

CONCERT

by the

NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA: 40 YEARS OF NBO

Saturday 21st June 2025
at 7:30pm

St. George's Church,
Bury Road, Oakenrod Hill, Rochdale

CONCERT
by the
NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Conductor : Paul Witkiewicz
Leader/Soloist : Andrew Rostron
Soloist : Diana Doherty

Saturday 21st June 2025

PROGRAMME

G F Handel	:	'The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba'*
J Stanley	:	Concerto Op. 2 No. 3 in G major
J S Bach	:	Concerto for Violin and Oboe in C minor, BWV 1060R ***Soloists – Andrew Rostron (violin) and Diana Doherty (oboe)***

INTERVAL

B Bartók	:	Sonatina, Sz. 55
A Vivaldi	:	Violin Concerto Op. 8 No. 2 in G minor, RV 315 ('Summer') ***Soloist – Andrew Rostron (violin)***
G F Handel	:	Concerto Grosso Op. 3 No. 4 in F major, HWV 315*

* Piece performed at NBO's first concert on 22nd May 1985

PROGRAMME NOTES

Sinfonia from Act III of *Solomon*, G F Handel
'The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba'

After a financially unsuccessful period composing Italian operas for performance in London and a stroke in 1737 which temporarily paralysed him, Handel concentrated on composing oratorios in English that would both educate and entertain his audiences. Until the revival of his operas in the second half of the 20th century, these oratorios (particularly *Messiah*) were the basis of Handel's musical reputation and are still regularly performed by English-speaking choral societies.

Handel composed his oratorio *Solomon* in 1748 and it was first produced at Covent Garden Theatre on 17th March 1749, under the direction of the composer. The oratorio tells the Bible story of King Solomon as recounted in the first Book of Kings and praises his piety, wisdom and splendour in each of the three parts. Being an astute business man, Handel highlighted these attributes of Solomon's character to show parallels with his patron, King George II of Great Britain. An important part of the story is Solomon's relationship with the Queen of Sheba, which is recounted in Act III and shows her amazement at the glory and splendour of his court.

The *sinfonia* that opens this part of the oratorio – written for two oboes and strings – has attained a life of its own as a dazzling concert piece and it is a fine example of Handel's ability to write grand music. We aptly present it tonight as our opening work, just as we did at our first concert 40 years ago (22nd May 1985).

William Gould (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

Concerto Op. 2 No. 3 in G major J Stanley

Adagio
Allegro
Andante
Allegro

John Stanley (1712-1786) was born in St Swithin, London Stone inside the City of London. At the age of two he was supposedly blinded by a domestic accident involving a broken china basin; an engraving of a lost portrait of him in middle age by Thomas Gainsborough shows him with shrivelled eye-sockets. In spite of his blindness, he studied under John Reading and Maurice Green and became a widely-admired organist. After marrying the daughter of a member of the East India

Company in 1738, he had the financial security to establish himself as a composer. He later succeeded Handel as director of the Lenten oratorio seasons at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and became the leading musician at the Foundling Hospital. Seven years before his death he succeeded William Boyce as Master of the King's Musick and was responsible for composing New Year and Birthday odes (all of which are now sadly lost).

Stanley's *Six Concertos in seven parts* (Opus 2) first appeared in an edition prepared for the composer in the spring of 1742. The publication was evidently a success as it was taken over and re-issued several times by the publisher John Walsh: many extant first edition copies survive today in public and private libraries. Stanley stood out among his contemporaries in London as a composer of 'grand concertos', using Handel's Opus 6 *concerti grossi* as a model instead of Corelli or Vivaldi.

His third concerto in G major uses the standard *concertino* grouping of two violins and a 'cello as soloists against a *ripieno* (the rest of the orchestra). The *concertino* first violin features in the opening *Adagio*, while it is joined by the second *concertino* violin in the middle of the fugal *Allegro*, whose second subject sounds rather like pealing bells. The first notes of the fugal subject reappear as the basis for the theme of the following *Andante*, a sentimental sarabande-type movement that starts with all three *concertino* instruments before the ripieno joins in. The concerto concludes with a gigue-like *Allegro* in triple time that against contrasts the *concertino* with the *ripieno*.

Peter Holman, adapted by M Seaton

Concerto for Violin and Oboe in C minor, BWV 1060R — J S Bach

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

Between 1717 and 1723, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) served as *Kapellmeister* (musical director) for the court of Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen. This proved to be a happy and productive time for Bach: his employer (a capable violinist and harpsichordist) appreciated his talents as a composer and rarely commissioned elaborate music for Calvinist worship, so Bach was able to concentrate on writing secular music. His Orchestral Suites, Brandenburg Concerti, 'Cello Suites and Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin all date from this period.

One work that Bach may have composed during this period was a Concerto for

Violin and Oboe in C minor. The manuscript for this concerto has long been lost, as mentioned in a 1764 Breitkopf catalogue of Bach's works. However, Bach most likely used it to create a concerto for two harpsichords and strings (BWV 1060) at some point in the 1730s, possibly for a concert at Zimmermann's coffee house in Leipzig's Catharinenstrasse. This concerto was eventually published in 1848, nearly a hundred years after Bach's death.

Bach's biographer from the early 19th century, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, described the two harpsichord concerto as 'very old', i.e. in an antiquated style for the time it was written. The 1874 Bach-Gesellschaft edition included a preface by its editor Wilhelm Rust suggesting it may have originally been a concerto for two violins and transposed from D minor, but Woldemar Voigt (physicist and amateur musician-turned-Bach expert) later wrote that an oboe would be a better fit for the second harpsichord part. Both possible concerti have subsequently been reconstructed from the two harpsichord work: we present the violin and oboe one tonight.

Its three movements – fast, slow, and fast – suggest the influence of Vivaldi in contrast to a more typically German four-movement form. The opening *Allegro* is cast in typical Baroque form with a recurrent main theme for the orchestral *tutti* alternating with lighter episodes for the solo oboe and violin. The *Adagio* is a rather melancholic duet for the solo instruments in a vocal style with discreet string accompaniment. The final *Allegro* has a similar form to the first movement but with additional fire and a gradual build-up of tension until its opening theme makes a final appearance.

John Dalton (Making Music, May 2018), adapted by M Seaton

INTERVAL

Tea & coffee will be served in the Church Hall

Sonatina, Sz. 55 **B Bartók (arr. M A Seaton)**

Dudások (Bagpipes): Allegretto
Medvetánc (Bear Dance): Moderato
Finale: Allegro vivace

Béla Bartók (1881-1945) is widely considered to be one of Hungary's greatest composers and one of the most important composers of the 20th century. While his earliest works show influences from Johannes Brahms, Richard Strauss and Claude Debussy, Bartók had a lifelong interest in folk music. From 1908 until the outbreak

of World War I in 1914, Bartók and fellow composer Zoltán Kodály travelled around the Carpathian Basin (then the Kingdom of Hungary) and collected folk songs using phonographs and phonomotors for later transcription and study. While many of his subsequent compositions directly arranged these folk songs, several others incorporated many of their elements (such as unconventional tonalities and rhythms) and demonstrated an alternative form of modernism to Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique.

While Bartók claimed Hungarian folk song was superior, he was strongly influenced by folk music from neighbouring Romania and several of his arrangements are of Romanian songs and dances. (Coincidentally, his birth town Nagyszentmiklós is now Sânnicolau Mare in present-day Romania.) One such work is his short three-movement *Sonatina* for piano, which dates from 1915 and includes five different folk tunes collected by Bartók in Transylvania between 1910 and 1914. It has subsequently been arranged for other ensembles: as well as this arrangement for string orchestra, which is being performed for the first time tonight, Bartók also orchestrated this work in 1931 as his *Transylvanian Dances* (Sz. 96).

The first ternary-form movement (*Dudások*) consists of two alternating dances originally played by Romanian bagpipe players: the first happens to be an *Ardeleana* (Romanian for 'Transylvanian') but slowed down significantly. The 'Bear Dance' second movement is based on a melody played by a Roma peasant violinist, who used his lower G and D strings to make it sound growly: Bartók goes even further and sets a slower, more lumbering tempo to mimic the movement of a bear. The *Finale* sets a further pair of fiddle tunes, each played several times sequentially before a brief coda brings them together and the work to a joyous conclusion.

M Seaton

Concerto Op. 8 No. 2 in G minor for violin, strings and continuo, RV 315 ('Summer') — A Vivaldi

Allegro non molto – Allegro
Adagio – Presto
Presto

The Venetian composer Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) became a dazzling violin virtuoso under the tutelage of his father. Although he was ordained as a priest, his health was allegedly too delicate to allow him to discharge his priestly duties, and from 1703 to 1718 he devoted his life to composing and to teaching at a girls' orphanage in Venice known as the *Pietà*. He fostered the talents of the young girls who lived at the orphanage, writing many of his instrumental works for them to play.

In the last 23 years of his life, he visited other parts of Italy – notably Mantua and Rome – and travelled widely in Europe, selling concerti and arranging performances of his operas and other music. He returned to the *Pietà* in the late 1730s – his continued absences to arrange musical performances outside Venice angered his employers – and died while on such a trip to Vienna.

The Four Seasons (*Le quattro stagioni*) is Vivaldi's most widely known work. Essentially a set of violin concerti, it actually forms the opening to a set of pieces with the grand collective title *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione* ('The Contest Between Harmony and Invention') and a dedication to Wenceslas, the Bohemian Count of Morzin and advisor to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI. Each concerto is complete in itself, following the standard three-movement formula of two fast movements linked by a slower one in the middle. What makes this set particularly unusual is Vivaldi's explicit attempt to depict the countryside during the various seasons in the music itself as an early example of 'programme music': he published accompanying sonnets describing what the music was intending to evoke.

Tonight's concerto – the second of the set – depicts Summer (*L'estate*) and opens with an eventful first rondo-like movement: men and animals languishing in the heat, the sounds of cuckoos, turtle doves and goldfinches (our soloist), a calm breeze swept aside by a northerly wind, and the trembling of a shepherd fearing the approach of violent storms from the orchestra. The boldly experimental second movement with alternating *Adagio* and *Presto* passages shows our shepherd struggling to sleep due to both his worries about storms (soloist with accompanying violins) and the furious buzzing of gnats and flies (*tutti* orchestra). The final *Presto* movement justifies and brilliantly depicts the shepherd's fears: the northerly wind returns, the sky is filled with thunder and lightning, and hail cuts and damages the wheat and grain.

Unknown (Making Music) and Ronald Comber, adapted by M Seaton

Concerto Grosso Op. 3 No. 4 in F major, HWV 315 G F Handel

Andante – Allegro – Lentamente
Andante
Allegro
Minuetto Alternativo: Allegro

Unlike his twelve Opus 6 'Grand Concertos', which are basically string concertos, the six concerti of Opus 3 might almost be considered George Frideric Handel's (1685-1759) answer to JS Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* and his *Orchestral Suites*, at least in terms of the variety of instrumentation and style of the various movements.

This set of concerti is primarily due to the enterprise of Handel's publisher, John Walsh, who saw the composer as a prime source of material and persuaded Handel to supply compositions on a regular basis. These *concerti grossi* were evidently Handel's contribution for the year 1734, which was quickly assembled from music used for previous operas, anthems and sacred works along with new material and issued as Opus 3. (It has been suggested that Handel had comparatively little involvement in their selection and publication, giving only tacit approval to Walsh.) These were known for a time as his 'concertos for oboes and violin', since his Opus 6 concerti were scored only for strings and harpsichord.

The fourth concerto in the set was initially performed some 18 years prior to publication in 1716 during a concert at the King's Theatre '*For the Benefit of the Instrumental Musick*', i.e. the opera orchestra: as a result it was frequently called the 'Orchestra Concerto'. Some of it was also performed as an *entr'acte* for his opera *Amadigi di Gaula*, which strongly features wind instruments. It did not originally make it into print, however: the first edition of the Opus 3 concerti published by John Walsh actually contained a different concerto in the same key by an unidentified composer. The intended concerto finally made it into print in the second edition, sometimes called 'Concerto 4a', while the spurious concerto is often denoted as 'Concerto 4b'.

The work begins with a French style *Ouverture* for the entire ensemble—which includes two oboes along with strings and continuo—in the customary slow-fast-slow form: outer slower sections with rapid scales up and down and a faster fugal middle section. A stately dance-like *Andante* follows, featuring a solo oboe soaring over the top of the strings. After an *Adagio* coda to the second movement, the third is a fugal *Allegro* in the relative minor key with solo sections for two different *concertini*: the standard *concertino* of two violins and 'cello, and one led by the two oboes. The final movement is a *Menuet alternativement* in tenary form based on material used for *Amadigi* and a *Birthday Ode for Queen Anne*: the melody in the second section is unusually played by the second violins and violas.

As with Handel's 'Arrival of the Queen of Sheba', this concerto was performed at our first concert in May 1985. We present it here to close tonight's concert and to commemorate our 40th anniversary.

M Seaton

Some of these programme notes were supplied through the Programme Note Bank of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies.

Paul Witkiewicz : Conductor



Paul began studying conducting when he was 14 under the guidance of his piano teacher, Michael Ward. His talent was soon supported further when, a year later, he was invited to a masterclass with Adrian Leaper and the Orchestra of the Mill. Studies continued with George Hurst and Robert Houlihan (Canford Summer School of Music) and then, whilst studying music at Nottingham University, with Jonathan Tilbrook. During his three years at Nottingham, he was a regular conductor of the Sinfonia, Philharmonia and Wind Band. In his final year he was also invited to conduct the Leicester University Symphony Orchestra.

After graduating, Paul enjoyed working with young musicians: from 1998 to 2002, he was Music Director of Sheffield Youth Orchestra, and between 2000 and 2017 he was in charge of Trafford Youth Philharmonic Orchestra. His work with young players was recognized by being awarded the Salvesen Baton from the National Association of Youth Orchestras and also winning the British Reserve Insurance conducting competition.

Paul has worked with various ensembles around the North West, including Chester Philharmonic, Wilmslow Symphony Orchestra and Westmorland Symphony Orchestra. His main association, though, is with Bolton Symphony Orchestra, with whom he has been a member since 1998. He first conducted the orchestra in 2001 and became its Associate Artistic Director in 2019.

In addition to orchestral conducting, Paul has also worked with various vocal groups: Music Director of Standish Choral Society (1996–2000), MD of Opera 74 (2008–2012), MD of Parkside Colliery Male Voice Choir (2012–present), and MD of Fleetwood and District Choral Society (September 2024–present).

He first worked with the Northern Baroque Orchestra in 2011 and is delighted to return and work with them again for a ninth time.

MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

1st Violins
Andrew Rostron
Nigel Cropper
Martin Wadsworth
Kirsty Olivant

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Peter Farnbank
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Players of string instruments are especially welcome!

For further information, please contact NBO via our website:

www.northernbaroque.org.uk

THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

The Northern Baroque Orchestra is now **40 years old**. In the early 1980s, the late Linda Williams, violinist and peripatetic teacher in Rochdale, had the idea of forming a small chamber orchestra with her friends and fellow professionals. Among those friends was our Honorary President, Sue Verity, who has been associated with the orchestra continuously since it came into existence, playing 'cello for most of its past 40 years.

The players would meet regularly and aim to give at least two concerts a year, basing their repertoire principally on the Baroque period. The Northern Baroque Orchestra was born soon after and gave its first concert on 22nd May 1985.

Players come mainly from Rochdale, Saddleworth and West Yorkshire, but also from Manchester and further afield. Essentially a string ensemble, it is pleased to invite along guest woodwind or brass players when augmentation is required. Concerto soloists have come from within the ranks of the orchestra or are invited friends or colleagues. The orchestra also offers young musicians opportunities to play or sing with an ensemble and has welcomed young soloists from the RNCM and Chetham's School of Music.

Part of the pleasure of playing in such an ensemble comes from having the opportunity to work with different conductors. The NBO has forged close links over the years with members of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra: Bob Chasey, Timothy Ang, Richard Davis and Simon Robertshaw. George Kennaway from the Orchestra of Opera North and Leeds University also conducted the orchestra regularly. Michael Dow, Director of Music at Stockport Grammar School, has given sixteen consecutive summer concerts with the orchestra since June 2004, and Paul Witkiewicz, conductor of Bolton Symphony Orchestra, has given six autumn/winter concerts as well as spring concerts in 2019 and 2023.

The NBO extends a warm 'welcome back' to Paul Witkiewicz for this evening's concert, his ninth with us. We very much enjoy working with Paul and trust that this enjoyment transmits itself to you in our playing.

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Jill Hamnett

In the lead-up to tonight's concert, we were saddened to hear of the passing of Jill, one of our long-standing Patrons and the widow of our first Patrons' Secretary, John Hamnett.

NBO would like to thank Michael Woodhead for sponsoring tonight's concert.

Proud members of

making music

NEXT NBO CONCERT

Saturday 15th November 2025

St Aidan's Church, Manchester Road, Rochdale

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www.northernbaroque.org.uk

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We are greatly indebted to our patrons for the support that they give us. It is not easy to maintain the number and level of performances to which we aspire without having a solid financial base. Our patrons' subscriptions and income from our concerts all go towards meeting the costs of music hire, venue hire, conductors' and soloists' fees, and publicity.

By becoming a patron you guarantee us an annual income, thereby supporting the orchestra and, more generally, amateur music making in the community.

We would very much welcome you as a patron. For an annual subscription of £30 you will receive 2 tickets (worth £15 each) for each of the two main concerts. Your name will be added to our mailing list and you will receive regular information about the orchestra's activities.

If you do wish to become a patron, please ask for an application form at the concert or contact David Shipp, Patrons' Secretary, by telephone on **01457 875171**, by email at **david@shipp.org** or by visiting our website at **www.northernbaroque.org.uk**