

CONCERT

by the

NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

and the

NIGHTINGALE SINGERS

Saturday 9th November 2024
at 3:00pm

St. Aidan's Church,
Manchester Road, Sudden, Rochdale

CONCERT
by the
NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA
and the
NIGHTINGALE SINGERS

Conductors	:	Paul Witkiewicz
		Ken Greaves
Leader/Soloist	:	Andrew Rostron
Pianist	:	Edward Rigg
Compere	:	Suzanne Mather

Saturday 9th November 2024

PROGRAMME

L Mozart	:	Divertimento in F major ('The Musical Sleigh Ride')
A Corelli	:	Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 8 in G minor ('Christmas Concerto')
A Vivaldi	:	Violin Concerto Op. 8 No. 4 in F minor, RV 297 ('Winter' from *The Four Seasons*) ***Soloist - Andrew Rostron***

INTERVAL

G F Handel	:	And the glory of the Lord from *Messiah*, HWV 56
H L Goodall	:	The Lord is my Shepherd
J Brahms	:	How lovely are thy dwellings from *German Requiem*, Op. 45
H Warren/ A Dubin	:	Forty-Second Street
C V Stanford/ M E Coleridge	:	The Blue Bird, Op. 119 No. 3
H S Roberton/ K Tynan Hinkson	:	All in the April Evening
E German/ J R Kipling	:	Rolling Down to Rio from *Just So Songs*
R Binge/ C V Hassall	:	Where the Gentle Avon Flows (*Elizabethan Serenade*)
J S Bach	:	Sleep Well from *St. John Passion*, BWV 245

PROGRAMME NOTES

Divertimento in F major, 'Die musikalische Schlittenfahrt' — L Mozart (attrib.)

Intrada: Allegro maestoso
Sleigh Ride: Allegretto
The Young Lady Shivering With Cold: Andante molto
The Ball Begins (Menuett)
End of the Ball (Rondo): Allegro
Sleigh Ride: Allegretto

Leopold Mozart was born in Augsburg (now in Bavaria) in 1719 and showed musical talent from an early age, singing as a choir boy and later became a skilled violinist and organist. He originally moved to Salzburg to study law at the Benedictine University, but left in 1739 due to either poor attendance or lack of funds. He subsequently became a professional musician for the Court of the Archbishop of Salzburg, first as an orchestral violinist and later as Court Composer, violin and piano teacher and eventually deputy *Kapellmeister*. Apart from extensive European concert tours with his children, Nannerl and Wolfgang, he stayed in Salzburg until his death in 1787.

As a composer, Leopold was understandably overshadowed by his more famous son and indeed composed no new works after the family started touring in 1762. His oeuvre was quite extensive, however, with many church items, several symphonies, solo concerti for various wind instruments, twelve oratorios, theatrical works and hundreds of dances to his name. In spite of a comparative lack of enthusiasm for his music at the time, his works compare favourably with those of his contemporaries. That said, there occasionally has been some confusion and dispute about their authorship: for instance, the famous *Toy Symphony* has been variously attributed to Leopold, his son Wolfgang, Joseph Haydn, Michael Haydn (Joseph's younger brother) and Edmund Angerer.

The Musical Sleigh Ride (Divertimento in F major) might have been composed by Leopold Mozart, but it is also possible he was not its original composer (whose identity is now lost) and that he had merely made a copy of a piece that amused him and he wanted to perform. The surviving autograph (or copy) was probably written before 1757 and, as the movement titles suggest, musically depicts the journey of a young lady attending a winter ball, including the trips there and back in a sleigh.

Like the famous *Toy Symphony* and Leopold's *Jagd-Sinfonie* (Hunting Symphony), this is a musical work that includes naturalistic effects: the main Sleigh Ride movements include a distinctive part for sleigh bells and the third movement depicts shivering with string tremolandos. The ball itself is depicted by a typical dance movement for the time – a *Menuett* – while a *Rondo* brings it to an end before the sleigh returns home.

M Seaton

Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 8 in G minor ('Christmas Concerto') — A Corelli

Vivace – Grave, arcate, sostenuto e come stà
Allegro
Adagio – Allegro – Adagio
Vivace
Allegro
Largo: Pastorale ad libitum

Little is known about Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) as a man, aside from Handel's description as someone who always wore black and collected paintings he never paid for! As the violin began to supersede the viol, however, he became one of the first great violinists, violin teachers and composers, and his musicianship and skill was a talking point all across Europe.

His twelve Opus 6 *concerti grossi* were published in 1714, a year after his death, although several of them had first been performed some thirty years earlier. These can be subdivided into eight *concerti da chiesa* ('church concerti') with alternating slow and fast movements and four *concerti da camera* ('chamber concerti') with movements based on popular dance types. They all involve a group of solo instruments, the *concertino* (two violins and 'cello), and a larger *ripieno* group for tutti passages.

The eighth of Corelli's concerti bears the inscription '*fatto per la notte di natale*' ('written for Christmas night'), and has been known ever since as the 'Christmas Concerto'. Christmas concerti were a part of seasonal observances in Italy and usually included a *Pastorale*, a movement in a slow 12/8 time and often harmonised in thirds, depicting shepherds in the fields. This concerto is clearly a *concerto da chiesa* and intended for church performance, although it has been expanded from the usual four movements to six.

Several movements of the Christmas Concerto fall into different sections. The concerto opens with a brisk *Vivace* introduction of only six bars long, while the rest of the movement is a slow, portentous *Grave*. Throughout both sections of this movement, our three soloists are integrated into the orchestral texture, but in the following *Allegro*, the two violinists, led by 'cello quavers, break into a highly effective scherzo-like passage, while the 'cello scurries along beneath them and the orchestral accompaniment moves in and out.

The central (third) movement is in ternary form: an opening melodious *Adagio* gives way to an *Allegro* middle section, where soloists and orchestra play in unison, and the movement then comes to a quiet close with a short code appended to a repeated *Adagio*. Then follows another *Vivace*, in which the soloists play the prominent part and which, in its minuet-like form, foreshadows Corelli's move from church to chamber concerti in the last four of the Opus 6 set.

The solo violins open the final *Allegro* movement, which proceeds with a steady crotchet pulse with echo effects and long descending scales, before leading without a break into the well-known *Pastorale*. The sustained *Largo* melody is initially entrusted to the *concertino*, but the *ripieno* takes a gradually increasing part, before the movement and concerto close on an evocative *pianissimo*. This is the longest movement of the concerto and might easily stand alone (as indicated by Corelli's use of '*ad libitum*' in its tempo marking); a quiet evocation of the spirit of Christmas and of the shepherds waiting in the fields on the eve of the Nativity.

D Peak, adapted by M Seaton

Violin Concerto Op. 8 No. 4 in F minor, RV 297 ('Winter' from *The Four Seasons*) — A Vivaldi

Allegro non molto
Largo
Allegro

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 an orphanage for girls in Venice known for short as the *Pietà*. Here, he fostered the talents of the young girls who lived there, for whom he wrote many of his instrumental works. In the last 23 years of his life, he visited other parts of Italy, notably Mantua and Rome,

and travelled widely in Europe, selling concertos and arranging performances of his operas and other music. In the late 1730s he returned to the *Pietà*, where his continued frequent absences to arrange musical performances outside Venice angered his employers. In 1741, he travelled to Vienna, apparently on just such a trip, and died there.

The Four Seasons (*Le quattro stagioni*) is Vivaldi's most widely known work and hardly seems to need any introduction. It forms the opening to a set of pieces with the grand collective title of *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione* ('The Contest Between Harmony and Invention') and was already in print by 1725, bearing a dedication to a Bohemian count, Wenzelaus von Morzin. *The Four Seasons* is in effect a set of four violin concerti.

Each concerto is complete in itself, following the three-movement formula of two fast movements linked by a slower one. Each could be performed in isolation, but the first performance of the whole work in 1728 was accompanied by text – both in the score and as a set of four sonnets – describing what the music depicted: this is arguably one of the first and best examples of what is known as 'programme' music.

The fourth concerto in F minor depicts Winter. Its opening *Allegro non molto* starts by the entire orchestra depicting someone shivering in frozen snow, before the soloist is cut through by the wind. Even though they try and stamp their feet, they cannot stop their teeth chattering! The middle *Largo* movement depicts quiet evenings by the fireside while the rain outside pours down, rendered by *pizzicato* violins against the soloist's melody. The final *Allegro* depicts a treacherous walk along icy ground, started by the soloist who is joined by the rest of the orchestra, all trying not to slip and fall … failing that, getting up and running before the ice finally cracks and opens, while the winds fight a furious battle that can even be felt behind locked and bolted doors.

Unknown contributor (Making Music, August 2010), adapted by M Seaton

INTERVAL

Tea & coffee will be served at the back of the Church

‘And the glory of the Lord’ from *Messiah*, HWV 56 G F Handel

Since his arrival in England in 1712, George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) had established himself as a composer of Italian opera, but as public taste for such works began to fade in the 1730s, he started introducing oratorios performed in English. Shortly after his final Italian opera (*Deldamia*) in 1741, Handel got to work on arguably his most famous oratorio, *Messiah*. Like many composers of his day, Handel was a fast worker, but the speed at which he wrote *Messiah* was extraordinary: he completed the entire score of 53 movements in the space of 24 days, using Charles Jennens’ (1700-1773) text derived from the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer with hardly any changes.

The first performance of Messiah took place on 13th April 1742 at The Great Music Hall in Dublin’s Fishamble Street, raising money for three different charities and receiving unanimous praise. In contrast, the first performances in London at the Covent Garden Theatre in March 1743 were less successful, overshadowed by controversy over the work’s subject matter and where it was being performed. From 1749, after a few revivals it finally started to take off and became the musical institution it has been for the past 275 years.

The first Part depicts the prophecy and realisation of God’s plan to redeem mankind by the coming of the Messiah, while its first scene depicts Isaiah’s prophecy of salvation. This anthem chorus closing the first scene announces the revelation of God’s glory – begun by the altos, before the other voices answer (mostly) homophonically and the music becomes denser. The words ‘for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it’ are set as a *cantus firmus* of solemn, repeated long notes, which also help to conclude the movement affirmatively.

Robin Golding (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

The Lord is my Shepherd H L Goodall

Howard Goodall (b. 1958), one of Britain’s most distinguished and versatile composers, was a former chorister at New College and music scholar at Christ Church, Oxford. Almost everyone knows at least one (if not all!) of his popular themes for TV comedy shows: *Blackadder*, *Mr Bean*, *Red Dwarf*, *The Catherine Tate Show*, *QI* and *The Vicar of Dibley*. He has also written many musicals and film scores, winning international awards including the 2009 Classic Brit Award Composer of the Year.

Howard was Classic FM's Composer-in-Residence for 2009 and hosted his own weekly show, *Howard Goodall On...;* he has appeared regularly on BBC TV music programmes, writing and presenting his own highly-successful TV documentary series on the theory and history of music (including one, coincidentally, on Handel's *Messiah*), receiving a BAFTA, an RTS Judges' Prize and over a dozen other major international broadcast awards. He is a tireless advocate for music education.

Anyone who thinks about *The Vicar of Dibley* is likely to focus on one of two things: the dry wit and humour of Dawn French or the now instantly recognisable theme tune. Howard's setting of *Psalm 23* ('The Lord is my Shepherd') has proved to be an extremely popular piece of music in its own right. It starts with a lyrical *legato* melody for a solo soprano, which is then repeated by the other sopranos and accompanied simply by the rest of the choir. A homophonic middle section in a minor key reflects the mood of the words 'Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil' and provides a contrast. The original theme then returns to draw the work to a beautiful conclusion which, given the right circumstances, could provide a very spiritual moment.

Jennie Butler (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

'How lovely are thy dwellings' from *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45 — J Brahms

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) first mentioned he was writing 'a *sort* of German Requiem' in a letter to Clara Schumann in 1865, presumably referring to the language of the text he was setting – derived from the German Luther Bible – in contrast to the usual Latin in Catholic requiem masses. This *Requiem* consequently has no *requiem aeternam* or *agnus dei*, and certainly no *dies irae* with threats of eternal damnation. Brahms supposedly would have preferred to call the work *ein menschliches Requiem* (a human requiem), given it is less a mass for the dead and more a mass for the living to console those who remain: he was grieving over the death of his mother while writing it.

The fourth movement, *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* ('How lovely are thy dwellings'), is an effective keystone for this work and the other six movements show a form of symmetry around it. It is essentially a setting of Psalm 84 that starts with a motif first heard at the very beginning of the work to the words *selig sind* ('blessed are'), but has a simple beauty of its own that belies Brahms' usual undeserved reputation as a composer of 'difficult' academic music.

Thomas McCahill (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

Forty-Second Street — H Warren, arr. D King / A Dubin

Harry Warren (1893-1981), born Salvatore Antonio Guaragna, was one of eleven children born to Italian immigrants in New York City. He was interested in music from an early age, teaching himself to play his father's accordion before singing in the church choir and learning to play the drums and piano. Dropping out of high school at the age of 16 to play with his godfather's band in a travelling carnival, he then started working at the Vitagraph Motion Picture Studios, graduating from props man to assistant director, as well as playing piano in cafés and silent-movie houses. He began writing songs after joining the U.S. Navy in 1918: over 800 in total, of which over 500 were published. Most of these were written specifically for feature films or were used in other films, including over a hundred Warner Brothers *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* cartoons, and dozens became best-selling pop singles.

Warren started working at Warner Brothers in 1932, pairing with lyricist Al Dubin (1891-1945) to write the score for the first blockbuster film musical, *42nd Street*, which was released the following year. The film tells the story of a theatrical cast and crew rehearsing for a Broadway show at the height of the Great Depression. In 1980 the film was adapted into a hugely successful Broadway stage musical, incorporating other songs written by Warren and Dubin, and winning Tony Awards for Best Musical and Best Choreography.

The title song happens to be the finale for the film, as well as the last main number in the musical. Originally sung by Ruby Keeler and Dick Powell (the new stars of the show) along with the ensemble for the film, it has been covered several times since 1933, most notably by Frankie Vaughan and the Cherry Poppin' Daddies.

M Seaton

The Blue Bird, Op. 119 No. 3 — C V Stanford / M E Coleridge

Dublin-born Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was arguably responsible for Britain's musical renaissance, along with his contemporaries Hubert Parry and Alexander Mackenzie. After studying music at the University of Cambridge, in Leipzig and Berlin, he became one of the founding professors of the Royal College of Music in 1882 and taught several future composers, including Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams. His own musical output tended to remain comparatively conservative in outlook – Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms were his main models – and included many concert works (including several indicating his Irish

roots), seven symphonies and choral works for church performance composed mainly in the Anglican tradition.

He was also an accomplished writer of partsongs: his first collection in Elizabethan style (Op. 47, written in 1892) was praised by the *Musical Times* as being among the best of their kind. His Opus 119 set was written in 1910 and set poetry by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge (1861-1907), whose father happened to be a friend of Stanford's.

Her poem *L'Oiseau Bleu* was initially published under a pseudonym in 1897, but was finally published under Coleridge's own name as 'The Blue Bird' a year after her premature death. Stanford set this poem as the third of his eight partsongs in the set. It is scored for a choral ensemble with divided altos and, in spite of Stanford's propensity for a more traditional musical style, contains hints of impressionism which Delius and others later developed. Particular features of note include the floating soprano line and Stanford's failure to resolve the final chord, leaving the music floating in the air.

William Gould (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

All in the April Evening — H S Roberton / K Tynan Hinkson

Sir Hugh Stevenson Roberton (1874-1952) was born in Glasgow and originally started working as a funeral director – his family business – while devoting most of his spare time to music making. He was largely self-taught in music, learning by singing in (and later directing) choirs and inheriting a love of folk song from his mother.

In 1906, he founded the Glasgow Orpheus Choir by transforming the Toynbee Musical Association, directing it until his retirement in 1951. Setting new standards in choral technique and interpretation, he led the Orpheus Choir to national and international recognition, performing many Scottish folk songs arranged for choir, Italian madrigals, English motets and Russian Orthodox Church music, as well as works by J S Bach, Handel, Mendelssohn, Brahms and others.

'All in the April evening' is Roberton's best-known original composition, a 1911 partsong anthem setting words by the Irish writer Katharine Tynan Hinkson (1859-1931). Written to fulfil the repertoire needs of the Orpheus Choir, it became their signature tune in line with Roberton's own vision for choral singing and 'an inspiration in the morning and a benediction in the evening'.

Kenneth Roberton/M Seaton

Rolling Down to Rio — E German
J R Kipling

Sir Edward German (1862-1936) was born in Whitchurch, Shropshire to Welsh parents: his father initially taught him piano and organ, before he taught himself the violin, composition and music arrangement while forming a concert band to perform locally. He eventually entered the Royal Academy of Music and continued to study violin and organ as well as composition under Ebenezer Prout, before he was appointed sub-professor of violin.

In 1888 he was appointed conductor and musical director at the Globe Theatre in London, where he started writing theatre music: after Sir Arthur Sullivan's death in 1900, he was invited to write comic operas for the Savoy Theatre with the librettist Basil Hood, the most successful of which was *Merrie England* in 1902. After the unsuccessful *Fallen Fairies* in 1909, also the final Savoy opera for W S Gilbert, German mostly avoided composing new music and concentrated on new arrangements for publication, walking, cycling, fishing and watching cricket matches at Lord's near his Maida Vale home.

After an unsuccessful opera in 1903, *A Princess of Kensington*, German temporarily turned to other endeavours. One of these was to set texts by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), specifically twelve poems from the latter's *Just So Stories* illustrating how various animals acquired their distinctive features. These became the *Just So Songs* – originally written for voice and piano, they were later arranged by the composer for various choral and partsong configurations.

The most popular of the *Just So Songs* is 'Rolling Down to Rio', based on the poem that immediately follows 'The Beginning of the Armadillos', the story of how a hedgehog and a tortoise transformed into the first armadillos.

M Seaton

Where the Gentle Avon Flows — R Binge
(Elizabethan Serenade) — C V Hassall

One of Britain's foremost composers and arrangers of light music, Ronald Binge (1910-1979) had started as a chorister at St Andrews Church ('the railwaymen's church') in Derby before attending the Derby School of Music to study the organ. After some time working as a cinema organist and in summer orchestras at British seaside resorts, he ended up playing organ for Annunzio Paolo Mantovani's first band (the Tipica Orchestra). His collaboration with Mantovani continued after serving in the RAF during the Second World War, arranging and composing for

Mantovani's new orchestra as well as orchestrating two of Noël Coward's musicals. Several of Binge's original compositions – as well as his arrangement of the popular song *Charmaine* with a distinctive cascading strings effect – ended up being performed by Mantovani's orchestra for BBC radio broadcasts, including in his own programme called String Song.

His best-known composition was the *Elizabethan Serenade*, completed in 1951 and used by the BBC as the theme to the 'Music Tapestry' series and as the play-out for the British Forces Network radio station. It was originally entitled 'Andante Cantabile' at its first broadcast by Mantovani's orchestra, but the original manuscript parts indicate a title 'The Man in the Street', possibly for an early television documentary. The accession of Queen Elizabeth II in February 1952 prompted Binge to change the name to reflect the post-war optimism of a 'new Elizabethan Age'.

Around the same time as the change to the piece's title, the actor and poet Christopher Hassall (1912-1963) added lyrics, transforming it into the song 'Where the Gentle Avon Flows'. The evocative words tell of a girl hearing a 'sweet serenade' supposedly being played below her open window.

M Seaton

Sleep Well from *St. John Passion*, BWV 245 — J S Bach

As popular as Passion music was in some parts of Germany in the early 18th century, it was comparatively new to Leipzig. During his time as Cantor at the Thomasschule, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) composed five Passion settings, although only two have survived in their entirety. The first of these, the *St. John Passion*, was first performed on 7th April 1724 at the Nikolaikirche as part of its Good Friday Vespers, before being revised and performed the following year at the Thomaskirche. Two further sets of revisions were made for performances in 1730 and 1749. It sets a text by an unknown author, likely to be based on a famous Passion poem by Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680-1747) that was also set by Handel, Telemann and other composers of the era, as well as drawing from the Gospel of John in the Luther Bible.

The final chorus preceding the congregational chorale, *Ruht wohl* ('Sleep Well'), offers a prayer to Christ's body after it has been laid in its grave so it can 'rest in God's safe-keeping'. It starts with the same final note as the previous recitative depicting when Christ was laid to rest.

Cappella Novocastriensis (Making Music), adapted by 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 Westmoreland 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 an eighth time.

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THE NIGHTINGALE SINGERS

The Nightingale Singers have been together since 1987 and for the last twenty years have been directed by Ken Greaves, who also currently conducts the Middleton Musical Society and was for a time the choral directory of the Choir and Orchestra Society (CAOS) of the Universities of Manchester.

The Nightingale Singers were founded by, and still have past and present members of, the Hallé Choir. They now also have some former professional soloists enjoying life as choral singers. Their members come not only from all over Greater Manchester, but from as far afield as the Peak District and North-West Wales.

The Nightingales perform an eclectic mix of music from Mozart and Elgar to Cole Porter and Billy Joel. As well as performing widely in England and Wales, they have done concert tours abroad on the island of Madeira and in France.

The choir has had the good fortune to be accompanied by some excellent pianists over the years, and now enjoy the talented services of Edward Rigg. Their compere, Suzanne Mather, is a locally-based former professional soprano soloist, who also sings with the Nightingale Singers.

Constantly striving to perform to as high a level as they can, the Nightingale Singers are always looking out for additional enthusiastic members. If you have good intonation and a pleasing tone, please do not hesitate to apply: you will be very warmly welcomed! To do so, have a word with Ken today or contact him later at **kcgreaves1@gmail.com**

The choir rehearses at St Thomas's Church on Heywood Old Road in Bowlee (M24 4GR), usually a couple of Thursdays a month. They tend to perform about four or five concerts each year.

THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

The Northern Baroque Orchestra is now in its fortieth year of existence. 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 come from within the ranks of the orchestra or are invited friends or colleagues. The orchestra is also pleased to offer young musicians an opportunity 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 five 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 eighth 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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