

CONCERT

by the

NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Saturday 7th November 2026
at 3:00pm

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

CONCERT
by the
NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Conductor : Paul Witkiewicz
Leader/Soloist : Maud Hodson

Saturday 7th November 2026

PROGRAMME

A Vivaldi	:	Concerto in C minor, RV 120
É C Jacquet de la Guerre	:	Trio Sonata No. 1 in G minor
M L Lombardini Sirmen	:	Violin Concerto Op. 3 No. 6 in C minor ***Soloist – Maud Hodson (violin)***

INTERVAL

T A Arne	:	Overture No. 4 in F major
J B Lully	:	Chaconne des Scaramouches, Trivelins et Arlequins
J Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges	:	Symphony No. 1 in G major, Op. 11

PROGRAMME NOTES

Concerto in C minor for strings and continuo, RV 120 — A Vivaldi

Allegro non molto
Largo
Allegro

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) was born, grew up and worked mostly in Venice. The son of a notable violinist and an ordained priest, he became a virtuoso performer on the instrument himself, as well as a prolific and important composer. In 1703 he was appointed *maestro di violino* at an orphanage in Venice, the *Ospidale della Pietà*, which offered musical education to its girls. Vivaldi wrote the majority of his more than 500 concerti at the rate of at least two per month for the talented girls at this establishment, whose orchestra and choir became internationally renowned during his thirty-year association. He later sold off many of his manuscripts to fund travel to Vienna, aiming to work at the court of Emperor Charles VI and to stage operas, although neither came to pass and within a year of arriving he died in poverty.

While a *concerto* is most often the name for a work involving one or more soloists, *concerti a quattro* were typically three-movement works with four independent string parts and continuo without any soloists, used as outlets by 18th century Italian composers for inventive musical ideas and likely predecessors for both string quartets and symphonies. Indeed, to add to the confusion, some of these concerti were referred to as *sinfonias*, although this alternative name helps to distinguish more homophonic, treble-dominated works from the more contrapuntal *concerti*. Vivaldi wrote 45 such concerti, which tended to be shorter than those for soloists but no less interesting.

Today's C minor concerto is one of three *concerti a quattro* in this key: sadly the composition date cannot be identified, as neither Vivaldi nor his publishers included dates on manuscripts or first editions. The opening *Allegro non molto* shows a clear division between the violins (playing mostly in unison) and the lower strings and continuo, with triplet quavers and dotted minims alternating between the two groups. Both the *Largo* and final *Allegro* are fugal in nature, each with four independent parts and subjects involving a distinctive rhythm (at the beginning of the *Largo*, at the end for the *Allegro*).

Linda A Williams (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

Trio Sonata No. 1 in G minor **É C Jacquet de la Guerre (arr. M A Seaton)**

Grave – Allegro – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro – Andante – Presto – Allegro

Élisabeth Claude Jacquet (1665–1729) was born into a family of Parisian harpsichord makers and organists. Her musical talents were evident from a very early age and nurtured by her father to the point that she impressed King Louis XIV (the 'Sun King') playing harpsichord at his palace in Versailles when she was just five years old. She eventually became a musician in his court and was given additional musical tuition under the supervision of the king's mistress, Françoise-Athénaïs, Marquise de Montespan. In 1684 she married the organist Marin de la Guerre and taught, composed and gave concerts at home and throughout Paris to great acclaim. Jacquet de la Guerre was one of the few well-known female composers of her day, able to compose in a wide variety of forms. Even at the age of 26, the biographer Évrard Titon du Tillet in his *Parnasse françois* considered her a musical equal to Michel Richard Delalande and Marin Marais, only just below the recently deceased Jean-Baptiste Lully, noting her remarkable improvisation skills.

Lully's influence was evident in her only opera from 1694, the five-act *Céphale et Procris* based on the tragic myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Its failure had less to do with her compositional abilities and more with French audiences' conservatism regarding opera. Even though the king had been losing interest in the form in any case, it diminished neither his admiration of her musical talents nor his patronage, and she continued to compose and publish works (e.g. sonatas, cantatas) blending French traditions with Italian innovations. Unusually for a female composer she continued to be held in high regard for several years after her death, although she was eventually overshadowed by her male contemporaries until her music was finally rediscovered nearly 250 years later.

One musical form Jacquet de la Guerre experimented with was the *trio sonata*, a multiple-movement work for two solo instruments (usually violins) and continuo: she composed a set of four sonatas in 1695, among the first such works written by a French composer. Contrary to the name, this type of work is normally played by four players since the continuo part is usually divided between a bass instrument – a viola da gamba, bass viol or violoncello – and an instrument that can play chords such as a harpsichord or an organ. It has more than a passing resemblance to the *concerto grosso*, which uses the same three or four instruments in its *concertino* group against the *ripieno* (the rest of the orchestra).

We present the first of Jacquet de la Guerre's trio sonatas in G minor re-arranged for full strings and continuo as a form of *concerto grosso*. The two violin parts are intact with occasional assignments to single solo players, while solo passages in the continuo part (particularly in the fifth *Allegro* section) are divided among a solo viola and a solo violoncello. The musical form of this sonata is somewhat episodic with sections running one into the next almost continuously throughout: it is not in Classical era 'sonata form' but it is still possible to hear musical development throughout the work.

M Seaton

Violin Concerto Op. 3 No. 6 in C major — M L Lombardini Sirmen

Allegro
Andante
Rondo: Allegro

Maddalena Laura Lombardini (1745–1818) was born in Venice to impoverished but noble parents, who sent their musically-gifted daughter to *Ospedale di San Lazaro e dei Mendicanti*, a former lepers' hospital and girls' orphanage that had its own music school. (One of its previous music teachers had been Antonio Vivaldi's father.) While there, she was able to take violin lessons with Giuseppe Tartini in Padua and eventually graduated in 1767 with a *maestro* licence to work as a musician beyond Venice. That same year, she married the violinist Ludovico Sirmen and they set off on a three-year tour to Turin, Paris and London, during which they performed together, composed new works (including a now lost double violin concerto) and had a baby daughter.

From 1771 onwards, Maddalena travelled around Europe without Ludovico – who looked after their daughter and had acquired a countess as his mistress – and performed as both a soloist and later as a singer. While she often performed her own violin concerti, she never wrote her own vocal music and her composing activities declined as she sang more frequently. After giving over 200 performances in London, she and her husband worked at the court of Catherine the Great in St Petersburg for around 18 months. In 1785 she ended her soloist career in Paris and then retired in Venice, living out the remainder of her life with a second adopted daughter. Although she was mainly remembered after her death as one of Tartini's favourite pupils, her reputation as a composer has grown considerably in the past 40 years with her works standing up well against those of her male contemporaries, including Haydn and Mozart.

During her first tour to Paris with her husband and probably around the time her daughter was born, Lombardini Sirmen completed her Opus 3 violin concerti. She essentially extended her previous Opus 2 concerti – which she had almost certainly written before setting off from Venice – by adding three more, making more extensive use of double stopping with voice-leading in thirds and sixths. All six concerti are scored for pairs of oboes and horns (mainly for tutti passages), strings and continuo, with the upper strings alone normally accompanying the soloist, who gets cadenza-playing opportunities at the ends of movements.

The opening *Allegro* in this sixth concerto in C major is bright and stately with a festive, energetic dialogue between the solo violin and the orchestra. The *Andante* that follows is the expressive showcase for the concerto, allowing the soloist to demonstrate the singing *cantabile* style that Lombardini Sirmen learned from Tartini. The final *Rondo* is a lively and playful finale that leans into rhythmic agility and spirited themes.

Martin Ash (2020), adapted by M Seaton

INTERVAL

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

Overture No. 4 in F major — T A Arne

Con spirito
Con spirito
Andante

Thomas Augustine Arne (1710–1778) was widely regarded in his day as the greatest native-born composer of English opera and theatrical song, contributing as much to London's musical life as the German-born George Frideric Handel and impressing both Mozart and Haydn during their visits to the city. However, his reputation later declined to the point that until recently his only well-known works have been 'Rule, Britannia!' from his patriotic masque *Alfred* – sung at every Last Night at the Proms – and 'A-Hunting We Will Go' from a 1777 production of *The Beggar's Opera*.

Born in Covent Garden to a recusant Catholic family of financially unsuccessful upholsterers, Arne was sent to Eton College with the intention of becoming a solicitor but was secretly so keen on music that he smuggled a spinet into his room and muffled its strings to practice late at night without waking up his family. He also learned to play the violin under Michael Festing, a composer and violinist who also

took Arne to various musical events such as a visit to Oxford in 1733 to hear Handel's oratorio *Athalia*. His father later caught Thomas leading a group of musicians at one of Festing's musical gatherings; fortunately, he was persuaded by his son's considerable talent (possibly with Festing's help) to permit him to pursue a career in music rather than law.

Despite this sudden discovery, Thomas' family was instrumental in starting his musical career: his first successful theatrical work, a new setting of Joseph Addison's opera libretto *Rosamund*, was suggested by his contralto sister Susannah Maria Cibber (née Arne). A further 90 works for the theatre followed, many of which were performed by both Susannah and their brother Richard. His success was not entirely smooth sailing: an argument with the director David Garrick caused him to move from Drury Lane to Covent Garden in 1750, while another with the publishers Henry Roberts and John Johnson led to one of the first court cases over music copyright. His marriage to the soprano Cecilia Young collapsed during a visit to Dublin in 1755 and he subsequently had a decade-long affair with one of his pupils, Charlotte Brent, who sang soprano roles in some of his operas.

Arne did not compose much non-theatrical music, and even some of this was probably extracted from his operas and masques. This is likely to have been the case for his *Eight Overtures in 8 Parts* from 1751, three of which have been positively identified as overtures or *sinfonia* for his operas *Henry and Emma*, *Comus* and *The Judgment of Paris*. While no direct connection has been made for his fourth overture in F major, more likely than not it originates from one of his theatrical works, possibly one lost in an 1808 fire at the Royal Opera House. Its first two sections resemble a French *ouverture*: a slower dotted-rhythm section is followed by a quicker fugal second section, although unlike many ouvertures they are kept entirely separate and have the same *Con spirito* tempo marking. The unusual third *Andante* section that closes the work resembles a graceful minuet. While most of the overture uses the pairs of oboes and horns to provide emphasis in louder *tutti* sections, each pair gets prominent solos in the second section alongside the strings and continuo.

Todd Gilman (*Arne, Handel, the Beautiful, and the Sublime*) and John Dalton (Making Music, April 2014), adapted by M Seaton

Chaconne des Scaramouches, Trivelins et Arlequins from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, LWV 43 — J B Lully

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) was born in Florence as Giovanni Battista Lulli, the son of Tuscan millers. Not much is known about his general education or musical training, although he later recounted that a Franciscan friar was his first music teacher. During a Mardi Gras carnival in 1646, his violin playing and clowning in

the streets caught the attention of Chevalier Roger de Lorraine, who was looking for a young man to converse in Italian with his niece. The 14-year-old thus came to the French court as a *garçon de chambre*, where he was able to hone his musical skills with the niece's household musicians and other composers.

In 1653, he attracted the attention of the young King Louis XIV while they danced together in the *Ballet royal de la nuit*, who soon after named Lully as royal composer for instrumental music and then director of his personal violin orchestra, *Les Petits Violons*. This orchestra became the main ensemble Lully used for court ballets and was particularly open to his musical innovations such as the French *ouverture*. Eight years later, Lully became superintendent of the royal music and music master of the royal family, also gaining control of the larger *Les Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* and receiving letters of naturalisation. Around this time, he started an 11-year collaboration with the playwright Molière, writing incidental music for plays and devising *comédies-ballets*, a hybrid form combining theatre, comedy, incidental music and ballet. After being appointed director of the Académie Royale de Musique in 1672, Lully acquired a royal privilege to produce a new opera at the Palais-Royal nearly every year, where his creation of *tragédie en musique* or *tragédie lyrique* became a distinctly French operatic style.

His relationship with the king started to sour after Queen Marie-Thérèse's death in 1683, and Lully's affairs with other men – despite being married with six children – did not help matters. An accusation of 'improper relations' with a page boy in 1685 fortunately did not lead to harsh punishment, but the king was sufficiently annoyed with Lully to disinvite him from performing his opera *Armide* the following year. As innovative and emotionally powerful as his music was, Lully himself was often short-tempered and could be ruthless and brutal: when he discovered one of his female choristers was pregnant, he kicked her stomach to force her to miscarry and be able to perform in *Armide* as planned. The manner of his death was notorious and ironic: during a performance of his *Te Deum* to celebrate the king's recovery from surgery, he accidentally struck his foot with his long heavy conducting staff. He refused to have the infected toe amputated, fearing he would be unable to dance again, but gangrene reached his brain and killed him nearly three months later.

Le bourgeois gentilhomme was one of Lully and Molière's *comédies-ballet* (plays with music, dance and singing) written and performed for the king in 1670. A satire on social climbing and aristocratic snobbery, it depicts a pretentious middle-class bourgeois man who longs to be accepted as an aristocrat and vainly learns how to become one, before he is finally being tricked into believing his daughter is about to marry a 'Turkish prince' (actually another middle-class man). The final act includes

a grand ballet sequence with a graceful *chaconne* – variations over a repeated bass line or harmonic sequence – danced by the grotesque and ungraceful stock characters of Italian *commedia dell'arte*: Scaramouche, Trivelin and Harlequin. Like other instrumental sections of this play, the chaconne was intended to be performed by the *Violons de Roy* orchestra and scored for five string parts to be played according to the practice of *notes inégales* (equal duration pairs of notes are played long-short).

M Seaton

Symphony No. 1 in G major, Op. 11 — J Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges

Allegro
Andante
Allegro assai

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745–1799) led a multi-faceted life, becoming the first known Classical composer of African descent to attain widespread acclaim in Western music. He was born on the Caribbean island of Guadalupe to a white wealthy plantation owner and an enslaved Senegalese woman who worked for the lady of the household. Unusually for the time, his father formally recognised Joseph as his son and took him and his mother to France when he turned five years old in the hopes of providing him the best education possible. He was enrolled into a private fencing academy at the age of 13 and proved himself to be one of the most accomplished fencers and horsemen in all of France. After graduating from the academy in 1766, Joseph was made a *Gendarme du roi* (officer of the king's bodyguard) and adopted his father's plantation title to become the Chevalier de Saint-Georges. He later acted as right-hand man to the Duke of Orléans and served as a colonel during the French Revolution, when he led the first regiment in Europe comprised of persons of colour.

His education was not just limited to fencing. Between 1764 and 1766, the composers Antonio Lolli and François-Joseph Gossec both named him in their works, revealing his extensive skills as a violinist, and the latter hired Saint-Georges in 1769 as a member of a new orchestra, *Les Concerts des Amateurs*. Three years later Saint-Georges made his solo debut performing his own violin concerti, before taking over as concertmaster-conductor. Unsurprisingly, most of his compositions centred around string instruments. One type he specialised in was the *symphonie concertante* – a small symphonic work evolved from the Baroque *concerto grosso* with a group of soloists – and several of these may have influenced Mozart when he visited Paris in 1778, inspiring him to write his own. Saint-Georges later led several

other ensembles, including the *Concert de la loge Olympique* (Orchestra of the 'Olympique' Masonic Lodge). His leadership of this orchestra extended to commissioning Joseph Haydn to compose his six 'Paris' symphonies (numbers 82 to 87), which Saint-Georges premiered in 1786 to rapturous reception. A particular fan of these symphonies was Marie Antoinette, a regular attender of Saint-Georges' concerts who ultimately gave a subtitle to her favourite, '*La Reine*' (number 85, 'The Queen').

His musical career subsequently wound down due to his military career, which itself was cut short during the Reign of Terror due to his possible links to 'suspects' such as the Duke of Orléans and Marie Antoinette. While he escaped being sent to the guillotine, he was imprisoned for nearly a year without charge and dismissed from the army. He later found solace in his music and managed to start yet another orchestra with freemasonry connections, *Le Cercle de l'Harmonie*, which gave concerts at the Palais-Royal (the Duke of Orléans' former residence) until a year before he died from a bladder disease. His fame and reputation initially faded after his death, but his music has ultimately survived and has recently started to be revived and performed again: even one of his violin concerti was quoted in Beyoncé's song 'Daughter'. While the 'black Mozart' soubriquet has sometimes been used to describe him, arguably Mozart should really be seen as the 'white Chevalier'!

Saint-Georges' Symphony No. 1 in G major is a pristine example of the early Classical symphony. Composed in the mid-1770s and first published in 1779, it was premiered by the *Concerts des Amateurs* and published as his Opus 11 alongside his second symphony. Written for strings plus pairs of oboes and horns, the music is charming and balanced throughout its three movements. The first violins dominate the musical conversation while the lower strings provide rhythmic momentum, and the winds lend harmonic support and timbral variety. The opening *Allegro* is an easy-to-follow sonata form, beginning with a spritely first theme with punchy dynamic accents and *pizzicato* strings. The second theme is more lyrical, leading to zippy closing material—all within the conventions of the time. The brief development has some diverting forays into various minor keys before the recapitulation. The *Andante* that follows is an elegant ballroom dance in two sections, one that exudes the perfumed atmosphere of the French court and resembles a minuet but in duple time. The final *Allegro assai* scampers in simple binary form and maybe a little too quickly for dancers to follow: some frisson between first and second violins adds interest along the way and exuberant horns drive it all to a conclusion.

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 Witkiewicz began studying conducting at the age of 14 with his piano teacher, Michael Ward. A year later, he was invited to a masterclass with Adrian Leaper and the Orchestra of the Mill, an early sign of the talent that would shape his career. His studies continued with George Hurst and Robert Houlihan at the Canford Summer School of Music, and then with Jonathan Tilbrook while he read music at Nottingham University. During his three years there, Paul was a regular conductor of the Sinfonia, Philharmonia and Wind Band, and in his final year he was also invited to conduct the Leicester University Symphony Orchestra.

After graduating, Paul devoted himself to working with young musicians. From 1998 to 2002 he was Music Director of Sheffield Youth Orchestra, and from 2000 to 2017 he led Trafford Youth Philharmonic Orchestra. His work with young players has been widely recognised: he was awarded the Salvesen Baton by the National Association of Youth Orchestras and won the British Reserve Insurance conducting competition.

Paul has worked with a variety of ensembles across the North West, including Chester Philharmonic, Wilmslow Symphony Orchestra and Westmorland Symphony Orchestra. His closest association, however, is with Bolton Symphony Orchestra, of which he has been a member since 1998. He first conducted the orchestra in 2001 and became its Associate Artistic Director in 2019.

Alongside his orchestral work, Paul is an active choral and operatic conductor. He was Music Director of Standish Choral Society (1996–2000) and of Opera 74 (2008–2012), and currently holds the position of Music Director with both Parkside Colliery Male Voice Choir (2012–present) and Fleetwood and District Choral Society (September 2024–present).

Paul first worked with the Northern Baroque Orchestra in 2011, and he is delighted to return to conduct them for an eleventh time.

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THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

The Northern Baroque Orchestra is over 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 seven autumn/winter concerts as well as spring/summer concerts in 2019, 2023 and 2025.

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

NBO COMMITTEE 2026-2027

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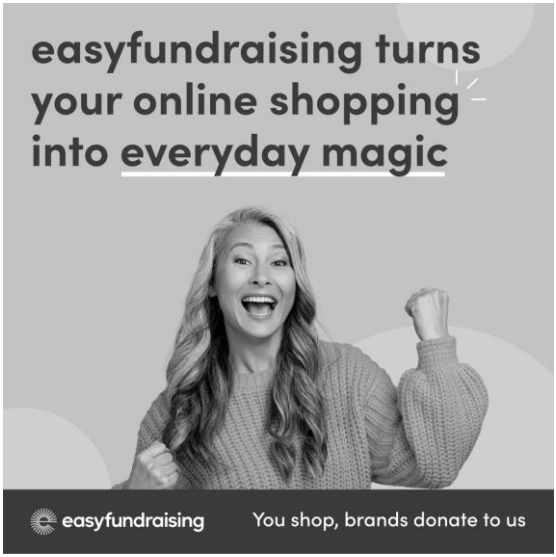
Mr R Chasey	Mr E Williams

David Ratchford and Sue Crosdale

We wish to record the deaths of our patron David Ratchford and our former player and Treasurer Sue Crosdale.

They were both loyal supporters of our orchestra and will be greatly missed.

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