



CONCERT
by the
NORTHERN BAROQUE
ORCHESTRA

Conductor : Paul Witkiewicz
Leader : Maud Hodson
Soloists : Chris Browne
Ian Noonan

Saturday 15th November 2025
at 3:00pm

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

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Conductor : Paul Witkiewicz
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PROGRAMME

- A Vivaldi : Concerto in G major, RV 151
(*‘alla rustica’*)
- F Geminiani : Concerto Grosso Op. 7 No. 1
in D major
- T Albinoni : Concerto Op. 9 No. 11
in B flat major
Soloist – Chris Browne (oboe)

INTERVAL

- B Bartók : Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 68
(arr. A Willner)
- G P Telemann : Overture-Suite in A minor,
TWV 55:a2
Soloist – Ian Noonan (recorder)
- G F Handel : Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 7
in B flat major, HWV 325

PROGRAMME NOTES

Concerto a quattro in G major, RV 151 (*‘alla rustica’*)

A Vivaldi

Presto

Adagio

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.

While the majority of Vivaldi's concerti were intended for one or more soloists with orchestra, he wrote around 45 *concerti a quattro* for four string parts and continuo without soloists. Many 18th century Italian composers tended to use this musical form as a vehicle for inventive musical ideas rather than as a soloistic display, and it is likely to have been a predecessor for both string quartets and symphonies.

This *Concerto alla rustica* was written between mid-1720 and 1730, certainly while Vivaldi was working on his *Contest Between Harmony and Invention*, his Opus 8 concerti that included *The Four Seasons*. Beyond its title, it did not include a descriptive programme, although its movements do suggest rustic scenes. The opening *Presto* movement is a *moto perpetuo* whose headlong rush seemingly depicts peasant revelry, aside from the final bars in the tonic minor that indicate an oncoming storm. The second *Adagio* is slow and contrasting with long chords, while the final *Allegro* is a rustic dance in a Lydian mode (a major scale with a sharpened fourth), a common trait in folk music that Vivaldi might have learned from Telemann in his Polish-style sonatas and concerti.

Concerto Grosso Op. 7 No. 1 in D major

F Geminiani

Andante

L'arte della fuga, à 4 parte reale: Presto

Andantino – Adagio

Allegro moderato

Francisco Geminiani (1687-1762) was born in Lucca and, after early lessons with his father, became a pupil of Corelli and Scarlatti in Rome. He later went on to Naples, where he led the opera orchestra from 1711 and was referred to as '*Il Furibondo*' (the Madman) due to a tendency (not always welcomed!) to play freely expressive rhythms. In 1714, with a growing reputation as a virtuoso violinist, he arrived in London and was introduced by his patron Baron von Kielmansegg into the court of King George I, where he remained for some years, performing, composing and teaching. He spent his final years in Dublin.

His six Opus 7 *concerti grossi* of 1746 were dedicated to the Royal Academy of London, considered by Geminiani to be a discerning audience, which would appreciate that ill-informed praise was 'like jarring Dissonance on the Ear'. These concerti all include a *concertino* group of soloists with an additional viola alongside the usual two violins and 'cello, effectively making them concerti for string quartet.

The opening *Andante* starts the concerto with a slow movement and includes contrasts between the *concertino* and the *ripieno* (the rest of the orchestra). A brisk *Presto* in 'the art of the fugue in 4 real parts' follows, one that was worked out with 'great Study and Application' but ends rather abruptly. A slower *Andantino* movement then follows with an end piece in an even slower *Adagio*, before the concerto ends with a lively *Allegro moderato* compound time gigue-like movement.

D Peak, adapted by M Seaton

Concerto Op. 9 No. 11 in B flat major

T Albinoni

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751) was one of Vivaldi's most distinguished Italian contemporaries, with an unusually long and productive career. Born into a family of Venetian playing-card makers, Albinoni liked to refer to himself as a dilettante – a serious amateur rather than a professional musician – but he ended up helping to establish Venice as a centre of instrumental and operatic music in the early 18th

century. As well as a composer, he was a leading violinist and is said to have run a successful singing school. Albinoni seems rarely to have travelled far, and his relative isolation perhaps contributed to the individuality of his style. In spite of this, his instrumental music enjoyed a vogue in northern Europe through the activity of publishing houses in Amsterdam and London.

His Opus 9 collection of twelve *concerti a cinque* (concerti with five parts) were published in Amsterdam in 1722: four with a solo violin, four with a solo oboe and four with two oboe soloists. This reflects a wider development of music across Europe, given that northern Italy had been the centre of stringed instrument making at the beginning of the 18th century, while France and Germany were the home of wind instruments. As the concerto – also created in northern Italy – became popular north of the Alps, so did oboes take root in Italy, to the point that the oboe concerto was created nearly simultaneously in both Italy and Germany during the 1710s.

The eleventh concerto in this set is the final one for one oboe soloist using a key (B flat major) that Albinoni recognised as bright and assertive, as reflected in the outer *Allegro* movements. Unlike Vivaldi, Albinoni treats the oboe soloist more like an operatic singer rather than as a violinist, biding some time at the beginning of each movement rather than joining in with the *tutti* orchestra and using smaller intervals instead of wide skips between notes. As a contrast, the middle *Adagio* movement uses the relative minor key (G minor) and an even more operatic melodic line for the oboe.

Dominic Nudd (Making Music, December 2017), adapted by M Seaton

INTERVAL

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

Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 68

B Bartók (arr. A Willner)

Jocul cu bâță: Allegro moderato

Brâul: Allegro

Pe loc: Andante

Buciumeana: Moderato

Poarga Românească: Allegro

Mărunțel: L'istesso tempo – 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) collecting folk songs using phonographs and phonomotors for later transcription and study. While he directly arranged some of these folk songs in many of his subsequent compositions, several others incorporated many of their elements and demonstrated an alternative form of modernism to Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique.

This set of dances probably ranks as Bartók's most readily approachable work. They originated in 1915 as piano pieces with the now rather contradictory title *Romanian Folk Dances from Hungary*. In 1917 the composer arranged them for full orchestra and in succeeding years arrangements have been made by various hands for almost every conceivable combination of instruments, including this one by Arthur Willner for string orchestra. They are, in turn, lively, sad, exotic and full of earthy humour.

The first of the set is a *Jocul cu bâță* (Stick Dance) from Mezőszabad (now Voiniceni), performed by one young man, who at some point is required to kick the ceiling of the room! A *Brâul* (Sash Dance) follows and is given a *grazioso* character by Bartók. Next comes *Pe loc* (In One Spot), traditionally danced by a couple literally remaining on one spot with a much darker, Middle Eastern-style melody. The lovely theme of the fourth, *Buciumeana* (Horn Dance), was taken from a Roma violinist at Bucsum (now Bucium). A *Poarga Românească* (Romanian Polka) from Belényes (Beiuş) with alternating even and uneven beats forms the fifth dance. The final movement is a *Mărunţel* (Fast Dance) consisting of two different melodies, one from Belényes and another even faster one from Nyagra (Neagra), both of which were usually accompanied by rhythmic singing and shouting.

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

Ouverture-Suite in A minor, TWV 55:a2

G P Telemann

Ouverture: [Lent – Vite]

Les Plaisirs: Bourrée

Air à l'Italien: Largo – Allegro

Menuets I and II

Réjouissance: [Vite]

Passepieds I and II

Polonaise

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) had originally planned a career in law and had been self-taught as a musician, but by his early twenties he had already written several operas and been appointed organist and later *Kapellmeister* at various courts.

In 1721, he applied for and was offered the position of Cantor at St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig, but turned it down for a similar post with a higher salary in Hamburg. The church then offered the position to Johann Sebastian Bach!

In Hamburg, Telemann was in charge of the music of five churches and in the city schools, conducted at the Opera, founded the *Collegium Musicum* (which gave public concerts) and published the first music journal to appear in Germany. In between all these activities, he composed prolifically – 40 operas, 600 French overtures, 700 church cantatas, 44 Passion settings, etc. – the best of which were highly regarded by his contemporaries, including Bach and Handel. He was able to push chamber music from the Baroque era towards the Rococo era that followed, by dispensing with the continuo bass and writing much more natural and melodic bass lines.

The French term *ouverture* (for which we usually substitute the word *suite*) was used in Germany in the early 18th century to denote a set of short pieces beginning with a substantial French overture: a slow introduction with dotted rhythms, a quick fugal section and a brief return of the slow music at the end. The pieces following the overture include typical Baroque dances (*bourrée*, *menuets*, *passepieds*) and contrasting movements (an Italian air, a *Réjouissance* and a *polonaise*). This suite was written for treble recorder, strings and continuo, with the recorder taking a soloistic role throughout, most often in quieter middle sections of each dance.

CRW for Ilkley Concert Club (Making Music, August 2010), adapted by M Seaton

Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 7 in B flat major, G F Handel HWV 325

Largo
Allegro
Largo
Andante
Hornpipe

In the summer of 1739, George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) had suffered some operatic disasters and decided to turn his hand to oratorio writing. While preparing two major works in oratorio style (his *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* and *L'Allegro ed Il Pensero*) for the upcoming season at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Handel started to compile some instrumental pieces for 'two new concerts for several instruments, never performed before'. In fact, he ended up writing twelve *concerti grossi* for his Opus 6 in little more than a month – each taking only around two days to compose –

specifically for performance between the acts of these oratorios.

In the same year Handel managed to negotiate with his publisher, John Walsh, for a royal privilege, allowing works to be published only as authorised by the composer. These ‘Grand Concertos’ – a title given by Handel more to emphasise the large scale of the works – contain various new musical elements evolved to satisfy the expectations of his audiences, including greater dynamic contrasts and new harmonic boldness.

The seventh concerto in this set is rather unusual in that there are no truly solo parts for the usual *concertino* of two violins and ’cello: this work is more akin to a *concerto a quattro* (similar to Vivaldi’s *Concerto alla rustica* earlier) and is intended for the full orchestra. Arnold Schoenberg later used this concerto as the basis for his ‘freely composed’ *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra*, making considerably more distinction between the four soloists and *tutti* orchestra.

Handel starts this work with a 10 bar long *Grave*, before launching into an *Allegro* fugal movement with a subject based on a single note, something only a composer of Handel’s stature would have dared to attempt. The central expressive *Largo* in G minor and triple time, reminiscent of the style of Handel’s contemporary J S Bach, is harmonically complex with a chromatic theme and closely woven four-part writing. The work then closes with a steady *Andante* with recurring *ritornello* themes, followed by a lively Hornpipe replete with unexpected syncopation.

M Seaton

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

Proud members of



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 tenth time.

MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

1st Violins

Maud Hodson
Julie Proctor
Fiona Liddy

2nd Violins

Peter Farnbank
Christopher Peach
Brigitte Barnes

Violas

Michael Seaton
Michael Fitzpatrick

'Cellos

Sophia Love
Carolyn Rhind
Jeremy Peach
Brian Milligan

Bass

Elizabeth Barraclough

Harpsichord

Marek Bakota

NEXT NBO CONCERT

Saturday 13th June 2026

St Aidan's Church, Manchester Road,
Rochdale

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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 and a summer concert in 2025.

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

NBO COMMITTEE 2025-2026

Honorary President	Sue Verity
Chair	Michael Seaton
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HONORARY LIFE PATRONS

Mr R Chasey	Mr E Williams
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Tribute to Peter Collier

We wish to record our thanks to Peter Collier, who unfortunately is no longer able to play with us.

His first concert as harpsichordist with the NBO was in June 2015, and he has played in all of our concerts since then.

Not only has he been a stalwart at the harpsichord, but he also arranged for a number of his friends from the Telemann Baroque Ensemble to join us as soloists, thus widening our repertoire.

We really appreciated his extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for Baroque music which he shared with us, and also his guidance on which works would be suitable for us to play.

We will definitely miss him.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

WOULD YOU CONSIDER BECOMING A PATRON OF THE ORCHESTRA?

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**