

FRI 6 MAR 2026 | 7.30PM

RNCM Symphony Orchestra:
Scheherazade
Stories to Tell the King



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FRI 26 JUN 2026 | 7.30PM

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 6 RNCM Symphony Orchestra

The Bridgewater Hall

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FRI 6 MAR 2026 | 7.30PM

RNCM Concert Hall

RNCM Symphony Orchestra: Scheherazade Stories to Tell the King

Programme

Antonín Dvořák The Noon Witch *

Bernd Alois Zimmermann Marchensuite (Fairy Tale Suite)

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov Scheherazade Op 35

Christoph Altstaedt, Jacobus de Jager * *conductor*

Louise Wallwein *poet*

RNCM Symphony Orchestra

PART OF LEGENDS & LORE

Welcome to the RNCM and our unique Concert Hall. We've hosted everyone here, from the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Manchester Collective to Gruff Rhys and Will Young, and whether you've joined us before or you're new here, we'd like to invite you to settle in for a wonderful evening of live music.

Tonight, we're gathered for a performance from the RNCM Symphony Orchestra that includes Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's much-loved suite. A collaboration between RNCM students and award-winning Manchester poet Louise Wallwein, this unique adaptation of Scheherazade Op 35 shifts the focus of the story away from the actions of the embittered King to give agency to the female victims of his merciless vengeance.

The RNCM Symphony Orchestra is one of the College's flagship ensembles, formed in 1973 with the opening of our world-class conservatoire and central to both our public performance programme and our training mission as we support more than 950 students to become the musicians of the future.

Symphony orchestras are rooted in Western classical music, and those once small court ensembles have grown into the large orchestras of today boasting four families of instruments: strings, brass, woodwind, and percussion. As well as regular appearances in this space, the RNCM Symphony Orchestra has also performed at The Bridgewater Hall and British Museum, and members have trained alongside professional musicians from the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, and the Hallé.

Since its foundation, the RNCM Symphony Orchestra has performed a vast repertoire, blending historical masterpieces with bold contemporary composition in seamless and exciting ways. Traditionally, these programmes explore the evolving lineage of orchestral music, inviting audiences to enjoy the diverse soundscape and dialogue between past and present, as well as the silences between the movements, before sharing in applause at the end of the final piece.

We hope you enjoy the concert, and that we have the pleasure of welcoming you back in the weeks and months ahead.



Louise Wallwein MBE is a multiple award-winning poet, playwright, and performer from Manchester whose companion plays, *Melting Ice* (1998) and *Glue* (2016), have earned her international acclaim for their candid accounts of life in the care system and Louise's successful search for her birth mother.

This season, she joins the RNCM as the inaugural Poet-in-Residence as part of the College's *Legends and Lore* theme, a year-long celebration of storytelling through music. Louise has been working alongside students to develop an original spoken word commission with the RNCM Symphony Orchestra, inspired by the theme of *Legends and Lore* and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* suite based on the famous folktales *One Thousand and One Nights* (aka *The Arabian Nights*).

Louise says:

This piece reimagines Scheherazade in contemporary Manchester, placing memory and voice at its centre. Rimsky-Korsakov's score is often associated with spectacle and oriental fantasy, but at its heart the work is

about a woman who survives by speaking. I wanted to return to that essential act: storytelling as resistance. I did not know how or where to begin until I led a series of workshops with the orchestra. I told the original story to these extraordinary musicians and asked what it made them think and feel. I asked them about Manchester from their point of view.

One answer shifted the room. A woman said, '*We never hear about the women who were killed by the King before Scheherazade. We do not even know their names.*' That was the spark.

The piece opens not with the King, but with the women who are absent. A constellation of names forms the moral foundation of the work. Each woman becomes a star, not romanticised, but functional. They offer bearings, warning signs, seasons, direction. The idea is simple: you cannot build a kingdom on forgetting. Before Scheherazade begins her tale, she remembers what is at stake. Memory becomes preparation.

From there, the setting shifts to Manchester at night. The city

transforms into a mythic landscape. Canals become seas, buses become ships, towers become constellations. The Kalender Prince is reimagined as a man who has crossed three seas and now rides the night bus endlessly because he has nowhere to sleep. His encounter with a bee, a mischievous Mancunian genie, introduces humour and tenderness. The bee shrinks him and carries him across the night skyline, allowing him to see the city not as a trap, but as something alive and unfinished. The wish he makes is modest: somewhere to sleep. The magic is equally modest. It is enough.

The final section returns to the framing voice. On the thousand and first night, something has shifted. The King's power is not overturned through spectacle but through listening. Stories do not defeat him; they alter what power looks like. The refrain from the opening returns, each one a story, each one a wish, but now it speaks of voices heard rather than erased.

This is not a retelling of *One Thousand and One Nights*, but a reflection on why the story persists. In Manchester,

as in any city, survival often depends on who gets to speak and who is heard. The piece suggests that once a voice is properly heard, it cannot be returned to silence. It stays. And from that, something new becomes possible.

**CHRISTOPH ALTSTAEDT
(CONDUCTOR)**

Christoph Altstaedt made his debut at the 2025 Bregenz Festival conducting Vienna Symphony Orchestra in Philipp Stölzl's production of Weber's *Der Freischütz* at the Seebühne Bregenz. Other recent highlights include performances of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* at Cologne Opera (new staging by Benjamin Lazar), featuring Gürzenich Orchester. Last season, Altstaedt returned to Vienna State Opera to conduct its staged production of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* symphony. This follows his superb debut there in 2023 conducting Haydn's *Die Jahreszeiten* which featured choreography by Martin Schlöpfer, with whom Altstaedt has developed a strong partnership since they first worked together during his tenure as Kapellmeister at Deutsche Oper am Rhein.

Altstaedt remains a very popular guest at Vienna Volksoper, to where he returns this season to conduct its production of *Marie Antoinette* (music by Haydn, Gluck, Lully). In recent seasons, he has also conducted Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, as well as the premiere and revival runs of *The Moon Wears a White Shirt* (music by Schnittke, Ligeti, and Locatelli). Recent and future symphonic highlights include Gürzenich Orchester, Munich Radio Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-

Orchester Berlin, Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra, George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra, Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, Dortmund Philharmonic, Ulster Orchestra, and Cologne's WDR Funkhausorchester.

Altstaedt has conducted gala concerts with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, as well as multiple programmes with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra - including London subscription concerts, regional tours, and its annual Handel's *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall. Highly regarded for his stylistic interpretations of classical repertoire, Altstaedt conducted the Academy of Ancient Music's European tour with repertoire including Beethoven and Friedrich Witt, featuring soprano Chen Reiss. His extensive operatic experience includes productions at Finnish National Opera (*Così fan tutte*), Glyndebourne on Tour (*La Traviata*, and David McVicar's production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Opera North (*Hansel and Gretel, Don Giovanni*), Theater Basel (*Die Zauberflöte*), and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Savonlinna Opera Festival and Opera Zürich.

Altstaedt is also very respected for his inspiring work with young musicians. He made a hugely successful debut with the Australian Youth Orchestra, touring a programme inspired by 'the grotesque' featuring Ligeti's *Mysteries of the Macabre* and HK Gruber's *Frankenstein*. Other significant

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**Janáček:
The Cunning
Little Vixen**

Matinee **3pm**
Evening **7.30pm**

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projects include leading the National Youth Orchestra of Germany's recording and tour, which included concerts at both Cologne and Berlin Philharmonie halls – the latter of which was recorded for Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall.

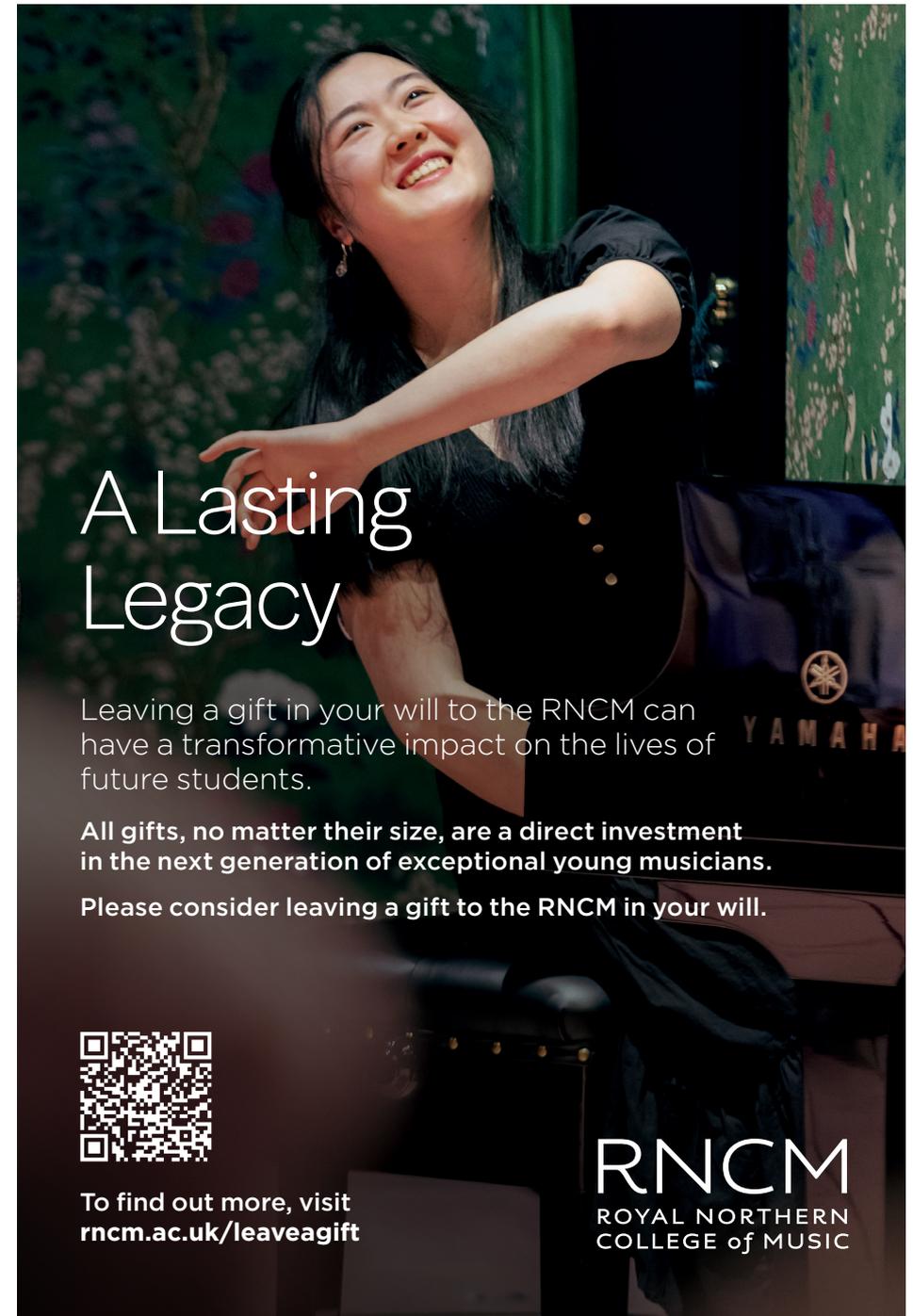
With the Junge Norddeutsche Philharmonie, Altstaedt led groundbreaking experimental projects *#sacrelektro* and *#etruschka* which combined Stravinsky's symphonic music with live sounds from electronic artists. The success of this innovative concert format resulted in a tour of *#etruschka* to the Berlin Konzerthaus and the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie. Another notable achievement was with the Junges Klangforum Mitte Europa (2004-2011), an orchestra which Altstaedt founded and directed, whose work won numerous prestigious awards, such as the Praemium Imperiale for the arts and the Marion Dönhoff Prize for International Reconciliation and Understanding.

Altstaedt's unwavering commitment to bringing classical music to wider audiences has led him to explore new avenues alongside his conventional engagements: for Arte and the Ufa Filmnächte Berlin, he recorded film music for *Carmen* by Ernst Lubitsch; with Ensemble Resonanz, he has presented Faust by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau at the Salzburg Festival; and, most recently, *The Merry Widow* by Erich von Stroheim at Hamburg Elbphilharmonie and Vienna Konzerthaus.

JACOBUS DE JAGER (CONDUCTOR)

South African conductor and pianist Jacobus de Jager is the 2025/26 recipient of the Mills Williams Junior Fellowship in Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music. A graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he studied under Martyn Brabbins and won the Conducting Prize, he was the winner of the fifth South African Conductors' Competition and a two-time semi-finalist in the Herbert von Karajan Young Conductors Award in Salzburg. He has worked with leading orchestras, including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Orchestre national de Metz Grand Est, and Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra.

De Jager recently conducted Manchester Camerata, the RNCM Symphony Orchestra, a performance of Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*. As the 2025/2026 season continues, he will also assist on projects with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. As Junior Fellow, he is mentored by Mark Heron, Clark Rundell, and Nicolás Pasquet. De Jager is currently a semi-finalist in the Concours de Genève Conducting Competition, taking place in November 2026 with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Ensemble Contrechamps, and the Orchestre de Chambre de Genève.



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LOUISE WALLWEIN (POET)

A renowned and award-winning poet, playwright, and performer from Manchester, Louise Wallwein has made a name for herself as an explosive artist who detonates her audiences' imaginations.

Her plays have been broadcast by BBC Radio Drama North, and produced by theatre and production companies Red Ladder, National Theatre Wales, Z-Arts, Contact, Arena Theatre Melbourne, HOME Push Festival, Domestic II, Royal Exchange, Greenwich and Docklands Festival, Walk The Plank, Take Back Theatre, Manchester Camerata, Absolutely Cultured, and Battersea Arts Centre.

She has performed at many festivals, including BBC Contains Strong Language, Hay Festival, Edinburgh Fringe, Hull 17, Outburst Queer Arts Festival Belfast, and Melbourne International Book Festival.

Louise has appeared as a guest contributor on programmes such as Front Row, The Verb, Radio 3, Radio 4, and Reform Radio. Louise has previously been Poet-in-Residence of Queensland, Australia 2006 and Writer-in-Residence at the Centre for Creative Writing and Oral Culture, Winnipeg, Canada.

Louise was brought up in 13 different children's homes and wrote her first play at the age of 17. Her career took

off in 1998 when she performed an award-winning one-woman show on the wing of a World War II Shackleton reconnaissance aircraft. Additionally, her various experiences as a cleaner, club promoter, dancer at the Hacienda, and activist for organisations such as anti-Clause 28 and Viraj Mendis defence campaign, have undoubtedly shaped her.

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Zoë Beyers guest leader
(Scheherazade only)
Georgina Bloomfield
(leader for Zimmermann
and Dvořák)
Amit Ilan Segev
Isobel Barber
Olivia Trezise
Angus Findlow
Joanne Teo
Daniel Patten
Mae Baker-Tuxworth
Dana Rybiantseva
David Harris
Weiran Zhang
Chloe Wood
Annie Meaden
Tori Li
Zoe Hennessy

SECOND VIOLINS

Rachel Stonham
Joshua Gill
Emily Ampt
Molly Barber
Charlotte Sweeney
Fabio Gonzales Zavala
Cameron Jackson
Orin Jacob Syer
Gabby Kohler
Eleanor Prout
Jayda Cheng
Mary Ann Coogan
Siyang Tang
Ellie Shek

VIOLAS

Michaela Jones
Emily O'Dell
Eadaoin Drumgoole
Utor Wong
Susie He
Jina Sou
Rory Africa
Xavier Williams
Celeste Meisel

Di Wu
Yibo Chen

CELLOS

Jasmine Blackshaw-
Britton
Gabriela Costa Peres
Fanyu Huang
Yujin Lee
Lola Garcia Marquez
Kexuan Zhao
Isabella Farleigh
Tongxin Wang
Ruoyu Yang

BASSES

Zoe Chen
André Chilio
Eric Harris
Joana Moura
Xinran Li
Marcelo Nunes Rodrigues

PICCOLO

Kaoruko Takehara (fl)

FLUTES

Natalie Ngai
Eleanor Brockett (picc)

OBOES

Anna Turner
Theo Chapple
Imogen Morris (cor)

CLARINETS

Ebba Eriksson
Nathan Kenworthy
Yuting Cao (bass)

ALTO SAXOPHONES

Rachael Green
Nick Rushworth

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Aaron Lo

BASSOONS

Connor Huss
Rob Kearley
Leonardo Bizzotto
(contra)

HORNS

Leo Penny
Sam Froggatt
Toby Johnson-Jones
Sami Pang
Jason Cheung

TRUMPETS

Lewis Barton
Edmund Tyler
Craig Shaw

TROMBONES

Nathan Joseph
Emily Nicolas
Gwen Howe

TUBA

Charlie Cresswell

TIMPANI

Michael McKeague

PERCUSSION

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Isobelle Britch

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PIANO

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Cici Shi

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To find out how you can support an individual student through a scholarship or bursary, contact **Eve Riley**, Head of Philanthropy at eve.riley@rncm.ac.uk

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