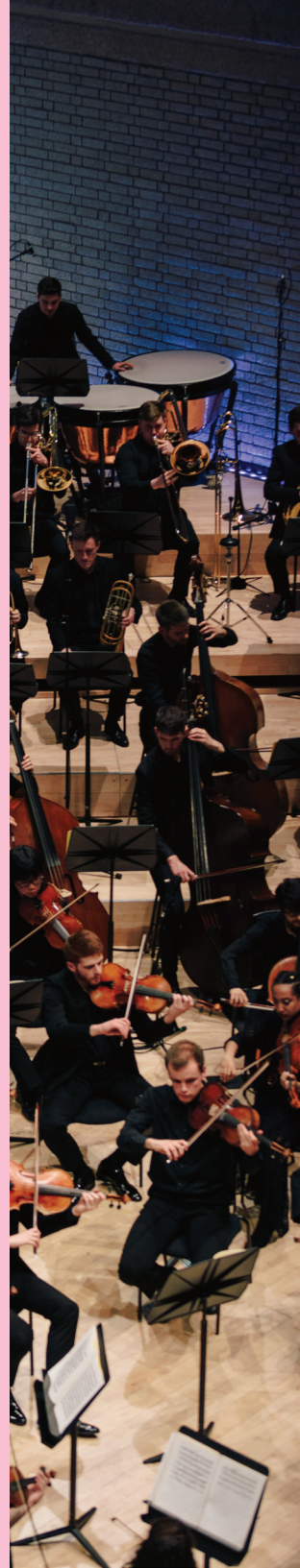


RNCM50 Birthday Celebration

THU 22 JUN

2023



Thu 22 Jun // 6.30pm

RNCM50 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

The RNCM's 50th anniversary is kindly supported by



The William and Frances Dobie
Charitable Foundation



PF Charitable Trust

6.30pm - 7.15pm
RNCM Concert Hall
RNCM STRING ORCHESTRA AND CHAMBER CHOIR

Caroline Pether *strings director*
Stuart Overington *choir director*

Interval 1

*Please join us on the concourses for celebratory cake and drinks.
The Principal will give a speech at 7.40pm*

8pm - 9pm
RNCM Concert Hall
RNCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Alpesh Chauhan, Agata Zajac *conductors*
Alexandra Dariescu *piano*
Soraya Mafi *soprano*

Interval 2

9.30pm - 10.15pm
RNCM Theatre
RNCM SESSION ORCHESTRA

Andy Stott *director*

Thanks to our drinks sponsors for supporting this evening.

WELCOME FROM THE PRINCIPAL

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to the RNCM for what promises to be a true highlight of our 50th anniversary year.

Since September 2022 we have marked this special milestone with a wonderful programme of collaborative projects and concerts featuring students, alumni and professional partners, as well as some inspirational community activity. We have enjoyed every minute of this fantastic opportunity to focus not only on our incredible journey to date, but the exciting future that lies ahead.

Tonight's event continues this glorious celebration with three innovative performances that pay tribute to the many ways our thoughts, ideas, encounters, and emotions can be expressed through live music. The first promises to immerse you in a uniquely curated experience that breaks the traditional barriers of the concert hall, incorporating movement, improvisation, new music and old, with alumni and students playing side-by-side. The second brings a nod to our roots, showcasing the sheer power and excitement that only a symphony orchestra can deliver, and the third welcomes an electrifying appearance by our Session Orchestra, taking us back to 1973 with a setlist of some of the year's most iconic tunes.

I am extremely proud to be Principal of today's RNCM: a world-leading conservatoire that reaches far beyond our walls to impact the industry on a global scale.

Born from collaboration, our organisation is the product of two pioneering musical institutions and the many people who have played a part in our history to date. Since opening our doors 50 years ago, we have developed the traditions of conservatoire training and transformed them into a vibrant and forward-thinking laboratory, fuelling the aspirations of young musicians, composers, conductors, educators, and entrepreneurs from all over the world.

Our audience members are an integral part of what makes us so special, and I am thrilled that you are able to join us this evening. I hope that your time with us enriches your love of the RNCM and, like me, leaves you excited to see where our next chapter takes us.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the alumni guest artists who have joined us today. I am proud of the amazing things they are all achieving in their careers and look forward to seeing what their future holds. I would also like to thank our official sponsors who have generously supported us throughout our 50th year.

All that remains is for me to wish you all a wonderful evening; and as we embark on our next 50 years, I hope to see you at the RNCM again soon.

Professor Linda Merrick CBE
Principal

6.30pm - 7.15pm
RNCM Concert Hall
RNCM STRING ORCHESTRA
AND CHAMBER CHOIR

Trad arr Katy Lavinia Cooper Cattle Call

-

Johannes Rusten arr Danish String Quartet O Fredrik, O Fredrik*

Edvard Grieg Holberg Suite Op 40

Praeludium; Sarabande; Gavotte

Shruthi Rajasekar Heart of Earth^

Trad arr Lucy Hale Four Folk Tunes*

Shruthi Rajasekar Bahaari Baarish^

Trad arr Danish String Quartet Jässpodspolska*

Shruthi Rajasekar To Manc, with Love^

Edvard Grieg Holberg Suite Op 40

Rigaudon

Trad arr Katy Lavinia Cooper The Shepherd's Wife

* transcribed for string orchestra by Alistair Vennart

^ RNCM50 commission, world première

Caroline Pether *director, violin*

Stuart Overington *conductor*

Guest section leaders:

Lily Whitehurst *violin*

Alex Mitchell *viola*

Stephanie Tress *cello*

Please note this performance will be performed all the way through without a break.

RNCM STRING ORCHESTRA AND CHAMBER CHOIR

Our first performance of this very special celebratory evening draws on folk music traditions from across the world. The RNCM in 2023 is a thriving, inclusive, international community and it felt important that the music in tonight's celebration should represent something of our global identity in our 50th year and recognise the diverse musical traditions that our students bring with them from wherever they call home.

This performance also celebrates our performing and composing alumni. It has been an absolute pleasure working with Caroline Pether (Leader of Manchester Camerata, RNCM 2008 - 2014) and Stuart Overington (RNCM Director of Choirs, RNCM 2006 - 2015) to curate this programme. Having known both Caroline and Stuart as students, it's a privilege to see them thrive in their musical leadership roles here in Manchester, and their creativity and openness in developing this programme has been a joy in the lead up to tonight's performance.

We welcome Lily Whitehurst (Sub-Principal BBC Philharmonic, RNCM 2013 - 2019), Alex Mitchell (Principal Viola Manchester Camerata, RNCM 2010 - 2017) and Stephanie Tress (Solem Quartet, RNCM 2011 - 2014) as our guest leaders, and included in tonight's programme are three short works for choir, newly composed for our anniversary by Shruthi Rajasekar (composer, RNCM 2019 - 2020), and Four Folk Tunes by Lucy Hale (composer, RNCM 2013 - 2019) who sadly died in January 2021, aged 26.

The music and texts in tonight's performance originate from Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, India, the US and, yes... Manchester!

O Fredrik, O Fredrik and ***Jässpodspolska*** are tunes from the Danish String Quartet's *Wood Works* album of Nordic folk music, recorded during a week in the Danish countryside in 2013. *O Fredrik, O Fredrik* is a contemporary folk work written by the Norwegian composer Johannes Rusten, while *Jässpodspolska* is a polska from Dalarna in Sweden. We're grateful to Ali Vennart (Viola, Manchester Camerata, RNCM 2011 - 2014) for transcribing these little gems of pieces.

Edvard Grieg's ***Holberg Suite Op 40***, or as originally titled *From the time of Holberg: Suite in the olden style*, is a classic of the string orchestra repertoire, which looks back to the roots of French Baroque dance and incorporates characteristics of Norwegian folk music. Tonight we perform four of the complete set of five movements.

I am indebted to Shruthi Rajasekar for writing three new short works for choir (with the strings joining in from time to time!) which receive their first performances this evening. These RNCM 50th Anniversary commissions draw together music and text from three significant places in Shruthi's own life, as she describes:

HEART OF EARTH

Heart of Earth sets the poetry of Laura Purdie

RNCM STRING ORCHESTRA AND CHAMBER CHOIR

Salas from my home state, Minnesota. The localness was immediately appealing: her farmers market is my farmers market, after all. But I believe the beautiful imagery evoked here extends beyond my home to places that are special to all of you on this earth. To capture this sonically, I turned to the clapping games from my childhood (and perhaps yours, too). Like children, our earth is resilient, generous, and content when in equilibrium. These might seem, to quote Laura, like 'natural talents' – but we adults would do well to learn these lessons from the earth, and from our children.

BAHAARI BAARISH

The title of this rhythmic celebration of springtime – *Bahaari Baarish* – is itself twofold, meaning 'spring rains' as well as 'downpour of Bahaar', the Hindustani raag. In this ode to Raag Bahaar, I have drawn from the melodic and rhythmic grammar of both traditions of Indian classical music, Hindustani and Carnatic (the latter, my first language of music), to create a tribute that is uniquely choral.

TO MANC, WITH LOVE

Inspired by Michael Symmons Roberts' moving poem *Great Northern Diver*, which is quoted in full in this composition, *To Manc, with Love* is indeed a love letter to the city of Manchester, UK, to its vibrant arts and cultural life, and to the unique set of universities and conservatoires on Manchester's Oxford Road. The piece draws from my own treasured time at RNCM (and in the city) but ultimately gives the creative reins to the performers – the

students for whom it has been written. To Manchester, the city of worker bees. With love, Shruthi.

Lucy Hale is a composer whose music and impact will live long at the RNCM and far beyond. ***Four Folk Tunes***, a beautiful intertwining of four Irish folk songs, was included in a focus of Lucy's music in January 2022 in celebration of her life. Lucy wrote this piece for string quartet, and thanks to Ali Vennart again for his transcription for string orchestra for tonight's performance.

The Scottish composer Katy Lavinia Cooper arranged a number of Scottish songs. Her adaptation of ***Cattle Call*** (c 1870) begins tonight's performance performed outside the Concert Hall, and her adaptation of the Robert Burns song ***The Shepherd's Wife*** (1792) closes the programme.

I do hope you enjoy this first performance in tonight's 50th Birthday Celebration. In Shruthi's setting of Michael Symmons Roberts' *Great Northern Diver*, Its final line says: 'so what keeps this city alive is you' – in Shruthi's mind, and in mine, this speaks to our appreciation of the RNCM's role in Manchester, to its students, its staff, and its supporters.

Thank you for joining us today and helping us to play our part in keeping this city alive with music – here's to the next 50 years!

Richard Collins
Head of Programming

BIOGRAPHIES



CAROLINE PETHER

strings director, violin

Caroline is the Leader of Manchester Camerata, often assuming the role of soloist and/or director with the orchestra. Chamber music sensibilities are at the heart of Caroline's music-making; she enjoys a regular duo partnership with Camerata's Principal Cellist, Hannah Roberts, and guest leads chamber music projects and chamber orchestras across the UK. Caroline was also the Leader of Welsh chamber orchestra Sinfonia Cymru from 2016 until 2021. From 2010 to 2019 Caroline was the first violinist of the Zelkova Quartet, winners of the 2017 St Martin's Chamber Music Competition and the 2014 Royal Overseas League Elias Fawcett Award for Outstanding Chamber Ensemble. Through her work with chamber orchestras and her quartet, Caroline has been fortunate to study and work closely with many incredible musicians, including Gábor Takács-Nagy, Ferenc Rados, Hatto Beyerle and Peter Cropper.

Caroline is passionate about enthusing and educating the next generation of musicians in her work as both a violin tutor at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and as a guest elsewhere, delivering masterclasses and workshops. She began her studies at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's esteemed Young Strings Project and later studied at Chetham's School of Music and the RNCM.

BIOGRAPHIES



STUART OVERINGTON

choir director

Stuart Overington is an accomplished conductor and vocal animator working across the UK. Having trained as a singer and conductor at the RNCM he is known for his engaging, informative and inclusive style and works with a wide and diverse range of ensembles.

In 2016 Stuart returned to the College to take on the RNCM Chamber Choir and Symphony Chorus. Since then, both ensembles have continued to develop in quality and performance opportunities. Externally, he has established and directed several junior, youth and community choirs across the country. He is currently the director of the Hallé Orchestra's Youth Choirs, Chetham's School of Music Chamber Choir and one of the National Children's Choir of Great Britain ensembles as well as regularly running community choir workshops and events across the country.

Stuart's diversity as a conductor is shown in his output. Projects include concerts with John Rutter, Stephen Bell, Sir Mark Elder, David Hill and Andrew Greenwood as well many performances for TV and radio with bands such as Snow Patrol, C Duncan and Elbow. Additional projects include *St Matthew Passion* with Jonathan Peter Kenny and English Touring Opera, several concerts with the RNCM Chamber Choir and Edvard Grieg Kor across the UK and Norway, and numerous concerts with the Hallé Orchestra including Debussy's Nocturnes with Sir Mark Elder.

Alongside his choral work, Stuart regularly works on music education projects for various companies including Royal Opera House, Opera North and the Voices Foundation. He is increasingly being recognised as a leader in the field of singing with children and young people.

BIOGRAPHIES



LILY WHITEHURST

violin

Welsh violinist Lily Whitehurst graduated from the RNCM in 2019, where she studied with Yossi Zivoni. She currently lives in Manchester, where she is Sub-Principal 2nd Violin with the BBC Philharmonic.

Lily started playing with the BBC Philharmonic as a student in 2015 as part of the RNCM's Professional Experience Scheme. She then joined the orchestra part-time in 2018 as a Tutti 2nd Violin during her final year of study.

Lily also enjoys a varied freelance career playing with ensembles such as Manchester Camerata, the Hallé, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, CBSO and Manchester Collective.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, Lily recorded Ben-Haim's Sonata for solo violin which was broadcast on BBC Radio 3. She also threw herself into the BBC's exciting online education programme, working with schools across the Northwest. She found a love for teaching and now has a violin class at the University of Manchester.

Lily currently plays on a Mark Robinson Violin kindly on loan from the Harrison-Frank Family Foundation.

BIOGRAPHIES



ALEX MITCHELL

viola

Alex Mitchell holds the position of Principal Viola with Manchester Camerata and is a viola teacher at the RNCM. He was awarded a special prize at the 2015 Tokyo International Viola Competition, and in 2012, third prize at the Beethoven International Competition in Hradek.

During his seven years at the RNCM, Alex learned with various tutors, including Petr Prause, Nobuko Imai, Garth Knox, Gina McCormack, Wenzhou Li and Asdis Valdimarsdottir. Whilst there he won numerous awards, such as the Helen Porthouse Paganini Prize and the Concerto Competition, the result of which brought a performance of Martinu's Viola Concerto with conductor Clark Rundell and the RNCM Symphony Orchestra.

Chamber music has also been a big part of Alex's life and he was a member of the Zelkova String Quartet until 2019. He also works with period instrument groups, and plays mainly with Manchester Baroque.

BIOGRAPHIES



STEPHANIE TRESS

cello

Stephanie, a founding member of the Solem Quartet, is a leading chamber musician and champion of contemporary music. Steph is also a member of the experimental group House of Bedlam and has performed with them at Kettle's Yard and various festivals around the UK, including biannual Britten Pears Young Artist courses at Aldeburgh. She often joins other chamber ensembles as a guest, such as the Jess Gillam Ensemble, Manchester Collective, SE26 Ensemble, United Strings of Europe, 12 Ensemble, London Chamber Orchestra and London Contemporary Orchestra.

A particular recent highlight was a performance of Michael Gordon's *Industry* for solo cello and live electronics at Hidden Notes Festival with Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood. Steph also performed this work at London's Purcell Room, and separately for a BBC Radio 3 live broadcast.

Steph frequently performs with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, was Principal Cello of Sinfonia Cymru, and is currently a regular Guest Principal with Manchester Camerata. Steph also enjoys session work for TV and film and has played on several major film soundtracks as well as live on BBC Children in Need.

Steph comes from Kingston-upon-Thames and studied in Bremen, Germany, and then in Manchester. She graduated from the Joint Course at Manchester University and the Royal Northern College of Music in 2014 with distinction, winning a number of awards and competitions including the Sir John Barbarolli Memorial Prize for Cello.

RNCM STRING ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLINS

Caroline Pether*
Dylan Edge
Zinan Wang
Nathan Fenwick
Katie Jankinson
Audrey Doyle
Shanglin Zhan
Alessandro Pacik

SECOND VIOLINS

Lily Whitehurst*
Julia Sandros-Alper
Christopher Karwacinski
Fionnghuala Drumgoole
Veronika Lubert
Caterina Bordoni
Lemoni Frary

VIOLAS

Alex Mitchell*
India Blackshaw-Britton
Tom Broadbent
Samuel Kane

CELLOS

Stephanie Tress*
Clara Hope Simpson
Fangning Dong
Sabrina Giovanardi

BASSES

Joana Moura
Bryn Davies

**RNCM Alumni*

RNCM CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANOS/MEZZOS

Verona-India Braich
Eve Codman
Taylor London
Ruby Magee
Niamh O'Connor
Phoebe Palmer
Rosa Sparks
Emily Stewart
Kelsey Thomas
Clementine Thompson

ALTOS/MEZZOS

Siân Davies
Ruby Donnelly
Eibhlín Eddy
Olivia Hamblyn
Midia Kalou
Louise Wood

TENORS

Alex Bradford
Ben Copsey
Hakeem Henderson
Alex Kirkland
Jacob Parker
Aaron Peters

BASSES

Matthew Budd
George Elson
Lewis Menzies
Harrison Morton-Deaville
Alex Peart
Sam Weakley

*All lists are correct at the time of printing and are
subject to change without notice.*

8pm - 9pm

RNCM Concert Hall

RNCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Thomas Adès Three-piece Suite from *Powder Her Face*

1. *Overture*

2. *Waltz*

3. *Finale*

Alpesh Chauhan *conductor*

Florence Price Andantino-Allegretto from *Piano Concerto in One Movement*

Agata Zajac *conductor*

Alexandra Dariescu *piano*

Tonight, Alexandra Dariescu plays the new Yamaha CFX Concert Grand in association with Yamaha Music Europe.

Leonard Bernstein Glitter and Be Gay from *Candide*

Agata Zajac *conductor*

Soraya Mafi *soprano*

Ottorino Respighi Roman Festivals

1. *Circus Games*

2. *The Jubilee*

3. *The October Festival*

4. *The Epiphany*

Alpesh Chauhan *conductor*

RNCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

THOMAS ADÈS Three-piece Suite
from *Powder Her Face* (Suite No 1)

1. *Overture*
2. *Waltz*
3. *Finale*

Written in 1995 with a libretto by Philip Hensher, *Powder Her Face* is Thomas Adès' (b 1971) first opera. About 100 minutes in length and in two acts, it was originally commissioned by the Almeida Opera (of London's Almeida Theatre) for performance at the Cheltenham Music Festival and eventually made into a film by Channel 4, shown on Christmas Day 1999.

The full opera follows the various real-life scandalous exploits of Margaret Campbell, the 'Dirty Duchess' of Argyll, as she navigated her divorce in 1963. The score incorporates dissonance and unconventional harmonies, reflecting the fractured nature of Margaret's life and the crumbling façade of her aristocratic world. Adès' influences are fairly apparent throughout this work, including Berg (and especially one of his operas, *Lulu*), Stravinsky, Britten, and even Kurt Weill, with elements of melodious 1930s-style popular music.

At its core, *Powder Her Face* explores themes of power, identity, and public scrutiny. Margaret's story serves as a cautionary tale, depicting the consequences of unchecked desires and societal expectations. The opera delves into the objectification of women, the

erosion of privacy in the public eye, and the complexities of human relationships.

The *Three-piece Suite* dates from 2007, with the first performance taking place in June at the Aldeburgh Festival with Adès conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. Originally written for a small pit ensemble, this suite expands three of the instrumental movements for full symphony orchestra.

'This piece is surreal, funny, mad and wonderful all in equal parts and I love bringing it to new audiences!'

Alpesh Chauhan

'The RNCM has changed my life and I couldn't be more grateful and happy to return to a place I call home and celebrate the 50th anniversary together with my musical family.'

FLORENCE PRICE Andantino-Allegretto
from *Piano Concerto in One Movement*

Florence Price (1887-1953) was the first female African-American composer to earn international reputation. Showing bright musical potential from a young age, she first performed at the age of four and published original works at 11, before eventually graduating from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston in 1906.

Price's style is essentially conservative late-Romantic, most akin to Rachmaninov or Mahler but highly individualistic notwithstanding, being oft-imbued with airs of popular music of the time and her African-American heritage.

The wonderfully sophisticated *Piano Concerto in One Movement* was first performed in 1934 with Price herself the soloist. Sadly, the original orchestration has not survived; it has been reconstructed by composer Trevor Weston. The concerto, ironically, is essentially in three movements which just so happen to be unbroken, following a developing practise of the time influenced by the likes of Liszt, Mendelssohn and Rachmaninov. Tonight Alexandra has selected the sensitive and nostalgic second movement.

*'I have always adored
Leonard Bernstein...
I hope everyone enjoys
the irony of the piece,
the witty-words, the
toe-tapping rhythms
and that ultimately,
it brings a smile to
peoples' faces!'*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN *Glitter and Be Gay*
from *Candide*

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990), most famous for *West Side Story*, a musical theatre retelling of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, was asked in 1956 to write some incidental music for Lillian Hellman's play *Candide*, based on the 1759 novella by Voltaire (a picaresque satire following the eponymous character blundering between misadventures). He loved the material so much, however, that he insisted the pair develop it into an operetta, with Hellman as librettist, though since 1974, it has generally been performed with a newer book by Hugh Wheeler, which is truer to Voltaire's work.

Glitter and Be Gay is a coloratura aria from the operetta sung by Cunégonde, a young woman who finds herself caught between her desires for a life of luxury and her genuine affection for her beloved Candide. The aria is a delightful satirical exploration of Cunégonde's internal conflict, blending humour and pathos in equal measure.

A showpiece for many sopranos because of the difficulties it poses, if sung as intended (easier alternatives are offered), some of the florid passages are incredibly complex, and there are three E flats above high C, each with risky articulation, and many high Cs and D flats. Further, performing it theatrically adds even more of a challenge: the song involves Cunégonde adorning herself with jewellery – and dancing at the same time too!

RNCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OTTORINO RESPIGHI Roman Festivals

1. *Circus Games*
2. *The Jubilee*
3. *The October Festival*
4. *The Epiphany*

Ottorino Respighi's (1879-1936) *Roman Festivals* forms the final part of his renowned *Roman Trilogy*, which also includes *The Fountains of Rome* and *The Pines of Rome*. Premiered in 1929, *Roman Festivals* showcases Respighi's remarkable ability to depict the grandeur, vitality, and historical richness of ancient Rome through vivid and evocative orchestral writing.

The piece is divided into four distinct movements, each portraying a different festive occasion that was central to the life of ancient Rome. Respighi masterfully weaves together a tapestry of colourful melodies, rhythmic energy, and dynamic orchestration to bring these scenes to life.

Circus Games portrays the excitement of chariot races and athletic contests; Respighi's energetic music captures the bustling atmosphere with lively rhythms, brass fanfares, and percussion. The movement culminates in a thrilling climax. *The Jubilee* honours the religious celebration of the Jubilee, beginning with a serene hymn before escalating to a triumphant and grandiose presentation. Brass chorales and sweeping string melodies create a sense of reverence and jubilation. *The October Festival* is inspired by autumn harvest festivals and paints a vibrant scene of Roman countryside festivities. Playful woodwind melodies,

dance-like rhythms, and pastoral themes capture the joy and rustic spirit of the occasion. Finally, *The Epiphany* merges ancient and Christian elements. Respighi weaves together chants, hymns, and vibrant orchestral colours to portray the Christian feast of Epiphany. The music alternates between solemnity and jubilation, showcasing the diverse emotions associated with the holiday.

Roman Festivals showcases Respighi's compositional prowess and ability to transport listeners to ancient Rome. Through his evocative orchestration and rich musical imagery, he brings forth the grandeur and vitality of the historical festivities.

Programme notes by undergraduate composer Joe Bloom

'My career properly began [in Italy...]. I think this piece really contains so much of that special country and what could be more fitting for the RNCM's celebration than this party piece?'

Alpesh Chauhan

BIOGRAPHIES



ALPESH CHAUHAN *conductor*

British conductor Alpesh Chauhan is Principal Guest Conductor of the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker, Associate Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of Birmingham Opera Company.

Recent and forthcoming highlights include performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Oslo Philharmonic, the Hallé, the Melbourne, and Antwerp Symphony Orchestras, Symphony Orchestra of India, the London Philharmonic, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale RAI, and BBC Symphony Orchestra.

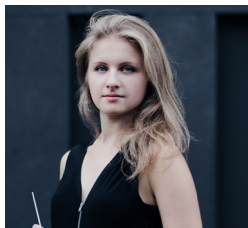
Alpesh enjoys collaborations with soloists such as Karen Cargill, Colin Currie, James Ehnes, Pablo Ferrandez, Alban Gerhardt, Benjamin Grosvenor, Hilary Hahn, Stephen Hough, Pavel Kolesnikov and Beatrice Rana.

A keen advocate of music education, Alpesh is a patron of UK charity Awards for Young Musicians. He has also worked with ensembles such as the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and RNCM Symphony Orchestras. He was conductor of the 2015 BBC Ten Pieces film which brought classical music into secondary schools across the UK and received a distinguished BAFTA.

Born in Birmingham, Alpesh studied cello with Eduardo Vassallo at the RNCM before continuing as a postgraduate conductor on the prestigious Master's course. Alpesh has studied with Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and was mentored by Andris Nelsons and Edward Gardner in his post as Assistant Conductor of the CBSO.

Birmingham Opera Company's triumphant 2019 production of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* led to Alpesh being named Newcomer of the Year in the 2021 International Opera Awards. In 2022 he received the Conductor Award from the Italian National Association of Music Critics for 'Miglior Direttore' for concerts across Italy and was awarded an OBE in The late Queen's New Year's Honours for Services to the Arts.

BIOGRAPHIES



AGATA ZAJĄC *conductor*

Agata Zając is a Polish conductor. She started her musical path as a violinist, and then completed her conducting studies at the Poznań Academy of Music in Poland. Currently, she is the Mills Williams Junior Fellow in Conducting at the RNCM.

Earlier this year she was awarded Second Prize and the Audience Vote at the Siemens Hallé International Conductors Competition and was appointed Assistant Conductor to Ludovic Morlot for the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra's 23/24 season.

Former Resident Conductor of the Toruń Symphony Orchestra (20/21) and the Sudeten Philharmonic Orchestra (21/22) in Poland, Agata has worked with many international orchestras, including the BBC Philharmonic, Manchester Camerata, Britten Sinfonia, Grazer Philharmoniker, Orchestre national de Metz, Malta Philharmonic, Athens Philharmonia, NOSPR in Katowice, Warsaw Chamber Opera and Poznań Philharmonic.

She has participated in conducting masterclasses with Paavo Järvi, Marin Alsop, Johannes Schlaefli, Mark Heron, Peter Eötvös and Jorma Panula. She was a student of the Tonhalle Conductors' Academy 22/23, and the 2021 Gstaad and NOSPR Conducting Academies. She will spend the summer of 2023 at the Tanglewood Music Festival as one of two Conducting Fellows working with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Andris Nelsons.

Agata has been invited to many international competitions and auditions, including the Malta International Conducting Masterclass and Competition (2018) and the International Conducting Competition Città di Brescia (2021), receiving special distinctions. She also participated in the most recent Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, where she reached the semi-finals and had the opportunity to rehearse with the London Symphony Orchestra.

BIOGRAPHIES



ALEXANDRA DARIESCU

piano

Pianist Alexandra Dariescu stands out as an original voice whose fundamental values are shining a light on gender equality in both her concerto and recital programmes as well as championing lesser-known works, advocating for diversity and inclusion.

In demand as a soloist worldwide, Alexandra has performed to critical acclaim with leading orchestras, including the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, European Union Youth Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Symphonique de Quebec, Houston, Detroit, Utah, Sydney and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras.

The first female Romanian pianist to perform at the Royal Albert Hall, Alexandra made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2012 and has since appeared in some of the most prestigious concert halls around the world. She has released eight CDs to critical acclaim, the latest being her Decca recording with Angela Gheorghiu.

In 2017, Alexandra took the world by storm with her incredibly successful piano recital production *The Nutcracker and I*; an original ground-breaking multimedia performance for piano solo with live dance and digital animation.

A former artist of the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT), Alexandra was a Laureate at the Verbier Festival Academy and received the UK's Women of the Future Award in the Arts and Culture category. In 2017, Alexandra was appointed Patron of Music in Lyddington, Cultural Ambassador of Romania and Honorary Associate Artist of the RNCM. A year later, Alexandra received the Officer of the Romanian Crown from the Royal Family and was selected as a Young European Leader by Friends of Europe as well as a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers. In 2020, Alexandra received the Order 'Cultural Merit' in the rank of Knight by the Romanian President and became an Associate Member of the RNCM. Alexandra returned to the RNCM in 2022 as a Tutor in the School of Keyboard Studies.

BIOGRAPHIES



SORAYA MAFI

soprano

Soraya Mafi is a graduate of both the RNCM and the RCM. She is the winner of the 2016 Susan Chilcott Award – an award from the Susan Chilcott Scholarship to support a ‘major young artist with the potential to make an international impact’. Soraya is also an Associate of the RNCM, an honour conferred upon recent alumni who have demonstrated notable achievement in the early stages of their careers and exhibit the potential to make a significant contribution to their chosen profession.

Soraya’s engagements in the 22/23 season include Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro* for Glyndebourne on Tour and Tytania *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for Glyndebourne Festival, Tytania for the Opéra de Rouen Normandie, and Ismene Mitridate for Garsington Opera.

A former Harewood Artist at English National Opera, her roles for the company have included Tytania, Musetta *La bohème*, Despina *Così fan tutte*, Mabel *The Pirates of Penzance* and Yum Yum *The Mikado*.

Elsewhere she has sung Susanna for the Seattle Opera and the Welsh National Opera, Morgana *Alcina* and Anne Trulove *The Rake’s Progress* for Glyndebourne, Gilda *Rigoletto* for the Seattle Opera, Nanetta *Falstaff* for Garsington Opera, Gretel *Hänsel und Gretel* for Grange Park Opera and Echo *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Edinburgh International Festival. She has also appeared at the Théâtre du Châtelet, the Opéra national du Rhin, with English Touring Opera, Opera North and the Opéra national de Lorraine.

Future seasons see Soraya return to Glyndebourne Festival, Welsh National Opera and Garsington Opera and make her debut for the Opernhaus Zürich.

RNCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLINS

Alex Webber
Elena Orsi
Ailsa Burns
Gustav Ranum
Elana Kenyon-Gewirtz
Charlotte Sweeney
Coraleigh Kelly-Edwards
Jonathan Hayward
Becky Cheung
Kiana Umali Garvey
Sarah Razlin
Nazar Khapsalis
Robert Bates
Pia Bromby
Kent Chan
Aleksandar Petrov

SECOND VIOLINS

Sean Morrison (*leader in Adès, Price and Bernstein*)
Jasmine Morris (*leader in Respighi*)
Yutong Jiang
Christopher Newton
Leda Mileto
Blair Taylor
Rachel Stonham
Gemma Humphries
Emily Tomlinson
Lian Yip
Ines Ferreira
Rory Masterson
Cameron Jackson
Conrad Ihering

VIOLAS

Hannah Borlase (*leader in Adès, Price and Bernstein*)
Sarah Greene (*leader in Respighi*)
Ben Norris
Rebecca Stubbs
Michaela Jones
Kevin Saw
Chaofan Chen
David Mullooly
Henry Grant
Robert White
Jeanette Szeto
Ellie Waddington

CELLOS

Rebekah Clarke (*leader in Adès, Price and Bernstein*)
Olivia Morton (*leader in Respighi*)
Andrea Kim
Ellen Quinn
James Conway
James Young
Catherine Lark
Kara Taylor
Esther Skipp
Kenji Luc

BASSES

Saulo Roberto Da Silva
Martins (*leader in Adès, Price and Bernstein*)
Marcus de Oliveira (*leader in Respighi*)
Marcelo Nunes Rodrigues
Duarte Colaco
Sara Banks
Harvey Falla
Yijie Guan
Aron Jonasson

FLUTES

Naomi Robinson
Kira Schlosser
Xiaowen Liu (*picc*)

OBOES

Charlotte Soerland
Mariam Jackson
Lizzy Russell

CLARINETS

Thomas Knollys
Emily Degg (*E♭*)
Lauren Ellis (*bass*)
Renjie Sun

BASSOONS

Erline Moreira
Will Hartley
Beatriz Carvalho (*contra*)

HORNS

Emily Douglas
Abbie Young
Tom Hutchison
Sophie Hearson
Molly Bielecki

RNCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

TRUMPETS

Robbie Richardson
Miranda Woodward
James Corking
Charlotte Nuta

BUCCINE

Andrew Farrow
Matthew Kenny
Erin McLellan

TROMBONES

James Hunt
Jodie Mitson
William Illingworth

TUBA

Ben Whitehead

TIMPANI

Calum Montgomery

PERCUSSION

Sharon Fung
Simone Herbert-Moores
Harriet Rhind
Luna Chang
Katie Thomas
Ho Wong
Oscar Williams
Zhao Liu
Kiki Liang

PIANO (Respighi)

Cici Shi
Yiting Zhang

PIANO (Adès)

Alex Lin

MANDOLIN

Chris Godhard

ORGAN

Oliver Bullock

HARP

Ellie Wood

9.30pm - 10.15pm

RNCM Theatre

RNCM SESSION ORCHESTRA

Wings

Live and Let Die (*P McCartney/L McCartney*)

Elvis Presley

Always on My Mind (*Carson/Christopher/James*)

Billy Joel

Piano Man (*Joel*)

Shirley Bassey

Never, Never, Never (*Moncrief/Testa/Renis*)

Diana Ross

Touch Me in the Morning (*Miller/Masser*)

Steely Dan

Reelin' In the Years (*Becker/Fagin*)

David Bowie

Life on Mars? (*Bowie*)

Dolly Parton

Jolene (*Parton*)

Stevie Wonder

Higher Ground (*Wonder*)

RNCM SESSION ORCHESTRA

The Royal Northern College of Music Session Orchestra was launched in 2011 and is the first ensemble of its kind worldwide in a major conservatoire. The 40-piece orchestra consists of a rhythm section, strings, brass, percussion and vocalists performing popular music repertoire and original music conceived for the larger symphonic palette. It plays a pivotal and inspirational role in bringing together musicians from both the classical and popular degree programmes at the College, providing them with industry standard training and professional performance opportunities.

To date, the Session Orchestra has performed to sell out audiences in the RNCM Concert Hall and Theatre, at the Dulwich International Music Festival in Shanghai, for the British Music Student Awards at the Liverpool Echo Arena and the Birmingham O2 Academy, at the Royal Courts of Justice for the Duke of Edinburgh World Fellowship Coronation Ball, Liverpool International Music Festival, Manchester Day, Bridgewater Hall, and The Royal Albert Hall. The ensemble also performs at numerous corporate and charity events and awards ceremonies across the UK and with guest artists including Stefan Redtenbacher, Bill Laurance, Mario Jose, and Mo Pleasure.

Founding Musical Director Andy Stott has worked as a consultant and guest MD with RNCM inspired Session Orchestras at Leeds Arts University, Barton Peveril College, Neath College, Hertfordshire Music Service, Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Company, and at Codarts

University for the Arts in Rotterdam. The RNCM and Codarts now enjoy a partnership which enables students to participate in joint performance projects in the UK and the Netherlands.

In the coming year, the RNCM Session Orchestra will be embarking on a professional development scheme with the world's leading pop and jazz orchestra The Metropole Orkest. RNCM students will have the opportunity to work side-by-side with the Metropole's musicians in Holland and the College will host Yong Metropole players in Session Orchestra projects in Manchester. The Metropole's Musical Director Jules Buckley will also be the guest conductor for the RNCM Session Orchestra show in February 2024.

Andy Stott
Head of Popular Music

BIOGRAPHIES



ANDY STOTT

director

Professor Andy Stott is Head of Popular Music at the RNCM, Musical Director of the RNCM Session Orchestra and the founding CEO of Northern Quarter Records. His career as a music educator has seen him heading music departments at several top institutions in addition to examiner roles in the UK and abroad and mentoring for rock and pop festivals.

As a performer, Andy has worked as a session drummer and percussionist in a wide variety of musical genres, including jazz orchestras, brass bands, symphony orchestras, choirs, musical theatre pit orchestras, and rock and pop bands. His performing career developed into working as a freelance Musical Director, and in that role he has appeared on the international stage performing with singers and musicians across the UK and in Barcelona, Lake Garda, Lisbon, Brisbane, Washington DC, New York, Los Angeles, Seoul, Singapore, Beijing and Shanghai.

Andy also has extensive experience as a MD in musical theatre – credits include; *West Side Story*, *Les Miserables*, *Evita*, *Grease*, *Joseph*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Godspell*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *STOMP* and *The Full Monty*. Andy was a producer and the musical supervisor for the first UK tour and West End run of the award-winning Broadway musical *RENT*.

Andy has been the recipient of four RNCM Student-Led Teaching Awards; two for his musical direction of the RNCM Session Orchestra, and two for Employability Enhancement. In 2015 he became a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and in 2017 was appointed to the ABRSM's Music Education.

RNCM SESSION ORCHESTRA

VOCALS

Jack Critchlow
Deni Davidescu
Mitch Greengrass
Keara Koterwas

KEYBOARDS

Jasper Clarke
Louis Rost
George Fisher-Edwards

GUITARS

Maria Rocha
Luke Pudney

BASS GUITAR

Daniel Orchard

DRUMS

Zac Hemming

SAXOPHONES

Eleanor Williams
Jasmine Brown

TRUMPETS

Seb Williman
Will Bird

TROMBONE

Roz Fearnehough

PERCUSSION

Dan Malone

CREDITS

TECHNICAL

Nick Ware *Head of Digital, Technical and Production*
Paul Botham *Technical Manager*
Julie Parker *Deputy Technical Manager (Lighting)*
Steve Barrington *Deputy Technical Manager (Stage)*
Greg Skipworth *Stage Manager*
Tracey Collinson *Deputy Stage Manager*
Louise Morgan *Deputy Stage Manager*
Tina Blatt *Assistant Technician (Stage Management)*
Elaine Needham *Wardrobe Manager*
Stephen Guy *Sound and Video Manager*
Django Pither *Deputy Sound and Video Manager*
Paul Bannatyne *Sound Engineer*
Dominic Chater *Sound Engineer*
Gregory Chiche *Sound Engineer*
William Minty *Video Engineer*
David Dickson *Video Engineer*
Barney Cunningham *Deputy Video Engineer*
David Coyle *Recording Engineer*

ORCHESTRAS AND ENSEMBLES

Andrew Bayly *Head of Ensembles*
Amy Gordon *Orchestras and Ensembles Manager (SS)*
Charlotte Ferry *Orchestras and Ensembles Manager (SWBP)*
Edgar Diver *Orchestras and Ensembles Assistant Manager*
Abigail Flood *Ensembles Administrator*
Jack Grime *Chamber Music and Conducting Administrator*
Amy Brown *Ensembles Librarian*

PROGRAMMING

Richard Collins *Head of Programming*
Matt Whitham *Programming Manager*
Paul Massey *Programming Co-ordinator*
Orla McGarrity *Programming Assistant*

DESIGN

Jody McDowell *Graphic Designer*

Q&A WITH SINÉAD WALSH, SU PRESIDENT



After completing undergraduate studies in 2022, flautist **Sinéad Walsh** decided to run for SU President to '*give back to a community that is so special to me*'. As her tenure draws to a close, she reflects on an incredible year and shares her thoughts on today's music industry and the undeniable value of conservatoire study.

What have you enjoyed most about our 50th year?

I have loved that the 50th has been an opportunity to celebrate the history of the RNCM and those who have played an important part in what it is today. *Bernstein's Mass* at The Bridgewater Hall was incredible and the highlight of the year so far for me with regards to student performances. It was a show, rather than a concert, and it was so cool to have over 200 students involved showcasing all the disciplines we have on offer here. It was actually quite emotional at times, and I felt proud to be at the RNCM watching everyone give it their all!

You've been Students' Union President during our anniversary year. Why did you want to take up this role and what has been your biggest achievement so far?

I wanted to run for SU President because I wanted to give back to a community that is so special to me and to make a difference in some way. I had been on the team as Events Officer in my final year and had loved seeing everyone having a good time at the events we put on, but I also saw the value in what the SU does for students. I was looking to take a year out from education after graduation, to take on a new

Q&A WITH SINÉAD WALSH, SU PRESIDENT

challenge and make a positive impact. Being SU President seemed like the perfect outlet for that.

I would say my biggest achievement of the year has been launching the Zero Tolerance to Discrimination campaign, an expansion of the original RNCM Zero campaign started by the SU five years ago. I think it's been impactful on the wider student body and has reinforced the motto that I based my election campaign on: that everyone should feel 'welcomed, valued and respected' during their time here.

Why did you want to study at the RNCM?

I wanted to study at the RNCM because of how I felt during the Open Day. The atmosphere in the building is so special, the sense of community here is vibrant, and I immediately felt quite at home. I was lucky enough to meet Laura Jellicoe at the Open Day, who has now been my tutor and mentor for the last five years, and once I had a lesson with her I knew this was where I needed to be - I certainly have no regrets!

What do you think the future of the music industry looks like?

I believe that we are at a pivotal moment with regards to the future of music. There's no doubt that the arts are in danger and have been heavily affected by Covid. But I believe that there's massive scope for innovation and think that how we experience live music will change over the next few years. The opportunities are endless for those of us graduating into the industry and I believe that it's now down to us to be changemakers which is a massive responsibility but also a privilege to be able to use the skills we have learned here and put them to good use.

How do you think the RNCM fits into this?

I think that the RNCM is a forward-thinking institution and will move with the times and challenges that we may face as an industry over the coming years. There is now so much more of an emphasis on preserving tradition whilst also empowering creative thinking and we need to continue to get on board with this idea as an institution. I'm excited to see what the future of music looks like and how our careers will be shaped over the next few years, but I hope that the RNCM remains at the forefront of pushing boundaries and carving the path for our students to be industry leaders.

What would you say to any young musician considering studying music at conservatoire or university level?

Go with your gut! The working world is changing and the 'normal' career of working for the same company for 40 years in an office is no more. My parents were naturally worried when I said I wanted to move over here from Ireland to study music. No one in my family is musical and from the outside it seems like an incredibly insecure career path. They are now so delighted that I have followed my passion and thrived in this place. There are so many paths you can take with a conservatoire degree and although I still want to be a performer in the future, I believe that I've diversified myself as a musician during my time here. As the door says, 'where will your love of music take you?'. Who knows, but I'm excited to see!

If you're interested in studying with us, our next Discover RNCM open day takes place on Saturday 8 July. Visit rncm.ac.uk/openday to learn more.

