

FRI 31 OCT, 2025 | 7.30PM

RNCM
Symphony
Orchestra

Programme

A young woman with dark hair and glasses is playing a violin. She is wearing a red top. In the background, other orchestra members are visible, including a man playing a violin. The scene is dimly lit, focusing on the performers.

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FRI 6 MAR 2026 | 7.30PM

**RNCM Symphony
Orchestra:
Scheherazade**
Stories to
Tell the King



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FRI 31 OCT | 7.30PM

RNCM Concert Hall

RNCM Symphony Orchestra

Programme

Charles Ives

Variations on America *

Michael Daugherty

Fire and Blood ^

Jessie Montgomery

Soul Force

John Adams

My Father Knew Charles Ives

Clark Rundell, Julius Mauldin * *conductors*

Rachel Stonham ^ *violin*

RNCM Symphony Orchestra

PART OF JOHN ADAMS FESTIVAL

WELCOME TO RNCM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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 as part of the Hallé's John Adams Festival, and we're delighted to be bringing you a deeply moving programme of music by the great Charles Ives, Michael Daugherty, Jessie Montgomery and, of course, John Adams.

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. This evening, the orchestra of 86 young musicians is joined by award-winning violinist and RNCM master's student Rachel Stonham, our soloist for Daugherty's *Fire and Blood*. Conducting are Clark Rundell and esteemed guest Julius Maudlin – currently an Assistant Conductor with the BBC Philharmonic and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and Artistic Director of New York's Westside Chamber Players.

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 compositions 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.



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PROGRAMME NOTES

CHARLES IVES

Variations on America

A patriotic hymn goes through the looking-glass. In 1892, a 17-year-old Charles Ives sat at the organ bench and turned America's unofficial anthem into a dazzling set of variations – a youthful experiment that would later become one of his most cherished works.

Ives grew up in New England's small-town soundscape: marching bands, church hymns, patriotic tunes – all set against his classical organ training. He was taught by his bandmaster father, George, who encouraged experimentation but sometimes drew the line. In *Variations on America*, for instance, an interlude of canons in three keys at once was vetoed as '*unsuitable for church performance – they upset the elderly ladies and made the little boys laugh and get noisy!*'.

The theme of the piece has a curious double life. Here in Britain it was – and remains – *God Save the King*. Across the Atlantic it was the all-American *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*, which Ives gleefully subverted into a witty, irreverent organ showpiece.

It opens with a bold prelude before the famous tune peeks out, only to be twisted into unexpected shapes: jaunty polonaise, sly syncopations, sudden harmonic jolts. Two later interludes show Ives's most audacious side, layering whole keys against each other in playful bitonality.

He later called the piece '*a boy's work, partly serious and partly in fun*', yet it has lived on well beyond its teenage origins. In 1963, William Schuman orchestrated it for the New York Philharmonic, amplifying its mischievous sparkle and fixing it in the repertoire.

Did you know?

The score wasn't published until 1949, more than half a century after Ives wrote it.

PROGRAMME NOTES

MICHAEL DAUGHERTY

Fire and Blood

Blazing furnaces, grinding machines, restless motion: Michael Daugherty's *Fire and Blood* channels Detroit's automobile age into an explosive concerto for violin and orchestra.

Daugherty (born 1954) has built a career fusing pop culture with symphonic tradition. He's best known for his *Metropolis Symphony* (inspired by *Superman* comics), but here he roots the drama in real-world heroism. Premiered by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 2003, the concerto draws inspiration from Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry Murals*, commissioned in 1932 by William Valentiner and Edsel Ford for the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Rivera painted the factories as terrifying and awe-inspiring: blast furnaces become volcanoes, conveyor belts coil like snakes, and men and machines lock in ceaseless rhythm.

Rivera himself said he heard music in the factories, '*waiting for the composer to give it form*'. Daugherty answers with this three-movement '*musical fresco*'.

Volcano erupts in jagged 7/4 and a searing violin cadenza, echoing Rivera's fiery furnaces. *River Rouge* turns tragic, reflecting the trauma of Rivera's wife, Frida Kahlo, who nearly died from a miscarriage in Detroit. A chromatic line flows like a red river of blood, set against a plaintive theme for her native Mexico. *Assembly Line* is a relentless conveyor-belt ride, with biting pizzicato, brassy clusters, and metallic percussion driving Rivera's vision of human-machine unity.

What Rivera painted, Daugherty brings to life in sound: a concerto of fire, toil, and resilience.

PROGRAMME NOTES

JESSIE MONTGOMERY

Soul Force

'Soul force' was Martin Luther King Jr.'s name for nonviolent resistance. Jessie Montgomery turns the idea into sound – an orchestral march that gathers allies as it advances.

Raised on New York's Lower East Side amid the radical arts scene of the 1980s and 1990s, Montgomery has forged a dual career as a violinist and composer. Her music ranges from statements on social justice to explorations of the Black diasporic experience and its roots are in American music, filtered through a voice that blends classical tradition with vernacular styles.

Written in 2015 for the civil-rights benefit project The Dream Unfinished, *Soul Force* folds big-band brass, funk-like riffs, and hip-hop grooves into an orchestral frame. Montgomery describes the work as a voice '*struggl[ing] to be heard beyond the shackles of oppression*'. Beginning as a solitary line and swelling into a collective cry, its momentum is driven by symbolically charged percussion – including whip and chain – while soaring strings keep hope aloft.

The title comes directly from King's *I Have a Dream* speech: 'We must

not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.' Montgomery's march does more than echo those words – it enacts them, turning an orchestra into a collective force for resistance and renewal.

Did you know?

Soul Force appears on the New York Youth Symphony's debut album, which won Best Orchestral Performance at the 2023 GRAMMY Awards. It was the first youth orchestra ever to receive the honour.

PROGRAMME NOTES

JOHN ADAMS

My Father Knew Charles Ives

To close, a work full of echoes as John Adams threads his New England childhood into an homage to the composer who shaped his early imagination.

Like Ives, Adams grew up in small-town New England, steeped in church hymns, jazz, and parades. And like Ives, he first learned music from his father, playing clarinet in marching bands and community orchestras. Though later associated with minimalism, Adams says Ives's music has '*always been a model*' – for its daring experiments, its mix of the sublime with the everyday, and its freedom '*that could only be done by an American*'.

Cast as a three-part '*musical autobiography*', the piece filters Adams' memories through Ivesian prisms. *Concord* begins in hazy summer stillness, its trumpet answering Ives's *Unanswered Question*, before bursting into a parade of colliding, half-remembered tunes. *The Lake* turns nocturnal as water laps, a boat horn groans, and faint dance-band music drifts across the Winnepesaukee Gardens, where Adams's parents first met. *The*

Mountain takes up what Adams calls a '*mysterious archetype*' he shares with Ives: the climb. Conjuring the New England peaks of Adams' childhood, distant reverie swells into pounding rhythms and upward surges, before a blaze of '*majestic serenity*' at the summit.

Adams' score is both homage and self-portrait – memory, place, and influence converging into music that echoes Ives, while speaking unmistakably in Adams' own voice.

Did you know?

The title is tongue-in-cheek: Adams' father never knew Ives – though Adams imagines they'd have been friends, '*exchanging a wry comment in front of the town post office*'.

Programme notes by Johnny James.

BIOGRAPHIES

CLARK RUNDELL (CONDUCTOR)

With a repertoire spanning centuries, continents, and styles, Clark Rundell has established himself as a champion of music ranging from the 18th century to the current day, from jazz to kora, from tango to European modernism, and from large, multidimensional projects to music of complexity and intricacy.

Recent and upcoming debuts include: the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, Belgian National Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony Orchestra, Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra, Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, Klangforum Wien, the Gulbenkian Orchestra (Lisbon), the SWR-Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden, NDR Orchestra Hannover, and the Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liege – all of which immediately re-invited him to conduct over the next few seasons. He works regularly with orchestras and ensembles including all of the BBC orchestras, Britten Sinfonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Ensemble 10/10, and Asko Schoenberg.

Opera world premieres include: James MacMillan's *Clemency* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Orlando Gough's *Voices &*

Votes at the Bergen International Festival; Julian Joseph's spectacular reimagining of *Tristan and Isolde* in London; Oscar Bettison's *The Light of Lesser Days* in the Netherlands; and the hugely anticipated opera *Iphigenia* by Wayne Shorter and Esperanza Spalding in Boston and at the Kennedy Centre, Washington, DC. Other opera performances include Albert Herring, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Carmen*, *Katya Kabanova*, *Street Scene*, *L'Heure Espagnole*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Greek*, and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*.

Deeply committed to the performance of new music, Clark Rundell has given world premieres of works by composers such as Louis Andriessen, Steve Reich, Mark-Anthony Turnage, James MacMillan, Django Bates, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, Oscar Bettison, Gary Carpenter, Trish Clowes, Tansy Davies, Tim Garland, Adam Gorb, David Horne, Julian Joseph, Steve Mackey, Steve Martland, Grace Evangeline Mason, Brad Mehldau, Martijn Padding, Gwilym Simcock, Joey Roukens, Wayne Shorter, and Julia Wolfe.

As an arranger, he collaborated with Louis Andriessen on a suite from the late Dutch master's opera *Rosa*,

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BIOGRAPHIES

JULIUS MAULDIN (CONDUCTOR)

entitled *Rosa's Horses*, which was premiered by Clark Rundell and the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic at Het Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. The pair also collaborated on *Vermeer Pictures*, a suite from Andriessen's opera *Writing to Vermeer*, which was also performed at Het Concertgebouw to great critical acclaim. Clark Rundell is working on further suites of Louis Andriessen's more recent operas.

He has conducted extensive orchestral projects with artists such as Elvis Costello, the Wayne Shorter Quartet, Esperanza Spalding, Toumani Diabate, Brad Mehldau, Tim Garland, Trish Clowes, Julian Joseph, Abel Selaoe, Gwilym Simcock, and Pablo Ziegler. A highly versatile musician, Rundell has also performed with artists including John Dankworth, Bob Brookmeyer, Victor Mendoza, Guy Barker, Julian Argüelles, Ed Thigpen, Cleo Laine, Andy Sheppard, Lew Tabakin, and Michael Gibbs.

He is passionate about working with young people and is Professor of Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and has a close relationship with the Netherlands Orchestral Academy.

Julius Akira Mauldin is a Japanese-American conductor and the Artistic Director of the Westside Chamber Players, a chamber orchestra in New York City. Julius has also conducted the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Hallé, Manchester Camerata, and Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, where he was a Julius Rudel Conducting Fellow. As an Assistant Conductor, Julius works closely with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and has also assisted the Hallé and Royal Northern Sinfonia.

Julius began his musical career as a boy chorister, performing with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra under the batons of Yannick Nézet-Seguin, Charles Dutoit, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, and more. He was also a featured soloist in a Lincoln Center production of *Wozzeck* with London's Philharmonia Orchestra and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Julius is currently pursuing his Master of Music in Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music, studying with Mark Heron and Clark Rundell, and has also received guidance from conductors such as Nicolas Pasquet, John Storgårds, Alpesh Chauhan, Ludovic Morlot, Anja Bihlmaier, Antony Hermus, David Hill, Anna-Maria Helsing, Gustavo Gimeno, Dinis Sousa, and Nuno Coelho.

BIOGRAPHIES

RACHEL STONHAM (VIOLIN)

Rachel is an accomplished and versatile violinist known for her energetic and compelling performances. With a repertoire spanning from the 17th century to the present day, she enjoys introducing audiences to unfamiliar works and innovative programmes.

Having completed her master's degree at the RNCM, studying with Catherine Yates and Callum Smart, she is now a student on the Hallé/RNCM Advanced Orchestral Strings Programme. Within the last year, her concerto appearances have included Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the Manchester Philharmonic Orchestra, and the premiere of Nicholas Simpson's Violin Concerto with the Athenean Ensemble. She has also given recitals at the RNCM and for the Rochdale Toad Lane Concert Series.

Rachel is a founding member of the Dovestone String Quartet, which has performed across the country at venues including Conway Hall and the Lake District Music Summer Festival. She also performs with the Valette Ensemble, a chamber group which promotes works by contemporary and under-represented composers. As an orchestral musician, she has

played with groups including the Hallé, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, and Sinfonia Cymru.



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RNCM Opera
Prokofiev: L'Amour
des Trois Oranges

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Luke Chu
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Thomas Bentley

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Finn Nguyen
Yiyang Sun
Yuyan Chen
Enhao Zhang
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Edward Owen
Sophie Wu
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Esther Clay
Peiran Zhong
Sally Lee

VIOLAS

Matthew Hayes
Xueer Wu
Rory Africa
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