

# Northern Sinfonia

## Orchestra of The Sage Gateshead



**Northern Sinfonia**  
50th Anniversary Season



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# Introduction

There is always a double-edged dimension to anniversaries. We are celebrating both the past and the future; proudly remembering previous achievements while at the same time making ambitious forward plans. Anniversaries are often moments we pause to make resolutions, to think afresh about our futures, or to re-define our positioning in the world around us.

You will know even before you read the tumultuous story in the following pages what an extraordinary series of transformations Northern Sinfonia has experienced in the last five years. By any standards Thomas Zehetmair is a musician of exceptional integrity and versatility, and as Music Director he has played a key role in bringing Northern Sinfonia to today's outstanding peak of performance. In The Sage Gateshead the orchestra is uniquely blessed, not just with two outstanding halls and acoustics in which to give their performances, but in being able to rehearse, perform, record and teach in one place – the building the Rough Guide to the UK has famously acclaimed as one of Britain's ten best buildings in the last hundred years. To the coincidence of those two transformations we owe the third – the constant stream of outstanding young players keen to join the already unique family of musicians who make up Northern Sinfonia. With these developments has come a refinement and clarification of our artistic vision, so that we now

look to a future defined by a very clear sense of the musical and artistic goals toward which Northern Sinfonia is heading.

More people have played key roles in the extraordinary journey of the last fifty years than we could list in a book three times this size, but I do want to say, with ringing emphasis, how deeply we value the support the orchestra has enjoyed from a succession of public sector funders and corporate partners; dedicated Friends and friends, many others who have given generously of their time or their money to support our work – and of course the generations of audiences, without whose insistent, adventurous enthusiasm we would not be here to celebrate this anniversary at all. This is also a moment to celebrate the unselfish, inspiringly ambitious commitment the musicians themselves have made – and continue to make every day – to Northern Sinfonia's journey.

Welcome to whichever of our performances you share with us during this Anniversary Season; thank you for your own support, and I hope you enjoy this little book as a reminder of some key moments from the last fifty years, and a glimpse of our vision for the next fifty!

**Anthony Sargent**  
General Director, The Sage Gateshead

# Beginnings



Fifty years ago, there was only a frustrated musician on the Shields Ferry. Michael Hall had recently returned from studying in London, and was dismayed at the lack of a professional orchestra based in the region – the nearest was the Hallé, over a hundred miles away in Manchester. Though orchestras occasionally played in Newcastle as part of their national tours, the vast majority of the North Eastern music-lover's year was spent in what Hall described as a "wilderness". In 1958, in a moment of clarity while crossing the Tyne, he determined to change this. With the help of his parents' savings (and instrumentalists from Scotland, London and the North West), Hall produced a series of six successful concerts at the City Hall in Newcastle. The cultural establishment took note – messages of support for the new Sinfonia came from Sir Adrian Boult, Dame Myra Hess and Sir Malcolm Sargeant.

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Following the first season's success, the orchestra embarked on a collaboration with another newcomer, Tyne Tees TV. This allowed Hall to recruit players of a higher calibre, and, crucially for the group's future as an orchestra for the whole region, to perform its programme outside of Newcastle – in Middlesbrough, Carlisle, Darlington, Sunderland and Scarborough.

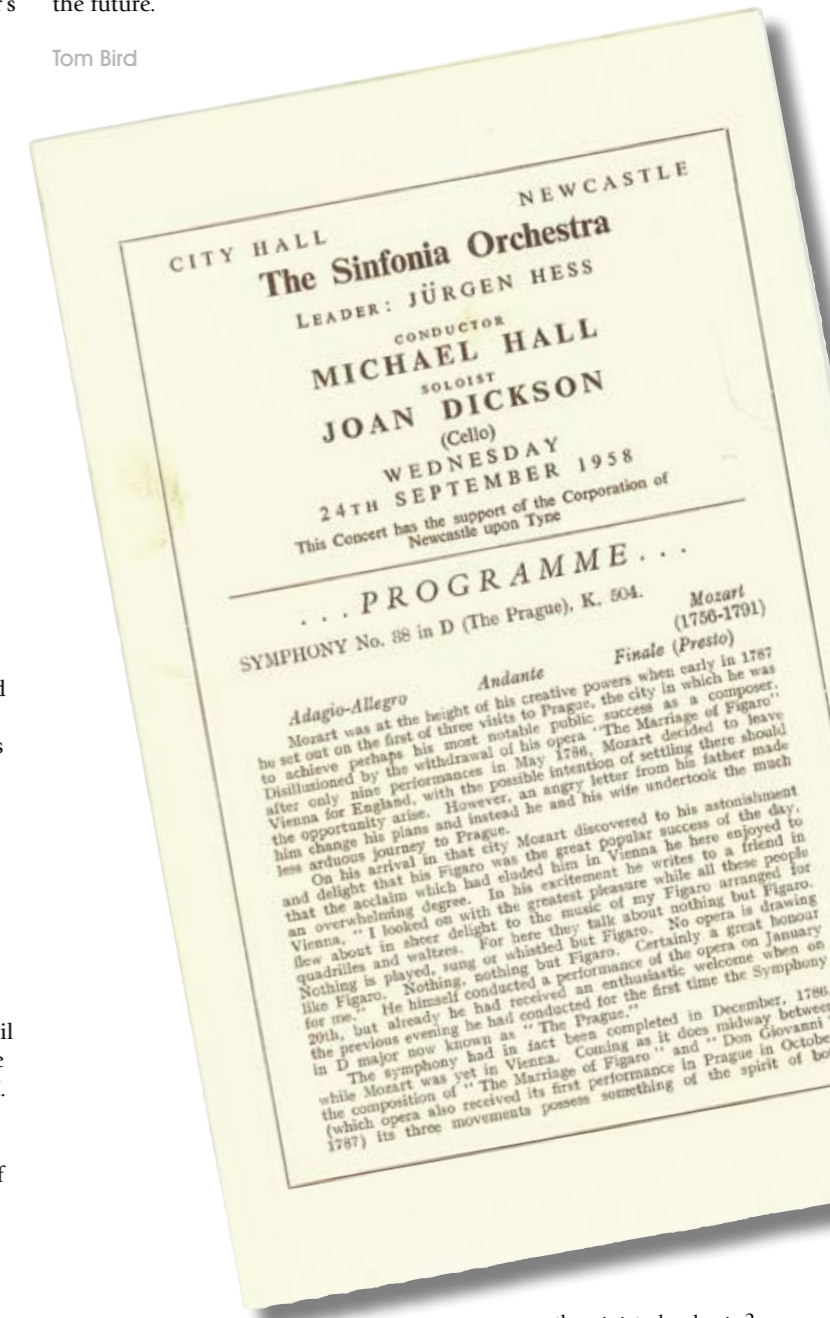
To be eligible for funding, the orchestra had to institutionalise formally. This took place in 1959, when a public meeting established Sir Humphrey Noble as the first chairman of the Sinfonia's Management Committee, which would later become the Board of Directors. Sir Humphrey's contacts, prestige and generosity allowed the orchestra to push forward into the 1960s with confidence. Resisting the temptation to become a city council symphony orchestra allowed the organisation to retain its unique selling point as the only permanent chamber orchestra in the UK.

The ambition of Keith Statham, General Manager, and Rudolf Schwarz, Artistic Director, then led to the creation in the 1970s of a new rehearsal and administrative centre in Jesmond Vale, and the Sinfonia's 25th Anniversary Celebrations in 1983 included a gala concert at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

With the 1990s came recognition of the need for a regional music centre, incorporating a concert hall complex and a new home for Northern Sinfonia.

On the banks of the river that Michael Hall crossed fifty years ago, The Sage Gateshead and its orchestra look out eagerly into the future.

Tom Bird



# Building for the Future

Northern Sinfonia, in its make up, is the type of orchestra that would have been most familiar to Mozart. It consists of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, timpani and strings. In its repertoire, personnel and role as the orchestra of The Sage Gateshead in the 21<sup>st</sup> century however, it is a very different body to a group you might have found in 18<sup>th</sup> century Vienna. The link with the Austrian capital that does exist, can be traced in the world class acoustic properties of The Sage Gateshead's performance spaces. Hall One uses ultra-modern technology to ensure the finest acoustic possible, but its actual shape is based on a much older hall: the Musikverein in Vienna, renowned as one of the best classical acoustics in the world. Our largest space shares with the Musikverein the same 'shoe box' shape, galleries, hard surfaces and high ceiling – and is just one metre different in its dimensions.

Those who have followed Northern Sinfonia over many years will know that to hear the orchestra in the acoustics of The Sage Gateshead reveals an ensemble of the most extraordinary quality. The move into such a wonderful working environment has enabled the orchestra to develop rapidly and with unprecedented confidence. The Times reported, "The Sage Gateshead has quickly become one of the most exciting music venues in Britain – and Northern Sinfonia has raised its game to match its new home." Northern Sinfonia is an orchestra of the 21<sup>st</sup> century working in a 21<sup>st</sup> century environment, whilst engaging with over 350 years of western classical music.

Thomas Zehetmair, the internationally-renowned violinist and conductor, has been Northern Sinfonia's Music Director throughout this recent and extraordinarily exciting time. When asked initially what he wanted his concerts with the orchestra to sound like, he said: "as if the ink is still wet". That simple phrase stays with us and continues to inform our artistic vision. It means that every performance should be as if its repertoire is being played for the very first time. Composers are some of our most important assets and through their work we constantly seek to realise the raw creativity that exists in their imaginations. It means a commitment to the highest possible artistic standards and ensuring that there is enough rehearsal and preparation time to explore a composer's work in real depth. Northern Sinfonia is both versatile and flexible. It can expand or

contract in response to its repertoire, working with an additional vital group of talented extra musicians who play regularly with the orchestra when needed. The repertoire itself stretches from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the here and now, encompassing Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Britten and the new composers of today, whose work we commission - whilst still finding the time for the occasional night of James Bond themes! This is a team so gifted and skilled that it turns each and every one of its performances into the most intense experience imaginable for its audience.

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The Sage Gateshead has offered Northern Sinfonia an opportunity to develop artistically in a way that happens very rarely for orchestras. After nearly four years in its new home, we are faced with the question of where this thrilling orchestra will go next. It will remain as the backbone of The Sage Gateshead's classical programme. It will continue to expand its repertoire and to stay true to its commitment to provide a context for new work. It will continue to make recordings, particularly for its own label. It will seek to increase broadcasting opportunities, extend its work beyond The Sage Gateshead, and create strong relationships with major venues and festivals both in this country and abroad. The Sage Gateshead will create its own large scale projects, to which Northern Sinfonia will be central, including opera and festivals, and will seek collaborations with partners who share our artistic ambitions. The orchestra has made an extraordinary start to this long voyage: there is endless excitement as it travels forward. This special Anniversary Season is the perfect time to join us on this invigorating journey.

**Simon Clugston**  
Performance Programme Director,  
The Sage Gateshead





# Sound Investment

“**T**hese are exciting days: my aim to lead Northern Sinfonia into an era of sparkling and overwhelming music-making is getting closer and closer, and the Anniversary Season is another large step.

The whole set of Beethoven's nine symphonies – each of them still incredible milestones within the history of music - will be presented to you, seasoned with two of his dramatic overtures and the equally famous violin concerto (no guest soloist required...!)

The last hundred years have brought an unprecedented diversity in musical styles. We celebrate fifty years of Northern Sinfonia with a journey through the different corners of an infinitely rich century in 'Dreams and Ceremonies', which concludes the Anniversary Season. This is a unique event, and it won't happen in London or Paris. It is here, in the North East.

The thrilling combination of our blossoming orchestra and The

Sage Gateshead has excited the curiosity of many great talents; during the last four years many wonderful young musicians have joined Northern Sinfonia. One of them, Juliette Bausor, will perform Nielsen's flute concerto this Anniversary Season. Tchaikovsky's famous 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony will conclude this programme - a premiere of this piece at The Sage Gateshead.

Last year the director of the Hong Kong Festival attended our concert at the Aldeburgh Festival and invited us, on the spot, to perform three different programmes at that prestigious gathering in 2009. At this momentous event, held in February, the Northern Sinfonia Chorus will join us for Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony.

There is no need to look back even after fifty years – there is so much more yet to come!”

Thomas Zeheilmair  
Music Director, Northern Sinfonia

“There is no need to look back even after fifty years – there is so much more yet to come!”

# New Generations of Sound

## Northern Sinfonia and music of our own time

Every piece of classical music was once a brand new work. The thrill of hearing a piece for the very first time remains an extraordinary moment, a leap in the dark. Northern Sinfonia is a 21<sup>st</sup> century orchestra in a 21<sup>st</sup> century landmark building, and is as committed to music of the future as it is to the music of the past. In this, its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, the orchestra will perform Skellig, a new opera by Tod Machover commissioned by The Sage Gateshead and based on the award-winning novel by North East writer David Almond. Since its opening, The Sage Gateshead has been responsible for the commissioning and performance of new works by Philip Cashian, John Casken, Tansy Davies, Jonathan Dove, Agustín Fernández, Howard Goodall, Piers Halliwell, John Harle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Gerard McBurney, Rebecca Saunders, Peter Weigold and John Woolrich. Impressive as this list is, our specific reason for the commissioning of these composers' works is equally so. Sir Peter Maxwell Davies wrote for Northumbrian piper Kathryn Tickell and a string quartet from Northern Sinfonia; John Woolrich wrote a piece to begin and end a concert for children; Jonathan Dove wrote a piece to be played against moving images of the construction of The Sage Gateshead; Tansy Davies wrote for four violins and Hardanger fiddles, and Gerard McBurney arranged nursery rhymes to introduce children to a classical sound world.

It is essential that we foster a context for contemporary work at The Sage Gateshead and share the excitement of the new and unheard with our audiences. During Northern Sinfonia's 50th Anniversary Season we will instigate a new series of concerts called 'All Eyes On...', where two days will be spent exploring the repertoire of a particular living composer. We will invite the composer to introduce and talk about their music throughout the event. The first of these will focus on the extraordinary British composer, Thea Musgrave, in her eightieth year.

The commissioning of new repertoire will continue to be a strong feature of our work at The Sage Gateshead. Looking further ahead, we are planning to perform an opera from the Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer David Lang, and a Concerto for Orchestra from Simon Bainbridge.

There has always been new work, and there must always be new work. We revel in the responsibility of making sure it gets heard.

Simon Clugston  
Performance Programme Director, The Sage Gateshead



# Exporting the Sound

## Northern Sinfonia beyond The Sage Gateshead

Just before The Sage Gateshead opened in 2004, something extraordinary took place. The orchestra was engaged to conduct a series of acoustic tests in the new venue's concert halls, to ensure that everything was in order for the building's grand opening. Immediately after these tests, the Sinfonia undertook an extensive tour of Germany, Austria and Poland – playing in some of Europe's most revered concert halls: including the Philharmonie halls in Berlin and in Cologne, as well as the Musikverein in Vienna. As the tour went on, it became clear that something was changing. Whereas in the past, the orchestra would have felt aided and uplifted by having the chance to play in these extraordinarily fine acoustics, the change they recognised was that now they knew they would be heading home to halls that could compete, and that these would be their permanent home.

Without the experience of places like the Musikverein, however, the vision that brought The Sage Gateshead and the Northern Sinfonia of today into existence would not exist. For this reason it is crucial that Northern Sinfonia continues to tour abroad. It is important for the international profile of the orchestra: they act as

## Northern Sinfonia acts as an ambassador for NewcastleGateshead and the North East.

an ambassador for NewcastleGateshead and the North East, and can do much to interest companies from around the world to take its home region seriously for both trade and investment. In Northern Sinfonia's 50th Anniversary Season confirmed trips abroad include a residency in Gothenburg, performances at the Hong Kong Festival with the Northern Sinfonia Chorus, an extensive tour of Germany and Poland, a residency at the Tongyeong Festival in Korea, together with concerts in Seoul and Shanghai. Touring will always be an integral part of Northern Sinfonia's work. There are already more distant tours of Europe, of Japan, and engagements in international summer festivals coming into focus...but it will always be nice to come home.

Simon Clugston  
Performance Programme Director, The Sage Gateshead

**P**lanning the classical programme for The Sage Gateshead and Northern Sinfonia is a process that begins several years before the concert in question takes place. We begin by working with Music Director Thomas Zehetmair to plot the flagship projects – such as the Beethoven symphonic cycle for 2008-09 – that will define the season. The planning inevitably starts with Northern Sinfonia, which forms the core of The Sage Gateshead's classical programme. Other major events, involving visiting artists, will also be plotted in at the same time. This year these include Mendelssohn's Elijah in his 200th anniversary year with Simon Halsey, our Principal Conductor, Choral Programme, and The Nutcracker (with film), with conductor Carl Davis, in January 2009. From that point, the season will continue to grow as guest conductors

and soloists are engaged. Northern Sinfonia's touring commitments will also be planned a long time in advance and often the content of these will feed into the artistic programme. The aim is to have a complete season six to nine months before it actually starts.

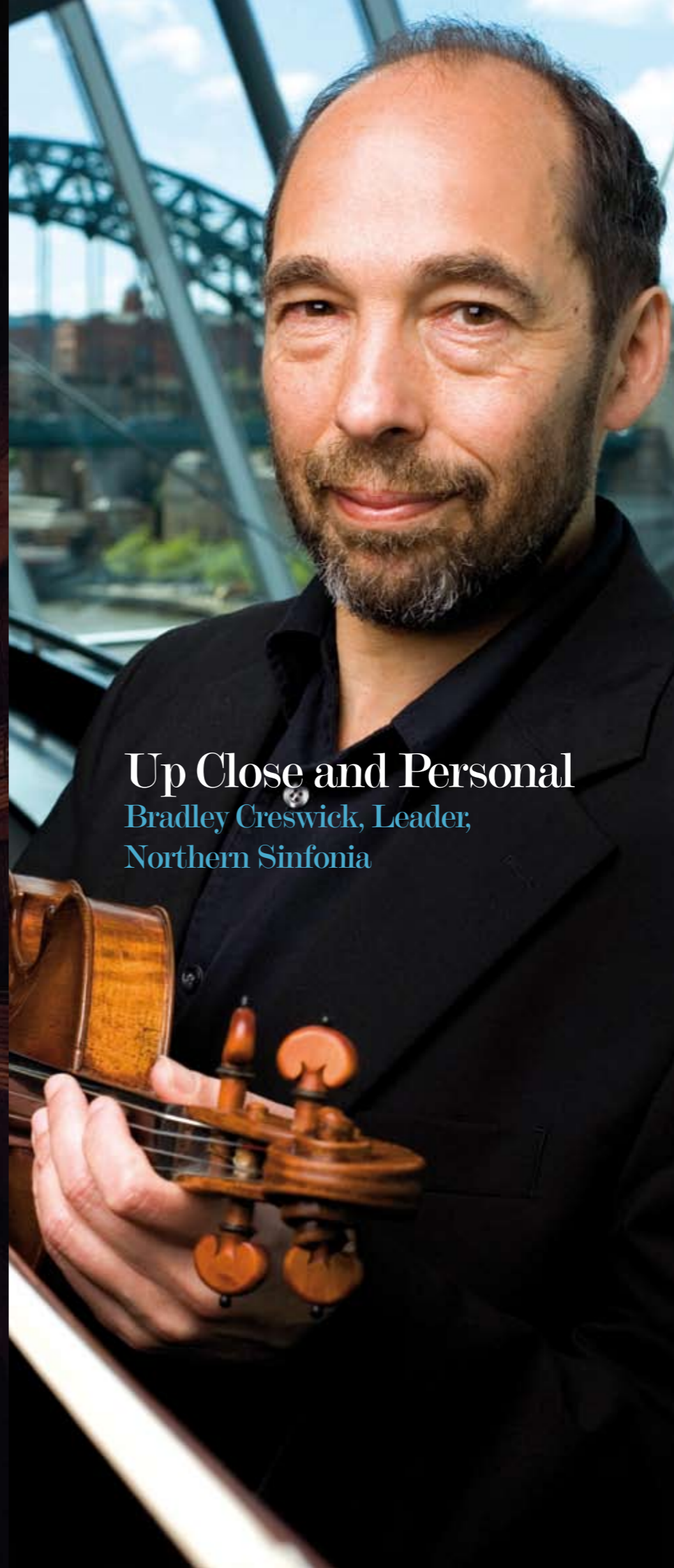
As the season takes shape, we regularly review the pattern of concerts and rehearsals, not only trying to ensure that we keep the concerts evenly spaced, but also to check that the musicians have enough time off across the year as a whole. The orchestra can work on any day of the week, and there are myriad contractual boundaries that need to be considered as the initial plans for Northern Sinfonia's season develop into the final schedule. The musicians must have sufficient time to do private

practice and, of course, have a life away from work! Whilst putting on a concert at home in The Sage Gateshead is a relatively straightforward affair for us, after nearly four years, (though each one still involves at least three technical staff and a twenty-five-strong customer service team), any activity outside of the building requires far more detailed pre-planning. With four trips already planned for our 50th Anniversary Season, many hours are already being spent studying flight lists and visa requirements. We hope you are as excited as we are about the future of both The Sage Gateshead and its orchestra Northern Sinfonia.

**Anthony Brice**  
Northern Sinfonia Manager  
**Craig West**  
Performance Programme Manager



# Planning a Season



## Up Close and Personal Bradley Creswick, Leader, Northern Sinfonia

### How long have you been with Northern Sinfonia?

It has been 25 years this season, with a seven year gap in the middle.

### Why did you join?

It was such a great job to be offered!

### Who were your teachers and where did you train?

Hugh Bean, Jaroslav Vanecek, Emmanuel Hurwitz and the Royal College of Music.

### Have you won any prizes?

A great many RCM violin prizes, together with the Tagore Gold Medal and the Martin Musical Scholarship.

### What attracts you to Northern Sinfonia?

A hugely varied repertoire with all kinds of challenges, coupled with freedom of expression that stems from having so many brilliant musicians all around you. And there is plenty of rehearsal time!

### What opportunities does The Sage Gateshead offer Northern Sinfonia?

Working in a building that is dedicated to music is immensely fulfilling. The place itself is often full of many musicians from a variety of backgrounds and genres, so being able to meet them and (sometimes) play with them is really inspiring. Giving concerts regularly in such fantastic halls is making our sound grow in colour and definition as well as increasing our vision – giving us something to live up to!

### What impact has Thomas Zehetmair had on the orchestra?

What can I say?! As a violinist, quartet musician and conductor he inspires such admiration. He treats the orchestra as a living organism and has this astonishing ability to let us play 'as we are', combined with a most rigorous discipline. I find it amazing to watch.

### What was your most amazing moment on stage?

Actually it was at a rehearsal in 1985 or so. We were going through Tippett's 'Corelli Fantasy' with Richard Hickox conducting, and the composer was listening. All of a sudden Tippett stood up behind Richard - he was kind of dancing to the music as we carried on. I was utterly blown away by the profound beauty of the scene.

### Have you a favourite piece?

Bach's Christmas Oratorio, especially the first chorus.

### And your favourite CD or recording?

Nick Drake singing River Man.



## Up Close and Personal Juliette Bausor, Principal Flute

### How long have you been with Northern Sinfonia and why did you join?

Three and a half years, having joined at the beginning of 2005. At the time I was looking for a Principal Flute position and was excited by the opportunity to play with a chamber orchestra of such high regard. It was such an important time in the orchestra's career with the recent appointment of Thomas Zehetmair as Musical Director, and the move into the wonderful The Sage Gateshead. I was attracted by the youthful energy of the orchestra and the warmth of all the players. Being such a small orchestra there is a real family atmosphere.

### Who were your teachers and where did you train?

I studied the flute with Anna Pope at both the Purcell School of Music in London and also at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music. Thereafter, I attended the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where my flute professors included Philippa Davies, Paul Edmund Davies and Samuel Coles. I also spent an intense few months on an exchange scheme studying at the Conservatoire Nationale Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris with Sophie Cherrier and Vincent Lucas.

### Have you ever won any prizes, competitions or awards?

Gold Medal winner in the Shell LSO Competition 1997, playing the Nielsen Flute Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra in the Barbican Hall. Winner of the Woodwind Final in the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition 1998, leading to

my debut in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast with the Ulster Orchestra. Gold Medal, Harrods Bank Prize and Worshipful Company of Dyers Award in the Royal Over-Seas League Competition 2001. Selected as a Tillet Trust Young Artist in 2002, which led to recital opportunities throughout Britain, and won the Making Music 'Philip and Dorothy Green Award' for Young Concert Artists 2004.

### What attracts you to Northern Sinfonia?

I love the variety of my work with the Sinfonia. Not only does our repertoire range from the very old to the very new, but the many different guises the orchestra performs in can mean that one minute I might be playing with a select few in some chamber music, or opening a concert with a solo flute piece, and the next I'll be involved in the bigger concerts such as J.S Bach's St. Matthew's Passion or Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, as well as pit orchestra duties for Mozart's opera Don Giovanni! I'm really looking forward to having the opportunity to perform the Nielsen flute concerto with Northern Sinfonia and Thomas Zehetmair in Hall One at The Sage Gateshead in November during its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season.

### What opportunities does The Sage Gateshead offer Northern Sinfonia?

With its ample rehearsal space and two world class concert halls, both with excellent acoustics, we are extremely lucky to be able to call this wonderful building our home. There is always such a diverse range of music going on at The Sage Gateshead – from world, folk, jazz and classical to electronic and dance music, all of which creates an amazing atmosphere and buzz in the building. This also means that the orchestra often finds itself involved in projects which we otherwise might not have the opportunity to do, such as the Gateshead International Jazz Festival.

### What impact has Thomas Zehetmair had on the orchestra?

The orchestra has a great relationship with Thomas. He is a phenomenal violinist and musician and is inspirational to work with. His uncompromising standards mean that we all strive to achieve our very best at all times.

### Have you a particular highlight from your time at The Sage Gateshead?

One very memorable concert was with the young Canadian conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin in 2007. I was performing the solo flute role in J.S. Bach's Suite No.2 for flute and orchestra and his energy and enthusiasm for the music was particularly affecting. Later in the programme we performed Stravinsky's magnificent Symphony of Psalms for which the orchestra doubled in size and was joined by the Northern Sinfonia Chorus.

### Where would you like to see the orchestra head next?

We have some very exciting programmes coming up in our 50th Anniversary Season, beginning with the performances of all the Beethoven Symphonies in October. I especially look forward to our forthcoming tour of the Far East next spring, when we'll perform in China, Korea and Malaysia.

### Have you a favourite piece?

I can't pick one! I love Ravel's Daphnis and Chloe and his String Quartet, Brahms' Clarinet Quintet, Mozart's Così fan Tutte, Beethoven 7... I could go on!...

### And your favourite CD or recording?

Martha Argerich playing Rachmaninov 3 and Tchaikovsky 1 Piano Concertos live with Riccardo Chailly and RSO Berlin.

### How do you wind down?

Socialising with friends over dinner or a glass of wine.



## Up Close & Personal How to get close to the orchestra

None of Northern Sinfonia's success would be possible without the ongoing support of a wide variety of people, businesses and other organisations. Supporters enjoy an exclusive relationship with Northern Sinfonia.

### Principal Partners

Principal Partners receive benefits including social events, crediting in orchestra programmes and opportunities for regular insights into the day-to-day working life of the orchestra and its members. Michael and Anne Marie Robinson became Principal Partners to the section leader for the Flute, currently Juliette Bausor, in April 2008. Michael is passionate about the orchestra's local roots: "What I think is so special about Northern Sinfonia is that it gives us an orchestra rooted in the North East, but with international recognition for its excellence, providing music of exceptional quality. The orchestra covers the whole range of classical music, right up to the most challenging modern works and, in every piece it does, I get not just an exceptional performance but a real sense that the orchestra are thoroughly enjoying the music! I feel strongly about the North East and know that it is one of our best exports".

Principal Partners enjoy a special association with the orchestra, and have the opportunity to meet the musician who holds the chair they support and attend rehearsals. The relationship adds value to the experience of attending a concert. Michael says: "The partnership gives me a feeling of a real relationship with the orchestra. I love classical (and all other kinds) of music but I can't claim to be an expert by any stretch of the imagination. I think we can all appreciate the sheer

beauty of the flute and Juliette Bausor shows such enjoyment of the music and is such a wonderful musician that it's a real pleasure to be associated with that particular instrument. The really wonderful thing is that we can congratulate Northern Sinfonia on a marvellous fifty years of music, but we also know that there are going to be so many exciting times ahead for the orchestra as it goes from strength to strength. It's something everyone in this region can be immensely proud of".

### Corporate Partnership: UBS

In 2006, UBS, the world's leading wealth manager, demonstrated its long-term commitment to the North East by announcing a three-year partnership programme with The Sage Gateshead. This marked the biggest regional partnership undertaken by UBS's office in the North East since it was established in 2002 and has provided UBS with a direct link to Northern Sinfonia through association with its Co-Leader (associate leader of the orchestra). This position is currently held by violinist Kyra Humphreys. Demonstrating UBS's global sponsorship focus on orchestral music, Northern Sinfonia enjoys support from UBS alongside other leading international orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony and UBS Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra.

Jonathan Brown, Investment Director with UBS, said: "UBS recognises the value that Northern Sinfonia brings to the region, attracting the very best in orchestral music, as well as extensive education and community programmes, engaging as many people as possible and promoting culture in the North of England. Northern Sinfonia shares values such as teamwork, pursuit of excellence, passion, commit-

ment, discipline and expertise with UBS. The partnership is also consistent with our global commitment to orchestral music and culture. UBS would like to congratulate Northern Sinfonia on its first fifty years. To reach this milestone in such health, offering so much to so many people, is indicative of the exciting times ahead. We look forward to many more years".

### Sponsorship: SIEMENS

In addition to the ongoing relationships that support the orchestra, Northern Sinfonia also benefits from support from companies sponsoring a single concert. Lynn Hepple, Communications Officer for Siemens Transmission & Distribution Ltd, said of a concert her company sponsored in May 2008 featuring former Northern Sinfonia artistic director Richard Hickox as conductor, "We were delighted with our recent sponsorship of the Northern Sinfonia concert – both our hosts and guests had a truly enjoyable evening from start to finish. As one of the region's biggest employers, Siemens is committed to supporting local cultural and community events. Unique events like the Northern Sinfonia concert really serve as a great launch pad to build relationships with the region's key decision makers and secure our future in the North East".

### Northern Sinfonia Friends

Friends pay an annual subscription and enjoy learning more about the orchestra and coming to know all of those involved. They also receive a regular newsletter and can attend informal Friends gatherings.

*There are many opportunities to get close to the orchestra. Contact Amanda Walker, Head of Development, 0191 443 4562, [amanda.walker@thesagegateshead.org](mailto:amanda.walker@thesagegateshead.org), for more information.*





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