

## New musical era for Sheffield orchestra

Tuesday 15 October, 2024

**Sheffield, 15 October 2024** – International classical soloist Laurence Perkins has just been appointed as the Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of Sheffield Chamber Orchestra (SCO). Perkins has a worldwide reputation for his chart-topping solo bassoon recordings for the Hyperion record label, alongside his regional work as Principal Bassoonist of Manchester Camerata between 1974 and 2017.

This is the first time that SCO has appointed an Artistic Director, a role which Perkins welcomes as an important part of his commitment and enthusiasm for amateur music-making. “The word ‘amateur’ means ‘for the love of’” says Perkins. “I really value the passion and dedication that the SCO members show in their playing, and I’m really looking forward to exploring the incredibly rich, varied and exciting music for chamber orchestra, working at the highest level.”

The first SCO concert with Perkins in his new role is on Saturday 30th November in All Saints Church, Ecclesall. Entitled ‘Sheffield Music Makers’, he has devised a wide-ranging programme which features each section of the orchestra. The only soloist in this concert is the leader of SCO, Ralph Dawson, who is playing a delightful Romance by the 19th century Norwegian composer Johan Svendsen. The strings feature in Tchaikovsky’s evocative musical portrait of the city of Florence, the winds in exotic music by Caplet, the brass in the ever-popular ‘Water Music’ by Handel, and the full orchestra in classics by Rossini, Elgar, Rachmaninov and Mozart.

Further details and tickets, £12 full price, £6 for students and children, available through Sheffield Chamber Orchestra’s website <https://www.scorchestra.uk/concert/sheffield-music-makers-2024/>

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### Notes to editors

For comment, call Laurence Perkins, 07866 802248.

### The music

#### *SCO taking Elgar’s pet dog for an outing*

In its next concert on Saturday 30th November 2024, Sheffield Chamber Orchestra will perform Sir Edward Elgar’s rarely heard but much-loved orchestral work ‘Mina’. His last orchestral work, which is by turns gentle, sad, and haunting, the piece is a love letter to one of the composer’s Cairn Terriers which, together with Marco and Meg, became his constant companion after the death of his beloved wife Alice. This work is his hymn of thanks to her (the dog, not his wife). The orchestra’s performance will accompany a short film of Elgar at his final home, Marl House in Worcester, since demolished, where he is seen playing with his pet dogs in the garden and driving with them by car through the Malvern hills, which provided much of the inspiration for his music.

#### *Romance in the air*

The Romance for Violin and Orchestra by Johan Svendsen is a lyrical, at times heart rending, romantic masterpiece to be performed by the orchestra’s professional leader, Ralph Dawson. The work was apparently sketched during a couple of hours when a violin student did not show up and then written out as a score the same evening.

#### *From Seville to Paris*

The concert will also feature classical favourites including Rossini’s overture from “The Barber of Seville”, Handel’s second suite from “The Water Music”, and Symphony 31 “Paris” by Mozart.

### The orchestra

**Sheffield Chamber Orchestra**, a registered charity, was formed in 1950 and is a small classical orchestra, comprising of strings, woodwind, horns, trumpets and percussion. It is essentially a body of

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amateur musicians but has the benefit of being professionally trained by its conductor, Laurence Perkins, and leader, Ralph Dawson. Each year the orchestra gives three concerts in Sheffield, around Sheffield. Our concert programme includes a concert with an opportunity for young, professional, local musicians who are just starting out in their careers as concert soloists. The relatively small size of our orchestra enables us to be adventurous with our wide-ranging and innovative repertoire from the baroque to the present day.

**Laurence Perkins** was born in Lancashire in 1954 and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester between 1970-76 with Charles Cracknell, principal bassoonist in the Hallé Orchestra. He joined Manchester Camerata as their principal bassoonist in October 1974, finally leaving in June 2017 to pursue more chamber music, solo playing and conducting. As a performer, he has played in concerts throughout the UK (including the BBC Proms) and on overseas tours including France, Germany, Portugal, Norway, the Azores Islands, Hong Kong, Macau, Australia and Japan. He has worked as a soloist with the English Chamber Orchestra, New London Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, as well as numerous concerts throughout Europe. Perkins was Director of Wind Chamber Music at Dartington International Summer School for 18 years, where he conducted a wide range of repertoire including British première performances of recent works. He has been a guest conductor with ensembles and orchestras throughout the U.K. directing much of the great classical repertoire. More details at <https://laurenceperkins.com/conducting>

**Ralph Dawson** took up the post of Leader of Sheffield Chamber Orchestra in October 2002. He effortlessly combines his excellent professional leadership qualities with great enthusiasm and an endearing sense of humour.

Ralph studied the violin at the Guildhall School of Music in London, and privately with Ralph Holmes and Maurice Clare, (a pupil of Sevcik and Enescu). He started his professional playing career as a member of The Ulster Orchestra, and then in 1987 joined the Orchestra of Opera North. In 1992 he left Opera North to pursue life as a freelance musician. Since this time, he has enjoyed a truly varied musical career, working regularly with most professional ensembles in the North of England. He has led the Orchestra of D'Oyly Carte and The National Operetta Orchestra and has toured extensively in the UK and abroad. He also enjoys performing regularly in several chamber music ensembles, most notably in a recital violin and piano duo.

## **Media**

High resolution images available from <https://SCOrchestra.uk/press>

144 second interview with Laurence Perkins: <https://youtu.be/BQRvIADJBVI>

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