

MUSICON

Concert season 2024-2025

Stunning music in historic Durham venues



Welcome to MUSICON's 2024-25 Season

Creating connection is our motto for MUSICON's 56th season of professional concerts in Durham.

Music connects us. It builds communities, draws us together to sing, play or listen. Sharing the space of a live concert with others is a special experience that transforms and enriches us and binds us closer together.

Last season, we continued our mission to expand the community of music-lovers in Durham, doubling our audiences and organising workshops for local schools and members of the public. This season we'll be going further, aiming to reach as many people as possible with our activities, and all for some of the cheapest ticket prices you'll find anywhere.

Supported by Durham University, our typical concert full-price entry is just £10, with £5 for students and just £1 for under-18s. But even this can be too much for some, in these difficult economic times. We don't want to price anyone out of the joy of live music, so if you're struggling to afford this we are happy to help – get in touch in advance, or let us know on the door.

So what's on this season?

We open with an exciting young trio of baroque performers, **The Portrait Players**, whose programme imaginatively explores the music of late 17th-century London. Next we are proud to welcome the celebrated duo of **Fenella Humphreys (violin) and Martin Roscoe (piano)** to mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Gabriel Fauré with a programme of his magical chamber music in the stunning setting of the Cathedral.

There's more early music later in the season, when some of the nation's leading period instrumentalists join forces for **In Echo's** tour of North European baroque repertoire on 12th November, and we look forward to welcoming audience favourites **EXAUDI** back in January to explore medieval vocal music. EXAUDI will also continue its very successful collaboration with St Leonard's Catholic Comprehensive School, performing compositions by A-level Music students as part of their concert.

Also returning are the world-renowned viol consort **Fretwork**, whose concert, featuring the stunning voice of young countertenor superstar **Alexander Chance**, marks the 400th anniversary of the death of Orlando Gibbons. Less familiar but equally fascinating will be the concert of traditional and contemporary harpsichord music on 20th November, with **Katarzyna Kowalik** – an opportunity to expand our musical horizons in the company of a top-class performer.

Talking of expanding horizons, our season culminates in a mini-festival dedicated to doing just that. In March we will welcome performers from two of the UK's greatest new-music ensembles **Plus Minus** and **Riot Ensemble**, to headline our **New Music Weekend**, which will include multiple performances and workshops, with plenty of opportunities to participate or just dip in and experience new work hot-off-the-press. We'll be publishing more details of that as the line-up is completed later in the year.

But our concerts are only part of what MUSICON does – equally important are our workshops, offering opportunities to participate in music-making to everyone from schoolchildren to adult amateur musicians. Most of our professional performers this season will be offering schools workshops in the area, and we'll be starting the whole season off with a one-day **Choral Workshop** exploring the music of **Henry Purcell** on 12th October, culminating in a performance during Evensong in the Cathedral that afternoon.

There's so much to enjoy in this MUSICON season – and there may be even more before the year is over. Our website is updated with new events as they arise, so be sure to check back regularly, or join our mailing list to be sure of not missing anything.

We can't wait to welcome you to a MUSICON concert this year!



James Weeks, Chair of MUSICON

Saturday 12th October, 10am-6.15pm, Chapter House, Durham Cathedral

Come and Sing Day: Henry Purcell

All-day choral workshop with a unique Evensong performance

James Weeks (EXAUDI Vocal Ensemble and Durham University) leads an inspiring day exploring the brilliant, varied and stunningly expressive church music of Henry Purcell (1659-95).

Purcell was a child prodigy who in his short life went on to become the greatest of the golden generation of Restoration composers, and perhaps the greatest natural composing talent England has ever produced. Though equally renowned for his theatre and instrumental music, his primary career was as organist of the Chapel Royal and of Westminster Abbey, for which he produced a string of glorious choral works, including music for royal coronations and funerals.

We will explore some of the finest works of this rich legacy in this workshop, including *Hear my prayer, I was glad, O God, thou art my God, Jehovah, quam multi sunt hostes mei*, and the *Funeral Sentences for Queen Mary*.

This special workshop takes place in the magnificent Chapter House of Durham Cathedral, and culminates in a unique opportunity to for participants to sing one of the workshop pieces as an Introit at the cathedral's service of Evensong that evening. The Cathedral Choir will sing the rest of the service after our performance.

Tickets:
£22.50 standard
£10 students
£2.50 under-18s

Booking fees apply.

For more information and tickets, visit the Durham Cathedral website.



Tuesday 15th October, 7.30pm, Elvet Methodist Church

The Portrait Players: *Les Femmes Illustres* – The Female Genius

Described in their debut concert as 'beguiling', The Portrait Players are an all-female trio whose engaging programmes are inspired by historical characters. Featuring Claire Ward (soprano), Kristiina Watt (theorbo/lute) and Miriam Nohl (cello/viola da gamba), the trio, founded in January 2023, has quickly established a busy concert schedule across the UK.

In this programme The Portrait Players shine a light on the female writers of 17th century Paris, who inspired the composers, as well as the actresses in London who brought Purcell's theatre songs to life.

Henry Purcell: *The Plaint; From rosy bowers, and other songs*
Sébastien Le Camus: *Ah! Fuyons ce dangereux séjour and other songs*

François Campion: *J'ai juré mille fois*
Honoré d'Ambruis: *Le doux silence de nos bois*
Michel Lambert: *Laissez-moi soupirer*

Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s



Tuesday 29th October, 7.30pm, Durham Cathedral

Fenella Humphreys (violin) and Martin Roscoe (piano): Fauré 100

Camille Saint-Saëns: *Sonata no. 1 op. 75*

Gabriel Fauré: *Romance op. 28*

Fauré: *Andante op. 75*

Georges Enescu: *Impromptu Concertant*

Lili Boulanger: *Nocturne & Cortège*

Maurice Ravel: *Sonata Posthume*

Fauré: *Sonata no. 1 in A op. 13*

On the 100th anniversary of the death of Gabriel Fauré, this concert celebrates the composer's lyrical romanticism with works from the 1870s to the 1890s, including the great first Sonata. Saint-Saëns' own first Sonata and Ravel's one movement *Sonate Posthume* complete a programme that will transport you to the magic of fin-de-siècle Paris.

Fenella Humphreys and Martin Roscoe are two of the UK's most celebrated soloists and chamber musicians, and their affinity with this repertoire is unmatched. Of his Fauré playing, Gramophone praised Roscoe's 'irresistible momentum in the outer movements, matching the composer's unstoppable flow of ideas', while The Scotsman applauded Humphreys' 'golden precision and effortless virtuosity'.

Tickets:
£15 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s

Booking fees apply.

For more information and tickets, visit the Durham Cathedral website.

Credit: Alejandro Tamagno



Tuesday 12th November, 7:30pm, Elvet Methodist Church

In Echo: Music in a Cold Climate – sounds of Hansa Europe

In Echo

Gawain Glenton, cornett & director
 Oliver Webber, violin
 Rachel Byrt, viola
 Emily White, sackbut
 William Hunt, viol
 Silas Wollston, organ

Tickets:
 £10 standard
 £5 students
 £1 under-18s

The sea-faring nations of Northern Europe have always been connected, never more so than during the heyday of the Hanseatic League, that great trading community connecting London to Tallinn via Lübeck, Hamburg, and the ports of Holland, Denmark and Sweden in a network that cemented ties by trade in everything from iron, wool, books, salt and soldiers, to music and ideas - all dependent on the North and Baltic seas.

This fascinating programme explores the instrumental music that passed between these ports and countries in the 16th and 17th centuries, from dances to sonatas, including Pavans inspired by John Dowland's famous *Lachrimae* to elaborate music by major figures such as the German/Danish organist **Dietrich Buxtehude**, a precursor of Bach.

In the virtuosic hands of Gawain Glenton's *In Echo*, these rarely-heard gems will sparkle as brightly as they did in centuries past.

Gawain Glenton



Wednesday 13th November, 7:30pm, Department of Music,
Palace Green, Durham

Songs from Japan

Miku Yasukawa, soprano

Yoshie Kawamura, piano

Programme to include:

Rentarō Taki: Kōjō no Tsuki (荒城の月, 'The Moon over the Ruined Castle')

Kōsaku Yamada: Karatachi no Hana' (からたちの花, 'Trifoliolate Orange')

Tatsunosuke Kishitani: Hatsukoi (初恋, 'First Love')

Gaetano Donizetti: *Prendi per me sei libero*

Giacomo Puccini: *Quando m'en vo'*

Umberto Giordano: *Caro mio ben*

This unique concert, curated by Dr Amanda Hsieh, presents a selection of extremely beautiful early twentieth-century Japanese art songs, rarely heard in the UK. Music by composers such as Rentarō Taki, Kōsaku Yamada and Tatsunosuke Kishitani will be interwoven with European songs and operatic excerpts, just as they would have been performed in their original context.

These songs - exploring timeless themes of love, nature and travel - formed part of a musical landscape grounded in Japanese desires to explore a new musical medium in times of political turmoil and imperialist expansionism.

Miku Yasukawa is fast gaining a reputation as one of the most exciting young sopranos around, following her appearance as a finalist in the prestigious Guildhall Gold Medal competition at London's Barbican Centre. She is partnered by Yoshie Kawamura, one of the North East's finest pianists.

Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s



Wednesday 20th November, 7:30pm, Department of Music,
Palace Green, Durham

Inventions: the harpsichord across time and borders

Katarzyna Kowalik, harpsichord

Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre: Suite no. 1 in D minor

Marjory Kennedy-Fraser: Mull Fisher's Love Song, arr. Lisa Robertson

Lisa Robertson: *dorchadas, duilichinn, dòchas (darkness, regret, hope)*

John Dowland/Heinrich Scheidemann: *Pavana Lachrimae*

Anon. Irish: *Ho Hoane*

Evangelia Rigaki: *Keening*

Elisabetta di Gamberini: *Lover, go and Calm your Sighs, with variations on the song*

Janet Oates: *Night shall Hide thee*

Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s

Inventions is a fascinating trans-national project to promote and present unusual music for solo harpsichord, drawing primarily on historical and contemporary music by female composers from Scotland, Ireland and England. Three beautiful new commissions are set alongside historical works, making links between different countries and centuries, and performed by Katarzyna Kowalik, a creative and skilled performer of both historical and contemporary keyboard music.

The *Inventions* project is gratefully supported by Creative Scotland, Sound Scotland, Arts Council England, Mary Cooke, the Hope Scott Trust, The Marchus Trust and the Francis Routh Trust.



Tuesday 28th January, 7.30pm, Elvet Methodist Church

EXAUDI: The Mirror of Speculation

Johannes Ciconia: *Le ray au soleyl*

Jacob Senleches: *La harpe de melodie*

Rodericus: *Angelorum psalat*

Music from the Old Hall Manuscript

Marcel le Gan, ed. Mark Dyer: *Scribe*

Guillaume de Machaut: *Tant doucement; Fin cuers doulz;*

Riches d'amour

James Weeks: *Four virelais*

Vocal ensemble EXAUDI returns to MUSICON with a dazzling programme exploring some of the most beautiful – and strange – vocal music of the medieval period.

They begin with pieces from the Codex Chantilly (c.1400), showcasing a style known as the *Ars subtilior*, or 'subtler art', when composers would bury dizzily complex rhythmic forms in their otherwise lyrical music, sometimes even drawing the music on shapes such as hearts, harps and concentric circles, leaving visual puzzles for the musicians to decipher.

The music of the Old Hall manuscript, copied in England around 1420, is similarly intricate, yet with a wonderful clarity and surface exhilaration, delighting in the interplay of virtuosic voices. Guillaume de Machaut, the foremost French composer and poet of the Middle Ages, is represented by three works, and the concert ends with James Weeks' playful entwining of several of his solo virelais.

The concert will also feature music specially composed for EXAUDI by A-level students at St Leonard's Catholic School, in partnership with Durham Music Service.

Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s



Saturday 1st March – Sunday 2nd March, Department of Music,
Palace Green, Durham

New Music Weekend

Plus-Minus Ensemble
Riot Ensemble
James Weeks

Experience some of the hottest new music currently being made in the company of some of the UK's leading ensembles, in a packed weekend of events:

- Explore and perform new experimental choral repertoire in our all-comers **Choral workshop**, led by **James Weeks**
- Hear new music for instrumental ensemble from **Cassandra Miller, Michael Finnissy, Zhouer Zhou** and **Laurence Crane**, performed by **Plus-Minus Ensemble**
- Enjoy a lunchtime recital of works for voice and violin from **Riot Ensemble's** Sarah Dacey and Marie Schreer
- Attend public **composition workshops** on specially-written pieces by local schoolchildren and university students
- Encounter **pop-up performances** by local artists and musicians throughout the weekend

The full programme will be announced in January, including ways to get involved as a performer or composer.

Check our website throughout the Autumn for updates and ticket information.

Kindly supported by funding from Vaughan Williams Foundation and Hinrichsen Foundation.



Tuesday 4th March 7:30pm, Elvet Methodist Church

Fretwork and Alexander Chance: Orlando Gibbons at 400

Orlando Gibbons, whose refined and deeply expressive works represent the pinnacle of Jacobean music, died on 5th June 1625 at the young age of 41, while travelling to Canterbury with the Chapel Royal to receive Charles I's bride, Henrietta Maria. His untimely death was mourned across English culture, and we mark the anniversary with the first of two concerts given in Durham in 2025 by legendary viol consort Fretwork.

This programme explores Gibbons' consort music in 5 and 6 parts, alongside songs and madrigals, performed by the stunning young singer Alexander Chance, described by Gramophone as 'his generation's most exciting British countertenor'. The concert climaxes with Nico Muhly's *My Days*, a substantial and deeply moving work exploring the melancholy that underpins Gibbons' style.

This concert has been generously supported by the Radcliffe Trust.



Tickets:
£10 standard
£5 students
£1 under-18s

Ticket Information

Purchasing Tickets

Online

All concerts are listed on our webpage at www.durham.ac.uk/musicon, which contains links to all booking sites.

On the door

If you are unable to book online, tickets are generally available on the door on the evening of performance (or reserve at musicon@durham.ac.uk). Cash or card payments only.

If you wish to attend our concerts but are prevented from doing so through hardship, please get in touch at musicon@durham.ac.uk.

Doors open 30 mins before the performance starts.

Honorary Patrons

Prof. Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor, Durham University
 Very Revd Dr Philip Plyming, Dean of Durham Cathedral
 Dame Sarah Connolly
 Sir Thomas Allen
 Sir James Macmillan

Contact

MUSICON
Department of Music
Palace Green
Durham, DH1 3RL

W: durham.ac.uk/musicon
E: musicon@durham.ac.uk

durham.ac.uk

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