



National Open Youth Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales premiere Charlotte Harding's 'The Orchestra: A Young Person's Guide'

A celebration of orchestral music on NOYO's #ThisIsOurOrchestra tour, led by young musicians shaping what the orchestra can become

- Eighteen disabled and non-disabled young musicians from the National Open Youth Orchestra (NOYO) perform alongside BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by Alice Farnham
- #ThisIsOurOrchestra tour features the world premiere of 'The Orchestra: A Young Person's Guide', a new co-commission with the BBC by Charlotte Harding
- Tour dates include the Barbican Centre (30 June 2026), Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff (30 July 2026) and Bristol Beacon (9 August 2026) as part of the BBC Proms.
- A vibrant programme mixing new music, new arrangements of iconic repertoire, and innovative instruments, including the world's first Clarion concerto
- Relaxed performances suitable for all, including neurodivergent and disabled audiences, and families

Eighteen disabled and non-disabled young musicians from the National Open Youth Orchestra (NOYO) are joined by guest players from BBC National Orchestra of Wales on a national tour that puts energy and invention at the heart of orchestral music-making.

The #ThisIsOurOrchestra tour features the world premiere of *The Orchestra: A Young Person's Guide*, a bold new reimagining of Britten's much-loved work by composer Charlotte Harding. Co-commissioned by NOYO in partnership with the BBC, the piece reframes the original concept: instead of audiences being taught what an orchestra is, young musicians invite them to experience what an orchestra can evolve to be today.

The programme features a wide-ranging mix of sounds and instruments, from strings, brass and harp to accordion, saxophones, synthesisers and the Clarion, an accessible electronic instrument developed by Open Up Music that some of the performers will play with their hand or head movement. Alongside Harding's new commission, the programme includes selections from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, Florence Price's *Juba Dance*, Michael Betteridge's *Soaring Through Sparks* (featuring Clarion soloist and NOYO alumnus Alessandro Vazzana), and *Barriers* by NOYO alumnus Oliver Cross, a work reflecting on access and belonging in music.

NOYO harpist Holli Pandit says: "We are a group of young musicians trying out new things in our music-making, and I think that will come through in our performances. 'Barriers' is thrilling for me to perform because it has a beautiful harp part. It was one of the first pieces I got to work on with a live composer, and I really like that about NOYO, because we could workshop our own parts with the composer. This is insanely rare in other orchestras. I've played it a few times now, but it always feels

different depending on the audience and how I'm feeling that day. NOYO is doing something different, and I'm sure it will be entertaining and interesting to hear us."

Charlotte Harding says: "This piece is an all-out celebration of the 21st century orchestra; its rich past, present energy, and the infinite sonic possibility it holds for the future. It has been a huge privilege to collaborate with NOYO and to explore together what an orchestra can mean to young people today. Their contemporary electronic-acoustic language, boundless creativity, and deep sense of community have fuelled this reimagining, and I am so excited to invite audiences to experience 'our orchestra' this summer! It's a symphonic celebration of all that we are; an open invitation to all play our part, a universal language of joy and endeavour; that moves us most when we are tutti, together."

Founded in 2018, the National Open Youth Orchestra is the world's first disabled-led national youth orchestra. NOYO works alongside young disabled musicians to remove barriers that have historically excluded them from learning music and progressing into professional pathways. This includes flexible approaches to rehearsal, accessible formats for learning, and commissioning new music and arrangements that support a wider range of musicians and instruments.

As the classical music world honours the 50th anniversary of Benjamin Britten's death, this new commission is full of youthful energy and centred on the theme of 'move' to show everyone what an orchestra can evolve to be. Written in five movements (Particles, Individuals, Sections, Palettes, and Tutti), Harding's piece brings together Purcell's theme, Britten's concept and the voices of today's young musicians to explore how orchestral sound is created, and what the orchestral experience can mean to us all.

All performances on the #ThisIsOurOrchestra tour are relaxed, inviting audiences to engage with the music in ways that work for them. With musicians introducing the programme and encouraging audience participation, the concerts offer an inclusive and shared experience that reflects NOYO's vision of an orchestra where everyone has a part to play. Audience members will also be able to play the Clarion before the concerts, with the instrument available in the foyer and shared spaces at each venue.

Notes to editors

#ThisIsOurOrchestra Tour

30th June 2026 - Barbican Centre, London

30th July 2026 - Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff

9th August 2026 - BBC Proms, Bristol Beacon

Programme

The Orchestra: A Young Person's Guide - Charlotte Harding

The Four Seasons (Spring) - Vivaldi (arr. Rhian Davies)

The Four Seasons (Autumn) - Vivaldi (arr. Ellen O'Brien)

The Four Seasons (Winter) - Vivaldi (arr. Ellen O'Brien)

Juba Dance - Florence Price (arr. Rhian Davies)

Barriers - Oliver Cross (arr. Liam Taylor-West)

Soaring Through Sparks - Michael Betteridge (arr. Julia Koelmans)

NOYO Performers

Alex Skinner - Trumpet, Accordion, Recorder
Cass Alabaster - Violin and Viola
Charlie Hyde - Drums and percussion
Connor Bates - Cello
Evie Read - Clarion (touchscreen)
Holli Pandit - Harp
Joshua Phelps - Violin
Lilian Hopper - Oboe
Lubo Rnic - Euphonium
Maeve Russell - Violin and French Horn
Oscar Abbott - Tuned percussion and piano
Pea Pearson - Oboe and Cor Anglais
Raena Torane - Piano and Saxophone
Shoshana Yugin-Power - Flute, bassoon, recorder, piano
Sophia Breeze - Violin
Sophie Capern - Violin
Una Morrissey - Orchestral Percussion and Double Bass
Ziya Haji - Bass guitar

Guests

Alice Farnham - Conductor
Alessandro Vazzana - Clarion (Quha Zono headmouse)

BBC National Orchestra of Wales musicians

Anna Cleworth - Violin
Lydia Caines - Violin
Tetsuumi Nagata - Viola
Alistair Howes - Cello
David Stark - Bass
Lindsey Ellis - Flute
Lenny Sayers - Clarinet
Tim Thorpe - Horn
Corey Morris - Trumpet
Darren Smith - Bass Trombone
Catherine Roe-Williams - Keyboard
Andrea Porter - Percussion
Jarek Augustyniak - Bassoon

Access information

The NOYO concerts are relaxed performances, designed to welcome neurodivergent and disabled audiences, families, and anyone who may benefit from a more informal atmosphere.

A flexible approach to noise is maintained, and audience members are free to come and go from the concert hall as needed. Those attending with young children are kindly requested to help minimise excessive noise to avoid distracting the orchestra. There will be a quiet space outside the concert hall, for anyone needing quiet time before or during the performance.

There will be a relaxed seating area with bean bags in the concert hall, which is not ticketed.

About NOYO

Since its launch in 2018 as the world's first disabled-led national youth ensemble, the National Open Youth Orchestra and its partners have successfully established a programme for 11-25 year-old disabled musicians to develop their skills, offering accessible ensemble practice and performance opportunities in five regions. 80% of NOYO musicians identify as disabled or neurodivergent.

The National Open Youth Orchestra is a dynamic orchestra that evolves each year. All National Open Youth Orchestra musicians have come through the ranks of five regional NOYO Ensembles, which are delivered through major partnerships:

- London NOYO Ensemble, in partnership with Guildhall School of Music & Drama.
- Bournemouth NOYO Ensemble, in partnership with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra;
- Bristol NOYO Ensemble, in partnership with Bristol Beacon

- Birmingham NOYO Ensemble, in partnership with Midlands Arts Centre and Services For Education.
- Cardiff NOYO Ensemble, in partnership with Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and BBC National Orchestra of Wales

with the Barbican Centre and B:Music as national partners.

In 2026, there are 68 musicians rehearsing in NOYO Ensembles.

Together, our mission is to show that combining high levels of inclusion and musical excellence isn't just possible, but the way forward.

The National Open Youth Orchestra is a programme of Open Up Music (Registered Charity No1167028). Open Up Music is an Arts Council National Portfolio organisation (NPO). It is also generously supported by founding sponsor ABRSM, Youth Music, Lightbulb Trust, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, John James Bristol Foundation, The Radcliffe Trust, The Northwick Trust, Marsh Charitable Trust, Dame Violet Wills Will Trust, Julia Rausing Trust and Golsoncott Foundation.

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Stay Tuned

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The logo for 'stay tuned' features the word 'stay' in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font above the word 'tuned' in a larger, bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The 't' in 'tuned' is stylized with a diagonal slash through it.