



## PRESS RELEASE

14 December 2017

# BBC National Orchestra Wales celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday from January to May 2018

- BBC NOW, Sinfonia Cymru and WNO Orchestra co-host the Association of British Orchestras Conference in Cardiff this January
- Composer-in-Association Huw Watkins explores music that has shaped him as composer and performer and his new symphonic work *Spring* receives its world premiere
- February focuses on new music that has been premiered by BBC NOW and the launch of the first phase of a digital archive
- BBC NOW celebrates Welsh music with world premieres by leading Welsh composers Mark Boden, Mark Bowden, Guto Puw and Gareth Glyn
- Composition: Wales returns to champion composers worthy of wider exposure and includes Gareth Churchill, Iestyn Harding, Ian Lawson, Lucy McPhee, Claire Victoria Roberts, John Senter, and Luciano Williamson
- BBC NOW celebrates its birthday week from 9 – 15 April on air, online and live in concert
- In May the Orchestra's dynamic learning programme takes the spotlight and re-confirms the orchestra's pledge that every child in Wales has the opportunity to experience a live orchestra during their school days

## BBC National Orchestra of Wales at 90

For 90 years, BBC NOW has played an integral role in the cultural and classical landscape of Wales, performing to audiences across the UK, abroad and on air. BBC NOW celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday from January to May 2018 showcasing the range and breadth of its work. In January, BBC NOW co-hosts the **ABO Conference** in Cardiff with **WNO Orchestra** and **Sinfonia Cymru** exploring the theme of collaboration. February focuses on new music past and present with the launch of a **new digital archive**. There are world premieres by leading Welsh composers across January, February and March including **Mark Boden, Mark Bowden, Gareth Glyn, Guto Puw** and BBC NOW Composer-in-Association **Huw Watkins**. The Orchestra celebrates its birthday week from **9 – 15 April** on air, online and live in concert and May puts the spotlight on its ground-breaking learning programme culminating with its Family Concert on **13 May**.

## January 2018: ABO conference

The ABO conference takes place from **24-26 January 2018** in Cardiff, and for the first time is hosted by three collaborating organisations: BBC NOW, WNO Orchestra and Sinfonia Cymru. On the first night the **WNO Orchestra & BBC NOW** join forces for a double bill at BBC Hoddinott Hall in a concert featuring Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier Suite* with WNO Orchestra and its Music Director **Tomáš Hanus** and Rimsky-Korsakov's

*Scheherazade* performed by BBC NOW under the baton of Principal Conductor **Thomas Søndergård**. The conference brings together delegates from every part of the sector with a focus on all aspects of collaboration. Key speakers will include **Lord Hall**, Director-General, BBC, **Sir Ciaran Devane**, Chief Executive, British Council, **Nick Capaldi**, Chief Executive, Arts Council of Wales, **Alan Davey**, Controller, BBC Radio 3, and BBC Radio 3 presenter **Katie Derham**.

### Composer-in-Association: Huw Watkins

BBC NOW's Principal Guest Conductor, Xian Zhang, conducts the world premiere of Huw Watkins' new symphonic work *Spring*. Watkins comments, 'It is astonishing that an Orchestra that continues to reinvent itself with such enterprising programmes every season is going to be celebrating its 90th birthday. In calling my piece *Spring*, I wanted somehow to mark that sense of renewal that keeps the Orchestra in such great health.' *Spring* is performed at **St David's Hall** on **19 January** and **Brangwyn Hall** on **20 January**. Commissioned by **BBC Radio 3**, it will be broadcast live on air on **19 January**. January also features two concerts at **BBC Hoddinott Hall** curated by **Huw Watkins** exploring the music that shaped him both as a composer and a performer. Conducted by **Martyn Brabbins** on **12 January**, Watkins joins the Orchestra to perform **Britten's Piano Concerto** alongside works by **Tippett** and **Bartók**. On **31 January**, BBC NOW performs a programme of music by living composers selected by Watkins including his own *String Trio*; **John Woolrich's Oboe concerto** performed by **Nick Daniel**; **Alexander Goehr's Sinfonia** and 'Clocks' from *A Winter's Tale* by **Ryan Wigglesworth** who conducts the concert.

### February 2018: new music

BBC NOW has premiered over 100 new works in its 90-year history and in February 2018 will launch the first phase of a digital archive which, once completed, will explore music written for and performed by BBC NOW. As part of the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, the Orchestra looks back at some of the new music it has championed in its lifetime with two concerts at BBC Hoddinott Hall on **21 February** and **28 March**. Each concert features a new commission and includes music by former Composers-in-Association, **Michael Berkeley**, **Simon Holt** and **B Tommy Andersson**, and former Composers-in-Residence, **Guto Puw** and **Mark Bowden**.

On **21 February**, **Simon Holt** turns 60 and to celebrate BBC NOW performs two of his orchestral works: *St. Vitus in the Kettle* which was premiered at the opening concert at BBC Hoddinott Hall and *an icicle of moon*, a piece that takes its title from a poem by Garcia Lorca. **Mark Bowden's Three Interludes** receive their world premiere and are a set of short orchestral interludes which explore ideas relating to the sea and are partly inspired by Matthew Arnold's lyric poem *Dover Beach*. **B Tommy Andersson** conducts the concert which includes his own *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Homage to Michelangelo* performed by **Chloë Hanslip**.

**Composition: Wales** offers composers worthy of wider exposure an opportunity to hear their works performed by BBC NOW. Seven composers have been selected for this year's project: **Gareth Churchill**, **Iestyn Harding**, **Ian Lawson**, **Lucy McPhee**, **Claire Victoria Roberts**, **John Senter**, and **Luciano Williamson**. Participants will have the opportunity to workshop their pieces with the Orchestra in a series of rehearsals open to the public supported by conductor/composer **B Tommy Andersson** and mentored by **Huw Watkins** and **Tansy Davies**. The project culminates with a concert in BBC Hoddinott Hall on **23 February**. **Composition: Wales** is organised in collaboration with Composers of Wales, Tŷ Cerdd and Welsh Music Guild. Previous participants of the project have included **Mark Bowden**, **Joseph Davies** and **Sarah Lianne Lewis**.

### March 2018: celebrating Wales

March celebrates Wales and BBC NOW as one of the nation's national treasures. The festivities kick off on **St David's Day** on **1 March** with friends joining the Orchestra and Chorus for a concert with traditional songs, choral works and an audience singalong featuring leading Welsh tenor **Gwyn Hughes Jones**. **Grant Llewellyn** conducts and is also joined by harpist **Catrin Finch** who performs the world premiere of **Gareth Glyn's Harp Concerto** (a Tŷ Cerdd commission) portraying scenes from the life of Saint David, the patron saint of Wales.

BBC NOW's On the Road tour sees violinist **Rachel Podger** direct the Orchestra from the violin in performances of Haydn & Mozart in **Aberystwyth (15 March)** and **Bangor (16 March)**. The tour also includes a Family Concert in **Llandudno (18 March)**.

The second in a pair of concerts looking back at works that have been premiered by BBC NOW over the years takes place on **28 March**. Two new works receive world premieres: **Mark Boden's** *Clarinet Concerto* which has been written for BBC NOW Principal Clarinet, **Robert Plane** and **Guto Puw's** *Camouflage*: a BBC Radio 3 and Ty Cerdd Commission. The concert also features **Michael Berkeley's** *Concerto for Orchestra*, a three-movement work first performed by BBC NOW at the BBC Proms in 2005, dedicated to the late Richard Hickox (former Principal Conductor for BBC NOW from 2000-2006). The programme is completed by **Alun Hoddinott's** *Variations for Orchestra Op. 47* marking ten years since the passing of one of Wales' foremost 20<sup>th</sup> century composers, whom BBC NOW's home is named after, and *There is no seeker of dreams that were* by **Sarah Lianne Lewis**.

### **April 2018: birthday celebrations on air and online**

On **Thursday 12 April** BBC NOW turns 90. Throughout its birthday week from **9 – 15 April** the Orchestra celebrates with the nation on air, online and in concert with a host of music, memories and festivities. A special birthday concert conducted by **Grant Llewellyn** featuring a selection of popular classics and works close to BBC NOW will be streamed live; offering an opportunity for audiences to tune in from anywhere and experience BBC NOW live in action.

On air a special week of Afternoon Concerts will mark the 90th birthday of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales on BBC Radio 3 (9-15 April). From the band's beginnings as the Western Studio Orchestra, to its current position as Wales' National Symphony orchestra, programmes will survey landmark performances across the past nine decades – including the inaugural performance of the BBC's then newly built broadcasting studios in Cardiff, through the early days of its enduring three decade-long partnership with Conductor Laureate Tadaaki Otaka and the adventurous tour on which he took the band to what was, then, East Germany, to the orchestra's performance at the investiture of The Prince of Wales, BBC NOW's patron. Programmes will also explore the relationship the orchestra has enjoyed with BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and the role it plays showcasing the work of Welsh composers.

### **May 2018: BBC NOW always learning**

May turns the spotlight on BBC NOW's dynamic learning programming which offers unique opportunities to develop musical skills and explore the world of classical music. BBC NOW is dedicated to developing innovative, exciting and distinctive experiences for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. As part of its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, the Orchestra pledges that every child in Wales has the opportunity to experience a live orchestra during their school days.

The Orchestra's **Family Concert** on **13 May** at **St David's Hall** is conducted by **Duncan Ward** and offers the chance for the audience to nominate the repertoire performed by BBC NOW and to hear some of their favourite pieces.

Having performed in the inaugural BBC Music Ten Pieces Prom in 2014, BBC NOW will continue this work in May with a series of **Ten Pieces coaching sessions**. Aimed at inspiring a generation of children to get creative with classical music, BBC Ten Pieces invites children aged 7-14 to develop their own creative responses to ten pieces of music. The initiative has so far reached over four million people across the UK, inspired three hugely successful BBC Proms concerts and won a BAFTA for the Ten Pieces II film. Musicians from BBC NOW will be leading **BBC Ten Pieces coaching sessions** helping to nurture young talent in schools and special schools around Wales.

[bbc.co.uk/now](http://bbc.co.uk/now)

#### **For further press information please contact:**

Rebecca Driver Media Relations

web: [www.rdmr.co.uk](http://www.rdmr.co.uk)

email: [rebecca@rdmr.co.uk](mailto:rebecca@rdmr.co.uk) | [ruth@rdmr.co.uk](mailto:ruth@rdmr.co.uk)

Tel: 020 7247 1894

**A welsh language version of the press release is available.**

## Notes to Editors

### BBC National Orchestra of Wales

For almost 90 years, BBC National Orchestra of Wales has played an integral role in the cultural and classical landscape of Wales, performing to audiences across the UK, abroad and on air. Led by Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård, BBC NOW has a unique role as both a broadcast and national symphony orchestra. Generously supported by the Arts Council of Wales, and part of BBC Wales, the Orchestra presents annual seasons in Cardiff and Swansea, and as Wales' national orchestra is committed to championing Welsh music and musicians. BBC NOW's performances can be regularly heard across the BBC, on Radio 3, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru, with appearances biennially at BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and annually at the BBC Proms. In 2015 BBC NOW visited South America for its most ambitious tour to-date, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Welsh settlement in Patagonia with a community residency, followed by performances across Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

BBC NOW's dynamic learning programming offers unique opportunities to develop musical skills and explore the world of classical music. Building on its extensive work with Special Educational Needs schools, BBC NOW performed the first ever Relaxed Prom in 2017. The Orchestra's home is BBC Hoddinott Hall, a world-class concert hall and studio in Cardiff Bay, where BBC NOW continues its work as the UK's foremost soundtrack orchestra working on programmes and films including *War and Peace*, David Attenborough's *Life Story* and Louis Theroux's *My Scientology Movie*; and has recorded music for the *Doctor Who* series for the last 12 years.

### BBC Orchestras and Choirs

The BBC's Orchestras and Choirs each play a unique role in British cultural life. Based in Cardiff, Glasgow, London and Salford, the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers and BBC Philharmonic, reach an audience of millions with their wide-ranging and distinctive programming. Performing with the world's leading conductors and soloists, the BBC Orchestras and Choirs give around 400 concerts a year in around 60 locations across the UK as well as touring worldwide. Contemporary music plays a central role in the musical life of each group, and every season includes a significant number of premieres, with many being commissioned by BBC Radio 3. The Orchestras and Choirs organise around 200 learning and outreach projects across the country, bringing music to tens of thousands of people of all ages across the UK. They are an integral part of the BBC's Ten Pieces, an initiative designed to encourage children to get creative with classical music and which has reached over 4 million people across the UK. The BBC Orchestras and Choirs are the backbone of the BBC Proms, collectively giving almost half of the concerts at the world's largest classical music festival.

### BBC Radio 3

BBC Radio 3 broadcasts high-quality, distinctive classical music and cultural programming, alongside regular arts and ideas programmes, jazz and world music. The station features more live classical music programming than any other and is the home of the BBC Proms - broadcasting every Prom live and more than 600 complete concerts a year - alongside daily speech programming, 90 full-length operas, over 25 drama commissions and over 20 new BBC music commissions a year. Radio 3 is the most significant commissioner of new musical works in the country and is committed to supporting new talent, from composers to writers and new young performers, through schemes such as New Generation Artists and New Generation Thinkers. [www.bbc.co.uk/radio3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3)

### History of BBC NOW

BBC National Orchestra of Wales gave its first performance on Thursday 12 April 1928, in the Assembly Rooms in City Hall, Cardiff. As the Radio Times announced that year, this was 'A New Orchestra for Wales', transforming one of the original station orchestras to 'a compact but classically complete little orchestra of thirty players, appointed no longer as merely a studio orchestra, but brought into being expressly to function both nationally and civically'. This first concert was broadcast on 5WA (an indirect ancestor of BBC Radio Wales), where the Orchestra became a regular feature to some of Wales' earliest radio listeners. Ninety years later, the Orchestra is still heard on BBC Radio Wales, and frequently on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio Cymru.

BBC NOW performed regularly in Cardiff, with six concerts a week in its first season. It also began touring Wales, performing at the National Eisteddfod of Wales in Llanelli for the first time in 1930. In the late 1950s, the BBC Welsh Orchestra as it was known then, made its first appearance on television and gave its first televised concert in 1961. The Orchestra gave its debut performance at the BBC Proms in the Royal Albert Hall in 1971, and since then has performed over 160 times as part of the festival. Performing on the world stage became more common place when BBC NOW began touring internationally, visiting Canada in 1983. The Orchestra has, to date, represented Wales in South America, China, Japan, USA and across Europe.

Find out more online: [www.bbc.co.uk/now](http://www.bbc.co.uk/now)