

Find out more about the Musicians:



Lucia Strings are professional freelance musicians from across the Northwest, who come together in a shared passion of performing some of the most loved chamber music works for strings.

Between them, they have worked with many orchestras including the BBC Philharmonic, the RLPO, Liverpool Philharmonia, and Liverpool Concerts Orchestra, to name but a few.

All the musicians have richly varied musical careers including orchestral playing, chamber music performances, touring and recording, numerous TV and radio appearances, as well as the joy of teaching the next generation of musicians.

Anita Naughton – first violin

Anita began playing the violin at the age of 9, having lessons initially at school before studying privately with Terry Lewis in Southport. At the age of 19 she took a gap year, taking lessons from Benedict Holland before taking up a place at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester in 1995. After graduating in 1999 Anita moved to Sheffield and enjoyed a freelance career working with orchestras such as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Performing Arts Orchestra, the Halle, BBC Philharmonic and Northern Ballet Theatre Orchestra amongst others before relocating back to Manchester to take up a contract position with the BBC Philharmonic.

Anita now combines her work as a freelance violinist, working regularly with professional orchestras and chamber groups in the North, with running her own busy private teaching practice. She is the leader of St Helen's Sinfonietta, Lucia Strings, The Rowan Quartet and Bolton Symphony Orchestra. In September 2023 she performed the Dvorak Violin Concerto with Bolton Symphony Orchestra in Victoria Hall in Bolton.

Helen Tonge – second violin

Helen studied at Manchester University and the RNCM and, as a member of the Rivoli Quartet, completed a Masters in String Quartet Performance at Sheffield University with Peter Cropper of the Lindsays. Aside from chamber music playing, she works with various orchestras including Manchester Camerata, Sinfonia Viva, Skipton Camerata, Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, The Brigantes and the Novello Orchestra. She is leader of the New Classical Players and Cheshire Sinfonia and has guest-led Blackburn, Wilmslow and

Stockport Symphony Orchestras. Solo performances have included the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with Tonbridge Philharmonic Orchestra, and The Lark Ascending With Cheshire Sinfonia, as well as duo work with composer-pianist Richard Whalley, with whom she has premiered 'Gorgon's Head' by Manchester-based composer Camden Reeves, and 'Limp' by Tom Coult.

Alongside her performing career, Helen teaches violin at Bolton School and Altrincham Grammar School for Boys.

Allison Calderbank – first viola

Allison is an experienced orchestral and chamber player. She has regularly freelanced with the Hallé Orchestra for over 10 years and currently performs with the Eberle String Trio, the Calderbank duo and Lucia Strings. She has been the viola player in the Stonebridge Quartet and the Highgate Wedding Quartet and also plays with What The Pluck wedding trio and quartet. She currently plays in the viola sections at St Helens Sinfonietta, Liverpool Concert Orchestra and Lakeland Sinfonia. She has led the violas in the Haffner Orchestra and the Liverpool Mozart Orchestra prior to attending the RNCM in 2009, where she qualified with a Post Graduate Diploma in Performance before turning professional.

She is also a qualified Chartered Accountant and is Senior Tax Manager in a Wirral accountancy and tax practice, combining both her music and accountancy careers and enjoying both!

Laura Cope – second viola

Laura was born in Rugby and studied at The University of Manchester and the Royal Northern College of Music. She enjoys playing with a wide variety of ensembles including Manchester Camerata, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Skipton Camerata and Manchester Baroque Orchestra. She regularly performs at lunchtime recitals in churches across the country with her mother, Rosemary Robinson and feels equally at home on both modern and period instruments.

Ilona Hepburn – first cello

Ilona began playing cello aged 9, and studied at Chetham's School of Music, followed by the Royal Northern College of Music, and a scholarship for postgraduate cello studies in Chicago. Ilona enjoys a varied performing career, most notably performing for the late Queen, and for the Pope, television appearances, and touring with Russell Watson and Elvis impersonator Lee Memphis King.

Chamber music is at the heart of much of Ilona's performing, appearing regularly across the Northwest with her chamber group Lucia Strings, interspersed with orchestral work, and solo appearances with orchestras, performing Schumann cello concerto, and Vivaldi double concerto.

Being passionate about passing on a love of music to the next generation, Ilona enjoys teaching and is the Founder and Director of an annual summer music course for young players, called Summer Sounds, as well as tutoring for the Benedetti Foundation. When not making music, Ilona is a busy Vicar's Wife,

Mum to 3 amazing children, a hilarious cockapoo, and a house rabbit who loves cello music!!

Laurence Hughes – second cello

Laurence Hughes was a chorister at Hexham Abbey before studying 'cello with Hannah Roberts at Chetham's School of Music where he won a scholarship to the RNCM. After further studies in London, Laurence has enjoyed a career where he has sought to balance his professional academic interests with a career in music. He was a founding member of the Dales String Quartet and Ensemble and is currently a member of the Sterling Trio as well as teaching the cello and freelancing with various orchestras. Other projects have included collaborating with Caroline Pether in Haydn's Seven Last Words and he is looking forward to a duo lunchtime recital at the Bridgewater Hall next year. Laurence also directs the Ignatius Singers at the church of the Holy Name at Manchester University and is an associate member of the Manchester Chamber Choir.