

The Darwin Ensemble Chamber Orchestra (DECO) was founded in September 2008, with its inaugural concert on 31 January 2009 in Lichfield Cathedral - its home base. It is an entirely local venture and is unique: there is at present no comparable orchestra with resident affiliation to a cathedral or church foundation in the region. DECO stages three regular concerts a year - winter, summer and autumn - and also contributes to the music of Lichfield Cathedral services.

Reviews for DECO are consistently positive:

- *The strings excelled themselves with the softest of pianissimos rivalling more established orchestras.*
- *DECO excel with thrill after spine-tingling thrill.*
- *DECO are to be congratulated on top class performances in Lichfield for tickets priced at less than a single CD.*
- *Watch out Birmingham. You have competition!*

The orchestra is formed from the highest calibre classical musicians in the West Midlands, with an emphasis on the employment of young, exciting players in the early stages of their professional careers. DECO has forged strong relationships with local choirs including the Ceramic Choir of Stafford, the Mansfield Choral Society and Lichfield Cathedral's own Chamber Choir and Cathedral Chorus.

DECO's repertoire is mainly popular and accessible classical music. It aims to draw the local community into the world of classical music in the inspiring setting of one of the most beautiful cathedrals in the country. The orchestra has a fresh approach to concert-going, with a commitment to bringing to a wider audience the pleasure and excitement of hearing classical music played to the highest standard. DECO's remit also includes sharing the experience of the live orchestral sound with young people, who will form both the audiences, and potentially the providers, of classical music into the future. The orchestra has developed partnerships with schools including Uppingham and Repton, rehearsing and performing alongside pupils and societies.

DECO has twice been broadcast on Classic FM: the first occasion was a Christmas concert in 2009, in collaboration with the Lay Vicars Choral and boys of the Lichfield Cathedral Choir; the second a complete orchestral concert broadcast in October 2010 as one of Classic FM's "Full Works" series. Following this success DECO was invited to participate in the Lichfield Festival performing Paul Patterson's *Little Red Riding Hood* (2010) DECO continues to attract the attention of the country's finest performers. Our first soloist was Simon Blendis (leader Schubert Ensemble and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra) and other notable soloists include Rowena Calvert (cello), George Caird (oboe), Lisa Nelsen (flute) and Jack Liebeck (Classical Brit Award winning violinist).

