

Paradise Mill in Macclesfield which forms part of the 'Weaving Stories, Weaving Sound' project.

The first of the two projects, Macclesfield Musical Heritage – run by the Northern Chamber Orchestra – will enable local school children to explore and learn about the 200 year history of Macclesfield's Old Sunday School, through music and visual arts. Their starting point will focus on the lives of the child silk workers for whom the Sunday School provided the only opportunity for education.

In 1796 the Macclesfield Sunday School was founded to provide better education for the children working in the mills. Later, in 1814, the school was established in a new building – the Old Sunday School– which will become the base for the project research. The history of the child silk workers will be explored through music and visual arts, with the participants experiencing the music which former generations would have heard and played, before creating their own compositions and art works in response to these fascinating, historical stimuli, working with NCO players and an artist.

HLF's £6,900 grant provides 30 children from a local primary school and their families to take part in museum workshops, explore the museum collections and produce artwork and a concert which will be displayed and performed in October at the Heritage Centre.

The second project, Weaving Stories, Weaving Sounds – developed by Macclesfield Museums in partnership with the Barnaby Festival – will use film, sound, performance and exhibitions to open up the history of the looms at Paradise Mill and the town's wider silk making heritage. Macclesfield was one of the most prominent silk manufacturing towns and

was home to around 70 mills at its peak in the 19th century. HLF's £9,200 grant will help create a programme of interactive and engaging visitor activities including the headline art commission for the Barnaby Art Festival from the Owl Project, activities, tours, volunteering and training opportunities and audience research to help inform the future direction of the museum service.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "At its peak, Macclesfield was home to over 70 working mills that brought with them jobs, housing and economic prosperity and the town's industrial heritage is still inextricably woven into the community. HLF is funding these two projects to bring to life the stories of those people, including many children, who worked in the Mills during the industrial revolution. Through taking part in interactive and engaging activities, both projects will help local people explore, learn about and pass on the stories of their past long into the future."

David Rutley MP for Macclesfield, said: "It is good to see the Heritage Lottery Fund investing in Macclesfield's rich silk heritage. Both the Macclesfield Musical Heritage and the Weaving Stories, Weaving Sounds projects are exciting initiatives that will bring Macclesfield's past to life. Local residents and visitors will all benefit from these unique insights into the silk industry."

Jonathan Thackeray, General Manager of the Northern Chamber Orchestra (NCO) said: "The NCO has thoroughly enjoyed presenting its annual concert season at Macclesfield Heritage Centre over many years. This project, supported by the HLF, provides a superb opportunity for NCO to work with the participating school children to explore the amazing history of the building and the people who used it, all those years ago. We're sure that the lives of the silk worker children two hundred years ago, will inspire this generation of Macclesfield children in the creation of their own music and art, which will be performed and displayed at our concert in October, for their parents and the wider community to enjoy."

Sue Hughes, Museum Director of Macclesfield Museums, is thrilled that the Heritage Lottery Fund support will strengthen existing partnerships with the NCO and the Barnaby Festival: "These projects will support the museum's ambitions for wider community engagement and to help more people better understand the rich heritage of the town. We are particularly pleased to have this opportunity to gain feedback from a wide range of people, some who will have never encountered the museums before, to help shape the service into the future.'

Notes to editors

The Northern Chamber Orchestra was formed in the 1960s and has gained a formidable reputation from its engaging and exciting concerts, tackling a wide range of repertoire. The members of the NCO are distinguished, professional chamber musicians who also play regularly as principals and soloists with other orchestras. The NCO enjoys its strong Northern connection and presents a successful, annual series of eight concerts at Macclesfield Heritage Centre. It also delivers an extensive learning and development programme with schools, colleges and music groups, with workshops given in many of the Orchestra's concert locations. The orchestra's ethos is to provide young people and adults with opportunities to engage with enjoyable and inspiring projects which are tailor-made to meet specific needs.

Macclesfield Museums are The Old Sunday School Heritage Centre, The Silk Museum, Paradise Mill and West Park. The Old Sunday School celebrates its Bicentenary in 2014 and a new exhibition detailing the building's history runs until 7 September 2014, along with the programme of related events. The Silk Museum and Paradise Mill tell the story of the silk heritage of the town, including demonstrations of the historic looms. During the Barnaby Festival 14-29 June 2014, the museum and mill will host a range of newly commissioned artwork reflecting the industrial history of the

town.

Further information

Sue Hughes, Museum Director, Macclesfield Museums on 01625 613210, email: director@silkmacclesfield.org.uk.

Kathryn Wolstencroft, Marketing & PR Manager, Northern Chamber Orchestra on 0161 247 2220, email: kathryn@ncorch.co.uk.

Laura Bates, HLF press office on 020 7591 6027, email: lbates@hlf.org.uk.