

First concert by the new

# South East London Orchestra

Sunday 23rd September at 3:00pm

Conductor: David Smith

Soloist: Christopher Walters

## Programme:

MOZART - Don Giovanni Overture

BEETHOVEN - Symphony No.1 in C

WEBER - Clarinet Concerto No.2

LYADOV - The Enchanted Lake

St Edmund's Church

Village Way,

Beckenham BR3 3NP

Tickets £5 on the door

website:

[southeastlondonorchestra.wordpress.com](http://southeastlondonorchestra.wordpress.com)



Welcome to this first concert by a brand new orchestra. We've been set up to provide a place for musicians in this area to come together and share with local audiences some well-known classics and lesser-known pieces too.

We are just getting going but already it feels like we are becoming established in the local community, with strong links being forged and the core of the orchestra being formed. Over time we'll develop and we hope you'll be with us along the way.

This first programme has a definite dramatic tinge to it – the overture to one of Mozart's great operas is followed by Weber's 'operatic' clarinet concerto, in which the soloist takes on the role of a star of the stage. *The Enchanted Lake* was intended as a lakeside scene in Lyadov's incomplete opera *Zoryushka*. And then Beethoven, whose first symphony began the greatest symphonic story in music.

We hope you enjoy the performances and will be back to hear us again in November for our second concert.

David Smith  
Music Director

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1759–1791)  
**Overture to *Don Giovanni*** (1787)

Famously a last-minute job, the overture to *Don Giovanni* ('Don Juan') was written during the night and morning before the first performance. The opera is classified as a *drama giocoso*, meaning it mixes serious and comedic action. And the overture embraces this description, beginning as it does with a weighty and turbulent introduction in a minor key, before the bright, faster main body of the overture.

Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)  
**Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat** (1811)

I: Allegro  
II: Andante  
III: Alla Polacca

Singing is perhaps the most natural musical expression a person can create, and you often hear instrumental performers say how they try to bring a vocal quality to the sound they create on their instruments. In this concerto, Weber gives clarinetists a gift of a piece that lets them sing for all they are worth.

The age of the piece – over 200 years old – puts us in a time when the technology of some instruments was still developing and the familiar shapes we know today were still a long way off. These developments allowed for *virtuoso* – exceptionally skilled – performance techniques to emerge, and so it was the case with the clarinet. Weber's concerto was written for Heinrich Bärmann, a member of the Bavarian Court Orchestra in Munich, who had a technical mastery that inspired Weber.

The fast first movement begins with the orchestra alone, but the soloist soon steps in dramatically, and from there on is in total command of the piece. The expressive second movement is a romantic *aria* and dramatic *recitative* – an almost 'speech-like' section – which is the true emotional heart of the piece. Finally Weber gives us the Polacca dance movement and spectacular clarinet fireworks to show off those new-fangled clarinets and their performers' virtuoso techniques.

*interval*

Anatol Lyadov (1855–1914)  
**The Enchanted Lake** (1909)

Not an overly well-known composer, if there's one thing people know about Lyadov it's that he had a flexible understanding of deadlines. He never succeeded in applying himself to his work for any great length of time, even finding himself expelled from Rimsky-Korsakov's composition classes because he rarely showed up. His laziness and low confidence meant that his list of completed works is rather small, and hardly anything could be described as a large-scale work.

All the same, what there is in his catalogue is remarkable. *The Enchanted Lake* was intended for an uncompleted opera, and alongside two other descriptive orchestral pieces based on Russian fairy tales (*Baba-Yaga* and *Kikimora*) is one of his best-known works. Describing a peaceful, lakeside scene, this short tone poem has distinct echoes of Debussy, and in its quiet, unhurried way transports you to the world of this ageless fairy tale.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)  
**Symphony No. 1 in C** (1799–1800)

I: Adagio molto – Allegro con brio  
II: Andante cantabile con moto  
III: Menuetto & Trio: Allegro molto e vivace  
IV: Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

The greatest composer? Quite possibly. Beethoven was certainly one of the most influential voices in music, through any number of pieces that are still part of our culture today. In just the symphonies alone, the opening of 'Beethoven's Fifth' will be widely recognised, as will the Ode to Joy from the Ninth. But this symphonic journey had to start somewhere – and it was here, at the turn of the nineteenth century.

This piece is described in some quarters as a conservative work, one that Haydn was known to approve of, as if that would make it conservative. (It's said, however, that by the time of Beethoven's second symphony, Haydn thought that the younger man had now gone too far...)

But consider the very opening of the piece – an odd (for the time) combination of plucked strings and sustained woodwind. And harmonically it feels 'uncertain' from the word go, because it's not a solid, fixed 'home' chord. Beethoven actually starts in the 'wrong' key if you assume that a 'Symphony in C' has to start on a C major chord. He draws out the slow introduction for as long as possible, building the tension before – eventually – releasing us to explore the faster part of the movement in C major. The woodwind writing is unusually spectacular for the time as well.

The charming slow movement comes next, followed by a quicksilver 'minuet' that is in fact the first of his symphonic scherzos: fast-moving and humorous. In the middle of this movement is a calming, contrasting 'trio' section. The fourth and final movement begins in striking fashion and contains a series of musical jokes – unexpected corners turned or sounds heard. Beethoven tells the same jokes more than once and they actually stand up on repetition.

So this is a work that is of its time but also pushes boundaries. It's ambitious and imaginative, and is a complete piece in its own right but also the first chapter in a glorious symphonic story.

*Programme notes © South East London Orchestra*