



South East London Orchestra
Finale to our first season!

Saturday 6 July 2013,
at 4pm

Conductor: David Smith

Welcome

Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony is well known and has a unique sound, taking us into the natural world. But it's a work of great detail and formal innovation too, so alongside the great themes just consider how advanced it was to pave the way for programmatic music in 1808 – just a year before Haydn died.

The pieces that make up a mini-suite of a first half are linked in more ways than one, all written within a few years of each other, by composers who carry a 'national' sound. And, somewhat surprisingly, given their popularity, none of them originally written for orchestra – but they work so well!

With this concert the orchestra reaches the end of its first season. It's remarkable how the group has come together and now looks ahead to a second season in expectation. We're all thrilled with the response from our audiences – you make it all worthwhile! My personal thanks go to you for your support, as well as all our members, committee and leader, Alan Titherington. Our dates for 2013–14 are included in this programme, so get them in your diaries now. They're not to be missed.

David Smith
Music Director

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Programme:

ELGAR: Chanson de matin

RAVEL: Pavane pour une infante defunte

ELGAR: Chanson de nuit

BARTOK: Romanian Folk Dances

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BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 6, 'Pastorale'

Conductor: David Smith



David enjoys working with a number of ensembles in London, programming pieces from unusual corners of the repertoire, alongside the great classics. In addition to his work with SELO, he is also Music Director of the City of London Symphonic Winds.

He also regularly conducts London Repertoire Orchestra and has worked as guest conductor with many orchestras in London and across the South of England, including Brent Symphony Orchestra, Kingston Philharmonic, Sidcup Symphony and South Bank Symphony (now Sinfonia Tamesa). Concert venues have included Trinity College of Music, Hampton Hill Playhouse, the Landmark

Arts Centre, Teddington, and St James's Park, as part of The Royal Parks series.

Work abroad has involved concerts at the Chopin Academy in Warsaw, Poland, and in Italy as part of the International Festival of European Youth Orchestras.

David studied Music, and subsequently Musicology, at the University of Southampton, where his tutors included David Owen Norris and Michael Finnissy. He studied conducting with Robin Browning and Denise Ham. Alongside his conducting career and trombone playing, David works as a marketing director in the music industry.

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Leader: Alan Titherington

Alan studied music in Huddersfield in the 1980s, where he was taught by Herbert Whone, immersing himself in as much contemporary music as possible, and over the years has worked closely with composers such as Witold Lutoslawski, Harrison Birtwistle, Peter Maxwell Davies, John Cage and Michael Tippett.

He began freelancing following a year at The National Centre for Orchestral Studies (based at Goldsmith's College) and early engagements included extra work with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and a short stint in the original Miss Saigon production in the West End. Playing mostly around the South East, other career moves such as joining the army, classroom music teaching and testing financial software have always been flexible enough in allowing time to continue musical pursuits.



After 22 years, Alan is also the second longest-serving member of the Dartington Festival Orchestra and has been privileged to have worked with some of the most respected and influential orchestral conductors, including Diego Masson, Charles Groves, Vernon Handley, Edward Downes, Richard Hickox, Ilan Volkov and Jiří Bělohlávek. A recent highlight of the Dartington years was a performance of Haydn's 'Creation' with Sir Charles Mackerras on his first visit to the Summer School in almost 40 years.

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Edward Elgar (1857–1934)
Chanson de Matin (1899, orch 1901)

Moving house is rarely a favourite activity, and Elgar detested it more than most, which is why it's particularly odd that he lived in some 25 houses or flats during his life. Some of the moves were attempts to progress his career, others forced by lack of work, but comparisons have been drawn between the restless element of his character and some of his music.

Chanson de Matin is a popular favourite now. Beautiful, charming, yet with something of that yearning restlessness about it. Elgar submitted it to his publishers days before moving to Craeg Lea (an anagram of Carice, Edward and Alice Elgar) in Malvern. He'd found a sketch of what he'd intended to be a companion piece to an earlier work, *Evensong* (more below), for violin and piano, and completed it.

He wrote to his publishers that 'this piece was intended to be a companion piece to the one you have already ... so I have suggested calling this "cheerful" piece *Chanson de Matin*.' He made the orchestral version in 1901, and this moving and delightful miniature has flourished ever since its first performance at Queen's Hall, London under the baton of Henry Wood.

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Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)
Pavane pour une Infante défunte (1899, orch 1910)

When one thinks of the orchestral music of Ravel or his near-contemporary, Debussy, large groups of players and lush sounds spring to mind. But when creating an orchestral version of his piano piece, *Pavane pour une Infante défunte*, Ravel deliberately used an orchestra of the size that Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven would recognise (though he allowed himself the addition of a harp).

Why did he write for a Classical-era orchestra? Well, a pavane was a slow, processional dance common in the 16th century, and whilst that doesn't exactly match the time of the Classical composers, Ravel is still evoking that sense of a time gone by.

The title is often taken to mean 'Pavane for a Dead Princess', 'Infanta' (French *infante*) being the Spanish term for a princess of royal blood. But there was no particular princess in mind, nor was Ravel necessarily writing a funereal work. Instead he suggested that he was evoking a pavane that might have been danced by 'such a little princess as painted by Velázquez.' So this stately dance unfolds slowly, with a delicate main theme and a discernable sense of sadness, for if there ever was a princess who danced to this music, she is now long dead.

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Edward Elgar
Chanson de Nuit (1897, orch 1901)

Before *Chanson de Matin* came *Evensong*, a short piece for violin and piano that Elgar wrote partially as he felt he needed some financially rewarding publications to bring him some income. Believing that French titles had a certain allure to customers, his publishers released it as *Chanson de Nuit*.

There's remarkable depth in this piece, and it has been observed that a kernel of Elgar's First Symphony is present within it – most notable when performed in this orchestral version, premiered by Wood in the above-mentioned 1901 London concert.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)
Romanian Folk Dances (1915, orch 1917)

- I Jocul cu bâta (*Stick Dance*): Molto moderato
- II Brâul (*Sash Dance*): Allegro
- III Pe Loc (*Stamping Dance/In One Spot*): Moderato
- IV Buciumeana (*Horn Dance*): Andante
- V Poarga Românească (*Romanian Polka*): Allegro
- VI Măruntel (*Fast Dance*): L'istesso tempo
- VII Măruntel (*Fast Dance*): Allegro vivace

Bartók was one of the very first ethnomusicologists – those who study music in its cultural and social contexts, trying to understanding not only *what* it is but *why* it has developed as it has. Bartók went out of the towns and cities and recorded folk music that was being made in the villages and countryside.

In this piece (originally for piano), Bartók draws together fantastic dances from around Romania. The melody of the first dance comes from Mezöszabad in Transylvania, the second and third dances from Igris, but are of strikingly different character. The fourth dance is from Bucium, the fifth (Romanian Polka) and sixth are from Belényes (today Beius), and the last from Nyágra.

The translations of the dance titles above give you a sense of the dances Bartók weaves into this set of postcards from the region. The piece lasts only a few moments, and the final three dances run into one another in a furious rush to the finish.

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Interval
Please join us for refreshments
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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Symphony No. 6 in F major, 'Pastoral' (1808)

- I Angenehme, heitere Empfindungen, welche bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande im Menschen erwachen (*Pleasant, cheerful feelings awakened in a person on arriving in the country*): Allegro ma non troppo
- II Szene am Bach (*Scene by the brook*): Andante molto moto
- III Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute (*Merry gathering of country folk*): Allegro
- IV Donner. Sturm (*Thunderstorm*): Allegro
- V Hirtengesang. Wohltätige, mit Dank an die Gottheit verbundene Gefühle nach dem Sturm (*Shepherd's Song: Happy and thankful feelings to the Deity after the storm*): Allegretto

This piece is not a pictorial description of the natural world. It wasn't originally a Disney soundtrack. Nor does the composer take genuine folk tunes and work them into an orchestral setting. Instead, the Pastoral Symphony represents Beethoven's response to country life, and his was a response that verged on the mystical. One writer described it as 'a deep untroubled happiness in the contemplation of country life.'

As such, three of the five movement titles refer to particular emotions – 'Pleasant, cheerful feelings'; 'Merry gathering'; 'Happy and thankful feelings' – and they are all of a sunny disposition. There is simplicity by design throughout the symphony, underpinned by Beethoven's use of harmony. The three strongest chords – tonic, dominant, sub-dominant – that

between them contain all seven notes of the tonal scale, are glorified above all. Further enhancing the grounded, uncomplicated nature of the piece is the amount of thematic repetition.

So think of that relaxing moment when you get out of the car on a trip out of London in the first movement. After that, allow the landscape of the second movement ('Scene by the brook') to calm you further through its complete lack of tension; time stands still as we experience the water flowing by. It has been compared with Milton's description of Eden in *Paradise Lost*. The famous bird calls at the end of this movement link Beethoven's composed melodies with those found in the natural world.

The scherzo conveys boisterous bucolic feelings, with almost drunken lurches in harmony adding to the sense of fun. But the merry gathering is disturbed by the thunderstorm – the greatest representation of a storm's power in all music. Beginning on the note D flat – very distant from the 'home' chord of F major – we are immediately unnerved. Tension builds and then, displaying a masterly grasp of compositional planning, the first *fortissimo* ('very loud') indication of the storm hits with the first and only F *minor* chord of the entire symphony.

But really, is this storm anything to do with weather, or should we think more about Beethoven's responses to the world around him again? This seemingly impossible man, who moved lodgings so frequently, had lost much of his hearing (and had contemplated suicide because of this only a few years previously), and was refused by women he loved (or their families) due to his being a commoner, had such turmoil in his own life. It's perhaps in this context that the majestic contentedness of the final movement makes most sense – the shepherd's song, evoking the caring tending of flocks.

This 'untroubled happiness' is certainly one defiant response to Beethoven's difficult life – the countryside was where he found his solace. It's interesting to note, however, that this symphony received its premiere performance in the same concert as another he had been writing almost alongside it, his Fifth, which shakes its fist at the skies, takes on the world, and wins.

Programme notes © South East London Orchestra

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Next Concert Details:

Date & Time: Sunday 29 September at 4:00pm

Programme: *Weber:* Oberon Overture

Haydn: Trumpet Concerto

Soloist: David Quinlan

Schumann: Symphony No. 3, 'Rhenish'

Venue: St Barnabas Church, Beckenham

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Orchestra members:

First Violin:

Alan Titherington
Heather Hall
Robert McIlveen
John Strange
Joanne Buckland

Second Violin:

Sara Trepte
Penny Davies
Louise Walters
Caroline Day
Maggie Houlgate

Viola:

Stephen Cadywold
Jane McLauchlin
Rachel Andrews
Gemma Rickwood

Cello:

Hilary Wood
Ed Langford
Sue Ardley
Heather Cluney
Rachel Mumby

Double Bass:

Charlie Francis

Flute:

Hanna Barriga
Sarah Harington Hawes
Vicky Yuan (piccolo)

Oboe:

Michael Clegg-Butt
Catherine Smale

Clarinet:

Steve Clark
Charlotte Woolley

Bassoon:

Peter Harris
Val Currie

Trumpet:

Kat Mason
Nick Walkley

French Horn:

Natalie Cole
Ben Mason

Percussion:

Emily Cumby

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Thanks must be given to David Smith, Charlotte Woolley, Hanna Barriga, Sarah Harington Hawes, Anthony Fawkes, Natalie Cole and Tim Hide, for their ongoing support and excellent organisational skills.

Thanks additionally to the Parishes of St Barnabas and St Edmunds, Christ Church and St George's, for allowing us to use their wonderful churches and halls.

**South East London Orchestra
2013-2014 Concert Season**

Sunday 29th September 2013, 4.00pm

Weber: Oberon Overture
Haydn: Trumpet Concerto
Soloist: David Quinlan
Schumann: Symphony No. 3, 'Rhenish'

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Sunday 24th November 2013, 4.00pm

Mozart: The Magic Flute Overture
Nielsen: Flute Concerto
Soloist: Charlotte Bettle
Beethoven: Symphony No 7 in A

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Sunday 9th March 2014, 4.00pm

Schubert: Overture in D major, in the Italian style
Berkeley: Four Poems of St Teresa of Avila
Soloist: Sarah Denbee
Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 3, 'Scottish'

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Sunday 11th May 2014, 4.00pm

Beethoven: Egmont overture
Brahms: Variations on a Theme of Haydn
Bizet: Symphony in C

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Saturday 5th July 2014 – Summer season finale

Programme TBC

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Ticket prices for our 2013/14 season will remain at £7 (adult) £5 (concession)
and children admitted free of charge.

Keep an eye on our website, facebook and twitter for updates on venues and programme

E: seorchestra@gmail.com
W: southeastlondonorchestra.wordpress.com