

## Supporting SELO:

We would like to thank Peter Main and two anonymous donors for their financial support of the Orchestra this season. We are also very grateful to the Parishes of St Barnabas and Christ Church for allowing us to use their halls and churches to rehearse and perform in.

If you would like to support our activities, there are several ways help:

- **Attend our concerts**

We're fortunate to play to friendly audiences at St Barnabas, receiving a warm welcome whenever we're here. Thank you for coming today, we have a mailing list if you'd like to keep up to date on our concerts and activities - fill in a feedback slip or email us ([seorchestra@gmail.com](mailto:seorchestra@gmail.com)) to join.

- **Play with us**

If you play an instrument and have experience of playing in orchestras, we'd love to hear from you. We're particularly keen to recruit some more violins and violas - more details on our website: [southeastlondonorchestra.com/contact-us/joining/](http://southeastlondonorchestra.com/contact-us/joining/).

- **Eat Cake!**

The interval "indoor picnic" has become a fixture of our concerts, enjoyed by audience and orchestra members alike. Many thanks to all who share their bakes, we're always very grateful for these contributions and for any donations given.

- **Easyfundraising**

If you shop online, you can help good causes at the same time through donations from many retailers. It's very easy to do and we have a page set up to support SELO here: [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/selo/](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/selo/)

Do get in touch at [seorchestra@gmail.com](mailto:seorchestra@gmail.com) for any further information.

## Next concerts:

### Sunday 8 July 2018

**Bizet:** Carmen Suite No. 1

**Bernstein:** Symphonic Dances from West Side Story

**Shostakovich:** Symphony No. 5 in D minor

### Sunday 14 October 2018

**Schumann:** Genoveva Overture

**Tchaikovsky:** Violin Concerto

**Elgar:** Froissart

**Smyth:** Serenade in D

*Featuring the welcome return of the 2018 BBC Music Magazine award-winner Fenella Humphreys as soloist in Tchaikovsky's famous Violin Concerto*

# South East London Orchestra

Conductor: David Smith



Sunday 20 May 2018

St Barnabas Church, Beckenham

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

Welcome to this afternoon's concert, focussing on the themes of life, love and death.

At a purely musical level, the thread connecting these pieces is 'harmonic exploration', though after all the innovative harmonic adventure in the music of Debussy, Wagner and Ives in today's concert, Strauss' *Death and Transfiguration* closes the concert in the warm glow of C major.

We have composers whose levels of renown in their lifetimes range from the massive ego of Richard Wagner to the unknown musical modernist (and insurance agent) Charles Ives.

In 2018 the music world marks the 100th anniversary of Debussy's death, and how better to do so than by performing the work that many believe heralded the beginning of modern music. It's perhaps simplistic to compare Debussy's 'suggestive' music with the 'impressionist' movement in the art world, but Debussy's career ran in parallel with those of Monet, Pissaro, Sisley and others.

In our next concert, we celebrate another 2018 compositional anniversary (the birth of Leonard Bernstein), and we hope you can join us for one of our most ambitious programmes yet.

Thank you for joining us today.

**David Smith**  
Music Director

\* \* \*

Claude Debussy – *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*

Richard Wagner – *Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde*

*Interval*

Charles Ives – *The Unanswered Question*

Richard Strauss – *Tod und Verklärung*

## The Orchestra

### Violin I

Alan Titherington  
Katherine Savage  
Mike Bradburn  
Matthew Burgess  
Lizzi Hewitt  
Peter Hoyes  
Philip Curry  
Giles Wade

### Violin II

Claire Rutland  
Louise Esaia  
Keith Hide  
Geraldine Lowery  
James Langridge  
Yean Chooi  
Liz Norton  
Christopher Rutland

### Viola

Lucy Stephenson  
Maeva Lynch  
Hannah Gostling  
Geoff Irwin

### Cello

Hilary Wood  
Ed Langford  
Richard Thorn  
Philippa Bradburn  
Anna Gillespie  
Sue Ardley  
Tony Albuquerque  
Charlotte Wright

### Double bass

Morven Leese  
Jack Cherry  
Gwen Reed

### Harp

Glenda Allaway  
Louisa Duggan

### Flute

Jennifer Raven  
Sarah Harington Hawes  
Jennifer Sutton  
Lucy Buckley

### Oboe

Catherine Smale  
Alice Hardy  
Andrew Radley (Cor Anglais)

### Clarinet

Philip Broadey  
Chris Jeffrey  
Andy Power (Bass Clarinet)

### Bassoon

Grace Watts  
Val Currie  
Ethel Livermore  
(Contrabassoon)

### Horn

Rosie Merriman  
Andy Currie  
Stephanie Jeffrey  
James Allen

### Trumpet

Ben Reeve  
Pete Mycroft  
Katherine Mason

### Trombone

Thomas Woodcock  
Richard Tighe  
Matthew Gray

### Tuba

Richard Lovett

### Timpani

David Coronel

### Percussion

Jonathan French

## Music Director: David Smith



David enjoys working with a number of ensembles in London, programming pieces from unusual corners of the repertoire alongside the great classics. He is the founding Music Director of South East London Orchestra.

He has conducted many orchestras in London and across the South of England, including Aylesbury Symphony Orchestra, Brent Symphony Orchestra, Kingston Philharmonic, London Repertoire

Orchestra, Northampton Symphony Orchestra, Sidcup Symphony Orchestra and Sinfonia Tamesa.

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, and participated in conducting courses led by George Hurst. Alongside his conducting career and trombone playing, David is a senior manager at ABRSM, the UK's largest music education body.

## 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 to allow time to continue musical pursuits.

Alan was for 25 years a 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, 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.

## Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

### *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune* (1894)

Debussy described this Prelude to 'the afternoon of a faun' as 'a general impression of the poem' (by Stéphane Mallarmé), and was clear that this was *not* a programmatic journey through the 116 lines, but instead a 'series of scenes against which the desires and dreams of the faun are seen to stir in the afternoon heat.'

Mallarmé hoped for a theatrical presentation of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, and there is evidence that Debussy was preparing incidental music for such a performance, but the composer's intentions changed close to completing the work. The *Prelude* received its first performance on 22 December 1894 in Paris, was well-received by the audience but not immediately recognised as a turning point in the history of music.

The now-famous opening theme on the flute, falling as it does from a C sharp to a G natural (an augmented fourth) and the whole-tone scales later on position the piece in a harmonic world apart from most Romantic-era harmony (consider that in 1894, Johannes Brahms, Anton Bruckner and Clara Schumann were still alive). Debussy uses this exotic harmony, arabesque-like writing, flexible rhythm and transparent orchestration to transport the listener to the heat-haze of the afternoon.

After the premiere, Mallarmé wrote to Debussy on a copy of the poem: 'Spirit of the forest, if with your primal breath your flute sounds well, listen now to the radiance which comes when Debussy plays.'

## Richard Wagner (1813 – 1883)

### *Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde* (1856–59)

The one-man artistic movement that was Richard Wagner changed the world of opera throughout his career. He was a massive figure and – allowing a modern expression – a 'Marmite' one at that. In amongst all of his achievements, his mastery of the orchestra was superb, and these two movements – bookending *Tristan und Isolde* – are supreme examples of his skills. The *Prelude* sets the scene before the curtain rises, and the *Liebestod* (literally 'love-death') plays (and is sung by Isolde) at the close of the opera.

*Tristan und Isolde* is renowned for the pressure Wagner places on tonal harmony. The famous "Tristan chord" is heard in the second bar, when the winds join the cellos in this ambiguous collection of notes

that can potentially resolve one of several ways. It lends an ambiguity to the harmony throughout the entire opera.

The story comes from the Middle Ages. The Irish princess, Isolde, is on her way to marry King Marke of Cornwall (an enforced arrangement), escorted by Tristan. Isolde feels dishonour at having unwittingly nursed Tristan, her enemy, after a battle, and orders her maid Brangäne to prepare a poison; instead, she prepares a love potion, and the princess and prince both drink of it. Falling into one another's arms, they are discovered by one of the king's soldiers; Tristan is attacked and dies with Isolde at his side, after which she too dies, in the ecstatic *Liebestod*, as the curtain falls.

**\*\* Interval \*\***

### **Charles Ives (1874 – 1954)** **The Unanswered Question (1906; 1930–35)**

Charles Ives was an American modernist, whose music was little-known in his lifetime. His music forged ahead in similar experimental directions to the modernists of Europe, though he was often ahead of them, chronologically. His reputation is now firmly established as a significant, original voice of the 20th-century.

In his note to performers in the score of *The Unanswered Question*, Ives writes that the string section of the orchestra represent: 'The Silences of the Druids - who Know, See and Hear Nothing.' He goes on to note that: 'The Perennial Question of Existence' is intoned in the same tone of voice each time; 'but the hunt for the "The Invisible Answer" becomes gradually more active, faster and louder ... "The Fighting Answerers," as the time goes on, and after a "secret conference," seem to realise a futility, and begin to mock "The Question" - the strife is over for the moment. After they disappear, "The Question" is asked for the last time, and the "Silences" are heard beyond in "Undisturbed Solitude."

This is a short work, but is set on a massive, cosmic scale. It contrasts the pure, tonal music of the "Silences" with the atonal question and non-answers. The clue is in the title - we don't learn the answer - and we are left with more questions of our own.

### **Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949)** **Tod und Verklärung (1888–89)**

*Death and Transfiguration* is about a dying man, written by the young Richard Strauss, hot on the heels of his major success *Don Juan*. Unlike the 'suggestions' of Debussy's music earlier in this concert, in *Death and Transfiguration* it is easy to spot where in the story of the dying man we are.

In the opening seconds, the strings give us the uneven beat of a failing heart - a rhythm that returns throughout - and after the slow introduction, we are flung headlong into the hero's explosive struggle with death in a more forceful, faster section. Following this, the music calms and suggests nostalgic memories of the hero's childhood, but these are interrupted again by the life-and-death struggle, with trombones now menacingly intoning the unstable heartbeat.

No spoiler alert is necessary before saying that at this point the hero dies, and the music changes to be slow and majestic - we have reached the transfiguration itself, in which the soul 'finds gloriously achieved in eternal space those things which could not be achieved here below.'

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