

SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2022

ijii
SELO
SOUTH EAST LONDON
Orchestra



WELCOME

David Smith, Music Director

A very warm welcome to this afternoon's concert, our first ever in the fantastic surroundings of All Saints, West Dulwich.

South East London Orchestra has just celebrated its 10th anniversary, having been based in nearby Beckenham all that time. Over the past decade we have explored a wide range of orchestral music, regularly featuring the music of British composers, of whom we hear from two today.

Speaking of decades, it is back to the noughties – the *nineteen*-noughties – for all of today's three pieces, written between 1904 and 1908. Ethel Smyth's overture to *The Wreckers* is a tale of plunder and adventure around the Cornish coast.

From there it is but a short trip around the south coast of England, to the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, where Claude Debussy holidayed in 1905, with the proofs of *La Mer* (The Sea) in his bag for him to correct prior to first performance. *La Mer* embodies, however, a modern French style and draws in influences from other musical cultures too. It is, undoubtedly, a masterpiece.

Elgar's First Symphony represents the same in the English tradition of great works, marrying up that recognisable style with the direction of leading European composers of the time. Its arrival was unanticipated by the wider musical world, but it was immediately recognised as an outstanding, modern symphony.

Our season continues next year with performances both in Beckenham, and here in Dulwich in July, for a programme that will include Shostakovich's huge Symphony No. 10 (see back page for details). We look forward to seeing you again soon for some more wonderful music.

PROGRAMME

Smyth, *The Wreckers Overture*

Debussy, *La Mer*

Interval

Elgar, *Symphony No.1 in A flat*

THE ORCHESTRA

Flute

Linda Penn (+piccolo)
Jenny Sutton (+piccolo)
Gemma Zufolo

Oboe

Catherine Smale
Rosalind Hodgeson
Andrew Koval-Radley
(cor anglais)

Clarinet

Charlotte Woolley
Phil Broadey
Chris Jeffery
(bass clarinet)

Bassoon

Claire Goddard
Val Currie
Alex Moss
Elizabeth Boyden
(contra)

Horn

Andy Currie
Steph Jeffery
Ben Mason
Lottie Orr

Trumpet

Ben Reeve
Ben Whalley
Steve Hair

Trombone

Tom Woodcock
Graham Winter
Kieron O'Neill

Tuba

Dan Mackintosh

Violin I

Martha Mitu (leader)
Claire Rutland
Matthew Burgess
Philip Curry
Russ Anderson
Heather Hall
Cathal Garvey

Violin II

Louise Esaias
Penny Davies
Geraldine Lowery
Tracey Duncan
Keith Hide
Wendy Albuquerque
Catherine Parkinson

Viola

Maeve Lynch
Lucy Mackintosh
Stephen Blows
Hywel Williams

Cello

Hilary Wood
Tony Albuquerque
Richard Thorn
Debbi Steele
Tom Player
Charlotte Davidson
Ed Langford
Fiona Clarey

Double bass

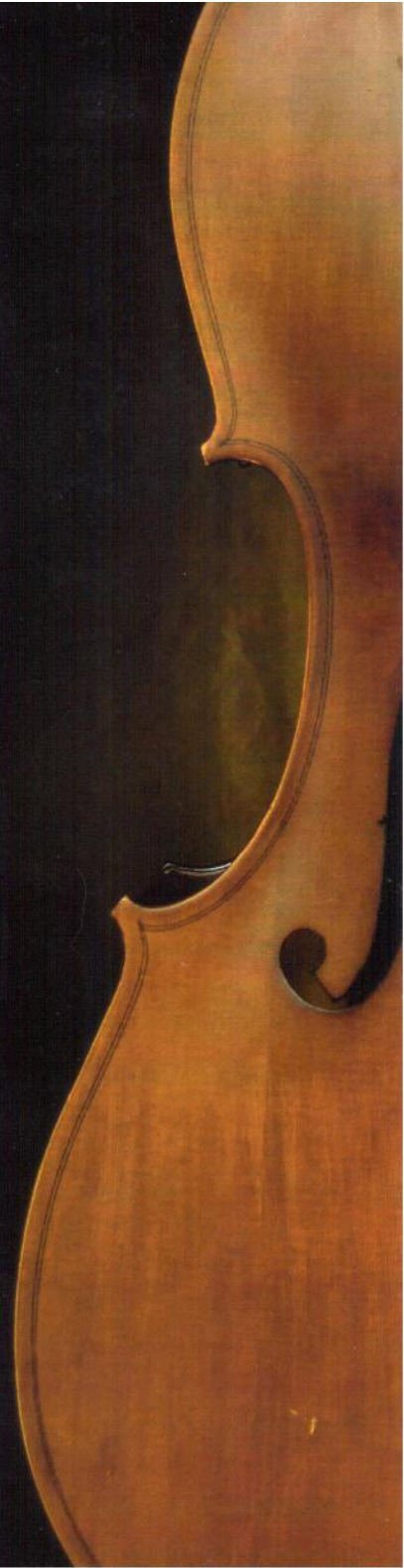
David Wright
Morven Main
Martin Gulliford

Harp

Iona Duncan
Chris Clark

Timpani and Percussion

John French



BIOGRAPHIES



David Smith | Music Director

David is passionate about conducting contemporary music alongside the more recent 20th-century music and the great masterpieces of the classical repertoire. David is the founding Music Director of South East London Orchestra.

He was Music Director of City of London Symphonic Winds (2011-2017) and has been a regular guest conductor with London Repertoire Orchestra, many orchestras across the south of England and in London. As an instrumentalist David has extensive experience as an orchestral trombonist and timpanist, with rare forays into the world of the double bass.

He read Music and a Masters in Musicology at the University of Southampton, where his tutors included David Owen Norris and Michael Finnissy. He studies conducting with Robin Browning, and previously studied with Denise Ham.

When not conducting, David is Head of Assessment Services at ABRSM (the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, inspiring musical achievement around the world), coaches junior age group cricket, and enjoys debating small details with his two young children.



Martha Mitu | Leader

An eclectic musician with a holistic approach to performance, Martha-Maria Mitu is a classical violinist, interdisciplinary arts performer, composer, and music educator. Alumna of Trinity Laban Conservatoire London, Lucerne School of Music Switzerland, and Bern School of Music, Martha has performed and showcased her work in various prominent international festivals (both classical and contemporary), and has performed solo concerts all over Europe, Asia, and the UK.

Highlights of her most recent performances include: 1st violin tutti member with BBC Concert Orchestra in various projects [Snape Malting BBC Proms, the Nevil Holt Opera and recordings under Barbara Hannigan's direction]; soloist [Sibelius violin concerto] with Trinity Laban Orchestra at Blackheath Concert Hall; recital at Wigmore Hall with Efra String Quartet; leader of 2nd violins Royal Opera House – Mumbai; recitals at the Enescu Festival, Romania, and Chopin Piano Fest, Kosovo; and concertmaster within the Lucerne Festival Switzerland.

Martha is based in London and performs as an orchestral leader and with various chamber music groups. She maintains professional relationships with the BBC Concert Orchestra, as well performing in recitals with her newly established duo alongside Italian pianist Andrea Emanuele.

Bromley,
Lewisham
& Greenwich

Mind



Bromley, Lewisham & Greenwich Mind are delighted to be partnering with South East London Orchestra to commemorate their 10 years of existence.

As our name suggests we provide mental health services to people across the three boroughs of Bromley, Lewisham & Greenwich. It is important to note that we are a local Mind and not the Mind that everyone knows, we are a separate registered charity and responsible for our own financial management. National Mind carry out research into mental health, provide information about it and lobby government around mental health issues. Local Minds provide mental health services to local people. We work with people to aid their recovery and to improve their quality of life.

We also have a role in early intervention and the prevention of mental health issues through our wellbeing services. We provide wellbeing services to new mums and dads, to people bereaved by suicide and to secondary school pupils. We also offer a wide range of awareness raising training and workplace wellbeing advice.

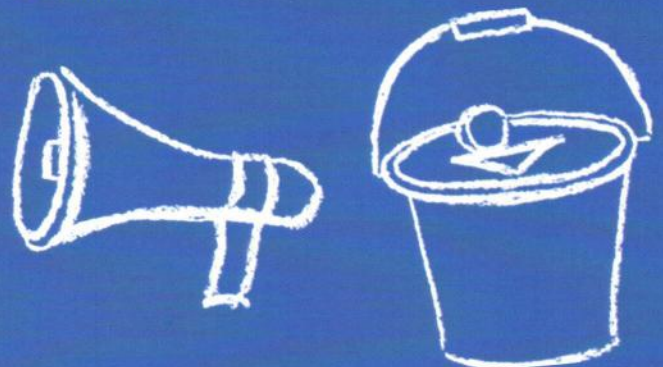
For people with more moderate to severe mental health problems, we offer counselling, mental health advice and help with more practical issues such as filling out benefits forms or getting back into employment. We also run a Recovery College, peer support groups of all kinds and we have staff who

are based in Doctors Surgeries and other healthcare establishments.

In addition we provide a range of services to people with dementia and their families. Last year, we supported over 7,500 people across our three boroughs and this number increases every year.

We need your support to make this happen. Please consider making a donation to BLG Mind. You can donate via our website (www.blgmind.org.uk/donate) or by popping something into our collectors at one of the orchestra's concerts.

Thanks in advance for helping us to help your communities.



ETHEL SMYTH

(1858–1944)

The Wreckers Overture (1904)

Ethel Smyth led a colourful life as a composer, suffragette, radiologist and author, achieving some notable firsts: her opera, *The Forest*, was the first by a woman to be staged by the Metropolitan Opera House in New York; she was the first woman to receive an honorary doctorate in music from Oxford University; and she became the first female composer to be awarded a damehood.

Born in Kent into a wealthy family, Smyth overcame parental disapproval to study music in Leipzig, where she mingled with the likes of Brahms, Dvořák, Clara Schumann and Tchaikovsky, being described by the latter as “one of the few women composers whom one can seriously consider to be achieving something valuable in the field of musical creation”.

On her return to England in 1890, she concentrated on composing operas, writing six in total. The first three – *Fantasio*, *The Forest* and *The Wreckers* – were completed by 1904, with the third having been inspired by a Cornish walking holiday some years beforehand. She recounted in her memoirs how the holiday had suffused her with

“impressions of that strange world of more than a hundred years ago; the plundering of ships lured on to the rocks by the falsification or extinction of the coast lights... and with it all the ingrained religiosity of the Celtic population of that barren promontory”.

This overture, one of her best-known works, captures how Smyth imagined that strange world. The stormy opening gives way to a calm, nautical atmosphere, where the winds and strings take turns to develop a lilting melody. The music then becomes more agitated and the storm returns, although this time it is followed by a triumphant anthem, full of Elgarian pomp, before the overture reaches its exuberant conclusion.





CLAUDE DEBUSSY

(1862–1918)

La Mer (1905)

I De l'aube à midi sur la mer

II Jeux de vagues

III Dialogue du vent et de la mer

Debussy started composing *La Mer (The Sea)* in 1903, soon after his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. His largest symphonic work is labelled as "three symphonic sketches for orchestra", and conjures up the sea in all its ephemeral moods.

Now one of Debussy's most highly regarded works, its initial reviews were mixed after the 1906 premiere in Paris. Pierre Lalo, an influential critic, said, "I do not hear, I do not see, I do not smell the sea". Many in the musical establishment felt his music with its Asian influences, using whole tone and pentatonic scales and unusual orchestral colouring, was outlandish. In Britain

the immediate reception was more favourable, as it was to become later in France and worldwide.

Debussy rarely spoke of musical influences, so it is difficult to pin-point the origin of the sea as inspiration. His parents had planned for him to be a sailor and he had enjoyed beach holidays at Cannes but the physical sea itself was less influential than his own imagination. The imagery of the sea in art and literature appealed to him: he insisted on a detail from Hokusai's print, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, appearing on the score's cover and appreciated J. M. W. Turner's seascapes. He also admired French Impressionism; his music is sometimes described as its musical equivalent. Debussy hated the term as he considered it to be

too focussed on the pictorial; rather he identified with Symbolism in its use of indirect artistic suggestion to express emotion.

Recurring motifs give the piece overarching unity, but many will be struck not by formal elements but by ever-evolving melodic motifs and what Debussy's biographer Stephen Walsh has described as "the astonishing diversity and refinement of Debussy's orchestration". These invite one to imagine, as Debussy put it, "the invisible sentiments of nature". *La Mer* does indeed encapsulate the unpredictable nature of the sea but, metaphors aside, the music has its own inner logic. This, as the BBC broadcaster Tom Service has said, "traps you in its undertow of sheer power".

From dawn to midday on the sea

At the break of dawn on the sea, we hear a key motif on the cor anglais in syncopated "scotch snap" rhythm, and mysterious descending violin scales. The second theme is on cor anglais and muted trumpet, and a third is a melody on winds. Wisps of melodies recombine, as wavelets building into waves, until interrupted suddenly by three loud chords. A lilting melody on cellos in four parts provides a dramatically new texture and a chorale-like theme on brass leads into the majestic conclusion, as the sun is at its highest point.

Play of the waves

The capriciousness of the sea is suggested by dancing triple-time rhythm. An initial motif on flute, clarinets and cor anglais is followed by playful trills on violins. Whole tone harp scales rush up and down before repeated staccato woodwind chords accompany a second contrasting lyrical theme on cor anglais. Fragments of themes lead to a frenzied climax until calm returns with harp arpeggios, glockenspiel and cymbal.

Dialogue of the wind and the sea

The tempestuous opening sets an ominous atmosphere. First movement motifs, including on muted trumpet, recur above racing violins and rumbling lower strings. Woodwinds, and then strings, introduce a new, haunting theme. Variants of many themes return while lower strings continue their menace, and the roar of a gathering storm is suggested. The waves calm and the first movement's chorale returns. Powerful restatements of previous themes combine to form the triumphant finish.

EDWARD ELGAR

(1857–1934)

Symphony No. 1 in A flat (1908)


- I Andante. Nobilmente e semplice - Allegro
- II Allegro molto
- III Adagio
- IV Lento – Allegro

Elgar completed his first symphony in 1908, when he was aged 51. By then, he had already achieved success as a composer through his *Enigma Variations* (1899), as well as receiving wide popular acclaim through the *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1* (1901) to which he set the words of *Land of Hope and Glory* for the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902. He was knighted in 1904.

The public-facing Elgar was a knight of the realm, the friend of aristocrats, and dined with royalty; in private, he was the son of a Worcester shop-keeper with limited formal musical education, who was excessively sensitive to criticism and plagued by episodes of despondency. Elgar said that the First Symphony has "no programme beyond a wide experience of human life with a great charity (love) and a massive hope in the future", but the contrasting aspects of Elgar's personality seem to be evident in it.

The Symphony begins with a hymn-like march theme in an Andante section marked *Nobilmente*. Literally meaning "nobly",

Nobilmente was introduced as a musical term by Elgar in the *Nimrod* movement of the *Enigma Variations*. The meaning of *Nobilmente* appears ambiguous, being at once emotionally expressive yet restrained; and offering hope for the future, while also being tinged with nostalgia. The march theme informs the whole Symphony and reappears on multiple occasions. At the end of this slow introduction, the movement transitions abruptly to a faster section (*Allegro*). The music is restless and agitated, with the sense of uncertainty increased by changes of tempo between two and three beats in a bar. The *Nobilmente* theme reappears but in a brief and hesitant form.



The second movement begins with the lower strings delivering rumbling figures before the violins enter with a "scurrying" theme. This leads to a march, which appears to accelerate with increasing dissonance. The tone of the music changes with the appearance of a slower more lyrical theme played by the violins together with the flutes and oboe. Elgar seemed to view this section as a rural idyll, telling the orchestra to play it "like something we hear down by the river". The march reappears in a softer and quieter form. The music then transitions without a break into the third movement, an Adagio whose melody is a note-for-note transformation of the initial violin theme from the second movement. The Adagio was exceptionally well-received at the Symphony's first performances. Elgar's friend and publisher, Jaeger (immortalised as Nimrod), who was by then terminally ill with tuberculosis, wrote, "this is not only one of the very greatest slow movements since Beethoven, but I consider it worthy of that master".

The finale begins with a slow and mysterious introduction. This is followed by an Allegro which presses forward with a sense of restless anticipation until the music is halted abruptly by a chord from the brass and lower wind instruments.

In an emotional moment, the theme introduced earlier in the movement is played at a slower tempo by the strings accompanied by harp arpeggios. The music builds again and the *Nobilmente* theme finally returns as a triumphant march, accompanied by glittering chords from the whole orchestra.

The symphony received an overwhelming recognition at its earliest performances, being appreciated as representing a new level of achievement not only for Elgar but for English music. Within just one year it had achieved 100 performances – exceptional for a new work. It was dedicated to, and first conducted by the great Hans Richter, who addressed the London Symphony Orchestra ahead of the first London performance to say: "Let us now rehearse the greatest symphony of modern times, written by the greatest modern composer – and not only in this country". The critic Neville Cardus wrote: "At last, an English composer speaking a language that was European and not provincial. No English Symphony existed [till] then to make comparison with a symphony by Beethoven or Brahms. I cannot hope to describe the pride taken in Elgar by young English students".

WE ARE RECRUITING!

We are always on the look out for new members and have specific vacancies in upper strings and brass. There is no audition process, so if you're around Grade 8 standard (even if you haven't played for a while...!) and are interested in getting involved, we'd love to hear from you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SELO wishes to extend our sincere thanks to Terry Davis and Jonathan Jeffery for the design, production and printing of the programme, fliers and season leaflets.

Programme notes by Tony Albuquerque (Smyth), Martin Gulliford (Elgar) and Morven Main (Debussy). Programme notes © 2022: South East London Orchestra

NEXT CONCERTS

Sunday 26 March 2023 at 4pm

St Michael and All Angels, Beckenham

Glinka, Ruslan and Lyudmilla Overture
Schumann, Scenes from Goethe's Faust: Overture
Liszt, Hamlet
Brahms, Symphony No. 2 in D

Sunday 21 May 2023 at 4pm

St Michael and All Angels, Beckenham

Beethoven, Violin Concerto in D (with Charlie Lovell-Jones)
Dvořák, Symphony No. 7 in D minor

Saturday 22 July 2023 at 4pm

All Saints, West Dulwich

To include
Shostakovich, Symphony No. 10 in E minor

More details about the orchestra, our concerts, how to buy tickets and much more can be found at our website, or via our social media links.

www.southeastlondonorchestra.com

 [southeastlondonorchestra](https://www.facebook.com/southeastlondonorchestra)

 [@selorchestra](https://twitter.com/selorchestra)

 [southeastlondonorchestra](https://www.instagram.com/southeastlondonorchestra)

Programme notes © 2022 South East London Orchestra



SELO is a member
of Making Music

SELO is a registered
charity
Number 1175395

