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SELO

SOUTH EAST LONDON

Orchestra

SUNDAY 26 MARCH 2023

WELCOME

David Smith, Music Director

One of the most enjoyable parts of making music here at South East London Orchestra is the variety we look to put into our programmes.

Already in just two concerts this season, we've had music from Britain, the Czech Republic, Finland, France and USA. Our last concert in November featured music from the beginning of the twentieth century, and so today it feels like a fresh experience to go back a little further to the middle of the nineteenth.

Today's programme takes us on a chronological journey through that century from 1842 to 1877, and taking in music from Russia, Germany and Hungary. We're also presenting an exploration of the relationship between music and the stage.

The concert starts with a fairly straightforward operatic overture – Glinka's curtain-raiser to get the audience into the world of the story they're about to experience. Following this is the opening number from Schumann's extensive music-drama *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*; the entire work features large numbers of instrumentalists and singers – quite the show. And the first half today concludes this survey with one of the first 'tone poems' – a piece of music illustrating or evoking the contents of another source – often a story, poem or artwork. And here Liszt takes his inspiration from the character of one of the most famous plays in the Western world.

All this and I'm yet to mention Brahms's Second Symphony, one of the cornerstones of nineteenth-century orchestral repertoire. It is one of his most popular pieces for orchestra, taking in multiple changes of mood, ending in one of the brightest blazes of glory imaginable!

PROGRAMME

Glinka, Ruslan and Lyudmila: Overture

Schumann, Scenes from Goethe's Faust: Overture

Liszt, Hamlet

Interval

Brahms, Symphony No. 2 in D

THE ORCHESTRA

Flute

Jenn Raven
Sarah Harington Hawes
Jenny Sutton (+piccolo)

Oboe

Catherine Smale
Rosalind Hodgeson

Clarinet

Charlotte Woolley
Phil Broadey

Bassoon

Claire Goddard
Val Currie
Elizabeth Boyden
(contra)

Horn

Andy Currie
Steph Jeffery
Lottie Orr
Frank Cottee

Trumpet

Ben Whalley
David Brinkley

Trombone

Tom Woodcock
Graham Winter
Kieron O'Neill

Tuba

Dan Mackintosh

Violin I

Martha Mitu
Claire Rutland
Philip Curry
Vikki Thomas
Matthew Burgess
Heather Hall
Mike Bradburn

Violin II

Louise Esaias
Wendy Albuquerque
Penny Davies
Pam Orchard
Tracey Duncan
Catherine Parkinson
Ros Sykes

Viola

Maeve Lynch
Lucy Mackintosh
Stephen Blows
Hywel Williams
Calum Moulton
Namaah DiRicci
Josh Albuquerque

Cello

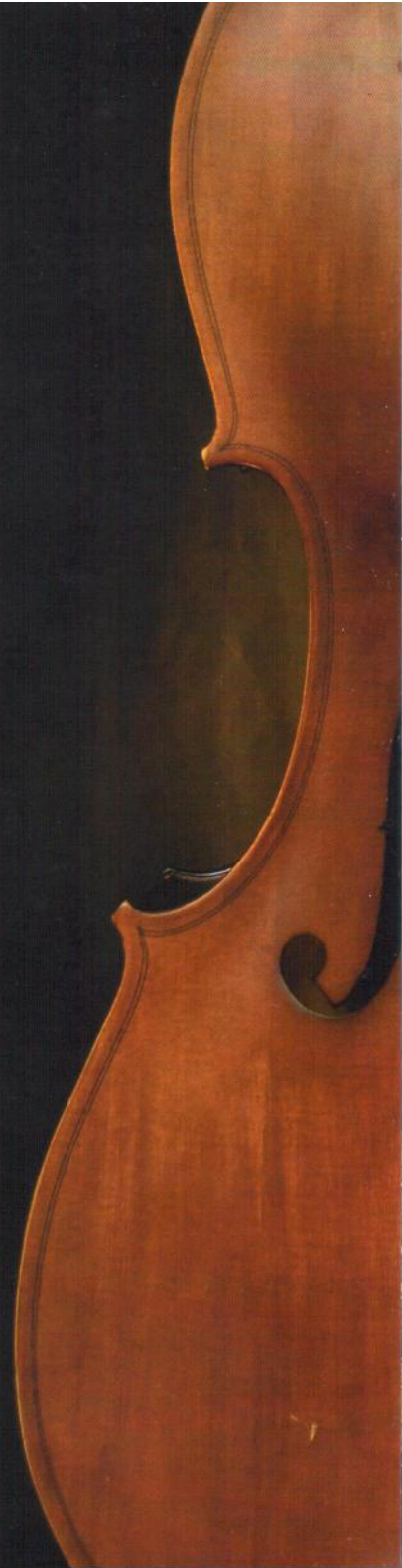
Hilary Wood
Tony Albuquerque
Richard Thorn
Philippa Bradburn
Charlotte Davidson
Debbi Steele
Sue Ardley

Double bass

David Wright
Morven Main
Martin Gulliford

Timpani

David Coronel



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 Effra 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



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.



MIKHAIL GLINKA (1804–1857)

Ruslan and Lyudmila: Overture (1842)

Glinka was born into a Russian aristocratic family where his privileged upbringing included conducting the peasant orchestra on his uncle's estate. After spending four unrewarding years working as a civil servant in his early twenties, he moved to Italy to pursue his love for music and immersed himself in the operas of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini. This was followed by a spell of formal musical training in Berlin before he returned home to compose the two operas he is most famous for, *A Life for the Tsar* (1836) and *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842).



Glinka's colourful life was bookmarked by two contrasting campaigns by the Russian military: the successful fightback against Napoleon's invasion in 1812, and defeat in the Crimean War in 1856. Perhaps it is no surprise then that Glinka's music is infused with nationalistic elements, particularly folk themes, although his inspiration

for the overture to *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was more prosaic. He had been invited to a wedding dinner at a Russian court and recalled that: 'I was up in the balcony, and the clattering of knives, forks and plates made such an impression on me that I had the idea to imitate them in the prelude to *Ruslan*.'

The overture opens with unmistakable *joie de vivre*, punchy chords alternating with scampering strings. A quieter interplay between the woodwind then gives way to a more sedate, lyrical melody. The striking use of dynamics throughout is reminiscent of Rossini, helping Glinka to maintain the overture's energy right through to its triumphant finale.

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Scenes from Goethe's Faust: Overture (1844–53)

The legend of Faust is an archetypal story of the struggle between good and evil. The German poet and polymath, Goethe, published his version of *Faust* as a play in two parts between 1808 and 1832. As well as being acclaimed as one of the great works of German literature, Goethe's *Faust* attracted the attention of many 19th and 20th-century composers. Goethe himself claimed that only Mozart, who had died in 1791, was fit to write music for the work.



Robert Schumann worked on the music for *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* between 1844 and 1853. The work was initially described as an oratorio but it evolved into a musical drama that was close to the renowned lieder composer's ideal of a German opera. The overture was completed in 1853, two months before Schumann was overwhelmed by mental illness and his career as a composer came to an end.

The D minor overture is in a Classical style. It begins with a slow and sinister introduction dominated by

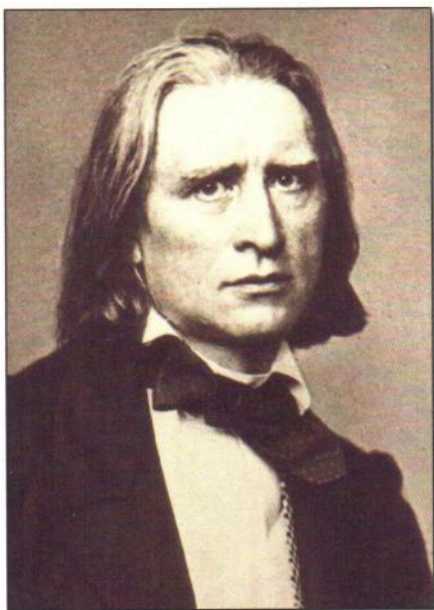
the lower strings. The tempo then increases, and the underlying tension is relieved by more wistful playing from the flutes and violins that might hint at the romance between Faust and the innocent Gretchen. This is undermined by sinister under-tones from the lower strings. The music finally transitions to the major key and dramatic chords from the brass seem to offer premonition of Faust's eventual redemption. The overture provides an introduction to the moving vocal music that Schumann composed for the main work.

The completed sections of *Scenes from Faust* were successfully premiered for the centenary of Goethe's birth in 1849 with simultaneous performances in Leipzig, Dresden and Weimar, the latter conducted by Liszt. Recent decades have seen renewed interest in the work with musicologist Bradford Robinson describing it as 'a masterpiece whose few flaws can be easily outweighed by its strengths of nobility, dignity, and impassioned attention to dramatic detail'.

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

Hamlet (1858)

Franz Liszt was born in Hungary but lived in Paris between the ages of 16 and 21, where he met Paganini, Berlioz and Chopin, who were important influences on his musical development. After spending several years touring Europe as a virtuoso pianist, Liszt settled in Weimar as court conductor between 1848 and 1862; here he composed many important orchestral works.



The symphonic poem represents one of Liszt's novel contributions to musical form, comprising a programmatic single-movement piece whose music evokes an emotional response consistent with a literary or other non-musical association.

In Weimar, Liszt attended an 1856 performance of *Hamlet* that provided the inspiration for his tenth symphonic poem. Liszt noted that Hamlet was not presented as an 'indecisive dreamer' but as 'an enterprising prince who is waiting to complete his revenge and be crowned king in place of his uncle'. The symphonic poem *Hamlet* reflects on the character of Hamlet and his emotional responses to the action.

Hamlet opens with a sombre but brief section marked 'very slow and gloomy'. The tempo gradually increases with chromatic scales from the strings. The music transitions to an Allegro (lively) section marked 'passionate and very agitated'. The orchestra is eventually silenced by a drum beat rhythm that ushers in a 'sweet and expressive' section played by the wind instruments and solo violin, whose ascending motif alludes to Ophelia, the young noblewoman who is a potential wife for Hamlet. The allegro theme makes a brief disjointed reappearance. The wind instruments continue to play, and the Ophelia

motif is repeated by the solo violin. The agitated allegro theme reappears but now in a modified form. Violent and repeated chords are heard. The opening drum-beats return, leading into funeral music that draws the work to a close.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, classical music was divided into two rival camps. Robert and Clara Schumann, who were friends and mentors of Johannes Brahms, generally remained loyal to classical forms inherited from Beethoven, while introducing romantic ideas into these. Liszt and his future son-in-law Richard Wagner embraced new musical forms and harmonic and thematic innovation. Liszt had great influence on future generations of composers through his anticipation of impressionism and atonality in music.



JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Symphony No. 2 in D (1877)

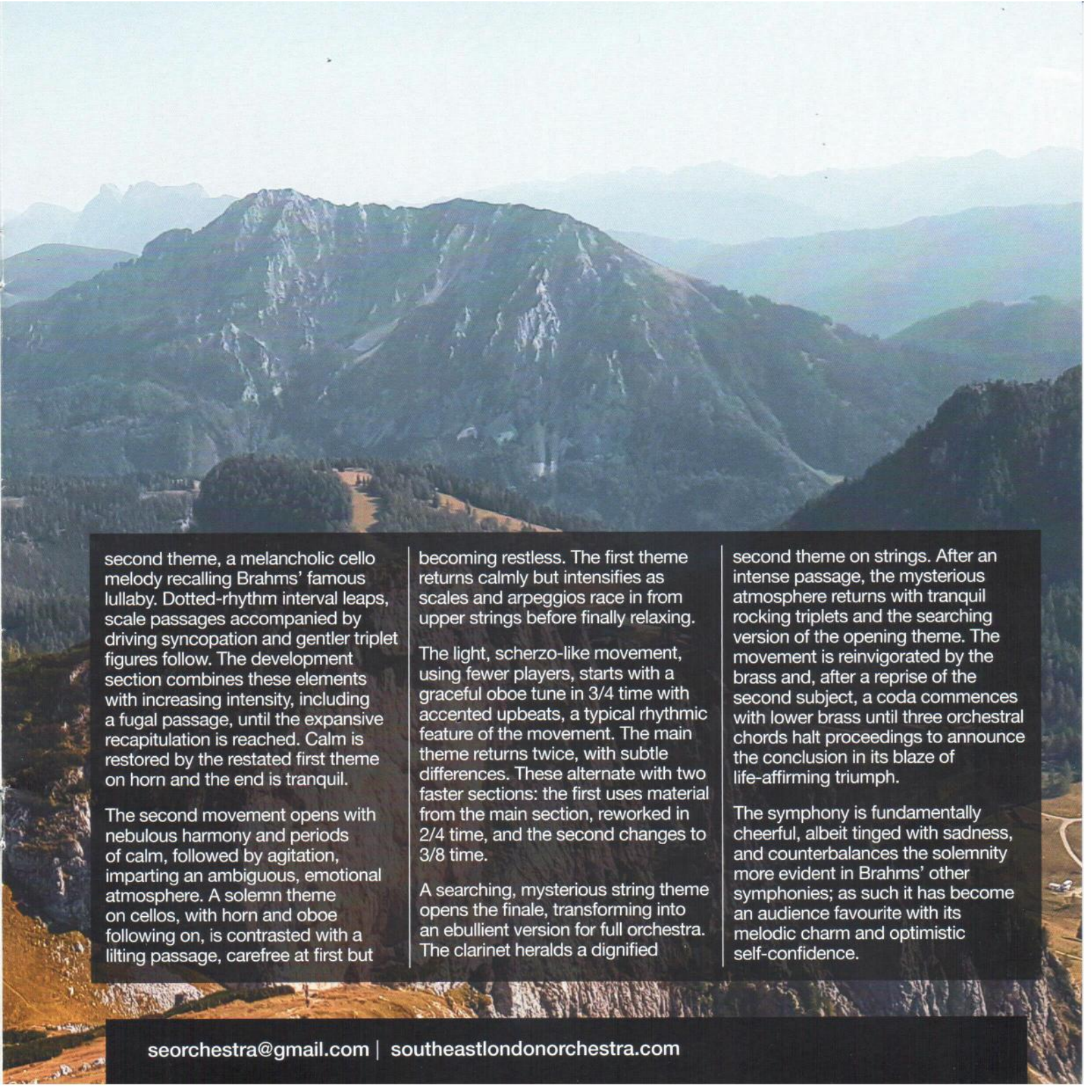
Living in the shadow of Beethoven, Brahms had taken many years to compose his first symphony; his second took him only a few months now that the weight of expectation had reduced. Composed while on holiday in 1877 in Carinthia, Austria, his *Symphony No. 2* was premièred in 1877 by the Vienna Philharmonic under Hans Richter, and praised by the public and critics.

More light-hearted than his first, this new symphony had less serious counterpoint and more thematic variation. Subtly reappearing themes are clothed in changing dynamic and orchestral colour and are often disguised by syncopation. A friend of Brahms, Ferdinand Pohl, seemed to capture its mood when he said: 'Vitality and strength are bubbling up everywhere, deep feeling and charm to go with it.... such music can only be composed in the country, in the midst of nature'.

Despite its sunny mood Brahms joked to his publisher: 'The new symphony is so melancholy that you won't stand it. I have never written anything so sad'. The symphony does indeed contain darker

moments which add depth to what the critic Hanslick described as its 'serenade-like' character. Brahms was generally enigmatic about his intentions but he partially explained these dark moments by referring to Job's cry to God, which he set in a motet shortly afterwards, and to the 'black wings of melancholy' that continually plagued him.

A three-note cello-bass motif which permeates the symphony introduces a pastoral theme on horns, woodwind, then strings. The peaceful mood is briefly set aside by an ominous drum roll and trombones and tuba, in a mysterious, recurrent intervention. The initial thematic material is gradually taken up by full orchestra until the appearance of the



second theme, a melancholic cello melody recalling Brahms' famous lullaby. Dotted-rhythm interval leaps, scale passages accompanied by driving syncopation and gentler triplet figures follow. The development section combines these elements with increasing intensity, including a fugal passage, until the expansive recapitulation is reached. Calm is restored by the restated first theme on horn and the end is tranquil.

The second movement opens with nebulous harmony and periods of calm, followed by agitation, imparting an ambiguous, emotional atmosphere. A solemn theme on cellos, with horn and oboe following on, is contrasted with a lilting passage, carefree at first but

becoming restless. The first theme returns calmly but intensifies as scales and arpeggios race in from upper strings before finally relaxing.

The light, scherzo-like movement, using fewer players, starts with a graceful oboe tune in 3/4 time with accented upbeats, a typical rhythmic feature of the movement. The main theme returns twice, with subtle differences. These alternate with two faster sections: the first uses material from the main section, reworked in 2/4 time, and the second changes to 3/8 time.

A searching, mysterious string theme opens the finale, transforming into an ebullient version for full orchestra. The clarinet heralds a dignified

second theme on strings. After an intense passage, the mysterious atmosphere returns with tranquil rocking triplets and the searching version of the opening theme. The movement is reinvigorated by the brass and, after a reprise of the second subject, a coda commences with lower brass until three orchestral chords halt proceedings to announce the conclusion in its blaze of life-affirming triumph.

The symphony is fundamentally cheerful, albeit tinged with sadness, and counterbalances the solemnity more evident in Brahms' other symphonies; as such it has become an audience favourite with its melodic charm and optimistic self-confidence.

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, flyers and season leaflets.

Programme notes by Tony Albuquerque (Glinka), Martin Gulliford (Schumann, Liszt) and Morven Main (Brahms). Programme notes © 2023: South East London Orchestra

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NEXT CONCERTS

Sunday 21 May 2023 at 4pm

St Michael and All Angels, Beckenham

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

Saturday 22 July 2023 at 4pm

All Saints, West Dulwich

Kabalevsky, Colas Breugnon Overture
Mussorgsky, Khovanshchina: Prelude and Dance of the Persian Maidens
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

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