

The background of the entire poster is a close-up photograph of several autumn leaves, likely from a maple tree. The leaves are in various stages of color change, showing vibrant yellows, oranges, and some hints of red. They are set against a soft, out-of-focus background of more foliage, creating a warm and seasonal atmosphere.

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SELO
SOUTH EAST LONDON
Orchestra

SUNDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2026

WELCOME

Charlotte Woolley, Chair of the Trustees

Welcome to the start of our new season!

As the nights begin to draw in and an autumnal feel is in the air, today's programme explores themes of turbulence. Opening with Brahms' *Tragic Overture* the piece is intense and stormy, with occasional beautiful warm melodies that emerge and seem to dance in and out but are ultimately short-lived. Grieg's *In Autumn* evokes the darker, wilder side of the season as well as capturing the joyfulness of a successful harvest.

In our second half Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony* is a deeply personal and emotionally turbulent masterpiece. The opening brass fanfare represents Fate, as "a power that is invincible and will never be overcome". It's a thrilling piece and shows off every section of the orchestra.

For those of you who are regular audience members you will notice a new face at the front! We're delighted to be conducted by Alex Robinson for this concert - Alex hails from Manchester and the orchestra have very much enjoyed working with him on this project.

PROGRAMME

Brahms, Tragic Overture

Grieg, In Autumn

Interval

Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4

BIOGRAPHIES



Alex Robinson | Music Director

Alex is a multi-award winning conductor and harpsichordist with a first-class MusB from the University of Manchester and a distinction level MMus in Performance (Conducting) from the Royal Northern College of Music. He studied under Mark Heron, Justin Doyle, and Clark Rundell. He has been the Music Director of Haffner Orchestra, Furness Bach Choir, Amaretti Chamber Orchestra and Nottingham Youth Orchestra. Alex has worked with the BBC Philharmonic, the Hallé, Northern Chamber Orchestra, English Touring Opera, Heritage Opera, Helix Ensemble, and many others. He has worked as an Assistant Conductor to Sir Mark Elder, Juanjo Mena, James Lowe, Clark Rundell, Gerry Cornelius, Nicolas Collon, Jonathan Peter Kenny, Vassily Petrenko and Sir Andrew Davies. Alex has worked with international soloists including Martin Roscoe and Inon Barnatan. He won the 'pris du public' and the 'pris d'orchestre' at the 8th annual Opera de Baugé conducting competition in 2026. He returns to English Touring Opera in Autumn 2026 to conduct a new production of Purcell's Dido & Aeneas.

alexrobinsonconductor.co.uk



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.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Tragic Overture, op. 81 (1880)

Brahms composed both the *Tragic Overture* and the *Academic Festival Overture* in the summer of 1880, remarking that “one weeps, the other laughs.” The overtures are sandwiched between his second and third symphonies, with the *Tragic* often regarded as an insight into the composer’s melancholic nature.

The opening chords of the work are pounded out, perhaps as a reminder of the crushing blows that fate can deliver. The main theme that follows is quietly

ominous, becoming more march-like as it develops to a crescendo. The turbulence eventually gives way to a heartwarming melody in the violins, although the respite from the angst-ridden mood is short-lived. Brahms uses the march-like elements in the main theme to create a quasi-funereal air in the slower middle section, underscoring the tragic nature of the piece. The key ideas from the opening section are reintroduced in the finale as the overture winds its way to a tumultuous conclusion.



EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)

In Autumn, op. 11 (1865)

On leaving the Leipzig Conservatory in 1862, Grieg moved to Copenhagen where he studied with Niels Gade and was inspired by Rikard Nordraak (who later composed the music to the Norwegian national anthem) to incorporate traditional folk music into his compositions.

The concert overture, *In Autumn*, was composed in late 1865 while Grieg was visiting Rome. Gade was unimpressed by the work and suggested that Grieg should "write something better". Undeterred, Grieg arranged a piano duet version of the overture for a competition at the Swedish

Academy, where it was awarded the top prize by a panel of judges that included Gade!

Much like Brahms' *Tragic Overture*, *In Autumn* opens with chordal declarations, but these are now followed by a pastoral motif in the woodwind. This leads into a driving section based on a song, *Autumn Storms*, that he had written earlier in the year. A cheerful melody, drawing on a traditional Reaper's Song (the Norwegian word for autumn, *høst*, also means harvest) is then used to lift the mood. All these themes are revisited before the piece concludes with a joyful celebration of the opening motif.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Symphony No. 4 (1877-78)

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, composed in 1877-78, is one of his most deeply personal works. He dedicated the symphony to his patron and confidante Nadezhda von Meck, describing it as an expression of the struggle between fate and the individual.

He sets out his first movement with one of the most towering structural achievements in western music. The structural foundations of sonata form are stretched to their limit to accommodate Tchaikovsky's extraordinarily passionate material. Beginning with a brass fanfare centred around an A flat that seems at first not to be able to move off it, the composer intended to represent Fate stating that "there is nothing to be done but to submit to it and lament in vain".

Perhaps writing in response to the disastrous end to his catastrophic marriage he goes on to say "No haven exists ... Drift upon that sea until it engulfs and submerges you in its depths". The movement goes on to juggle huge emotional contrasts of despair, tenderness and triumph.

The second movement unfolds with a gently rolling oboe melody which turns into a theme and variations with a passionate climax. Tchaikovsky then spins a scherzo out of an extended passage for pizzicato strings which then bursts into a jubilant finale based on a Russian folk song entitled "In the Field stood a Birch Tree". This is punctuated by cymbals depicting "lightning bolts" and followed by a vigorous coda that features a restatement of the opening "Fate" fanfare.



THE ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Martha Mitu (Leader)
Claire Rutland
Mike Bradburn
Philip Curry
Noura Sanatian
Harriet Bill
Russ Anderson

Violin II

Louise Esaias
Penny Davies
Keith Hide
Wendy Albuquerque
Laura Derain
Rosamund Sykes
Tracey Duncan
Geraldine Lowery

Viola

Lucy Mackintosh
Katie Saunders
John Hinchcliffe
Martin Ash

Cello

Hilary Wood
Tony Albuquerque
Philippa Bradburn
Emily Sawyer
Richard Thorn
Charlotte Davidson
Gillian Wood

Double bass

David Wright
Stephen Davies
Owen Harris

Flute

Pauline Savage
Sarah Harrington Hawes
Gemma Zufolo

Oboe

Catherine Smale
Frances Slack

Clarinet

Charlotte Woolley
Chris Jeffery

Bassoon

Claire Goddard
Val Currie

Horn

Steph Jeffery
Ben Mason
Brian Newman
Roy Banks
Stuart Lynn

Trumpet

Ben Whalley
Eddie Weedon
Ben Wong

Trombone

Richard Tighe
Graham Winter
Mikey Anderson
Jennings

Tuba

Dan Mackintosh

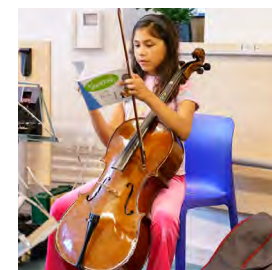
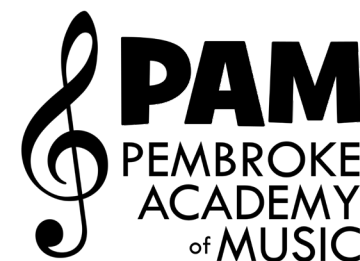
Timpani

Jon French

Percussion

Austin Beattie
Chris Goody
James Crook

OUR NEW COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTNER



Pembroke Academy of Music (PAM) is an open-access community music education project for young people aged 7–14 living in and around Walworth, South-East London. It is a programme of Pembroke House, a centre for social action and residential community in Walworth. PAM provides high-quality music education for around 50 children from low-income households who might otherwise miss out.

On Wednesday evenings during term time, students receive 30 weeks of small-group instrumental lessons in violin, cello, trumpet, trombone, guitar, clarinet or flute. Alongside instrumental tuition, they take part in musicianship classes, ensembles, choir and composition lessons. Sessions are heavily subsidised, and students can borrow instruments free of charge to practise at home.

As part of a neighbourhood organisation, PAM aims to reduce isolation and build connections in Walworth. At its heart is the opportunity for children to come together through music, develop friendships and feel part of their community. Through its teaching, performance opportunities and wider musical experiences, PAM makes high-quality music education accessible to children and young people in Walworth, regardless of their financial circumstances.



ABOUT US

South East London Orchestra is one of South London's leading amateur orchestras with a reputation for exciting, high quality concerts and a genuine connection with our community.

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 (Brahms and Grieg) and Alex Robinson (Tchaikovsky).

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WE ARE RECRUITING!

We are looking for new members, specifically in upper strings and brass. If you're around Grade 8 standard and interested, we'd love to hear from you.

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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 [selorchestra.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/selorchestra.bsky.social)

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NEXT CONCERTS

Sunday 6th December 2026, 4.30pm

St Michael and All Angels, Beckenham

Wagner, Tannhauser Overture
Sibelius, King Kristian II: Suite
Elgar, Enigma Variations

Conductor: Dorian Dimitrov

Sunday 14th March 2027, 4.30pm

St Michael and All Angels, Beckenham

Programme to include **Florence Price**
– Symphony No. 1

Saturday 15th May 2027, 4.00pm

All Saints, West Dulwich

Programme to include **Schubert**
– Symphony No. 9, 'The Great'

Saturday 3rd July 2027, 4.00pm

All Saints, West Dulwich

Programme to include **Bartok**
– Concerto for Orchestra

Image credits

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Grieg: AI-generated with ChatGPT
Tchaikovsky: Portrait of Nadezhda von Meck, Wikimedia



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