



# Solihull Symphony Orchestra



*Summer Concert - Strictly Beethoven*  
*Shirley Methodist Church*

Programme £1

*19:30, Saturday 6 July, 2024*

# Dan Watson



Dan completed a Masters degree in conducting at Birmingham Conservatoire, and has studied with Michael Seal, Sian Edwards, Edwin Roxburgh and Daniele Rosina. He won an MBF Emerging Excellence Award and Conducting Prize. He was recently appointed conductor of the Worcester Philharmonic Orchestra and gave his debut performance with them in Pershore Abbey last month.

He featured in the BBC series *All Together Now: The Great Orchestra Challenge* as conductor of The People's Orchestra. The program, designed to inspire and promote amateur music making, reflects many of Dan's continued aims as a conductor, to bring together professionals and community musicians culminating in high standard performances and rewarding life experiences.

Dan has a particular interest in contemporary music. He was Conductor and Artistic Director of Thumb contemporary music ensemble with whom he commissioned new music, performed at festivals and contemporary concert series, directed numerous performances resulting in over 50 premières of new works, and worked alongside Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Mark-Antony Turnage. Throughout his career, Dan has enjoyed working with soloists in the early stages of their careers. In recent years he has worked with Fenella Humphreys (Sibelius Violin Concerto), Sarah Sew (Elgar and Mendelssohn Violin Concerti), Izzy Howard (Brahms Violin Concerto), Danushka Edirisinge (Elgar and Shostakovich No. 1 Cello Concerti), and many others. He has enjoyed a close association with the Kanneh-Mason family, having conducted the first concerto performances of Konya, Aminata, and Mariatu.

He lives in Leicestershire with his wife (Sally) and daughter (Bethan), alongside their cat (Morris), some chickens and a colony of bees. In his spare time Dan plays chess for Kirby Muxloe's 2nd team, and he enjoys a spot of DIY and gardening.

Programme notes - David Evans and Vivienne Brown  
Cover - *Bonaparte crossing the Alps*, Paul Delaroche, 1850, oil on canvas, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

# Programme

*Beethoven - Overture Egmont*

*Beethoven - Piano Concerto No 4*

INTERVAL

*Beethoven - Symphony No 3 'Eroica'*

## **Conductor**

Dan Watson

## **Piano**

Renata Konyicska

## **Leader**

Sabrina Ko



*Please make sure that all telephones, watch alarms and other electronic devices that make noises are switched OFF or to silent. You can make short video recordings and take photographs - but please do not use flash and be careful not to disturb people nearby. And we'd love it if you could share them and tag us on social media!*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

## **Egmont Overture, Op. 84**

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The first decade or so of the 1800s are often known as Beethoven's 'heroic' phase, during which his compositions became noticeably grander in scale while his performing career (as a pianist and conductor) was increasingly hampered by encroaching deafness. Having been disappointed in the actions of his former hero Napoleon, Beethoven was delighted to be commissioned to provide the incidental music for a new production of Goethe's 1787 play *Egmont*, based on the story of a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Flemish count who fought against Spanish oppression. Beethoven was a great admirer of Goethe, who was twenty years older and already internationally renowned, and the composition provided an opportunity for them to meet at Teplitz in Bohemia, where Beethoven was taking the waters on medical advice. Despite his admiration, Beethoven found the cultured and aristocratic Goethe (a Privy Councillor) to be rather too concerned with courtly matters and formal manners, while Goethe found Beethoven's prodigious talent to be untamed and alarming. The musical collaboration was a success however, with the new production

being staged in 1814, and Goethe praising Beethoven's 'remarkable genius'.

Only the Overture is regularly played nowadays, but it contains a microcosm of the whole play. A slow opening, with ominous F minor chords, depicts the Count in prison, followed by a stately Sarabande illustrating the heavy burden of Spanish occupation on the people. The main Allegro section is structured in sonata form and is full of urgent yet lyrical writing as the battle for freedom moves inexorably towards a tragic climax, followed by a funeral lament from the woodwind when Egmont is defeated. In the drama, Egmont's lover declares this to be the spark for a future rebellion, and musically this is depicted by a triumphant coda in F major, often referred to as the 'Victory Symphony': Goethe had himself requested that the music not end with a lament. Therefore despite Egmont's personal fate, the music concludes on a note of optimism and inspiration, reflecting Beethoven's belief in the enduring power of liberty and justice.

## **Piano Concerto No 4 Op. 58**

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Beethoven's early fame derived not only from his compositions but his brilliance as a pianist. His



rival Joseph Geklinek remarked, 'Beethoven is no man, he is the devil. He will play me and all of us to death!' He once challenged another pianist, Daniel Steibelt to a duel to prove who was the better improviser, and won by using one of Steibelt's tunes as the basis for his improvisations. Steibelt never performed again in Vienna.

Beethoven's five piano concerti were written partly as vehicles for musical innovation, partly as showpieces for his own virtuosity and partly as demonstrations of technical improvements in piano construction. Three strings for each note, and new pedal systems together with additional high notes allowed the composer to develop ever more brilliant and exquisite writing. He always composed at the keyboard. After ordering a new Broadwood six octave piano, he wrote to the maker saying 'I will regard this as an altar upon which

I will place the choicest offerings of my mind to the divine Apollo.' The manufacturer then presented him with the instrument as a gift.

Yet despite these innovations, the Fourth Concerto concerto avoids virtuosic keyboard display in favour of radiant beauty, and its gentle approach broke new ground for the concerto concept. Far from the crashing keyboard attacks for which Beethoven was well known, this concerto demands discipline, subtlety, control, legato playing and finesse. However, perhaps for these reasons it was rarely performed Beethoven's lifetime, and only achieved popularity later in the century. The critic George Grove described it as a Cinderella piece.

In a break with convention, the work opens with the soloist alone. The orchestra then introduces the first subject and a second melody in a minor key. A smaller third idea is also generated before the pianist reappears. The main topic of this movement concerns the soloist's melody and the development section focuses almost exclusively on this. Beethoven wrote four cadenzas for his concerto so the pianist has a broad selection, but all are fairly subdued affairs. After the cadenza, the movement concludes with a short coda.

The second movement, accompanied by strings alone, has

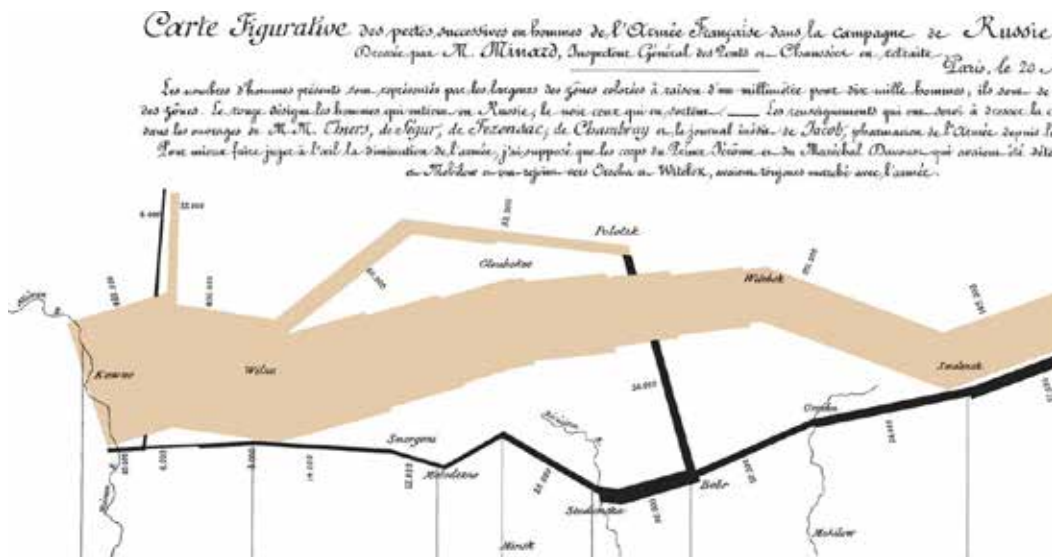
become the concerto's most famous. Beethoven's biographer Adolph Marx compared it to Orpheus taming the wild beasts. The orchestra is loud, staccato, in stark octaves. The piano is soft, flowing, lyrical and richly harmonised. At the end, the orchestra seems to have learned from the the piano. Only the cellos and basses remember their opening music in a whispered pianissimo.

An aggressive third movement begins without a pause. Strings burst in with a flourish playing an energetic tune, and the soloist quickly joins in the fun striking up an instant rapport. Trumpets and drums add accent and extra colour. A lyrical second theme emerges, but the consistent mood is propulsive. A long coda brings the concerto to

a close. With this work, Beethoven revealed that a concerto does not have to be bombastic in order to leave us spellbound.

## Symphony No 3 'Eroica' Op. 55

In 1801, Beethoven wrote in his diary 'I am not satisfied with my works up to the present time. From today I mean to take a new road.' His Third Symphony was the result. George Grove wrote, 'The Eroica first shows us methods which were to completely revolutionise music—the continuous and organic mode of connecting the second subject with the first, and the extraordinary importance of the coda.' There were further innovations - a Funeral March for the second movement and the term 'Scherzo' (or joke) appearing for the first time in place of of the standard Minuet.



However Beethoven's personal life was in turmoil. He had recently told friends about his hearing loss; he moved out of Vienna and wrote his private Heiligenstadt Testament confessing to exasperation with his doctors and contemplating suicide, before concluding 'only my art held me back. It seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had produced what was within me.' This was his state of mind as he turned to write the Third symphony.

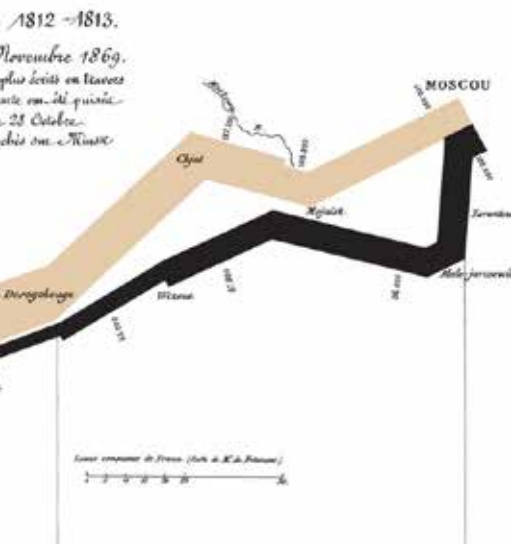
The music's impact was enormous. Jonathan Kramer has written 'Once the *Eroica* existed, no subsequent composer could ignore it. The development of 19<sup>th</sup> century symphonic music is traceable more to the *Eroica* than to any other single work.'

In 1798, General Bernadotte,

Ambassador from France to Vienna, suggested that a symphony should be written to honour Napoleon Bonaparte. Beethoven liked the idea - Napoleon seemed to be a harbinger of the future, and a passionate champion of revolutionary ideals. He was also thinking of moving to Paris, and thought that such a work would provide a passport into French elite social circles. However, in May 1804, when Napoleon assumed the title Emperor, Beethoven flew into a rage saying 'He is nothing but an ordinary mortal! He will trample all the rights of men under foot to indulge his ambition....' He tore the title page in half and threw it on the ground.

The first movement opens with two bold chords, establishing a heroic character. The main theme, introduced by the cellos is followed by extensive development, modulation, and unexpected harmonic shifts, creating a sense of struggle and triumph. The coda - the final part of a movement that brings the music to a satisfactory conclusion - is unusually long and serves almost as a second development of the theme. Overall, the movement breaks away from the more predictable structures of classical symphonies, setting a new standard for emotional and structural complexity.

The second movement is a funeral



march in C minor, providing a stark contrast to the exuberance of the first movement. It features a sombre and stately theme that undergoes variations and developments, conveying a profound sense of grief and solemnity. The trio section offers a glimmer of hope with its lyrical melody in C major, but the return of the march theme reasserts the movement's tragic mood. The use of counterpoint and the emotional depth make this one of the most poignant slow movements in the symphonic literature.

The third movement is a lively and vigorous scherzo, characterized by its rapid tempo and playful, rhythmic motifs. The trio section, featuring prominent horn calls, evokes a rustic, hunting-like atmosphere. This movement's light-hearted and energetic character provides a welcome contrast to the preceding funeral march, showcasing Beethoven's ability to balance different moods within a single work.

The final movement is a theme and variations, based on a simple but versatile theme that Beethoven had used in previous works. It begins with a series of variations that explore different moods and characters, from the humorous to the majestic. The movement includes a fugue, a

lyrical variation, and a brilliant Presto section, culminating in a triumphant conclusion. This finale encapsulates the symphony's heroic spirit, demonstrating Beethoven's ingenuity in transforming a simple theme into a complex and dynamic narrative.

The newness of *Eroica* was baffling to early audiences, A contemporary critic complained about Beethoven's 'undesirable originality...' and concluded that the new symphony was 'unendurable to the mere music-lover.' However, the symphony always remained important to the composer. After completing eight symphonies, he was asked by his friend Christoff Kuffner which symphony was his favourite and he answered simply and without hesitation, '*Eroica*.'

In 1812, Beethoven's erstwhile hero Napoleon launched a massive invasion of Russia with over 600,000 troops. His army reached Moscow in September, only to find it abandoned and set ablaze by the Russians. The 1869 graph by Charles Joseph Minard, a French civil engineer on the previous page is a brilliant early example of data visualization, combining geographical, chronological and meteorological information to convey the devastating losses suffered by the the French army.



# Renata Konyicska

Praised for her ‘sparkling, crystal-clear passage-work’ (*Classical Music Daily*) and imagination, Hungarian-British pianist Renata Konyicska has been described as a ‘true international talent’ and her playing as a ‘triumph of musicianship’ (*Stratford Herald*). She has played solo and chamber music concerts in festivals such as IMS Prussia Cove, Nuits Classiques Megeve, Festival de Piano Classique Biarritz, Encuentro de Musica y Academia de Santander, Internationale Sommerakademie der ISA Reichenau and Liszt Week Esztergom, where she has been a regular artist since its launch.

Drawn to music early on Renata was introduced to piano at the age of five. Although her family had no background in music, they provided her with their full support. Soon afterwards she was admitted to the School for Exceptional Young Talents at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, in the class of Zsuzsa Esztó. She continued her studies with László Baranyay, Rita Wagner and Márta Gulyás at the same institute and attained her Bachelors degree with highest honours. She moved to London

to study with Pascal Nemirovski at the Royal Academy of Music where she graduated with her Masters degree. In 2018 she received her Advanced Postgraduate Diploma at the Birmingham Conservatoire.

She has won first prize in a number of international piano competitions, including Zlatko Grgosevic in Croatia, Cittá di Gorizia in Italy and Smetana in the Czech Republic. She was the winner of the inaugural Talent Support Competition at the Liszt Academy in Budapest.



# Sabrina Ko



Born in Taiwan and raised in the UK, Sabrina has held principal violin positions with the North Beds Youth Orchestra, the San Diego Youth Symphony Orchestra and several University of Birmingham ensembles. Sabrina's orchestral highlights include leading the Hear and Now community outreach project with the Philharmonia Orchestra in the Royal Festival Hall, and playing under Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla and Jac Van Steen in Symphony Hall with the CBSO Youth Orchestra. Sabrina currently works as Relationship Manager for the music education charity Future Talent, as a freelance conductor, and as a peripatetic violin teacher for Services For Education.

## Non-Playing Members

If you've enjoyed our concert and want to become more involved with the orchestra, there are a variety of tasks and activities that are always open to friends of the orchestra as well as to players. In return, we can offer you complimentary tickets for our concerts, visits to rehearsals and other benefits!

## Sponsorship

We would welcome offers of sponsorship from individuals, local businesses or other organisations. Sponsors can choose to support particular projects - for example, work with young musicians or inspiring soloists and composers. We look forward to hearing from you!

**info@  
solihullsymphony.org.uk**

## Our Mailing List

If you've enjoyed this concert, why not sign up to our Supporters' Newsletter to make sure you don't miss out on future events? You'll receive advance notice of the full season's programme, and reminders about all our concerts a few weeks in advance. [solihullsymphony.org.uk/ mailing-list](https://solihullsymphony.org.uk/ mailing-list)



# Solihull Symphony Orchestra

Patron: The Mayor of Solihull



## First Violins

Sabrina Ko *leader*  
Marina Battey  
Lis Branson  
Vivienne Brown  
Peter Halldron  
Hannah Massey  
Jo Oswald  
Sarah Sasse

## Second Violins

David Roper  
John Bayley  
Ella Begley  
Rachel Johnson  
John Maxwell  
Charlotte McLuskie

## Violas

Joanna Clarke  
Hannah Branson  
Mark Emms  
Kelvin Farge  
Julia Lawley  
Isabella Smith

## Cellos

Helen Atherton  
Sheila Armstrong  
Jeremy Dale  
Kim Free  
Raye Garrett  
Alison Hart  
David Kanyandekwe  
Anne Kemp  
Louise Robertson  
Nicola Walters

## Double Basses

David Evans  
Sue Hawthorne

## Flutes

Su Newton Ede  
Mary Wright

## Oboes

Sarah Vaughan  
Fiona Speak

## Clarinets

Victoria Rex  
Jane Emms

## Bassoons

Harry Jones  
Simon Gates

## Trumpets

David Hirst  
Colin Farlow

## Horns

Tim Overton  
Emma Mcleod  
Stephen Mayes  
Edward Fisher

## Timpani

David Pett



## About the Orchestra

Solihull Symphony Orchestra is an inclusive and friendly group that enjoys taking on the challenge of a varied repertoire with professional leadership and inspiring soloists.

We are always open to new members, especially violin and double bass players. Commitment to attend rehearsals regularly, and a willingness to learn are more important to us than formal music qualifications. We like to perform in different venues around Solihull, and will always consider invitations to play at special events.

Rehearsals are held at Shirley Methodist Church every Tuesday from 19:30 until 21:45 during school term time, with at least four concert performances each year.



## Our Next Concert

Saturday 23 November, 15:30  
Shirley Methodist Church

**Borodin**

*In the Steppes of Central Asia*

**Tchaikovsky**

*Waltz and Polonaise from Eugene Onegin*

**Bruckner**

*Symphony no 4 - Romantic*

Conductor - Richard Jenkinson



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