

HENLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Grieg

Peer Gynt: Suite No. 1

Weber

Clarinet Concerto No. 2

Shostakovich

Symphony No. 9



JACQUES COHEN *Conductor*

EMMA JOHNSON *Clarinet*

Saturday 29th June 2024, 7:30pm

St Mary's Church, Henley-on-Thames RG9 2AU

Tickets: email hsoboxoffice@gmail.com or 07726 459261

£22 reserved (central aisle); £20/£18 unreserved; U16s/students £10.



www.henleysymphonyorchestra.co.uk

Henley Symphony Orchestra is a Registered Charity No. 271849

HENLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

HSO is delighted to present its Summer concert in the beautiful surroundings of St Mary's Church, Henley. Our guest conductor will be **Jacques Cohen**, Principal Conductor of the Cohen Ensemble (formerly the Isis Ensemble) which performs regularly at London's Southbank Centre and around the UK. He has conducted at the UK's leading conservatoires where he has also given master classes and composition seminars. Jacques is Principal Conductor of the Royal College of Music Junior Department Symphony Orchestra and Lloyd's of London Choir.



Jacques Cohen

Emma Johnson is one of the few clarinetists to have established a career as a solo performer, after winning the *BBC Young Musician of the Year* at the age of 17. She has appeared as soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras, playing all the major clarinet works as well as special commissions. Emma has made 30 recordings to date; tracks from her recent album with the BBC Concert Orchestra, *English Fantasy*, have been streamed 5 million times on Spotify whilst her recording of the Stanford and Finzi Concertos was nominated for a Gramophone Award. Her radio work includes *Artist of the Week* for both BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. Videos of Emma's performances and masterclasses can be seen on her YouTube channel. She plays an instrument made by the English clarinet maker, Peter Eaton.

Grieg was very flattered when, in 1874, Ibsen asked him to compose incidental music for his new play *Peer Gynt*, but Grieg found the task difficult. The story tells of the downfall and subsequent redemption of a Norwegian peasant anti-hero. The influence of folk music on Grieg's writing was part of the search for a distinctive musical identity amidst a widespread growing nationalist fervour in Norway. Grieg himself said the *Hall of the Mountain King*, now the theme music for Alton Towers, 'reeked of cowpats'.

Weber's interest in the clarinet began in 1811, when he met Heinrich Baermann, the greatest clarinetist in Germany, for whom he composed two concertos. The *Concerto no. 2* is the more popular, with a strikingly operatic character to the solo part. The final movement, the Polonaise, finishes with one of the most glittery, virtuosic passages in the clarinet repertoire, consisting mainly of arpeggios and scalic runs in sextuplet semiquavers, and marked "brillante".

Shostakovich wrote his *Ninth Symphony* in 1945 after Russia's defeat of Hitler. It should have been a glorious ode to Stalin and Russia's heroes, but instead Shostakovich dreamed up a subversive neo-Classical construction which seemed to make fun of the cult of the leader. According to an American critic, 'the Russian composer should not have expressed his feelings about the defeat of Nazism in such a childish manner', but in refusing to celebrate the victory along the lines demanded by Stalin, Shostakovich not only stood up to the dictator's power, he belittled it. After the premiere, the piece was not performed again until after Stalin's death.

Come and join us!

St Mary's Church, Hart Street, Henley-on-Thames RG9 2AU is situated by the bridge over the River Thames in central Henley, in a continuation of the Market Place. Parking at the church itself is extremely limited so we reserve this space for disabled visitors. Public car parks are available within a few minutes' walk, off the Market Place (RG9 2AA) or Kings Road (RG9 2DQ).

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