

MEMORIAL CONCERT FOR GEORGE COULOURIS

Aeolian Sinfonia of North London - Saturday 29th March 2025, 7.30pm

Studio 1, Jacksons Lane Community Centre, 269a Archway Road, London N6 5AA

George Coulouris (1937-2024) was a computer science professor, author and cycling campaigner. He led Aeolian Sinfonia's cello section for about fifteen years and was a loyal supporter of the orchestra. He worked on the development of ICL's Content Addressable File Store, developed the UNIX editor *em – editor for mortals* and was co-author of the book *Distributed Systems – Concepts and Design*.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), *Tragic Overture*, Op 81

Allegro ma non troppo; Molto più moderato; Tempo primo ma tranquillo

Brahms' *Tragic Overture*, composed in the summer of 1880, was named in contrast to his *Academic Festival Overture* of the same year, written in gratitude for his having received an honorary doctorate from the University of Breslau. One weeps, the other laughs, he claimed. It was premiered that year in Vienna under Hans Richter. The overture opens with two exclamatory chords played by the full orchestra, followed by an exposition of the constituent ideas: the solemn, austere main theme, introduced by unison strings; a dotted figure; an onward rushing triplet; and a comforting major key melody. The music then moves energetically and defiantly into what one critic has described as the "convulsive development". As Marianne Williams aptly puts it, "Themes surge and spin in a tempest of emotion". In contrast, the middle, slower and calmer section introduces a gentle march containing the dotted figure. The final section begins serenely but drama soon returns. Two *fortissimo* chords herald the recapitulation, which summarises the main ideas with the usual modifications.

Pericles Makris: *Sunny Days* (circa 2022)

Written for voice and guitar, this is part of Pericles' 2024 album *Closure*. He performed this song at George's funeral. The orchestral version of the song has been made specially for this concert, by Pericles, Jasmine and Keith. This will be the first performance of this version, sung by Pericles and Kelly De Brabanter.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), *Symphony No 4*, Op 60

Adagio–Allegro vivace; Adagio; Menuetto: Allegro vivace–Un poco meno mosso; Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

Beethoven spent the summer of 1806 at the country estate of his patron Prince Lichnowsky. While there, they visited Count Franz von Oppersdorff, a friend of Lichnowsky's. The Count had a private orchestra, which performed Beethoven's second symphony. Oppersdorff then commissioned Beethoven to write another symphony, which was duly dedicated to him. It received its premiere in 1807 at Lichnowsky's town house in Vienna under the composer's direction and its first public performance in the same city the following year. George Grove, editor of the dictionary, described it as "a slender Greek maiden between two Nordic giants", referring to the better known and weightier 3rd (*Eroica*) and 5th (*Pastoral*) symphonies. In contrast, the 4th is shorter, "radiantly joyful", economic in resources, and beautifully well-balanced. It was written at a time when Beethoven was in love with the recently widowed Josephine Brunswik and feeling contended despite his increasing deafness. The key of Bb major was considered bright and happy. The symphony shows the influence of Haydn with whom Beethoven had studied. Mendelssohn was very fond of it and owned the original manuscript.

The first movement begins with a long, mysterious, atmospheric introduction in which the music wanders amongst minor keys – "a dark and interesting tonal journey", as one observer put it – before fortissimo chords announce the *Allegro vivace*, and the home key of Bb major is finally established. The first main theme consists of lively arpeggios played by the strings, to which the winds respond with a lyrical melody. The second theme in the dominant is a conversation amongst the bassoons, oboe and flute. Much excitement follows with interesting use of timpanic rolls to create suspense.

The second movement is a rondo in the sub-dominant, Eb major. Berlioz considered it the work of the Archangel Michael! It consists of a beautiful *cantabile* melody, played first by the strings and then the woodwinds, over a dotted rhythm *ostinato*. The second theme is a clarinet solo. The rhythmic *ostinato* persists throughout the movement in one form or another, appearing in the timpani towards the end.

The third movement, as had become the custom, is a Scherzo rather than a Minuet, but instead of the usual ternary form, here the Scherzo is played three times, albeit truncated on its last occurrence, with the Trio interspersed twice. It's characterised by syncopation and a two-note slurred figure. The gentler Trio has a pastoral atmosphere.

The “scampering fun-and-games finale with its irrepressible high spirits” (Michael de Sapio) owes its character partly to the *moto perpetuo* semi-quavers played by the strings. The second theme is played on the oboe. At the end, Beethoven employs the Haydnesque device of playing the main theme at half speed, interrupted by pauses, creating the effect of a gradual winding down, before the final *fortissimo* flourish.

The music this evening should finish at around 8.45pm and the cafe/bar should still be open briefly for refreshments. We are very grateful to Jacksons Lane for hosting us, to George’s family for their help organising this event, to Pericles and Kelly for coming all the way from Brussels to perform, to John Stewart for timpani hire, to Jasmine Ali for her help with *Sunny Days* and providing amplification, to Nigel Brockmann for managing the orchestra’s finances, to Liz Valentine for programme notes, to Daniel Davis for arranging horn parts and to various members of this and other local orchestras and the wider musical community for their help in putting on this concert.

Please, please, before you leave, give a **paper** donation to the **SankTus Welfare Project**, which provides essential help to homeless and vulnerable people, the elderly and those with support needs in the local community. The cost of providing these valuable services has recently risen sharply. You can make a cash donation in the hall before you leave, or send a donation using the instructions found on the website sanktus.org

Pericles Makris is an improviser, singer-songwriter, educator and producer based in Brussels, Belgium. His identity as a musician wanders between his passion for the rhythmic elements of jazz and world music, the melodic journeys of oriental improvisations and the lyrical stories of folkloric traditions that cross the boundaries of Europe and beyond.

Kelly De Brabanter is a singer and music therapist. Singing from her early childhood, through hardships and joy, she explores the healing and empowering potential of the human voice. In her performances and practice, one can experience the elevation of body and soul in a unison of emotional and bodily bliss.

Aeolian Sinfonia of North London, active for many years, was conducted for most of these by the late Roy Budden, who founded the orchestra at least sixty years ago as the Kensington Sinfonia. Known as one of North London’s friendliest orchestras, we rehearse on Thursday evenings during school term time. If you know of anyone who would like to join us, we always need string players, and sometimes extra woodwind and brass.

Violin 1

Elizabeth Ann Binks (leader)
Donna Beldom
Casey Jo Grosso
Margot Hodgkinson
Fumiko Mihara
Mariko Yamamoto

Violin 2

Jasmine Ali
Rohan Arambepola
Gita Croft
Piyarat Martin
John Rokos

Viola

Richard Stanley
Henry Walker
Segun Adetunji
Bronwen Taylor

Cello

Ruth Williams
Jude Olabanji
Dave Jenkinson

Bass

Paul Martin

Flute

Liz Valentine
Katri Yates

Oboe

David Williamson
Sara Ho

Clarinet

Nick Charles
Nigel Brockmann

Bassoon

Bryan Ogilvie
Mary Ball

Horn

Daniel Davis
Felix Davis

Trumpet

Tristan Boldy

Timpani

Charlotte Harber

Conductor

Keith Bramich

Visit aeoliansinfonia.com for more information about George, for more about Aeolian Sinfonia and for details of our future concerts. Send us a message via the site and ask to be added to our mailing list.