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Epsom Symphony Orchestra: A Cornerstone of Local Musical Excellence

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The Epsom Symphony Orchestra, a cherished fixture in the town's cultural landscape, has been delighting audiences since its founding in 1951. Over its decades-long history, the orchestra has shared the stage with numerous esteemed soloists, including pianists Phyllis Sellick, Eileen Joyce, and Semprini, clarinettist Gervase de Peyer, and, more recently, the internationally acclaimed pianist Benjamin Grosvenor.

Currently under the direction of its long-serving musical director **Darrell Davison**, the orchestra performs four concerts annually at the **Epsom Playhouse**. Mr. Davison, who has led the orchestra since 1981, brings an impressive musical pedigree to the role. A scholar of both Charterhouse and St Catherine's College, Cambridge, Davison began his career as the principal cellist of the Ulster Orchestra before transitioning to conducting. A winner of the Sir John Barbirolli Conducting Competition in 1979 and a prize winner at the inaugural Leeds Conducting Competition in 1984, Davison has conducted major ensembles across England, including all four London orchestras, and has appeared at venues such as the Royal Festival Hall.

The Epsom Symphony Orchestra comprises a blend of professional musicians and dedicated amateurs, creating a vibrant and inclusive musical community. Among its members is leader **Julia Burkert**, a German-born violinist who studied on scholarship in Canada and Scotland before establishing a successful freelance career in London. The orchestra's ethos of collaboration and shared passion for music resonates strongly with its members, many of whom describe it as a "musical family."

The orchestra recently performed its annual Christmas concert to a packed audience at the Playhouse. The festive program featured interactive elements that encouraged audience participation, adding to the warm and lively atmosphere. This year's Christmas concert continued a tradition of welcoming celebrity narrators for musical pantomimes, with past guests including Johnny Morris, Wayne Sleep, and Lionel Blair.

Looking ahead, the orchestra's next concert on 23rd March promises a compelling program of classical masterworks. Highlights include Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Overture*, Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with Cypriot pianist Christos Fountos as the soloist, and Shostakovich's emotionally charged Fifth Symphony. Mr. Fountos, born in Nicosia in 1997, began his piano studies at the age of five and made his orchestral debut at 17 with the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra.

The orchestra's commitment to nurturing local talent and delivering high-quality performances continues to enrich Epsom's cultural life. It is also actively seeking new players of a good standard to join its ranks, ensuring its legacy endures for years to come. For more information, prospective musicians and concertgoers are encouraged to visit the orchestra's website. http://www.epsomsymphony.co.uk/

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