

# Classical with a twist

We meet three young people involved in Lewisham's thriving music scene

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## 'A CHOIR PRODUCES A REMARKABLE SOUND'

Tim Chiosso, 25, sings with the Blackheath Choir

'My wife Lauren wanted to join a choir when we moved to the area so she typed 'Blackheath' and 'choir' into the internet and up came Blackheath choir! Lauren had always sung in choirs and I had sung a bit at school. It helps if you can read music. There's no audition – it's self-selecting. Those who enjoy it stay, those who don't leave!

'There are around 100 members in total, and around 70 or 80 singing in each concert. The age range is 19 to 85.

We rehearse once a week on a Tuesday evening at Kingswood Hall and at the end of each term we perform a concert at St Margaret's Church in Lee. We usually do one big piece – say, a mass – and then maybe some more modern pieces. In December we always do a Christmas concert. It's very sociable – we always have a tea break and a chat at rehearsals.

'Each rehearsal starts with a warm-up. If we're learning a piece in a different language, say Latin or German, the

conductor, Patricia Williams, will read through the words so that we can agree the pronunciation. She'll also translate as she's very particular about people singing with feeling.

'A choir produces a remarkable sound and singing is exhilarating – you feel very excited and fired up after a concert. Being in the choir has made me much more appreciative of choral music – you deconstruct your own part and you learn how it interacts with other parts and I appreciate the complex harmonies much more. My favourite work is Mozart's Mass in C minor – it's so joyful and intricate.

'Lauren and I do sing around the house a lot. The choir is a commitment, but it's nice to do something together. I would definitely recommend it.'

Blackheath Choir's next concert is on 14 March at St Margaret's Church, Lee, at 7.30pm. For more information, visit [www.blackheathchoir.org.uk](http://www.blackheathchoir.org.uk).



## 'CLASSICAL MUSIC WASN'T COOL WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL'

Clare Thorn, 29, is principal trumpet player in the St Paul's Sinfonia

'I've been with the St Paul's Sinfonia since it was formed about five years ago. We do about nine concerts a year at St Paul's Church in Deptford. I love early music and my favourite composer is Bach, but I also love playing newly commissioned work. None of us gets paid – the money from ticket sales goes straight back into the orchestra to support publicity etc.

'Like many musicians, teaching is my bread and butter, and I teach

trumpet at a school in Cambridge. I'm also a freelance trumpet player, which takes me all over the world. I often play for scratch orchestras, which are put together at the last minute for choral concerts. I've played on stage with Kanye West, and I also work for Live Music Now, a charity that takes musicians into special needs schools and prisons. On top of that, I'm in a trumpet quartet called Bellatromba.

'I started playing the trumpet at nine.

You have to build your embouchure when you first begin, which involves the muscles around the mouth. Your chops can get tired! My dad was a big fan of John Williams, who composed the Star Wars music, which is very trumpet heavy, and I guess that had a big influence. Classical music wasn't cool when I was at school and it still has an elitist image, but I'm from a normal family – my dad's a window cleaner and my mum works in a shop.'

St Paul's Sinfonia will be playing their next concert on 26 February at St Pauls Church, Deptford.

For more information visit [www.stpaulssinfonia.com](http://www.stpaulssinfonia.com). Please note that the sinfonia is completely separate from the church.

## 'DANCE MUSIC IS MY PASSION'

Sarah Telman, 24, plays violin for the London Breakbeat Orchestra

'The London Breakbeat Orchestra plays original uptempo dance music. We're just like a conventional orchestra, with string, woodwind, brass and percussion sections, but in addition we have vocalists, a sax section, a keyboard player and a rhythm section. We play mainly at gig venues and clubs such as the Islington Academy, Koko and the Carling Academy, so we're bringing an orchestra to people who wouldn't normally see one. Dance music isn't usually so visual, and people love the spectacle of seeing a 30-piece orchestra on stage!

'I was classically trained at Trinity College of Music but dance music is my passion. It's getting more possible to bridge the gap between classical and pop music – for instance, you often see string sections playing with bands on TV. I'm involved with three other dance music projects, including

Ocarina, which consists of two violinists and two vocalists and plays hip hop and breakbeat music. We've just released our first single. I also teach violin in schools.

'I love classical music – I listen to it and play it regularly to keep up my technique. It can be quite challenging to play, but it gives you a good grounding.

'I had a West Indian upbringing and I grew up listening to classical, soul, jazz and reggae. I started playing violin at five. It was a very musical environment and my family was very encouraging. I wouldn't be where I am today without their support.

'Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson were my musical inspiration, and I loved Nigel Kennedy. At nine I decided I wanted to play violin for the rest of my life. I asked my teacher "Can I do this as a job?" and she said yes, it could be my life, and it is.'



To find out more about the London Breakbeat Orchestra, visit [www.londonbreakbeatorchestra.co.uk](http://www.londonbreakbeatorchestra.co.uk). To find out more about music in Lewisham, visit [www.lewisham.gov.uk/arts/music](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/arts/music).