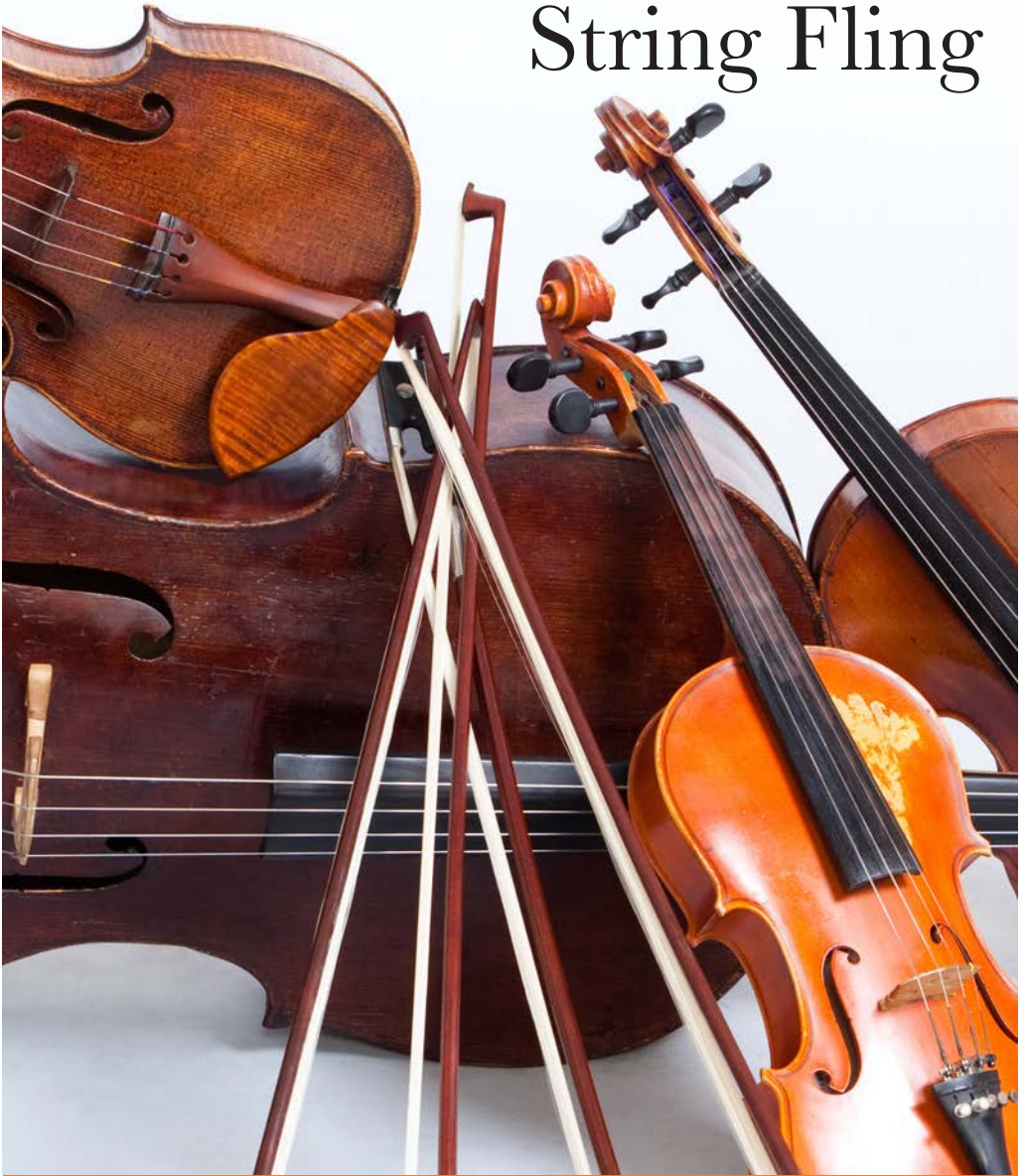


# String Fling



## PROGRAMME

*Thursday 22 October 2020*

*St George's Hanover Square*

London  
**Firebird**  
Orchestra

# Firebird Friends & Benefactors

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## Welcome

Dear Friends, Thank you so much for joining us at our orchestra's first concert since the lockdown. It has been a terribly difficult year for music and musicians.

Recently we have been working hard to try to make it possible for our orchestra to play again and in accordance with all the guidelines and regulations. It is a fluid and ever-changing situation but we are delighted it is possible for us to perform tonight.

As many of our regular supporters will be unable to attend tonight's concert, we are recording tonight's performance which will also be broadcast online so that everyone can enjoy it at home.

For the present time we are focusing on string, keyboard and percussion performances, avoiding wind, brass and singing. We hope to balance this by increasing the involvement of wind, brass and singing in future programmes.

I hope you enjoy tonight's varied and colourful programme - showcasing some of the wonders of string playing.

Our Young Composer's Competition is open to current students or recent graduates of any UK conservatoire or university under the age of 31 years. Candidates are invited to submit

a composition of up to eight minutes in duration to compete for a cash prize of £500 and a live performance of their work.

Our first Firebird for Schools Concert took place last year and we were ready to organise a second concert in May this year, before the crisis took over.

We are currently working with local schools to explore how this event can now proceed. We are keen to bring the concert to as many children as possible and will at the very least be broadcasting it online.

Tonight's performance would not have been possible without the unstinting support of our Friends & Benefactors Society. I would like to thank each and every one of our donors who have provided support to the charity.

If you are not yet a member, do please consider joining us as your support would be extremely valuable to the orchestra - particularly in these challenging times.

Just join online by visiting our website at [www.LondonFirebird.com](http://www.LondonFirebird.com). Details of the rest of the concerts of the season are viewable there too.

We very much hope to see you again soon!  
Kindest regards,

**Marc Corbett-Weaver**

*Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)*

# Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus

*Introduction and Theme: Adagio,*

*B modal minor*

*Variant I: B modal minor*

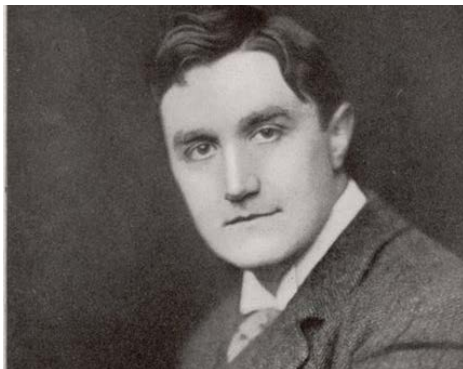
*Variant II: Allegro moderato,*

*B modal minor*

*Variant III: D modal minor*

*Variant IV: L'istesso tempo*

*Variant V: Adagio, B modal minor*



The Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus was commissioned by the British Council in 1939 to be played at that year's World's Fair held in New York City.

Vaughan Williams was inspired throughout his career by English folk music and this piece was based on an ancient folksong Dives and Lazarus, which tells the moral tale of a heartless rich man and a poor man.

The rich man, Dives, refuses charity to the poor, Lazarus. Lazarus ends up going to heaven whilst Dives goes to hell.

The song's composer and exact age are uncertain but it is known that by the 16th century it was being sung as a Christmas carol.

The work is divided into six parts, an introduction containing a statement of the main theme, followed by five 'variants'.

The composer himself explained: "*These variants and not exact replicas of traditional tunes, but rather reminiscences of various versions [of the folk tune] in my own collection and those of others.*"

It is clear where each variant begins due to tempo and atmosphere changes. Each is unique, but the common thread of the main theme shines out in all, giving the work unity and a sense of familiarity as it progresses.

Like Vaughan Williams's other famous works The Lark Ascending and Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis, the Five Variants contain warm and sumptuous string writing, with sweeping melodies stretching across the orchestra with deep and resonant harmonies underpinning.

*Edward Elgar (1857-1934)*

# Serenade for Strings, Op. 20

*Allegro piacevole*

*Larghetto*

*Allegretto*

Edward Elgar composed his *Serenade for Strings* early in his career as a composer (he began his musical career as a violinist), in 1892, and before he achieved fame.

It was first performed in private that year, by the Worcester Ladies' Orchestral class, with Elgar conducting. Its public premiere was not until four years later, in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1896.

The *Serenade for Strings* seems to have been a revised form of an earlier set of pieces Elgar had composed back in 1888. Much of his earliest orchestral music is straightforward and light, intended for small salon and dance orchestras.

This piece, however, is more substantial, and follows in the tradition of earlier Brahms and Dvořák serenades. Later in his life Elgar described the work as one of his personal favourites.

Elgar's background as a violinist allowed him to write very effectively and idiomatically for strings, and that quality is very much on display throughout the *Serenade*.

It is in three movements. The first, wistful and slightly mysterious *Allegro piacevole*



(“pleasing” *allegro*) states a main theme at its outset, which has an underlying tone of sadness, set against a more lilting middle section with brief solo turns for the principal violin.

The long central *Larghetto* opens with an introduction that draws on the first movement, but with a lush romantic theme which is spun out patiently (similar to the treatment of the theme in the *Nimrod* movement of the composer's famous *Enigma Variations*).

The feeling-tone is dreamy, and simultaneously serene, sensuous, dignified and lamenting. There is a brief contrasting interlude before the main theme returns in the full orchestra, before the movement ends in a hushed whisper.

The brief closing *Allegro* movement reverts to the opening mood of the *Serenade*, albeit now with a dancelike character.

*Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)*

# Adagietto (from Symphony no. 5)

**G**ustav Mahler wrote his monumental Symphony No 5 throughout 1901 and 1902.

The symphony, in five movements, takes over an hour to perform and its scope and emotional landscape are vast.

The fourth movement of it, the Adagietto, is often performed as a stand-alone piece (in fact it was performed for the first time in Britain 36 years before the first British performance of the entire symphony), as it will be tonight.

The Adagietto is perhaps Mahler's most famous composition and is the most frequently performed of all his works. It is based on a love poem that the composer wrote for his new wife, Alma:

*Wie ich Dich liebe, Du meine Sonne,  
ich kann mit Worten Dir's nicht sagen.  
Nur meine Sehnsucht kann ich Dir klagen  
und meine Liebe, meine Wonne!*

*In which way I love you, my sunbeam,  
I cannot tell you with words.  
Only my longing, my love and my bliss  
can I with anguish declare.*

Mahler marked the score “very slow”, “soulful” and “with the most heartfelt sentiment”.



It is music of great delicacy, reducing the orchestra down to harp and strings.

Beginning very quietly, this music is quickly enthused with longing.

Arching, graceful melodies unfold with a bittersweet intensity, rise gradually to a soaring climax, and finally fall back to a peaceful close.

*Edvard Grieg (1843- 1907)*

# Holberg Suite, Op. 40

*Praeludium (Allegro vivace)*

*Sarabande (Andante)*

*Gavotte (Allegretto)*

*Air (Andante religioso)*

*Rigaudon (Allegro con brio)*

The Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg composed his Holberg Suite in 1884. It was one of two works, along with a cantata, that he composed to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of Norwegian playwright Ludvig Holberg, a prominent figure in Norwegian and Danish literature.

It was originally composed for piano. Grieg scored the suite for string orchestra the following year.

Subtitled Suite in the Olden Style, the work draws on 18th century dance forms that the composer imagined would have been familiar to Holberg. It comprises five movements in the style of a Baroque dance suite.

The opening Praeludium, a bright and expansive overture, is notable for its textural clarity and expert handling of string sonorities.

The second movement is a sarabande, originally a Spanish dance form that typically served as the slow movement in, for example, Bach's cello suites.

A brief passage midway through the movement, scored for three solo cellos and accompanied by solo bass pizzicato, is both piercing and ephemeral. This yearning passage leads to the way the dance's cinematic climax.

The third movement consists of a sprightly



but polite gavotte, a courtly French dance.

The fourth movement air, given the tempo marking *Andante religioso*, begins with a stately and somewhat mournful arioso. Its middle section again deploys solo cello in a heartfelt passage, in tender dialogue with the full ensemble.

The fifth and final movement takes the form of a rigaudon, a French folk dance, and, in theme, it is boisterous and brimming with folk character, with a lively fiddling at the opening played on solo violin and viola. A slower middle section interrupts the party mood briefly before a reprise of the opening festivities.

## PROGRAMME

# String Fling

Thursday 22 October 2020  
St George's Hanover Square

**Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus

**Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**

Serenade for Strings, Op. 20

**Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)**

Adagietto (from Symphony no. 5)

**Edvard Grieg (1843- 1907)**

Holberg Suite, Op. 40

**George Jackson** conductor

*Members of the audience are respectfully requested to refrain from filming or recording any part of this evening's performance on phones or other electronic devices. Recording is strictly prohibited.*

*Programme notes by Michael Manning Clark*



# George Jackson

Armed with insatiable artistic curiosity and a true performer's instincts, George Jackson has earned critical acclaim for the authority and eloquence of his music-making.

*"George Jackson raised the stature of the music to a rarely-encountered level, absolutely enthralling from first bar to last,"* Robert Matthew-Walker, Classical Source

Jackson's interpretation of *Hänsel und Gretel* for Grange Park Opera, given with the Orchestra of English National Opera in 2019, was showered with five-star reviews and hailed as 'magnificent' by the Telegraph.

Highlights of his 2020-21 season include debuts with Wrocław Opera Orchestra and Collegium Novum Zürich, and returns with the orchestra of Opéra de Rouen, Theater an der Wien and Opera Holland Park.

George came to attention in 2018 when he replaced Daniel Harding at short notice in Ives's Fourth Symphony with the Orchestre de Paris at the Philharmonie de Paris.

Jackson's work embraces everything from debut performances with Hamburg State Opera, the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Kammeroper Frankfurt and the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie to new productions of *The Magic Flute* for Opera North and the world premiere of Tscho Theissing's *Genia* at Theater an der Wien in 2020.

Jackson read for a degree in music at Trinity College, Dublin and subsequently



studied conducting at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna.

George took part in masterclasses with, among others, Bernard Haitink, Michael Tilson Thomas, Kurt Masur and David Robertson, and gained invaluable insights while working as assistant to his mentors Robert Spano and Yves Abel.

Prizewinning success at the 2012 International Conducting Competition 'Jeunesses Musicales' in Bucharest led to Jackson's professional debut with the Oltenia Philharmonic in Romania.

He continued his studies at the Lucerne Festival Academy, the Bayreuth Festival and at the Aspen Conducting Academy, where he won the 2015 Aspen Conducting Prize.

# Anna Blackmur

Anna Blackmur studied as a Royal College of Music scholar under Maciej Rakowski, completing her BMus with first class honours (2010) and her Masters in Performance with Distinction (2012).

In 2015, Anna was appointed Section Principal Second Violin with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, having previously appeared as Assistant Concertmaster with the orchestra.

She has also appeared as guest principal with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and principal or co-principal with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (with whom she has toured extensively, directed by Joshua Bell, Sir Neville Marriner and Murray Perahia), and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Anna is in constant demand as a recording artist, playing on multiple film and television sessions.

She is also in high demand as a coach/mentor and chamber musician, playing



with, amongst others, the Covent Garden Soloists and Aronowitz Ensemble.

As an artist in residence, she has attended numerous international festivals including the BBC Proms, the Saronic and Aims Festivals.

# Concert Programme

## 2020/21



### **From London to St Petersburg**

Thursday 19 November 2020

A concert of music that will take you from London to St Petersburg. Conducted by Michael Thrift this concert will feature music by Vaughan Williams, Corelli and Holst.



### **From the New World**

Sunday 21 February 2021

Join the London Firebird Orchestra with pianist Marc Corbett-Weaver and conductor George Jackson for this concert in Oxford featuring Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 in E minor, From the New World.



### **B Minor With Love**

Thursday 10 June 2021

This concert will feature Dvorak Cello Concerto in B minor, the world premiere of new work from the winner of the Firebird Young plus Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 6 in B minor.



### **Northern Lights**

Thursday 23 September 2021

Music by Glinka, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius are on the programme for this concert conducted by George Jackson and featuring talented violinist Yury Revich.

# London Firebird Orchestra



## **Conductor**

George Jackson

## **Leader**

Anna Blackmur

## **Violin I**

Ben Paulden (*Sponsored by  
Michael & Helen Brown*)

Tayfun Bomboz

Stella di Virgilio

Olivia Ziani

Melissa Hunter

## **Violin II**

Soh-Yon Kim (*Sponsored by  
Anatoly Savin*)

Claire Edwards

Adriana Cristea

Victoria Marsh

Sydney Grace Mariano

## **Viola**

Tetsuumi Nagata (*Sponsored by  
Anonymous*)

Anastasia Sofina

Vanessa Hristova

Nils Jones

Morven Graham

## **Cello**

Charlotte Kaslin (*Sponsored by  
Philip & Suzy Rowley*)

Ruth Hallows (*Sponsored by  
Stephen & Susan Yarnold*)

Samuel Ng

Abigail Lorimier

Helena Svigelj

## **Bass**

Owen Nicolaou (*Sponsored by  
David & Eillis Baty*)

Daniel Tancredi

## **Harp**

Vicky Lester

*The London Firebird Orchestra would like to acknowledge the very generous support of Chair Benefactors not listed above, who have sponsored woodwind and brass chairs not included in tonight's performance.*

*Their support is invaluable to the orchestra.*

*A complete list of Friends & Benefactors can be found on page 2 of this programme.*



London Firebird Orchestra is an orchestra of young musicians comprising talented orchestral players who are making the journey from study into the profession. Through Firebird's annual season of concerts, players perform core repertoire at central London concert venues, while collaborating with renowned soloists, composers and conductors of the younger generation. By providing this experience, Firebird offers a helpful platform at the crucial early stages of professional life.

The orchestra has collaborated with many renowned soloists, including Mathieu van Bellen, Thomas Gould, Aleksei Kiseliyov, James Meldrum, Jennifer Pike, Yury Revich, Leonard Schreiber and Raphael Wallfisch. Each Season, Firebird showcases a small number of prize-winning conductors of the younger generation who conduct the concerts.

The orchestra also organises an annual composition competition for young composers, with a cash prize and live performance for the composer of the winning work.

Outreach is an important part of Firebird's mission. Since 2013, the orchestra has held a residency at Middlesex University, involving large-scale concerts, conducting and composition workshops, ensemble and dance performances. The 2018/19 season saw the launch of a new outreach project for the orchestra "Firebird for Schools" – a tailor-made children's concert for London schoolchildren.

London Firebird Orchestra operates as a registered charity, governed by a Board of Trustees. The orchestra is supported by Dame Judi Dench as Patron, the Firebird Friends & Benefactors Society and a series of generous sponsors.



# SUPPORT US, BECOME A FRIEND

At the heart of our orchestra is the Firebird Friends & Benefactors Society. Launched at the orchestra's inception in 2012 and now with around 100 members, the Friends & Benefactors Society is a growing association of supporters forming the core of our audience.

Members commit an annual donation to the charity, providing a vital bedrock of funding for the orchestra. Without this vital income stream, the orchestra's concerts would not be possible. Why not join to today to become part of our family and help us continue to grow?

Sign up today at [www.londonfirebird.com](http://www.londonfirebird.com)  
or speak to one of our team.