

# Eroica



## PROGRAMME

*Tuesday 1 February 2022*

*St George's Hanover Square*

London  
**Firebird**   
Orchestra

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## Welcome

**D**ear Friends, We are delighted to present the first Firebird concert of 2022! Tonight we are performing Mendelssohn and Beethoven, without an interval, in a concert that will last around an hour in duration.

Our regular Principal Guest Conductor Michael Thrift is conducting once again.

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 [londonfirebird.com](http://londonfirebird.com)

Our programme, running up to the summer, is viewable on our website. Details of our autumn 2022 concerts will also be viewable soon.

We hope you enjoy this evening's performance and look forward to seeing you again very soon.

Kindest regards,  
**Marc Corbett-Weaver**  
*Artistic Director & Chief Executive*

*Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)*

# ‘Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage’, Op. 27

**F**elix Mendelssohn’s stand-alone work, ‘Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage’ (*Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt*) is a concert overture for orchestra, which was first performed in 1828, in Berlin.

It based on a set of two poems by the great German poet Johann von Goethe.

The titles of Goethe’s two poems are meant as contrasts, two stages in a story. Prior to steamships, a totally calm sea was a cause for alarm, as the ship could not move. Only when the wind arises does human calm return and the ship can continue on her journey.

The first poem, ‘Calm Sea’ (*Meeresstille*), in English translation reads:

Deep stillness rules the water  
Without motion lies the sea,  
And worried the sailor observes  
Smooth surfaces all around.  
No air from any side!  
Deathly, terrible stillness!  
In the immense distances  
not a single wave stirs.

The second, the ‘Prosperous Journey’ (*Glückliche Fahrt*), reads:

The fog is torn,  
The sky is bright,  
And Aeolus releases  
The fearful bindings.

The winds whisper,  
The sailor begins to move.  
Swiftly! Swiftly!  
The waves divide,  
The distance nears;  
Already I see land!

Mendelssohn’s concludes the overture with a fanfare of trumpets, announcing the ship’s arrival at its port of destination.







*Ludwig von Beethoven (1770 - 1827)*

# Symphony No. 3 in E flat major ‘Eroica’, Op. 55

*i Allegro con brio*

*ii Marcia funebre: Adagio assai*

*iii Scherzo: Allegro vivace*

*iv Finale: Allegro molto*

Beethoven’s third symphony, known as the ‘Heroic’ (*Eroica*), is one of the most important ever written. It was a key work marking not only the beginning of the composer’s ‘Middle Period’, but also the transition from the Classical style to the Romantic, in the early the 19th century. When it finished playing at its premier concert on 7 April 1805, the old composer and master of Classicism Joseph Haydn said: “*After today, everything has changed*”.

The *Eroica* was the first of Beethoven’s symphonies to have specific extra-musical associations. He at first had wanted to dedicate it to Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he revered as the

hero that had made good the ideals of the French Revolution. Beethoven went so far as to write out a dedication to him on the title page of the score (see page 6).

But then, news reached Vienna that Napoleon had grandiosely proclaimed himself emperor. Beethoven, furious, tore up the page, saying ‘*Is he too nothing more than an ordinary man? Now he too will trample on all human rights*’.

The heroic theme of the *Eroica* can also be traced to his earlier ballet, *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (The Creatures of Prometheus) Op. 43 (1801), which was described as a “*heroic allegorical*” ballet.

The last movement of the symphony consists of a set of variations on the finale of *Prometheus*. The ballet told the story of Prometheus, a lofty spirit who comes to earth and finds the men of his day in a state of ignorance. He brings them civilisation, by imparting human sentiments through the power of harmony.

It alludes to the creative artist, who breathes life and human feeling into his creations and thereby civilises those around him. The real hero, then, is the composer.

The symphony has four movements opening with an *Allegro con brio* in sonata form. Two large E-flat major chords, played by the whole orchestra, establish a recurring central motif from the start. The mood of the movement is bold and adventurous.

The second movement, *Marcia funebre*: Adagio assai is a funeral march in C minor

with a trio in C major, and comprises multiple fugatos. Some speculate that in this movement Beethoven has killed off his hero.

The third movement is a lively Scherzo: *Allegro vivace* in rapid 3/4 time during which various members of the orchestra play the theme, which ranges in dynamic from pianissimo to fortissimo. Its trio features hunting calls from the three horns.

This movement, if the theory about the second movement being a funeral march is correct, has been compared with the funeral games dedicated to Patroclus in the *Iliad*.

*The Finale: Allegro molto* contains a set of ten variations on a theme from *Prometheus*. It builds to a final variation, which is when the 'full image' of *The Eroica* is heard - triumphant and heroic.



Beethoven's title page which shows his erasure of dedication of the work to Napoleon

## PROGRAMME

# Eroica

Tuesday 1 February 2022  
St George's Hanover Square



**Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)**

‘Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage’, Op. 27

**Ludwig von Beethoven (1770 - 1827)**

Symphony No. 3 in E flat major ‘Eroica’, Op. 55

- i Allegro con brio
- ii Marcia funebre: Adagio assai
- iii Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- iv Finale: Allegro molto

**Michael Thrift** conductor

**Calyssa Davidson** leader

**London Firebird Orchestra**

*Programme notes by Michael Manning Clark*

*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.*

# Michael Thrift

In 2022 Australian-British conductor Michael Thrift continues his long-standing relationship with the London Firebird Orchestra, having conducted them during the past several seasons. In addition to tonight's concert, Michael will lead two concerts later in the season, as well as workshops with the University of Middlesex, and work with the winner of Firebird's Young Composer Award.

In addition to his symphony work, Michael is a fervent conductor of opera. In 2014 he joined the team at Fulham Opera for Verdi's *Falstaff*, returning to lead Puccini's *Il Tabarro* in 2015. Since then, he has conducted the revival of *Falstaff*, as well as new productions of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* and *Don Carlo*, and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. This year Michael will lead a new Production of Strauss' seldom-performed *Die Ägyptische Helena* with Fulham. For Ormond Opera, he has conducted Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and Bizet's *Carmen*.

In 2017, Michael conducted several works at the Blue Danube Opera Conducting Competition at the Rouse State Theatre, Bulgaria, leading the company's forces in Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* and Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Delilah*. Elsewhere, Michael has lead productions of Wagner's *Parsifal*, as well as performances of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, and Beethoven's *Fidelio*. He will close 2020 with Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Educated in Sydney, Michael undertook studies in composition at Sydney University, alongside conducting. Notable achievements include winning the Young Composer of the



Year Award in 2001 (ASME) and performances by the Adelaide Symphony and the Sydney University Symphony Orchestra. A passionate advocate for new music, he is an active part of the London new music scene.

In 2013, he helped to inaugurate the Composer's Academy at the Cheltenham Festival and has worked with the Dr. K Sextet in both Cheltenham and London. He returns to work with composition students from the University of Middlesex after successful collaborations with them and LFO in 2018 and 2019.

An unabashed love of sci-fi literature provides escapism. Michael regularly lives a vicarious, alternative existence through the Australia cricket team, though his duties to music inevitably snap him back into reality.



# Calyssa Davidson

American violinist and arranger, Calyssa Davidson, is a versatile artist whose wide range of interests has led her to perform throughout the world with major orchestras, bands, in musicals, and has recorded solo violin for several feature and independent films as well as television including the BBC.

Along with performing in venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Cadogan Hall, and Wigmore Hall, Davidson has led recording sessions at Abbey Road, Air Edel, and Angel Studios and has recorded the solo violin score for the BBC2 documentary series *The Story of China* and wrote and recorded the solo violin scores for the BBC2 documentary *Normandy '44: The Battle Beyond D-Day* and BBC Four documentary *Shakespeare's Mother: The Secret Life of a Tudor Woman*. She can also be heard on the *Harry & Meghan: A Royal Romance* soundtrack from the Lifetime original movie with the same title.

Davidson has been featured on soundtracks for various video games, trailers, and adverts and has performed alongside Alfie Boe, Rick Wakeman and Grammy-award winner Rick Springfield. She can also be seen in Springfield's music video, *Christmas With You*, and is currently a member of The Hedone String Quartet represented by Twisted Noise Troupe.

Most recently, Davidson co-led the 29-piece orchestra at the London Coliseum for the world premiere of *Rumi: The Musical* and will be the violin soloist for the West End premiere of *Broken Wings* at the Charing Cross Theatre starting in February 2022.

Originally from California, Davidson moved to London in 2010 to attend the Royal College



of Music where she earned her Master's Degree in Violin Performance and Composition for Screen and Bachelor of Music Degree in Violin Performance.

Whilst at the RCM, Davidson studied with former Associate Leader of the Philharmonia Orchestra and former Co-Leader of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Adrian Levine, and film and television composers Maurizio Malagnini (*Call the Midwife*, *The Paradise*) and Howard Davidson (*Death Games*, *The Battle for Malta*).

Amongst others, Davidson has also studied with world-renowned violinists Ivry Gitlis, Gilles Apap, LA Phil Concertmaster Martin Chalifour and former BBC Concert Orchestra Leader Cynthia Fleming.

Davidson is set to perform as soloist debuting a new violin concerto with the Santa Barbara Symphony in their next season.

# London Firebird Orchestra

## Conductor

Michael Thrift

## Leader

Calyssa Davidson

## Violin I

Sherry Shen

*(Sponsored by Michael & Helen Brown)*

Ben Paulden *(Sponsored by Jenny Jones)*

Ming Zeng

Tayfun Bomboz

Claudia Dehnke

Alex Casson

## Violin II

Thibault Pesnel *(Sponsored by Anatoly Savin)*

Harry O'Keefe

Can Cui

Cristina Morell

Greta Bommarito

Katherine Yoon

Dimitra Sioras

## Viola

Cameron Howe

Elizabeth Tobald

Edwin Podolski

Vanessa Hristova

## Cello

Elizabeth Elliott *(Sponsored by Philip & Suzy Rowley)*

Elia Benhamou *(Sponsored by Stephen & Susan Yarnold)*

Josie Campbell *(Sponsored by Jarrod Henderson & Sue Sinclair)*

Jennifer Sturt

## Bass

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

Noah Daniel

## Flute

Sofia Castillo *(Sponsored by Ann Scott)*

Sarah Parkes Bowen

## Piccolo

Paul Tiberghien

## Oboe

Izy Cheesman *(Sponsored by Trevor & Elizabeth Gore)*

Richard Lines-Davies

## Clarinet

Nelson Sinclair-Strong

*(Sponsored by Ken Watters & Robin Wilkinson)*

Holly Isherwood

## Bassoon

Matt Kitteringham

Francesco DiMatteo

## Contrabassoon

Rachel Gooding-Hurst

## Horn

Jack Pilcher May *(Sponsored by Rory Graham)*

Henry Wright

Georgia Dawson

## Trumpet

Alex Brain *(Sponsored by Professor Thomas Hale & Dr Sam Webster)*

Louis Barclay

Ucheena Cohen-Shah

## Timpani

Lewis Bleec



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.

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

# Concert programme 2022

*Join us for live concerts in Oxford and London*



## From the New World

The London Firebird Orchestra with pianist Marc Corbett-Weaver and conductor Michael Thrift visit **Oxford** on **13 March** for this concert featuring:

**Arvo Pärt** Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten

**Grieg** Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16  
**Dvořák** Symphony No. 9 in E minor, From the New World, Op. 95



## European Classics

We welcome the return of the dazzling Russian virtuoso Yury Revich for this concert on **14 June** in **London** conducted by George Jackson and featuring:

**Ravel** Tombeau de Couperin

**Bruch** Violin Concerto no. 1 in G minor, Op. 26

**Schubert** Symphony no. 1 in D. 82

*This concert is generously sponsored by the Morris-Venables Charitable Foundation*

*Book tickets for live concerts and see filmed concerts online at [www.londonfirebird.com](http://www.londonfirebird.com)*



**From London to St Petersburg**



**String Fling**



**Welcome the Spring**





# 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.**