



European Classics: Egmont

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 27 September 2022

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London Firebird Orchestra's 10th Anniversary Season

Welcome to the Opening Concert of the London Firebird Orchestra's 10th Anniversary Season!

Tonight we are performing an exciting programme of music by Mozart and Beethoven, including Beethoven's Piano Concerto no. 3 with the internationally renowned piano star George Harlono. Our regular Principal Guest Conductor Michael is conducting.

Tonight's performance would not have been possible without the unstinting support of our Friends & Benefactors Society. We are celebrating with our donors this evening at a champagne and canapé reception held downstairs at St George's before the concert. I would like to thank each and every Firebird Friend and Benefactor 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.

Our full programme is viewable on our website.

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

Programme design and digital support by Revolution Arts



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Overture to Egmont, Op. 84

Napoleon Bonaparte's French forces invaded Vienna in May 1809, and stayed until October of that year. The period of occupation was one of hardship for the Viennese, with food shortages, economic downturn and curtailed freedoms – including draconian censorship of literature, the press and the theatre.

Soon after the French left, the director of the Vienna Hoftheatre, Josef Härtel, in a patriotic gesture arranged for the production of a series of revivals of plays the great German writers Schiller and Goethe. In keeping with recent events two of the plays chosen dealt with the oppression of a noble people by foreign tyranny, and of eventual freedom that patriots win for themselves – Schiller's *William Tell* and Goethe's *Egmont*.

Beethoven was commissioned to write the incidental music for Goethe's play. He was enthusiastic about its theme. Committed to the ideals of human freedom and dignity, and originally inspired by the ideals of the French revolution, Beethoven's opinion later turned against Napoleon in disgust when his autocratic tendencies emerged.

The story of *Egmont* takes place in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century. The Spanish have invaded, and their notorious Inquisition is unleashed on the Protestant population. Count Egmont leads resistance, and for his heroic efforts is arrested and executed.

The Overture to the music Beethoven composed to accompany the play – often performed as a stand-alone piece, as in the concert tonight – brilliantly condenses the entire drama of the play into one symphonic



movement. The musicologist Marion Scott described it as a “tremendous compression – comparable to the locked power of atomic force”.

The music describes, first, the arrest of the Count. Then, in deep strings, can be heard the Spanish Inquisition interrogating him. In plaintive wind passages, his wife pleads for mercy. In fortissimo staccato notes played by the brass section, a guilty verdict is pronounced, followed by a piano pleading in the first violins. The whole orchestra then enters in unison with a single note giving the sentence of death. A forte fall of violins is the executioner's sword coming down. But in typical Beethoven fashion (as for example in his Fifth Symphony), darkness and despair are followed by triumph and light. A quiet passage, which builds to a massive and exhilarating crescendo, announces that Count Egmont's spirit – and the cause he died for – lives on. The people of the Netherlands ultimately overthrow their wicked invaders, and freedom returns.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

I Allegro con brio

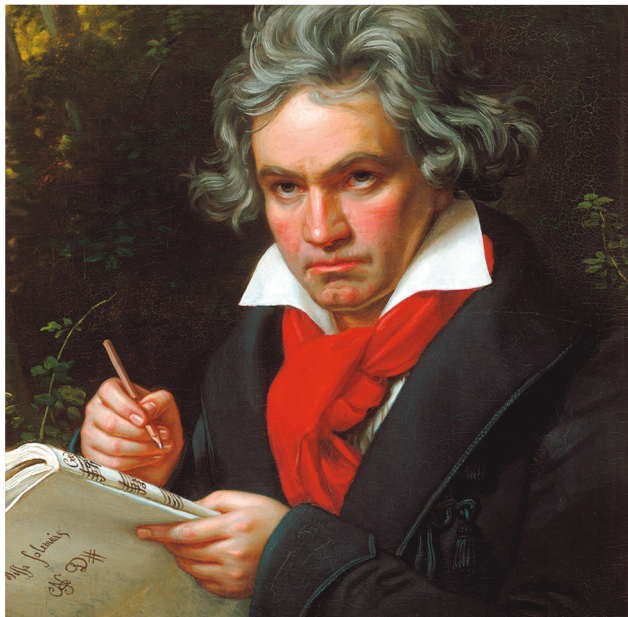
II Largo

III Rondo - allegro

Beethoven composed his third piano concerto in stops and starts over three and a half years from 1799. The finished work, in C minor, premiered in Vienna on 5 April 1803, at a concert in which Beethoven's Second Symphony and oratorio, Christ on the Mount of Olivers, were performed. Beethoven himself was the soloist.

The Piano Concerto No. 3 is in Beethoven's signature key of C Minor, used for many of his most famous and characteristically dramatic works. The Concerto draws inspiration from Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor, which Beethoven greatly admired. In it, Mozart had diverged from the classical style of concerto-writing in evoking a brooding and despairing mood, which foreshadowed and inspired the later Romantics.

The first movement opens with a powerful, brooding theme played solely by the orchestra. The second part of the opening has the soloist playing the same theme, followed by a contrasting second theme, softer and more lyrical



in character. The mood of both the opening and development of the movement remains subdued, hinting that drama will come later. And so it does – the dramatic moment arrives at the end of the movement, in both the recapitulation and the cadenza. Beethoven's published cadenza (traditionally they were not published but left to improvisation) is fiery and stormy.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550

I. Molto allegro

II. Andante

III. Menuetto – allegretto

IV. Finale – allegro assai



Mozart wrote his last three symphonies together in the summer of 1788, three years before he died. They were the no. 39 in E flat major, the no. 40 in G minor, played in tonight's concert, and the no. 41 in C Major (also known as the Jupiter). It is possible that he wrote them for a series of concerts that he wanted to give that summer, but there is no record of them ever taking place. There is, however, a record of Symphony No. 40 being performed twice in April 1791, conducted by

the composer Antonio Salieri (his alleged rival, of Amadeus fame), in concerts to raise money for charity.

The first movement opens with a disquieting sense of anxiety and urgency. It echoes the Sturm und Drang ('storm and stress') movement of the 18th century, and foreshadows the Romanticism of the 19th. Mozart's use of irregular phrase lengths and dramatic contrasts of dynamics evokes feelings of uncertainty and searching for something elusive, and propels the music forward with frenetic energy. In the development section, fast-changing harmony creates excitement, tosses the opening theme between higher and lower voices of the orchestra and introduces a fast moving counter-subject. At the start of the recapitulation, there is a sense of mystery in the contrast between the busy main tune and a simple descending theme played in long notes by the bassoons.

The second movement gives relief from the stress of the first. Its mood is gentle and relaxed. The opening theme appears in the form of a canon, though the counterpoint is just suggested and not developed. The second half of the movement begins with a dramatic development of its first subject played by the full orchestra, which casts a shadow over the initial calm. But the dark cloud soon passes, and the gentleness returns to finish the movement.

The third movement is in the form of a minuet and trio. The triple time has a military

regularity which is counterbalanced by syncopations. In the second half, musical ideas are developed in counterpoint. A counter-subject appears with the minuet tune. The trio section contrasts the minuet in style with long legato phrases.

The final movement opens with fast and furious theme, which is accentuated throughout with strong dynamic contrasts of forte and piano. It has more regular phrases than the first movement, giving it a decisive rather than edgy and uncertain character. Following the introduction comes an extended contrapuntal section, drawing on baroque techniques in a classical setting. The movement propels forward to its conclusion with perpetual energy.



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PROGRAMME

European Classics: Egmont

Tuesday 27 September 2022

St George's Hanover Square

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Overture to Egmont, Op. 84

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

I Allegro con brio

II Largo

III Rondo - allegro

INTERVAL

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K.550

I Molto allegro

II Andante

III Menuetto - allegretto

IV Finale - allegro assai

Michael Thrift conductor

George Harliono piano

Calyssa Davidson violin

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 2022/23 Australian-British conductor Michael Thrift continues his long-standing relationship with the London Firebird Orchestra, having conducted the orchestra during the past several seasons. In addition to tonight's concert, Michael will lead concerts later in the season.

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*. 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-Saens *Samson et Delilah*. Elsewhere, Michael has led productions of Wagner's *Parsifal*, as well as performances of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, and Beethoven's *Fidelio*. In 2021 he led an acclaimed performance in the London Opera Company's debut production of *Tristan & Isolde*. 2022 performances include Verdi's *Aida*, and Janacek's *Katya Kabanova*.

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 has lead premiers of new music with the London Firebird Orchestra, and has worked closely with composition students from the University of Middlesex during LFO's collaborations in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

In his free time, Michael enjoys sharing the joys of South-Australian red wines as well as decrying the state of New Zealand whites. 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. He lives with wife and son in Manchester.

www.michaelthrift.co.uk

George Harliono

British pianist George Harliono was invited to make his first one hour long, solo recital at the age of nine and since then has performed in numerous locations both in the UK, USA, Europe and Asia, appearing at venues such as Wigmore Hall, The Berlin Philharmonie Kammermusiksaal, The Royal Albert Hall and Chicago Symphony Centre.

In 2013 he was invited to record Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op.2 No.1 at the Southbank Centre in London. In 2016 his performance of Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No.1 at the Great Hall of The Moscow Conservatory was broadcast live on Russian national TV and streamed live on Medici TV.

Since his concerto debut at the age of 12 he has been a regular performer with orchestras including the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, The Mariinsky Orchestra, Tatarstan National Symphony Orchestra, New Millennium Orchestra of Chicago, Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester and Tyumen Philharmonic Orchestra. George also regularly performs alongside eminent artists such as Denis Matsuev and has worked with many renowned conductors including Valery Gergiev, Alexander Sladkovsky, Evgeny Shestakov, Ainars Rubikis, Anton Lubchenko and Sebastian Weigle.

George has been awarded prizes in numerous competitions throughout the world including The Grand Piano Competition in Moscow, Sendai International Music Competition, Royal Overseas League Music Competition in London, Gina Bachauer



Piano Competition in Utah, Concourse International de Lagny-sur-Marne and Dinu Lipatti Piano Competition in Bucharest.

Most recently he performed Beethoven Piano Concerto no. 5 at Zaryadye Concert Hall in Moscow and Liszt Piano Concerto no 1 at the Frankfurt Alte Oper. He was also invited to perform a recital as part of the Duszniki-Zdrój International Chopin Piano Festival, one of the oldest and most important classical music festivals in Poland.

He studies with Professor Pascal Nemirovski (International Chair in Piano, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire) and has taken masterclasses with Dmitri Bashkirov, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Vladimir Ovchinnikov and Simon Lepper among others. George also works closely with conductor Alexander

Sladkovsky who has taken a personal interest in his development as an artist.

“George Harliono is very talented, he’s got a phenomenal career ahead of him,” says the acclaimed Russian pianist Denis Matsuev.

George has just completed a BMUS Degree at the Royal College of Music. He was one of the youngest students to be accepted onto this course.

In 2018 he was shortlisted for an award in the ‘Sound of Classical Poll’ at the Classic BRIT Awards in London, which promotes the best emerging artists and ones-to-watch in classical music.



Calyssa Davidson

Award-winning American violinist 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 record 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 BBC4 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 Grammy-award winner Rick Springfield, Alfie Boe, and Rick Wakeman. She can also be seen in Springfield's music video, *Christmas With You*.

Most recently, she was solo violinist for Tim Firth's (*Calendar Girls*, *Kinky Boots*) new musical *Now Is Good* at the Storyhouse Theatre, which earned a 4-star review in *The Guardian*. Within the last year, Davidson has also been the solo violinist for the West End premiere of the musical *Broken Wings* and co-led the 29-piece orchestra at the London Coliseum for the world premiere of *Rumi: The Musical*.



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 where she was supported by an Alice Templeton Scholarship and a Robert McFadzean Whyte Award Scholarship. 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 frequently returns to California for work in Los Angeles and is set to perform as soloist debuting a new violin concerto with the Santa Barbara Symphony in their next season.

London Firebird Orchestra

London Firebird Orchestra's 10th Anniversary Season

Conductor

Michael Thrift

Piano

George Harliono

Leader

Calyssa Davidson

Violin I

Kellija Moncaka

(Sponsored by Michael & Helen Brown)

Elliott Bougant *(Sponsored by Jenny Jones)*

Sherry Shen

Ugne Zuklyte

Esther Zaglia

Violin II

Pietro GenovaGaia *(Sponsored by Anatoly Savin)*

Harry O'Keefe

Adriana Cristea

Ana Lavinia Vlad

Xiaoxuan Guo

Viola

Elizabeth Tobald

Laura Gorden

Paul Fitzgibbon

Megu Huang

Cello

Eddie Mead *(Sponsored by Philip & Suzy Rowley)*

Chian Chian Hsu

Annie Hodgson

Bass

Evangeline Tang

(Sponsored by David & Eillis Baty)

Flute

Nika Pinter *(Sponsored by Ann Scott)*

Flute/Piccolo

Doroti Vincler

Oboe

Maisie Ireland *(Sponsored by Trevor &*

Elizabeth Gore)

Janice Chen

Clarinet

Jasper Parry

(Sponsored by Ken Watters & Robin Wilkinson)

Isaac Prince

Bassoon

Amy Thompson

Douglas McDonald

Horn

Caoime Glavin

Emma Edwards

Bertille Cascio

Beatriz Villa

Trumpet

Jack Wilson *(Sponsored by Professor Thomas Hale*

& Dr Sam Webster)

Louis Barclay

Timpani

Lewis Blee

Stage Manager

Gabriella Coomber



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 Kiseliov, 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 2022/3

Join us for more European Classic concerts in London



European Classics: Pastoral

Emmanuel Bach performs the beautiful Violin Concerto by Brahms at our concert on **25 October** conducted by **Michael Thrift** and featuring:

Mozart Overture to Don Giovanni, K. 527

Brahms Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77

Beethoven Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68 *Pastoral*



European Classics: Magic & Mayhem

Our first concert in 2023 features the Turkish cellist **Jamal Aliyev** performing one of the greatest of all cello concertos. Music in this concert on **7 February** includes:

Mozart Overture to Die Zauberflöte, K.620

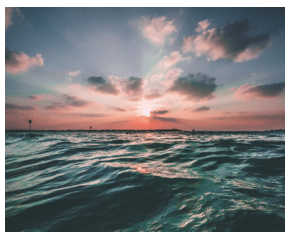
Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No.1 in A minor, Op.33

Beethoven Symphony No.5 in C minor, Op.67

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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?

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or speak to one of our team.**