

Firebird Chamber Platform: The Avalon Trio



PROGRAMME

Tuesday 14 November 2023
St George's Hanover Square, London

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Orchestra

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Welcome to the second concert of the London Firebird Orchestra's 11th annual season. This concert is part of the Firebird Chamber Platform which showcases talented chamber ensembles.

Some of you will have heard the pianist Benji Lock perform before. He has performed concertos with our orchestra at two private concerts, sponsored by one of Firebird's Benefactors.

The Avalon Trio was formed at the Purcell School with Benji and two gifted peers, Louis Solon and Seb Williams. All three have very recently started at the Royal Academy of Music and already have many prizes to their credit.

Their programme features three great highlights of the Piano Trio repertoire - Haydn's Gypsy Rondo Trio, Rachmaninoff's first Trio Élégiue (which the composer wrote aged 18, a similar age to tonight's performers) and the mighty Tchaikovsky Trio, a huge work and a great masterpiece.

This evening'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. Just join online by visiting our website at www.LondonFirebird.com.

All of our current season is now viewable on our website. Do book tickets online! 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, London Firebird Orchestra

Programme design and digital support by Revolution Arts





Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

Piano Trio no. 39 in G, Hob. XV/25 Gypsy Rondo

Joseph Haydn's Piano Trio No. 39 in G major, Hob. XV, commonly known as the Gypsy Trio is seen by many as Haydn's greatest chamber work, very much pushing the boundaries for an 18th century piano trio.

The piano trio was composed in 1795 dedicated to Rebecca Schroeter, a love interest of Haydn's during his time in London.

In this three-movement work, Haydn combines a graceful Andante, an elegant Poco Adagio Cantabile movement that sets the stage for a lively Rondo which incorporates vivacious and rhythmic dance elements inspired by the Gypsy tradition.

The first movement has the structure of a theme and variations, alternating between the major key and minor, creating an elegant

yet sometimes mysterious feel to the movement.

This then leads to a huge contrast into the 2nd movement, which begins in E major, where the piano starts by playing an elegant motif, which later the violin and piano play together and creates a very longing and beautiful feel to the movement.

Then the trio closes with one of Haydn's best-known movements known as the Gypsy Rondo, which brings fiery Gypsy dances into the work, in the style which Haydn brought with him to England from Hungary.

Haydn's Gypsy Trio remains a masterpiece of the classical era, inviting listeners to a rich tapestry of different emotions and styles.



St George's Hanover Square Fabric Appeal

What is happening on the portico?

Following the partial collapse of the ceiling and failure of its lead roof, we needed to raise **£400,000** for urgent repairs.

Thanks to the generous support of our friends and benefactors we have now reached this target and secured the immediate future of St George's.

How can I help?

Despite this, the work to maintain and preserve the structure of this wonderful three hundred year old building continues

Please scan the QR code to donate via the Give A Little platform and help to secure the future of St George's for years to come.



For further information or to discuss possible sponsorship please contact
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S. Rachmaninoff.



Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninoff (1873 - 1943)

Trio Élégiacque no.1 in G minor, Op. Post.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's Trio Elegiacque No. 1 in G minor, written when Rachmaninoff was just 19 years old in 1892, is a chamber work of profound emotional depth and artistic maturity.

It is work that is most certainly a poignant exploration of the Russian Romantic tradition, with many influences from Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio, a composer that Rachmaninoff greatly admired.

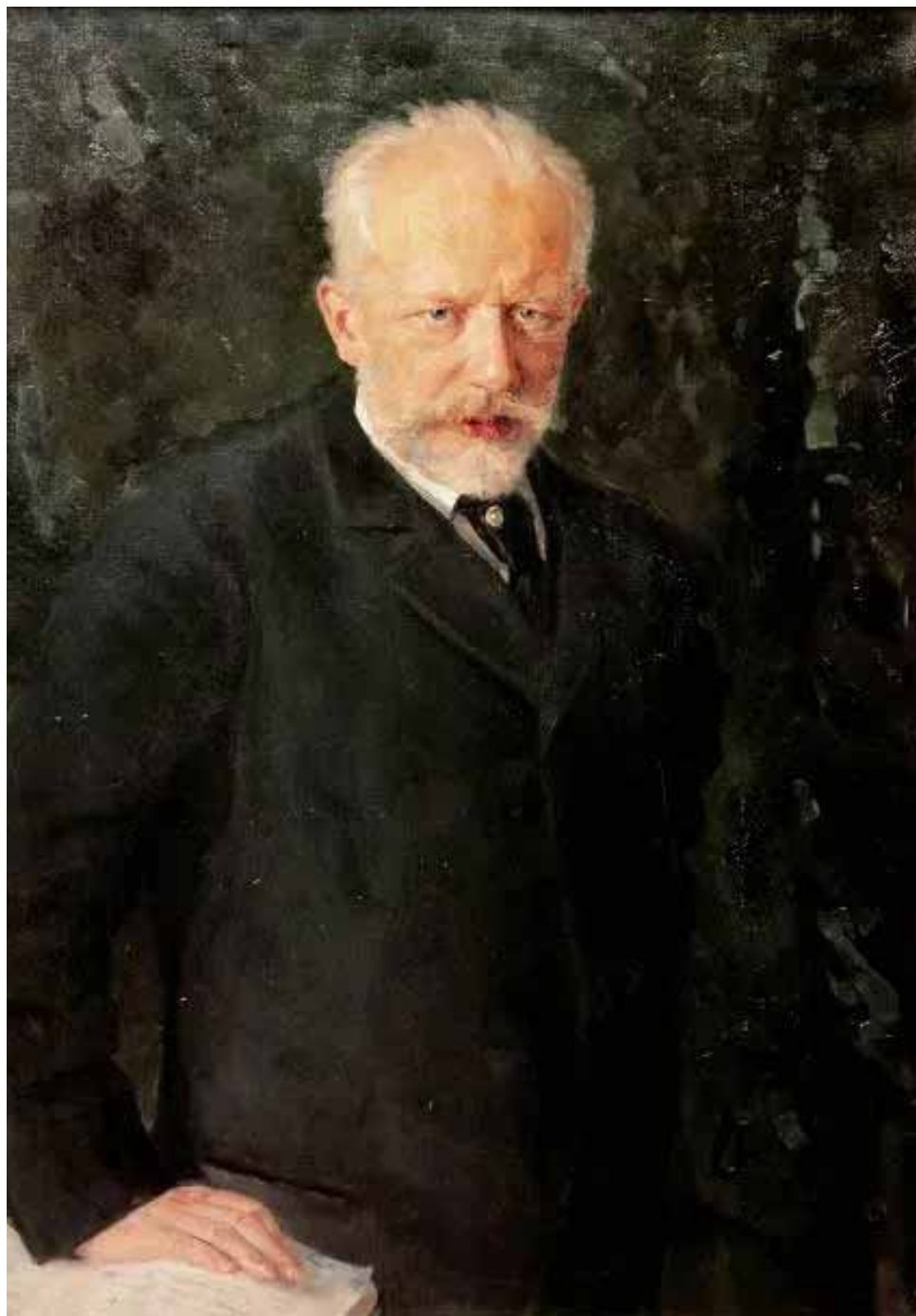
It is a single movement work, which starts with the strings playing a frosty motif that continuously grows and develops until the piano comes in playing a very sombre melody that is marked "Lento Lugubre" which eventually the strings take over, creating a powerful yet haunting atmosphere.

The work then develops into the 2nd subject where the violin projects a rich melody,

which leads to a hugely dramatic section within the work, where the piano has several virtuosic passages - like a surge of passion as well as the themes passing from the violin to the cello which hugely embellishes the Russian romantic style.

The work then eventually returns to the opening motif albeit through different keys and concludes by Rachmaninoff paying homage to Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio where the original theme returns but as a funeral march.

Rachmaninoff's ability to seamlessly transition from an icy, chilling character to a brilliant and triumphant one is exactly what makes this piece an exceptional piece of piano trio literature.



Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 50

Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A minor is arguably one of the most monumental works ever written for piano, violin and cello.

Composed in 1882, Tchaikovsky wrote this work as a memorial to his close friend and mentor, Nikolai Rubenstein.

Tchaikovsky originally had no intention of writing a piano trio, saying in a letter that he "simply cannot endure the combination of pianoforte with violin or violoncello."

However, so saddened by the death of his mentor, Tchaikovsky had a change of heart and wanted to "test himself", so he wrote his Piano Trio.

He wanted to commemorate Nikolai Rubenstein by writing a piano part so virtuosic that it would have matched the keyboard prowess of Rubenstein himself.

It was first performed in 1882 and took place in Moscow, where the performers were Sergey Tanyev (piano), Jan Hřimalý (violin) and Wilhelm Fitzenhagen (cello).

The first movement of the work is an elegy and starts with a mournful theme first introduced by the cello which eventually is given to the piano and violin.

Another two expressive melodies get introduced throughout the first movement and they unroll in a free version of sonata form.

The 2nd movement of the piano trio is a set of theme and variations based on a theme which is heavily influenced by folk music. This is very much seen as a homage to Rubenstein as he highly appreciated folk music.

Consisting of 11 variations in total, the first two maintain the simplicity of the theme, however from the third variation onwards, they evolve into more surprising formats including a scherzo, a waltz, and a mazurka with many who believe some variations are inspired by events in Rubenstein's life.

These are followed by the final section of the work, which is so independent from the first two movements many consider it a movement. However, we do get the return of first theme - originally played by the cello, however this time in a much more dramatic way, which gradually leads into a funeral march, very much a homage to Nikolai Rubenstein.

This piano trio stands as one of the greatest works for piano, violin and cello ever written and takes the listener on a magical and emotional journey through its profound musical landscape.

PROGRAMME

The Avalon Trio

Tuesday 14 November 2023
St George's Hanover Square, Mayfair



Franz Joseph Haydn

Piano Trio no. 39 in G, Hob. XV/25 Gypsy Rondo

Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninoff

Trio Élégiacque no.1 in G minor, Op. Post.

INTERVAL

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 50

*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.*

Benji Lock



Benji Lock was born in Port Talbot (Wales) in 2004. He started playing the piano aged 7 and attended the Junior Department at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama from the age of 10, where he became an ABRSM scholar and in 2017, won a scholarship to the Purcell School.

Benji currently attends the Royal Academy of Music where he was awarded a full scholarship sponsored by Sir Elton John.

He currently studies piano with Tatiana Sarkissova. Most recently, Benji was first prize winner in the Purcell School Concerto Competition where he played Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, and in 2024, will perform it

with the Purcell School Symphony Orchestra at St John's Smith Square.

His other recent successes include performing a solo recital at Wigmore Hall, 1st prize the Welsh International Piano Competition in 2021, 1st place in the Grand Prize Virtuoso Competition (London) and 4th prize in the Young Pianist of the North Competition in 2019. Benji also enjoys composing and was shortlisted for the BBC Young Composer award in 2019.

He particularly enjoys composing for film. Outside of music, Benji is a keen footballer and swimmer and, in 2013, was the Welsh Gymnastics Under 12 Club Champion.

Louis Solon

Born in 2005, Louis Solon started playing the Violin at the age of six. Originally from London, he moved to Devon and was awarded a music scholarship at Exeter school.

In parallel, he studied at Junior Conservatoire under Fiona McLean-Buchel. He was awarded a Grade 8 distinction at the age of thirteen and achieved the ATCL diploma a year later.

He was fortunate to gain valuable performance experience as a soloist and orchestral musician, and also attended many masterclasses before being awarded the Dora Kastner-Szafranski prize in his final year. Louis moved to the Purcell School for Sixth Form where he studied the violin with Joo-Yeon Sir and chamber music with William Fong and Richard Jenkinson.

While at the Purcell School, he performed at prestigious venues such as the Cadogan Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and St John's Smith Square.

He was a section principle in the Symphony Orchestra and played in a range of other groups and ensembles and as a soloist. He aims to pursue a career in music and is a student in the class of Joshua Fisher at the Royal Academy of Music.



Seb Williams

Cellist Sebastian Williams started learning the cello at the age of seven and he won all the major string prizes at local festivals before enrolling as a student of James Halsey at the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music at the age of fourteen.

He became a student at the Purcell School for sixth form where he studied cello and chamber music with Dr Richard Jenkinson. During his time at the Purcell School, he was principal cellist of the School Symphony Orchestra, performing at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Cadogan Hall and at the Hatfield House Chamber Series. He was fortunate to participate in solo masterclasses with Stefan Popov, Josephine Knight and Julian Lloyd-Webber in addition to masterclasses as a member of the Avalon Trio. He was awarded an Honourable Mention in the Senior String Class of the New Talent Festival and has also been a member of Aldeburgh Young Musicians and national ensembles. Sebastian is fortunate to have had a range of performing experiences, the most notable of which have been performing in the Lunchtime Chamber Series at the Wigmore Hall and performing Elgar's cello concerto at Snape Maltings. Since September 2023 he has been a student of Josephine Knight at the Royal Academy of



Music. Sebastian is grateful for the support he has received from the Wolfson Trust, the Leverhulme Foundation, the Scarfe Trust and the Ed Sheeran Foundation. He plays an old English cello on loan to him from the Benslow Trust.

New Season 2023-24

Join us for our fabulous new season of concerts in London



Garden of Fire

28 January 2024

Ruth Gipps Cringlemire Garden: Impression for string orchestra, Op. 39

Mozart Piano Concerto No.9 in E flat, K. 271
Jeunehomme

Emperor

30 April 2024

Beethoven Piano Concerto no. 5 in E flat, Op. 72 *The Emperor*

Dvorak Symphony no. 8 in G, Op. 88



Clarinet Fair

27 February 2024

Mendelssohn Die Schöne Melusine (The Fair Melusine)

Mozart Clarinet Concerto

Beethoven Symphony no.2

Forests & Fantasy

11 June 2024

Revich Olario Prelude & *Choriner Wald* (the Forest of Chorin)

Gershwin/Frolov Fantasy on themes from *Porgy and Bess*

Massenet Méditation from *Thais*

Bizet/Sarasate *Carmen Fantasy*

Sibelius Symphony no. 2

*See full season details & buy tickets online at
www.londonfirebird.com*



Now celebrating its 11th Anniversary Season, the London Firebird Orchestra was founded in 2012 with Dame Judi Dench as Patron and Marc Corbett-Weaver as Artistic Director. The orchestra supports extraordinary talented musicians of the younger generation who have either recently graduated or are still studying at one of the major London conservatoires, by enabling to perform in orchestral concerts and outreach projects.

The orchestra performs regularly at its main home venue St George's Hanover Square. Every two years it performs at Kings Place and SJE Arts Oxford and it also has a residency at Middlesex University. Firebird for Schools – the orchestra's tailor-made concert for school children – takes place annually. Firebird has also performed on several occasions at the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Cadogan Hall, St Paul's Covent Garden and the Bath Pump Room. Performances have been received fantastic reviews in *The Times*, *Evening Standard*, *Classical Music Magazine*, *Musical Opinion*

Magazine, *Seen & Heard International* and BBC Radio London.

The orchestra has collaborated with many internationally-renowned soloists including Jamal Aliyev, Thomas Gould, George Harlono, Aleksei Kiseliyov, Jennifer Pike, Yury Revich, Leonard Schreiber and Raphael Wallfisch. Each Season, Firebird showcases a small number of prize-winning conductors of the younger generation. 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. Angela Slater is among the recent prize-winners.

Over the years, Firebird players have moved on by securing places in leading orchestras across the UK and beyond, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, the Philharmonia, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and the Orchestra of Opera North among many others.

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



SUPPORT US, BECOME A FRIEND

At the heart of our organisation 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.

Each concert costs several thousands of pounds to produce. Even with good ticket sales from popular concerts, Firebird's concert income falls short of its expenditure. The need for subsidy is of course a reality encountered by almost all projects in the performing arts world. By supporting this short-fall with an income stream our members enable the orchestra's work to continue to prosper. The orchestra has ambitious plans for future development too, which require an increase in income to achieve.

Membership of the Friends & Benefactors Society focuses upon charitable giving. However, the orchestra is very keen to acknowledge support and to offer what it can in return. Members are invited to an annual reception at the start of each concert season every autumn, at which there is a chance to meet the orchestra's players and conductors. Supporters also enjoy priority booking and other privileges at the concerts themselves, as well as recognition in concert programmes and on the website.

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or speak to one of our team.**