



Dvořák's New World

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 30 September 2025

St George's Hanover Square

London
Firebird 
Orchestra

Firebird Friends & Benefactors

Firebird Circle

Nick & Debbie Barton
The Garrick Charitable
Trust
Mathieu Gaveau
Howard de Walden Estates
Hyde Park Place Estate
Charity
London Chamber Music
Society
The Morris-Venables
Charitable Foundation
The D'Oyly Charitable
Trust
The Story of Christmas
Sam Webster
Hillary & Stuart Williams

Benefactors of the Chair Endowment Scheme

Michael & Helen Brown
(*Principal First Violin*)
Michael Manning Clark
(*First Violin*)
Jenny Jones (*First Violin*)
Anatoly Savin (*Principal
Second Violin*)
Stephen & Juliet Callaghan
(*Principal Viola*)
Philip & Suzy Rowley
(*Principal Cello*)
In Memory of Herc &
Oeschka Hefer (*Cello*)
Luke & Liza Johnson (*Cello*)
David & Eillis Baty
(*Principal Double Bass*)
Ann Scott (*Principal Flute*)
Trevor & Elizabeth Gore
(*Principal Oboe*)
Ken Watters & Robin

Wilkinson (*Principal Clarinet*)
Amanda Clack (*Principal
Horn*)
Professor Thomas Hale &
Dr Sam Webster (*Principal
Trumpet*)
Stephen & Kate Wilson
(*Principal Trombone*)
Mathieu & Nathalie Gaveau
(*Principal Percussion*)

Golden Firebird Friends

Sir Richard Aikens PC
Misako Akane
Emily Bohill
Tonia Leon Corbett-Weaver
& Howard Smith
Jeanie Hirsch
Christopher Humphry
Adam Karp & Jocelyn Cho
Karp
Neil McKeown
John Naulls
Thomas Sharpe KC &
Mrs Phillis Sharpe
Geoffrey Shepherd
Sue Sinclair & Jarrod
Henderson
Lindsey & Jorge Villon

Silver Firebird Friends

Anonymous
Martin Amherst-Lock
Valérie Besançon
Cllr Ruth Bush
Jim & Olivia Cook
Robin Culshaw
Dr David Daniels
Chris & Howard Fielding
Maria Gouveia

Allasonne Lewis
Martin Melville
Doreen Munden
Ness Norman
James Saunders
Lynne Schey
Nicholas Sokolow
David Sugden
John & Rowena Tubby
David & Susie Turner
Thelma Vernon

Performance Partners

Bärenreiter
Fazioli Pianoforti
Jaques Samuel Pianos
Kings Place
London Chamber Music
Society
Middlesex University
SJE Arts Oxford
St George's Hanover Square,
Mayfair
The Undercroft Mayfair

Trusts & Foundations

The Barton Trust
The Garrick Charitable
Trust
Hyde Park Place Estate
Charity
The Morris-Venables
Charitable Foundation
The D'Oyly Carte
Charitable Trust
The Williams Charitable
Trust

Become a Firebird Friend at londonfirebird.com



Welcome

Welcome to the Opening Concert of the London Firebird Orchestra's 14th Annual Concert Season. Tonight we present a very popular programme featuring Brahms Violin Concerto and Dvorak Symphony no. 9 (From the New World). Our very own George Jackson is conducting and the prize-winning Italian Violinist and YCAT Artist Matteo Cimatti joins us as soloist for the first time.

A new bar / restaurant / event's space has opened at St George's in the basement, called The Undercroft. We would like to invite you all to join us for drinks at the bar after the concert tonight. (The Undercroft is open for drinks only on this particular occasion).

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

Our complete 2025/26 season is viewable via our website: www.LondonFirebird.com. We hope to see you at some of the other concerts too!

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

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo

Brahms composed his first and only violin concerto in the summer of 1878, while in holiday in Pörschach, an Austrian resort by the scenic lake, Wörthersee.

His idyllic surroundings seem to have influenced the music. There is a grand, expansive and airy feel to this concerto, redolent of majestic vistas, just as there is in Brahms's Second Symphony – written in the same location, in the summer of the previous year.

Talking of the musical inspiration he felt in Pörschach, Brahms joked in a letter to a friend; “The melodies fly so thick here you have to be careful not to step on one”.

Brahms dedicated the concerto to his friend, Joseph Joachim, the most famous violinist of his time, who played it at the premiere, in Leipzig on New Year's Day, 1879.

In fact, Joachim deserves credit for contributing to the composition of the piece – Brahms, himself a pianist with limited knowledge of violin technique, corresponded with him while writing it, asking for and receiving advice and suggestions.

The concerto is on the scale and with the character of a symphony. It is one of the most challenging pieces to play in the violin repertoire, with technically fiendish passages having to be belted in order to stand on par with the symphonic majesty of the orchestral parts.

The contemporary virtuoso violinist Henryk Wieniawski declared the concerto to be “unplayable”. A famous quotation (attributed to various people) has it that the work is not so much for the violin but against it. Like many witty quotes, this is both unfair, and slightly true.

The first movement, marked *Allegro non troppo*, begins with a slow introduction from the orchestra. This contains the seeds for most of the themes later developed in the movement.

The violin then enters with dramatic flair, before presenting the expansive warmth of the main theme and its counterpart, a longing melody. The movement combines Brahmsian intensity with gentler, lyrical passages. It ends with a cadenza composed by Joachim.

The slow *Adagio* second movement is notable and unusual in a concerto for the prominent part it gives to another solo instrument, the oboe. This presents the main theme, with the violin later joining in and elaborating on it. (The violin virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate refused to play the concerto on account of this, his celebrity ego affronted by having to stand around, with violin in hand, while the oboist takes centre stage.) The mood of the movement is of inner longing and searing Romantic beauty.

The third and final movement, marked *Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace*, is full of energy and fire. Brahms is often serious and brooding, but when the sun occasionally comes out, it shines brightly.

The main theme requires extreme skill on the soloist's part with a succession of double-stops (playing two notes simultaneously), to be played both lyrically and thunderously, as an equal partner with orchestra.

The dance-like exuberance of the main theme is balanced by a poignant, song-like interlude. After a final, brief farewell theme played by the soloist, the movement, and concerto, ends with stately and triumphant chords played by the full orchestra.



Antonín Dvořák (1841 – 1904)

Symphony no. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 ('From the New World')

I. Adagio – Allegro molto

II. Largo

III. Scherzo: Molto vivace

IV. Allegro con fuoco

The Ninth Symphony in E minor by Czech composer Antonín Dvořák, was composed in 1893, and is the composer's most popular symphony. It was written in a period when he was director of the National Conservatory of Music of America, and living in New York City.

At the time, the American classical music scene focused on European styles. Dvořák, however, as a Czech nationalist himself in his music, believed that America should draw on its own traditional of folk music, in the form of black American spirituals and Native American sources. Drawing on native songs and African-American spirituals, the Ninth Symphony broadly captures their spirit, without quoting individual melodies. Along with this, the work conveys a sense of America's natural beauty, with its wide open spaces and rugged wilderness.

The first movement, *adagio – allegro molto*, opens with a portentous slower theme, which seems to express homesickness for the 'Old World'. But then the slower theme gives way to a quick *allegro*, conveying the excitement of discovery and new frontiers. The emphasis on brasses and woodwinds, as opposed to strings, gives the movement a fresh sound which separates it from European styles. The Czech nationalist propensity for sketching

landscape in music is evident in this movement, but the landscape itself—with its rocks, crags and rushing waters—is like a musical evocation of the heroic landscapes by the Hudson River School of contemporary American painters such as Alfred Bierstadt.

The second movement, *Largo*, feels like a black spiritual but with entirely new melodies. (Later it was actually adopted as a spiritual, and given the title, 'Goin' Home'.) In the middle of the movement, some lively Czech sounds bring on a wave of homesickness. A chorale-like sequence of mellifluous brass chords introduces a set of variations on a tender *cor anglais* melody, aching in the gulf between two worlds. This stream of nostalgic serenity is interrupted by a livelier variation. The recurrence of the chorale motif and the balancing of episodes around this central emotion make an elegant arch-structure.

The third movement, *Molto vivace*, contains bright, lively tunes and dancelike rhythms which are characteristic of the composer's Czech heritage, while also evocative of American landscapes. It takes the form of a classical scherzo and trio.

In the fourth and final movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, Dvořák combines themes already presented in the first three movements, along with the development of new material. There is a fateful quality to the clarion brasses and thundering percussion as the symphony draws to a close. In it, a musical portrait appears of a country both youthful and bold.



PROGRAMME

Dvořák's New World

Tuesday 30 September 2025
St George's Hanover Square



Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo

INTERVAL

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Symphony no. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 ('From the New World'))

I. Adagio – Allegro molto

II. Largo

III. Scherzo: Molto vivace

IV. Allegro con fuoco

London Firebird Orchestra

Matteo Cimatti violin

George Jackson conductor

Calyssa Davidson violin

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.

George Jackson

“George Jackson raised the stature of the music to a rarely-encountered level, absolutely enthralling from first bar to last.” **Classical Source**

George Jackson is quickly making a name for the breadth and commitment of his work, whether in opera, symphonic repertoire or contemporary scores. He builds strong relationships with the orchestras he conducts, and has served as Music Director of Amarillo Symphony since September 2022.

Jackson brings a broad repertoire to Amarillo Symphony, this season ranging from classics such as Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*, Holst’s *The Planets* and Bruckner’s *Seventh Symphony*, to world premieres by Christopher Lowry and Gavin Higgins, and the US premiere of Dani Howard’s *The Butterfly Effect*.

His skill in preparing complex scores has led to an ongoing relationship with Ensemble Intercontemporain. Together they released the world premiere recording of Steve Reich’s *Reich/Richter* on Nonesuch Records, following successful performances of the work in Rome, Paris and Luxembourg. Recently, he conducted the group at Festival Présences and Tokyo Spring Festival, in programmes featuring Reich, Werner, Boulez, Varèse and Webern. With Collegium Novum Zürich, Jackson conducted Isabel Mundry’s new work *Noli me tangere*, and with Brussels Philharmonic he led the world premiere of Claire-Mélanie Sinnhuber’s *Chahut*.

Jackson is increasingly sought-after as a guest with European orchestras, who appreciate his fearless conducting and thorough rehearsal



technique. Current highlights include Opéra Orchestre National de Montpellier, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Ensemble 10:10, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León and Brussels Philharmonic.

Praised for his natural affinity for opera, he has received acclaim for his work in productions of *Hänsel und Gretel* and *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* (Grange Park Opera), *La bohème* and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Opera Holland Park), and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Theater an der Wien).

Formative experiences include his participation at Lucerne Festival Academy, Deutsche Bank’s Akademie Musiktheater heute and at Aspen Music Festival, where he was awarded the Aspen Conducting Prize in 2015.

Matteo Cimatti

Matteo Cimatti is a prize-winning Italian violinist who has been praised for his “...refined playing and melodious and intense tone...” (ANSA).

Based between London and Switzerland, he has appeared alongside several European orchestras and at numerous festivals, and is also an accomplished and enthusiastic chamber player.



In May 2025, he was selected as one of the winners at the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) International Final Auditions.

Upcoming highlights include his debut at the Alte Oper Frankfurt, Internationales Musikfestival Heidelberger Fruhling, a return to Wigmore Hall and the Brahms concerto with the London Firebird Orchestra.

In 2024, Matteo graduated from the Haute École Musique de Lausanne in Switzerland, where he most recently studied with Janine Jansen and Tomo Keller.

He has appeared as a soloist alongside several orchestras, including the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne and the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra, and has performed in numerous festivals and concert seasons such as the Sion Festival, Amici della Musica di Firenze, Festival dei Due Mondi, Musikdorf Ernen and the Ticino Music Festival among others.

Matteo has received awards from the Rahn Kulturfonds and the Concours d'Interprétation Musicale de Lausanne, and has been a prize winner in leading competitions including the Concours Feast of Duos International, Premio Postacchini International Violin, and Premio Crescendo.

A chamber music enthusiast from a very young age, Matteo enjoys a rich and varied concert activity as a chamber player. He is a founding member of the Wendel Quartet, a piano quartet based in Basel.

Matteo plays a 1769 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin kindly loaned to him through the Beare's International Violin Society by a generous sponsor.

Photo credit: *Kaupo Kikkas*

New Season 2025-26

Join us for our fabulous 14th annual season of concerts



Piano Recital with Marc Corbett-Weaver

Tuesday 14 October 2025

Marc performs a key early work of Beethoven's "Heroic" decade - the Sonata in C, Op. 53
Waldstein and Liszt's Sonata in B minor



Firebird Festival Night

Tuesday 18 November 2025

Join London Firebird Orchestra and internationally-acclaimed violinist Yury Revich for a special concert featuring music by Massenet, Beethoven, Sarasate and Revich too.



Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations

Tuesday 10 February 2026

Beautiful music by Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky and Mozart feature in this concert in which London Firebird are joined by Belarusian cellist Aleksei Kiseliov



Mendelssohn's Dream

Sunday 8 March 2026

This concert in association with the London Chamber Music Society features pianist Ariel Lany and a programme including Mendelssohn Overture to a Midsummer Night's Dream and music by Beethoven, Puccini and Haydn

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

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 for the BBC.

Along with performing in renowned venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Windsor Castle, and several theatres on the West End, this past year Davidson has toured the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States. Most recently, she was invited back to New York City to perform with Andrea Bocelli on NBC's *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*.

Davidson has led recording sessions at Abbey Road, Air Edel, and Angel Studios and has been featured on soundtracks for numerous feature films, video games, podcasts, trailers, adverts and pop songs including Dermot Kennedy's chart-topping 'Something to Someone'. Davidson has recorded the solo violin score for the BBC Two documentary series *The Story of China* and wrote and recorded the solo violin scores for the BBC Two 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 also performed alongside Grammy-award winner Rick Springfield, Alfie Boe, and Rick Wakeman, and can be seen in Springfield's music video, *Christmas With You*.

Originally from California, Davidson moved to London 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.

London Firebird Orchestra

Conductor

George Jackson

Solo violin

Matteo Cimatti

Leader

Calyssa Davidson

Violin I

Jessica Meakin (*Sponsored by Michael & Helen Brown*)

Victor Caparnagiu (*Sponsored by Michael Manning Clark*)

Sherry Shen (*Sponsored by Jenny Jones*)

Louis Solon

Wilmien Janse van Rensburg

Emily St Clair

Violin II

Victoria Marsh (*Sponsored by Anatoly Savin*)

Lorenzo Narcici

Ana Lavinia Vlad

Theo Elwes

Kiana Garvey

Greta Bommarito

Viola

Cameron Howe (*Sponsored by Stephen & Juliet Callaghan*)

Elizabeth Tobald

Danya Rushton

Rosanna Rowe

Charis Morgan

Cello

Will Robertson (*Sponsored by Philip & Suzy Rowley*)

Paula Skulte (*Sponsored in Memory of Herc & Oeschka Hefer*)

Daniel Yiu (*Sponsored by Luke & Liza Johnson*)

Sebastian Williams

Bass

Adam Churchyard (*Sponsored by David & Eillis Baty*)

Lilia Collier-Smith

Flute

Nika Pinter (*Sponsored by Ann Scott*)

Doroti Vincler (doubles to Piccolo)

Oboe

Polly Bartlett

Katherine Jones (doubles to Cor Anglais)

Clarinet

Jasper Perry (*Sponsored by Ken Watters & Robin Wilkinson*)

Catrin Davies

Bassoon

William Hartley

Amy Thompson

Horn

Tom Findlay (*Sponsored by Amanda Clack*)

Alex Grinyer

Lucas Boardman

Rosie Jackson

Amelia Lawson

Trumpet

Archie Musselwhite (*Sponsored by Professor Thomas Hale & Dr Sam Webster*)

Callum Robb

Tenor trombones

George Winter (*Sponsored by Stephen & Kate Wilson*)

Ed Simons

Bass trombones

Kieran Smith

Tuba

Alexander Miller

Timpani

Charlie Hodge

Percussion

Tobias Engelbrektsson (*Sponsored by Mathieu & Nathalie Gaveau*)

Stage Manager

Gabriella Coomber



Now celebrating its 14th Annual Concert 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, Martin James Bartlett, Thomas Gould, George Harliono, Aleksei Kiseliy, 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 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
or speak to one of our team.**

Undercroft



Hidden in the crypt beneath Mayfair's St George's Church, a new dining experience has emerged. Aldo Zilli, the celebrated Italian chef, creates unforgettable meals in a charming, hidden setting.

The hidden space provides the perfect atmosphere for enjoying authentic Italian dishes. Our menu reimagines tradition with a contemporary twist, weaving together the finest British and Mediterranean influences. Each dish is crafted from the finest locally sourced ingredients.

www.undercroft-mayfair.com