



THE FAUN AND THE FIREBIRD

Friday 3 November 2023

The BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican

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CONCERTS OCTOBER – DECEMBER

FRIDAY 6 OCTOBER 7.30pm

GYÖRGY LIGETI Concert
Românesc

DORA PEJAČEVIĆ Phantasie
concertante *UK premiere*

GUSTAV MAHLER Symphony No. 5

Alexandra Dariescu *piano*
Sakari Oramo *conductor*

SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER 7.00pm

ȘTEFAN NICULESCU Ison II
UK premiere

ANNA MEREDITH Origami Songs

ARVO PÄRT Perpetuum mobile

IGOR STRAVINSKY The Rite of
Spring

Erik Bosgraaf *recorders*
Ryan Wigglesworth *conductor*

FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 7.30pm

OLIVIER MESSIAEN Les offrandes
oubliées

OUTI TARKIAINEN Milky Ways
BBC co-commission: UK premiere

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH
Symphony No. 10

Nicholas Daniel *cor anglais*
David Afkham *conductor*

FRIDAY 3 NOVEMBER 7.30pm

CLAUDE DEBUSSY Prélude à
l'après-midi d'un faune

LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI Prosoidia
BBC co-commission: world premiere

BORIS LYATOSHINSKY Grazhyna

IGOR STRAVINSKY The Firebird –
suite (1919)

Ilya Gringolts *violin*
Roderick Cox *conductor*

FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER 7.30pm

DETLEV GLANERT Prague
Symphony – Lyrical Fragments
after Franz Kafka (Symphony No. 4)
BBC co-commission: UK premiere

JOHANNES BRAHMS Symphony
No. 4 in E minor

Catriona Morison *mezzo-soprano*
Christian Immler *baritone*
Semyon Bychkov *conductor*

FRIDAY 1 DECEMBER 7.30pm

ALICE MARY SMITH Overture
'Jason, or The Argonauts and
the Sirens'

MAURICE RAVEL Shéhérazade

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Symphony No. 3 in E flat major,
'Éroica'

Jennifer Johnston *mezzo-soprano*
Sakari Oramo *conductor*

FRIDAY 8 DECEMBER 7.30pm

CARL NIELSEN An Imaginary
Journey to the Faroe Islands

TEBOGO MONNAKGOTLA Globe
Skimmer Surfing the Somali Jet
BBC commission: UK premiere

JEAN SIBELIUS
Symphony No. 6 in D minor
Symphony No. 7 in C major

Johan Dalene *violin*
Sakari Oramo *conductor*

FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER 7.30pm

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI arr. Ryan
Wigglesworth Lamento d'Arianna
London premiere

RYAN WIGGLESWORTH
Magnificat *London premiere*

ROBERT SCHUMANN Symphony
No. 2 in C major

Sophie Bevan *soprano*
BBC Symphony Chorus
Ryan Wigglesworth *conductor*

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SAKARI ORAMO CHIEF CONDUCTOR

FRIDAY 3 NOVEMBER, 2023

7.30pm, BARBICAN HALL



CLAUDE DEBUSSY Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune 8'

LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI Prosoidia *BBC co-commission: world premiere* c20'

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

BORIS LYATOSHINSKY Grazhyna 19'

IGOR STRAVINSKY The Firebird – suite (1919) 23'

Ilya Gringolts violin

Roderick Cox conductor

*Eva Ollikainen, the advertised conductor, has had to withdraw from tonight's performance.
The BBC Symphony Orchestra is grateful to Roderick Cox for taking her place at short notice.*

RADIO 3 SOUNDS

This concert is being broadcast live by BBC Radio 3 in *Radio 3 in Concert*. It will be available for 30 days after broadcast via BBC Sounds, where you can also find podcasts and music mixes.

Please ensure all mobile phones and watch-alarms are switched off.

Russian and Ukrainian themes run through tonight's concert, directed by American-born Roderick Cox.

Debussy's lush and languorous *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* was composed after a poem by Mallarmé describing a faun's sensual contemplation of nymphs as it awakes from its slumber in the afternoon sun. Nearly two decades after its premiere in 1894, the piece was at the centre of a scandal when it was danced by Vaslav Nijinsky in his louche, provocative choreography for Sergey Diaghilev's Ballets Russes company.

While tonight's world premiere by Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski takes its inspiration partly from a pacifist line in a poem by Russian poet Marina Tsvetayeva, the concert's second half pairs the dramatic symphonic ballad by Ukrainian-born Boris Lyatoshinsky with Stravinsky's first ballet for Diaghilev, *The Firebird*, drawing on a number of Russian folk tales. Debussy was at *The Firebird*'s premiere in Paris in 1910 and, when asked by Stravinsky for his reaction, apparently replied: 'What do you expect? One has to start somewhere.' For his part, Stravinsky admired the ballet of Debussy's *Prélude* and concluded that 'Nijinsky's performance was such marvellously concentrated art that only a fool could have been shocked by it'.



SOUNDS

Tonight's concert is available on BBC Sounds until 2 December. Hear the BBC SO under Sakari Oramo performing Mahler, Ligeti and Pejačević on BBC Sounds until 5 November.

iPLAYER

Watch the BBC SO's performances at the First and Last Nights of the Proms this year on BBC iPlayer until a year after first broadcast

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CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune (1891–4)

Debussy had written a lot of music before he was 30, but nothing to match this 'prelude' to Stéphane Mallarmé's poem 'L'après-midi d'un faune' (The Afternoon of a Faun), composed between 1891 and 1894. His music begins here afresh. So does music more generally.

Mallarmé, 20 years older, appealed to Debussy not only by virtue of his poetry but as the centre of a circle that valued intense, tightly focused artistic experience. 'L'après-midi d'un faune' – fluid, capricious and highly wrought, like everything Mallarmé wrote – presents itself as the interior monologue of a faun (a mythical half-man, half-beast) remembering, at a moment of rest in a Classical landscape, a recent erotic encounter. There is an implicit border of rush and sensuality around the poet's picture of calm and idle reverie.

So there is with the music. Writing to a critic who had evidently asked for information, Debussy remarked that the piece 'is a free illustration of the poem'. It demonstrates a disdain for 'constructional know-how' and 'has no respect for tonality', being composed 'in a mode which is intended to contain all the nuances'. 'All the same,' his letter goes on, 'it follows the ascending shape of the poem as well as the scenery so marvellously described in the

text.' But 'follows' is too modest. Debussy's music dissolves the words and recreates the poem's suggestive imagery and free association on its own terms of pure sound.

...

Everything unfolds from the opening solo for unaccompanied flute, an aptly unprecedented and beguiling beginning for a work that treads over the threshold into a new age. This solo is not really a melody – hardly more than a scale on the point of forming itself into a melody. That is its virtue. Every time we hear the idea, it becomes something different. Every time, it has a new breath, a new harmony, a new colour, a new extension. There is a middle section based on more completely formed material: a rather jaunty oboe solo, and a grand phrase introduced by woodwinds in spacious octaves. Then the beginning begins again.

Programme note © Paul Griffiths

A critic for over 30 years, including for *The Times* and *The New Yorker*, Paul Griffiths is an authority on 20th- and 21st-century music. Among his books are studies of Boulez, Cage and Stravinsky, as well as *Modern Music and After* and *A Concise History of Western Music*. His novels *let me tell you* and *let me go on* were published in July.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Achille-Claude Debussy was born near Paris on 22 August 1862 and, after private piano lessons, entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1872, where he

remained until 1884 – our view of him as a composer who espoused freedom at all costs needs to take account of this long apprenticeship. Gaining first prize in the Prix de Rome competition in 1884, he spent some of the years 1885–7 in the Eternal City, but then returned to a precarious freelance life in Paris. In the meantime he had composed a number of songs, notably for his mistress Marie Vasnier, a high soprano; signs of his genius begin to show in a few of these but more patently in his complex, Wagner-inspired *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire* (1887–9). He emerged as a major composer in *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1891–4), a powerfully sensual commentary on Mallarmé's poem, described by Pierre Boulez as the awakening of modern music.

Debussy had already begun his only completed opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, on which he continued to work through the 1890s before its production at the Opéra Comique in 1902, and in which Wagnerian influences are absorbed to produce something more ethereal and mysterious, although more recent productions have also discovered in its depths of anxiety and terror. These were the early years of so-called 'Impressionism' – a term Debussy disliked, since it popularised the utterly false idea that his music was formless. At the same time, piano works such as *Estampes* (1903) and the two books of *Images* (1901–5 and 1907) brought a new colour and atmosphere into the keyboard repertoire.

After a short-lived first marriage, in 1904 Debussy entered a liaison with the singer Emma Bardac, and 1905 saw not only the birth of their daughter Claude-Emma (nicknamed Chouchou) but the first performance of *La mer*, which initially puzzled audiences with its complex scoring. The years leading up to the First World War saw his reputation growing, and works such as the two books of piano *Préludes* (1909–10 and 1911–13) and the orchestral *Images* (1905–12), even if they disturbed the critics, showed young composers new ways of thinking about music.

During the five years before his death from cancer on 25 March 1918, Debussy was continually exploring new means of expression: 'How much one has to find, then suppress,' he wrote, 'to reach the naked flesh of emotion.' In his ballet *Jeux* (1912–13) and the last three chamber sonatas (1915–17) he succeeded wonderfully in this search, opening paths for any number of composers over the past century.

Profile © Roger Nichols

Roger Nichols is a writer, translator and critic with a particular interest in French music. His books include studies of Debussy, Ravel, Messiaen and Poulenc. *From Berlioz to Boulez* was published last year (Kahn & Averill). In 2007 he was appointed chevalier de la Légion d'honneur.

LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI (born 1970)

Prosoidia (2022–3)

BBC co-commission with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and Norrlands Opera (Sweden): world premiere

**1 ‘So what have you to say, O poet,
general, lover?’**

2 Word Stress

**3 Prosody (BWV 1011 & Bergman):
Kaija Saariaho in memoriam**

Ilya Gringolts violin

The word ‘prosody’ refers to the musical properties of speech: rhythm, pitch, stress and pauses. So surely music is actually prosody, *ie* speech without the semantic dimension? This fascinating thought was the basic premise for my violin concerto. The title *Prosoidia* is the original, Greek form of ‘prosody’. The concerto was commissioned jointly by BBC Radio 3, the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and Norrlands Opera. My warm thanks go to Ilya Gringolts for his collaboration over both the commission and the moulding of the solo part.

I began drafting my concerto in spring 2022, shortly after Russia launched its brutal assault on neighbouring Ukraine. The war made – and still makes – me feel very sad, helpless and frustrated. As the motto for my concerto I chose a pacifist line penned by the Russian poet Marina

Tsvetayeva. As the First World War raged in 1915, she wrote:

*No need for people anywhere on earth
to struggle.*

*Look – it is evening, look, it is nearly night:
So what have you to say, O poet,
general, lover?*

The first movement of the concerto, ‘So what have you to say, O poet, general, lover?’, features linguistic performance instructions inspired by prosody, such as *parlando* (like speaking) and *sussurrando* (like a whisper).

The second movement, ‘Word Stress’, alludes both to Finnish and to a language, Hungarian, that is a hobby of mine; in both, the stress is always on the first syllable of a word. This movement also affords a glimpse of a folk-song arrangement I made, and through it my relationship to the violin, which I briefly studied as a youngster, and specifically in Hungary.

In reflecting on prosody, I was also reminded of a scene from the 1972 film *Cries and Whispers* directed by Ingmar Bergman. Two sisters begin to speak to each other again after many years’ silence, and the moment is full of emotional charge and consolation. Bergman fades the speech until it is no longer audible and replaces it with the Sarabande movement from Bach’s Suite No. 5 for solo cello (BWV 1011).

The emotional, melancholy third movement of my concerto is in fact called 'Prosody (BWV 1011 & Bergman)', and the listener may well detect echoes of material from Bach's Sarabande. I have dedicated the movement to the memory of my former teacher Kaija Saariaho, who died in June this year.

Programme note © Lotta Wennäkoski

LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI

Lotta Wennäkoski was born in Helsinki. She studied violin and Hungarian folk music at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest and composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, where her teachers included Kaija Saariaho, Eero Hämeenniemi and Paavo Heininen. She also studied privately in the Netherlands with Louis Andriessen.

Returning from Budapest, Wennäkoski played for passing shoppers and tourists as a street musician in Helsinki. She has worked as a musician at children's daycare centres and after-school groups. 'I belong to a generation of composers who see the outside world as an opportunity rather than a threat,' she has said.

Wennäkoski has written for all manner of ensembles and for the theatre. But her orchestral music has increasingly been catching the ears of audiences, critics and musicians around the world, marked

out by its very particular treatment of texture, colour, light and density. Her distinctive brand of lyricism emerged with the flute concerto *Soie* (2009) while the song-cycle *Le miroir courbe* (2010–11), for mezzo-soprano and orchestra setting poetry by Yves Bonnefoy, is one of the best examples of Wennäkoski's way with cumulative melodic shape.

Surprising or unorthodox elements often appear in Wennäkoski's works. She has written a new score for the 1922 silent film *Amor omnia* (2011–12) and a work for orchestra with onstage juggler, *Jong* (2012–13). The stage works *N!* (2003) and *Lelele* (2010–11) underlined pertinent political issues surrounding the place and treatment of women in contemporary society, while the Hungarian folk music Wennäkoski loves is celebrated most obviously in the orchestral piece *Nosztalgiaim* (2006–7).

A string of concertos followed the success of *Soie*, each of them viewing the relationship between soloist and orchestra as something deeper than binary opposition. The guitar concerto *Susurrus* (2017) demonstrates Wennäkoski's relish when faced with challenges of sonority and balance. The piece also hints at one of the composer's most telling fascinations – silence. She favours acoustic instruments over amplification or electronics, and has spoken of the 'magical silence' that sits between those instruments and an audience.

The harp concerto *Sigla* – in which the harp appears to cast a spell over the orchestra – was commissioned by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, which presented it in May last year at the end of a season celebrating Wennaköski's works. A recording of the piece was nominated for a *Gramophone* Award this year; the album also included performances of Wennaköski's orchestral showpiece for the 2017 Last Night of the Proms, *Flounce*, and *Sedecim*, three movements for orchestra inspired by artworks from 1916.

In 2022 the Danish String Quartet gave the premiere of Wennaköski's string quartet *Pige* ('Girl') – a companion piece to Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden' quartet – at Carnegie Hall in New York. She is currently working on a full-length opera for the Savonlinna Opera Festival.

Profile © Andrew Mellor

Andrew Mellor is a freelance journalist and critic, and author of *The Northern Silence – Journeys in Nordic Music and Culture* (Yale UP, 2022).



FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER 7.30pm

Bychkov conducts Brahms

DETLEV GLANERT

Prague Symphony – Lyrical Fragments after Franz Kafka *BBC co-commission: UK premiere*

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Symphony No. 4

Catriona Morison mezzo-soprano
Christian Immler baritone
Semyon Bychkov conductor

When Detlev Glanert was commissioned to write a symphony for Prague, he turned to Franz Kafka – whose words, he says 'spoke to me immediately'. The result is a song-symphony in the tradition of Mahler that speaks directly to our time: exactly what you'd expect from this most communicative of living composers.

Semyon Bychkov, the work's dedicatee, has paired it with another deeply personal Fourth Symphony by a composer who thrived on reinventing tradition – Johannes Brahms. Expect beauty, truth and deep emotions honestly shared: in other words, a night to remember.

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INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

BORIS LYATOSHINSKY (1895–1968)

Grazhyna, Op. 58 – symphonic ballad after a poem by Adam Mickiewicz (1955)

Boris Lyatoshinsky's symphonic ballad *Grazhyna* was written in 1955 for celebrations marking 100 years since the death of Adam Mickiewicz, Poland's foremost poet. The piece was inspired by Mickiewicz's 1823 narrative poem of the same name concerning the fictitious Lithuanian female chieftain Grazhyna, set in the early 15th century during the wars between the Lithuanian princes and the Teutonic Knights. Lyatoshinsky provides a sombre prologue and epilogue with measured figurations in the violas to represent the unchanging flow of the River Neman. The beautiful cor anglais solo is a folk-style lament for Grazhyna, the story's tragic heroine.

The ballad begins with brass fanfares representing Prince Litavor. In his bedchamber, he gives orders to his counsellor to prepare his men for battle against a rival Lithuanian prince, and reveals his plan to enlist the Teutonic Knights to his cause. The counsellor, shocked by this alliance with the traditional enemy, goes to Litavor's wife Grazhyna in the hope that she will be able to change the Prince's mind. A lyrical cello theme represents her pleading and, once she has his word, Litavor falls asleep. Courtiers rudely dismiss the Teutonic envoy.

The Teutonic Knights take offence and we hear a sinister chorale in the brass as they descend on Litavor's castle. The troops pouring out of the castle are led by a knight in red who is presumed to be Litavor, but is in fact Grazhyna in disguise. The leader is struck down, but a mysterious knight in black (actually Litavor this time) appears. After the battle, a funeral cortège brings Grazhyna's body back to the castle. In the poem, Litavor chooses to immolate himself on her funeral pyre. The music of the River Neman resumes its measured flow.

Lyatoshinsky had earlier been censured for his modernism, and *Grazhyna* is written in a late-Romantic style. His talents as a composer prevent the result from sounding tired or derivative, and the score abounds in colour, rising to an almost Expressionist intensity at the climactic moments.

Programme note © Marina Frolova-Walker

Marina Frolova-Walker is Professor of Music History at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. She is the author of *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (2007, Yale UP) and *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (2016, Yale UP).

BORIS LYATOSHINSKY

Borys Lyatoshynsky is regarded in Ukraine with almost as much reverence as Sibelius in Finland. He wasn't the first important Ukrainian composer, just as Sibelius wasn't the first noteworthy Finnish composer – Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912) is generally

regarded as ‘the father of Ukrainian music’, and it is Fredrik Pacius (1809–91) who enjoys a similar status in Finland. But Lyatoshynsky was the first explicitly Ukrainian composer of the modern age – and he emerged as part of the brief flowering of Ukrainian culture between the oppression of the tsarist Russian empire and the ideological straightjacket of the Soviet regime.

Lyatoshynsky was born on 3 January 1895 in the western Ukrainian city of Zhytomyr (later the birthplace of the pianist Sviatoslav Richter) and spent much of his childhood there. In 1913 he began to study Law at the University of Kyiv but, after private lessons with Reinhold Glière, director of the recently founded Kyiv Conservatory, he enrolled as a student there, graduating in 1918. Music was already flooding from him – the first of his five symphonies and four string quartets date from his student years – although war was all around him, with Kyiv constantly changing hands between battling Whites and Reds, Poles and Germans, and other warring factions.

Joining the staff of the Conservatory the year after his graduation, he taught there for the rest of his career, though he also spent some time (1935–8 and 1941–4) teaching orchestration at the Moscow Conservatory. Ukrainian themes informed his works almost from the start: his first two operas, *The Golden Ring* (1929) and *Shchors* (1937), both cast Ukrainians in heroic positions, and the *Overture on Four*

Ukrainian Themes (1926) integrates folk music into his own symphonic language.

With Lyatoshynsky’s determination to write his own music, he soon ran foul of the Soviet authorities. His Second Symphony (1935–6) attracted criticism even before it was performed, one critic arguing that, ‘with its external complexity and imposing sound, [it] leaves the impression of an extremely empty, far-fetched work’. The premiere was cancelled. The symphony came in for further bashing during the 1948 convention called to condemn ‘formalism’ in music, causing its despondent composer to write to Glière, his former teacher: ‘As a composer, I am dead, and I do not know when I will be resurrected.’ The first performance took place only in 1964.

The ‘resurrection’ came slowly: eventually his official positions meant that he was allowed brief trips abroad in the years before his death in 1968. More importantly, his dedication to teaching and his insistence on writing explicitly Ukrainian music meant that his students came to constitute a generation of composers writing in full awareness of their national heritage – an awareness that informs the work of Ukrainian composers to this day.

Profile © Martin Anderson

Martin Anderson writes on music *Fanfare* in the USA and *Finnish Music Quarterly*. He also publishes books as Toccata Press and releases recordings of unfamiliar music as Toccata Classics.

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

The Firebird – suite (1909–10, arr. 1911, rev. 1919)

- 1 Introduction – The Firebird and Her Dance**
- 2 The Princesses’ Round Dance**
- 3 Infernal Dance of King Kashchey –**
- 4 Berceuse –**
- 5 Finale**

The origins of *The Firebird* are intimately intertwined with the ambitions of Sergey Diaghilev, the extraordinary impresario of the Ballets Russes company. Diaghilev had strong views on what the Russian art of the future should be. He set about promoting a neo-nationalist Russian art that would transcend artistic and national boundaries. His first major project was to found a journal called *Mir iskusstva* ('The World of Art'), which was inaugurated in St Petersburg in 1898 and which encouraged a new generation of artists to dedicate themselves to 'the exaltation and glorification of individualism in art', as well as to a genuinely national art.

Diaghilev was also keen to export his new Russian art, and so took to mounting well-received events in Paris, including a Russian art exhibition, concerts and an acclaimed staged performance of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. His spectacular first *saison russe* of opera and ballet productions opened in Paris in May 1909, for which he shipped members of the Russian Imperial Theatres to Paris

for the summer. It created an almost hysterical desire among the Paris public for Russian exoticism. To capitalise on this, Diaghilev decided to create something entirely new. 'I need a ballet,' he wrote, 'and a Russian one – the first Russian ballet, for there is no such thing as yet.' And so the *Zhar-ptitsa* or *Firebird* project was conceived, constructed from various fairy tales found in a variety of Russian folk sources. The eventual scenario (by choreographer Mikhail Fokine), telling of a magical kingdom and creatures, a beautiful princess and a heroic prince, had all the exotic colour necessary to thrill the Paris public. It fitted perfectly what stage designer Alexandre Benois called a 'mysterium of Russia' for 'export to the West'. It was entirely authentic and yet, at the same time, an illusion, a nostalgic invention of a folk past.

Stravinsky joined the project late. Diaghilev turned to him out of desperation after a roster of senior Petersburg composers had rejected his approaches, including Tcherepnin and Lyadov, maybe even Glazunov. By the time Stravinsky had been commissioned, the scenario had already been worked out in detail and the production designs were under way. So Stravinsky was simply required to slot in as best he could. Nonetheless, his work rate was prodigious, and he completed the fully orchestrated score within six months. It is often quipped that *The Firebird* is the finest score Rimsky-Korsakov never wrote. Certainly in the virtuosity of its orchestration it stands proudly

alongside the work of Rimsky, Stravinsky's teacher. There are many striking effects throughout. Stravinsky's own favourite was the glissando of string harmonics near the beginning, which he claimed astonished even Richard Strauss. The score has an animated rhythmic language, which, while derived from the practices of his Russian forebears, anticipates in places the rhythmic innovations of his succeeding works, not least in the well-known 'Infernal Dance'. Elsewhere there are simple folk-like melodies, notably for Ivan, in the manner of Rimsky.

But perhaps *The Firebird's* greatest achievement is its drama. Stravinsky worked closely with Fokine at every stage and, as a result, scenario, choreography and design were tightly bound together by the music. Indeed, it was the integrated nature of the ballet that so impressed many of the French reviewers of the premiere performances: 'the most exquisite marvel of equilibrium that we have ever imagined between sounds, movements and forms'. Recurring musical motifs are deployed in an almost operatic (Wagnerian) manner to represent characters and situations. Harmonies, too, are used to delineate characters: the fantastical world of Kashchey and the Firebird is associated with exotic harmonies – particularly the eight-note diminished scale, known to Stravinsky as the Rimsky-Korsakov scale – while the human characters such as the Princesses are, in the main, diatonic (that is, using the conventional scale of Western tonal

music). This sense of drama is palpable even in the three concert suites of the work made in 1911, 1919 (the version being played this evening) and 1945. Stravinsky himself conducted these suites hundreds of times all over the world.

The Firebird was premiered at the Paris Opéra on 25 June 1910. The golden designs of Alexander Golovin and Léon Bakst, the dancing of Tamara Karsavina and Fokine, and not least Stravinsky's magical sounds, sent the audience wild. Stravinsky's complete ownership of the techniques of so much Russian music that preceded it, sustained over such a large scale, is highly impressive for a composer of such relative inexperience. What *The Firebird* certainly demonstrates beyond doubt is his instinct for the role music can play in the theatre. In transferring the techniques of opera to ballet, Stravinsky made a contribution to the reinvention of dance for the 20th century that cannot be overestimated.

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Son of a principal singer at the Imperial Opera in St Petersburg, Igor Stravinsky had always been surrounded by music. He embarked on a law degree, ensuring fast-track entry into a civil service career, but his heart lay elsewhere. The great Russian composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov was intrigued enough by the young Stravinsky to take him

on as a pupil, encouraging the writing of his First Symphony and giving him orchestration tasks based on his own operas. The breakthrough came with impresario Sergey Diaghilev's *Firebird* project, produced to satisfy the near-hysterical Parisian taste for all things Russian. Stravinsky was the last-minute choice to write the music after more senior composers had refused. The premiere at the Paris Opéra in 1910 was an unimaginable triumph and Stravinsky was thrust instantly into the international limelight.

Hungry to capitalise on this success, Diaghilev immediately commissioned further ballet scores from his newfound talent. *Petrushka* followed, representing a huge advance in the composer's musical language away from the shadow of his teacher. Then, in 1913, *The Rite of Spring* burst onto the stage. The work defines a high point in musical modernism: its reworking of ancient Russian melodies as a mechanical music spoke disturbingly of the turbulent age in which it was written. As ballet or concert piece, it can still challenge and unsettle listeners more than a century after its premiere.

The war years were spent in exile in Switzerland. Stravinsky began to simplify his musical language, while at the same time, cut off from his homeland, he produced some of his most 'Russian' works – *Renard* and *Les noces* ('The Wedding') among them. Paris after the war was a changed place, simultaneously melancholic and

hedonistic. It turned its back on German Romanticism and, guided by the likes of Jean Cocteau, looked towards a chic kind of Classicism. Stravinsky followed suit with *Pulcinella*, *Apollo*, *Oedipus rex* and *Persephone*, all of which recast earlier music and cultures in order to assert a new order and directness of expression.

The prospect of Europe at war for a second time led Stravinsky to seek tranquillity in the USA, settling in Los Angeles. Following his only full-length opera, *The Rake's Progress* (premiered in 1951), and exceptionally for a man in his seventies, he again sought to renew his musical language. The late great works, including *Agon* and his final masterpiece, *Requiem Canticles*, engaged with the serial method championed by his old rival Schoenberg. Yet these pieces really only marked a further intensification of the classicising tendency evident in his music over the preceding 40 years.

'Stravinsky demeure' (Stravinsky remains): so proclaimed Pierre Boulez in 1951. Over seven decades on and more than half a century after the composer's death, it still holds true. If anything, his music is now heard more widely than ever before and he continues to speak powerfully even into the 21st century.

Programme note and Profile © Jonathan Cross

Jonathan Cross is Professor of Musicology at Oxford University. He is the author of three books on Stravinsky and was Series Consultant to the Philharmonia Orchestra's award-winning *Stravinsky: Myths and Rituals* series in 2016.

RODERICK COX
CONDUCTOR

Born in Macon, Georgia, and now based in Berlin, Roderick Cox was Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra for three seasons and in 2018 was winner of the Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award.

He has appeared with the Boston, Cincinnati, Detroit and Seattle Symphony orchestras, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris and the Cleveland, Philadelphia and Philharmonia orchestras.

This season he makes his Canadian debuts, as well as appearing with the Hallé and Lahti Symphony orchestras and Orchestre National de Montpellier. He also appears with the Staatskapelle Dresden and Orchestra of St Luke's. He has conducted operas in Houston, Montpellier, San Francisco and Washington DC and this season makes his English National Opera debut with *The Barber of Seville*.

In 2019 he launched the Roderick Cox Music Initiative, which provides opportunities for the next generation of musicians, and in 2020 he was the subject of the documentary *Conducting Life*.

His recordings include William Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* (earning five stars in *BBC Music Magazine*) and Tesori's *Blue* (nominated for the magazine's 2023 Opera Award).

ILYA GRINGOLTS
VIOLIN

Ilya Gringolts studied in New York at the Juilliard School and with Itzhak Perlman. From 2001 to 2003 he was a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist. He now performs around the world in repertoire ranging from core classics to contemporary and rare works; he is also interested in historical performance practices.

He has recently appeared with the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra Zürich, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and National Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan. In the summer of 2020 he and conductor Ilan Volkov founded the I&I Foundation for the promotion of contemporary music, which awards commissions to young composers.

Ilya Gringolts opened the current season with a tour of Australia and New Zealand. Forthcoming highlights include appearances with the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of La Scala, Milan, and Brussels Philharmonic, as well as with Orchestra La Scintilla and Finnish Baroque Orchestra. He also gives the premieres of new works by Chaya Czernowin, Boris Filanovsky and Mirela Ivičević. With the Gringolts Quartet he appeared at the Edinburgh, Lucerne and Salzburg festivals. Ilya Gringolts is a professor at the Zurich University of the Arts and teaches at the Accademia Chigiana, Siena.

BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

For over 90 years the BBC Symphony Orchestra has been a driving force in the British musical landscape, championing contemporary music in its performances of newly commissioned works and giving voice to rarely performed and neglected composers. It plays a central role in the BBC Proms, performing regularly throughout each season, including the First and Last Nights. The BBC SO is Associate Orchestra at the Barbican, where it performs a distinctive annual season of concerts.

Reflecting the themes of voyage and storytelling, the current season includes Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and Ravel's *Shéhérazade* and an evening of words and music with author Kate Atkinson. There are world and UK premieres from Detlev Glanert, Tebogo Monnakgotla, Outi Tarkiainen and Lotta Wennäkoski, and the BBC SO takes a deep dive into the musical worlds of American composer Missy Mazzoli, including a concert with Principal Guest Conductor Dalia Stasevska, and 'Italian Radicals' Luciano Berio, Luigi Dallapiccola and Luigi Nono in two Total Immersion days. Performances with the

BBC Symphony Chorus include José Maurício Nunes Garcia's *Missa di Santa Cecília* (1826).

In addition to its Barbican concerts, the BBC SO makes appearances across the UK and beyond and gives regular free concerts at its Maida Vale studios.

You can hear the vast majority of the BBC SO's performances on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Sounds, with all 2023 Proms currently available on BBC Sounds, and a number of Proms, including the First and Last Nights, available to watch on BBC iPlayer.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – alongside the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers and BBC Proms – offer innovative education and community activities and take a lead role in the BBC Ten Pieces and BBC Young Composer programmes, including work with schools, young people and families in East London ahead of the BBC SO's move in 2025 to its new home at London's East Bank cultural quarter in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford.

Keep up to date with the BBC Symphony Orchestra

To find out more about upcoming events and broadcasts, and for the latest BBC SO news, visit bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra.

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Chief Conductor

Sakari Oramo

Principal Guest Conductor

Dalia Stasevska

Günter Wand Conducting Chair

Semyon Bychkov

Conductor Laureate

Sir Andrew Davis

Creative Artist in Association

Jules Buckley

First Violins

Stephen Bryant *leader*

Cellerina Park

Philip Brett

Jeremy Martin

Colin Huber

Shirley Turner

Ni Do

James Wicks

Stuart McDonald

Alexandra Lomeiko

Franziska Deschner

Thea Spiers

Lulu Fuller

Naoko Keatley

Victoria Irish

Sophie Belinfante

Second Violins

Dawn Beazley

Rose Hinton

Vanessa Hughes

Danny Fajardo

Lucy Curnow

Tammy Se

Caroline Cooper

Victoria Hodgson

Lucica Trita

Nihat Agdach

Gareth Griffiths

Dania Alzapiedi

Julian Trafford

Nuno Carapina

Violas

Richard Waters

Joshua Hayward

Nikos Zarb

Natalie Taylor

Michael Leaver

Carolyn Scott

Mary Whittle

James Flannery

Yan Beattie

Claire Maynard

Lowri Thomas

Anna Bastow

Cellos

Ben Hughes

Graham Bradshaw

Mark Sheridan

Clare Hinton

Michael Atkinson

Morwenna Del Mar

Deni Teo

Gilly McMullin

Laura Donoghue

Ben Michaels

Double Basses

Chris West

Richard Alsop

Anita Langridge

Michael Clarke

Beverley Jones

Josie Ellis

Elen Pan

Michael Fuller

Flutes

Daniel Pailthorpe

Tomoka Mukai

Piccolo/Alto Flute

Patricia Moynihan

Oboes

Alison Teale

Imogen Smith

Cor Anglais

Max Spiers

Clarinets

Richard Hosford

Jonathan Parkin

Bass Clarinets

Thomas Lessels

Bassoons

Andrea de Flammineis

Graham Hobbs

Contrabassoon

Steven Magee

Horns

Nicholas Korth

Michael Murray

Mark Wood

Nicholas Hougham

Alexei Watkins

Trumpets

Philip Cobb

Joseph Atkins

Martin Hurrell

Trombones

Lindsay Shilling

Dan Jenkins

Bass Trombone

Robert O'Neill

Tuba

Sam Elliott

Timpani

Alasdair Kelly

Percussion

David Hockings

Alex Neal

Fiona Ritchie

Heledd Gwynant

Harps

Elizabeth Bass

Anneke Hodnett

Piano

Elizabeth Burley

The list of players was correct at the time of going to press

**Acting Co-Director/
Planning Manager**

Tom Philpott

**Acting Co-Director/
Orchestra Manager**

Susanna Simmons

**Orchestra Personnel
Manager**

Murray Richmond

**Orchestras and
Tours Assistant**

Indira Sills-Toomey

Concerts Manager

Marelle McCallum

Tours Manager

Kathryn Aldersea

**Music Libraries
Manager**

Mark Millidge

Orchestral Librarian

Julia Simpson

**Planning Co-ordinators
(job share)**

Naomi Faulkner

Zara Siddiqi

Chorus Manager

Wesley John

Chief Producer

Ann McKay

Assistant Producer

Ben Warren

Senior Stage Manager

Rupert Casey

Stage Manager

Michael Officer

**Commercial, Rights
and Business Affairs
Executive**

Zoe Robinson

Business Accountant

Nimisha Ladwa

**BBC London Orchestras
Marketing and Learning**

**Head of Marketing,
Publications and
Learning**

Kate Finch

**Communications
Manager**

Jo Hawkins

Publicist

Freya Edgeworth

Marketing Manager

Sarah Hiron

Marketing Executives

Jenny Barrett

Alice White

**Senior Learning Project
Managers (job share)**

Lauren Creed

Ellara Wakely

**Learning Project
Managers**

Melanie Fryer

Laura Mitchell

Chloe Shrimpton

**Assistant Learning
Project Manager**

Siân Bateman

**Learning Project
Co-ordinator**

Deborah Fether

Learning Trainees

Dylan Barrett-Chambers

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