

RSNO

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA



Nicola Benedetti Plays Elgar

Caird Hall, Dundee
Thu 14 May 2026 7.30pm

Usher Hall, Edinburgh
Fri 15 May 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
Sat 16 May 7.30pm

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Nicola Benedetti Plays Elgar

Caird Hall, Dundee Thu 14 May 2026 7.30pm

Usher Hall, Edinburgh Fri 15 May 7.30pm

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Sat 16 May 7.30pm

Scotland's best-loved classical violinist, Nicola Benedetti, joins Scotland's National Orchestra for Elgar's lyrical Violin Concerto. Her performance is the big, passionate heart of a concert that begins with a garland of musical fairy tales from Azerbaijan (a special favourite of conductor Kirill Karabits) and ends amid the dark magic and glittering romance of Stravinsky's great ballet *The Firebird*. Music doesn't get more colourful.

FRANGHIZ ALI-ZADEH Nagillar [14'] SCOTTISH PREMIERE

ELGAR Violin Concerto in B Minor Op61 [48']

INTERVAL

STRAVINSKY The Firebird [44']

Kirill Karabits Conductor
Nicola Benedetti Violin
Royal Scottish National Orchestra



The Dundee concert is supported by Leisure and Culture Dundee, Leng Charitable Trust, Northwood Charitable Trust and Tay Charitable Trust.

The Glasgow performance will be recorded for the RSNO Archive.
Supported by the Iain and Pamela Sinclair Legacy.

If viewing these notes at the concert, please do so considerately and not during performances.

Please silence all mobile telephones and alerts, and refrain from taking photographs, without flash, until the end of each piece.

RSNO

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA



2026:27 Concert Season
on sale now!
rsno.org.uk

Welcome

I am so pleased to welcome Nicola Benedetti back to the RSN0 for the first time since she returned from maternity leave – and what a comeback she is making! Elgar's Violin Concerto is no mean feat, and to do it while balancing preparations for this year's Edinburgh International Festival is something else.

I've known tonight's conductor Kirill Karabits for some time now, as we worked together at I, CULTURE Orchestra, an orchestra for eastern European young people. Kirill is a brilliant conductor and was awarded a well-deserved Honorary OBE for services to music in 2024. He and Nicola performing together is really special.

Next week, the Orchestra heads off on tour to China with Music Director Thomas Søndergård and violinist Lü Siqing, with concerts in Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai and Tianjin. Some of our players that aren't heading to China will be busy back home with schools performances in Dumfries, workshops with young people in Glasgow, and taking part in the Aberdeen Big Sing in Duthie Park. And on Friday 29 May, those of you in Dundee can keep an eye out for our pop-up performances at Dundee Contemporary Arts (11am) and the McManus Gallery (12.30pm).

This is the final 2025:26 Season concert in Dundee, but general ticket sales are now open for Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth for 2026:27. We've got quite the Season lined up for you! To name just a few of those coming to play with us, we have pianist Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, violinist Philippe Quint and Scottish guitarist Sean Shibe, plus conductors Edward Gardner, Clelia Cafiero, Emilia Hoving and Bassem Akiki. We're also looking forward to Scottish mezzo-soprano Beth Taylor joining us as our Artist in Residence. To book your tickets, head to rsno.org.uk/whats-on

Alistair Mackie

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Keep in touch with the RSN0

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rsno.org.uk



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Royal Scottish National Orchestra



Formed in 1891, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. Awarded royal patronage by Her Late Majesty The Queen in 1977, its special status in the UK's cultural life was cemented in 2007 when it was recognised as one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies, supported by the Scottish Government.

Led by Music Director Thomas Søndergård, the Orchestra performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and the BBC Proms. The RSNO tours internationally, most recently visiting China and Europe. In 2026 the RSNO was the first professional symphony orchestra to be awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Ensemble Award since 2014. The award recognises musical ensembles for outstanding quality and scope of performances and work.

The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving a 2020 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Chopin's Piano Concertos (soloist: Benjamin Grosvenor), conducted by Elim Chan, two Diapason d'Or awards (Denève/Roussel 2007; Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight GRAMMY Award nominations. In

recent years, the RSNO has cultivated an international reputation for world-class film, television and videogame soundtrack recording. The Orchestra has recorded for BAFTA-winning series *Silo* (Apple TV) and worked with the likes of GRAMMY Award-winning composer Lorne Balfe on *Life on Our Planet* (Netflix). Other notable titles include *Nuremberg* (Sony Pictures), *Now You See Me: Now You Don't* (Lionsgate), *Horizon: An American Saga* (Warner Bros) and *Star Wars Outlaws* (Ubisoft). The Orchestra records at its bespoke in-house facility in Glasgow.

The RSNO believes that music can enrich lives and aims to inspire, educate and entertain people throughout Scotland and beyond with its performances, recordings and engagement programmes. Supporting schools, families, young professionals and wider communities, the RSNO delivers high-quality initiatives for all ages and abilities. The RSNO's engagement offering includes its singing strand, encompassing a Buggy Choir and Chorus Academy in both Dundee and Glasgow and a lunchtime Workplace Choir, which complements the well-established and highly respected RSNO Youth Choruses and RSNO Chorus. The community choruses are designed with the benefits of group singing for health and wellbeing at their core and are open to all.

On Stage

FIRST VIOLIN

Maya Iwabuchi
LEADER
Shlomy Dobrinsky
ASSOCIATE LEADER
Tamás Fejes
ASSISTANT LEADER
Patrick Curlett
Joana Rodrigues
Caroline Parry
Ursula Heidecker Allen
Veronica Marziano
Liam Lynch
Amelia Harding
Elizabeth Bamping
Katrina Lee
Lorna Rough
Susannah Lowdon

SECOND VIOLIN

Marion Wilson
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Jacqueline Speirs
Colin McKee
Kirstin Drew
Helena Rose
Paul Medd
Sophie Lang
Anne Bünemann
Robin Wilson
Seona Glen
Joe Hodson
Rosamund Noll

VIOLA

Tom Dunn
PRINCIPAL
Felix Tanner
Asher Zaccardelli
Lisa Rourke
Katherine Wren
Maria Trittinger
Claire Dunn
Francesca Hunt
Beth Woodford
David McCreadie

CELLO

Pei-Jee Ng
PRINCIPAL
Betsy Taylor
Kennedy Leitch
Yuuki Bouterey-Ishido
Anne Brincourt
Gunda Baranauskaitė
Rachael Lee
Robert Anderson

DOUBLE BASS

Nikita Naumov
PRINCIPAL
Michael Rae
Moray Jones
George Podkolzin
Alexandre Cruz dos Santos
Olaya Garcia Alvarez

FLUTE

Katherine Bryan
PRINCIPAL
Oliver Roberts
Adam Richardson
Jack Welch
PRINCIPAL PICCOLO

OBOE

Adrian Wilson
PRINCIPAL
Peter Dykes
Hazel Cropper
Henry Clay
PRINCIPAL COR ANGLAIS

CLARINET

Timothy Orpen
PRINCIPAL
Rebecca Whitener
William Knight
Duncan Swindells
PRINCIPAL BASS CLARINET

BASSOON

David Hubbard
PRINCIPAL
Matt Kitteringham
Iona Garvie
Paolo Dutto
PRINCIPAL CONTRABASSOON

HORN

Amadea Dazeley-Gaist
PRINCIPAL
Alison Murray
Andrew McLean
David McClenaghan
Martin Murphy

TRUMPET

Jason Lewis
ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL
Gideon Brooks
Robert Baxter

TROMBONE

Dávur Juul Magnussen
PRINCIPAL
Cillian Ó Ceallacháin
Alastair Sinclair
PRINCIPAL BASS TROMBONE

TUBA

John Whitener
PRINCIPAL

TIMPANI

Adrian Bending
GUEST PRINCIPAL

PERCUSSION

Simon Lowdon
PRINCIPAL
Tom Hunter
Stuart Semple
Philip Hague
Paula O'Malley

HARP

Pippa Tunnell
Sharron Griffiths
Teresa Barros Pereira Romão

PIANO

Judith Keaney
Ana-Thea Panainte

Kirill Karabits

Conductor



Kirill Karabits has been Chief Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for 15 years, and their relationship is celebrated worldwide. Together they have made many critically acclaimed recordings, performed regularly at the BBC Proms, celebrated the reopening of Bristol Beacon, appeared at London's Barbican Centre as part of the Beethoven celebrations and at the Southbank Centre for Kirill's bold programming brand Voices from the East.

Kirill has worked with many of the leading ensembles of Europe, Asia and North America, including the Cleveland, Philadelphia, Dallas, San Francisco and Chicago Symphony orchestras, Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre de Lyon, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Wiener Symphoniker, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Filarmonica del Teatro La Fenice and the BBC Symphony Orchestra – including a concert version of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* at the Barbican Centre.

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include return visits to the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Trondheim Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra during the Beethoven Festival, and the RSNO. Kirill also embarks on a major Chinese Tour culminating at the Macau International Music Festival, followed by an appearance at the Seoul Arts Center for the closing concert of the Seoul International Music Festival. The season concludes with a two-month residency conducting *La traviata* at the Bregenz Festival with the Wiener Symphoniker.

Recent operatic highlights include the Theater an der Wien for a new production of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, Opernhaus Zürich for *La bohème*, The Grange Festival for *Così fan tutte*, with the Weimar Staatskapelle for the Hungarian premiere of Liszt's *Saradanapalo* and Norwegian Opera for Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. Kirill was Music Director of the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar from 2016 to 2019, and conducted acclaimed productions of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Mozart's Da Ponte Cycle.

Working with the next generation of musicians is of great importance to Kirill. He is Artistic Director of I, CULTURE Orchestra, he conducted the televised finals of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Award in 2012 and 2014, and he has collaborated with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

Kirill was named Conductor of the Year at the 2013 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards.



RSNO CIRCLE

Do you wish to support the Orchestra on a regular basis, hear behind the scenes news, and attend open rehearsals? Becoming a Circle member is for you.

Donate

This year we launched our *Every Child, Every Community* appeal, with funds directly supporting our work in musical education, from early years to young professionals. If you would like to support the next generation of young professionals please donate at rsno.org.uk/every-child



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By becoming an RSNO Circle Member or Patron, donating to our appeal or leaving a gift in your Will, you are helping to keep Scotland's National Orchestra on stage and in communities across the country.

To find out more please contact polly.lightbody@rsno.org.uk

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RSNO Patrons support the Orchestra by aligning their giving to a specific area of interest, from individual musicians and our Engagement activity through to new commissions and international touring. Being a Patron brings you closer to our community of supporters, with access to our members' bar and exclusive events.



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Franghiz Ali-Zadeh (Born 1947)

Nagillar



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Lucerne, 17 August 2002

SCOTTISH PREMIERE

DURATION 14 minutes

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh is one of Azerbaijan's leading composers, known for her distinctive voice blending the Western symphonic tradition with the traditional Azerbaijani art music, *mugham*, which is characterised, among other elements, by improvisation. Her portfolio includes works for cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Hilary Hahn and the Kronos Quartet. 'Her pieces unfold with a magical sense of timing,' says one of the quartet's violinists, David Harrington. 'New scenes arrive mysteriously, each born just at the right moment. She gives us exquisite interior worlds of instrumental colour.'

Born in Baku in 1947, Ali-Zadeh's musical education was essentially Soviet, given Azerbaijan was a republic of the Soviet Union until 1991, and her teacher, Kara Karayev, had been a pupil of Shostakovich in Moscow. But Ali-Zadeh took this training and made it her own, absorbing influences from both her home country and the West. As a pianist, she brought many Western pieces to Azerbaijan for the first time, giving premieres of works by Messiaen, Cage and Crumb, and the Second Viennese School; her own First Piano Sonata was written in memory of Alban Berg.

In 1999, Ali-Zadeh became the first woman to be composer-in-residence at the prestigious Lucerne Festival, and as a returning guest in 2002 she composed *Nagillar*, or Fairy Tales, for large orchestra. Under the banner of the Lucerne Festival's Scheherazade – Oriental Night programme, *Nagillar* was premiered that August by the Orchestre Philharmonique Suisse and conductor Susanna Mälkki. More recently, the piece has been championed in the UK by tonight's conductor Kirill Karabits, initially as part of his revelatory Voices from the East project with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

The fairy tale in question is from *1,001 Nights*, a story of a magic carpet and heroic adventures. The result is a wonderfully atmospheric piece, tracing the carpet's journey over, in the composer's words, 'a beautiful landscape with images of nature, rivers and birdsong' and 'a city full of mysteries'. Bassoons suggest the carpet taking off, while woodwind instruments reproduce a busy bazaar. 'The tension mounts, everyone screams and knocks each other over,' explains the composer, 'and amid all the hustle and bustle, the princess suddenly disappears! She was kidnapped by robbers.' The hero must cross the stormy ocean and find an enchanted kingdom to free the princess, which he duly does, trumpets announcing his triumphant return home. But nothing is quite as it seems. 'It turns out that it was just a beautiful vision,' says Ali-Zadeh.

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The Arts in 2002

In Literature

Any Human Heart by William Boyd

The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold

Fingersmith by Sarah Waters

In Music

25 May The 47th Eurovision Song Contest was won by Latvian singer Marie N with the song *I Wanna*

1 Jun To celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee, the Prom at the Palace featured Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna

In Film

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers was the highest-grossing film of 2002

Chicago was named Best Film of 2002 at the 75th Academy Awards

Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival

In Art

Balloon Girl by Banksy

Three Oncologists by Ken Currie

In Architecture

24 May The Falkirk Wheel, a rotating boat lift connecting the Forth and Clyde Canal and the Union Canal, was opened by Queen Elizabeth II

13 Jul The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art opened in Gateshead

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Violin Concerto

in B Minor Op61



FIRST PERFORMANCE

London, 10 November 1910

DURATION 48 minutes

- 1. Allegro**
- 2. Andante**
- 3. Allegro molto**

Elgar's Violin Concerto is known for being one of the longest and most demanding in the repertoire, with the solo part constituting a kind of forensic examination of the violin's physical capabilities (music critic Michael Kennedy writes that the soloist needs to be a 'virtuoso with stamina'). This is partly due to the violin being Elgar's own instrument. But it was also down to the talents of the dedicatee and first soloist, Fritz Kreisler – who had put it about that he longed for Elgar to write a concerto for him – and to advice from W H 'Billy' Reed, the leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, who Elgar consulted during the composition process.

Kennedy remarks that the Concerto is a 'wayward' work. This is perhaps especially so in the first movement, with its constant changes of tempo and dynamic markings, suggesting a very personal train of thought. And the personal element of the Concerto has been much discussed, mainly due to the enigmatic inscription Elgar added: 'Herein is enshrined the soul of', with five dots instead of a name. Elgar scholars generally agree that the dots represent Elgar's close friend Alice Stuart-Wortley, daughter of the painter Millais, whom he nicknamed 'Windflower' (several of the themes in the Concerto are given the name Windflower). But in not confirming either way, Elgar clearly enjoyed creating yet another musical 'enigma'.

The Concerto has a passionate, sustained intensity, the first movement overflowing with themes – almost a mini-concerto on its own – and a languorous, ardent central section. The second movement, a touching *Andante*, is less dramatic but equally as lyrical, and something of a 'breather' before the startling third. While concerto finales are often more of a romp, with the emotional heavy lifting – and solo cadenza – confined to the first movement, in Elgar's the soloist has to gird his or her loins for the most demanding music yet. The cadenza is even more

unconventional. It is not heralded by the usual drumroll and a down-tools from the orchestra, but accompanied nearly throughout, often by an unusual ‘thrumming’ effect in the strings. Against this mysterious backdrop, the soloist works through reminiscences from the first movement.

‘How excited [Elgar] was about the Cadenza,’ wrote Billy Reed. And the critics were excited by the whole piece, heaping praise onto it after the premiere (conducted by Elgar himself). Elgar was rightly proud of the work, which has the capacity to surprise those who believe he was a stiff-upper-lipped Edwardian, hiding his feelings behind tweed suit and bushy moustache. As he wrote during its composition: ‘I have the Concerto well in hand ... & it’s good! Awfully emotional! Too emotional but I love it.’

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Elgar
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Crown of India and Polonia**

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Sir Andrew Davis Conductor

More information
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If you enjoyed Elgar’s Violin Concerto, why not try his **Cello Concerto** (performances in Edinburgh and Glasgow, 5 and 6 Jun).

What was happening in 1910?

31 Jan Slavery in China, which had existed since the Shang dynasty of the 2nd millennium BC, was made illegal

8 Mar Raymonde de Laroche became the first woman to be authorised to fly an aeroplane

10 Mar *In Old California*, directed by D W Griffith, was the first film to be made in Hollywood

6 May On the death of his father, Edward VII, George V became king of Great Britain and Ireland

3 Jun The Norwegian Antarctic Expedition, led by Roald Amundsen, left from Christiania (Oslo)

15 Jun Robert Falcon Scott’s British Antarctic Expedition departed from Cardiff, unaware of Amundsen’s intentions

19 Jun The Zeppelin *Deutschland* made the first commercial passenger flight, from Friedrichshafen to Düsseldorf, and took 9 hours

22 Jul Murderer Dr Crippen was identified and arrested as the result of a wireless telegraph message sent from the SS *Montrose*, on which he was travelling

18 Nov Marching to the Houses of Parliament, 300 suffragettes were subjected to violence meted out by the Metropolitan Police in what became known as Black Friday

Nicola Benedetti

Violin



Nicola Benedetti is one of the most sought-after violinists of her generation. Her ability to captivate audiences and her wide appeal as an advocate for classical music have made her one of the most influential artists of today.

Nicola opened her 2025/26 season with a unique and personal UK and Ireland tour. Coinciding with the release of her new album, *Violin Café*, it marked Nicola's first solo tour in over a decade, combining popular virtuosic and romantic works arranged for violin, guitar, accordion and cello.

Also this season, Nicola returns to the New York and Czech Philharmonic orchestras with the Marsalis Violin Concerto, to the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, RSNO, Philharmonia and London Philharmonic Orchestra with the Elgar Violin Concerto, and to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor.

Winner of the GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo in 2020, as well as Best Female Artist at both the 2012 and 2013 Classical BRIT Awards, Nicola records exclusively for

Decca (Universal Music). Her latest Beethoven recordings both received high praise: the Violin Concerto with Aurora Orchestra and the Triple Concerto with Benjamin Grosvenor, Sheku Kanneh-Mason and the Philharmonia Orchestra. Nicola's recordings of the Vivaldi Concerti and Elgar's Violin Concerto entered at No.1 in the UK's Official Classical Album Chart. Other recent recordings include her GRAMMY Award-winning album written especially for her by jazz musician Wynton Marsalis: Violin Concerto in D and *Fiddle Dance Suite for Solo Violin*.

Nicola has always been a dedicated, passionate ambassador and leader in music education, and her commitment was underlined in 2019 when she established The Benedetti Foundation. The Foundation delivers transformative experiences through mass music events and unites those who believe music is integral to life's education. The Foundation believes in the strength of music and the power of inspirational moments to connect cultures and communities through combining excellence and inclusivity, tradition and innovation and meaningful collaboration. In its first four years, the Foundation has worked with close to 70,000 participants of all ages and levels, instrumentalists and non-instrumentalists alike, across 105 countries.

Nicola was appointed an MBE in 2013, awarded the Queen's Medal for Music in 2017 and appointed a CBE in 2019. She is Vice President of the National Children's Orchestras, Sistema Scotland's Big Sister, and Patron of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland's Junior Orchestra, the Music in Secondary Schools Trust and the Junior Conservatoire at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

In 2002 Nicola became the first Scottish and first female Festival Director of the Edinburgh International Festival.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

The Firebird



FIRST PERFORMANCE

Paris, 25 June 1910

DURATION 44 minutes

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The Enchanted Garden of Kashchei**
- 3. Appearance of the Firebird, pursued by Prince Ivan**
- 4. Dance of the Firebird**
- 5. Capture of the Firebird by Prince Ivan**
- 6. Supplication of the Firebird – Appearance of the thirteen Enchanted Princesses**
- 7. The Princesses' Game with the Golden Apples**
- 8. Sudden Appearance of Prince Ivan**
- 9. Khorovod (Round Dance) of the Princesses**
- 10. Daybreak – Prince Ivan penetrates Kashchei's Palace**
- 11. Magic Carillon, Appearance of Kashchei's Monster Guardians, and Capture of Prince Ivan – Arrival of Kashchei the Immortal – Dialogue of Kashchei and Prince Ivan – Intercession of the Princesses – Appearance of the Firebird**
- 12. Dance of Kashchei's Retinue, enchanted by the Firebird**
- 13. Infernal Dance of all Kashchei's Subjects – Berceuse (Lullaby) – Kashchei's Awakening – Kashchei's Death – Profound Darkness**
- 14. Disappearance of Kashchei's Palace and Magical Creations, Return to Life of the Petrified Knights, General Rejoicing**

In the summer of 1910, Sergei Diaghilev's Paris-based Ballets Russes premiered a new work with music by a precocious yet barely known composer – Igor Stravinsky. *The Firebird*, a setting of a popular Russian fairy tale entitled *Kashchei the Immortal*, proved an immediate and enduring success. Gloriously orchestrated and full of Stravinsky's now familiar rhythmic drive and sense of colour, *The Firebird* established the composer as the major new voice in 20th-century music – not bad for someone who had been Diaghilev's third choice. 'This goes further than Rimsky-Korsakov,' wrote composer Maurice Ravel to a colleague after hearing *The Firebird*. 'Come quickly.' The rest, as they say, is history. Stravinsky went on to produce a string of ballet scores for Diaghilev, including *Petrushka* (1911) and the momentous *The Rite of Spring* (1913), and the musical, choreographic and design influences of the Ballets Russes swept across Europe.

The Firebird's source is the sort of exotic tale much favoured by Stravinsky's teacher Rimsky-Korsakov, whose influence can also be heard in the work, not least in its vivid and vibrant orchestration (in 1902 Rimsky-Korsakov himself had composed an opera based on the same fairy tale).

In the mysterious Introduction there are dark rumblings in the lower strings, ominous trombone lines and strange nocturnal sounds in the woodwinds. The mysterious noise of the wind in the trees is heard (the violins, violas and cellos slide up and down the strings with the lightest of pressure to create the effect) before the Firebird makes its luminous entrance, its dance and variation flickering intensely.

Prince Ivan chases the Firebird in breathless music that runs helter-skelter across the full orchestra, finally catching it, and keeping tight hold despite its fading cries for help. The Firebird begs Ivan to spare its life in a melody for solo

viola that develops into a lush, oriental-sounding tune in the strings. He relents and releases the magical creature, and it offers him an enchanted feather that he can use to summon it should he find himself in dire need, a gift sung in a folk-like horn solo.

Thirteen princesses enchanted into subservience by Kashchei appear to sweetly rising harmonies in the strings, and Ivan hides and watches as they play a game with golden apples from one of the palace's trees, in a quicksilver passage full of rushing strings and woodwind. There's a sudden silence as Ivan reveals himself, announcing his presence with a slow, noble horn melody, and the princesses dance a graceful Khorovod (Round Dance) for him, with long folksong-like solos for oboe and cello. Captivated by the spectacle, Ivan falls in love with one of them, the music at this point becoming noticeably more amorous. Overall, however, charm and innocence prevail. The music dies away as Ivan falls into a languorous sleep.

Cockerel-like crows in the trumpets herald the arrival of the new day, and Ivan surreptitiously finds an entrance into Kashchei's Palace, where, with a clash of cymbals and a roar from the tam-tam, he finds himself face to face with the ogre's monstrous guardians, who capture him in music that grows ever more intense. Foghorn-like noises from trombones and tuba announce the coming of Kashchei himself, who arrives with a crude slide from the trombones and an unmistakable thump on timpani and bass drum.

Ivan and Kashchei face each other off, and the ogre sends his guardians to grab the Prince. With some sweetly rising figures in solo violin and woodwind, the thirteen princesses plead for Ivan, but Kashchei dismisses them.

The music brightens considerably, however, as Ivan waves the Firebird's feather and summons the magical creature, with rushing gestures in

harp and woodwind. The Firebird first makes Kashchei's retinue dance in music led by a prominent xylophone, before taking things even further.

With a sudden explosion of sound, the Infernal Dance shatters the atmosphere. The Firebird casts a spell on Kashchei and all of his monstrous retinue who, with the Firebird as choreographer, dance the frenzied Infernal Dance. With its feverish energy and grotesque swells of sound, this is a foretaste of Stravinsky in *Rite of Spring* mode. The monsters eventually collapse from exhaustion, and the Firebird lulls them into a deep sleep with the beautifully soporific *Berceuse*, its mysterious melody introduced by a solo bassoon.

To the growling accompaniment of two contrabassoons, Kashchei briefly awakens. But the Firebird has shown Ivan a hidden egg that conceals the ogre's soul, and Ivan destroys it, killing Kashchei to a tumble of noise from drums and brass.

Out of the darkness and stillness that follows, a noble horn melody emerges, heralding a new era. Kashchei's palace and all his magical creations vanish, petrified knights return to life (a particularly nasty habit of Kashchei was to turn his foes to stone) and the princesses are released. The music gets ever louder and more majestic and, with evil banished and Ivan united with his princess, the work ends in a mood of triumph and brassy jubilation.

© David Kettle

The Arts in 1910

In Art

The City Rises by Umberto Boccioni
Violin and Candlestick by Georges Braque
Dance by Henri Matisse
The Dream by Henri Rousseau

In Literature

Prester John by John Buchan
Howards End by E M Forster
The History of Mr Polly by H G Wells
The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson
Burnett

In Music

Symphony No3 by Charles Ives
Thirteen Preludes Op32 for piano by Sergei
Rachmaninov
Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis by
Ralph Vaughan Williams

In Architecture

Flinders Street Railway Station in
Melbourne, Victoria, designed by Fawcett
and Ashworth
Steiner House in Vienna, designed by
Adolf Loos

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Elgar's Cello Concerto

EDN FRI 5 JUN: 7.30pm

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Wagner Prelude to Act I from
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Season Finale

Ode to Joy

EDINBURGH

FRI 12 JUN: 7.30pm

GLASGOW

SAT 13 JUN: 7.30pm

Mendelssohn The Hebrides Overture
Fingal's Cave

Sir James MacMillan Three Scottish Songs

Beethoven Symphony No9 Choral

Patrick Hahn Conductor

Eleanor Dennis Soprano

Karen Cargill Mezzo-soprano

Joshua Ellicott Tenor

Andrew Hamilton Bass

RSNO Chorus

Stephen Doughty Director, RSNO Chorus

Paul Whittaker BSL Performer

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BSL

Book online at

rsno.org.uk



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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