

WIGMORE HALL 125

Saturday 2 May 2026
7.30pm

Zlatomir Fung cello
Ariel Lanyi piano

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

The Collection (1920) *arranged by Zlatomir Fung for cello and piano*

In the Alley (1896) *arranged by Zlatomir Fung for cello and piano*

Memories: a. Very Pleasant, b. Rather Sad (1897) *arranged by Zlatomir Fung for cello and piano*

Two Little Flowers (1921) *arranged by Zlatomir Fung for cello and piano*

Florence Price (1887-1953)

Adoration (1951) *arranged by Elaine Fine for cello and piano*

Elfentanz *arranged by Joel Lee for cello and piano*

Zlatomir Fung (b.1999)

Eulogy (2026) *European première*

John Harbison (b.1938)

Abu Ghraib (2006)

Scene I. Prayer I • Scene II. Prayer II

Interval

Alistair Coleman (b.1998)

Continuo for solo cello (2025)

Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975)

Scène d'amour from *Vertigo* (1958) *arranged by Zlatomir Fung for cello and piano*

Eric Nathan (b.1983)

III. Straussmanöver (Ostrich-Maneuver) from *Missing Words III* (2017)

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Three Meditations from *Mass* (1977/8)

Meditation No. 1 • Meditation No. 2 •

Meditation No. 3



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Zlatomir Fung Eulogy

At the end of 2025, I began to sense that my life would never be the same again. I had started using artificially intelligent chatbots daily for nearly everything – from drafting emails to brainstorming social media posts to discussing movies.

In *Eulogy* (2026), I wanted to capture my grief for the pre-AI life I had lived while also drawing on the original Greek meaning of eulogia: 'to praise'. The piece is structured as a brief set of loose variations on an ambivalent, lugubrious theme. I tried to intentionally obscure how the variations relate to one another to pose a question through the work's form itself: in a world where AI can create infinite variations on anything in the blink of an eye, how can raw, unassisted human creativity still make the case for its significance? This piece is but one attempt to answer that question.

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'You'll not get a wild heroic ride to heaven on pretty little sounds' said **Charles Ives**'s father George to his son. 'If you listen to the sound, you may miss the music'. The myth of the melting pot can obscure the full strangeness, dissonance and variety of the American experience, and the complexity of the ongoing struggle by its artists to forge the 'one united voice' that Ives hymned (the words were his own) in his song *The Collection* of 1920. Yet Ives created a distinctly American aesthetic, in which any tradition could generate life-force – whether European romanticism (*Rather Sad*, 1897) sentimental 'Oirishry' (*In the Alley*, 1896) or vaudeville humour (*Very Pleasant*, 1897). Ives asks only that you take him or leave him – with the vital proviso (as he instructed his copyist) that 'all the wrong notes are *right*'.

Ives was a millionaire Connecticut insurance dealer. **Florence Price** grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas at the turn of the century; the daughter of a music teacher and the only African-American dentist in a community that was still riven with racial prejudice. In 1927 she left for Chicago, where she played the organ in churches and cinemas across the city, as well as developing a strikingly original compositional voice. *Adoration* (1951), in fact, began life as an organ voluntary. The date of *Elfentanz* is unknown, but this playful, romantic miniature is in the tradition of the melodious, beautifully crafted salon pieces that could be found in the piano stools of every musical household in Price's youth.

John Harbison offers his own description of *Abu Ghraib* (2006) for cello and piano:

The title of this piece refers to an important episode in our country's history. Abu Ghraib, while inscribed on our nation's consciousness by photographs and reports, has been absorbed into the nation's bloodstream, its long term effects yet to be known. (My piece is not a protest or moral lesson. These

would require little bravery. Instead it seeks music in a moment when words can fail.)

There are two movements, separated by a pause: *Scene I. Prayer I*; *Scene II. Prayer II*. *Scene I* investigates infection and wrongness. Then, in a less rebarbative language, *Prayer I* begins a tentative plea for help beyond ourselves. *Scene II* is based on an Iraqi song which I was hired to transcribe back in 1962, for a collection called *Lullabies of the World*. This song is shown to have connections to two of our well-known hymns. *Prayer II* again suggests that by entering a difficult meditative world we may find courage to face our own Shadow.

Alistair Coleman belongs to a younger generation of American composers and *Continuo* – premièred in New York by Zlatomir Fung as recently as December 2025 – imagines a meeting of minds between the jazz-loving painter Piet Mondrian (creator of *Broadway Boogie Woogie*) and Johann Sebastian Bach. The relationship between music and visual image has always been strong in the USA, and nowhere more than in Hollywood, where the powerfully original film scores that **Bernard Herrmann** created for Alfred Hitchcock are finally being acclaimed in their own right. *Vertigo* (1958) – a drama of obsession at the brink of madness, set in a colour-saturated San Francisco – might be Herrmann's masterpiece.

The New York-born **Eric Nathan**, meanwhile, just loves words, and his *Missing Words III* (2017) takes its inspiration from Ben Schott's 2013 book *Schottenfreude* – a collection of imaginary German words for the contemporary world. 'The third movement', writes Nathan, 'builds upon the concept of *Straussmanöver* (Ostrich-Manoeuvre), which Schott calls "the short-term strategy of simply denying reality"'. Draw your own conclusions...

President Nixon, as we now know, was advised by the FBI to avoid the world première of **Leonard Bernstein**'s 'subversive' *Mass* in September 1971 – advice that he heeded, though the performance in Washington's John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts received a 30-minute ovation. Bernstein's impassioned choral-theatrical extravaganza courted controversy by parodying the form of the Catholic Mass, but at its heart was a sincerely-felt plea for tolerance in an era of international conflict.

Bernstein subsequently extracted two instrumental *Meditations* from *Mass* and added a third – based on material from elsewhere in the work – to create what was, in effect, a cello concerto, premièred by Mstislav Rostropovich in 1977. The first *Meditation* is just that: a prayer-like reflection between the *Confession* and the *Gloria*. The second takes a theme from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (with its message of human brotherhood) and creates four searching variations. The third and longest *Meditation* ties the broken threads together, ending in the spirit of the celebrant's final words: 'The Mass is ended. Go in peace'.

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