

London Philharmonic Orchestra



Elgar image © Royal College of Music



Key Stage 2 BrightSparks Concert

Summer 2026
Teachers' Pack
lpo.org.uk/brightsparks

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This pack is available on the
Learning Resources section of the
London Philharmonic Orchestra's
website along with many other free
resources for schools.





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Introduction

Welcome to the London Philharmonic Orchestra BrightSparks Key Stage 2 Concert – The Big Enigma – featuring Edward Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*: a piece with an unsolved riddle at its heart. In this concert we will explore how composers have hidden secrets and coded messages in their music and we’ll uncover a famous musical theft!



It will really help your children’s understanding and enjoyment if you unpick the music a little before or after you visit us. This pack is designed to help you do this and features a composing project that we strongly urge you to undertake in the run up to the concert. We’ve also included a new song for you to teach to your class – ‘Magical Mysterious Mirage’ by Rachel Leach. You can find the words to the song, the piano score and links to the backing track from page 14 onwards. We hope you enjoy the concert!



Meet the presenter

Rachel Leach is a composer, animator and presenter. Born in Sheffield, she started playing piano aged 4 and began composing at 11. She studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

In a career spanning over 25 years she has devised and led education projects, presented concerts, composed music and written teachers’ resources for the UK’s top orchestras and opera companies. Outside of the UK she has trained musicians and led projects in the US, New Zealand, Japan and across Europe. Thousands of children have seen her concerts and sung her songs and hundreds of teachers use her educational resources every day. Rachel has worked with the LPO for many years, and regularly presents our popular BrightSparks concerts for schools.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra

Uniquely ground-breaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been celebrated as one of the world's greatest orchestras since Sir Thomas Beecham founded it in 1932.



Our mission is to celebrate artistry and humanity through the power of orchestral music, through live performances, online, and our extensive Education and Community programme. Our home is at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, where we're at the beating heart of London's cultural life. You'll also find us at our resident venues in Eastbourne, Brighton and Saffron Walden, and on tour worldwide. In 2024 we celebrated 60 years as Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

We're one of the world's most streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month, and in 2024 we featured in a behind-the-scenes TV documentary series on Sky Arts: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', which was nominated for a BAFTA. You can hear us on countless film soundtracks, and we've released over 130 albums on our own LPO label.

We're committed to inspiring the next generation of musicians and music-lovers. Our dynamic and wide-ranging Education and Community programme:

- ★ offers high-quality learning projects and performances for schools, with resources and CPD opportunities for teachers
- ★ uses music to inspire and engage with families, young people with SEND, community groups, disabled adults and those who have experienced homelessness
- ★ develops the next generation of professional instrumentalists, composer and conductors.

The LPO is proud to be an official partner of the South East London Music Hub and the Sussex Music Hub.

For more information about the LPO, you can visit our website or social media.

Website: lpo.org.uk

Facebook: [londonphilharmonicorchestra](https://www.facebook.com/londonphilharmonicorchestra)

Instagram: [londonphilharmonicorchestra](https://www.instagram.com/londonphilharmonicorchestra)

TikTok: [LPOrchestra](https://www.tiktok.com/@LPOrchestra)

The orchestra

An orchestra is a large group of musicians and their instruments. It is divided into different sections:

Strings: violins, violas, cellos, double basses

Woodwind: flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons

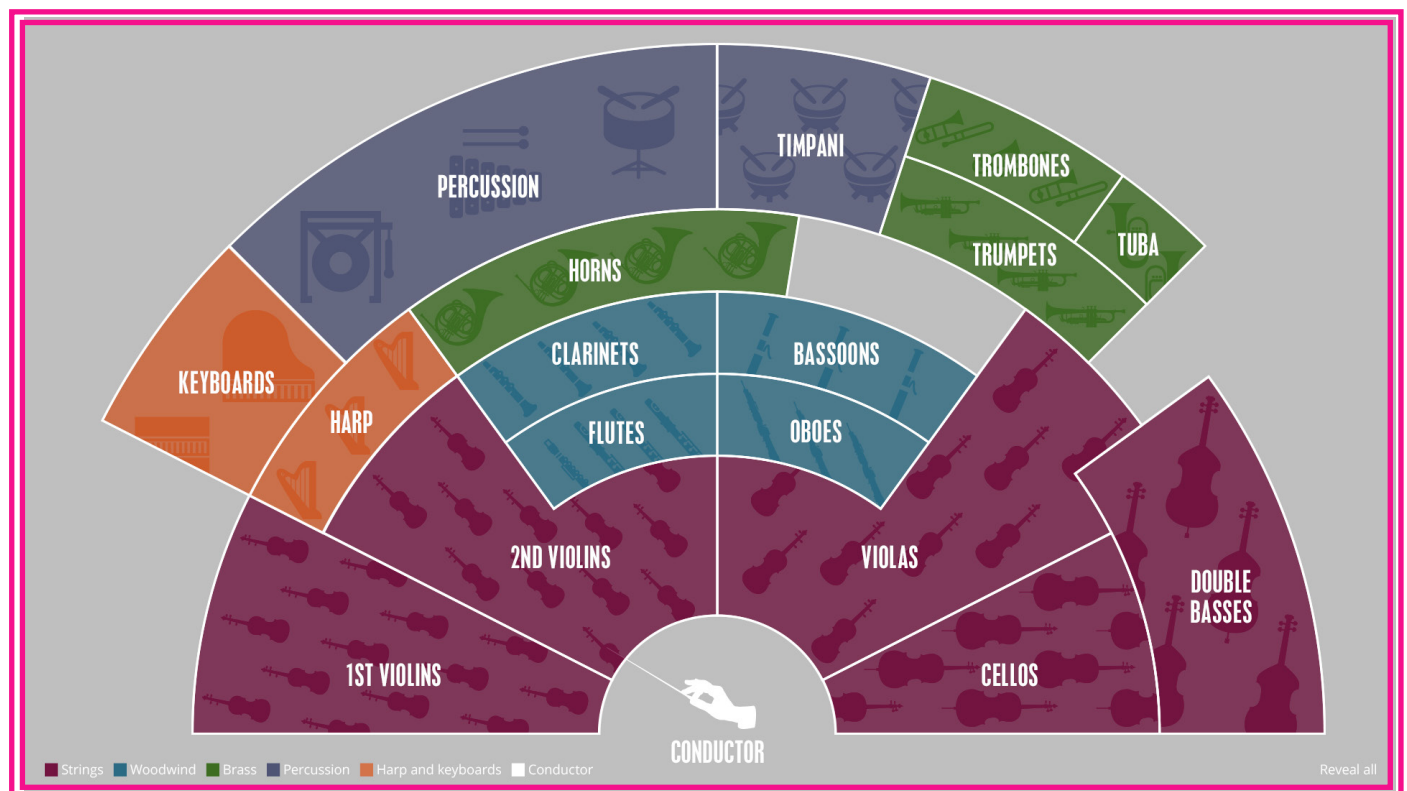
Brass: French horns, trumpets, trombones, tuba

Percussion: Timpani (large kettle drums) and other types of drums, xylophone, glockenspiel, shakers, triangles and lots more

Other: harp, piano

There are some extra instruments in our concert too:

- ★ Piccolo: the little sibling of the flute, which is smaller and plays higher notes
- ★ Cor Anglais: a larger oboe with a rounded bottom, which plays deeper notes
- ★ Bass Clarinet: a larger clarinet which is long and rests on the ground, playing deeper notes
- ★ Contrabassoon: a larger, curlier bassoon that rests on the ground and plays deeper notes



The music

Edward Elgar (1857 – 1932)

Born in a small village near Worcester, Edward Elgar grew up to be one of the best and most famous English composers of the 20th century. He didn't have an easy route to fame however, and nearly abandoned his music career many times. Then, at the age of 42, he wrote his Enigma Variations and within 4 years he was world famous and knighted by the King.



Elgar image © Royal College of Music

Enigma Variations (1899)

Elgar was improvising at the piano one day when he came up with a simple tune. He decided to make lots of different versions of the tune (variations) to describe his friends and acquaintances. At first he didn't name the friends or talk about where his theme had come from and so the piece became known as 'Enigma'. Eventually people worked out the personalities behind his musical portraits but the origins of the main tune remain a mystery to this day.

In this concert we will explore the theme, alongside the following variations:

- ★ **Richard Baxter Townshend** – an eccentric Oxford don, rode a bike with a bell
- ★ **William Meath Baker** – a wealthy country landowner, known for rushing about
- ★ **Richard Penrose Arnold** – a passionate piano player, possibly in love with...
- ★ **Ysobel Fitton** – a tall and beautiful viola player
- ★ **Arthur Troyte Griffiths** – Elgar's piano pupil, a pretty awful pianist who couldn't keep in time
- ★ **Augustus J. Jaeger** – Elgar's best friend who believed in him when nobody else did. This is the most famous variation and is often played at important national occasions
- ★ **Dora Penny (Dorabella)** – Elgar's favourite pupil. She had a nervous giggle
- ★ **Dan the Bulldog** – he runs; flings himself into a river; shakes off the water; bites; and barks! He was much loved by Elgar, and now has a statue that resides opposite Hereford Cathedral!



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Symphony No. 5, 1st Movement

Beethoven was in appearance and manner a very unlikely genius. He was often dishevelled, rude, aggressive, unpredictable, and eccentric but his music re-wrote the rulebook. He is considered a composer who bridged the Classical and Romantic periods. Put simply, Classical music (roughly 1750–1820) focused on structures and forms, whereas by the Romantic era (roughly 1820-1900), music was more about conveying emotions or stories. Beethoven radically developed and transformed every genre he wrote in.



At age 28 he began to go deaf and soon could only communicate through the use of a notebook. From then on, he heard his greatest works by imagining the sounds in his head. Beethoven's 5th symphony was written in 1808 at the beginning of his hearing difficulties. The iconic da-da-da-duh rhythm is said to represent fate knocking on his door.

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909 – 1969)

Overture for Orchestra

Bacewicz was born and raised in Warsaw, Poland and had a successful career as violinist and composer until World War II broke out. Suddenly she found herself living in a dangerous place. With war raging around her she was unable to continue her public life and devoted herself to her family instead. However, we now know that she was secretly writing music, organising underground concerts, and perhaps even involved in espionage. This extremely exciting Overture is from 1943 and contains coded messages in Morse Code including a prominent 'V for Victory' signal at the very beginning.



© Alamy

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Hungarian Dance No. 5

German composer Johannes Brahms was one of the leading composers of the Romantic period (roughly 1800–1910). Music of the Romantic era often focused on evoking emotion and passion, stories, places or events. However, Brahms had a great respect for what had gone before, and his music often blended the structures and innovations of Beethoven with an intensely romantic voice. His Hungarian Dances were written in 1879 and were an instant success. Brahms said they were based on traditional folk tunes but composer Béla Kéler disagreed. He said that the famous tune of number 5 was stolen from his earlier work!



© Luckhart c.1885

Lalo Schifrin (1932 – 2025)

Mission Impossible theme

Multi-award winning Argentinian-American composer Lalo Schifrin was one of the best film and TV composers of the last century. His iconic Mission Impossible theme from 1962 is by far his most famous piece. The distinctive rhythm in 5/4 time is based on Morse Code for M.I.



© Getty Images

Rachel Leach: *Magical Mysterious Mirage*

Please teach this song to your class so that they can join in with us during the concert. It is printed on pages 16-20 of this pack and you can listen to it on SoundCloud (full version and accompaniment only version) via the QR code here or using the link below.

<https://on.soundcloud.com/CyiFavveXjzbpPTIvw>



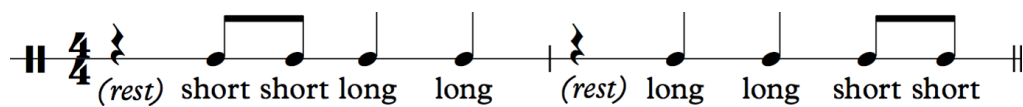
Classroom Project – Theme and Variations

Tell your children the story of Elgar's piece (see page 7). Remind your class that Elgar used just one simple tune as the basis of 14 short pieces describing his friends, family, acquaintances, including a dog and a house! In this project, your class will make their own Theme and Variations.

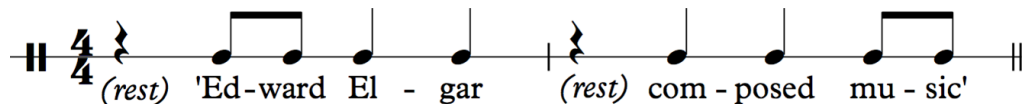
Elgar's Theme

Explain to your class that before they can make variations, they must make the theme.

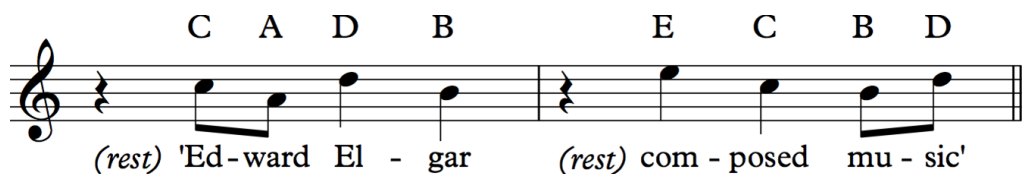
1. Teach the following rhythm:



It may help to use these words:



2. Ask a volunteer to try playing this rhythm on an unpitched instrument (e.g. drum, woodblock). The rest of the class can help by adding a body percussion sound on the 'rest' and by whispering the words.
3. Play the tune on a xylophone and encourage volunteers to come forward and have a go:



Others can join in on unpitched percussion or continue to clap along.

4. Make a class version of Elgar's tune.
 - ★ Decide who will play which instrument
 - ★ Try your tune a few different ways - you could vote and decide which is best
 - ★ Practise your tune to make sure it's the same each time
 - ★ Write it down in a way that makes sense to you

Understanding Variations

Variation is simply another way of saying 'version'.

One of Elgar's variations describes a Bulldog called Dan. Dan runs, bites, and breathes heavily (panting) in Elgar's music.

Lead this quick game:

- ★ Ask your class to think of a body percussion sound for a dog running
... there is no right or wrong answer, but they might come up with something like patting their knees fast
- ★ Ask your class to think of a body percussion sound for a dog biting
... something like one big clap with their hands outstretched
- ★ Ask your class to think of a body percussion sound for panting
... maybe they will tap their chests lightly
- ★ Split into three quick teams and ask each team to practise **one** of these sounds
- ★ Appoint a conductor and ask them to signal to the groups to make their sound, creating one big 'dog' piece.

Explain that this is what Elgar does to make his variation. He thinks of three things the subject does, turns them into sounds, and puts them in an order.

He also adds his tune, in disguise!

New Variations

Follow this simple method, perhaps working in small groups, to make your own Enigma Variation.

1. Choose one person that everyone knows – a public figure. Discuss your choice and make a list of three things this person does or is.

For example King Charles:

- i. shakes hands
- ii. waves
- iii. is really important

2. Ask your children to create one short sound (musical motif) for each of these things.

For example King Charles:

- i. shakes hands (three short hits on a drum)
- ii. waves (a shaking tambourine)
- iii. is really important (a short fanfare on a xylophone)

3. Challenge the class to structure these motifs together to make a short piece.
4. Now they need to add in Elgar's tune somewhere. Maybe it could be the basis of the fanfare, or it could be played at the beginning of the piece to announce the King's arrival.
5. Split your class into small groups and ask them to make their own piece using this method:
 - ★ Choose a 'subject'
 - ★ Choose three descriptive words for the subject
 - ★ Create three motifs based on each of these words
 - ★ Decide who plays which instrument, and in what order
 - ★ Add in Elgar's tune somewhere
6. When this is achieved, bring the class back together, hear their pieces one by one and give a bit of gentle feedback - do they sound like the person (or animal etc) they are describing? Can you hear the theme or is it well disguised?

There is no need to join the different variations together to make one big piece – variations are always kept separate – so put your variations into an order and try performing them back-to-back without a pause. Begin with your class version of the theme.

*Your subjects can be people, animals or even buildings – Elgar describes all three in his piece. Choose subjects known to everyone and with distinct characteristics or actions. You also want to avoid offending anyone so it might be safest to choose people that the class are unlikely to ever meet e.g. Beyonce, Usain Bolt, Elgar! You could choose people you are studying in other curriculum areas i.e. Queen Victoria, the Egyptians, Malala Yousafzai or even insects, places, trees...

Taking it further

- ★ Make graphic scores of your pieces to ensure that they are performed the same every time. A graphic score is a way of representing music using visual symbols, shapes, and images instead of traditional musical notation
- ★ Draw the people etc. you have described. Then transform your classroom or the hall into an art gallery and perform your pieces in front of the corresponding art to an invited audience
- ★ Choose one important person to make a full class variation about and make this your grand finale. Elgar chose himself for this!

The song – Magical, Mysterious Mirage

We have created a new song for you to teach to your children so that they can join in during the concert. The words to the song and the piano score are printed at the back of this pack. You will also be able to listen to a recording of the song using the link or QR code below.

We would love to see and hear your children joining in enthusiastically so please add lots of actions and gestures to the words for maximum energy and to help with memory. We will project the words on our big screen so there's no need to bring them with you.

Please remember that we're not looking for perfect singing but for volume and enthusiasm!

<https://on.soundcloud.com/CyiFavveXjzbpPTIvw>



Warming up

It's really important that you warm up your class before you start learning the song. Doing so will gather focus, get everyone relaxed and energised, protect their voices and help them to sound their best. Below we've suggested some warm ups written by singing specialist Lucy Hollins that you might want to try.

Focus

Start by doing an activity that gets everyone focused. You may have your own ways of doing this, but here are a few ideas of how to do this in a musical way:

Don't clap this one back

This is a call and response clapping game. You clap a four beat rhythm and the children clap it back. The only twist is that if you clap the following rhythm, they don't clap it back:



Physical warm up

Now, a physical warm up. This can be anything that gets your young singers moving and feeling energised, making sure every part of the body is relaxed.

8-4-2-1-HEY

Put your right hand in the air and shake it 8 times, counting the numbers out loud as you do. Now do the same in the left hand, then the right foot and the left foot. Repeat this pattern but now with 4 shakes in each hand and foot, then 2 in each, then 1 in each. To finish, jump up in the air and all shout HEY!

Breathing

Next, do some work on breathing...

Bubble Gum

Ask the children to get an (imaginary) piece of bubblegum out of their pocket, unwrap it and pop it in their mouths. Now tell them it's really, really sticky and ask them to have a good chew. They might need to use their tongues to get it off their teeth!

Next tell them you're going to have a bubble blowing competition. On the count of three, everyone blows an imaginary bubble, using their arms to show how it is slowly expanding, until you shout 'POP!' and the bubbles all burst. You'll now need to roll it into a ball and start again.

Make some noise!

'Aha!'

Take a simple word or sound, for example 'aha' or 'hello,' and ask the children to copy the way you say it. You might imagine a scenario, for example, in which you get angry, then despondent, then happy, then excited – but the whole story is told with this single sound. Make sure you use different parts of the voice from high to low, and don't be afraid of swooping and sliding to get a really good warm up.

**Now you've warmed up your body through rhythmic and physical activities,
and your voice through breathing and sound exercises,
it's time to learn the song!**

Magical, Mysterious Mirage

by Rachel Leach

Sung: Strange, unexplained
Freaky phenomena
Has to be seen to be believed
Some call it a sixth sense
Some call it ESP
It's just plain magic to me

Spoken: Let's... make... magic!

Sung: Illusion, confusion, delusion, collusion
Camouflage, sabotage
Magical, Mysterious, Mirage!

A wand
A top hat
A pack of cards
A suit of black
I'll read your mind
Make a penny disappear
Cut a person in half
Pull an egg from someone's ear

Enchant a rope
Pick a card from a pack
Catch a bullet in my teeth
Vanish and come back
Escape from handcuffs
Float off the ground
Hypnotise you
Leave you spellbound

Abracadabra, Hopeless Focussed, Hocus Pocus
Ablanathanalba
Abracadabra, Hopeless Focussed, Hocus Pocus
Magical, Mysterious, Mirage!

Spoken: Magic!

Magical, Mysterious, Mirage

RACHEL LEACH

A Allegro ♩ = 120 *p legato*

Voice

Strange, un - ex - plained Frea - ky phe

Piano

p legato

con Ped.

6

no-me-na Has to be seen to be be - lieved_____

11

Some call it sixth sense Some call it E S P Its just plain

B Spoken:

16

ma - gic to me Let's make

p

V.S.

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2 21 *p*

ma-gic! Il-lu-sion Con

24

fus-ion De-lu-sion Col-lu-sion

27 *cresc.*

Cam-ou-flage Sab-o-tage Ma-gi-cal Mys

30 **C** *Presto* ♩. = 60 *f*

ter-i-ous Mi-rage! A wand

36

A top hat A pack of cards A suit of black

42

I'll read your mind Make a penny dis-a-pear Cut a person in

48

D

half Pull an egg from some-one's ear En - chant a rope Pick a card from a

mf legato

54

pack Catch a bullet in my teeth Va-nish and come back Es -

4 59

cape_ from hand-cuffs Float off the ground Hyp - no - tise you Leave you spell-

E ♩ = ♩

66

bound A - bra-ca-da - bra Hope - less Fo - cussed Ho - cus Po - cus

70

Ab-la-na-than-al - ba A - bra-ca-da - bra Hope - less Fo - cussed Ho - cus Po - cus

74

Mag - i - cal Mys - ter - i - ous Mi - rage! Ma - gic!

Thank you

We hope this pack will give you some suggestions to support Key Stage 2 provision in your school. For further ideas, don't forget to look at Learning Resources on the LPO website, or book tickets to future BrightSparks concerts. We offer a Key Stage 1 (London only) and Key Stage 2 (London and Eastbourne) BrightSparks concert per year, each with associated resources and INSET sessions.

You can find out more at www.lpo.org.uk/brightsparks/

We'd love to hear from you about your school's musical activities! Feel free to get in touch with us via email education@lpo.org.uk to find out more about our work here at the LPO, or if you'd like any guidance for musical work in the classroom.

