

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

April 28 programme complementary content

Talented husband and wife, Julian Rachlin and Sarah McElravy, join forces to perform a little-known work by Max Bruch at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall.

You can learn more about what to expect in our programme notes, which this year are being presented in a new and accessible way.

In addition, this companion page draws together a range of complementary content that we hope will help shine further light on the pieces, the people who composed them and the performers bringing them to life here in Hope Street.

Julian Rachlin

Lithuanian violinist, violist and conductor **Julian Rachlin** was born in Vilnius to musical parents. He grew up in Austria, however, and when he was nine, entered the Vienna Conservatoire.

He gave his first concert at 10, and in 1988 – aged 13 – won the title of **Eurovision Young Musician of the Year**. This led to him becoming the youngest ever soloist to perform with the Vienna Philharmonic.

In 2000, he founded his own music festival – Julian Rachlin & Friends – in Dubrovnik, while the Julian Rachlin & Friends Foundation aims to help nurture the careers of extraordinary young musicians.

Over a **30-year career**, he has appeared with major orchestras across the world, both as a soloist and conductor, and is committed to working with contemporary composers.

Rachlin plays the 1704 “ex Liebig” Stradivarius.

Sarah McElravy

Canadian violinist and violist **Sarah McElravy** enjoys a busy and diverse international career as a soloist and chamber musician, and is a regular guest artist at some of the world’s leading concert halls.

She studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music, before taking part in the graduate string-quartet-in-residence programme at Yale’s School of Music, where she was mentored by the Tokyo String Quartet.

McElravy is a founding member of the award-winning **Linden String Quartet**. The ensemble has served as Fellowship Quartet-in-residence at Yale University, and has delivered masterclasses, lectures and educational outreach performances across the US and Canada. In 2014, McElravy founded the Chamber Music Society Mexico.

Since 1998, she and Rachlin have performed masterpieces of the violin and violin/viola repertoire in concert together.

Meanwhile, highlights this season include performances with the Helsinki Philharmonic, Prague Philharmonia and Warsaw Philharmonic.

McElravy plays a 1785 Lorenzo Storioni viola.

Max Bruch

Although **Max Bruch** remains best known for his masterpiece, *Violin Concerto in G minor*, the German Romantic composer – and former Liverpool Philharmonic Chief Conductor – wrote more than 200 works, including operas and symphonies, during his long career.

Bruch composed his first work, a song for his soprano mother's birthday, in 1847 at the age of nine. It was from there that his passion for music blossomed – a passion encouraged by his parents.

He started his career in Mannheim and worked extensively, both in Germany and abroad, before being appointed director of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society in 1880. He would spend three years in the city.

In 1881, he married singer **Clara Tucek** in Berlin and on returning to Liverpool, the couple lodged with a widow called Ann Bruston in **Brompton Avenue**, near Sefton Park. In August 1882, their daughter Margaretha was born.

In January 1883, Bruch tendered his resignation to the Society. The young family left the Mersey and moved back to Germany, where Bruch had been offered the position of conductor of concerts at Breslau. Liverpool would remain his only overseas position.

His *Double Concerto for Violin and Viola* dates from 1912, late in his career, and started its life as a work for clarinet and viola, composed for Bruch's son Max Felix who was a talented clarinettist.

Did you know? Bruch was professor of composition at the Berlin Academy from 1892-1910, where Ralph Vaughan Williams was briefly one of his pupils.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

In the summer of 1783, rising star pianist and freelance composer **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** and his young wife Constanze took a trip from Vienna to Salzburg to visit his family.

Constanze had given birth to their first child, **Raimund Leopold**, just a few weeks earlier – but rather than take the infant on a long and arduous road journey, they left the 'big, strapping plump boy' at home.

While the couple were there meeting Mozart's father and sister, two notable things happened.

Mozart premiered his *Great Mass in C Minor*, with Constanze singing the high soprano line, and back at home in Vienna, baby Raimund died.

The couple travelled home in a sombre mood, but when they broke their journey at Linz, where they were guests of **Count Johann Thun-Hohenstein** Mozart was energised enough to compose a new symphony to be performed at a concert – just four days later!

The result was his *Symphony No 36 in C major*, widely known as the Linz Symphony.

Felix Mendelssohn

Early in 1847, the Liverpool Philharmonic Society's conductor, Jakob Zeugheer Herrmann, had an exchange of letters with **Felix Mendelssohn** the composer writing to the Swiss-born conductor at his London home .

Mendelssohn had been approached to compose a cantata to celebrate the opening of the new Philharmonic Hall, which was being built in Hope Street.

Sadly, Mendelssohn died before he could fulfil the brief (something based on Milton's *Comus* and "illustrative of the Science of Music to which art the building will be dedicated") or see the completion of the hall, which opened in 1849 with six grand musical performances. The second of these concerts was the composer's hugely popular oratorio, *Elijah*.

Mendelssohn had a happy relationship with Britain, enjoying a warm reception from audiences and travelling widely across the British Isles from his first visit in 1829, when he was just 20. He visited London many times and a **Blue Plaque** now adorns the house in Belgravia where he stayed.

Elijah was premiered at Birmingham Town Hall in 1846 with Mendelssohn himself conducting, and – in a revised form – was performed before Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in London in April 1847.

His Third Symphony, 'Scottish', was completed in 1842 and was inspired by a visit north of the border as a young man, which he also channelled into his *Hebrides Overture*.

Did you know? Mendelssohn visited Liverpool in July 1829 but his only 'performance' was when he played his Fantasy in F-sharp minor on the Broadwood piano of an American ship moored in the docks.

About the Music

Max Bruch (1838-1920); Double Concerto in E minor, Op 88

(Version for violin & viola)

Composed: 1911

First Performed: Berlin, 5 March, 1912

Fate has been unkind to Max Bruch. Yes, his Violin Concerto in G minor is a beautiful, brilliant work, but why should its apparently indestructible popularity obscure his other major works? This generously tuneful concerto is an excellent case. Bruch originally wrote it for clarinet and viola, with his son, Max Felix Bruch (a fine clarinettist), and the viola-player Willi Hess in mind as soloists. Following the example of Brahms in some of his clarinet works, Bruch made an alternative version where the clarinet was substituted for violin – a wise decision commercially, but it also works beautifully in musical terms too. This is a remarkable, unflashy concerto. Instead of the traditional big showcase first movement, Bruch begins with a tender, lyrical duet for the two soloists, tactfully supported by the orchestra. The second movement too is gentle, lilting, wistful. It's only in the finale that the fireworks start, but there's still plenty of tender, melodious writing too. There isn't another concerto in the repertoire like Bruch's Double, and we really ought to make more of it.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791): Symphony No 36 in C major, K425 ('Linz')

Composed: 1783

First Performed: Linz (Austria), 4 November, 1783

Mozart usually worked quickly, but even by his standards, the speed with which he despatched the 'Linz' Symphony is pretty impressive. The composer and his wife Constanze had been to visit his family in Salzburg and were now on the way back to Vienna down the valley of the River Danube. When the local count heard that Mozart would be stopping at his home city, Linz, he sent a request for a symphony, offering a tidy sum in recompense. Mozart composed what we now call his 'Linz' Symphony in just four days— most modern copyists would probably need four days just to copy the score! The Symphony's vitality, sensuous beauty and stunning inventiveness suggest high spirits and the confidence of a brilliant young man at the top of his game: you'd never guess from this music that the Mozarts had just lost their firstborn son, baby Raimund. Mozart's music is often deeply expressive, but he usually managed to keep direct personal experience out of the picture. Instead, he concentrated on giving the Count and his audience what he correctly guessed they wanted: something with grandeur, but also elegance, playfulness and a suitably exciting finale to bring the house down at the end.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47): Symphony No 3 in A minor, Op 56 ('Scottish')

Composed: 1829-31, 1841-42

First Performance: Leipzig Gewandhaus, 3 March, 1842

The young German Romantics were fascinated by Scotland. Remote and very difficult to get to from the continent, it was known almost entirely through poetry and the hugely popular novels of Walter Scott – a land of wild and misty mountains, swashbuckling adventure and dark passions. Most were content to leave it as a dream, but on his first visit to England, the 20-year-old Mendelssohn set off to explore. Edinburgh delighted him, and as he was standing amongst the ruins of Holyrood Chapel (beloved of the glamorous Mary Queen of Scots), a sombre, hymn-like theme occurred to him. This became the opening of his Symphony in A minor, published as No 3 though actually the last of his five to be finished. The symphony seems to have given Mendelssohn problems at first, and he put it to one side for most of the 1830s, only returning to it a decade later. It sounds as though it was conceived in a single flood of inspiration though, and even ten years later, the impressions of that formative Scottish trip were evidently still fresh. From the melancholy 'Holyrood' beginning, a turbulent, impassioned but still dance-like Allegro emerges. A wild scherzo with a decidedly Scottish-folk-sounding clarinet theme leads to a pensive slow movement. The finale is a rapid dance movement with some fancy rhythmic footwork (echoes of the famous Highland Sword Dance?) leading to a broad coda, for which Mendelssohn evoked the sound of a male chorus. As well as being a beautifully conceived symphonic structure, it's music to set the imagination romancing wildly.