

## **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra March 26 programme complementary content**

Liverpool Philharmonic Hall's organ is in fine voice after its extensive refurbishment – and what better way to hear it than with Ian Tracey at the console?

Two fantastic French organ works are bookended by a pair of glorious symphonies to make it quite an afternoon's entertainment.

Watch Stephen Johnson talking about the concert programme [here](#).

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.

### **Andrew Manze**

Since 2018, [Andrew Manze](#) has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and he's a great favourite of Liverpool audiences.

He made his debut with the Orchestra more than a decade ago and has appeared regularly on the Hope Street stage ever since.

With boundless energy and warmth – and an extensive and scholarly knowledge of the repertoire – Manze is in great demand as a guest conductor from some of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles.

He began his career as an Early Music specialist, becoming Associate Director of the Academy of Ancient Music at the age of 31. Along with a busy conducting career he also teaches, edits and writes about music and is in demand as a broadcaster.

He is currently Chief Conductor of the [NDR Radiophilharmonie](#).

### **Ian Tracey**

He's a familiar face at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, although usually Professor Ian Tracey can be found at the front conducting the Orchestra and Choir.

However, he is first and foremost an organist – and first played the Hall's Rushworth and Dreaper instrument in concert with the Liverpool Welsh Choral some 50 years ago as a [teenager](#).

Tracey studied under the late [Noel Rawsthorne](#) and replaced him as organist at Liverpool Cathedral in 1980 when he was 25. There, he plays the magnificent [Willis organ](#), the largest organ in the UK.

It was also there that he recorded Saint-Saëns *Organ Symphony* with the Orchestra back in 1986 – the year he was made Organist to the City of Liverpool.

With his other hat on, he is currently Chorusmaster of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir, a position he has held for 38 years, making him the longest serving Chorusmaster in the Choir's history. Last autumn he revealed he would be [retiring from the role this summer](#).

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The year 1779 dawned with [Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#) grieving his mother, who had died the summer before in Paris, and kicking his heels in Salzburg wondering what to do next.

In February he became court organist as well as [Konzertmeister](#) for the Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus Colloredo, which while improving his finances, also increased the 23-year-old's playing and composing workload.

In March he wrote what became known as the *Coronation Mass* which may – or may not – have originally been sung at the cathedral on Easter Sunday.

Then around Easter time, Mozart sat down to write what became his *Symphony No 32*, which it is thought may have originally been planned as an overture to a dramatic work. Certainly, it is written in the form of an 'Italian Overture' with three short movements played without interruption.

It would be one of two symphonies he completed during the year around his formal responsibilities.

Listen to the *Allegro spiritoso* first movement from Mozart's [Symphony No 32 in G major](#).

## Eugène Gigout

Organist and composer [Eugène Gigout](#) was a teenage pupil of Camille Saint-Saëns and went on to serve an extraordinary 62 years as organist of Saint-Augustin Church in the French capital.

He founded his own organ school and in 1911 was appointed professor of organ and composition at the Paris Conservatoire. His pupils included Albert Roussel, André Messager and [Léon Boëllmann](#) who married Gigout's niece.

Known as an expert improviser, Gigout's compositions for the instrument included *10 Pièces pour Orgue* which featured his *Toccata in B minor*.

In 2007, Ian Tracey released [a CD](#) which included Gigout's challenging *Grand Chœur Dialogué for organ and orchestra*, recorded on Liverpool Cathedral's Willis organ and with the BBC Philharmonic.

Here is a performance of Gigout's [Grand Chœur Dialogué for organ and orchestra](#).

## Francis Poulenc

The youngest member of Paris' so-called '[Les Six](#)', [Francis Poulenc](#) was born into a French industrialist family. Introduced to classical music by his mother and uncle at an early age, he was initially influenced by the work of Debussy, Satie and Stravinsky.

[The Concerto pour Orgue, Cordes et Timbales \(Concerto for Organ, Timpani and Strings\)](#) was commissioned by Princess Edmond de Polignac and written between 1934-38.

It was given a private premiere in December 1938 with Maurice Duruflé as soloist and Nadia Boulanger (elder sister of Lili Boulanger) conducting. Duruflé also played at the first public performance which took place in Paris in June 1939.

Enjoy listening to Maurice Duruflé play Poulenc's [Concerto for Organ, Timpani and Strings](#).

## Jean Sibelius

When [Johan Julius Christian Sibelius](#) was born in Hämeenlinna on December 8, 1865, it was in a Finland that was still part of the sprawling Romanov empire.

But the young 'Jean' would become inspired by the folklore he encountered at his Finnish-speaking grammar school, particularly the epic mythical poem Kalevala whose rhythms and themes he later used in his music – notably his 1892 choral work *Kullervo* - and which spoke to the patriotic heart of those fighting for Finnish independence.

*Kullervo* was followed in 1893 by his *Karelia Suite*, and six years later, tone poem [Finlandia](#) – a bold musical challenge to oppressive Russian censorship – became the unofficial anthem of Finland's resistance.

It was against this backdrop that in 1898, Sibelius started to plan his [First Symphony](#) – the start of a personal symphonic journey which rather than embracing the whole world as Mahler recommended, would follow the 'profound logic' that would eventually be distilled into his single movement Seventh.

But while *Symphony No 1 in E minor* might be seen as perhaps the most expansively Romantic of his symphonies, it still comes with darker, more desolate, hues and unexpected dimensions.

Enjoy Sibelius' [Symphony No 31 in E minor](#).

## About the Music

### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91): Symphony No 32 in G major, K318

Allegro spiritoso – Andante – Primo tempo

Composed: 1779

First Performed: ???

Mozart didn't actually call this work 'Symphony' – in fact he didn't give it any kind of genre description. When Mozart wrote the work he'd just returned from a trip to Paris, where he had hoped – in vain – to find prestigious employment, and thus escape severely restrictive servitude to the Archbishop of Salzburg. In Paris, Mozart had heard comic opera overtures whose one-movement structure resembles that of Symphony No 32, so was it really intended as a curtain-raiser for a theatre work?

In fact, Mozart may simply have been trying out new formal models. Whatever the case, this lively, highly compact piece manages to say a great deal in well under ten minutes. It begins like a grand symphonic first movement, presenting strikingly contrasting themes, but at the point where we might expect the first theme to return, the music pauses expectantly, and a slow movement begins. Eventually this too breaks off, and the first movement resumes, as though nothing had happened to stop it. Mozart may not have called this a 'symphony', but as a symphonic argument, it's a triumph.

### **Eugène Gigout (1844-1925): *Grand chœur dialogué***

Composed: 1881

First Performed: 1881, Saint-Augustin Church, Paris, Eugène Gigout (organ)

In the Baroque era, German composers tended to dominate in the field of solo organ music. By the time Eugène Gigout composed his *Grand chœur dialogué* ('Grand dialogue of the choirs'), the French had seized the lead. Gigout was one of an impressive number of organist-composers, from César Franck to Olivier Messiaen, who found new riches of colour and expression in the instrument Stravinsky later dismissed as the 'monster' who 'never breathes'. Gigout rose to become Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire, which gives an idea of how highly he was esteemed. The 'dialogue of the choirs' in the title refers to the way Gigout brilliantly exploits the contrasts between the various sections of a very large organ, requiring dextrous use of the different keyboards and pedals. It is very much a celebratory work, with a suitably thrilling conclusion.

### **François Poulenc (1899-1963): *Organ Concerto***

Composed: 1934-8

First Performed: 16 December 1938, Salon of the Princess Edmond de Polignac, Paris, Maurice Duruflé (organ), cond. Nadia Boulanger (private premiere)

21 June 1939, Salle Gaveau, Paris, Duruflé (organ), cond. Roger Désormière

The four years François Poulenc took to compose his magnificent Organ Concerto cover probably the most important period of transition in its composer's life. Up until then he'd acquired the image of a sometimes playful, irreverent, sometimes barbed naughty boy, employing classical forms as though he was allergic to any kind of classical high seriousness. When he received the commission for the Organ Concerto in 1934, his first inclination was towards something iconic, definitely not 'grand', with just timpani and string orchestra. But in 1936 the horrifying death of a close friend in a car accident shook him to the core. In stunned grief he visited the shrine of the Black Virgin of Rocamadour, where he began to rediscover his boyhood Catholic faith. This had a profound effect on the character of the Organ Concerto. As Poulenc wrote to a friend, 'The concerto... is not the amusing Poulenc of the Concerto for two pianos, but more like a Poulenc en route for the cloister.'

The Concerto is in one continuous movement, but it unfolds in seven highly contrasted sections. The grand, angry Bachian opening suggests that we are going to hear a dramatic work, yet much of the music that follows is quieter, delicate, inward-looking. The chaste yet also exquisitely touching religious choral music of Poulenc's later years is only just around the corner.

### **Jean Sibelius (1865-1957): *Symphony No 1 in E minor, op 39***

1. Andante ma non troppo - Allegro energico
2. Andante (ma non troppo lento)
3. Scherzo: Allegro - Lento (ma non troppo) - Tempo I
4. Finale (Quasi una Fantasia): Andante - Allegro molto

When Sibelius wrote his First Symphony in 1899, he was still saturated in Romanticism, and especially the fervid Romanticism of Tchaikovsky. "There is much in that man that I recognise in myself", he wrote to his wife, Aino. Sibelius' decision to end the Symphony tragically almost certainly marks the impact of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony (1893), which concludes in deathly gloom.

But it's still unmistakably Sibelius, powerfully suggestive of the vast spaces, elemental weather and magical play of light in his native Finland. The opening is like nothing else in the 19th century symphonic repertoire: above a sustained drum-roll, a solo clarinet begins a long, mournful melody, which seems to lose itself in dreams, until violins enter tremolando and a new theme strives energetically forward, eventually reaching a grim, strikingly abrupt conclusion. A languishing Tchaikovskian tune opens the second movement, but Sibelius soon shows his own hand: in the bare, eerie woodwind writing, and in the surging string figures that accompany the final climax. At last the Tchaikovsky tune returns, in mid-phrase, and with it brings an uneasy peace.

Peace is blown away by the Scherzo: throbbing plucked string chords and a sharply rhythmic motif for timpani inaugurate an elemental dance. Contrast comes with the slower and quieter, almost hymn-like, Trio section, but this doesn't last long; soon the elemental dance begins again, this time building to a brusque conclusion.

Sibelius marks his Finale Quasi una Fantasia ('Almost like a fantasy'), inviting comparison with Tchaikovsky's 'Fantasy Overture' *Romeo and Juliet*, and perhaps still more of the 'Symphonic Fantasy' *Francesca da Rimini*. The ardent opening theme for strings is in fact the clarinet melody that began the first movement. After this, the music seems carried forward on a flood of ideas. Eventually a long, impassioned melody leads to a forceful, brass-dominated climax, but the symphony ends with two steely plucked string chords – an unmistakably tragic conclusion.