

## Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra February 5 programme complementary content

If you've missed hearing Liverpool Philharmonic Hall's Rushworth and Dreaper organ in action over the last two years, you certainly won't want to forgo this chance to hear the newly restored instrument in all its glory.

Saint-Saëns' thrilling *Organ Symphony* is only one part of a brilliant evening of music however.

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

Watch Stephen Johnson talking about the concert programme here ((LINK)).

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

### Elena Schwarz

Award winning Swiss-Australian conductor **Elena Schwarz** (<https://www.sulivansweetland.co.uk/elena-schwarz>) is one of a number of talented women conductors appearing with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra this season.

The 36-year-old was born in Lugano and grew up in the Italian speaking area of Switzerland before studying cello and musicology at the Geneva Conservatoire and University before turning to conducting.

She is a champion of contemporary music and has held assistant roles with the Orchestre de Philharmonique Radio France and West Australian Symphony Orchestra, and associate conductor at the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

In 2018/19 she was selected for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Dudamel Fellowship programme and is in demand as a guest conductor of both orchestral and operatic works.

Watch an interview Elena Schwarz did when she worked with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and Youth Orchestra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0ZNYhvWVg0>

## Noa Wildschut

Violinist **Noa Wildschut** (<https://www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/noa-wildschut>) has been described as “one of the musical hopes of her generation” by her mentor Anne-Sophie Mutter.

Hilversum-born Wildschut, the daughter of Dutch violist Arjan Wildschut, released her debut album on Warner Classics in 2017 and was nominated as a rising star of the 2019/20 season by the European Concert Hall Organisation (ECHO).

Last summer the 20-year-old appeared at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Meanwhile this concert marks a happy return to Hope Street for the violinist who made her UK debut in May 2019 with the Orchestra, performing **Max Bruch’s *Scottish Fantasy***. (<https://bachtrack.com/review-zemlinsky-seejungfrau-petrenko-wildschut-royal-liverpool-philharmonic-may-2019>)

She plays a 300-year-old instrument made by Milanese Giovanni Battista Grancino.

## 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**. (<https://www.liverpoolphil.com/media/403085/pipe-dreams-13-january-programme-notes-2022.pdf>)

Tracey studied under the late **Noel Rawsthorne** (<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/29-march/gazette/obituaries/obituary-noel-rawsthorne>) and replaced him as organist at Liverpool Cathedral in 1980 when he was 25. There, he plays the magnificent **Willis organ** (<https://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/cathedral-music/our-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, the 66-year-old is Chorus Master of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir, a position he has held for 37 years.

Watch him talking about his role as Chorus Master.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBwX3GNCp9E>

## Stravinsky

By 1936, when he composed *Jeu de Cartes*, **Igor Stravinsky** (<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/stravinsky/>) was in the middle of the important **neoclassical period** (<https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-music/articles/stravinsky-and-neoclassicism>) of his career.

It would be another three years before the Russian-born composer of *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*, left his adopted home France for the United States.

But *Jeu de Cartes*, described as a ballet in three 'deals', preceded him, being premiered by **George Balanchine's** (<https://www.nycballet.com/discover/our-history/george-balanchine/>) newly-formed American Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway in April 1937.

The main character is the devious Joker who makes himself invincible by being able to become any card. But while he may win in the first two 'deals' of the poker-inspired piece, in the final movement he himself is vanquished by a royal flush.

Stravinsky referenced a number of other composers' work in the 25-minute piece including Beethoven, Ravel, Strauss, and Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

The composer enjoyed a **fruitful working relationship** (<https://www.sfballet.org/balanchine-and-stravinsky-an-innovative-partnership/>) with the equally ground-breaking Balanchine from the late 1920s onwards.

And following Stravinsky's death, in 1972 the choreographer staged a special festival at which he presented eight new ballets set to music by Stravinsky.

Listen to the third 'deal' from *Jeu de Cartes*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qY8Z4VfjIWI>

## Tchaikovsky

**Tchaikovsky** (<https://www.biography.com/musician/pyotr-ilyich-tchaikovsky>) was recuperating at Lake Geneva in spring 1878 when he was paid a visit by friend, former student (and witness at his disastrous marriage of a few months before) **Iosef Kotek** (<https://bachtrack.com/feature-at-home-guide-tchaikovsky-kotek-violin-concerto-january-2018>) – who had been badgering him for a new work for some time.

Whether it was the stunning Swiss mountain scenery or playing music with Kotek – with whom Tchaikovsky was infatuated - which fired his imagination, the composer was inspired to start work on what would become his only *Violin Concerto*.

Composed in the space of a few weeks – including revising the sweetly melancholy second movement, the D major work includes one of Tchaikovsky's most beautiful themes

It was finally premiered in 1881 not by Kotek, but by Adolph Brodsky who performed it under Hans Richter's baton in Vienna to a mixed reception – enthusiastic from its audience but less so from the reviewers.

The conservative but influential Austrian critic Eduard Hanslick panned Tchaikovsky as “an inflated talent” and said his concerto was “**music which stinks to the ear**”.

((<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/latest/insults-classical-music/hanslick-on-tchaikovsky/>))

Then again, Hanslick also had few good things to say about Tchaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony* either.

Watch Russian-born virtuoso Jascha Heifetz play the first movement of the *Violin Concerto* in the 1947 film Carnegie Hall.

[Jascha Heifetz plays Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto: 1st mov. - YouTube](#)

## Saint-Saëns

Camille Saint-Saëns ((<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/saint-saens/guides/saint-saens-facts/>)) was born in Paris in 1835 and was a child prodigy, entering the city's Conservatoire at 13.

He spent much of the first quarter of a century of his career as a church organist, while in the 1860s he joined the teaching staff at the École de Musique Classique et Religieuse where one of his pupils was a teenage **Gabriel Fauré**.

((<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/faure/guides/faure-15-facts-about-great-composer/saint-saens/>)) It was the start of a lifelong friendship.

In 1871, he founded the National Society for French Music, and he was a pioneering figure in its development through the Romantic period.

Saint-Saëns composed the first French symphonic poems, of which the 1874 *Danse Macabre* is the most famous, and his quintet of piano concertos – dating from 1858 to 1896 – were the first French examples of their genre.

Meanwhile among his prolific output were 13 operas, including *Samson and Delilah*, and his chamber music included ***The Carnival of the Animals***.

((<https://www.classicfm.com/composers/saint-saens/music/carnival-animals/>))

His *Symphony No 3 in C minor*, better known as the **Organ Symphony**, ((<https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2014/feb/25/symphony-guide-saint-saens-organ-tom-service>)) was composed in the same year as *Carnival* and employed thematic transformation – a technique employed by Beethoven and continued by Liszt and Berlioz.

The composer himself described it as an example of “the progress of modern instrumentation”.

The symphony, with its famous melody and glorious finale, was commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society and premiered at St James's Hall in London on May 19, 1886, in a concert attended by the future Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.

Saint-Saëns was also there that evening, and not simply as composer – and, indeed, conductor. He also performed as the soloist in Beethoven's *Piano Concerto in G major*.

**Did you know? Saint-Saëns made his debut as a concert pianist aged 11 – and as an encore he offered to play any one of Beethoven's 32 piano concertos from memory.**

Listen to the finale of *Symphony No 3 in C minor*.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq\\_jzx-gLBk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq_jzx-gLBk)