

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra February 29 programme complementary content

In our dreams we've all heard the perfect melody, but only Anton Bruckner actually woke up and wrote it down.

It's right there at the start of his Seventh Symphony; a gateway to glowing vistas, stunning landscapes and towering Alpine peaks.

Domingo Hindoyan adores it, and it's a magical way to follow the gloriously tuneful *Violin Concerto* by Erich Korngold, the Viennese prodigy who made it big in Hollywood.

Our Young Artist in Residence Johan Dalene brings romance without limits.

Johan Dalene interview

[Johan Dalene](#) has a particular memory of his first visit to Liverpool last spring – and not just because he enjoyed a successful performance of Barber's *Violin Concerto* in the city one of his favourite football teams calls home.

It turns out it was also his first concert outing with [the 1725 'Duke of Cambridge' Stradivarius](#) which was previously played by 19th Century composer and violinist Louis Spohr among others.

The young Swedish-Norwegian virtuoso had not long picked up the instrument – on generous loan from Oslo's [Anders Sveeas' Almennyttige Fond](#) – and had only spent a week or two practicing on it at home in Stockholm before he flew to Liverpool.

"It takes time to get to know [an instrument] but it felt quite good already in the beginning," he recalls. "And of course, you have to adjust a lot of things; I feel like I had to adjust my playing, in a good way, with this violin. I feel like this violin has so many opportunities, I've learned quite a lot from it, with where the sound comes for instance; it has a really sweet, soulful sound, a really interesting sound – in my opinion anyway.

"It felt good. I was still unsure if I was going to play the concert [with it] or not, but felt it was best to start. And then in the Hall, it felt much better because I think the instrument opens up in a hall, more than when I was just in my room at home."

A year on, both Dalene and the 'Duke of Cambridge' are returning to Hope Street, with the violinist appearing twice on stage here as this season's Young Artist in Residence.

His first concert features Korngold's glorious *Violin Concerto* in D major. The last time the work was played on the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall stage was in 2022 when, coincidentally, the soloist was this season's Artist in Residence, Simone Lamsma.

Dalene learned the concerto during the Covid pandemic, and before this spring had only given one public performance of it – with the Arctic Philharmonic in Tromsø.

"I think it's a fantastic piece," he says on a Zoom call from a snowy Stockholm. "It's very fresh, and it feels youthful. The whole thing is very difficult and demanding. But it should sound simple, even if it's super difficult. It doesn't sound like that when, for example, [\[Jascha\] Heifetz](#) [who premiered the work in 1947] plays it, it just sounds fun. So that's the challenge with this music.

“But also, the second movement is beautiful and quite intimate, although it has a bit of a weird middle section! It’s very romantic but also dramatic and I’m excited to play it in Liverpool.”

The son of a cellist father and pianist mother, when a four-year-old Dalene showed an interest in learning an instrument he was steered in the direction of the violin.

He went on to make his debut as a soloist with the [Norrköping Symphony Orchestra](#) at the age of seven, and three years later started studying with his current teacher, Professor Per Enoksson at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

Leaving aside a youthful dream of being a footballer, by the time he was 13 he had decided that he wanted to pursue a career as a violinist.

A BBC New Generation Artist from 2019-21, in 2022 he was also chosen as an ECHO Rising Star for 2021-22.

He says: “What I love about playing music, of course it’s not my own music that I’m playing but you still feel like you take the work and make it your own interpretation and your own thing. You try to develop your own style of playing, and that’s the thing I love most about playing the violin.”

Still only 23, Dalene rose to prominence five years ago when he took first prize in the prestigious [Carl Nielsen International Competition](#) held in Odense.

It was an [intense week](#) for the then teenager (who had still to graduate from high school), with [four different pieces](#) to perform in the competition, culminating in the final with Nielsen’s *Violin Concerto* itself.

“That competition was the first time I played that piece with an orchestra,” he recalls. “But I’ve played it every season, or every half year, since.”

He has also recorded the concerto, releasing it alongside his interpretation of the better-known Sibelius *Violin Concerto* on a CD which has garnered [acclaim](#) and awards including Classical Album of the Year at the [Swedish Grammis](#).

“Of course, Sibelius is an extraordinary piece, but Nielsen is also an extraordinary piece,” he points out. “And while people know the Nielsen, it’s not as famous as a lot of other violin concertos. And it’s a nice way to promote the piece because I love it so much.”

So much so, that when Dalene was discussing potential programmes for his Liverpool residency, he decided to include Nielsen’s 1911 work which he will perform with the Orchestra when he returns to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall [on April 11](#).

He explains: “What I love about the piece – and his music in general – is the humour that the music has. It’s humorous, it’s a sort of warm humour, it’s not totally weird or anything like that. My teacher always speaks about the Tivoli [Gardens] in Copenhagen. You could maybe say the concerto has some inspiration from rollercoasters, going down and up. But of course, the music still has seriousness, especially in the prelude. It’s also extremely elegant.”

He grins: “And it also has two cadenzas.”

Domingo Hindoyan

[Domingo Hindoyan](#) was born in Caracas in 1980 to a violinist father and a lawyer mother. He started his musical career as a violinist in the ground-breaking Venezuelan music education programme El Sistema.

He studied conducting at [Haute Ecole de Musique in Geneva](#), where he gained his masters, and in 2012 was invited to join the Allianz International Conductor's Academy, through which he worked with the London Philharmonic and the Philharmonia Orchestra and with conductors like Esa-Pekka Salonen and Sir Andrew Davis.

He was appointed first assistant conductor to [Daniel Barenboim](#) at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin in 2013 and in 2019, he took up a position as principal guest conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra.

In the same year, he made his debut with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and was appointed as the Orchestra's new Chief Conductor in 2020, taking up this position in September 2021. Last July he announced he had extended his contract until 2028.

Erich Korngold

While [Erich Korngold](#) may remain best known as one of early Hollywood's most **important and prolific composers**, he actually started his career thousands of miles away – and as a composer of highly-regarded operas and orchestral works.

At nine years old, the Moravia-born Korngold had been hailed 'a genius' by none other than [Mahler](#), and as a teenager his compositions were praised by Richard Strauss and Puccini among others.

In 1928, when he was still only 31, Korngold was voted – along with Schoenberg – as Austria's greatest living composer. Six years later, Korngold was invited to Hollywood to adapt Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for a film version of the Shakespeare play planned by Warner Brothers.

It not only saved the Jewish composer from the rise of Nazism in Europe, but it proved to be the start of a collaboration which would see Korngold create lush, swashbuckling **soundtracks** for some of the biggest movies of the 1930s and 40s, particularly those – like *Captain Blood*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* – starring Errol Flynn.

When the Second World War started, Korngold became an American citizen and spent the rest of his life living in Los Angeles where, eventually disillusioned with film scores, he started composing classical music once again.

The [Violin Concerto in D major](#) dates from this period, although its melody had been created several years earlier and included in the 1937 melodrama *Another Dawn* (starring, of course, Errol Flynn).

Did you know? Korngold's father Julius was a lawyer turned professional music critic who worked with the legendary Eduard Hanslick on *Die Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna.

Enjoy listening to Johan Dalene play Korngold's [Violin Concerto](#).

Anton Bruckner

Success took a long time to find [Anton Bruckner](#). In fact, it wasn't until he was on the cusp of his 60s that the Austrian-born composer – a deeply religious Catholic who often cut a shambolic appearance and lived in a notoriously disorganised and messy home – started to be recognised properly for his music.

In 1881, with his [Symphony No.4](#) premiered in Vienna to great acclaim, and having recently completed his *Symphony No.6*, he started work on a new piece which took two years to complete.

Its opening theme, carried by the cellos, came to Bruckner in a dream, while the composer also said the melody which winds through the adagio second movement arrived along with a premonition that [Wagner](#), whom he admired greatly and finally met in 1882, was about to die. A premonition that sadly all too soon came true.

From the time it was premiered in Leipzig in December 1884 to its composer's death 12 years later, Bruckner's [Seventh Symphony](#) proved a favourite with audiences and was performed at least 30 times – more, in fact, than any of his other monumental works.

Did you know? In 1871, as part of the London International Exhibition, Bruckner gave six recitals on the Royal Albert Hall's newly installed Henry Willis organ, playing Handel, Bach and some of his own work. It was a month after Liverpool organist WT Best had given the first recital on the huge instrument.

Listen to the opening movement of Bruckner's [Seventh Symphony](#).

About the Music

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957): Violin Concerto in D major, Op 35

1. Moderato nobile
2. Romance
3. Allegro assai vivace

Composed: 1945

First Performed: 15 February 1947, St Louis Symphony Orchestra, Jascha Heifetz (violin), cond. Vladimir Goldschmann

One of the most astonishing prodigies in musical history, Erich Wolfgang Korngold scored his first triumph at just thirteen when his ballet *Der Schneemann* ("The Snowman") stunned a Vienna audience, impressing even the Emperor, Franz Joseph. Things looked bright for quite a while, but then, alarmed by the rise of Nazism, Korngold moved to Hollywood in 1934 to compose scores for films. His concert works achieved limited success in the late 1940s, but Korngold's ripe late-Romantic style was going out of fashion. It was only in the last decades of the twentieth century that interest in his music truly began to surge. Now he regularly features in concert programmes all over the world.

The suggestion to write a Violin Concerto came from the violinist Bronislaw Huberman. Korngold dedicated it to a fellow Viennese émigré Alma Mahler, widow of Gustav Mahler, who had encouraged and helped him during his childhood. Given that Korngold had concentrated exclusively on film music during the Second World War, one might have expected him to turn his back on that glittering, richly emotive sound world when returning to the concert hall. In fact, he did quite the opposite. Not only does Korngold rework themes from his film scores in the Violin Concerto, the sumptuous orchestral palette – including gong, tubular bells, glockenspiel, vibraphone, xylophone and celesta – vividly recalls atmospheric scenes in his great cinema

scores. Some of the solo writing is very challenging, but it is the violin's melodic soul that is on display, both in the tuneful *Moderato nobile*, and in the exquisite, dreamlike slow movement that follows – 'Romance' is definitely the word. Virtuoso fireworks really begin in the jig-like finale, though with a sound instinct for popular impact, Korngold keeps the best and brightest for the end.

Anton Bruckner (1824-96): Symphony No 7 in E major

1. Allegro moderato
2. Adagio: Sehr feierlich und sehr langsam [Very solemn and slow]
3. Scherzo: Sehr schnell [Very fast] - Trio: Etwas langsamer [Somewhat slower] - Scherzo
4. Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht schnell [Lively, but not fast]

Composed: 1881-3

First Performed: 30 December 1884, Leipzig Opera House, Gewandhaus Orchestra, cond. Arthur Nikisch

The Seventh is Bruckner's warmest, most melodically generous symphony, with moments of visionary serenity unmatched anywhere outside his beautiful church works. It was begun in 1881, a time when, after a long period of ridicule and neglect in his adopted city, Vienna, the premiere of his Fourth Symphony had brought him his first taste of real success. Hugely encouraged, Bruckner composed one of his most grandly affirmative works, the choral-orchestral *Te Deum*, and began sketching the Seventh Symphony. He later revealed that its wonderful opening theme came to him in a dream: a friend played the theme on a viola, adding "This will bring you success". His friend was right: the premiere of the Seventh Symphony in December 1884 - significantly, not in conservative Vienna, but in the more culturally progressive German city of Leipzig - was one of the greatest triumphs of Bruckner's life. 'How is it possible', wrote one critic, 'that he could remain unknown to us for so long?'

That long, arching opening theme does indeed have a dreamlike quality, but no dream can last forever, and soon a melancholy second theme (oboe and clarinet) aspires to recover lost glory, only to be supplanted by an earthy dance tune. Memories of Bruckner's original vision alternate with moments of doubt. The promise is fulfilled only at the end when, above a hushed drumroll, a phrase from the visionary first theme strives heavenward, then a long, increasingly radiant crescendo leads us into blazing light.

It's said that Bruckner composed the magnificent Adagio when he realised that his musical idol Richard Wagner hadn't long to live. The noble first theme, featuring a quartet of so-called 'Wagner tubas', yields in time to a lovely, lighter second theme on violins. Eventually the first theme returns with smoky rising figures on violins, building to a magnificent, cymbal-topped climax. Then the light fades, and tubas and horns sing a magnificent elegy for Bruckner's dead hero, and the Adagio concludes in peace.

The Scherzo third movement has its roots deep in Bruckner's native Upper Austrian soil: pounding rural dance rhythms build excitingly to elemental climaxes, and the central Trio section brings gentler pastoral lyricism. Unusually for Bruckner, the Finale is the lightest of the four movements. Excitement builds towards the end until, at last, Bruckner reveals that the finale's dancing first theme is simply the Symphony's 'visionary' opening motif in disguise. We have come full circle.