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Schumann & Mozart

13-15 November 2025

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Schumann & Mozart

With Anthony Marwood

Thursday 13 November, 2pm The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

Friday 14 November, 2pm City Halls, Glasgow

Saturday 15 November, 7.30pm Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries

SCHUMANN Overture, Scherzo and Finale

MOZART Violin Concerto No.1 in B-flat

Interval of 20 minutes

HANDEL Overture, Agrippina

SCHUMANN Violin Concerto in D minor

Anthony Marwood director/violin



4 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5AB
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What You Are About To Hear

SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Overture, Scherzo and Finale, Op.52
(1841 revised.1845)

MOZART (1756-1791)

Violin Concerto No.1 in B major, K.207
(1773)

Allegro moderato
Adagio
Presto

HANDEL (1685-1759)

Overture, Agrippina, HWV6
(1709)

SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Violin Concerto in D minor, WoO23
(1853)

In kräftigem, nicht zu schnellem Tempo
Langsam
Lebhaft, doch nicht schnell

High drama, youthful exuberance and a scarcely believable backstory come together amid the musical evocations of today's wide-ranging programme, which takes us from the opera houses of Venice to the court of Salzburg and even – indirectly, at least – into the dark days of Nazi Germany.

We begin, however, in Leipzig, and in 1841, just a year after the long-awaited and longed-for marriage between Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck. Clara's father Friedric had long been Robert's piano teacher, and he'd effectively forbidden the relationship between his student and his daughter (all the more tricky, in fact, since he'd previously invited Robert into their home as a live-in tenant). In response to the ban, Robert had begun legal proceedings, but eventually married Clara the day before her 21st birthday (when she wouldn't have needed her father's permission anyway). Their union spurred the composer into celebratory creativity: in quick succession, he produced today's opening work, two symphonies (now numbered 1 and 4) and the *Phantasie* for piano and orchestra that would later become the first movement of his Piano Concerto.

At one stage, Schumann even referred to the Overture, Scherzo and Finale as his 'Symphony No.2', and (perhaps more convincingly) as a 'Sinfonietta'. Its three movements do effectively form a symphony (albeit a somewhat lightweight one) without a slow movement, though he offered the piece to his Leipzig publisher Hofmeister as an orchestral suite, stressing that its individual movements could be played separately if desired. Nonetheless, he'd devised their styles and characters – as well as thematic links between them – so



Robert Schumann

The dazzling, tarantella-like Finale contains some of the fastest music that Schumann ever wrote, with flickering colours in its inventive scoring and no shortage of contrapuntal ingenuity in its central development section.

that they clearly belonged together as an unusual, compact trilogy of pieces full of charm, drama and emotion.

The dark, dramatic slow introduction that kicks off the opening Overture contrasts a yearning violin theme with a more aggressive outburst from the cellos, basses and bassoons, and when Schumann's brighter, faster main music bursts in, its dashing opening melody clearly looks back to that rather gruff opening. The Scherzo is based around a driving, dotted dum-di-dum rhythm that he maintains virtually throughout, and which informs the movement's gently galloping main theme, interrupted by hunting calls from the horns. Those unstoppable rhythms suddenly drop away during the movement's more lyrical central trio section, which returns to bring the movement to its conclusion. The

dazzling, tarantella-like Finale contains some of the fastest music that Schumann ever wrote, with flickering colours in its inventive scoring and no shortage of contrapuntal ingenuity in its central development section.

For today's second piece, we leap back in time around seven decades from Schumann's proto-symphony, heading south from Leipzig to Salzburg, where the teenage Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had gained his first salaried employment as a court musician to the city's ruler, Prince Archbishop Hieronymus Colloredo (whom he'd quickly grow to despise). As concertmaster, Mozart was expected to produce and perform entertaining violin concertos: five of them remain, and there may well have been others that have since been lost.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1773

(Painting by Martin Knoller)

We might reasonably think of Mozart as a keyboard player, but it's easy to forget that he was equally gifted on the violin, writing 33 sonatas for the instrument as well as the five concertos.

We might reasonably think of Mozart as a keyboard player, but it's easy to forget that he was equally gifted on the violin, writing 33 sonatas for the instrument as well as the five concertos. His father Leopold was one of the period's most esteemed string players, and author of an influential treatise on violin technique that's still in use to this day. Young Wolfgang had studied violin with him since the age of six, and his father later wrote to the young man: 'you are not quite aware yourself of what an excellent violinist you are, when you gather up all your strength and play with self-confidence, verve and fire.'

It was long thought that all five of Mozart's violin concertos date from 1775, when the composer was 19, but more recently it's been established that his First Violin Concerto was written two years earlier,

making it his first entirely original concerto for any instrument (he'd written earlier keyboard concertos, but they were reworkings of other composers' music). That said, by this stage Mozart had already composed around 20 symphonies and seven operas, so he hardly counted as a novice.

Indeed, he seems to have wanted to show off his early compositional dexterity in this First Violin Concerto. All three movements – very unusually – are in sonata form, the elaborate musical structure of the time that pits two contrasting melodies against each other, develops them together, then reconciles them at the end. A brief orchestral introduction establishes the first movement's main material before the soloist launches into an elegant solo line. The second movement – the longest of the three – makes clear the immersion in opera



George Frideric Handel

He arrived there as a virtual unknown but departed in 1710 as ‘il caro Sassone’ (‘the beloved Saxon’), so deeply fond were Italian audiences of his creations, especially his operas.

that Mozart had already experienced, and the dashing finale makes great play of its surprisingly light, transparent orchestration, which serves to emphasise the soloist’s athletic prowess.

We leap further back in time – to Venice in 1709, to be precise – for the concert’s next piece. George Frideric Handel (or, more correctly at that time, Georg Friedrich Händel) was born in Halle and lived most of his life in England, but spent around four formative years in what’s now Italy in his early 20s. He arrived there as a virtual unknown but departed in 1710 as ‘il caro Sassone’ (‘the beloved Saxon’), so deeply fond were Italian audiences of his creations, especially his operas. *Agrippina* was one of them: it ran for an astonishing 27 consecutive performances at Venice’s Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo during

the winter carnival season of 1709-10, where it was nothing short of a sensation. The composer’s first biographer, John Mainwaring, later remembered: ‘the audience was so enchanted with *Agrippina* that the theatre at almost every pause, resounded with shouts and acclamations of *viva il caro Sassone!* and other expressions of approbation too extravagant to be mentioned. They were thunderstruck with the grandeur and sublimity of his style: for never had they known till then all the powers of harmony and modulation so closely arrayed, and so forcibly combined.’

Handel’s storyline certainly helped. In some ways a prequel to Claudio Monteverdi’s earlier opera *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, *Agrippina* is a Roman drama of schemes and subterfuge, whose eponymous (anti-) heroine uses every means at her disposal to

place her son Nero on the Roman throne. Its bold Sinfonia (or overture) serves to set up the opera's drama, using – admittedly – quite a lot of material recycled from Handel's earlier scores. After a sturdy, striding opening, to which rushing rising scales add even more theatricality, Handel breaks off for some scurrying counterpoint, an emotive oboe solo, a few sudden and dramatic stops, another oboe solo, and a decisive conclusion. It's bracing, audacious and unpredictable, just like the opera's subject matter itself.

Sitting in the audience at one of the Venice performances were Baron Kielmansegg of Hanover and Prince Ernst, the brother of the Elector of Hanover, who'd caught wind of Handel's Italian successes. As a result of their favourable reports, the musician was quickly offered a high-ranking new role at the court of Hanover, whose Elector would, a few years later, become King George I of Britain – and the rest, as they say, is history.

There's more than a little intrigue and drama, too, behind today's final piece. Indeed, Schumann's sole Violin Concerto has one of the strangest backstories in all of classical music, one that brings together madness and messages from the afterlife, Nazis and venomous music critics, and esoteric manuscripts hidden in dusty archives. Whether the tale behind the piece even overshadows the fragile lyricism and delicate virtuosity of the Concerto itself – well, we'll come to that.

The early 1840s – when he composed today's opening Overture, Scherzo and Finale – were in many ways the creative high point of Schumann's career. He was a fragile, sensitive man, prone to mood swings, and a move to Düsseldorf in 1850 to

take on the role of Municipal Music Director proved a professional and personal disaster, one from which he'd never truly recover. The period during which he composed his Violin Concerto in 1853, however, would prove something of a turning point for Schumann and his family: following increasingly worrying auditory hallucinations, he'd attempt suicide in 1854 by throwing himself in the Rhine, and would end his days in 1856 in the small sanatorium of Endenich, near Bonn, aged just 46. It's now speculated that he may have suffered from bipolar disorder or even schizophrenia – about which little was understood, of course, in the middle of the 19th century.

Schumann had, however, completed the Violin Concerto before his mental collapse, and had presented it to its dedicatee, the eminent violinist and family friend Joseph Joachim. The violinist had even arranged a private play-through with the Hanover Court Orchestra (which he led), so that Schumann could hear his music, but had stopped short of performing the piece publicly.

After the composer's death, however, the question arose as to the unpremiered Concerto's future. Joachim offered his opinion that the piece might have been a product of Schumann's declining mental state, and admitted that he felt uncomfortable about performing it – and, indeed, about the piece being performed at all. Robert's widow Clara was inclined to agree, as was close family friend and fellow composer Johannes Brahms. As a result, the Violin Concerto was omitted from a complete edition of Schumann's music compiled after his death, and its manuscript was deposited in Berlin's State Library, with the stipulation that the music should not be played or published until at least a



Jelly d'Arányi

Through a 'glass game' that was essentially what we'd call a ouija board, d'Arányi was told to seek out an unpublished work – and later directed to a Berlin library, where it was held.

century after Schumann's death. This would theoretically take us to 1956.

More than two decades earlier than that 'release' year, however, things took a decidedly spooky turn. Jelly d'Arányi was an internationally admired violinist at the time, born in Hungary but resident in London, and great-niece of Joachim. She was also a passionate devotee of spiritualism, and at a séance in 1933 she was apparently contacted by the spirit of none other than Robert Schumann. Through a 'glass game' that was essentially what we'd call a ouija board, d'Arányi was told to seek out an unpublished work – and later directed to a Berlin library, where it was held.

The Concerto manuscript was duly found, and, despite protestations from Robert and Clara's youngest daughter Eugenie

(then in her 80s) that her mother had not wanted it to be played, d'Arányi convinced Mainz music publishers Schott to look into its authenticity, in the hope that they might eventually publish it. D'Arányi herself was keen to give its premiere, and when Schott contacted none other than Yehudi Menuhin for his views on the manuscript, he was equally enthusiastic about being the first to perform the Concerto.

In the end, however, neither d'Arányi nor Menuhin would be given that honour. This being 1930s Germany, the Nazi authorities kept a keen eye on cultural comings and goings. When Joseph Goebbels' Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda got wind of a major rediscovered Concerto by an unquestionably German, Aryan composer, they considered it theirs. In the end, the Concerto's first ever performance was given

by violinist Georg Kulenkampff and the Berlin Philharmonic in Berlin in November 1937, in the presence of Adolf Hitler himself.

The story doesn't end there. D'Arányi gave the Concerto its British premiere at the Queen's Hall in London, in February 1938 but the previous autumn, a book had been published detailing the strange circumstances of the piece's rediscovery. The reaction from critics and commentators was one of disbelief, derision and outrage. And the central accusation was simple: the Concerto had never been 'lost', since a handful of people (including Eugenie Schumann) did know of its existence and location, and that the whole incident had been engineered to revive d'Arányi's flagging career. It took an intervention from Sir Donald Francis Tovey – then Reid Professor of Music at the University of Edinburgh, and a much-loved musical scholar – to step in, defend d'Arányi, and effectively rehabilitate her reputation.

Perhaps not surprisingly, it's taken a while for Schumann's Violin Concerto to establish itself in the repertoire. Early critics were not generally favourable: 'of this dismal fiasco, the less said the better' was the view of one in Britain. But it's hard, too, to deny the impact of its bizarre, unfortunate origin story, and the fact that details about its creation and 'rediscovery' might have simply overshadowed the music itself. After all, we've just spent several paragraphs mulling over those very details.

Is the Concerto the product of a declining mind? Ultimately, it's up to the listener to decide. It's not without its rather baffling aspects. The solo part, for example, is extremely challenging for the violinist, but doesn't sound terribly virtuosic to the

listener. The finale has to be kept at a slower tempo than might perhaps be expected, or else certain solo passages would become unplayable. It's also, maybe, conceived on more of a symphonic scale than the more modest, soloist-centric proportions of a more conventional concerto.

But it's perhaps elements such as its symphonic ambitions that make Schumann's Violin Concerto such a fascinating, compelling piece, as well as the composer's linking of its movements through recurring but transformed themes. If its backstory threatens to overshadow the piece in our own times, then perhaps the same was true for Clara Schumann, Joachim and Brahms. Did their decision to suppress the piece have more to do with its painful associations with Schumann's mental decline than concerns that were purely musical? Again, it's up to the listener to decide.

In any case, Schumann's Violin Concerto is anything but bland or forgettable. It opens with a powerful, muscular theme for the orchestra, followed by a far gentler, more lyrical second main theme, shared between violins and flutes. The soloist takes a slightly more introspective view on the bold opening theme when they enter, though they stress the Concerto's symphonic credentials by foregoing a traditionally showy solo cadenza.

After the hushed warmth of the slower, second movement *Intermezzo*, Schumann leads without a break into the strutting rhythms of the concluding polonaise, which makes for a surprisingly gentle but nonetheless characterful close to the Concerto.

© David Kettle

Director/violin

Anthony Marwood MBE



Anthony Marwood enjoys a wide-ranging international career as a soloist, director, and chamber musician. Recent solo highlights include performances with the Hallé Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Concerto Budapest, Adelaide Symphony, Boston Symphony, St Louis Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, New World Symphony, London Philharmonic, Spanish National Orchestra, and Sydney Symphony. He has worked with conductors such as Valery Gergiev, Sir Andrew Davis, Thomas Søndergård, Andrew Manze, David Robertson, Gerard Korsten, Ilan Volkov, Jaime Martín, Douglas Boyd, Mark Wigglesworth, and Chloé van Soeterstède.

Highlights of the 2025–26 season include performances with the Ulster Orchestra, Göttingen Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, alongside engagements in Australia and New Zealand with UKARIA, Sydney Conservatorium, Snow Concert Hall, At the World's Edge Festival, and the Adelaide Festival.

As director and soloist, Anthony is a frequent collaborator with many of the world's leading chamber orchestras, including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Irish Chamber Orchestra, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Les Violons du Roy, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

Studying at London's Royal Academy of Music and Guildhall School of Music & Drama, with teachers Emanuel Hurwitz and David Takeno, Marwood now divides his time between Sussex and Koringberg, South Africa. He is co-Artistic Director of the Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival in East Sussex, performs annually at the Yellow Barn Festival in Vermont, and enjoys close associations with the Australian National Academy of Music in Melbourne and UKARIA Cultural Centre in Adelaide. Appointed William Lawes Chair of Chamber Music at the Royal Academy of Music in 2022, he was also awarded an MBE in the 2018 Queen's New Year Honours List and made a Fellow of the Guildhall School of Music. Anthony plays a violin by Antonio Stradivari, the 1709 'ex Scotta-Kaulbach, Kempner' (Cremona), on loan from UKARIA following a gift from a generous Australian benefactor. He uses a bow by Joseph René LaFleur.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk

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The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, Lorenza Borrani and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

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