

Musical Treasure Chest #50

Musicians of Ma'alwyck has been hard at work on our Scottish program for WAMC's *Open for Takeout* on Monday, April 5th. This program is a combination of traditional popular Scottish music, such as "Your Love is Like a Red, Red Rose" and "Annie Laurie," paired with some less familiar vocal gems and a set of great instrumental music from mid 1700s. We are really excited about the program, and we certainly hope you will tune in (8pm, and you will need to go on line at WAMC.org). But as we prepared this program, I was reminded how much I enjoy Scottish music (perhaps because my lineage includes McDonalds and Gregories). I guess I am in good company: Mendelssohn certainly loved Scotland and musically captured its beauty and ruggedness in his Scottish Symphony (No. 3) and Hebrides (Fingal's Cave) Overture. And I love the music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, a particular favorite is *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise*, just a brilliant composition. But one of the works I hold most dear is the Violin Concerto of Max Bruch known as the *Scottish Fantasy*.

Bruch is remembered for only a handful of works today, of which the Violin Concerto No 1 in G minor (1866) and Kol Nidrei (1880) for violoncello and orchestra are probably the best known. But Bruch was a prolific composer writing operas, choral works, lieder, and symphonic works. Bruch was a pianist, not a violinist, yet he left no piano concerti, and his first violin concerto remains in popularity on a par with the violin concerti of Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms. He was also a well-respected composition teacher at the Berlin Academy of Music and a sought-after conductor, who held orchestral posts in Mannheim, Bonn, Berlin and even Liverpool, England.

The year before **Bruch** took the position in Liverpool (1880), he had access to the collection of Scottish music manuscripts in the Munich library, which fired up his creative powers. The ***Scottish Fantasy*** was completed in early 1880. Though Bruch had help with the writing from violinist Joseph Joachim, who also gave the premiere in February of 1881 (with Bruch as conductor with the Liverpool Philharmonic). Bruch was extremely disappointed with Joachim's performance and

subsequent performances were given by the great Spanish virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate, to whom Bruch eventually dedicated the concerto. With a design of four rather than the normal three movements, each features a traditional Scottish melody, including “Through the Wood Laddie,” “The Dusty Miller,” “I’m A’ Doun for Lack O’ Johnnie,” and “Scot’s, Wha Hae.”

I first heard this concerto on a recording with Jascha Heifetz. I was overwhelmed, it’s an incredible performance, with virtuosic playing paired with great exuberance. I have heard many other recordings, but this one really set the bar for me and I still love it today—I never tire of hearing the opening to the fourth movement. I hope you will enjoy it too.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQb_JdRzou0&list=RDyQb_JdRzou0&start_radio=1&t=1136