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West Cork Chamber Music Festival 2021

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presents

Bantry and Beyond

Festival Echoes

18. Citizens of Everywhere (1)

Filmed at Studio 150 Bethlehemkerk, Amsterdam

Mairéad Hickey [violin]

Ella van Poucke [cello]

Kodály

Duo for violin and cello

Schulhoff

Duo for Violin and Cello

Finola Merivale

The silent sweep as you stand still

FESTIVAL COMMISSION

Zoltán Kodály [1882-1967]

Duo for violin and cello Op.7 [1914]

1. *Allegro serioso, non troppo*
2. *Adagio*
3. *Maestoso e largamente, ma non troppo lento – Presto*

Zoltán Kodály was on holiday in the Alps in July 1914 and, on the outbreak of war, was forcibly evacuated as all the hotels were closing down. In the resulting confusion he was stuck for several days at Feldkirch on the Austrian border, where he wrote the first movement of his Duo Sonata in a school music exercise book. Everything about this gripping work is both magnificent and strange, you can hear the towering mountains and the advent of War closing in as the composer rides roughshod over all established musical conventions creating fascinating challenges for these two young star performers.

Kodály was a contemporary and fellow-student of Bartók and shared his obsession with Hungarian folk music. They both toured the countryside studying, transcribing and recording hundreds of folksongs and, in their different ways, they both incorporated their resulting sense of the nation's musical speech into their writing. Kodály later founded the Institute of Folk Music Research of the Hungarian Academy of Science, which now has categorised records of over 100,000 folksongs of the people of Hungary and of surrounding and related countries.

Not surprisingly, Kodály's compositional output is dominated by around 150 works for unaccompanied chorus, but his fascination with the intonation and rhythms of language translated into a small but remarkable body of instrumental writing which displays a preoccupation with enabling instruments not only to sing his ideas but to speak them in an eloquent kind of recitative.

The first movement finds us caught up in a vibrant dialogue in which the two voices alternately accompany and comment on the other's thoughts; disagreements begin to emerge and are voiced with increasing passion until a resolution leads to a restatement of the opening material. This time we are led to the close of the movement with a quiet sense of optimism.

The singing opening of the Adagio creates an aura of eerie beauty that gives way to an impassioned central section in which the conflicts of the first movement arise again; but soon the instruments reunite and sing together through a series of varied recitatives until the opening song reappears. The movement draws to an end with a sense of wearied resignation. The last movement is full of snatches of folk-song, sometimes with bustling, vigorous accompaniment, sometimes presented with a stark simplicity. This unique work with its many moods ends with a presto, climactic flourish.

Christopher Marwood

Erwin Schulhoff [1894-1942]

Duo for Violin and Cello [1925]

1. *Moderato*
2. *Zingaresca*
3. *Andantino*
4. *Moderato*

Schulhoff was one of the many composers murdered by the Nazis in the concentration camps. He was both Jewish and Marxist as well as a jazz pianist and a composer of *Entartete Musik* so he stood no chance. He earned a temporary reprieve by becoming a Soviet citizen, which saved him when the Germans occupied Prague in 1938 but cost him his life when the Soviet Union was attacked in 1941. He came from a family of Prague musicians and was a prodigious pianist as well as a self-taught composer. As a virtuoso player he promoted music written by his contemporaries, overcoming Czech-German differences in Prague and through his brilliance at improvisation making contact with jazz. The rise of the Nazis led him to become a Marxist.

His Duo was written three years after the premiere of Ravel's masterpiece but he brings his own original voice to this unusual combination. It begins quietly with a sinuous theme, which dominates the movement. Its calm progress is punctuated by brief distractions, such as a short rhythmic episode and a ferocious wild outburst. The coda achieves an impressive calm as it climbs out of hearing into ethereal harmonics. The gypsy movement is exhilarating with its typically exotic dance and opportunities for virtuoso display. The gentle muted song of the Andantino is played against a pizzicato accompaniment, the song a reminder of the opening moderato. This is again recalled in the closing movement along with the harmonics. The final hectic gallop is heralded by a series of powerful chords before the race to the finish.

Francis Humphrys

Finola Merivale [born 1987]

The silent sweep as you stand still [2020]

I have composed a lot during the pandemic, but this is the first piece I have written in 2020 that contemplates the lockdown and the virus. The title refers literally to how it is still sweeping across the world, even though, for the most part, we're barely moving around or travelling. It also refers to the anxiety that so many are feeling during the lockdown. *The Silent Sweep* was commissioned by West Cork Music when I was Composer in Residence at Centre Culturel Irlandais in Autumn 2020. It was premiered virtually on 29 December 2020 with a filmed performance by Mairéad Hickey and Bruno Philippe in the Library at Centre Culturel Irlandais.

Finola Merivale

Thank you for watching