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West Cork Chamber Music Festival 2021

with

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presents

Bantry and Beyond

Encore

30. Divertimento

Filmed at the Studio Boerne⁴⁵, Berlin

Rosanne Philippens [violin]

Julien Quentin [piano]

J.S. Bach

Violin Sonata in B minor BWV 1014

Stravinsky

Divertimento

J.S. Bach

Violin Sonata in E major BWV 1016

J.S.Bach [1685-1750]

Violin Sonata in B minor BWV1014 [1720-25]

1. *Adagio*
2. *Allegro*
3. *Andante*
4. *Allegro*

Violin Sonata in E major BWV1016 [1720-25]

1. *Adagio*
2. *Allegro*
3. *Adagio ma non tanto*
4. *Allegro*

Bach's sonatas for violin and harpsichord are less well-known than his solo Sonatas and Partitas. In 1774 his son, CPE.Bach, praised the accompanied sonatas extravagantly: '*The six harpsichord trios are amongst the finest works of my dearly beloved father. They still sound excellent and give me great pleasure although they are over 50 years old [!!]. There are several Adagios in them which even nowadays could not be set in a more singing style.*' By trio sonata CPE referred to the three voices – violin, harpsichordist's right hand and the bass played by the left hand with optional support of a viola da gamba, though not in this performance.

The earliest source for these works describes them as '*sonatas for obbligato harpsichord and solo violin with a bass accompanied by a viola da gamba if you like*'. They were written while he was Capellmeister at Cöthen for the music-loving Prince Leopold, who had brought together a highly distinguished ensemble to work with Bach. The presence of these outstanding musicians like Joseph Spiess and Christian Abel inspired much of Bach's solo instrumental works. It is interesting to note that these sonatas were among the very first works published in the Nineteenth Century's Bach revival.

Unlike some Baroque composers Bach's music translates to modern instruments without blinking. Earlier in our series of Festival concerts you could have heard this E major Sonata played on period instruments, where it (quite correctly) sounded like another work from another era.

Francis Humphrys

Igor Stravinsky [1882-1971]

Divertimento for Violin and Piano [arr Samuel Dushkin] [1928/34]

1. *Sinfonia – Andante*
2. *Danses Suisse – Tempo giusto*
3. *Scherzo – Allegretto grazioso*
4. *Pas de deux – Adagio, Variation, Coda*

Stravinsky's Divertimento is a condensed version of his 1928 ballet score, *Le Baiser de la Fée* (*The Fairy's Kiss*, Allegorical Ballet in Four Tableaux, inspired by the Muse of Tchaikovsky). The ballet falls into Stravinsky's neo-classical period while borrowing themes and inspiration from the great Russian ballet composer. The music spikes Tchaikovsky's opulent melodies with the dissonances of the Twenties. In 1932 Stravinsky and the violinist, Samuel Dushkin, arranged the score for violin and piano for use by Dushkin and himself. Several years later he reiterated it as an orchestral Suite.

The original ballet music is prime Stravinsky largely based on lesser Tchaikovsky. Only two Tchaikovsky works are used complete, the rest are excerpts. Most are taken from little known songs and piano miniatures. Stravinsky claimed he could not remember whose music was whose as much of the original Tchaikovsky is totally transformed. The Divertimento arrangement is most probably by Dushkin.

The story of the ballet is taken from Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ice Maiden*. Stravinsky summarised the plot: 'A fairy imprints her magic kiss on a child at birth and parts it from its mother. Twenty years later when the youth has attained the very zenith of good fortune, she repeats the fatal kiss and carries him off.'

The tale takes place in the valleys and mountains of Switzerland where the Ice Maiden dwells. A young, recently bereaved mother is struggling through the snow with her infant son and falls into the fatal clutches of the Ice Maiden, who implants her kiss on the child before he is rescued – *he is mine and I will send for him*. The child is taken in by his relations and grows up to become an impossibly brave and agile young man, who convinces the rich miller to let him marry his beautiful daughter, which the villagers celebrate with *Danses Suisses*. The celebrations are interrupted by a gypsy fortune-teller, whose touch unsettles our hero. A *Pas de deux* see the lovers dance together before the bride leaves to prepare for the ceremony and the Ice Maiden takes her place, momentarily deceiving the bridegroom. A second fatal kiss destroys him and she carries him away to her palaces of ice, while the miller's daughter waits in vain.

Francis Humphrys

Thank you for watching