

**West Cork Chamber Music Festival 2021**

with

**OurConcerts.live**

presents

**Bantry and Beyond**

***Encore***

**Moonlight**

Filmed at the Henry Wood Hall, London

**Michael McHale**

**Linda Buckley**

*Solas na Gealai – FESTIVAL PREMIERE*

**Beethoven**

*Sonata No.14 in C sharp minor Op.27/2 'Moonlight'*

**Áine Mallon**

*Raindrop Prelude – FESTIVAL PREMIERE*

**Beethoven**

*Sonata No.23 in F minor Op.57 'Appassionata'*

**Linda Buckley** [b.1979]  
***Solas na Gealaí*** [2020]

**Áine Mallon**  
***Raindrop Prelude*** [2020]

These two short pieces were commissioned by Moving on Music and composed for Michael McHale, to precede Beethoven's 'Moonlight' and 'Appassionata' Sonatas respectively. Both reflect a deep engagement with these two masterpieces and the inspiration and influence Beethoven continues to exert.

Buckley describes this piece as '*reimagining material from Beethoven's iconic Moonlight Sonata in a new and contemporary context.*' The title means 'moonlight' in Irish and anyone familiar with Beethoven's work will recognise the inspiration. The opening is clear and gentle, from which fragments of Beethoven begin to emerge, and while the overall sense of the piece remains 'Beethovenian,' Buckley's own creativity also shines through.

Mallon describes the piece as '*a precursor to one of Beethoven's most stormy and dynamic Piano Sonatas:*

*The glistening water calms me*

*The reflection of the clouded moon watches over deep waters filled with life, that will soon be disturbed from slumber*

*The wind skims the water and droplets start to fall, sweetly at first*

*They place themselves delicately on the water,  
 creating circular shapes in the undulating waves, adding to its energy,  
 little by little.*

*The rhythmical motion of the waves is hypnotising; its crash a comforting constant*

-- Áine Mallon, 2020

*Helen Dawson*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** [1770-1827]

***Sonata No.14 in C sharp minor Op.27/2, 'Moonlight'*** [1801]

1. *Adagio sostenuto, sempre piannissimo con sordino - attacca*

2. *Allegretto - attacca*

3. *Presto agitato*

The Adagio is one of those poems that human language does not know how to qualify. This was Berlioz' comment on the fabled opening movement. This Sonata is not only the most famous of the Beethoven sonatas, but it is a candidate for the most famous piece of serious

art music ever written. Its fame during the composer's lifetime, like that of the Septet, ended up irritating Beethoven, who felt it unjustly overshadowed far superior later works.

The Sonata was dedicated to the Countess Giulietta Guicciardi. Beethoven had been giving her piano lessons that year and she was probably the dear charming girl who loves me and whom I love, whom he referred to in a letter that autumn. She was for a long time thought to be the Immortal Beloved, but that famous letter has now been dated as being written in 1812 rather than 1801. There is no doubt that Beethoven the man longed for a wife, *'After two years I am again enjoying a few blissful moments; and for the first time I feel that - marriage might bring me happiness. Unfortunately she is not of my class - and at the moment - I certainly could not marry - I must still bustle about a good deal.'* But as we can see from this letter, he was adamant that he was in no position to marry. Years later he said of Countess Giulietta that she begged him to love her, but he rejected her – *'If I had wished to give the strength of my life to that life, what would have remained for the nobler, the better?'* Clearly Beethoven felt that he was condemned to live a solitary life if he was to fulfil his highest artistic ideals. So instead of marrying Giulietta he gave her, and us, the Moonlight Sonata.

The famous nickname of this sonata was coined after his death and is far from appropriate, the fury of the Presto finale is hardly anyone's image of romantic moonlight. The popularity of the first movement can easily distract from its remarkable originality. It was rare but not unprecedented to begin with a slow movement; the sonority and texture were, however, highly novel for a sonata. The movement resembles a romantic cavatina with its emphasis on an aria-like melody accompanied by patterned figuration, all swathed in a misty background caused by the absence of dampers throughout. The beginning reminds us of the Funeral March in the Op.26 sonata. It has the same mood of dire tragedy. The second movement follows immediately and provides a sharp contrast of mood, but its cheerfulness is a brief interlude before the furious finale bursts in. Here the triplets of the first movement are expanded into surging arpeggios that cover almost the whole keyboard, in a sonata-form movement that carries the main weight of the work. Beethoven's desire to create unity, continuity and forward thrust throughout the whole work finds new expression in this magnificent movement.

*Francis Humphrys*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** [1770-1827]

**Sonata No.23 in F minor Op.57, 'Appassionata'** [1806]

1. *Allegro assai*
2. *Andante con moto - attacca*
3. *Allegro, ma non troppo - Presto*

*We went so far astray that we did not get back to Döbling, where Beethoven lived, until nearly eight o'clock. The entire way he had hummed, or sometimes even howled, to himself - up and down, up and down, without singing any definite notes. When I asked what this was, he replied: 'A theme for the last Allegro of the sonata has occurred to me.' When we entered the room he rushed to the piano without taking off his hat. I took a seat in the corner and he soon forgot all about me. He stormed on for at least an hour with the new finale of this sonata, which is so beautiful. Finally he got up, was surprised to see me still there, and said: 'I cannot give you a lesson today. I still have work to do.'*

This report came from Ferdinand Ries in the autumn of 1804. The theme in question was one of his least singable, consisting of runs of semiquaver figuration, so it was no wonder Ries could not discern any notes. Normally Beethoven carried a notebook around with him and when he was without humming and howling had to suffice - doubtless increasing his reputation for wild eccentricity. Clearly at this stage of his life, his hearing was still good enough to enable him to compose at the piano, innumerable variants could be tried out much quicker than on paper. Even normally he had a reputation for absent-mindedness, but when immersed in composing at the piano, he became completely oblivious to his surroundings.

This sonata is Beethoven in heroic mode, marked by strength of character, intense emotion, powerful and concentrated rhythm, and all-embracing lyricism. Once again Beethoven opens with a motto theme, a pianissimo descending F minor triad, whose rhythm permeates the whole movement along with a repeated notes rhythm that is first heard unmistakably in the bass in the tenth bar. Once this second rhythmic idea is established we are hurled into a violent fortissimo counterstatement of the opening, which leads to the dolce second subject, one of the finest melodies he wrote and yet clearly related to the opening motto theme - a relationship that becomes more apparent as the movement progresses. However in such a violent world, beauty of this order is soon overwhelmed by the ferocity of its environment and the closing of the exposition verges on the brutal. Structurally there is a rigid symmetry to this movement, each of the four sections, exposition, development, recapitulation and coda, take up the themes in the same order and each is approximately the same length. Somehow, it is only in this way that the violence can be contained.

The D flat Andante con moto is a theme and set of three variations. The theme consists of a peaceful and almost static melody, which is built up layer by layer with increasingly

decorative and energetic variations - each variation doubles the speed and rises an octave. The final variation gives us a hint of where Beethoven is going to take the variation form in the last sonatas. The finale is reached without a break. Technically it is in sonata form with the whole of the development and recapitulation repeated and the presto coda introduces new material in simple two-phase binary form with repeats. But for most of us this movement is a raging sea of sound, exploiting violent contrasts of dynamics and a perpetuum mobile style, leaving us battered and exhausted after the final terrible bars.  
*Francis Humphrys*

*Thank you for watching*

*To see the other concerts available in Bantry and Beyond visit the Chamber Music Festival Programme on our website  
[www.westcorkmusic.ie/chambermusicfestival/programme/](http://www.westcorkmusic.ie/chambermusicfestival/programme/)*