



Dublin International Chamber Music Festival
Great Music in Irish Houses



Dublin International Chamber Music Festival

Great Music in Irish Houses

Message from Catherine Martin, TD Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media



The annual Great Music in Irish Houses Festival, newly renamed the Dublin International Chamber Music Festival, on its 51st year, will be streamed online through homes all over Ireland and around the world from Thursday, June 17th to Monday, June 21st.

This year, the Festival welcomes a host of Irish artists and international artists, as well as those with an Irish connection, and hosts a strong female representation in both the performing and composition fields. The Festival's two-tiered programme offers a splendid banquet of tantalising musical styles and melody across the five days. This will include a series of five concert performances featuring an outstanding array of artists, a rendition of WB Yeats' poem *The Cloths of Heaven* performed by the Carducci String Quartet and tenor, Robin Tritschler, and a world première of a work by Gráinne Mulvey, entitled *Great Women*, commissioned by the Festival with funds from The Arts Council.

Victor Hugo wrote "Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent". As this last year has been a globally challenging one, it is increasingly important to continue to communicate with this universal language and ensure that the importance of music is recognised and celebrated. I am, as always, delighted that my Department can continue to support this festival, and I would like to congratulate all those involved. I urge you to tune into some of these wonderful recitals and enjoy some of the outstanding Irish and international talent that will be available to you in your home.

The Dublin International Chamber Music Festival (Great Music in Irish Houses) is funded by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and is supported by the Office of Public Works and Culture Ireland.



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



OPW
Oifig na nObrechtaí
Office of Public Works



2021
↓

Finghin Collins, *piano*

Recorded at Farmleigh House
by kind permission of the Office of Public Works

Musical Moments from Morning to Night

MORNING

CÉCILE CHAMINADE (1857-1944) **Aubade Op 140**

It is reported that when Cécile Chaminade, at the age of seven, played a number of her pieces to Georges Bizet, the composer of *Carmen* was hugely impressed by her talents and advised her family to allow her continue her studies. Her initial piano lessons came from her mother at home and later at the Paris Conservatoire where composer Benjamin Godard (1849-1895) was one of her teachers.

She included a number of her own works at her first public recital when she was eighteen after which her music, of mostly characteristic piano pieces and salon songs, became enormously popular. In 1913 she was made a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur by the French Government, the first female composer to receive the award.

Her Andante tranquillo *Aubade*, built on a charmingly attractive melody, is a highly expressive reworking of an earlier piece from her *Album for the Young*.

AMY BEACH (1867-1944) **A Hermit Thrush at Morn Op 92 No 2**

Born in Henniker, New Hampshire, Amy Cheney made her concert début at sixteen and completed her musical studies in Boston. With its inspiration coming from English, Irish and Scottish melodies, the Boston Symphony gave the first performance of her *Gaelic Symphony* Op 32 on 30th October 1896.

She remained, more or less, out of the public limelight following her marriage to Boston surgeon Henry Harris Beach in 1885 but following his death in 1910, she resumed her public career and came into the full flowering of her

talent as a composer. The notably high standard she attained made her an inspirational model to many women in US music.

Her two *Hermit Thrush* Pieces Op 92 date from 1921 when she was staying at an artists' and musicians' retreat at Peterborough, New Hampshire. A 'most voluble' bird provided the melody for both pieces. Amy Beach noted it on paper and played it back to him. He would answer leading to a 'conversation' between them. She used the bird's tune as the basis for her pieces and in *A Hermit Thrush at Morn*, marked Quasi valse lente, its haunting song is heard three times while intervening motifs suggest the bird's high-soaring flight.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828) **Arr LEOPOLD GODOWSKY (1870-1938)** **Morgengruss - from *Die Schöne Müllerin* D 795/9**

Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* (The maid of the mill) – a cycle of twenty lieder – was published in 1823. The poet was Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827), who was born in Dessau and studied philology and history in Berlin. Following a period in the Prussian army Müller became a member of a circle of young Romantic poets. He had a gift of fluent and evocative verse and did a great deal in forging the links between poetry and music and often regarded his lyrics as drafts for songs. He is best remembered now as the author of the texts of Schubert's masterly song cycles *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*.

Schubert's setting of *Morgengruss* (Morning greeting) is said to be 'as fresh as the morning itself'. Marked Mässig (moderate) it is delicately expressive and has a contemplative air to it.

We hear an arrangement of *Morgengruss* by Leopold Godowsky, best remembered for his phenomenally difficult transcriptions. Born in Žasliai, near Kaunas in Central Lithuania, by the age of five he was extraordinarily proficient on both piano and violin and was also composing. He gave his first public recital when he was nine. One of the remarkable things about him was that he was largely self-taught.

Godowsky settled in New York in 1914 and following the end of WWI he returned to Europe many times on concert

and recital tours despite his dislike of public appearances and the recording studio. Strangely, it was in a recording studio in 1930 that he suffered a stroke leaving him partially paralyzed and deeply depressed. His obituary in *The New York Times* described him as 'a unique figure among all his contemporaries; a phenomenal pianist and musician of the most exceptional attributes'.

AFTERNOON

GERALD BARRY (1952-) **Arrogant Trespass: The Normans Landing at Barrow Strand (Midday) – No 3 from *The Ros Tapestry Suite****

Gerald Barry has kindly supplied the following note on his *Ros Tapestry* panel: "The piece is about people in the Wexford landscape of 1169 waiting for the Normans to land. Watching, listening, standing still, all ears for every sound, looking out to sea in a heightened state. The music is hushed and distant, the intense concentration of people on tenterhooks. It's as much about silence as sound. I see that the invading army included Robert de Barry, brother of Gerald de Barry who I know well. I set part of Gerald's *The Conquest of Ireland* for bass voice and orchestra in 1995". - GB

The exceptionally prolific Barry comes from Co Clare. He studied in Germany with Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mauricio Kagel, with Peter Schat in the Netherlands and Friedrich Cerha in Austria.

From his extensive catalogue come a number of orchestral works, with several commissions from the BBC, and to date a total of six operas including *The Intelligence Park*, *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*, written for Channel 4 television, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and the most recent, *Alice's Adventures under Ground*, staged in Covent Garden in February 2020 to rave reviews.

**The Ros Tapestry* is a fifteen-panel artwork telling the story of the coming of the Normans to Ireland in the 12th century and the foundation of the port and town of New Ross at the beginning of the next century. The Suite, commissioned in 2014 by the New Ross Piano Festival from fifteen Irish composers, shows each one's response to a given panel.

JOHN FIELD (1782-1837)
Nocturne No 18 in E major (Le Midi)

John Field was born in Golden Lane hardly more than a stone's throw away from the Chapel Royal in Dublin Castle. He made his début as a pianist at the age of nine and when the family moved to London in 1793 the lad began his studies with Muzio Clementi (1752-1832). Field later took a brief course in counterpoint with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809), Beethoven's teacher in Vienna.

He eventually settled in Moscow but his lifestyle and social behaviour reached extravagant levels on his extended tours throughout Europe. Field died, after a very colourful, if financially precarious, career, in Moscow on 23rd January 1837.

His exceptionally expressive Nocturnes, of which the strangely named *Le Midi* (Noonday) is a wonderful example, are among the most influential music of the early Romantic period. Much admired by Liszt and Chopin, Field's music pioneered episodic structure and Chopin's own Nocturnes took their inspiration from him.

EVENING

AMY BEACH (1867-1944)
A Hermit Thrush at Eve Op 92 No 1

Her two *Hermit Thrush* Pieces Op 92 date from 1921 when she was staying at an artists' and musicians' retreat at Peterborough, New Hampshire. A 'most voluble' bird provided the melody for both pieces. Amy Beach noted it on paper and played it back to him. He would answer leading to a 'conversation' between them. She used the bird's tune as the basis for her pieces and the *Molto lento* (con gran espressione) *A Hermit Thrush at Eve* depicts the bird's call late in the day being 'cloudy and twilight in mood'. It grows even darker as it concludes.

ERIC SWEENEY (1948-2020)
Evening: The Lighthouse at Hook – No 6 from
The Ros Tapestry Suite

"The tide slowly advancing – ripples of wind on the water – soft chords in contrary motion – rising arpeggios – distant

bells from the monastery. Chords gradually expanding, becoming louder and faster as the wind rises and the tide advances. Chords continue in the right hand/left hand. Right hand more agitated. Ascending and descending arpeggios and chords collide as the waves crash over the boat. The monastery bell becoming more urgent. Coda: the boat finally reaches the shelter of the estuary. Gentle rocking of the waves – the contrary motion chords of the opening return – swaying cross-rhythms between the hands – plainchant of the monks at Evening Prayer (*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*). ES

Dublin-born Eric Sweeney spent the greater part of his life in Waterford where he was Head of Music at the city's Institute of Technology from 1981 until his retirement in 2010. He was organist at Waterford's Christ Church Cathedral for many years. He had previously lectured at Dublin's College of Music and TCD and was RTE's choral director for three years from 1978. A member of Aosdána, he was, at various times, composer-in-residence at a number of universities in North America. A versatile composer, his 2014 opera *The Invader* celebrated the 1,100th anniversary of the founding of Waterford city.

**The Ros Tapestry* is a fifteen-panel artwork telling the story of the coming of the Normans to Ireland in the 12th century and the foundation of the port and town of New Ross at the beginning of the next century. The Suite, commissioned in 2014 by the New Ross Piano Festival from fifteen Irish composers, shows each one's response to a given panel.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)
La Soirée dans Grenade - from *Estampes*

Finghin Collins continues the *Evening* section of this programme with *La Soirée dans Grenade*, the second of Debussy's three *Estampes*, or Prints, dating from 1903, the year he was awarded the Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. Premiered in Paris on 9th January 1904 by the Spanish virtuoso Ricardo Viñes (1875-1943), *Estampes* was well received with its third piece, *Jardins sous le Pluie*, encored.

While Debussy captures the atmosphere of the evening in Grenada with its almost careless, supple habanera-like movement and its languid chords evoking the slow

strumming of guitars, it may be interesting to note that apart from spending a few hours in San Sebastian watching a bull fight, the composer otherwise never visited Spain.

Yet, Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) was able to comment in the December 1920 edition of *Revue Musicale* on the intensely Spanish atmosphere of the piece. 'The descriptive skill that is condensed into the few pages of *La Soirée dans Grenade* seems nothing short of miraculous when one considers that this music was written by a foreigner, guided almost entirely by his own insight and genius... This is indeed Andalusia that he depicts for us: unauthentic truth, we might call it; seeing that not one single bar has been directly borrowed from Spanish folk music and that, notwithstanding, the entire piece, down to its smallest details, is characteristically Spanish'.

Later, on being asked which pianistic work he considered to be the most expressive of Spain, Falla replied without hesitation, 'Debussy's *La Soirée dans Grenade*, which contains in a marvellously distilled way the most concentrated atmosphere of Andalusia'.

The music's tone colour has been described as 'reddish, like the Alhambra's bricks'. Its motion is that of the habanera, an idea that Debussy may actually have taken from the first piece of Ravel's two-piano *Sites Auriculaires* following its first performance in 1898. Debussy suggests Grenada's kaleidoscopic nocturnal life as he conveys the 'heavy perfumes, the warmth and the poly-sensuous dreams of the Andalusian night'.

Estampes was dedicated to Debussy's portrait painter friend Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861-1942).

NIGHT

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881-1945)
The Night's Music - from *Out of Doors* Sz 81

Bartók's *Out of Doors* is a suite of five pieces written in 1926, a year that might well be described as the composer's 'piano music year' as, besides the *Out of Doors*, it brought his First Piano Concerto, Piano Sonata and Nine Little Pieces.

Out of Doors is highly imaginative and individualistic. Bartok appears to have had a definite purpose in the pieces' particular order, although he himself never played them together in public. While they may be descriptive they need not be understood as programmatic even if the inspiration of *The Night's Music* may well have been a chorus of frogs and other nocturnal sounds he heard when visiting his sister's house in the country.

In *The Night's Music*, dedicated to his second wife Ditta Pásztor (1903-1982), the main tune arrives from a distance and is then doubled at a space of three octaves. The piece aims at expressing the feelings awakened in the imagination by the stillness of woods and fields at night and it is a marvellous reflection of Bartók's own extreme sensitivity to the sounds of nature.

Initially one is presented with the 'stillness of night' mildly interrupted by the chirruping of crickets. Then there is a weightier sound - a chorus of frogs maybe - after which the music becomes denser with the awakening of other creatures. After the 'frogs concert' things quieten down and drift back into the original scenario.

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856) **In der Nacht – No 5 from *Fantasiestücke* Op 12**

Following an injury to his right hand, Schumann suffered from what was termed 'psychotic melancholia'. This caused severe mood swings and periods of depression. As a result he created two fictional characters - Eusebius, showing his dream-like nature and Florestan, representing his passionate side. These characters first appeared in his Op 6 *Dauidsbündlertänze* and returned in the calm and passion of his Op 12 *Fantasiestücke*.

In F minor, *In der Nacht*, the fifth of Schumann's Op 12, was written in 1837 at a time when Clara Wieck's father, Friedrich, had forbidden her to have anything to do with him. It was a time, too, when Schumann had a brief affair with 18-year-old English pianist Anna Robena Laidlaw (1819-1901) who was then living in Königsberg.

A remarkable player, Schumann met her in Leipzig and subsequently dedicated his *Fantasiestücke* to her. Finding his writing at its most imaginative, *In der Nacht* is probably

the most effective piece of the set. The central section - *Etwas langsam* - displays a particular Schumann trait where a cantabile right hand has an arpeggio accompaniment that is divided between both hands.

CLARA SCHUMANN (1819-1896) **Notturmo – No 2 from *Soirées Musicales* Op 6**

Described as miniatures in the 'new Romantic tradition', Clara Schumann's *Soirées Musicales* are reminiscent of Chopin and those who influenced him - John Field and Johann Hummel. It is also suggested that another influence may have been the Polish composer and virtuoso pianist Marie Szymanowska (1790-1832) whose music was published in Leipzig and who played there in 1823.

Robert compared Clara's Op 6 pieces, written when she was in her teenage years, to 'the buds before the wings of colour are exploded into open splendour, captivating and significant to view, like all things that convey the future within themselves'. According to Clara's father, Friedrich Wieck, Chopin was impressed and enthusiastic about the pieces, especially the *Notturmo*, which is marked *Andante con moto*, and asked to take a manuscript away with him.

In F major with a slow 6/8 tempo and the most inspired piece of the set, the *Notturmo* is in an ABA form with its gently lilting opening section having a rocking accompaniment in the left hand to support a descending melody in the right. The B section's pulse begins in the left hand as the key shifts to the relative D minor. When section A returns it is highly decorated and harmonically altered. Clara dedicated her *Soirées Musicales* to Henrietta Voigt, a member of a wealthy Leipzig music-loving family.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849) **Nocturne in F sharp minor Op 15 No 2**

In his book *The Music of Chopin*, Jim Samson mentions that 'in very general terms Chopin's Nocturnes are characterized by lightness and clarity of sound, by a thinning out of density and by an acute sensitivity to nuance of dynamics and articulation and by an unprecedented subtlety in the use of the pedal'.

Samson also maintains that the Op 15 No 2, the second of three written between 1830 and 1832, 'conveys something of the intricacy and variety that Chopin achieves within a prevailing melody and accompanying framework. In the F sharp minor, the ornamentation, functioning as a source of energy as well as a means of variation, is part of a single, continuously unfolding line, characterized by those pliable rhythms which so characterize the mature nocturne style'.

Chopin marks his opening section *Larghetto*. This is something of a delicate arabesque with the right hand floating above an unwavering bass. An atmospheric change comes with the central *doppio movimento* - twice the speed - segment. Serenity is restored with the return of the opening and the Nocturne flickers in a haze to its conclusion.

Programme notes © Pat O'Kelly 2021

Presented in association with the Office of Public Works

Supported by Culture Ireland

We are happy to acknowledge the support of the Cowbridge Music Festival, Carducci Festival Higham, Hatfield House Chamber Music Festival and Syde Manor.



FINGHIN COLLINS, *piano*

One of Ireland's most successful musicians and significant musical ambassadors, Finghin Collins was born in Dublin in 1977 and, following initial lessons with his sister Mary, studied piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music with John O'Connor and at the Geneva Conservatoire with Dominique Merlet. His international career was launched by winning first prize at the Clara Haskil International Piano Competition in Switzerland in 1999. He has performed in recital and with major orchestras throughout Europe and the United States, as well as in the Far East and Australia.

Engagements in 2020 included solo, chamber and concerto performances of Beethoven across Europe to mark the composer's 250th anniversary, as well as his *début* with the Russian National Orchestra in Moscow, although most of these engagements had to be cancelled or postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. When online activities resumed in Autumn 2020, Collins performed throughout Ireland, in Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, Dublin, Drogheda, Belfast, Wexford Festival Opera, Killaloe Music Festival and Cork, as well as play-directing concertos by Haydn and Mozart with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra.

Finghin Collins also makes a significant contribution to the musical landscape of his native Ireland, where he resides. Since 2013, he has been Artistic Director of Music for Galway, which was tasked with presenting the major classical programme of Galway 2020, European Capital of Culture. The centrepiece of that programme, the cello festival Cellissimo, was delivered successfully online in March 2021. He is also the founding Artistic Director of the New Ross Piano Festival as well as the founding co-Artistic Director of the International Master Course at the National Concert Hall in Dublin.

In October 2017, the National University of Ireland conferred on him an honorary Degree of Doctor of Music.

Find out more at www.finghincollins.com



Dublin International Chamber Music Festival

Great Music in Irish Houses

Founder

David Laing

President

Frank Casey

Directors

Linda O'Shea Farren (Chair)

Gráinne Boushell

Frank Casey

Martin Davidson

Sheila de Courcy

John Keogan

John Reynolds

Artistic Director

Ciara Higgins

Executive Director

Laurie Cearr

Production

Gavin O'Sullivan

Festival Marketing and Office Administrator

Becky Kennedy

Publicity

Mary Folan