



**Dublin International  
Chamber Music Festival**  
Great Music in Irish Houses



# Dublin International Chamber Music Festival

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## 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 51<sup>st</sup> year, will be streamed online through homes all over Ireland and around the world from Thursday, June 17<sup>th</sup> to Monday, June 21<sup>st</sup>.

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.  
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An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,  
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán  
Department of Tourism, Culture,  
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2021  
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## William Butt, cello

Recorded at Farmleigh House  
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### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750) Suite No 1 for Solo Cello in G major BWV 1007

*Prélude: Allemande: Courante: Sarabande: Minuets 1 & 2:  
Gigue*

There is some doubt as to when Bach actually wrote his six Cello Suites. Most likely the first five were completed in Cöthen around 1720 but the last of the sextet, noted for its highly progressive features, may have been written following his arrival in Leipzig in 1723. It has been said of Bach that, 'he showed a great love for exploring specific types of pieces in a very concentrated way' and that, 'he often assembled collections of works that demonstrate... the complete technical potential of the instrument for which the music was written.' The six Cello Suites certainly display this propensity extremely well.

Bach's period at Cöthen was pleasant. He was not required to produce a steady supply of church music and was free to turn his attention to purely instrumental works. His creative powers in chamber music reached a peak and besides the Cello Suites, this was also the time of the Brandenburg Concertos, Well-Tempered Clavier, Inventions, English and French Suites and the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin.

It is uncertain for whom the Cello Suites were written but two highly accomplished musicians - Christian Bernhard Linike (1673-1751) and Christian Ferdinand Abel (1682-1761) - were working in Cöthen at the time. Bach's writing has his customary invention and completeness and nothing even remotely close to these works for the cello had been written beforehand. Through implied harmonies and briefly held chords, Bach creates a texture of fullness from the sparest musical means.

Each of the pieces follows a dance-suite structure that opens with a Prélude and leads to a series of dance movements - the German Allemande, Italian Corrente or French Courante, Spanish Sarabande and English Gigue. A

pair of other dances occupies the penultimate position - minuets, as we hear in the First Suite, bourrées, in the Third and gavottes, in the Fifth.

The Suite No 1 is considered to be the sunniest and most transparent of the set. The Prélude calls to mind the opening of the Well-Tempered Clavier with its unfolding series of arpeggio chords functioning simultaneously as melody and harmony. The Allemande is in duple metre and binary form beginning with an upbeat.

The Italian dancing master Cesare Negri (c1535-c1605) described the Corrente (or Courante) as 'having numerous hops and springs'. Bach's cheerful writing here was probably inherited from Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713). Castanets and guitars normally accompanied the Spanish Sarabande but when taken over by the French court of Louis XIV it had become more restrained and serious. Bach's Sarabande in the First Suite is rather short but particularly expressive.

The Minuets are also of French origin where they symbolised nonchalance, elegance, subtlety and nobility and the two here are nicely contrasted. The concluding Gigue is lively and quite complex. Bach uses imitative textures and fugal procedures but the effect is ingenious.

### EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA (1926-2016) Sonata for Cello Solo

*Libero e poetico: Allegretto: Tranquillo: Molto allegro*

Helsinki-born Rautavaara's brass and percussion suite of 1953, *A Requiem for Our Time*, more or less established him as a composer while still a student. It so impressed the octogenarian Sibelius that he referred to Rautavaara as 'the most promising Finnish composer' and recommended him for a scholarship to the United States. As a result, Rautavaara studied with Vincent Persichetti at the Juilliard in New York and with Aaron Copland and Roger Sessions at Tanglewood.

At home he studied at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, graduating in 1957, and then being tutored for a while in Switzerland and Germany. On his return he joined the staff of the Academy and was its professor of composition for fourteen years from 1976. During his time there many of

Finland's composers currently enjoying international reputations were among his pupils.

Rautavaara's own output is quite extensive with eight symphonies, nine operas, twelve concertos and a range of other orchestral works, chamber pieces and vocal music to his credit. He was also a perceptive writer on music.

His compositions passed through a variety of styles beginning with Russophile and neo-classicism in the 1950s and then moving on to a period dominated by serialism. He abandoned this for neo-romanticism that evolved, over time, into an eclectic post-modernism in which it has been said he 'blended a wide spectrum of stylistic techniques'. His fascination with metaphysical and religious subjects in several of his works, with a number of titles alluding to angels, gives his music the description of 'mysticism'.

Among Rautavaara's orchestral works, his relatively popular *Cantus Arcticus* is really a concerto for taped Arctic Finland birdsong and orchestra while his double-bass concerto is subtitled, *Angel of Dusk*, and his 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony, *Angel of Light*. Considered a masterpiece, his choral *Vigilia* is a large-scale unaccompanied setting of the Orthodox all-night vigil service for the feast of St John the Baptist.

In his operas, *Vincent* (1989) is structured around the life of Vincent van Gogh and this later became the source of his 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony, *Vincentiana*. Written for the great Finnish bass Matti Salminen, his final opera, *Rasputin*, was first produced by Finnish National Opera in 2003. Its reception was mixed with its stagecraft admired but its music criticised for being 'old fashioned'.

The cello has enjoyed an important place among Rautavaara's output with music for it spread across several decades. The substantial and enthralling four-movement Sonata for cello solo dates from 1969. It is said its baroque influences provide a 'charming study of polyphony and bare archaic harmonies' and that 'its neo-baroque devices offer Rautavaara the chance to hang melodies off a single *anchor* note and to explore ideas of one plane of sound [while] restricting or controlling another, like, for example, placing pizzicato *pegs* underneath broad double-stopped lyricism'.

Dr Martti Rousi, professor of cello at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, has added the following comments. 'The sonata

has its roots in polyphonic music, Bach and the old French masters are the main inspiration here. Some moments are impressionistic as well with lots of rhythmic freedom.

The first movement is the most important one and can be played alone. Other movements sort of comment on that and complement it in different ways. The second movement is like a scherzo and has typical Rautavaara humour in it. The finale ends with that first movement motif which is a kind of *leitmotiv* of the whole piece'. MR

*Programme notes © Pat O'Kelly 2021*

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Dublin International Chamber Music Festival**

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

**In this concert, we remember with great affection  
long-time supporters and Friends of the Festival:  
Alison Casey, John Donnelly and Dennis O'Sullivan.**



## **WILLIAM BUTT, cello**

A former prize-winning student of Moray Welsh and Antonio Lysy, London-born William Butt enjoys a busy career as one of Ireland's leading soloists, chamber musicians and teachers.

On the concert platform he has performed extensively throughout Ireland, the United Kingdom, Europe and the Far East. He is a much-admired exponent of the solo cello repertoire, having performed and broadcast numerous works for this medium by contemporary composers, as well as the formidable Kodály Solo Sonata and the suites of Bach and Britten. He has performed all the major cello concerti with such orchestras as the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra and Orchestra of St Cecilia, working with conductors Alexander Anissimov, Barry Douglas, Gerhard Markson and Vernon Handley. He is a passionate advocate of chamber music having worked with many leading Irish musicians, most recently both the Vanbrugh and RTÉ Contempo Quartets in the Schubert Quintet. He also works regularly with his own string quartet, the Esposito Quartet.

His recording of the Britten Solo Suites for Cello on the Warner/Apex label has garnered critical acclaim from the international music media, including a five-star review from the Independent on Sunday. His latest recording, the Bach Cello Suites on the Warner Classics label, has equally received critical acclaim, as has a recording of Music by Esposito with violinist Mia Cooper and pianist Lance Coburn on the Champs Hill label.

Recent engagements have included concerti performances, recitals and masterclasses in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Europe and China.

He plays on a fine cello made by Giovanni Grancino in Milan (1690).



## **Dublin International Chamber Music Festival**

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