CORK ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY

2021 ONLINE CONCERT PROGRAMME

13 Strings

Curated by **David Whitla**
Leader: **Sébastien Petiet**

Telemann: Don Quixote Suite
Mozart: Divertimento in B flat, K.137
Grieg: Two Elegiac Melodies
Mendelssohn: String Sinfonia no.2 in D

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13 Strings

Curated by
David Whitla

Violin 1
Sébastien Petiet *(leader)*, **Brendan Garde, Maria Ryan, Rachael Masterson**

Violin 2
Hugh Murray, Christine Kenny, Carol Quigley, Lyn O'Reilly

Viola
Cian Ó Dúill, Niamh Quigley

Cello
Aoife Burke, Yseult Cooper Stockdale

Double Bass
David Whitla

G. P. Telemann (1681-1767)
Don Quixote Suite (Burlesque de Quixotte), TWV55:G10
i. Overture ii. Awakening of Don Quixote
iii. Attack on the Windmills iv. Sighs of Love from Princess Aline v. The Deceived Sancho Panza
vi. The Galloping of Sancho Panza vii. Don Quixote

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Divertimento in B flat major, K.137 (K.125b)
i. Andante ii. Allegro di molto iii. Allegro assai

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)
Two Elegiac Melodies, Op.34
i. "Heart-wounded" ii. "The Last Spring"

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
String Sinfonia no.2 in D major
i. Allegro ii. Andante iii. Allegro vivace

Telemann: *Don Quixote Suite, TWV55:G10*

i. Overture **ii.** Awakening of Don Quixote **iii.** Attack on the Windmills **iv.** Sighs of Love from Princess Aline **v.** The Deceived Sancho Panza **vi.** The Galloping of Sancho Panza **vii.** Don Quixote

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) was a German Baroque composer and multi-instrumentalist. Almost completely self-taught in music, Telemann is one of the most prolific composers in history, at least in terms of surviving oeuvre. He was considered by his contemporaries to be one of the leading German composers of the time, and he was compared favourably both to his friend Johann Sebastian Bach, who made Telemann the godfather and namesake of his son Carl Philipp Emanuel, and to George Frideric Handel, whom Telemann also knew personally. His music incorporates French, Italian, and German national styles. He remained at the forefront of all new musical tendencies, and his music stands as an important link between the late Baroque and early Classical styles.

Telemann wrote several freestanding orchestral suites of character pieces, along the lines of what Rameau and Couperin did on the harpsichord, but his Don Quixote suite is actually drawn from an opera, Don Quixote der Löwenritter, inspired by the famous Cervantes novel. The first movement is a not-quite-conventional French overture. Its opening Largo section, complete with the standard dotted rhythms, includes some comically swooping figures and the ornaments have a strong shuddering effect. The ensuing Allegro fugal section is playful and hyperactive, but hardly engages in serious counterpoint.

Now ensues a series of short movements either illustrating certain Don Quixote adventures or setting particular scenes. The Andantino, "Awakening of Don Quixote," is a brief pastoral piece with light Spanish inflections. Now awake and modestly armed, the Knight of the Mournful Countenance launches a Moderato assault: "His Attack on the Windmills," a spirited rendition of the famous scene in which Quixote believes himself to be charging on a gang of giants.

"Sighs of Love for Princess Aline" is an Andante in which Quixote turns his thoughts to the princess known as Dulcinea, who is actually a peasant girl. Almost every measure of this movement features a two-note, descending "sighing" figure. The next movement introduces the knight's squire; it's an allegro moderato called "The Deceived Sancho Panza", an inverse of the Aline movement in that here the principal motif is a humorously rising two-note figure. Two brief equestrian movements follow: an allegretto called "Rosinante Galloping," a surprisingly graceful but by no means fast minuet depicting Quixote's old steed; the next movement, "The Galloping of Sancho Panza" is actually the minuet's measured, hesitant trio, followed by a brief repeat of the "Rosinante" music. Finally comes a vivace movement counter-intuitively titled "Don Quixote at Rest," far more of a gallop than what was just heard, and presumably music to accompany Quixote's dreams of great adventure.

Programme notes by James Reels

Mozart: *Divertimento in B flat major, K.137 (K.125b)*

i. Andante **ii.** Allegro di molto **iii.** Allegro assai

Most of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's childhood and youth were spent on the road traveling around Europe from one concert engagement to the other, accompanied by his father. Leopold Mozart was the archetypical stage-door mother, acting as agent, promoter and chaperone for his gifted son. During those years, father and son spent little time in their hometown of Salzburg. Between 1769 and 1772, the pair made three journeys to Italy, the longest a ten-month trek from December 1771 to October 1772. The goal was not simply to parade the boy around like an itinerant one-man circus, but to land him a prestigious job in one of the important courts of Europe. During the three Italian journeys, the adolescent Wunderkind composed dozens of works in nearly all "public" genres, including operas, symphonies, sacred choral music and chamber music. Solo keyboard music was more suitable for private use – particularly for ladies.

There is some confusion about when and where Mozart composed the Divertimento K. 137, together with its companion works K. 136 and K. 138. Often referred to as the "Salzburg Symphonies," the manuscript assigns them the title Divertimenti. However, they do not conform to the divertimenti of the period, which usually consisted of more movements, perhaps the reason someone reclassified them. They were most likely intended as three-movement string quartets. Mozart may have written them either on his visit to Milan, the last stop on his way home, or in Salzburg. Nowadays these divertimenti are usually performed by string orchestras rather than string quartets, and in this form they work quite well. An entire first violin section playing in unison can successfully assume the florid first violin part. However, it is doubtful that this was possible in 1770, given the quality of the musicians available to Mozart in Salzburg or in many other cities around.

The Divertimento K 137 contains a number of unusual features that suggest the adolescent Mozart was being deliberately different. The foremost is the overall structure of the work, an Andante, followed by two fast movements. The rather melodramatic harmonic progression that opens the work is unusually sophisticated, leaving the listener unsure of the key and once again illustrating – as if one needed more proof – the prodigious talent and originality of this 16-year-old. Mozart was nothing if not a tunesmith, and here, he rolls our several melodies before the development: a formal second theme and two cadence figures, the second one with a deceptive cadence for another dramatic touch.

For the second movement, Mozart retains the customary ternary structure but makes it surprisingly sprightly. He saves the expected minuet and trio for the finale. In another unconventional touch, he does not follow the rules of repetition for the Trio.

Programme notes by Elizabeth and Joseph Kahn

Grieg: *Two Elegiac Melodies, Op.34*

i. "The Wounded Heart" ("Hjertesår")
ii. "The Last Spring" ("Våren")

The melodies in Edvard Grieg's Two Elegiac Melodies for strings are borrowed from two songs, originally entitled "The Wounded Heart" and "Spring," in his Op. 33 set of twelve. The songs were composed sometime between 1873 and 1880, the orchestral setting arranged in 1880. Both Op. 33 and the Elegiac Melodies were published in 1881. In stripping his songs of their words and transferring just the melodies into the orchestral medium, Grieg appears to have thought it necessary to slightly alter the titles in order to better convey the sentiments of the poems; "Heart-wounded" and "The Last Spring" give the two movements a more sorrowful mien- a last spring is certainly more lamentable than just any spring, and the expression "heart-wounded" would seem to personalize anguish beyond the more objective original appellation.

The orchestral work was well received at its early performances; Grieg reports of a rendering at Weimar in 1883 that caused Liszt himself to grunt (a sign of approval), and the audience to burst into cries of "Bravo, bravo" while the piece was still underway. Apparently surprised at this Teutonic approval, the composer exclaimed in a letter: "And believe it or not, the Germans liked it! " The Germans weren't the only ones who liked it. Upon hearing the work for the first time, Debussy offered this piquant commentary, laden with a minor tautology and colourful analogy: "How melodious are the Two Elegiac Melodies for strings .. . With Grieg, the whole thing is stretched out like those all-day suckers one can buy at country fairs. [Each movement begins] with an innocent little phrase that is going to be our companion for the remainder of the piece. Along the way it runs into some lush chords with which it covers its nakedness."

"Heart-wounded" presents the same basic melody-lifted almost without -change from the original song-thrice in succession. The tune appears first in the violins, with cadence points that seem both sudden and emphatic; then in the sensuous cello, accompanied by classic eighteenth-century gestures, harmonically tailored to the Romantic idiom; and finally the melody returns to the violins, but now doubled at the octave for a climatic and expressive effect. The double basses at last sound in full force for this final reading of the melody, adding to the sense of fulfilment.

In **"The Last Spring"** the basic melody is presented only twice, owing to its greater length and more expansive reach. Again, the tune is lifted without alteration from its original source, although here material that was originally spread between the piano accompaniment and vocal part is blended together. The second setting of the melody begins more sparsely orchestrated than the first, and the temporary pulling-back of forces here counters the steady increase in expressive intensity of the first movement. There are moments of "The Last Spring" that seem redolent of Wagner, particularly the overture to Lohengrin, a quality that Liszt would surely appreciated.

Programme notes by Michael Nock

Mendelssohn: *String Sinfonia no.2 in D major*

i. Allegro **ii.** Andante **iii.** Allegro vivace

Mendelssohn's earliest surviving compositions date from 1820, when he was still only eleven years old. These include a violin sonata, a piano trio, several songs, piano pieces (including three sonatas), pieces for organ, choral works, and two operas! His initial foray into the field of pure orchestral music was made the following year in the form of the first six string 'sinfonias', or 'symphonies' as they are now popularly known, originally composed as exercises for Zelter. The complete set of twelve was completed two years later (1823), and they were long thought to be lost until, in 1950, they were re-discovered in the State Library of East Berlin.

It is fascinating to trace Mendelssohn's progress through the twelve string symphonies, from his early experiments with canonic and fugal textures, and the formal outlines of the Classical period, to the inimitable texturing of the last four in the set. Beethoven observed the young man in 1813 (they never met), and poignantly entered in one of his conversation books: 'Mendelssohn – 12 years old – promises much.' Within two years of the completion of String Symphony No 12, the remarkable String Octet first saw the light of day, and only a year later, the overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream. At seventeen years of age, Mendelssohn was already an established master.

The first six 'symphonies' were all composed in 1821, the first three and number six being undated, although almost certainly composed sometime during the late summer and early autumn.

The Allegro first movement of **String Symphony No 2 in D major** continues where No 1 left off, with its irrepressibly high spirits, the busy textures premonitory of the opening movement of the String Octet of 1826. The slow movement (again in the relative minor, B) contains the most deeply expressive music thus far, the use of suspension and near-canonic interplay between first and second violins being particularly notable. The scintillating Allegro vivace finale suggests a primitive cyclical connection with the first movement in its melodic outlines.

Programme notes by Julian Haylock

Filmed by **Barra Vernon**, **Robin Guiton** and **Paraic English**.
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