



Review of concert - Amici 'cello Trio - 17th November 2012

The number of cello trios in the UK can probably be counted on one hand. It was therefore with an eager sense of expectation that the visit of the Amici Cello Trio (Sonia Cromarty, Fiona Dippie, Helen McVey) was welcomed last Friday and Saturday by audiences in Campbeltown and Ardrishaig respectively. And the Trio did not disappoint, presenting a generous, well balanced programme covering 4 centuries from Pachelbel to Pärt.

The concert opened appropriately with items from Handel's "Royal Fireworks Suite" (1749), and the rich mellow sounds of the 3 cellos were immediately heard in the opening *Minuet*. The interplay between the three artists was constantly fascinating to watch, and the selection finished with a lively outburst of joy in "*la Réjouissance*".

Sonia explained that whilst music written specifically for 3 cellos did exist, most of their repertoire consisted of *arrangements* of music for more conventional instrumental groups. So the "*Adagio Cantabile*" which followed had been adapted from a Beethoven Wind Trio, and it was performed with warmth and sensitivity.

The next item – 5 short trio pieces by Zoltan Kodaly – were mainly based on Hungarian folk tunes and they had actually been written specifically for three cellos. Lively, imaginative, picaresque music, reaching a climax in the final Trio with its Arabic overtones.

Two delightful pieces by Gabriel Fauré followed, before the first half ended with 3 traditional Scots songs from Ayrshire, Aberdeen and Edinburgh – like our 3 guest artists!

There were many more delights in store, as the second half began with a four movement *Trio* by Cervetto, an eminent cellist himself from the 18th century. This piece was beautifully written for this combination and finished with a striking, lively "*theme and variations*".

Going backwards 100 years, we next heard Pachelbel's "Canon" and then bang into the 20th century with Arvo Pärt's "*Spiegel im Spiegel*". This was a fascinating piece, with Helen and Fiona, indulging in beautiful harmonies on top of Sonia's constant gentle pizzicato bass, taking the music to interesting places, and resulting in a performance which gained many new friends for this minimalist composer.

No enigmas with the final 3 composers, as they were all immediately recognisable. Piazzolla wrote "*Libertango*" in 1974 – to underline his clean break from classical in favour of Tango Nuevo. The three cellos each took on the role of another instrument – bandoneon, violin, double bass - result, an authentic tango sound and a total success!

Again, an instantly recognisable Baroque style with Vivaldi's 3 movement "*Concerto for 2 Celli*" – played with energy and precision and highly enjoyable as a result.

And so to the final item – Aram Khachaturian's breathtaking "Sabre Dance" (1942) from his ballet, "Gayane". This show-stopper involved trick effects and truly virtuoso playing from all 3 artists, and provided an exciting conclusion.

This really had been "a team effort" making it impossible to single out any one cellist. Fiona, Helen and Sonia – the Amici Cello Trio – had created a total rapport with their audience and they fully deserved the long and loud appreciation at the end. *JBH*