



Clare Hammond

28th April 2018

The Ardrishaig Public Hall was filled with pictures in sound last Saturday night at the final Mid Argyll Arts Association concert of the season. From the depiction of a rural domestic drama involving a lost cat, to the images of surging ocean waves, pianist Clare Hammond brought these musical pictures to life. Her carefully constructed programme comprised works by Haydn, Szymanowski, Schubert, Malcolm Hayes and Chopin.

The concert began with Haydn's 1789 Fantasia in C based on an Austrian folk song, '*The Farmer's Wife Has Lost Her Cat*'. With an ingenuity and freedom akin to the programme music of the late 19th century, Haydn politely escapes the formalities of the classical era and with great wit and humour describes the mayhem of the chase. Clare told this musical story with verve and imagination, making light of its significant technical challenges.

As her next piece Clare played two of Szymanowski's four *Metopes* completed in 1915. This work describes the voyages of Odysseus as he escapes the clutches of several exotic femmes fatale. Clare played *Calypso* followed by the *Isle of Sirens*. An intriguing work in a style reminiscent of Debussy and Ravel these pieces were well chosen as preparation for the 21st century work that was to be heard later in the programme.

Schubert's four impromptus D.899 concluded the first part of the concert. These pieces require delicate finger work and an understanding of Schubert's raw musical talent. Clare performed these with insight and a magical dexterity. Amateur players in the audience were no doubt made envious as the scale like theme of the impromptu in E flat and the arpeggios of the A flat, effortlessly filled the concert room.

Amongst her many other talents as musical scholar, impresario, and sometime television actress, Clare Hammond is a champion of works by living composers. Indeed the penultimate piece, *Purgatorio* written by Malcolm Hayes in 2007, was given its debut performance by Clare herself earlier this month. Malcolm Hayes, a composer who spent a great deal of his working life in the Scottish Islands, based this composition on Dante's poem *Purgatorio*. The audience could not have had a better performer to introduce them to this dramatic and ground breaking work.

Chopin's Etudes, op 25 concluded a wonderful concert. Each of these twelve virtuosic studies was so popular with audiences that they have all acquired nicknames. And so once again pictures in sound filled the hall. From Etude no 1, *The Aeolian Harp*, to no 9 *The Butterfly*, to number 11, *Winter Wind*, and lastly, no 12 *The Ocean Study*, with its expansively arching double handed arpeggios, the concert was provided with a resounding finale.

Robert Lacey