National Chamber Choir of Ireland

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The characters are not assigned specific voices; the voices of BBC’s The War of the Worlds are provided by a persistently changing combination of voices and guitar. The one exception is Cas Corach, the character of a warrior who is most closely embodied, throughout this setting, in the solo interface for guitar.

The music itself is not ethnographically inclined; that is, I have not attempted to reconstruct theories on oral music from the period from which Acolam stems. However, the score generally, and especially in the guitar writing, provides a basis for the idea of Arab and Persian influence. The dulcimer, which Cas Corach plays, is thought to have been similar to the Irish tin whistle and a potential antecedent of the bodhrán (Irish frame drum), for which I have written two parts in this work, is the North African bendir.

The conversation between the saint and Calte (who takes a significantly larger role in the dialogue than Osín), as they journey around Ireland, provides an opportunity in which are embedded approximately 200 shorter narratives describing incidents in the era of St. Patrick and his followers.

In preparing the libretto (the sung text), I was drawn to the evenness of the dialogue. Instead of St. Patrick simply converting the pagan warriors, he is encouraged to listen to Calte’s stories and consider them, or at least recognize, of an earlier time, in which the saint delights.

The secular/sacred osmosis is maintained unwaveringly throughout the entire text. By the end of the narrative, one has witnessed not only the arrival of a new religion in Ireland, but also a richly recounted secular narrative map of the entire island: the peaceful and enriching shackle of two great hands.

In the present-day libretto (the sung text), I have focused on only a few of the shorter narratives described in the Acolam manuscripts. The religious and secular stories are provided in the form of a choral setting, representing by an interlude for guitar (11), have been received by Calte to Patrick. These culminate in the sorrowful tale of Calé and Crédé (13). This prompts Calte to ask Patrick of his own mortality (14) and Patrick answers, giving the warrior the number of years he has left to live.

After some time (15), Patrick worries that he has been neglecting his duties (16). However, he is reassured by his two guardian angels that the stories of Calte and Osín are complete and should be preserved. After a patron saint is sung (18), Calte decides to leave for Tara, which Patrick has to his one regret to be the warrior’s final resting place.

The setting closes with the parting of Patrick and Calte (19).—Tark O’Regan, May 2011

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Paul Hillier, Artistic Director and Conductor

Paul Hillier is from Dorset in England and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. His career has embraced singing, conducting, and writing music. Earlier in his career, he was founding director of the Hilliard Ensemble and subsequently founded Theatre of Voices.

He has taught in the United States at the University of Missouri, University of Texas at Austin, San Francisco State University, and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He has been a visiting Professor at Stanford and the Sarah Abeles Centre for Music. He was Head of the Department of Music at Indiana University and is currently the Director of the Early Music Institute at Indiana University.

His recordings, over a hundred CDs including seven solo recitals, have earned worldwide acclaim and won numerous prizes. His book about Arvo Pärt and Steve Reich, together with numerous anthologies of choral music, are published by Oxford University Press.

In 2006 Hilier was awarded an Order of the British Empire for services to choral music. An experienced performer, arranger, producer, and editor, and he is particularly interested in how music functions as a cultural artefact, as a means of social change, as an expression of political power, and as an agent of social change. He has written extensively on this topic, including a book, The Performance of Social Change: Music and the Protestant Reformation in France, which was published by Oxford University Press in 2000.

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Paul Millier, Artistic Director and Conductor
with guest artist
Stewart French, guitar

“Jauchzet dem Herrn” Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

“O süßer Mai” Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

“All meine Herzgedanken” Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

“Waldensnacht”

“Theophilus Thistle & the Myth of Miss Muffet” Siobhán Cléary (b. 1970)

~~Intermission~~

Regional Premiere!
Acalam na Senórach: “An Irish Colloquy”

Tim O’Regan (b. 1978)

1. Prologue to Part One
2. The Fair
3. The Spring
4. Recitative
5. Cas Corach
6. Guitar Interlude I
7. The Sid
8. Recitative
9. Niam
10. Prologue to Part Two
11. Guitar Interlude II
12. Recitative
13. Céad And Créde
14. Calle
15. Guitar Interlude III
16. Patrick
17. Recitative
18. Finn Patenoster
19. Epilogue

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