

LINOS PIANO TRIO

3 & 4 September 2021

Bridport and Ilminster Arts Centres

The Dance House, Crewkerne

In the years before the current pandemic, the **Linos Piano Trio** had deservedly earned a growing reputation in chamber music circles and interest. But like all music groups they have had to endure the last 18 months of difficulties caused by the pandemic and the new cumbersome border arrangements that exist between the UK and European countries. It goes without saying that Linos - Prach Boondiskulchock (piano), Konrad Elias-Trostmann (violin) and Vladimir Waltham (cello) – are extremely accomplished and experienced musicians. What was particularly noticeable in the three performances given at Bridport, Ilminster and Crewkerne and presented by **Concerts in the West** was their absolute devotion to the music in their programme and their awareness of presentation. In the Linos arrangement of Debussy’s atmospheric *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*, inspired by the 1876 poem of the symbolist poet, Mallarmé, the players demeanour drew the audience into setting an atmosphere of sultry afternoon weather as the faun reflects on his ’desires and dreams’. In that setting emerged almost imperceptibly the ethereal sound of the violin’s sustained solo note. Having engaged the listeners in this way, Linos then continued to transport them through Debussy’s rich sensuality. On reaching the music’s final destination, Linos, with the help of their audience, allowed the atmosphere to dissipate through the ensuing silence.

Eduard Steuermann’s arrangement of Schoenberg’s early string sextet formed thirty minutes of the concert’s second half. This single movement work requires immense focus and concentration from both players and audience. Based on Richard Dehmel’s poem *Verklärte Nacht,* it follows the journey through the night of a man and a woman. Their relationship is transfigured after the woman confesses to carrying another man’s child. Schoneberg’s musical interpretation of Dehmel’s poem makes for a very powerful and emotional journey, sometimes even distressing but ultimately one of acceptance for the child that would cement their love. The compositional content is a rich mixture of chromatic harmonies and was a crossroads point in Schoenberg’s development. Before the performance, Prach Boondiskulchock very helpfully gave the audience a number of musical markers to listen out for as the work unfolded. This was the key to Linos’s success in taking their audience with them.

Linos gave a very convincing performance of Ravel’s A minor piano trio. At the time of composition in 1914, the world was in a crisis and at a crossroads of change. Ravel seems to have sensed this, writing a work full of emotional contrasts. Lyricism, athleticism and dynamism all play their part in this stunning work that requires players to be absolutely secure with each other’s ability and musicianship: Linos excelled.

CPE Bach’s piano trios of the 1770s mark a juncture in musical history and as is often the case with pioneering developments, such pieces lose their place in the concert repertoire to later examples of the genre. As part of their mission to recover neglected music, Linos have recorded all of CPE Bach’s piano trios onto a double CD. The fourth piano trio was chosen for this programme.

In recent times the world of classical music appears to have increasingly turned its attention to the dubious features of personality cult, popular fashions, ‘tick-boxing’ and music of debateable merit. Linos, on the other hand, focus on the qualities of the music they choose to perform, valuing the more established repertoire yet exposing new audiences to challenging pieces, giving life to forgotten music and cleverly ‘stealing’ music written for other instrumental combinations and making it available through their own arrangements.

Finally, the Trio’s pre-ambles to each piece were warm and engaging and their natural friendliness continued with chatting to members of the audience long after the concert had finished.

Andrew Maddocks – September 2021