



ADAPTATION

by Ian Wilson

World Premiere

8pm February 27th, 2020. Teach Ceoil, Kilrush, Co.Clare

8pm February 28th, 2020. Miltown Malbay Community Centre, Co.Clare

Commissioned by Clare County Council through

“Gaining Ground” Public Art Programme 2017-2020.

Note from Ian Wilson – Composer



“Adaptation” is the result of a year-long project I undertook in and around West Clare in 2018/19, investigating possible foreign influences on local culture there over the centuries. This naturally ended up focusing on music and as well as various kinds of research involved discussions with a number of knowledgeable people from the area including flutist Christy Barry, director of Kilfenora Céilí band John Lynch, Ireland-based French harpist Floriane Blancke, and University of Limerick Irish Dance Lecturer Orflaith NiBhriain, among others.

The extent of the “foreign infiltration” of what we think of as Irish traditional music was quite a revelation, and the musical work “Adaptation”, which was the principal outcome of the project, embraces many of these influences as it traces the imaginary journey of a well-known traditional Irish tune, “The Mason’s Apron”, through the centuries and across the globe. Like a set of variations in reverse, the music visits (among others) Gregorian Chant, Medieval Dance, Italian Baroque, German Waltz and even American Ragtime music, all the while moving closer to the traditional tune at the heart of the whole work. All these eras had some influence on the traditional music we have now, from the long-present monastic singing and the importation into Ireland of Italian violins and German accordions, to the more recently arrived British Marching Bands and American ragtime music – the latter itself had an impact on emigrant Irish musicians whose recorded music later filtered back to the home country.

From the outset I had in mind the wonderful and unique duo of pianist Izumi Kimura and guitarist Joe O’Callaghan as the performers for “Adaptation”. I had worked with Izumi previously, most notably on my large-scale (also) partly improvised duo “Possession” (2016) with saxophonist Cathal Roche. Izumi’s duo with Joe, “Sankhara”, provides a different set of options from most duos: not only are both players wonderful improvisers but the range of colours and moods they manage to obtain, especially in a large-scale work such as this, is remarkable.



As with the earlier piece “Possession”, which was based on a number of very different indigenous folk tunes from around the world, “Adaptation” both allows and requires the performers to improvise within and between the written sections, which in this case include a wide variety of musical archetypes from different stages of musical history and from different parts of the world. What binds them all together is that each has been imagined anew and built around the tune that finally appears, unadorned, at the end of the work – “The Mason’s Apron”, as played to me by Doolin flutist Christy Barry.

An extra element in the work is the presence of a Prelude and two Interludes which consist of fragments of conversations I had with various interviewees during the project and which illuminate various aspects of the research.

With thanks to:

Christy Barry
Floriane Blancke
Gianpiero Cavalleri
John Lynch
Orflaith NíBhriain
Pat Murphy
Harry Hughes
Gary Shannon

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Engineered & edited by Jack Talty