

Music
Grimsdottir;
Vilhjalmsson;
Agnarsson, Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh
Conrad Wilson

Here was an odd, yet oddly compelling, programme of Icelandic music featuring a piano trio whose component parts were not heard as a unity until the final work.

Although the two featured composers, Hafidi **Hallgrimsson** and Sveinbjorn Sveinbjornsson, proved similarly disparate, the results were by no means unsuccessful, even in church surroundings that contributed their own element of disparity to the event.

Hallgrimsson, now in his late sixties, is Edinburgh's resident Icelandic composer and one-time principal cellist of the SCO. Sveinbjornsson, born in the year of Mendelssohn's death, was (for 46 years) an earlier resident and one of the founders of the Edinburgh Society of Musicians.

With nothing else to link them, they were alternated on Saturday to show the diversity of Icelandic composers (given that these ones were born a century apart), Sveinbjornsson's lightness serving as foil for the more probing **Hallgrimsson**.

It was an effective mix, with Hallgrimsson's early piano Bagatelles, played by Nina Margret Grimsdottir, adding edge to Sveinbjornsson's jauntier folk-song pieces.

Hallgrimsson's Solitaire for solo cello, with an eloquent dirge as the fourth of its five movements, showed the strength of his feeling for his own instrument (with Sigurgeir Agnarsson as the work's latest exponent), whereas Sveinbjornsson's Violin Sonata, played by Thor Vilhjalmsson, seemed content to be a genial tribute to Mendelssohn.

But if **Hallgrimsson**, whose Offerto for solo violin contained the evening's most potent music, proved the more interesting composer, Sveinbjornsson's succinct Trio in A minor, with a tender song without words as slow movement and a lovely ballroom scherzo, was a delight.

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