

Program notes

The Six Suites for Solo Violincello were most likely composed between 1720 and 1721, while Bach was employed by Prince Leopold of Cöthen. Over the course of the previous ten years, Prince Leopold had built up a court orchestra of 18 fine musicians, including cellist, Christian Ferdinand Abel. A close friend of Bach's, Abel may well have been the inspiration to write these suites, shortly after he had finished the unaccompanied violin Sonatas and Partitas in 1720. Originally, the 6th Suite was composed for a five-stringed instrument such as the violincello piccolo or possibly a viola pomposa, the strings tuned C, G, D, A, E, starting on C2. Tonight I will perform this suite on my converted five-string viola, with a Baroque bow made by Chris English, and modern strings.

Liz Carroll is a master Irish fiddle player and composer, born in Chicago to Irish parents. She has toured and recorded extensively and has received many awards including a National Heritage Award Fellowship, and a grammy nomination for her duet album with guitarist John Doyle, "Double Play".

This haunting tune, A Long Night on the Misty Moor, was inspired by a line from Seamus Heaney's translation of Beowulf.

Between the two world wars, Arnold Bax was recognized as one of England's leading young composers of symphonic works. His music retained much influence from the Romantic style yet included Impressionistic elements and inspiration from Irish, Russian, and Nordic traditional music. As a student of composition and piano at the Royal Academy of Music from 1900-1905, he established a long-term friendship with Lionel Tertis and wrote this Sonata for Viola and Piano in 1922, dedicated to Tertis. Bax was a published poet under the Irish pseudonym, Dermot O'Byrne, and was deeply influenced by Irish culture. This sonata reflects his poetic sensibilities, dramatic symphonic tendencies, and love for Celtic culture.

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