

The composer

(Edward) Swan Hennessy (1866–1929) was born in Rockford, Illinois (USA) and studied at the Conservatory of Music in Stuttgart, Germany, with Percy Goetschius (composition) and Edmund Alwens (piano), 1878–86. After some years of traveling in Europe with homes in England and Italy, he settled in Paris from around 1903. Initially influenced by Schumann and the late Romantic school in Germany, he became increasingly inspired by French Impressionism which is most evident in his pre-World War I works for piano and voice. From 1912, he was part of a group of Breton composers in Paris who developed a pan-Celtic identity which sought to fuse art music with elements from Breton and Irish traditional music and culture and within which Hennessy represented the Irish side (his father was an Irish emigrant from Cork). He particularly cultivated this unique style in his post-1920 chamber music. Hennessy exclusively focused on piano music, French *mélodies* and chamber music (duos, trios, quartets).

Petit trio celtique, Op. 52 (1920)

The *Petit trio celtique* for string trio was Swan Hennessy's most frequently played work during his lifetime. It is at the same time the only work by Hennessy that received a first performance in Ireland, namely on 30 March 1922 at the Engineers' Hall on Dawson Street, Dublin, by John Moody, George H. Brett, and Joseph Schofield. Written in late 1920, the work is dedicated to his Breton composer friend Paul Le Flem (1881–1984) who provided Hennessy with a brief theme for the second movement. The four movements are written alternately 'dans le style irlandais' and 'dans le style breton' and – like a number of his works – reflects a pan-Celtic approach that united Hennessy with the group of Breton composers he was part of in France. The first 'Irish' movement makes much use of the 'Scotch snap', a small rhythmic device in the main theme that rather reminds of Scottish than of Irish music, although it does occur in traditional music of the north of Ireland. The second ('Breton') movement elaborates on Paul Le Flem's given motif, consisting of one bar in 5/8 with a decorative figure that Hennessy incorporates into a 3/4 metric structure, all to a melodic motif that might well have sprung from a Breton folkdance collection. The next 'Irish' movement is considerably shorter than the first and returns to the former's tonality and pastoral atmosphere, even citing its main theme at the very end. The closing 'Breton' movement is the most energetic part of the work, with a brisk approach in 5/4 time that is the basis of some Breton folkdances.

Der Komponist

(Edward) Swan Hennessy (1866–1929) wurde in Rockford, Illinois (USA) geboren und studierte am Konservatorium für Musik in Stuttgart bei Percy Goetschius (Komposition) und Edmund Alwens (Klavier), 1878–1886). Nach einigen Reisejahren durch Europa mit Wohnsitzen u.a. in England und Italien, ließ er sich um 1903 in Paris nieder. Anfang beeinflusst von Schumann und der spätromantischen Schule in Deutschland, fand er zunehmend Inspiration im französischen Impressionismus, was sich vor allem in seiner Vorkriegsklaviermusik und den Liedkompositionen dieser Zeit zeigt. Ab 1912 war er Mitglied einer Gruppe bretonischer Komponisten in

Paris, die eine pan-keltische Identität entwickelten, die die Kunstmusik ihrer Zeit mit Elementen bretonischer und irischer Volksmusik und Kultur verschmolz und innerhalb derer Hennessy die irische Seite repräsentierte (sein Vater stammte aus Cork). Diesen individuellen Stil pflegte er besonders in seiner Kammermusik nach 1920. Hennessy schrieb ausschließlich Klaviermusik, französische Lieder und Kammermusik (Duos, Trios, Quartette).

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