

ENTANGLED FORTUNES

EDDIE MCGUIRE

DELPHIAN

Red Note Ensemble



EDDIE MCGUIRE (b. 1948)

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1 Elegy	[12:35]
2 Euphoria	[16:03]
3 String Trio	[12:50]
4 Entangled Fortunes	[10:16]
5 Quintet 2	[15:43]
Total playing time	[67:31]

premiere recordings

Recorded on 24-26 November 2014
at St Mary's Church, Whitekirk,
East Lothian
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Notes on the music

Eddie McGuire has been described as an enigma – chiefly, or so it appears, for his countercultural refusal to compromise his values in pursuit of victory in the status game. Yet there is nothing enigmatic about his recognition of human interdependence and our pressing need for equality. McGuire's worldview, rooted in Marxism and an unshakeable belief in the common good, is gaining favour far beyond his native Glasgow; likewise, interest in his music is on the rise, propelled by word of mouth and the recognition by wise performers and concert promoters that a voice of such eloquence and vitality must be heard.

The works on this disc were created over a span of more than three decades. They bear a wide range of styles and cover an equally broad spectrum of influences, some rooted in timeless Scottish folk traditions, others informed by more modern processes. McGuire's chamber music, apparently without limit in melodic creativity, is open to the loosely defined musical borderlands that connect the popular to the contemplative, the visceral to the cerebral. His folk-like tunes are not dumped self-consciously into a mix of 'serious' subject matter; rather, they arise naturally to take their place in a world of invention large enough to contain minimalist gestures, intense romanticism, meditative silence and sudden drama.

There is a lesson to be had here about the difference between productive and unproductive labour. Unlike those who toil for capital returns, McGuire writes because he has to. To borrow a phrase from Karl Marx, he composes 'for the same reason that a silk worm produces silk. It [is] an activity of his nature'. Marx was writing about Milton, who was paid £5 for *Paradise Lost*. Those who have followed McGuire's artistic development will recognise the similarity with his own 'unproductive' efforts, which have generated little capital but which own high – perhaps the highest – spiritual values, free from modish influence yet steeped in allusion to the music that touches him most deeply. We hear traces of Ravel and Stravinsky in *Euphoria*, together with McGuire's personal brand of minimalism, and echoes of the unutterably moving language of Gaelic psalm-singing in *Elegy*. There are flashes elsewhere of dissonance, long stretches of carefully worked thematic transformations (touched by the composer's contact with the Scandinavian avant-garde of the 1970s), and soaring melodies that speak directly to the heart. Beyond that stands the originality of McGuire's work, its integrity and essential fluidity, offering a vision of music as metaphor for life open to every channel of emotion.

Notes on the music

Euphoria was in short supply in the summer of 1980. The Cold War's temperature had recently soared following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, renewing fears of thermonuclear war and mass destruction, while the spreading shockwaves of the Iranian revolution left many western observers convinced that the Persian Gulf states would soon be mired in blood. If international affairs appeared too remote or impossibly complex, Margaret Thatcher's government was working hard to deliver ideal conditions for popular resentment on the home front. Support for the Tories, already invisible in Scotland, began to fall away as Britain's dole queues lengthened and inflation nudged ever higher. The list of reasons to be miserable clashed with society's deep-rooted faith in progress and reinforced the consensus view that the handcart to hell contained room for all. Eddie McGuire set out to challenge the era's anti-Panglossian trend, writing **Euphoria** in response to what felt at the time like a 'need to go against the current tide of pessimism and, in the midst of attacks on culture, the general decline of capitalism and glib talk of imminent holocausts, to be life-asserting and optimistic'. The work was completed in July 1980 and first performed two months later at the Edinburgh International Festival by The Fires of London conducted by Peter Maxwell Davies.

Although McGuire's score predates the invention of positive psychology, some will

see synchronicity at play in the work's original title: *Euphoria – a sense of wellbeing*. The composition's generous spirit and feeling of flow are clearly congruent with recent work in cultivating if not euphoria then states of contentment and happiness. In fact McGuire borrowed his title from a play by Marianne Carey, a Scottish writer and poet with whom he has since collaborated on various projects, the opera *The Loving of Etain* among them. In this case he began by linking the seven sections of *Euphoria* to aspects of seven characters from Carey's play, but recalls that the piece took on an independent life as it evolved. Each listener must decide whether the work reflects the elation of euphoria, although few will be able to resist its atmosphere of optimistic anticipation and the near-irresistible compulsion to move to McGuire's beat.

Rhythmic nuance serves as *Euphoria's* catalytic element. The semiquaver riffs woven throughout the opening discourse appear predictably repetitive on paper but sound anything but in performance. The score is strewn with subtle shifts of emphasis, dynamic shadings and syncopations; likewise, McGuire uses judicious contrasts of texture and timbre to create a rich soundscape in which simple melodies, even those attached to prolonged repeated rhythmic units, acquire great stature and significance. The opening pattern of semiquavers – a luminous mix of

marimba, winds, strings and piano – in part prefigures the shape of the first long melody, cast in natural harmonics on cello and violin, and remains a dominant force, driven by an apparently unstoppable piano, until the bass clarinet interposes a bold change of mood. Shades of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* rise in the following section, cast in triple time, during which the flute struggles in vain to pacify an overassertive fiddle solo. Piano and violin serve notice of rhythm's role in inducing euphoric states, the intensity of which is momentarily suspended during a dream-like disintegration of the music's strictly measured time and clearly defined logic.

After the rupture, fragments of familiar melody and rhythmic patterns return and begin to coalesce only to disintegrate once more, disrupted by keyboard cluster chords and sweeping marimba glissandos. Traces of the opening section's string melody surface out of the chaos, together with 'a fading memory' of the flute's earlier semiquaver passagework. The sense of uncertainty present here feels natural, at ease, not hopeless. It dissolves into a forthright reel voiced by violin and bass clarinet, offered before the work's joyful opening state is restored.

String Trio explores transformation through conflict and reconciliation. The work was written in the spring of 1986 and first performed by the

Nash Ensemble at Bracknell's Wilde Festival that summer. It has, notes the composer, 'a suitable seasonal feel'. The season in mind is temperamentally unsettled, periodically enchanted by warmth but otherwise open to an abundance of passing moods, complex and, like William Wordsworth's vision of nature, ultimately uplifting. The multivalent character of McGuire's piece grows from a succession of simple overlapping unisons, sustained in the opening *lento* until the viola breaks ranks with a fanfare-like flourish and provokes agitated answers from violin and cello. Although cast as one continuous movement, String Trio falls into seven sections which in turn form two almost symmetrical groups of three sections interleaved with a cleanly differentiated central *presto*.

The work's raw material is drawn from two reservoirs of what the composer likes to call 'theme notes', the first comprising C, D, G, A, E and B, the second delivering creative tension from its stock of F sharp, A flat, F, B flat, D flat and E flat. Early in the piece McGuire introduces a brief quotation from his then recently completed trio for flute, viola and guitar, *Cauldron of Improvisations*, stated by solo viola immediately before the full trio launches a slow, meditative transition to something other. The subsequent faster music, tinged with the flavour of *tango nuevo*, appears like a flash of insight into another world, one where rhythmic precision offers the consolation

of certainty. It cannot and does not last. The seeds of fragmentation grow out of the jittery silences between pizzicato phrases and flower in the improvisatory freedom of the following *cantando*, where commingled melodies, evocative of Gaelic psalm-singing, are discharged above a plaintive cello solo. The following *presto*'s fresh energy soon dissolves into a second *cantando*, shot through with allusions to traditional Scottish fiddle style. McGuire's second *vivo* projects ghostly shades of material already heard, subverting once-clear thematic ideas with pizzicato outbursts, bowing effects, brief pauses and longer silences. Out of chaos comes a barely perceptible shift towards resolution, set in motion by a fiddle cadenza and growing stronger in the final *lento*. Concentration and stillness emerge as the three instruments reconcile their formerly competing theme notes.

Fleeting ideas form and disperse throughout **Quintet 2**, like the diluted spirit of a lifetime's memories recalled in one short sitting. The work, notes McGuire, 'marked a return to more dramatic, atonal music in contrast to my first Quintet (1981), which had presented popular and Scottish traditional ideas over minimalist textures.' *Quintet 2* was commissioned by Lontano, who gave its first performance on a Scottish tour in 1987. Its thematic material and formal construction amount to a study in tonal contrasts, explored in seven sections which

play continuously. The composer submits his chosen instruments to an extended process of individuation, drawing out their specific characteristics as the piece unfolds before integrating each into the collective whole in a final *lento*. McGuire allocates the work's theme notes to clarinet, violin, flute and piano in turn in its opening *cantando*, projecting their individual natures without allowing one voice to assume dominance. The cello, meanwhile, revels in pizzicato slides across the range of the fingerboard. The piano's clockwork right-hand ostinato marks a new beginning, an *allegretto* in which the thematic material is inverted before being subverted by the delicate pulsations and measured silences of the ensuing *liberamente*. 'The long notes of the *sostenuto* section,' observes McGuire, 'begin a gradual crescendo – building atonal chords with the theme notes – a crescendo that reaches its full extent in the *vivo* section, [and] which brings back earlier ideas.'

Elegy, commissioned by Mathilda Mitchell for the Coker-Manson Trio, was written in 1991 in memory of the composer's father, who had died the year before. Sparse in texture at first, the piece is never bleak; rather, it draws comfort from tunes snatched from childhood memory – 'songs my father's male voice choir used to rehearse in our home in my pre-teenage years', as the composer explains – and the energy of a folk melody newly crafted from thematic material derived from the opening section.

Thus, a wistful folksong of the composer's imagination (shared by violin and cello) and an overt reference (in the piano left-hand) to the 'Londonderry Air' usher the work towards its lively central section. The 'Mingulay Boat Song', based on an old Gaelic melody (a popular favourite since the 1930s in Hugh Robertson's arrangement), arises in the piano, is taken up in full by the violin and thereafter explored by the trio. The cello's multi-hued reflections on the song give way to an intense dialogue with violin before a seamless return to the texture of the work's opening. McGuire's cultivation of 'kaleidoscopic moods' continues with a sprightly passage cut from 'Mingulay' and a lingering final reflection on his own folk melody.

In recent years, central themes in economic theory have become practical realities for millions. Sir James Mirrlees, Emeritus Professor of Political Economy at the University of Cambridge, was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1996 for his work on moral hazard, optimal accumulation and the economics of uncertainty. Little over a decade later the world learned hard lessons about what happens when bankers and brokers push risk far beyond wise limits and dismiss uncertainty as superstitious nonsense. Mirrlees' wife commissioned **Entangled Fortunes**, together with works by Peter Maxwell Davies, Alexander Goehr and John Woolrich, for a gala concert in her husband's honour hosted

in May 2002 by the University of Cambridge. 'As it gathers strength,' notes McGuire, 'the soaring, emotive phrases and dance rhythms of *Entangled Fortunes* establish a celebration of achievement.'

The composer recalls how he 'used the limited abilities of music to symbolise some aspects' of Mirrlees' economics. 'Taking one aspect of [his] ground-breaking work – accumulation – and applying it to my composition results in four main, crescendoing sections.' *Entangled Fortunes* begins with a dialogue between pizzicato cello and clarinet, joined soon after by violin and piano. The piece moves into a 9/8 dance, in which the close interdependence of the four instruments is strained: each becomes involved in its own Faustian striving, a matter of accumulating greater melodic wealth until the musical argument, in McGuire's words, reaches 'crisis point'.

Freedom rules in the central section, the improvisatory feel of which flows from a folk-like melody reminiscent of the 'Mingulay Boat Song' heard in *Elegy*. Everything flows here, delivering a welter of independent melodic patterns that change inexorably. The piece, spurred on by an exuberant reel, thereafter evokes the spirit of what David Hume, philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment, called 'fellow feeling' and what McGuire refers to as a symbolic 'resolution for the common

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good, for rebuilding'. Life's complexities are mirrored in *Entangled Fortunes*, covering the gamut from 'two lives entangled in a love affair to the striving entanglements of the poor, of Capital and Labour struggling for survival'. As so often in McGuire's work, the individual and the universal are shown to be united.

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Andrew Stewart has been a freelance writer since 1989. He studied historical musicology at King's College London, was artistic director of the Southwark Festival, and is an experienced choir trainer and choral conductor.

Red Note Ensemble

Jacqueline Shave *violin* a b c d e

Jane Atkins *viola* c

Robert Irvine *cello* a b c d e

Ruth Morley *flute/piccolo/alto flute* b, *flute* e

Yann Ghiro *clarinet/bass clarinet* b, *clarinet* e

Simon Smith *piano* a b d e

Tom Hunter *marimba, temple blocks, bamboo wind chimes* b

(Elegy a, Euphoria b, String Trio c, Entangled Fortunes d, Quintet 2 e)

Biography

Red Note Ensemble is Scotland's contemporary music ensemble, commissioning and performing new music from Scotland and around the world. The Ensemble was founded in 2008, and draws its members from the deep talent pool of Scottish new music expertise. Red Note's Spring and Autumn seasons comprise tours, site-specific work and collaborations with other companies within Scotland, around the UK and abroad.

In 2013 the ensemble made its Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival debut with an acclaimed three-concert series including the UK premiere of James Dillon's *New York Triptych*. Red Note also toured venues in Europe with François Sarhan's multimedia work *Lachez Tout*, performing in collaboration with the Flemish contemporary music theatre group LOD at the Rotterdam Opera Festival, in Dresden, Bruges, Ghent, Clermont-Ferrand, Orléans and elsewhere. Autumn 2014 saw Red Note collaborating with the Orchestre d'Auvergne for performances in France and Scotland of new works by William Sweeney, Brian Irvine and Laurent Cuniot.

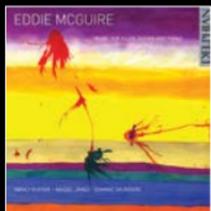
Other recent collaborations include the ensemble's *Reels to Ragas* project with tabla player Kuljit Bhamra and piper Fraser Fifield, while highlights for 2015 are set to include a new song cycle by Rory Boyle (with mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill), performances at the Bath and City of London festivals, and autumn visits to Ireland, Barcelona and Moscow. In 2016 Red Note will collaborate with the Antwerp-based ensemble I Solisti on a European tour of Louis Andriessen's *De Staat*.

Red Note is Associate Contemporary Ensemble at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow, an Associate Company of the Traverse Theatre Edinburgh and Associate Ensemble of the Sound Festival Aberdeen. Appearances on BBC Radio 3 include the premiere of Stephen Montague's *Three Fables* from the Purcell Room in London. The ensemble makes its Delphian debut in 2015 with two portrait discs, of the highly respected Scottish composers John McLeod (DCD34155) and Eddie McGuire (DCD34157).

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Also available on Delphian



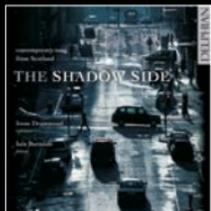
Eddie McGuire: Music for flute, guitar and piano

Nancy Ruffer, Abigail James, Dominic Saunders
DCD34029

Over the past 40 years Eddie McGuire, British Composer Award winner and Creative Scotland Award winner, has developed a compositional style that is as eclectic as it is concentrated. This disc surveys a selection of his solo and chamber works, written for his home instruments – flute, guitar and piano. The writing, whilst embracing tonality, focuses on texture and aspects of colour, drawing on a myriad folk influences.



'This is quite simply beautiful music ... Performances are excellent, the overall playing as expressive as the music itself requires; Delphian's sound is spot-on ... the perfect entrée to his sound-world'
— Gramophone, Awards issue 2006, EDITOR'S CHOICE



The Shadow Side: contemporary song from Scotland

MacMillan / McGuire / Geddes / McLeod / Bingham / Forbes / Mealor
Irene Drummond *soprano*, Iain Burnside *piano*
DCD34099

For many years Irene Drummond has been the leading exponent of contemporary song in Scotland. With her partner Iain Burnside – peerless in this music – she offers here a fascinating snapshot of her repertoire. From the rarefied sparseness of James MacMillan to the sustained luminosity of Paul Mealor and the emotionally charged dramatic outbursts of John McLeod, *The Shadow Side* explores a world of half-lights and brittle intensity.

'... soprano Irene Drummond at her most breathtakingly stellar and seductive' — The Herald, June 2011

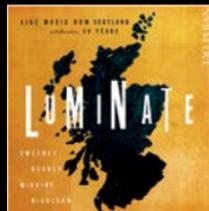


John McLeod: Moments in Time

Red Note Ensemble
DCD34155

Increasingly acclaimed at home and abroad, Aberdeen-born John McLeod's music bears all the hallmarks of exuberant colour and precisely imagined fantasy that his early associations with Lennox Berkeley and Witold Lutosławski would lead one to expect. Recorded during the composer's eightieth birthday year and released to mark Red Note Ensemble's new recording partnership with Delphian, this landmark collection brings together McLeod's four mythological 'songs' – powerful dramatic scenes in which instruments are elevated to voice-like expression – and a further work which crystallises the theme of a single moment with a long expressive 'shadow'.

New in June 2015



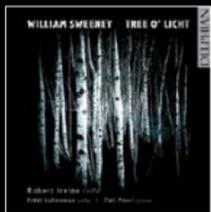
Luminate: Live Music Now Scotland celebrates 30 years

McGuire / Sweeney / Nicolson / Geddes
Spencer-Strachan Duo, Emma Versteeg *soprano*, Maryam Sherhan *piano*,
Astrid String Quartet, Wildings, Laura Margaret Smith *mezzo-soprano*,
Geoffrey Tanti *piano*
DCD34153

This year, Live Music Now Scotland – an organisation that promotes the work of stellar young artists – celebrates its 30th birthday. A blazing trail of commissions has followed in the charity's wake. In recognition of these three decades' achievements, Delphian has taken a snapshot of LMN's activity, itself a miniature picture of the wider cultural endeavours taking place in Scotland. Some of Scotland's shining young artists have recorded recent commissions by some of the country's brightest composing voices. A broad canvas of activity, flecked with intriguing and beautiful details.

New in April 2015

Also available on Delphian

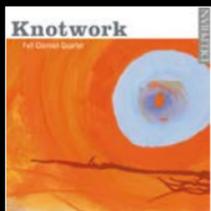


William Sweeney: Tree o' Licht

Robert Irvine & Erkki Lahesmaa *cellos*, Fali Pavri *piano*
DCD34113

Both musically impassioned and socially engaged, William Sweeney's music is at its most eloquent when voiced by that most human of instruments, the cello. The player navigates a stormy electronic landscape in the Borges-inspired *The Poet Tells of his Fame*, while Schumann lies behind the powerfully argued Sonata for Cello and Piano. The Sonata bears a joint dedication to Delphian artist Robert Irvine and to Erkki Lahesmaa – 'keepers', as Sweeney calls them, 'of the cello's inner voice' – and Irvine is joined by his Finnish colleague here in the 2008 duo *The Tree o' Licht*, in which Gaelic psalmody is transmuted into deepest instrumental expressivity.

'luminous ... an intriguing combination of exploration and introspection'
— The Independent, August 2013

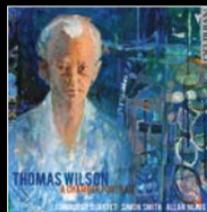


Knotwork: music for clarinet quartet

Fell Clarinet Quartet
DCD34065

From the vigour of Graham Fitkin's *Vent* and the flamboyance of Piazzolla to the refinement of two pieces by Eddie McGuire, alongside earlier music by Pierre Max Dubois and Alfred Uhl, the Fell Clarinet Quartet have created an inspired programme of superbly realised works from both the history and present of this still-young medium.

'Their style is electrifyingly unanimous ... ice-cool virtuosity and moody whispers that colour in equal measure'
— The Scotsman, April 2008



Thomas Wilson: A Chamber Portrait

Edinburgh Quartet, Simon Smith *piano*, Allan Neave *guitar*
DCD34079

An influential figure both personally and musically, Thomas Wilson (1927–2001) was the leading light in a group of composers whose vision and technical assurance brought an international modernism into twentieth-century Scottish music. In the chamber works collected here, moments of extraordinary stillness continually release into fast, propulsive writing whose compelling energies are matched by the individual and collective virtuosity of Simon Smith, Allan Neave and the Edinburgh Quartet.

'Delphian are to be warmly congratulated for bringing these tough but elegant, closely argued and well-crafted works to a wider public ... Superbly committed performances in vivid recordings'
— Tempo, October 2009



Robert Crawford: Music for piano and strings

Nicholas Ashton *piano*, Edinburgh Quartet
DCD34055

Elder statesman of the Scottish music scene by the release date of this disc shortly after his eightieth birthday, Robert Crawford (1925–2012) lavished intense care upon every one of his comparatively few compositions. The Edinburgh Quartet and pianist Nicholas Ashton are intimately acquainted with Crawford's work, and mirror the composer's attention to detail in a long overdue survey of this lovingly crafted music, spanning sixty years of compositional activity.

'an impressive collection ... committed and excellent performances'
— Musical Opinion, March/April 2008

