

Piano Recital by Mícéal O'Rourke

The Irish group delighted us on 17th October 2019 with a piano recital by Mícéal O'Rourke, the internationally acclaimed Irish pianist.

The artist is very well known in Poland and considered to be Russia's best loved Irish pianist. Mícéal O'Rourke's played Chopin's at his first public recital in France, in 1976. Chopin occupied a central place in his artistic life for 15 years. Mícéal is known for playing all of Chopin's 21 nocturnes in one sitting in St. Petersburg and elsewhere. His work was recognized as outstanding by the Frederic Chopin Society in Poland and awarded a Chopin medal. As he says himself: "Chopin is a disease one never wants to be cured of".



Mícéal O'Rourke also specialises in works of John Field, who lived and composed music for a large part of his life in Russia (from 1802 until his death in 1837). Field had a strong influence on Chopin. O'Rourke says: "Field is a bridge between Mozart and Chopin, placed chronologically between the two". Thanks to Mícéal's extensive research, many of Field's works were re-discovered and his 8 recordings of the Irish-Russian artist compositions for piano have won several international awards.

The recital started with a short speech by our President, Bernadette Ulens, who outlined the activities of Association Femmes d'Europe in helping those in need and expressed her appreciation of the artist's support for our cause.

The Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles with its excellent acoustics was a very good choice for the virtuoso performance, full of energy, no notes required.

The audience of some 350 persons listened spellbound as Mícéal brought them on a musical journey with romantic masterpieces from Beethoven, Barber, Field and Chopin, culminating in the powerful and evocative

"Pictures at an Exhibition" by Mussorgsky. It is simply amazing how well Mr. O'Rourke understands Mussorgsky; could it be that he channels John Field, his predecessor in Russian (and Polish) hearts?



After a standing ovation and requests for encore after encore the artist played an old Irish song which moved most of the audience, especially the Irish part, to tears.

It has been said that Mícéal's highly distinctive sound, presence, and ability to communicate musically grip public and critics alike and that was certainly the case of the audience on this occasion where the emotion was palpable. We can certainly agree with the description that he is "a tremendous virtuoso, playing with the simplicity of a child singing".

Our most sincere thanks go to Mícéal O'Rourke for his wonderful performance and also for mingling so kindly with the audience at the "Verre de l'Amitié", following the concert.

We are also extremely grateful to our generous sponsors, the Embassy of Ireland, FoodDrink Europe, Interparking, O' Reilly's Irish Pub and the Hotel nh Collection, whose financial and in-kind support was invaluable for the success of this event and in generating a healthy financial surplus, which will all go to funding the Association's small-scale humanitarian projects.

My special thanks go to our Irish group of Femmes d'Europe for all the hard work in organising this very enjoyable event.

Malgorzta Lukomska
Polish Group