

MUSIC
MR MCFALL'S
CHAMBER
**REMEMBERED/
IMAGINED**

SUMMERHALL, EDINBURGH

★★★★

NEVER ones to opt for anything as mundane as a straightforward concert, those fearless innovators at Mr McFall's Chamber found themselves at the centre of a web of influences and interconnections in their latest project.

Remembered/Imagined let loose seven artists – four writers and three composers – in the treasures of the archive at the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies, and challenged them to create new work taking fresh perspectives on traditional music and poetry, to be performed by the crack chamber group alongside actor and writer Angus Peter Campbell.

The results refracted folk material into unexpected shapes without ever destroying its essence. The text of *For the Bees* by writer Rebecca Sharp was pretty well obscured in the amplification process, but Ailie Robertson's music was achingly beautiful, from the rich, surging, Straussian harmonies of the second movement, to the

slow, serene consonance of the ending, all played with glowing confidence.

There followed two versions of *Clachan Beò*, from composer Amble Skuse and writers Campbell and Sophie Cooke, and here it was the natural melodies in a South Uist man's storytelling that served as launchpads for Skuse's witty, skittering music.

There was more wit in an unlikely tale of fairy abduction in *After Niall Sgrob* from composer Mike Vass and writer Charlotte Hathway, full of gently unfolding melodies and fresh, catchy rhythms.

Mr McFall's musicians were on exceptionally vivid form throughout – but they still risked being upstaged by the touching impromptu performance by Edinburgh Youth Gaitherin that opened the evening. Old tunes, maybe, but magically fresh takes on them.

DAVID KETTLE

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