



The grant from Angel Early Music helped us to bring our 'Smock Alley' album launch tour to the Worthing Pavilion Atrium on the 16th September 2023.

We are so grateful for this support as the album launch tour was an invaluable opportunity to rehearse together again as an ensemble, to revisit the music that we recorded together in July 2022, and to add some new repertoire into the concerts (including a new piece which Carina Drury wrote for the launch). We also had some incredibly touching feedback from audience members, which we've assimilated at the bottom of this report.

The musicians involved in this concert were:

Carina Drury, baroque cello
Poppy Walshaw, baroque cello
John Henry Baker, baroque double bass, percussion
Aileen Henry, baroque harp
Eimear McGeown, Irish flute and whistle

We think what was particularly creatively successful during this tour was the process of collaborating with the artist Matthew Robins, and the engagement that this created on social media (particularly elements such as Instagram stories from Matthew Robins in which we were tagged, whilst he was in the process of drawing and designing the artwork), drawing in a new audience who might not have previously engaged with period instrument music.

The engagement of the audiences in the live concerts was also particularly successful; not only have we received some wonderful feedback, but we sold over 35 CDs over the course of the three concerts which works out as more than 1 in 3 people buying an album when attending the concert. This is testament to how much the programme resonated with the audience when performed in a live setting.

As a marketing strategy for the Worthing concert we contacted local newspapers and gave an interview for an article which was published in the Sussex Express, we also created targeted online facebook adverts and printed posters and flyers which we distributed around local businesses. We were also helped by the Brighton Early Music Festival who did a social media post to promote the concert. This did help to bring a new audience to our concert, but we feel that it would take time to grow an audience base into full venue capacity levels. Hopefully we have already made inroads into establishing this!

We filmed the concert with assistance from Tom Mungall:



To summarise, this recording and the launch tour have been so incredibly fulfilling for us artistically, and we are extremely grateful to have had the funding which has made this possible. With each project that is funded, we feel empowered to develop our identity as a group and to take creative risk with our arrangements and compositions. It has also been extremely rewarding to bring this music to my own neighbourhood and to feel that I can bring some of what we do, sharing these fascinating historical connections and pieces of music, to the local community.

Here is some feedback from players and audience members:

You should be so proud of this whole project and your artistic vision.. perfect programme and everyone was so into it. Very nice young audience too! Nathaniel Mander- harpsichord

Thank you for bringing your beautiful music to Worthing! - Kay

Cellos rule.. wonderfully haunting Irish music at the launch of [Smock Alley] this eve. Just beautiful. -Jane

My wife took our kids to your gig tonight, sadly I had a rehearsal.. she said it was absolutely stunning! Thanks so much! -Andrew

I absolutely loved it! Thanks for performing to us. Not only did you sound phenomenal but the programme was so intricately constructed- it was magical. My favourite things were your compositions- what can I say! They were spell binding. -Alice

I have been listening to the album and it is really beautiful. It's like listening to a story, or stories. It has a taste of Ireland, and nomadic energy. Beautiful emotions behind the melodies, evoking. I'm listening with gratitude. - Justyna

It was great to sit in the audience and listen without need for technical analysis - unlike when I'm working on the live stream concerts at Sands Studios. I particularly enjoy the sound of the cellos and I think the group succeeds in creating a very convincing sound world of its own. The variety of the pieces on the CD (which I have now had a chance to listen to) and the way they are performed and recorded seems just right. All the hard work on the project has paid off. A winning combination! - Stewart

