

**Tuesday lunchtime
concert
Rachel Firmager and
Rachel Fryer (cello and
piano)
Fairfield
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TO CHOOSE an hour's music for cello and piano must be a daunting task from the rich library available.

Almost any programme is going to be greeted with, "I wish they'd played...", so the trick must be not to think of that, rather see the virtue in what's presented. The rationale of Rachel Firmager and Rachel Fryer seems to have been to choose music that would appeal to other cellists primarily but which, with a bit of co-operation, would at least in part be a pleasant surprise to those who only listen to music rather than play it.

Few of us might place, for example, Paul Bazelaire (1886-1958) high on the favourites list, but his Suite Francaise is most attractive and deserves to get the sort of airings that lesser works receive on a certain radio station capable of manufacturing popularity. It was, after all, composed for a superlative cellist (Pierre Fournier). Firmager's flexible playing ensured that the delights - especially in the lively Chanson de Bresse - were well-captured.

Janacek's music is often more appealing than expected and his three movement Pohadka (Fairy Tale) was a delightful tour of the textures of the combined qualities of the two instruments - a revelation that was rather more than the sum of its parts, being played here as a powerful and quite hypnotic work. It is creeping increasingly into more recitals and is certainly worth hunting down by the adventurous listener.

There was no surprise in the more familiar Sonata in D minor by Claude Debussy, a study in lush impressionism, composed in 1915. Like the Janacek piece, also a sonata in all but name, it is in three movements and, as in all of the above, the two players played excellently as an equal musical partnership, always putting the music first.

As an encore, we were given an equally sumptuous performance of Faure's Apres Une Reve, yet the whole concert still fell short of the prescribed hour, an object lesson in the presentation of sheer pleasure.

Howard Thomas