

**Europe dances at a concert of the series**  
**By Barbara Mühlenhoff**

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That music unites across frontiers was confirmed by the EU Chamber Orchestra, guest in Kleve's Town Hall for the 7th concert of the series. 15 musicians of 10 nations greeted the public in 9 languages. Both the concert master, Hans-Peter Hofmann, and his string-playing colleagues stood up to perform and Hofmann directed the interpretation using his body language with elan and finesse. He said in his introduction to the concert, 'We play always for the moment,' and he also proposed the wonderful motto for the evening. 'It is our wish that Europe dances, not that Europe fights.'

Schubert's Five German Dances began with excitement and unified motion – a preparation for a joyful evening. The journey set off through Bohemia with two pleasing if brief Waltzes from Dvorak's quill pen and continued to Italy for Ottorino Respighi's Ancient Airs & Dances (Suite III). With fleeting lightness these short dance movements are based on variations which are full of both fantasy and artistry. Playing with great concentration, but remaining relaxed, EUCO wallowed in the sound. After the interval, the journey went on to England with the dances of Peter Warlock's Capriol Suite to inhabit the same Neo-Barock as Respighi.

Dance miniatures, a Mazurka by Chopin and Cow Call & Peasants' Dance of Grieg followed. Grieg created the two Norwegian Melodies op.63 out of a rich treasure-trove of folk music. After Cow Call was the Peasant's Dance that is traditionally performed on the third day of a marriage party. A bridge was then made to Germany: before 1918 Siebenbürgen, an area of today's Rumania inhabited in part by Germans, belonged to Hungary. It was there that Bela Bartok collected folk melodies, assembling a collection of 'Rumanian Folk Dances from Hungary' which contains at least 1115 instrumental tunes.

In six Rumanian Dances Sz.56 the orchestra played with such rhythmic intensity that the Stick Dance, the Butschum Dance and the Rumanian Polka all acquired great expressive clarity. Overall the fast dances sounded happy and relaxed while, in the lyrical pieces, the players seemed to tell stories without words which led listeners into a world somewhere between melancholy and happiness.

No accents of the score were omitted and through consistently precise melodic delivery and clear delineation of the voices the unified 'machine', a string orchestra, sounded particularly colourful. A demanding and richly varied programme brought great pleasure to the listeners who could only go home consumed by the music.