

Richard Sweeney : lute

Richard was born in Dublin in 1978 into a musical family. In 1985 he began playing the cello and 3 years later received a guitar under the Christmas tree. Richard enjoyed playing string quartets from an early age but always disliked playing with larger ensembles. In his teens, he decided that he wanted to become a rock guitarist – it went pretty well for a while – but was eventually lured back to classical music via the classical guitar.

It was during his studies as a guitarist that Richard discovered the lute. He was instantly drawn to the instrument, its repertoire and to the opportunities it presented for social music-making. He began studying with Nigel North in 1998 and in 2001 moved to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music with Elizabeth Kenny.

Richard has extensive performance experience, having played with renowned ensembles including; The Kings Consort, Early Opera Company, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Academy of Ancient Music, English Concert, I Fagiolini, Les Talens Lyriques, Concerto Palatino, Irish Baroque Orchestra and Sonnerie. Richard is a member of the newly formed lute quartet, Chordophony, and has been described by The Irish Times as *'no mean master of his instrument'*.

Over the course of his career as a lutenist, Richard has found himself to be most at home in the repertoire of the 17th & 18th centuries. He has extensively researched historical performance techniques (he'll get around to writing about it someday) and is unique in his approach to *really* historical continuo realisations on the lute and related instruments.

Richard will direct his first project next year (something he's been dying to do for ages) – a small touring opera production with Malmö opera entitled *'i natt, i natt'*. The project will be co-directed by his wife, baroque violinist Hannah Tibell.

Richard lives close to the sea in Malmö in the south of Sweden. He is the recipient of the Arts Council of Ireland Bursary Award for 2009 / 2010.