

# THE VANBRUGH & FRIENDS

*Keith Pascoe and Marja Gaynor, violins*

*Simon Aspell and Ed Creedon, violas*

*Christopher Marwood, cello*

**CARRICK-ON-SHANNON** - Thursday 18th April at 8pm - The Dock

**DROGHEDA** - Friday 19th April at 7pm - St Peter's Church of Ireland - *presented by Drogheda Classical Music*

**BANDON** - Saturday 20th April at 8pm - Methodist Church – *presented by Bandon Walled Town Festival*

**LIMERICK** - Sunday 21st April at 3.30pm - University Concert Hall - *presented by Limerick Classical Concert Series*

**Luigi Boccherini** [1743-1805]

**String Quintet in E major, G.402, Op.62 No.6** [1802]

1. *Allegro vivo assai*
2. *Larghetto amoroso*
3. *Presto-Larghetto amoroso*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** [1770-1827]

**String Quintet in C minor Op.104** [1795 & 1817]

1. *Allegro con brio*
2. *Andante cantabile con variazioni*
3. *Menuetto: Quasi Allegro – Trio*
4. *Finale: Prestissimo*

## INTERVAL

**Antonín Dvořák** [1841-1904]

**String Quintet in E flat major Op. 97 American** [1893]

1. *Allegro non tanto*
2. *Allegro vivo - Un poco meno mosso*
3. *Larghetto*
4. *Finale: Allegro giusto*



THE DOCK



LIMERICK CLASSICAL  
CONCERT SERIES

## THE VANBRUGH

The Vanbrugh has evolved from the work of the Vanbrugh Quartet which was based in Cork as RTE's Resident Quartet from 1986 to 2013 and as Artists-in-Residence at University College, Cork from 1990 until the retirement of violinist Gregory Ellis in 2017. Over three decades the quartet gave close to three thousand concerts, presenting the chamber music repertoire to audiences throughout Ireland, Europe, the Americas, and the Far East. Commercial recordings include more than thirty CDs of repertoire ranging from the complete Beethoven quartets to many contemporary Irish works. In 2016 the group was presented with the National Concert Hall's Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of their contribution to music in Ireland.

Keith Pascoe, Simon Aspell, and Christopher Marwood continue to perform together as the nucleus of the Vanbrugh and are joined by guest artists for performances of a wide range of chamber music repertoire.

### Marja Gaynor, violin

Originally from Finland, Marja Gaynor is a Cork-based violinist and viola player. She specialises in Baroque music and is a member of Irish Baroque Orchestra and Camerata Kilkenny, recording and touring with both groups regularly. She has also performed with Irish Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Marsyas, Dunedin Consort, London Handel Players, King's Consort and Helsinki Baroque Orchestra. Marja is known as a versatile musician at home in many different styles, a fluent improviser, as well as arranger and curator. Her string arranging credits include Oscar-winning song "Falling Slowly" from the movie *Once*, and Marja is also a long time member of the cult band Interference. Upcoming projects include chamber music tours with Solas Quartet and The Vanbrugh and performing and arranging as a trio with uilleann piper David Power and flamenco guitarist John Walsh. She teaches violin and chamber music in MTU Cork School of Music.

### Ed Creedon, viola

Ed Creedon enjoys a varied career as a viola player, performing chamber music, in recitals and as an orchestral musician. Recent performances include the National Concert Hall Chamber Music Gathering, tours throughout Ireland with the Lir String Quartet, tours to Finland, France and India with Camerata Ireland as well as solo performances with Camerata Ireland and Barry Douglas.

Chamber music highlights include performances with the Vanbrugh Quartet, as well as appearances with the Ficino Ensemble in Dublin, the Piatti Quartet in the U.K., at the Ortús Festival in Cork, and repeat invitations to the Clondeboye Festival in Belfast and the Killaloe Festival of Chamber Music. For four consecutive summers he took part in the West Cork Chamber Music Festival's Young Musicians Programme.

Ed comes from Cork and studied with Constantin Zanidache and Simon Aspell at the Cork School of Music.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

**Luigi Boccherini** [1743-1805]

**String Quintet in E major, G.402, Op.62 No.6** [1802]

Much of Luigi Boccherini's music is painfully under-represented in concert performance. Added to that 'douleur', many published works attributed to the composer are fake imitations at best. Around two hundred works bearing his name are potential imposters. Why this is the case deserves examination. Boccherini, a child-prodigy cellist, though born in Lucca, Italy, soon travelled far to the main musical centres of Italy, France, and eventually Spain, where he spent most of his mature life and where he died. His talents as cellist and composer were recognised at an early stage by publishers, journalists, and royal courts. In Paris he was approached by the Spanish ambassador on behalf of a certain Prince Don Luis de Borbon and so he became his court composer-cellist, initially to the court at Madrid.

Due to the prince's morganatic marriage, he became exiled by the king to the remote Spanish hilltop village of Arenas de San Pedro. Don Luis brought with him his court, Boccherini and members of a string quartet, already on his payroll. A family string quartet, (the Font Quartet: father and his three sons) who joined Boccherini in Arenas and formed the basis for most of Boccherini's works of great quality that were commissioned by the prince: the string quintets for two violins, viola and two cellos. This unusual formation was a product of circumstances, and one imagines boredom of a young genius trapped in an isolated place. But crucially, being isolated from the main hub of the big musical cities it was quite impossible to control the lack of copyright over his works. Unscrupulous publishers had no qualms in publishing works of other composers under the name of Boccherini if it made them money. Even after his death many performers too were guilty of appropriating their works to Boccherini.

Ironically, when the prince died in Arenas and Boccherini returned to Madrid, his next patron was from the Prussian court. Prince Freidrich Wilhelm II, an amateur cellist who had also commissioned Mozart's 'Prussian Quartets' loved Boccherini's 'two-cello quintets' so much that he commissioned more and more of them! Thus there remain around 110 such quintets by Boccherini. Sadly, some of them have yet to be published or recorded.

The rest of Boccherini's output was also impressive with around eighty string quartets, other chamber music, symphonies and choral works. The present work is the last of the composer's twelve quintets for the more usual formation of two violins, two violas and cello dedicated to Lucien Bonaparte, younger brother of Napoleon. We know it to be an authentic work because of an extant autograph manuscript in the Paris Bibliotheque de L'opera. It is, as far as we know, the first time it has been performed in Ireland, and has not yet been recorded commercially. *Keith Pascoe*

**Ludwig van Beethoven** [1770-1827]

**String Quintet in C minor Op.104** [1795 & 1817]

This quintet is an arrangement made by Beethoven himself of the third Piano Trio in his ground-breaking Opus 1 set. Such arrangements were common practice in Beethoven's time and, when they were sensitively made, ideally by the composer of the original work, they served to bring contemporary works to a wider domestic and amateur audience. Unfortunately, in the pre-copyright era, publishers would often unscrupulously commission arrangements and transcriptions by lesser musicians and publish them under the name of the original composer, thus sullyng the reputation of the unfortunate composer while reaping the financial benefit. This used to make Beethoven furious and for a time his brother Carl tried to control this process, but Beethoven was not prepared to spend a lot of time on transcriptions.

For those who know this work in the original version, listening to this quintet will be a strange experience, for it is both disturbingly and yet magically different. The original set of trios was published by Beethoven himself on a subscription basis in 1795. His confidence in undertaking this venture and his dramatic success, both financial and artistic, speaks volumes for his ability to command the attention of the music-loving aristocrats of Vienna so soon after the death of Mozart. But of course, he chose the trios as they enabled him to show off his prowess as a pianist. One cannot but wonder how he must have felt returning to these youthful works over twenty years later, now completely deaf and, in that year of 1817, in poor health and seemingly unable to compose.

The opening movement is one of sharp dynamic contrasts and daring key changes full of the tensions implied by the choice of C minor. The quiet opening recalls Mozart's C minor concerto, a work that the younger composer admired. A typically ardent Beethovenian moment is when the opening phrase is released *fortissimo* at the start of the recapitulation to herald a completely recomposed version of the exposition. The tension is reduced for the second movement, a gentle theme with a set of five undemanding variations, where the expressive fourth variation is in the minor and the last one is extensively decorated by the first violin. There is a quiet valedictory coda.

The short minuet encloses a delightful trio that sees the first violin brilliantly capture the piano's opening flourish. The Finale goes off like a rocket with furious arpeggios from the violin that once was a piano interspersed with collective octaves and then after a tense pause continues quietly but with enormous latent energy. There is a contrasting major-key second subject that has a chorale-like quality that is gloriously expanded as the movement progresses and the firework displays from the opening are gradually left behind. Unbelievably there is a beautifully controlled reduction in tension and, courageously, the twenty-five year old composer, now accompanied by his older self, allow the work to sink to a quiet close in C major. **Francis Humphrys**

**Antonín Dvořák** [1841-1904]

**String Quintet in E flat major Op. 97 'American'** [1893]

Dvořák's chamber music output was prodigious, 14 string quartets, 4 piano trios, 2 piano quartets, 3 piano quintets, 1 string sextet and 3 string quintets. The E flat Quintet dates from Dvořák's first American sojourn in 1893 and was written immediately after the American Quartet and in the middle of writing the New World Symphony. As in both those works the composer concentrates on simplicity of form placed at the service of an enchantment of melody.

As viola players are fond of pointing out, many great composers were also violists, Mozart & Dvořák being leading examples, and the fifth instrument opens this work with a gentle evocation of the main theme. The sustained and delightful lyricism of this movement and indeed the whole work is quickly made clear. Its unquestioning overflowing of delicious tunes marks it as belonging to an age of innocence unlike the intellectual questing of most contemporary music, which is entirely alien to Dvořák's world. Instead we have an irresistibly infectious joy in music making that reminds us why we are all here.

The *Allegro vivo* goes with a tremendous swing requiring precision playing and the counter-melodies both above and below the driving rhythm show the hand of an undisputed Master, just as the extra viola creates all sorts of exotic possibilities. The Trio is opened with a gloriously soulful solo on the first viola and a delicious pizzicato accompaniment. However the Scherzo refuses to be kept waiting and soon bursts in on this interlude with its unrestrainable energy.

The *Larghetto* is a set of variations based on a quiet and open-hearted theme, to which the composer is so attached that the variations are given to the accompaniment and the theme is left intact. Only the first variation takes the conventional form of tempo change and decorations. So there is a whirling and plucked gypsy variation, a sobbing tremolo one, café style with guitars, all culminating in a full-throated singing before sinking to a hushed close.

The Rondo theme of the last movement is obsessively cheerful. A contemporary critic made the following enigmatic comment on this theme: *What American suggestions lie in this merry tune we scarcely dare suggest, as not wishing to mar innocent and pure enjoyment with hints of the ignoble; but that it reflects some of the pleasures of the lowly is obvious enough.* So we must consider the fertility of Dvořák's melodic invention in this movement as a cause of great, if lowly, pleasure. At the finish the cheerfulness is thrown aside and a big head of steam is built up for a stirring close. **Francis Humphrys**