

FUAIM - MUSIC *at* UCC

Friday lunchtime concerts – Spring 2024

THE VANBRUGH & FRIENDS

Keith Pascoe and Marja Gaynor, violins

Simon Aspell and Ed Creedon, violas

Christopher Marwood, cello

Aula Maxima, UCC - Friday 9th February at 1.10pm

Introducing the **GEALACH QUARTET**

Kseniia Yershova and Ellen O'Connell, violins

Ilona Adams, viola

Alina Obreja, cello

Joseph Haydn [1732-1809]

String Quartet in D Major, Op.76, No.5 [1797]

1. Allegretto – Allegro

4. Finale: Presto

Ludwig van Beethoven [1770-1827]

String Quintet in E flat major Op.4 [1795]

1. Allegro con brio

2. Andante

3. Menuetto: Allegretto

4. Finale: Presto



GEALACH QUARTET

Kseniia Yershova is a violin and viola player from Ukraine. She graduated from the Stolyarsky Lyceum in Odesa and is currently studying full-time at MTU Cork School of Music with Gregory Ellis and Simon Aspell. Kseniia is the artistic director of a family quintet with her sisters and also arranges music.

Ellen O'Connell is a first year BMus student studying in the MTU Cork School of Music. She is studying violin under Katherine Hunka and was previously taught by Gregory Ellis. A keen chamber music player, she has played in numerous ensembles over the past five years. Ellen is a member of the Cork School of Music Symphony Orchestra, and a past member of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland. Ellen also plays the piano and is currently studying organ with James Taylor.

Iona Adams is a viola player from Dublin currently pursuing an MA in performance in CSM under Simon Aspell. Prior to this, she studied in RIAM part-time with Lisa Dowdall while completing a BSc and ME in engineering in UCD. As a chamber musician, she has been coached by members of the Vanbrugh, Contempo Quartet and Signum Quartet.

Shortly after moving to Ireland, **Alina Obreja** took up the cello with Sonja Cadogan in Portlaoise. She is currently undergoing her studies in MTU Cork School of Music, specialising in performance under the tutelage of Christopher Marwood. Since starting the degree, Alina has developed a passion for chamber music, participating in various ensembles.

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

Ludwig van Beethoven [1770-1827]

String Quintet in E flat major Op.4 [1795]

Beethoven's chamber music for strings is rightly dominated by his sixteen quartets but there are also an interesting number of duos, trios, and quintets including this quintet in E flat major. The piece is something of a 'Cinderella' among Beethoven's string ensemble output. Its performances are relatively rare and it lags way behind its sibling – the Op 29 String Quintet in C dating from 1801 – in the realm of popularity.

The Op 4 Quintet was most likely written in 1795 some three years after the composer's arrival in Vienna from his native Bonn, ostensibly to study with Franz Joseph Haydn. While Beethoven maintained he learned little or nothing from the master, the pupil's music often tells a different story. The quintet is partly a hybrid work with some, but not all of it, stemming from one of Beethoven's earlier pieces, a wind octet written in Bonn in 1792 for his patron Elector Maximilian Franz. He revised it in Vienna but, not particularly satisfied, put it aside. It resurfaced after his death when the publisher Artaria gave it the opus number 103.

While Beethoven may have discarded his octet, he didn't abandon it altogether and, in an extensive revision, transposed some of it, did some 'radical reworking' of more of it and added new material, to create this string quintet. The end result is a mature and intricately crafted piece with its inventive writing sounding perfectly natural in its string format.

The themes of the opening movement are light and flexible. Full of contrapuntal interaction, their construction follows the Viennese classical styles of Haydn and Mozart. The main theme has been

described as ‘a wriggling semi-quaver motif’ and this tends to dictate most of the *Allegro*’s musical discourse. Following the usual pattern of exposition and development, a cello passage in the remote key of B flat delays the arrival of the recapitulation in what has been termed ‘an exquisite moment of harmonic deception’.

With a moderately slow tempo, the B flat *Andante* is a charming serenade not too far removed from a Siciliano. The movement is also sprinkled with harmonic surprises, something Beethoven learned from Haydn although this might not be readily admitted! A short central development moves through several unanticipated key changes and shows the composer already creating imaginative effects.

The following *Menuetto più allegretto* is an early example of a Beethoven scherzo. A rising staccato scale figure actually prefigures something similar in the scherzo of the 9th Symphony. Ideas from the original octet are greatly expanded with Beethoven adding a second trio section marked ‘*sempre dolce e piano*’. Interestingly, here he silences the second viola throughout. And maybe in homage to Mozart, who transformed his own Serenade in C minor K 388 for wind octet into the String Quintet K 406, Beethoven indulges in a series of canonic imitations.

In a complete rethinking of the octet’s finale, the concluding sonata-rondo *Presto* is based on a gambolling main theme with the composer exploiting its amusing potential to the full. The influence of Haydn is not far beneath the surface and, maybe as a consequence, Beethoven is found in one of his more jovial moods. *Pat O’Kelly*

UPCOMING NSQF CONCERTS IN AND AROUND CORK

Saturday 17th February at 1pm – The Ora Quartet at Triskel Christchurch

Saturday 19th March at 1pm – The Piatti Quartet at Triskel Christchurch

Friday 22nd March at 1.10pm – Vanbrugh & Friends at Aula Maxima, UCC

Saturday 23rd March at 4pm – Vanbrugh & Friends at the Mall Arts Centre, Youghal

Saturday 20th April at 8pm – Vanbrugh & Friends at Bandon Methodist Church

NSQF SUMMER GALA CONCERT - Saturday 8th June at 8pm, Aula Maxima, UCC

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