

NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION - SPRING SEASON 2023

BANBHA QUARTET

Lidia Jewloszewicz-Clarke and Maria Ryan, violins - Robin Panter, viola - Aoife Burke, cello

LISTOWEL - Wednesday 18th January at 8pm - St John's Theatre and Arts Centre

NAVAN - Thursday 19th January at 8pm - Solstice Arts Centre

LIMERICK - Friday 20th January at 8pm - Belltable

CORK - Saturday 21st January at 1pm - Triskel Christchurch (*Bacewicz, O'Leary, Dvorak*)

DUBLIN - Sunday 22nd January at 12pm - Hugh Lane Gallery (*Bacewicz, O'Leary, Dvorak*)

Josef Haydn [1732-1809]

String Quartet in D major, Op 20 No 4 [1772]

1. *Allegro di molto*
2. *Un poco adagio affettuoso, with 4 variations*
3. *Minuet. Allegretto alla zingarese - Trio*
4. *Presto e scherzando*

Grażyna Bacewicz [1909-1969]

String Quartet No.4 [1951]

1. *Andante – Allegro molto*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegro giocoso*

Jane O'Leary [1946]

Forever begin... (*Fanfare for a New Year*) [2019]

Antonín Dvořák [1841-1904]

String Quartet in F major, Op.96 'American' (1893)

1. *Allegro ma non troppo*
2. *Lento*
3. *Molto vivace*
4. *Finale: vivace ma non troppo*



HUGH LANE GALLERY



NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION
www.nsqf.ie



triskel christchurch



The Banbha Quartet was founded in 2020 and is made up of four of our most celebrated musicians. This is their fourth tour for the National String Quartet Foundation.

Lidia Jewloszewicz-Clarke, violin

Lidia Jewloszewicz-Clarke is an award-winning Polish violinist living in Ireland. She is a winner of the Hibernian Orchestra Concerto Competition (Ireland) and the Gdańsk Mozart Prize (Poland). She was a founding member of the Lupus Piano Trio, with whom she received the Special Prize at the International Brahms Competition in Gdańsk, and was a finalist of the Bacewicz International Chamber Music Competition in Łódź. Lidia is the recipient of a scholarship from the President of the University of Music in Luzern, Switzerland and an Artistic Scholarship from the President of Gdańsk for Special Achievements in Music and Culture. Most recently, Lidia was awarded an Agility Award and a bursary by The Arts Council in Ireland. Lidia regularly performs with Camerata Ireland, Musici Ireland, the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra. Lidia graduated with honours from the Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk. She furthered her studies in London at The Royal Academy of Music and graduated with an MA in Performance. Her teachers included Remus Azoitei, Sebastian Hamann, Tomotada Soh and Mirosława Pawlak.

Maria Ryan, violin

A native of Kilkenny, award-winning violinist Maria Ryan is a member of the Banbha Quartet, the newly-founded Marble Collective and performs in duo partnership with Dr. Gabriela Mayer. She also recently performed with the Prizm Trio as part of Cork Orchestral Society's concert season.

In 2010, Maria moved to London to join Southbank Sinfonia; there she was awarded the position of Leader and chosen to perform in their chamber music showcase at Wigmore Hall. Over the following ten years, Maria worked with some of the UK's most prestigious orchestras, including the BBC Concert and Symphony Orchestras, the English Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra. She recently undertook a Music Network Residency at St. John's Arts Centre, Listowel with the Marble Collective.

Maria is a recipient of the RDS Music Bursary and winner of the Heineken Violin Competition. She was awarded an Agility Award by The Arts Council in 2021. She studied at the CIT Cork School of Music with Ruxandra Petcu-Colan and subsequently at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz in Cologne with Emilian Piedicuta.

Maria moved back to Kilkenny in 2019 to live on a farm in the countryside with her two children. She works regularly with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra, Irish National Opera, Camerata Ireland and is a Lecturer at the MTU Cork School of Music.

Robin Panter, viola

Robin Panter is from Liverpool and studied the viola at the Royal Northern College of Music with Roger Benedict and Scott Dickinson. Robin joined the viola section of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in 2004, and while in Glasgow teamed up with a group of musicians to set up the Scottish version of El Sistema, visiting Venezuela and applying its ground-breaking social and community development programme to schools in Raploch, Stirling.

Robin now lives in Ireland where he is a member of the Irish Chamber Orchestra and performs with the RTÉ Concert, National Symphony and Ulster Orchestras. Robin is a keen chamber musician and is a member of the Robinson Panoramic Quartet, and more recently Trio Táin with his wife Vourneen Ryan (Flute) and Aisling Ennis (Harp). Robin is a trained Suzuki violin teacher and teaches the viola at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin.

Aoife Burke, cello

Selected by The Arts Council as a Next Generation Artist in 2020, cellist Aoife Burke leads a diverse career as a recitalist, chamber musician, orchestral player, curator and producer.

An avid chamber musician, she has collaborated with The Vanbrugh, the ConTempo String Quartet and the Gavin Bryars, Kirkos, Ficino and Crash Ensembles. Her love for chamber music was fostered, in tandem with many other influences, during a Chamber Studio mentorship with Richard Lester at King's Place, London. Aoife has also appeared as soloist with orchestra several times both at home and abroad. Her début with the New York Concerti Sinfonietta in Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in 2016 was described as *"a thing of beauty...intelligent, poised, and refined"*. (The Epoch Times)

Aoife studied at undergraduate level with Emma Ferrand at the RNCM in Manchester, and with Christoph Richter and Andreas Reiner at the Folkwang Universität der Künste in Essen, Germany, graduating in 2014 with a first-class BMus. (Hons.). During the course of her studies, Aoife won the Raphael Sommer Music Scholarship and partook in the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme. Aoife subsequently obtained a Master's Degree in Arts with Distinction from the CIT Cork School of Music, where she studied under Christopher Marwood, and pursued further study on the Performance Certificate Course (Corso di Perfezionamento) at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole, Italy, with Paolo Bonomini and Francesco Dillon. She is grateful for the generous support of Music Network's Music Capital Scheme, funded by The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Music Network is funded by The Arts Council.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Josef Haydn [1732-1809]

String Quartet in D major, Op 20 No 4 [1772]

Haydn's remarkable Opus 20 quartets are regarded as landmarks in the history of the string quartet. Throughout the six contrasting quartets the composer employs compositional techniques that were to shape and define the genre. We witness a deviation in style from the lightness and wit of his previous quartets to a mood of emotional intensity and darker musical imagery.

No 4 in D major is the most obviously tuneful of Op 20, looking ahead to later Haydn in its incorporation of popular-style melodies. The expansive yet sinewy opening Allegro di molto makes mysterious/dramatic capital of its initial 'drum' motif, always likely to pivot the music to an unexpected tonal area. With the instruments often paired in mellifluous thirds and sixths (as in the dialogues between upper and lower voices in the second group of themes), the textures sound more 'Mozartian' than usual in Haydn's quartets.

The poignant D minor slow movement is Haydn's only variation movement cast entirely in the minor key (and there is no parallel in Mozart or Beethoven). The second half of the theme, with each instrument rising slowly by step, reaches an almost excruciating pitch of intensity. Of the three variations, the first is fashioned as a fretful dialogue between second violin and viola, the second exploits the cello over its whole compass, and the third dissolves the theme into triplets for the first violin. After a reprise of the original theme, shorn of its repeats, Haydn expands the scale in an astonishing, unprecedented fantasia-cum-coda that stresses the dissonant melodic shapes within the theme and, in the fragmentary final bars, pushes the music to the brink of incoherence.

Returning to a world of robust normality, the minuet, Allegretto alla zingarese ('gypsy-style'), and Presto scherzando finale mine Haydn's favourite Hungarian gypsy vein with irresistible wit and élan. In the former a riot of offbeat accents keeps the listener guessing as to whether this is a minuet or a gavotte. In pointed contrast, the trio deals in perfectly regular four-bar phrases, with a jaunty cello solo against the simplest of accompaniments. The finale lives up to its scherzando billing in music of controlled waywardness and harmonic surprise, treating its impish opening motif in the free, informal contrapuntal textures that are among the chief delights of Haydn's mature quartet style. *Richard Wigmore*

Grażyna Bacewicz [1909-1969]

String Quartet No.4 [1951]

Grażyna Bacewicz studied violin, piano, and composition at the Warsaw Conservatory, then went on to Paris, where she studied composition with Nadia Boulanger and violin with Carl Flesch. Bacewicz quickly developed into an outstanding violinist: she gave concerts throughout Europe, was a prizewinner at the 1935 Wieniawski Competition, and served for three years in the 1930s as concertmaster of the Polish Radio Orchestra. In 1954, Bacewicz was so seriously injured in an automobile accident that she had to give up performing, and she devoted the rest of her career to composing and to teaching composition at the Łódź and Warsaw conservatories. Bacewicz's talents were multi-dimensional: she was also a fine pianist, and she was a writer – she left behind (in manuscript) a novel, short stories, and a dramatic sketch. She died in Warsaw just a few weeks before her sixtieth birthday.

As a composer Bacewicz was extremely prolific. She wrote seven violin concertos, two cello concertos, as well as concertos for piano and for viola, plus four symphonies, seven string quartets, five violin sonatas, and a vast amount of chamber music, piano music, vocal music, and two ballets. As might be expected of a student of Boulanger, Bacewicz wrote with clarity of texture and form, and she has inevitably been classified as a neoclassical composer, though she disliked that term. After the cultural thaw of 1956 brought more freedom to Polish music life, Bacewicz experimented with serial music and avant-garde techniques, but – unlike Lutosławski, Gorecki, and Penderecki – she did not evolve far from her pre-war idiom. Her music is only now, fifty years after her death, being gradually discovered internationally.

In 1950, the Polish Composers Union commissioned a string quartet from Bacewicz that would be entered in the International String Quartet Competition the following year in Liège. Bacewicz composed her String Quartet No. 4 in 1950, and its premiere in Liège on September 21, 1951, was so successful that the quartet was awarded first prize. The Polish premiere took place the following month, and the Fourth remains one of Bacewicz's most popular quartets and one of her most frequently performed compositions.

The Fourth Quartet is in three movements, all of them in classical forms and all of them beautifully written for strings. The quartet opens with a long, slow introduction that occasionally flares up with unexpected tensions before the music takes wing at the Allegro molto. In sonata form, this contrasts its dramatic, energetic opening with more relaxed secondary material. The central Andante, in a general three-part form, is expressive and sometimes quite intense; Bacewicz takes some

of the material through brief fugatos before the movement comes to a quiet close. The tensions of the first two movements relax in the last, for Bacewicz rounds the quartet off with an aptly-marked *Allegro giocoso* ("happy"). This rondo-finale does indeed dance happily, its progress interrupted by differing episodes, one played entirely *pizzicato*, another based on Polish folk music. But the rondo theme always makes an agreeable return, and at the end it propels the Fourth Quartet to a most emphatic conclusion. **Eric Bromberger**

Jane O'Leary [1946]

Forever begin... (*Fanfare for a New Year*) [2019]

'every beginning is a promise...'

Written for the Galway Music Residency series, *From Europe with Love* - a concert programme highlighting string quartet music from each of the 27 EU countries over three years, this work was premiered on 4 February 2020, when the focus was on Ireland. The music is full of anticipation, of hope and optimism - feelings associated with new beginnings. As we start 2023, we can reflect on the nature of renewal and recall the words of Brendan Kennelly's iconic poem, *Begin*:

*'Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
that always seems about to give in
something that will not acknowledge conclusion
insists that we forever begin.'*

Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)

String Quartet No 12 in F ('American') Op 96 (1893)

Antonín Dvořák was the most prolific chamber music composer of the late nineteenth century. He wrote numerous excellent works in every standard form as well as for novel ensembles. His natural and seemingly effortless proclivity for chamber music resulted in a body of work that was unusual for a composer of the Romantic period, a time in which the exploration of large forces, extra-musical programs and expansive, subjective forms had little to do with this intimate and formalized genre most associated with the Classical era. It was characteristic of his time for Dvořák to express his musical nationalism; strong elements of his native Bohemian (i.e. Czech or Slavonic) folk music appear in his music in the dance and narrative forms of the *furiant* and the *dumka* respectively. But despite such general influences of form, rhythm and mood, Dvořák's music was always entirely original, characteristic, and, by the standards of the best chamber music, masterful. Though he was not a pioneer, his music has a freshness, a clarity of texture and a bounty of dramatic lyricism that makes it original.

Dvořák's most well-known works date from the 1890's during his three-year sojourn to America where he served as director of the National Conservatory in New York. They include the *New World Symphony*, the *Viola Quintet* and the "*American*" *String Quartet*. Dvořák encountered American folk music in the form of Native-American drumming and African-American spirituals, the latter of which he regarded as profoundly original music that might serve as a basis for a national style. Many find strong influences of both genres in Dvořák's own "American" compositions while others claim that his music is entirely consistent with his own European folk and classical traditions. Dvořák himself denied that he intentionally incorporated any American elements. Nonetheless, the "American" String Quartet in particular bears the stamp of the time and place of its composition.

Ironically, Dvořák composed the American quartet while on holiday in the predominantly Bohemian farming community of Spillville, Iowa. A spirit of relaxation and perhaps joyful homecoming inspired him to swiftly compose the quartet within a few weeks. Flowing, spacious, and bright, the music seems to reflect his disposition, if not, as some claim, the expanse of the American plains. The most pervasive aspect of the quartet supporting these qualities, as well as reflecting Dvořák's general preoccupation with folk idioms, is the use of the pentatonic or five-note scale: nearly every primary and secondary theme throughout the quartet uses a form of it. Common in folk music around the world, the pentatonic scale omits the semitones found at the 4th and the 7th degrees of the more common classical scale yielding a specific quality of broadness, stability and a lack of tension (even in a minor key). Whatever influences or expressive intentions lay behind this choice, it imbues the quartet with a personality and a continuity that is distinctive and strongly evocative. The most particular trace of the quartet's rural, American origin, however, is birdsong. The third movement Scherzo features the song of the Scarlet Tanager, a bird that Dvořák heard and transcribed while hiking the countryside. After an initial statement of a sprightly, rustic theme, the first violin sings the birdsong high in the treble range. The instantaneous evocation of dance, the outdoors, and the piercing simplicity of nature's own music define a pure moment of folk music as high art. © Kai Christiansen / www.earsense.org

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