

NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION - SPRING SEASON 2023

# CALLINO QUARTET

*Helena Winkelman and Tom Hankey, violins – Rebecca Jones, viola – Sarah McMahon, cello*

**LISTOWEL** - Wednesday 22nd March at 8pm - St John's Arts Centre

**SLIGO** - Friday 24th March at 8pm - The Model - *presented by Con Brio*

**CASTLEPOLLARD** - Saturday 25th March at 8pm - St Michael's Church - *presented by Derravaragh Music Association*

**BANTRY** - Sunday 26th March at 3pm - St. Brendan's Church - *presented by West Cork Music*

**KILKENNY** – Monday 27th March at 8pm - Thomastown Concert Hall, Co. Kilkenny - *presented by Music in Kilkenny*

**Josef Haydn** [1732-1809]

**Quartet in C major Op.33 No.3** [1781]

1. *Allegro moderato*
2. *Scherzo: Allegretto*
3. *Adagio ma non troppo*
4. *Finale: Rondo – Presto*

**Helena Winkelman** [1974]

**Papa Haydn's Parrot** [2016]

**Ian Wilson** [1964]

***In fretta, in vento, string quartet no.6*** [2001]

**Maurice Ravel** [1875–1937]

**String Quartet in F major** [1902-3]

1. *Moderato très doux*
2. *Assez vif – très rythmé*
3. *Très lent*
4. *Vif et agité*



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**The Callino Quartet** was formed at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival in 1999 where they immediately felt a deep musical affinity and gave a critically acclaimed début concert. Since then they have been delighting audiences, both in Ireland and abroad, with their fresh, engaging interpretations and innovative programming.

The Callino Quartet has cultivated a broad and eclectic repertoire. They have collaborated with musicians from across a variety of genres, including Edgar Meyer, Tom Poster, Gilbert Kalish, Patricia Rozario, Ailish Tynan, rock band Arcade Fire, Bell Orchestre and jazz guitarist John Abercrombie. They have also worked with many composers, including Peteris Vasks, Aleksandra Vrebalov, Alexander Knaifel, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, Ian Wilson and Raymond Deane on their works for string quartet. The Quartet was also honoured to be invited to Italy to work closely with the distinguished Hungarian composer and pedagogue György Kurtág.

The Callino Quartet has received many awards including prizes at the Borciani and Tromp international string quartet competitions. They have performed in many of the world's leading concert halls including Wigmore Hall and Carnegie Hall, as well as having toured extensively throughout Europe.

Previous recordings by the quartet include works by Arvo Pärt, Valentin Silvestrov, John Tavener, Rachel Stott, Alexander Knaifel and Ian Wilson. Their most recent recording of Haydn's "Seven Last Words" for Coro has met with critical acclaim. Their subsequent collaboration with Canadian film director, Kaveh Nabatian, performing a live score of this work, was premiered at the International Film Festival in Rotterdam in 2019 and will be touring to festivals in New York, Buenos Aires, Bilbao, Montreal, Edinburgh and Moscow.

The Callino Quartet takes their name from the Irish air "Cailín cois tSuir a mé" which means "Girl by the River Suir". This is the earliest piece of Irish music to have been notated, in the 16th century, and it is on display in Trinity College Dublin.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

**Josef Haydn** [1732-1809]

**Quartet in C major Op.33 No.3** [1781]

1. *Allegro moderato*
2. *Scherzo: Allegretto*
3. *Adagio ma non troppo*
4. *Finale: Rondo - Presto*

Haydn had already acquired a reputation for the antic and the eccentric - inspired or downright offensive, according to taste - long before he embarked on his Op. 33 quartets in 1781. But these new works, composed with a canny eye to popular appeal (and why not?), take what sober-minded critics in North Germany dubbed 'comic fooling' to a new level of whimsy and caprice. They quickly circulated throughout Europe, exactly as the composer hoped, and were a prime influence on Mozart in his six quartets dedicated to Haydn.

Before the quartets appeared in print Haydn offered manuscript copies to potential subscribers, who in a spirit of cultural one-upmanship would enjoy exclusive use of them for several months. In letters sent to subscribers in December 1781, he proclaimed that the quartets were written 'in a completely new and special way, for I haven't composed any for ten years'. It's easy to dismiss Haydn's 'new and special way' as sales talk, but there *are* new features in Op. 33, as one would expect given the decade that had elapsed since the Op. 20 set of 1772. Compared with Op. 20, Op. 33 is lighter and more 'popular' in tone, with a livelier sense of rhythm that Haydn had honed in his comic operas of the 1770s. Ideas seem to grow inevitably out of each other, with the instruments moving fluidly between background and foreground, theme and accompaniment. The Op. 33 quartets perfectly illustrate Goethe's famous description of the string quartet as 'a conversation between four intelligent people'.

The glorious first movement of Op. 33 No. 3 ('The Bird') has one of the most magical openings in all Haydn. After a bar of pulsing quavers from second violin and viola, the first violin steals in with a sustained high G, grows increasingly animated (with a hint of birdsong) and then plunges down two octaves against an ardent rising cello line. C major seems firmly established. But Haydn then questions this certainty by repeating the same process in D minor before gliding back to the home key. The violin's 'chirping' figure in bar three permeates so much of the texture, right through to the second theme.

Here the fragments coalesce into a popular-style tune on first violin, with approving imitations from the lower instruments. Haydn further exploits the movement's unstable opening in an oblique, 'off-key' recapitulation', stealing in before we realise it, and in the reharmonisation of theme in the very last bars.

The main part of the scherzo is the least jokey in Op. 33. Contradicting the usually bright, 'open' key of C major, this music transmutes a dance into a hymn or prayer, with all four instruments playing in a veiled *sotto voce* on their lowest strings. With comical incongruity, the trio introduces more birdsong in a twittering violin duet. The serene, warm-textured Andante surely left its mark on the slow movement of Mozart's 'Dissonance' Quartet, K465, in the same key. Instead of literally repeating the first half of the movement, Haydn varies it with floridly expressive figuration for the first violin: a touchstone for the player's 'taste' and imagination.

The rondo finale seems almost to have been calculated to irk those eighteenth-century critics with a humour bypass. Its manic refrain, oscillating obsessively between G and E, is modelled on a Slavonic folk dance known as a *kolo*. After the tune has tumbled down from first violin to cello, Haydn swerves into an impassioned gypsy-style episode. But the hyperactive folk tune can never be repressed for long. The coda is pure slapstick, with a tiny fragment of the theme tossed about between upper and lower instruments before the music vanishes into thin air. **Richard Wigmore**

**Helena Winkelman** [1974]

**Papa Haydn's Parrot** [2016]

- I A QUESTION OF CHARACTER – an imitation game.
- II MENUET IN SLOW MOTION – a study in overtones.
- III MEMORY OF A DANCE - quasi trio.
- IV AT EASE (Adagio) - bird on a slope.
- V NON PERPETUUM MOBILE – in an exact number of bars.
- VI VARIATIONS ON VERY LITTLE - as the title says
- VII RONDO IN PRESENCE OF FLEAS – a manic scratching miniature.
- VIII HAYDN ON THE ROCKS – your personal bird experience.

This quartet, which was premiered by the Schumann Quartet in Esterházy in April 2016, is dedicated to Joseph Haydn.

After the master had died in Vienna in 1809, there was found amongst his possessions a parrot. Haydn had bought him 20 years earlier in London and taught him many things. After his death, the parrot was sold for more money than Haydn had paid for the entire second storey of his house – so huge was the cult around the composer.

Winkelman's quartet is a paraphrase of his string quartet nicknamed "the Bird". Each movement of the latter is reflected in two of her eight miniature movements.

The first movement of the Haydn is reflected in the first and fifth miniatures. It analyses the characters that Haydn used in his music and recreates them in a contemporary idiom.

The fifth miniature follows Haydn bar for bar. Even the number of bars (157) is the same. The reason it is called non-perpetuum mobile is because the first violinist, in memory of Haydn's parrot, repeatedly breaks the phrases with a croak.

The second miniature corresponds to Haydn's Menuet. The melodic line of Haydn is present, but in very slow tempo because all the strings play natural harmonics. These remind the listener of the Alps. "Calm – from far away" is written over the first line.

Winkelman's third miniature is inspired by Haydn's trio. Here one hears an effect with knitting needles, originally invented by Swiss composer Jürg Wyttenbach.

The fourth miniature uses chords and melodic fragments from the slow movement of the Haydn and puts them on a microtonal slope .

The sixth relates particularly to Haydn's mastery of ornamentation and diminution in the slow movement.

The seventh miniature is closest to Haydn's original. It corresponds to his fourth movement and it makes fun of the wigs of that time and their inhabitants. String effects make the fleas audible - as well as the desperate scratching of the victim.

The last movement includes many references to Jazz. The "Bird" in the title also signifies a girl. And the performance instruction is: think Big Band.

**Ian Wilson** [1964]

*In fretta, in vento, string quartet no.6* [2001]

My sixth quartet (2001) is a single-movement work bound up with ideas of loss and remembrance, particularly in relation to the 9/11 attacks which took place just before I began writing. The piece is dedicated to the memory of my maternal grandmother, who died just after I completed it. 'In fretta, in vento' was written for the Callino Quartet. **Ian Wilson**

**Maurice Ravel** [1875–1937]

**String Quartet in F major** [1902-3]

1. *Moderato très doux*
2. *Assez vif – très rythmé*
3. *Très lent*
4. *Vif et agité*

Ravel's only string quartet was written in 1902-3 and premiered in 1904. It became a *cause célèbre* when it failed to win the prestigious composition prize at the Paris Conservatoire and Ravel's popularity was such that the Director was forced to resign. The work is dedicated to his teacher Fauré, who had stood by Ravel during his long run-in with the Conservatoire. Although the work has many innovations it is still firmly rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with its allegiance to sonata form, the traditional four movement format and the tonal harmonic system.

The music of Ravel, Debussy and Fauré has a curiously elusive quality, which the opening theme of this work demonstrates quite vividly. It is a sinuous and exotic melody and its companion, the second subject, has a similar flavour, though it has a more reflective character. The development allows a more dynamic view of the main theme before sinking back to its former languorous mood. The coda gives us one last exquisitely lingering embrace.

The pizzicato second movement is a pure delight, a mechanistic precision that reminds more of Yeats' Byzantine golden bird – *More miracle than bird or handiwork* – than Ligeti's *meccanismo di precisione*. The vision of a miraculous bird taking flight is an irresistible image for this extravagant music. And the trio with its feeling of shimmering dusk *and evening full of linnet's wings* only adds to the atmosphere of spellbound transformation. The return flight of the golden bird is prepared with care and delicacy.

The muted calm of the *Très lent* features the wonderful alto voice of the viola. Its melody is first interrupted by an ethereal version of the first movement's main theme. Later an un-muted central section bursts in passionately but soon dies back. The second half is a long refulgent fading into the night with another magical re-scoring from the first movement. After this sumptuous nocturnal elegy the first bars of the last movement are uncomfortably jolting but its ingenious brilliance quickly fits into the prevailing mood. The first movement theme makes another cyclic appearance and the work ends with a bravado flourish. **Francis Humphrys**

*The National String Quartet Foundation creates and sponsors projects which bring live chamber music to audiences throughout Ireland. It is committed to supporting musicians who wish to explore and perform the string quartet repertoire and to helping concert promoters present this rich and rewarding music. In addition to the support of its major funders, the Arts Council and RTÉ Lyric FM, the Foundation gratefully acknowledges the support of University College, Cork, Cork City Council and Cork County Council.*

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