

NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION - AUTUMN SEASON 2021

CALLINO QUARTET

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

NAVAN - Wednesday 6th October at 8pm - Solstice Arts Centre

SLIGO - Thursday 7th October at 8pm - Calry Church, The Mall, Sligo

PORTLAOISE - Friday 8th October at 8pm - Dunamaise Arts Centre

CORK - Saturday 9th October at 1pm - Triskel Arts Centre

DUBLIN - Sunday 10th October at 1pm and 3.30pm - National Concert Hall

Joseph Haydn [1732-1809]

Quartet in D major Op.50/6 'Frog' [1787]

1. *Allegro*
2. *Poco adagio*
3. *Menuetto – Allegretto*
4. *Finale – Allegro con spirito*

Siobhán Cleary [b.1970]

Carrowkeel [2003]

Claude Debussy [1862–1918]

Quartet in G minor Op 10 [1893]

1. *Animé et très décidé.*
2. *Assez vif et bien rythmé.*
3. *Andantino, doucement expressif.*
4. *Très modéré.*



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 best 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

Joseph Haydn [1732-1809]

Quartet in D major Op.50/6 'Frog' [1787]

Novels have been written about the improbable journeys made by famous violins, but the story of the manuscript score of this quartet is too bizarre even for a novel. In 1982 a Haydn Festival was organised in Melbourne to celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the composer's birth. After one concert the conductor Christopher Hogwood was approached by a lady carrying a shopping bag in which she claimed were authentic Haydn manuscripts. She allowed some to be photo-copied and then vanished. Later that year a leading Haydn scholar was in Adelaide for a Haydn conference and was persuaded by the media to look at the manuscripts, which, astonishingly, proved to be the autograph score of the last four quartets in the Op.50 set. They had been brought to New Zealand in 1852 by a music-loving English colonel, who had bought them at an auction in London the previous year and they had remained in his descendants' possession ever since. It is thought that Hummel, as Haydn's successor at Esterháza, had inherited the manuscripts and passed them to the London-based Clementi, whose annotations can be found on the score. Intriguingly the autograph is different in many respects from the published version, which was based on copies sent to the original publishers. It is the autograph version that we hear today.

This set of quartets was dedicated to the same cello-playing King of Prussia who was the dedicatee of Mozart's last three quartets as well as so many of Boccherini's quintets, so confusingly both Mozart and Haydn have sets of Prussian Quartets. Confusing in a different way is the fact that Haydn's previous set, the six Op.33 quartets, are known as his Russian Quartets. Haydn wrote so many quartets, the vast majority of them masterpieces, that it is a dedicated music-lover who can find his way through the maze. On the whole, string quartets tend to limit themselves to the last dozen or so quartets written in the 1790s, so it is refreshing to get to hear some of the earlier ones that made his reputation.

The 'Frog' Quartet opens with a typical Haydnesque pun, turning a conventional closing phrase into an unstable opening, whose possibilities are delightfully developed, while postponing expected cadences for as long as possible. This is a complex and confident movement, rejoicing in much witty counterpoint and exploiting to the full the sonorous warmth of D major, while demanding the utmost virtuosity from the first fiddle. The movement closes pianissimo with shadowy harmonies that warn us of the D minor opening of the Adagio. This deeply felt monothematic movement speaks in a veiled voice that nonetheless does not prevent brilliant bursts of decoration from each of the instruments. There is a powerful central development that leads to an even richer recapitulation.

Haydn turns convention on its head in the third movement by making the whimsical Trio twice as long as the Minuet. The latter strides out with its dotted rhythms and Scotch snap figures, while the Trio is more restrained with a chromatic texture and Haydn delights in further confounding expectations with false endings. The Quartet gets its nickname from the croaking effect achieved by the quick-fire repetition of the same note on adjacent strings – a technique known by the French term *bariolage*, meaning *odd mixture of colours*. This odd mixture is allowed to invade the parts at any time during the movement including a bizarre moment when all the instruments play it together. The movement as a whole is a technical *tour de force*, with Haydn's exotic sense of humour contained in a barrage of brilliant effects, including ending in a whisper. *Francis Humphrys*

Siobhán Cleary [b.1970]

Carrowkeel [2003]

Known locally as 'the Pinnacles', the Carrowkeel cairns are 15 miles south of Sligo on ridges in the Bricklieve Mountains. Fourteen cairns are found in the Carrowkeel complex and on the northern slope of the eastern ridge is a cluster of 'hut circles' known as the Doonaveeragh Neolithic village. The Carrowkeel complex, believed to have been constructed between 3000 and 2000 BC, remained in use until 1500 BC. The cairns, built of limestone with interior chambers roofed with large limestone slabs, range in size from 25 to 100 feet in diameter. The site was used in Christian times as a burial place for unbaptised children. One of the cairns, was demonstrated by researcher Martin Byrne, to have a 'light-box' which is similar in design to the light-box at Newgrange and was constructed so as to allow the light of both the sun and moon to penetrate the inner chamber. (The sun for a month on either side of the summer solstice, and the light of the full moon on either side of the winter solstice). It is a tranquil spiritual place where I have often contemplated the people who lived there so long ago and their advanced knowledge of astronomy and physics. *Siobhán Cleary*

Claude Debussy [1862–1918]

Quartet in G minor Op 10 [1893]

The bell has now tolled to mark my thirty-first year, and I'm still not confident that my musical attitudes are right; and there are things I can't yet do (write masterpieces, for example, or, among other things, be completely serious - I'm too prone to dream my life away and to see realities only at the very moment they become insuperable). This letter to his friend and fellow-composer, Ernest Chausson, dates from the late summer of 1893, just after the completion of his only string quartet, which posterity would indeed rate as a masterpiece, but his contemporaries were far from convinced. Debussy's big breakthrough did not come for another ten years when the popular success of *Pelléas et Mélisande* catapulted him to fame.

The string quartet has a long tradition in France dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, but the Golden Age of the quartet in France only began with Franck's quartet of 1890. This inspired similar attempts from the younger generation of French composers beginning with Vincent d'Indy and Debussy. They were both pupils of the *mystical old angel*, Franck, but Debussy managed to elude much of his post-Romantic influence, eschewing his predilection for chromaticism. Nonetheless Debussy is clearly inspired by the complex thematic interplay and the rich cyclical form of the Franckist school.

The first movement's gutsy opening theme returns in many different guises throughout this movement and indeed throughout the whole work, since it appears in every movement bar the Andantino. This movement is all action, rhythm and motion – Animé et très décidé. The second movement uses pizzicato to an extent never before imagined. The motto from the first movement, now transformed into 6/8 time, continues almost throughout. The effect is electrifying, something like an updated version of Mendelssohn's Walpurgisnacht in the Scherzo of the Octet. The trio shimmers and glitters before the pizzicatos come dancing back.

The transcendental Andantino is the spiritual centre of the work, an oasis of calm amid the virtuosity of the other movements. Muted for the most part, its veiled beauty lingers in the mind long after more obviously insistent music. The last movement seems reluctant to break the spell, but, eventually a headlong accelerando leads back to the first movement's motto theme and the return of reality. Reality is tempered by a moment of peacefulness recalling the Andantino, but the music gathers momentum again for a forceful conclusion. *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, the Foundation gratefully acknowledges the support of University College, Cork, Cork City Council and Cork County Council.

Please visit www.nsqf.ie for details of upcoming concerts and to sign up to the Foundation's mailing list

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