

NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION - AUTUMN SEASON 2023

ESPOSITO QUARTET

Mia Cooper & Anna Cashell, violins - Joachim Roewer, viola - William Butt, cello

LISTOWEL - Wednesday 4th October at 8pm - St Johns's Theatre and Arts Centre

NAVAN - Thursday 5th October at 8pm - Solstice Arts Centre

THURLES - Friday 6th October at 8pm - Source Arts Centre

CORK - Saturday 7th October at 1pm - Triskel Arts Centre (*Kinsella, Giddens, Brahms*)

DUBLIN - Sunday 8th October at 3pm - National Concert Hall

Joseph Haydn [1732-1809]

String Quartet in G major, Op 17 No 5 [1771]

1. *Moderato*
2. *Menuetto (Allegretto) – Trio*
3. *Adagio*
4. *Finale (Presto)*

John Kinsella [1932-2021]

String Quartet No.3 [1977]

1. *Moderato*
2. *Andante*
3. *Presto*

Rhiannon Giddens [b. 1977]

At the Purchaser's Option with variations [2016]

Johannes Brahms [1833-1897]

Quartet No.3 in B flat Op.67 [1875]

1. *Vivace*
2. *Andante*
3. *Agitato - Allegretto non troppo*
4. *Poco Allegretto con Variazioni*



THE ESPOSITO QUARTET

The Esposito Quartet comprises four of our most distinguished musicians with a combined wealth of experience as recital artists, orchestral leaders and teachers, who have been playing as a quartet since 2010. The Quartet's name honours Michele Esposito, pianist and composer, who for forty years from 1888 was the initiator for much of the chamber music making in Dublin through the establishment of The Royal Dublin Society concert series.

Mia Cooper, violin

Mia Cooper has lived in Dublin since her appointment as leader of the RTE Concert Orchestra in 2006. She previously held principal positions with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and City of London Sinfonia, has appeared as guest leader of many of the UK's symphony orchestras. Equally at home as a chamber musician, Mia has participated in chamber music festivals, in Ireland, the UK, France, India, and Lithuania. Mia studied with renowned pedagogue Yossi Zivoni at the Royal Northern College of Music, and continued her training at the Paris Conservatoire. She teaches violin at the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

Anna Cashell, violin

Outside of her work with the Esposito quartet she performs regularly with her husband the pianist Simon Watterton and is a member of the Adderbury Ensemble and the Irish Chamber Orchestra. With the ICO she has performed in Heidelberg, the Wiener Konzerthaus, Würzburg, Rheingau the Lincoln Center and the Konzerthaus in Berlin. She regularly freelances with a number of orchestras in the UK such as the City of London Sinfonia, Manchester Camerata and the Northern Sinfonia. She has also performed and recorded with the Crash ensemble in America and Dublin and has recently co-commissioned a new solo violin work by the New York based composer Stephanie Anne Boyd.

Joachim Roewer, viola

Born in East Germany, Joachim Roewer graduated from the Hochschule für Musik "Franz Liszt" Weimar and the Orchesterakademie of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1994 he moved to Ireland to become principal viola with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, a position which he has held ever since. He has also worked as principal viola with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland and Camerata Ireland. On numerous occasions he appeared as soloist with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, recently alongside Anthony Marwood in Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante. Joachim Roewer is a passionate teacher and a busy chamber music player. Outside his work with the Esposito String Quartet he was invited to perform with the Vogler Quartet, the Vanbrugh Quartet and the ConTempo Quartet and since 2013 he works as Artistic Director of the annual international Killaloe Chamber Music Festival. Joachim teaches viola and chamber music at the Cork School of Music and the MA course for classical string performance at the World Academy at the University of Limerick.

William Butt, cello

William Butt enjoys a busy career as soloist, chamber musician and is professor of cello at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin. On the concert platform he has performed extensively throughout Ireland, the UK, Europe and the Far East. He is a much admired exponent of the solo repertoire, having performed and broadcast numerous works for this medium by contemporary composers, as well as the formidable solo sonatas by Kodaly and Ligeti and the suites of Bach and Britten. He has performed and broadcast all the major concerti, in 1997 he gave the Irish premiere of the Walton concerto with the National Symphony Orchestra, in 2001 the Dvorak concerto with the NSO and 2003 a tour of the Schumann concerto with the NSO. He has also performed and broadcast the cello concerto by Victor Herbert with the Ulster orchestra. He plays on a fine cello made by Giovanni Grancino in Milan (1690).

PROGRAMME NOTES

Joseph Haydn [1732-1809]

String Quartet in G major, Op 17 No 5 [1771]

Late in life Haydn recalled that he had 'stumbled by accident' on the medium of the string quartet with the works published as Op 1 and Op 2. After these serenade-like quartets from the 1750s came a gap of over a decade, during which Haydn produced reams of symphonies for the Esterházy court. When he returned to the quartet medium, he did so with a vengeance, producing in quick succession the three sets of Op. 9 (c1769), Op. 17 (1771) and Op. 20 (1772) which mark the string quartet's coming of age.

Written during the period when Haydn emerged as an indisputably great composer, these works have a mastery of rhetoric and thematic development that are a world away from the lightweight divertimento-quartets of Opp 1 and 2. While we can only guess what prompted this sudden effusion of quartet writing, one impetus was surely the

AUDIENCE SURVEY

Across all its concerts this autumn, the National String Quartet Foundation is asking for feedback from audiences in the form of an online survey.

We would be so grateful if you could take a couple of minutes to answer a few questions to help us plan and raise funding for future concert seasons. If you are attending more than one NSQF concert this autumn, please feel free to complete the survey for each one.

If you point your phone's camera at this QR code and tap the suggested link you will be taken straight to the survey. This programme can be downloaded from nsqf.ie if needed.



presence of the young virtuoso violinist Luigi Tomasini, leader of the Esterházy orchestra and of the ad hoc court string quartet in which Haydn playing second violin and Joseph Weigl (for whom Haydn wrote his famous C major Cello Concerto) cello.

Although the first violin is first among nominal equals in the Op 17 quartets, the sturdy opening of the G major quartet, Op 17 No 5, with its flicking 'Scotch snap' rhythms, quickly involves all four instruments in the motivic interplay. Then, near the end of the exposition, Haydn gives Tomasini his head in a bravura passage of double-stopping. To offset the expansive development, ending with a quasi-improvisatory passage for Tomasini, the recapitulation drastically compresses the events of the exposition.

Placed second, the tangy minuet, full of metrically disruptive canonic imitations, encloses an inscrutable G minor trio that leads back without a break into the minuet. G minor is also the key of the Adagio, where the first violin impersonates an imploring opera seria heroine in alternating arioso and recitative, the latter uncannily foreshadowing the finale of Beethoven's Ninth. Haydn exploits the catchy theme of the finale, given a rhythmic 'kick' by the viola, with impish wit and resource, right through to the conspiratorial pianissimo ending. *Richard Wigmore*

John Kinsella [1932-2021]
String Quartet No.3 [1977]

This work was commissioned by the Testore String Quartet, leader Audrey Park, for performance at the 1978 Dublin Festival of 20th Century Music which took place in January of that year. Other quartets subsequently played the piece, notably the Academica and Vanbrugh String Quartets, the latter recording a superb performance on the Chandos label in 1994.

Composed between February and October 1977 my third string quartet is played without a break, although there are three distinct movements.

My previous introductory note to the piece was mainly a factual description of the music but at this remove I can perhaps be more objective and add that the months of composition closely paralleled the final illness of my first wife, Bridget, and that the discipline of composition helped me to cope. The moods vary from apprehension, to shock, to disbelief, to denial, to self-pity, to anger, to acceptance, and to wonder and awe at the moment of death, which slips by with a final breath and a final heartbeat. *John Kinsella*

Rhiannon Giddens [b. 1977]
At the Purchaser's Option with variations [2016]
Composed for 50 For The Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire
Arranged by Jacob Garchik [b. 1976]

Rhiannon Giddens' *At the Purchaser's Option* with variations is an instrumental variation of a song from her album *Freedom Highway* (Nonesuch, 2017), arranged by Jacob Garchik. She wrote the song after finding in a book a 19th-century advertisement for a 22-year-old female slave whose 9-month-old baby was also for sale, but "at the purchaser's option." This piece comes from that advertisement, and from thinking about what that woman's life might have been like.

Johannes Brahms [1833-1897]

Quartet No.3 in B flat Op.67 [1875]

1. *Vivace*

2. *Andante*

3. *Agitato - Allegretto non troppo*

4. *Poco Allegretto con Variazioni*

Your letter was a great temptation to leave my pretty house, but all the same I stay sitting here, and from time to time write highly useless pieces in order not to have to look into the stern face of a symphony. So wrote Brahms from Ziegelhausen, during his summer holiday in 1875, to a friend who had invited him to a performance of his requiem. Amongst his useless pieces was the Third Quartet. It had taken Brahms the best part of twenty years to find the courage to complete his first pair of string quartets. Once he had broken the spell he felt liberated, and the B flat followed within two years – a buoyant and carefree work. He had escaped his fear of the medium and was able to have fun with it; nonetheless he wrote no more quartets. The next summer he finally completed his First Symphony.

The new quartet opens in exuberant style leaping forcefully off the page in 6/8 time. We are reminded of Brahms' convivial life-style and bonhomie as we shall be in the G major Quintet. A mysterious transitional idea in contrary motion leads to a second dance, a more sedate polka, and we discover these two dances are the principal subjects. The development is curious, full of strange pauses and hesitations, followed by a more powerful argument before the recapitulation comes leaping back in. The soaring melody of the F major andante leads us into one of Brahms' most magically romantic creations. The long love song of the first violin is spun out over a gently throbbing accompaniment until the D minor middle section bursts in. This also has its introspective passages but grows in intensity leading to a return of the song in the wrong key of D major. The correct key is found in time to rediscover the love song in all its beauty. The coda reaches a blissful conclusion.

The restless scherzo gives centre-stage to the viola, the only instrument allowed to remain unmuted. It is a substantial movement, but the dark viola colouring combined with the mutes places it in the realm of shadows; it is more in the tradition of intermezzo than scherzo, though Brahms calls the central section a trio. The Trio begins as a trio preparing for the entrance of the viola, which quickly dominates this part of the movement as well. This quartet is the first time Brahms uses a theme-and-variations form as a finale. The theme is an ambling mock folk tune, whose genial exterior conceals an intricate construction enhanced by a tendency to wander harmonically. This leads to eight variations that explore both the harmonic and rhythmic possibilities of the theme. Brahms' coup is on the seventh variation to bring back the opening theme of the whole work, followed in the eighth variation by the contrary-motion transition theme, also from the first movement. Having now gone full circle, he delightedly combines in counterpoint the themes from the first and last movements in the coda.

This useless piece was a great hit with Brahms' circle and Joachim waxed lyrical about the new work. Brahms dedicated the work to a Dutch physiologist, Theodor Engelmann, who had been his host when he played in Utrecht. He acknowledged the dedication with the perspicacious remark: I have now no reason to worry about my immortality. *Francis Humphrys*

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