

NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION - AUTUMN SEASON 2021

LIR QUARTET

Mia Cooper and Siobhán Doyle, violins, David Kenny, viola, William Butt, cello

with Christopher Marwood, cello

CORK - Thursday 11th November at 7.30pm - MTU Cork School of Music

SLIGO - Friday 12th November at 8pm - Calry Parish Church, The Mall

DROGHEDA - Saturday 13th November at 7.30pm - St Peter's Church of Ireland

DUBLIN - Sunday 14th November at 1pm and 3.30pm - National Concert Hall

John Kinsella [b.1932]

'On hearing Purcell and Shostakovich at Bantry House – June 2008' [2009]

1. *Prelude*
2. *Toccata*
3. *Epilogue*

Franz Schubert [1797-1828]

String Quintet in C major D956 [1828]

1. *Allegro ma non troppo*
2. *Adagio*
3. *Scherzo (Presto) – Trio (Andante sostenuto)*
4. *Allegretto*



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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 and 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.

Siobhán Doyle was born in Dublin and began playing the violin at the age of four. Currently based in Amsterdam, she enjoys a varied career of solo, orchestral and chamber music.

Recent highlights include a duo recital with Alexei Grynyuk for the West Cork Chamber Music Festival and a performance as a soloist with the European Union Youth Orchestra at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. She is a founding member of the Lir Quartet with which she has performed several tours throughout Ireland.

A member of the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra since 2019, Siobhán also regularly plays with ensembles such as the London Symphony Orchestra and Irish Chamber Orchestra and has toured extensively throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas.

Siobhán studied with Gillian Williams at the DIT Conservatory of music before completing her Bachelors degree with Leland Chen at the Royal Northern College of Music in 2015. She currently studies with Nurit Stark at the HMDK Stuttgart.

A native of Cork, **David Kenny** studied with Constantin Zanidache and Simon Aspell at the CIT Cork School of Music. He has worked with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Wexford Festival Opera Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, John Wilson Orchestra and the Irish Chamber Orchestra. He has played Principal Viola with the European Union Youth Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland. In 2016, David was appointed to the viola section of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra.

He has performed at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Music in Drumcliffe and the Interlaken Classics Festival. He has collaborated with the Ficino Ensemble, Musici Ireland and the Vanbrugh Quartet. As violist with the Shandon String Trio he undertook a Chamber Studio mentorship under Richard Lester at Kings Place, London, last year.

He has participated in masterclasses with Yuri Bashmet, Nobuko Imai, Bruno Giuranna, Maxim Rysanov, Lawrence Power and with members of the Alban Berg, Vanbrugh, Pacifica, Artemis, Vogler, Danel, Danish and Casals Quartets.

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. As well as a performance of the Protecting Veil by John Tavener with the Hibernian Orchestra he undertook a series at the National Concert Hall in Dublin in 2004 with the orchestra of St Cecilia and Barry Douglas in which he played the Dvorak, Elgar, Shostakovich (No 1), Tchaikovsky Rococo variations, and both Haydn concerti in three concerts over a two week period. 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).

Christopher Marwood graduated from Cambridge University in 1983 and went on to study at London's Royal Academy of Music and Conservatorium Maastricht. His cello teachers included Florence Hooton, David Strange, Ralph Kirshbaum, William Pleeth and Radu Aldulescu. His chamber music mentor for many years was Emmanuel Hurwitz.

As cellist of the Vanbrugh Quartet for 32 years, Christopher Marwood enjoyed a busy career performing throughout Ireland and touring worldwide. The Quartet released over thirty CDs encompassing a wide range of repertoire and including the complete Beethoven quartets ("fine enough to bear comparison with any set" Fanfare, USA). They built up a considerable repertoire including at least sixty Irish works, many of them commissions or premieres. The Quartet's contribution to music in Ireland was formally recognized in 2016 when they were presented with the National Concert Hall's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Christopher co-founded the West Cork Chamber Music Festival in 1996 and remains director of the Festival's masterclass programme. He is also director of the National String Quartet Foundation which curates and sponsors some fifty concerts nationwide each year, supporting Irish musicians and concert promoters. He teaches at MTU Cork School of Music and at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and continues to perform both as soloist and as chamber musician. His recent CD of works by Boris Tchaikovsky was nominated for the 2019 International Classical Music Awards

PROGRAMME NOTES

John Kinsella [b.1932]

'On hearing Purcell and Shostakovich at Bantry House – June 2008' [2009]

On Monday 30th June last year [2008] the Rosamunde Quartet gave an evening concert at Bantry House. Each half consisted of two Fantasias by Purcell followed by a Shostakovich string quartet.

The recital was broadcast live on RTÉ lyric fm and it was arranged that there would be no applause until the entire event had concluded. The effect was quite profound and, it seemed to me, drew the audience very closely into the music making.

Andreas Reiner, leader of the Rosamunde Quartet, wrote a most thought provoking note on the concert and I quote an extract from this "And then there is the sound! What kind of miracle is this? Three hundred years apart yet so close. When Shostakovich fantasises over D-S-C-H, that might as well have been written by Purcell. And listen to the opening of Shostakovich No.15! It's not just the fugue-fantasia-counterpoint-thing, it's the unusual and immediate sense of personal conduct. Not the older, but the younger scores seem to tell the player a lot about the use of vibrato. Both composers seem to ask for a certain "breathing" sound.

This new work is a recollection of last year's Rosamunde Quartet concert shaped into a prelude, toccata and epilogue, and draws on motifs principally from the opening and closing works, Purcell's Fantasia No.2 in B-flat and Shostakovich's last quartet, No.15 in E-flat minor. *Note by John Kinsella*

Franz Schubert [1797-1828]

String Quintet in C major D956 [1828]

Schubert's last years were a race against time. He knew he was fatally ill and this clearly heightened the emotional perceptions of his inspired romantic imagination. He died on 19th November 1828, after a ten-day illness. During the last days he was often delirious, but when he was lucid he spent his time correcting proofs of *Winterreise*. In the two previous months he had completed the last three magnificent piano sonatas in C minor, A major and B flat; the thirteen songs that make up *Schwanengesang*; the joyous *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* that brings clarinet and soprano together; and, as if that were not enough, this overwhelming quintet. There seems to have been no commission for these works, just a desperate need to keep writing while he still could.

Schubert undoubtedly knew the Mozart string quintets with the two violas, and that composer's tactic of dividing his quintet into two trios. Schubert chose instead the extra cello and divides his ensemble into two quartets, which gives the single extra instrument a disproportionately more powerful effect. He was particularly taken by the luminous quality of the cello's top string, as is wonderfully demonstrated by the first movement's second subject, where the two cellos duet serenely high above the viola's bass line. The extra bass instrument also gives him more freedom to explore the lyrical potential of the cello, as well as giving rein to the richer tenor textures, as in the *Adagio* where the theme is played by the second violin, viola and first cello.

The long-breathed opening is deep with mystery, soon to be dispelled by a greater sense of urgency. A triplet figure arises as the signature of this new momentum, and drives the music to the expected cadence, where a harmonic twist moves to the unexpected key of E flat, an inspired preparation for the gorgeous melody of the second subject. This begins in the two cellos, then the violins, and finally the first violin and the viola. The exposition is rounded off by a new march-like idea, which dominates the development that follows the exposition repeat. The extended and emotionally intensified development culminates in the driving triplets that led to the second subject, and a seamless return to the opening material and the recapitulation. The coda manages to encompass both the power and the mystery of the opening, before this huge twenty-minute movement is finally closed.

The timelessness of the work's opening is echoed and intensified by the otherworldly *Adagio*. The impression of calm is constantly undermined by the first violin's decorative comments, but each time reaffirmed by the pulsation of the plucked cello. This finally erupts in the F minor middle section, where we experience some of the terror and anguish that Schubert knew so well. The driving triplet rhythms from the first movement mutate into dark and bitter foreboding, which the warmth of the main theme only manages to calm after a long struggle. The return to the Elysian Fields of the opening is accomplished as the F minor mode collapses exhausted, and the familiar strains re-emerge with greatly elaborated decorations. Eventually the cello pizzicatos return, and the utter peacefulness of the opening is almost recovered in music of unearthly beauty.

The primeval physicality of the Scherzo's peasant dance comes as a brutal shock after so much introspection. There is an unquenchable joy in living in this music, an earthy power that generates a short-lived but all-consuming elation. The Trio is the absolute opposite, a despairing travail through the valley of the shadow of death, which reminds us of that other winter's journey he wrote about, and looks forward to his own death two weeks later. The return of the Scherzo has this time an element of frantic desperation.

The finale is a procession of dances from the wild Hungarian melody at the beginning to the gorgeous Viennese lilt of the heart-warming second subject. Schubert wrote literally hundreds of dances for dance-crazy Vienna, and he exults here in his skill. But even here the demons lurk in moments of threatening quiet and bursts of frenetic energy. The final section is Schubert at his most exuberant driving the music to a thunderous and dramatic finish. *Note by 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

*The National String Quartet Foundation CLG is a registered charity No.20200357
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