

NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION - AUTUMN SEASON 2021

NAVARRA QUARTET

Benjamin Marquise Gilmore and Charlotte Bonneton, violins - Sascha Bota, viola - Brian O'Kane, cello

GALWAY - Thursday 25th November - St Joseph's Church, Presentation Road

WATERFORD - Friday 26th November at 7.30pm – The Large Room, City Hall

CORK - Saturday 27th November at 1pm - Triskel Christchurch

DUBLIN - Sunday 28th November at 1pm and 3.30pm – National Concert Hall

CASTLECONNELL - Tuesday 30th November at 8pm – All Saints' Church

Henriëtte Bosmans (1895-1952)

String Quartet [1927]

1. *Allegro molto moderato*
2. *Lento*
3. *Allegro molto*

Jane O'Leary [b. 1946]

the passing sound of forever... [2013-2015]

in three movements

Béla Bartók [1881–1945]

String Quartet No. 3 [1927]

1. *Prima parte: Moderato – attacca*
 2. *Seconda parte: Allegro – attacca*
 3. *Ricapitulazione della prima parte: Moderato*
- Coda: Allegro molto*

Antonín Dvořák [1841-1904]

Quartet No.13 in G major Op.106 [1895]

1. *Allegro moderato*
2. *Adagio ma non troppo*
3. *Molto vivace*
4. *Andante sostenuto - Allegro con fuoco*



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The London based **Navarra Quartet** has built an international reputation as one of the most dynamic and poetic string quartets of today. Selected for representation by YCAT (2006-10), they have been awarded the MIDEM Classique Young Artist Award, a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, a Musica Viva tour, and prizes at the Banff, Melbourne and Florence International String Quartet Competitions.

The Navarra Quartet appears regularly at major venues throughout the world including the Wigmore Hall, Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, the Sydney Opera House, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Esterházy Palace, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Berlin Konzerthaus, the Laeiszhalle in Hamburg, the Lincoln Centre and international festivals such as Lockenhaus, Aldeburgh, Bath, Lammermuir, Presteigne, Bergen, Grachten, Sandviken, Schwetzingen, Rheingau, Heidelberg, Aix-en-Provence, Bellerive, Harrogate Chamber Music and the BBC Proms.

Looking forward to the new season, the Navarra Quartet will be touring to Ireland, Scotland, Spain, and their festival in Weesp (Holland) focusing on eclectic repertoires containing Mozart, Bartok and Dvorak quartets as well as new commissions dedicated to the group. Navarra Quartet will be recording Edward Gregson's complete chamber music for strings and the first volume of the Mozart Celebrated String Quartets.

The Navarra Quartet would like to express a great debt of gratitude to the Kersjes Foundation for their generous prize, to their agency Rayfield Allied for their continuous support and to all their followers and audience whom they welcome wholeheartedly to the upcoming concerts.

Programme Notes

Henriëtte Bosmans (1895-1952)

String Quartet [1927]

Henriette Bosmans was a Dutch pianist and composer. Her father was the principal cellist of the Concertgebouw Orchestra and her mother taught piano at the Amsterdam Conservatory. She started composing as a teenager while studying harmony and counterpoint with Jan Willem Kersbergen. Until 1927, her work was characterized by lyrical lines and romantic influences. After that, her work became less romantic and more colourful. In her string quartet from 1927, strong influences of Debussy and Ravel can be heard. It is dedicated to Willem Pijper, her composition teacher at the time.

Jane O'Leary [b. 1946]

***the passing sound of forever....*[2013-2015]**

With its origins in the opening phrase of Beethoven's string quartet Op. 95 (known as 'serioso'), this quartet emerges from the vitality of those few notes. Having heard ConTempo play Beethoven's quartet several times, the resonance never left me as I shaped something new for the same instruments. The opening motif is explored and dissolves into a more ethereal spaciousness; the contrast between these two elements - driving/rhythmic and floating/atmospheric - shapes the music.

The title is from the closing lines of Dermot Healy's poem *'the echo of all that's happened'* in the collection *'A Fool's Errand'*. The poem too was deep in my consciousness during the period of composition.

The work was premiered in January 2016 by ConTempo Quartet, and given a US premiere in June 2017 at the Mise-en Music Festival in New York. It was released on a CD of chamber music by Jane O'Leary with Navona Records in 2017.

Béla Bartók [1881–1945]

String Quartet No. 3 [1927]

The size and musical significance of the string quartet has changed radically ever since the 18th century when Haydn's quartets were pre-eminent and quartets were generally published in sets of six. Then in Beethoven's lifetime cycles of even two or three quartets became rarer, and this trend culminated in his late string quartets, just one of which could stand alone and carry the same weight as a symphony. Bartók's six string quartets, which he wrote between 1908 and 1939, continued the transformation of the character and function of the string quartet.

Bartók wrote his Third String Quartet in September 1927, by which time his style had become highly personal. Most distinctive was his fascination with the characteristics of the music of the many ethnic minorities in the Hungarian section of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which included Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Transylvanian communities. He had collected ethnic traditional music with Kodály in the early years of the century and believed that the music of the rural communities was a natural phenomenon, which had the potential to reform both the nation's musical life and his own musical approach. In his quartets he relied on short motifs and so traditional music particularly appealed to him because of its small-scale completeness.

His Third Quartet is renowned for the extreme concentration and violence of its language. The prima parte, after a mysterious 5-bar introduction, takes the form of a triptych whose central episode metamorphoses into strange and rarified nocturnal music punctuated by growls and cries. Moments of aggression are tempered by unexpected glimpses of lyricism, swiftly forgotten. The strongly contrasted seconda parte features Hungarian folk dance elements especially a driving rhythmic energy. His language is harsh, using pitilessly dissonant intervals and a veritable dictionary of sound effects, which drive the expressive tension to a peak, mastering this music is a huge test of a Quartet's resolve and technical ability. The Ricapitulazione sets out to concentrate even further the already highly compressed prima parte, giving the listener a brief reminiscence of a half-forgotten dream before a virtuoso summary of the seconda parte drives to an explosive finish. *Francis Humphrys*

Antonín Dvořák [1841-1904]

Quartet No.13 in G major Op.106 [1895]

Dvořák's music has no profundity. He does not, as Bruckner, dig into the depths of his soul to bring forth an adagio. Everything came too easily to him. One can see it in the last quartets, he tossed them off as he did with the first quartets. Though he equips them more richly here and there, no more challenging

problematic of counterpoint or ideas commands his attention. He does not strive to go beyond the beautiful, harmonious sound and a healthy reality. [Robert Hirschfield, Vienna, 1904]

Dvořák has had a rough ride from the critics, more or less in inverse proportion to his popularity with audiences. Writers like Adorno considered that Dvořák's immediacy and trouble-free accessibility deprived music of its redemptive spiritual power. Such critics felt music needed to rouse and inspire the audience as in Wagner's generation or to make them critical and uncomfortable as in Schönberg's generation. Even the contemporary writer, who delighted in finding in Dvořák's music compelling alternatives to academic formalism, romantic excess and the desire to achieve profundity, never argued that his gift for natural melodic beauty was integrated with the formal depth of Beethoven or Brahms.

Dvořák came from humble peasant stock and was completely unspoiled by his enormous public success. On his return from America, he spent four months idling at home, delighting in his garden, his large family and his beloved pigeons. This was no dramatic artistic crisis but a spiritual relaxation after years of tense and restless travelling. He refused all tempting offers to return to New York as director of a National Conservatory and retired to the country. After the four months of idleness, he sat down and wrote in quick succession two quartets, in G major and A flat.

The unusual opening theme seems to express his overflowing happiness, while a subsidiary theme is equally upbeat. After a joyful outburst, we hear hints of the second subject, which nonetheless takes us by surprise when it suddenly springs out as yet another irresistible theme. A mysterious interrupted cadence leads to the powerful development where his melodic and harmonic invention is unparalleled. This continuous transformation of his material reminds us of Schubert as does the extraordinary slow movement. Dvořák does not explicitly use the dumky form here but he takes the outward plan of contrasting a pensive, minor-key lament with a relaxed, dance-like theme in the major and develops and enriches it in a way that demonstrates his total mastery of the medium. He moulds the whole movement into a dynamic and deeply moving whole that should be an answer to his sternest critics. The main scherzo theme has the character of a heavy-footed peasant dance, whose impact is softened by an unexpectedly mellow second subject. The trio is extensive, perhaps because Dvořák got carried away by his wealth of new tunes, but eventually the rollicking dance returns. Commentators disapprovingly describe the finale as very loose in construction, a kind of irregular rondo, which covers more or less anything. However the melodies just keep on coming in all shapes, a slow pensive introduction followed by a whole series of lively but contrasting ideas. Halfway through the movement, the pace slackens and the slow introduction is recalled and then suddenly wisps from the first movement are touchingly summoned up before the movement resumes. This cyclic idea is then repeated three times just before the coda, which concludes in wild euphoria. *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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