

PIROSMANI QUARTET

Mairéad Hickey and William Hagen, violins - Georgy Kovalev, viola - Aleksey Shadrin, cello

KINSALE - Tuesday 18th October at 8pm - Methodist Church - **presented by Kinsale Amateur Orchestral Society**

WATERFORD - Wednesday 19th October at 7.30pm - City Hall - **presented by Waterford Music**

CORK - Thursday 20th October at 7.30pm - MTU Cork School of Music - **presented by Cork Orchestral Society**

NAVAN - Friday 21st October at 8pm - **Solstice Arts Centre**

KILKENNY - Saturday 22nd October at 8pm - The Parade Tower, Kilkenny Castle - **presented by Music in Kilkenny**

DUBLIN - Sunday 23rd October at 3pm - **National Concert Hall**

Ludwig van Beethoven [1770-1827]

Quartet No 3 in D major Op 18 No 3 [1798]

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante con moto*
3. *Allegro*
4. *Presto*

Sean Doherty [1987]

Night Piece [2020]

Johannes Brahms [1833-1897]

Quartet No 2 in A minor Op.51/2 [1873]

1. *Allegro non troppo*
2. *Andante moderato*
3. *Quasi Minuetto - moderato*
4. *Allegro non assai*



THE PIROSMANI QUARTET

Celebrated Irish **violinist Mairéad Hickey** is acclaimed for her captivating expression, soaring tone and fearless virtuosity. Her natural ability to communicate sincerely, with beauty and integrity, entrances audiences worldwide.

As a soloist Mairéad has performed with the RTÉ Irish National Symphony Orchestra, RTÉ Irish National Concert Orchestra, Württembergisches Kammerorchester, Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Mainz, Kremerata Baltica and Camerata Ireland and many others in some of the major halls around the world. Her Carnegie Hall debut was described as ‘...*magical, penetrating to the heart and soul of the music.*’ (*New York Epoch Times*)

A passionate chamber musician, Mairéad has performed with Sir Andrés Schiff, Barry Douglas, Tabea Zimmermann, Fazil Say, Marc Coppey, Mate Bekavac, Irena Grafenauer, Alexander Lonquich, Andreas Reiner, Paul Neubauer, Andrés Díaz, Pieter Wispelway, Michel Lethiec, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Boris Berezovsky and the Vanbrugh Quartet among many others. Mairéad has been invited to perform at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Westport Festival of Chamber Music, the Clondeboy Music Festival, Mantova Chamber Music Festival, Grachtenfestival Amsterdam, Rolandseck Festival and Chamber Music Connects the World Kronberg 2016 where she performed with Steven Isserlis and Christian Tetzlaff. Her love of chamber music led her to co-found the Ortús Chamber Music Festival in 2016 in her native Cork, of which she is Artistic Director.

Violinist William Hagen has performed as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician across North and South America, Europe and Asia. This season, William will perform with orchestras in the U.S., Europe and in Colombia with the Filharmonica de Bogotá, and plays recitals and chamber music across the United States and Europe.

A native of Salt Lake City, Utah, William began playing the violin at the age of 4. He studied with Robert Lipsett, Christian Tetzlaff, and Itzhak Perlman, and won top prizes at the Queen Elisabeth and Kreisler Violin Competitions.

William performs on the 1732 “Arkwright Lady Rebecca Sylan” Antonio Stradivari, on generous loan from the Rachel Barton Pine Foundation.

Georgy Kovalev, born in 1990 in Tiflis (Georgia), is one of the leading violists of his generation. After finishing his studies with Yuri Bashmet and Matthias Buchholz, currently he is a student of Nobuko Imai at the *Kronberg Academy*.

He is a prize winner and a finalist of international competitions such as *Yuri Bashmet International Competition* in Moscow, *Tokyo International Viola Competition*, *Brahms International Competition*. In 2011 he received the *Neva Foundation Prize* awarded by the *Verbier Festival*.

His chamber music partners included Gidon Kremer, Christian Tetzlaff, Steven Isserlis, Yuri Bashmet, Fazil Say, Frans Helmerson, Emanuel Ax, Jörg Widmann, Viviane Hagner, Claudio Bohorquez, Lawrence Lesser, at renowned international music festivals such as *Schubertiade*, *Verbier Festival*, *Ravinia Festival*, *Heidelberger Frühling*, *Rheingau Festival*, *Kronberg Academy Festival*.

Cellist Aleksey Shadrin, who was a member of the Kronberg Academy Master Program, was born into a family of musicians in Ukraine. He won the first prize of the 4th M. Lysenko International Music Competition in 2012. In 2018, he has been awarded the 3rd Prize at the Prague Spring Competition and the 4th Prize at Queen Elisabeth Competition in 2022.

In 2005, Aleksey Shadrin was a finalist in the 3rd David Popper International Competition in Hungary, and in 2008, he won the 2nd prize at The International Competition in Minsk. Following his competition successes, he has performed in major concert halls of Ukraine, Germany, France, South Korea, China, Vietnam, Holland, Singapore, and Belgium.

Aleksey Shadrin has performed as a soloist with orchestras such as the National Philharmonic of Ukraine, the Opéra national de Montpellier, the Sudwestdeutsche Philharmonie Konstanz, and the Belgian National Orchestra. In 2016, he made his debut appearance at the Berliner Philharmoniker. In 2017, he appeared as a soloist with the NDR Radiophilharmonie with Andrew Manze in the Grosser Sendesaal in Hannover, and made his debut appearance at the Hamburg Chamber Music Festival.

Aleksey Shadrin received his Bachelor and Master of Musical Arts at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien in Hanover with Prof. Leonid Gorokhov and studied with Prof. Frans Helmerson at the Kronberg Academy. He is currently studying with Gary Hoffman at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven [1770-1827]

Quartet No 3 in D major Op 18 No 3 [1798]

In late October 1792 Count Ferdinand von Waldstein (1762-1823), a patron of Beethoven in Bonn and one of the first to appreciate the young composer's talents, advised him on the day before he left for Vienna to 'work hard and the spirit of Mozart's genius will come to you through Haydn's hands'. These words of encouragement were prophetic, partly through Beethoven's short period under Haydn's tutelage but mainly through his own efforts and self-searching.

Beethoven's first six quartets, published in 1801, came when he was already well established as an eminent pianist and with his compositions showing his distinct musical personality as well as his penchant for innovation. That being so, his Op 18 Quartets owed a great deal to the foundations laid by Haydn and Mozart.

However, before he began writing them in 1798, Beethoven embarked on a rigorous preparation by studying with the renowned theorist and composer Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809). The lessons in counterpoint, fugue and canon were spread over an eighteen-month period. Besides, it is known that Beethoven copied out several quartets by Haydn and Mozart in order to analyse them in depth.

The D major Quartet – the third in Beethoven's Op 18 set of six – is almost certainly the first to have been completed. Several pages of sketches, dating from 1798, appear to indicate the composer spent considerable time mulling over its principal theme before he was fully satisfied with it.

In the event, this Quartet is mainly reserved in its demeanour although there are occasional suggestions of tendencies towards wistfulness. It also shows its indebtedness to its classical antecedents – the quartets of Haydn and Mozart.

The D major Quartet begins with the first violin playing two unaccompanied long held notes and then curving upwards to bring the first theme. The other instruments, which have entered at bar three, provide sustaining chordal support. Later, the rest of the ensemble echoes a series of solo statements from its leader.

The first violin's graceful lines are then nicely contrasted by the more agitated second theme, which the leader also introduces. It appears to be a little uneasy after the aristocratic gestures inferred by theme one with the staccato bass line adding to the moderate feeling of disquiet.

Both themes are assiduously developed before Beethoven leads to a fortissimo climax. The violins break loose and, leaving the others on a sustaining chord, restate the opening theme but this time in imitation of each other. With an aura of calm restored, viola and cello re-enter the action and, engaging a further spirit of geniality, Beethoven moves into his coda and brings the movement to an emphatic close.

The poetic slow movement, with its construction lying somewhere between rondo and sonata form, unusually allows the second violin to announce its cantabile principal theme. This is basically a four-note phrase with a rising pattern that moves a tone higher each time it is repeated. In order to avoid this idea becoming monotonous, Beethoven supplies a series of counter subjects in his richly textured design. There is a contrapuntal second subject but Beethoven prefers to concentrate on the first for the movement's expansion.

With its offbeat accents and tonal variants, the third movement has a more rustic than genteel bearing. As in the uncertainty of the form of the slow movement, it is hard to determine whether this Allegro is minuet or scherzo. One commentator maintains it lacks 'the rhythmic verve of a minuet and the vivacity of a scherzo' and that 'instead Beethoven supplies what might be called a gentle and graceful intermezzo'. Whatever one makes of it, the movement is beautifully crafted.

Beethoven moves into the minor for his Trio. This is distinguished by the flowing passages of the violins and the descending sequences of the lower instruments. The Allegro, as Beethoven titled it, is repeated.

The sonata form Finale is a dazzling 6/8 Presto in a continuous moto perpetuo. With its running quavers, the first subject has a mischievous air about it. The second theme brings with it the jerky swings of a tarantella or, as has also been suggested, 'a Mexican hat dance'.

Sharp and sudden dynamic changes add to the excitement as Beethoven develops his material with sparkling vitality. He continues his amusing progression to the end and, as Haydn had done on occasions, Beethoven keeps us on the edge of our seats until eventually leaving us wondering where the music has actually gone!

Beethoven dedicated his Op 18 Quartets to his patron and admirer Prince Joseph Franz Lobkowitz (1772-1816). Pleased with the result, he endowed Beethoven with an annual stipend. The Quartets were premièred at the Prince's palace in Vienna by a group of young players led by Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830), who would become synonymous with Beethoven's quartets over the ensuing years.

Because of his corpulent figure, the composer liked to call the violinist *Falstaff* and wrote a short and amusing, if not particularly complimentary, choral piece WoO 100 about him in 1801. Entitled *Lob auf den Dicken* (In Praise of the Fat One), the first line is *Schuppanzigh ist ein Lump* (Schuppanzigh is a rogue). *Note by Pat O'Kelly*

Sean Doherty [1987]

Night Piece [2020]

Night carries much symbolic weight in the German song tradition. In Schubert's *Nacht und Träume* it is a place to find refuge in dreams. *Night Piece* is inspired by Samuel Beckett's last television play, *Nacht und Träume* (1982). In this wordless play the only sound is that of a voice humming the final bars of Schubert's lied of the same name, originally sung to the words 'Holde Träume, kehret wieder!' ('Sweet dreams, come back!'). Beckett conveys a feeling of deep pathos amid the silence and stillness. In *Night Piece*, the final bars of 'Nacht und Träume' return and mark the Dreamer's passage through the various stages of sleep in which different types of dreams occur. Our inchoate desires reveal themselves in these half-forgotten dreams—the desire for atonement, for forgiveness, for consolation, for acceptance. This is not a lullaby but a howl of protest to be left alone in dreams, safe from reality, and enveloped in night.

Johannes Brahms [1833-1897]

Quartet No 2 in A minor Op.51/2 [1873]

I have often reflected on the subject of what happiness is for humanity. Well, today in listening to your music, that was happiness. Theodor Billroth, dedicatee of this Quartet, to Brahms in 1890. It was Billroth who observed to the dedicatee of the Third Quartet; *I'm afraid these dedications will keep our names known longer than our best work.*

The two Opus 51 quartets were composed on the brink of Brahms' sustained attack on the symphony. Their publication represented a pivotal moment in his development as a composer. He often claimed that he had written as many as twenty quartets before 1873, all of which he destroyed. Only three quartets composed by Brahms survive, whereas Haydn published sixty-eight, Mozart twenty-three and Beethoven sixteen. The spectre of the past, in particular Beethoven, haunted Brahms until he finally overcame his intense self-criticism with these quartets and the First Symphony three years later.

Brahms was not only a composer but also a dedicated music scholar at the forefront of the musicological developments of his day. He had a vast music library and owned such treasures as the autograph of Mozart's G minor Symphony K.550, Haydn's opus 20 string quartets, a Beethoven sketch book including the sketches of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, songs and piano pieces by Schubert and Schumann's D minor Symphony. He was close friends with the leading musicological scholar of the day, Gustav Nottebohm, who pioneered the study of Beethoven's sketchbooks. Inevitably this acute awareness of the shadow cast by history exacerbated Brahms' natural self-consciousness, thus the terrible rate of attrition on his first attempts to write string quartets.

However in the superb A minor Quartet Brahms manages to leaven this deadly serious business of confronting history with his innate and irresistible lyricism. The first movement contrasts these conflicting states of mind in the two subjects, the close-woven texture of the motto-like opening figure followed by the suavely Viennese *grazioso* second subject. The substantial exposition, which is repeated in classical fashion, has a wealth of ideas that is perhaps more Schubert than Beethoven, though the development has a Beethoven-like grittiness about it. The Andante moderato moves to the major key with an intricate and sophisticated theme of dark beauty, whose smallest phrases mirror and dovetail into each other. The central section is a brief passionate duet for violin and cello set against dramatic tremolandi. The main theme eventually returns in F major and has to be eased back to A major by the cello before a peaceful coda. The *Quasi Minuetto* is an incorporeal dance, seemingly removed from all physical concerns, which alternates with an all-too-physical Allegretto, a distant, contrapuntal variation of itself. The Finale opens in a burst of energy. It retains the 3/4 time of the minuet but sets out as a Hungarian dance, doubtless in honour of his violinist friend Joachim, whose quartet premiered the work. The virtuoso main theme keeps returning as in a rondo but it is also subjected to remarkable developments through a dazzling array of cross-rhythms. The coda brings the work to a brilliant conclusion. *Note by Francis Humphrys*

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