

NATIONAL STRING QUARTET FOUNDATION - AUTUMN SEASON 2021

THE VANBRUGH

Keith Pascoe and Marja Gaynor, violins

Simon Aspell and David Kenny, violas

Christopher Marwood and Yseult Cooper Stockdale, cello

St Brendan's Church, Bantry

Sunday 21st November at 3pm

Wolfgang Mozart [1756-1791]

String Quintet in C major K.515

1. Allegro
2. Andante
3. Menuetto - Allegretto
4. Allegro

Antonín Dvořák [1841-1904]

String Sextet in A-major, Op.48 [1878]

1. *Allegro moderato*
2. *Dumka. Poco allegretto*
3. *Furiant. Presto*
4. *Finale. Tema con variazioni. Allegretto grazioso, quasi andantino*



Cork
County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí



THE VANBRUGH

The Vanbrugh has evolved from the work of the legendary Vanbrugh Quartet. Over three decades the quartet gave close to three thousand concerts, presenting the chamber music repertoire to audiences throughout Ireland, Europe, the Americas and the Far East. Commercial recordings include more than thirty CDs of repertoire, ranging from the complete Beethoven quartets to many contemporary Irish works. In 2016 the group was presented with the National Concert Hall's Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of their contribution to music in Ireland.

Marja Gaynor, violin

Marja Gaynor was born in Finland but has been based in Cork since 2005. She was awarded a 1st class honours MA at Cork School of Music, and continued her Baroque violin studies at The Royal Conservatoire of The Hague with Pavlo Beznosiuk. Marja is a member of the Irish Baroque Orchestra and Camerata Kilkenny. Both ensembles have released much-acclaimed recordings and toured nationally and internationally. Marja is also a founder member of Giordani Quartet, Ireland's only chamber group specialising in early Classical repertoire using period instruments.

Outside Ireland Marja works with the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra and other leading European period orchestras, and is increasingly in demand as a leader, soloist and workshop facilitator. She was the Artistic Director of East Cork Early Music Festival 2013-2015, and has also been invited to act as guest curator for the Kaleidoscope Night concert series.

With her various areas of interest and expertise (Baroque, traditional music, and improvisation) Marja is much sought after as an arranger, studio musician and collaborator in all genres. Her proudest project to date was her critically acclaimed arrangement of Purcell's 'Dido and Aeneas' (Cork Opera House), and she also arranged and played the strings of 'Falling Slowly' for the movie 'Once', Oscar winner for best song in 2008.

David Kenny, viola

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.

Yseult Cooper Stockdale, cello

Yseult Cooper Stockdale enjoys a versatile career between the UK and Ireland. She has worked with both RTE orchestras, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, Southbank Sinfonia and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. She loves performing as a chamber musician and had a spring tour in 2019 with the Alberi Piano Trio, including performances at Music for Wexford and the Crawford Summer Lunchtime Series. She has also been invited to play with Musici Ireland, Crash Ensemble, Ficino Ensemble and London-based Scordatura Collective. In 2018 she played at inaugural Beckett Chamber Music Festival and has also played as a young artist with the Britten-Pears Orchestra and at Bantry Chamber Music Festival and Chamber Music on Valentia. In 2018 her concerto performances included the Schumann Cello Concerto with the Cork Fleischmann Symphony Orchestra, and Beethoven's triple concerto with Wexford Sinfonia. She has also performed as soloist in the NCH, playing Elgar, and in 2016 toured with the Esker Festival Orchestra performing the Dvoak concerto.

She has a keen interest in exploring new music, and has performed over 50 premieres with Kirkos Ensemble and has performed at 5 ICC concerts. Recent projects include an online collaboration with sound artist Philip Fogarty, in association with Music for Galway and supported by the Arts Council.

Yseult was a recipient of the John Vallery Memorial Prize for highest placed string player at the 2015 Freemasons Young Musician of the Year and was awarded the 2016 Yamaha Music Foundation of Europe scholarship. Yseult has a 1st Class Honours MA, from the CIT Cork school of Music, and BA, from the Royal Irish Academy of Music, where her teachers were Christopher Marwood and Bill Butt. In 2015/16 she studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy", Leipzig, with Peter Hörr.

Programme Notes

Wolfgang Mozart [1756-1791]

String Quintet in C major K.515 [1787]

The early spring of 1787 was a busy time for Mozart. He was working on a commission for his new opera, *Don Giovanni*, his father was slowly dying in Salzburg, Mozart himself was not well, he moved house, the young Beethoven arrived on his doorstep looking for instruction and he wrote the two miraculous quintets in C major and G minor back to back. Historians have interpreted the house moving in two diametrically opposed ways. He moved from his elegant but very expensive city centre apartment to a spacious house with a large garden in a quiet suburb. Some Mozart scholars follow Leopold Mozart in immediately assuming the worst, namely that Mozart had been overspending and needed to retrench by moving to less expensive lodgings. Others have argued persuasively that Mozart no longer needed the large city centre apartment that he took on at the height of the success of his subscription concerts when he needed space for his assistants and copyists who helped keep the music flowing for the torrent of concerts. Instead a quiet district and a large garden may have seemed attractive with a young child, another on the way and his own indifferent health. Whatever the answer, the majestic, outgoing C major Quintet was written in the old apartment and the tragic, inward-looking G minor Quintet was the first product in the new house.

Music making in Vienna had changed since the height of Mozart's fame as a pianist and composer a few years earlier. The threat of the Turkish War and the Emperor's fiscal reforms had reduced the desire and the ability of the aristocracy to spend lavishly on orchestral concerts. Instead there was a growing bourgeoisie who liked to ape the aristocracy by promoting chamber music soirées and were prepared to pay both musicians and composer. Unfortunately Mozart's chamber music had become increasingly complex for this kind of audience and, hard though it is to believe, there were no subscribers for the set of three quintets in C major, G minor and C minor.

There is something indescribably joyful about the effortless mastery and bewitching beauty of this quintet. The opening cello theme and the violin's deft answer create a sense of serene spaciousness, as though an entire world existed inside those phrases. This is immediately turned upside down as the cello intriguingly becomes the answer instead of the question. The second group opens into a web of bewitching patterns that leads out to a gently murmuring figure which echoes the opening of Figaro's overture, though without the bustle.

The Andante is one of Mozart's sublime rhapsodies, an inspired dialogue between first violin and first viola. The other strings act as a discreet accompaniment, so openly spaced as to enhance the passages where they blend with the two leaders into the richness of the full quintet. In contrast the minuet is much more inward looking and darkly questioning as though suddenly uncertain of its direction. The trio, however, unveils sudden bursts of confidence and the craftsmanship throughout is so exquisite that no listener can remain unmoved. By darkening the minuet movement Mozart redoubles the effect of the buoyancy of the final sonata-rondo. This is one of those movements you wish would go on for ever and, indeed, Mozart must have known this as this is the longest single instrumental movement he ever wrote. He treats the enchanted opening melody with incredible diversity and brilliance at each of its returns. There is a mid-movement imitative episode, whose profound simplicities prefigure the inspired naïvety of *The Magic Flute*. This is music that restores one faith in the world, perhaps music to heal the broken-hearted. *Francis Humphrys*

Antonín Dvořák [1841-1904]

String Sextet in A-major, Op.48 [1878]

Dvořák was catapulted to international fame as the result of a grant for impoverished composers set up by the Austrian government in Vienna - Czechoslovakia was at that time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The

judging committee included both the renowned critic Eduard Hanslick and the even more famous Johannes Brahms. In each of the five successive years 1874-8 Dvořák won a prize and in 1877 Brahms took active steps to further Dvořák's career by recommending him to his publisher Simrock. Dvořák knew he was onto a good thing and bombarded the *Highly revered Master* with letters and dedications and scores. The results were spectacular for Simrock immediately undertook to publish Dvořák's compositions and Brahms arranged for the String Sextet to be premiered in Berlin.

The players were no less than the Joachim Quartet led by the famous violinist himself for whom Brahms wrote his Violin Concerto. The cellist in the Quartet was Robert Hausmann for whom, along with Joachim, Brahms wrote his Double Concerto. Dvořák was quite unused to being feted by such distinguished musicians and the delighted composer wrote to a friend: *How they played all of it, with what understanding and élan, I cannot even tell you now as words are failing me.* Joachim and his friends were equally excited for they could see at once the extent of Dvořák's genius and were delighted to be his standard bearer.

Dvořák must have known the two Brahms Sextets for the richly flowing and luscious melody of the *Allegro moderato* is redolent of the older composer's achievements with this ensemble. The two themes are similar in mood, full of the Czech composer's easy gift for songlike melody. It was this gift that Brahms so admired, for his own melodic inspiration was much harder won and he fairly gushed over the Sextet. *It is endlessly beautiful. I always have the feeling that people don't admire this piece enough, this splendid invention, freshness and sonorous beauty.* This first movement is in the customary sonata form with a dramatic and colourful development after the exposition and repeat. The coda explores the main theme once more and the ending has its surprises.

The *Dumka* has a fast-moving, cheerful main section enclosing slower more pensive music. The former clearly has folk origins with its simple little ditty that Dvořák cleverly exploits with the different instrumental combinations at his disposal. The slower section is equally folk-like but more sentimental than melancholic; it reappears a second time and the movement ends with a miniature coda. The *furiant* is an exuberant Bohemian folk-dance featuring alternate metres and this particular version would make one wish for a revival of the old custom of encoring individual movements. There is a slower central Trio, which is hardly less exciting though it begins innocently enough. Joachim must have loved this movement. The Finale is a theme with six variations. It begins life at the *andantino* end of *allegretto* and is replete with the rich middle voices of the violas. The variations are straightforward enough, the first two more lively, the third slower and chromatically richer, the fourth has a Mozartian colouring while the fifth exploits some vibrant pizzicatos. The last variation is huge fun as he decides to turn his six strings into an orchestra and gives them their head.

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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