

# THE VANBRUGH & FRIENDS

*Keith Pascoe and Marja Gaynor, violins*

*Simon Aspell and Ed Creedon, violas*

*Christopher Marwood, cello*

**CORK UCC** - Friday 17th November at 1.10pm - Aula Maxima, UCC - *presented by UCC FUAIM*

**BANTEER** - Friday 17th November at 8pm - The Glen Theatre

**CHARLEVILLE** - Saturday 18th November at 2pm - The Pavilion - *presented by Musica Fusion*

**ENNIS** - Saturday 18th November at 7.30pm – glór

**LEAP** - Sunday 19th November at 3pm - Myross Wood House - *presented by Barrahan Music*

**Ludwig van Beethoven [1770-1827]**

***String Quintet in C minor Op.104*** [1795 & 1817]

1. *Allegro con brio*
2. *Andante cantabile con variazioni*
3. *Menuetto: Quasi Allegro – Trio*
4. *Finale: Prestissimo*

**Johannes Brahms [1833-1897]**

***String Quintet No.2 in G major Op.111*** [1890]

1. *Allegro non troppo, ma con brio*
2. *Adagio*
3. *Un poco Allegretto*
4. *Vivace ma non troppo presto*



Cork  
County Council  
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí



## THE VANBRUGH

The Vanbrugh has evolved from the work of the Vanbrugh Quartet which was based in Cork as RTE's Resident Quartet from 1986 to 2013 and as Artists-in-Residence at University College, Cork from 1990 until the retirement of violinist Gregory Ellis in 2017. 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.

Keith Pascoe, Simon Aspell, and Christopher Marwood continue to perform together as the nucleus of the Vanbrugh and are joined by guest artists for performances of a wide range of chamber music repertoire.

### Marja Gaynor, violin

Originally from Finland, Marja Gaynor is a Cork-based violinist and viola player. She specialises in Baroque music and is a member of Irish Baroque Orchestra and Camerata Kilkenny, recording and touring with both groups regularly. She has also performed with Irish Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Marsyas, Dunedin Consort, London Handel Players, King's Consort and Helsinki Baroque Orchestra. Marja is known as a versatile musician at home in many different styles, a fluent improviser, as well as arranger and curator. Her string arranging credits include Oscar-winning song "Falling Slowly" from the movie *Once*, and Marja is also a long time member of the cult band Interference. Upcoming projects include chamber music tours with Solas Quartet and The Vanbrugh and performing and arranging as a trio with uilleann piper David Power and flamenco guitarist John Walsh. She teaches violin and chamber music in MTU Cork School of Music.

### Ed Creedon, viola

Ed Creedon enjoys a varied career as a viola player, performing chamber music, in recitals and as an orchestral musician. Recent performances include the National Concert Hall Chamber Music Gathering, tours throughout Ireland with the Lir String Quartet, tours to Finland, France and India with Camerata Ireland as well as solo performances with Camerata Ireland and Barry Douglas.

Chamber music highlights include performances with the Vanbrugh Quartet, as well as appearances with the Ficino Ensemble in Dublin, the Piatti Quartet in the U.K., at the Ortús Festival in Cork, and repeat invitations to the Clondeboy Festival in Belfast and the Killaloe Festival of Chamber Music. For four consecutive summers he took part in the West Cork Chamber Music Festival's Young Musicians Programme.

Ed comes from Cork and studied with Constantin Zanidache and Simon Aspell at the Cork School of Music.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### Ludwig van Beethoven [1770-1827]

#### String Quintet in C minor Op.104 [1795 & 1817]

This quintet is an arrangement made by Beethoven himself of the third Piano Trio in his ground-breaking Opus 1 set. Such arrangements were common practice in Beethoven's time and, when they were sensitively made, ideally by the composer of the original work, they served to bring contemporary works to a wider domestic and amateur audience. Unfortunately in the pre-copyright era, publishers would often unscrupulously commission arrangements and transcriptions by lesser musicians and publish them under the name of the original composer, thus sullyng the reputation of the unfortunate composer while reaping the financial benefit. This used to make Beethoven furious and for a time his brother Carl tried to control this process, but Beethoven was not prepared to spend a lot of time on transcriptions.

## 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.



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For those who know this work in the original version, listening to this quintet will be a strange experience, for it is both disturbingly and yet magically different. The original set of trios was published by Beethoven himself on a subscription basis in 1795. His confidence in undertaking this venture and his dramatic success, both financial and artistic, speaks volumes for his ability to command the attention of the music-loving aristocrats of Vienna so soon after the death of Mozart. But of course he chose the trios as they enabled him to show off his prowess as a pianist. One cannot but wonder how he must have felt returning to these youthful works over twenty years later, now completely deaf and, in that year of 1817, in poor health and seemingly unable to compose.

The opening movement is one of sharp dynamic contrasts and daring key changes full of the tensions implied by the choice of C minor. The quiet opening recalls Mozart's C minor concerto, a work that the younger composer admired. A typically ardent Beethovenian moment is when the opening phrase is released *fortissimo* at the start of the recapitulation to herald a completely recomposed version of the exposition. The tension is reduced for the second movement, a gentle theme with a set of five undemanding variations, where the expressive fourth variation is in the minor and the last one is extensively decorated by the first violin. There is a quiet valedictory coda.

The short minuet encloses a delightful trio that sees the first violin brilliantly capture the piano's opening flourish. The Finale goes off like a rocket with furious arpeggios from the violin that once was a piano interspersed with collective octaves and then after a tense pause continues quietly but with enormous latent energy. There is a contrasting major-key second subject that has a chorale-like quality that is gloriously expanded as the movement progresses and the firework displays from the opening are gradually left behind. Unbelievably there is a beautifully controlled reduction in tension and, courageously, the twenty-five year old composer, now accompanied by his older self, allow the work to sink to a quiet close in C major. *Francis Humphrys*

**Johannes Brahms [1833-1897]**

**String Quintet No.2 in G major Op.111 [1890]**

Vienna's Prater was, in the nineteenth century, a four-mile long wooded park dotted with cafés and beer gardens and restaurants. Brahms, like Beethoven and Schubert before him, relaxed there and listened to music from the little orchestras and the gypsy bands. Brahms' apartment was within ten paces of the Prater, where he over the years became a well-known figure. Max Kalbeck, who was a member of Brahms' inner circle from 1880, and later his first biographer, exclaimed on first hearing the opening of this magisterial quintet: '*Brahms in the Prater!*' Brahms replied: '*You've got it,*' and added with a roguish grin: '*And all the pretty girls there!*' It is likely that Brahms was pulling his leg, but the idea is a good one.

The opus number is significant for it is the same number as Beethoven's final piano sonata. Brahms had

spent most of his life fighting Beethoven's giant shadow; now suddenly he was tired, and Opus 111 seemed a significant milestone. The proposal for a quintet came from Joachim, who requested a companion for Op.88, though it was actually premiered by the Rosé Quartet, who were also to premiere quartets by Schönberg, Pfitzner, Reger and Weigl. As soon as Joachim saw the opening bars he told Brahms it would take three cellists in one to make the line heard above the thunderous accompaniment. Joachim was right, of course, and Brahms actually sketched a less massive alternative, but in the end he let the opening stand and bequeathed discomfort to cellists forever.

Brahms strolling in the Prater would appear to call for music every bit as grandiose as Musorgsky's description of himself at Hartman's memorial exhibition nearly twenty years earlier; both composers were aware of their significance. The opening of the quintet is truly superb as the cello melody strides out beneath the symphonic grandeur of the tremolo in the upper strings. Unlike the first quintet, there is no transition theme before the lyrical and waltz-like second subject is reached. However the tremolandi from the first subject begin to invade before the end of the exposition, which is repeated as usual. The start of the development is mesmerising, as pianissimo whisperings – derived from the movement's opening tremolo – are mingled with wisps of the second subject. The remainder of this section makes much of the full-blooded opening, and the recapitulation is reached without a break in the tension. The coda looks seriously at the possibility of a gentle conclusion, but in the end Brahms cannot resist a final flourish.

The dark beauty of the adagio is a complete contrast, dominated as it is by the husky voice of the viola sighing over a hushed and ambiguous harmonic background, with plaintive pizzicatos to maintain momentum. Brahms is surely echoing the exotic gypsy bands that haunted the Prater with their night music for violin, cimbalom and bass. The central outburst is heralded by a mysterious sequence that almost fades into silence before the passionate climax. This culminates in a cadenza for the first viola, unknowingly anticipating a similar moment in the clarinet quintet.

The third movement is equally restrained, as though Brahms is creating an introspective counterweight for the extrovert outer movements. It is a reflective dance in G minor led by the first violin, leading into a graceful G major dance for the trio. The overwhelming impression of the finale is the dizzy abandon of the coda, but the build-up is achieved with Brahms' usual subtlety. The first subject contrasts a scampering semiquaver idea with a more boisterous foot-stamping dance. These make way for a brief second subject of violin solo against a shimmering background with offbeat pizzicatos. The development and most of the recapitulation is driven by the energetic semiquavers as the working out becomes more brilliant. The reappearance of the second subject allows the momentum to dissolve momentarily into pianissimo, before the hectic coda takes over. *Francis Humphrys*

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