

FUAIM - MUSIC *at* UCC

Friday lunchtime concerts – Autumn 2023

THE VANBRUGH

Keith Pascoe and Marja Gaynor, violins

Simon Aspell and Ed Creedon, violas

Christopher Marwood, cello

Aula Maxima, UCC - Friday 17th November at 1.10pm

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*



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

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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 NOTE

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.

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, allows the work to sink to a quiet close in C major. *Francis Humphrys*

The National String Quartet Foundation is Chamber Music Partner to UCC

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