

March 2026

# Irish Chamber Orchestra

**Kristian Bezuidenhout**

Director/Piano

**Daniel Bates**

Principal Oboe/Co-Director

**Magdalēna Geka**

Guest Leader/Co-Director

# The Emperor



**Friday 6 March** Limerick

**Saturday 7 March** Dublin



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# The Arts Council

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The Arts Council is the national agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in Ireland. It was established by statute in 1951. The Arts Act 2003 provides that the Arts Council stimulates public interest, promotes knowledge, appreciation and practice and assists in improving standards in the arts. The Arts Council is an autonomous expert body for funding and promoting the arts, steering its development, and offering advice on arts and cultural matters.

The Arts Council's objective over the next three years is to nurture, support and fund More People, More Place and More Spaces across the country. We want to work alongside artists, arts organisations and partners to develop practices, strengthen capacity and audience engagement. This supports professional development, innovation and adaptability.

We are also implementing and monitoring our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. This will make sure that the arts sector and the Arts Council support a greater diversity of audiences, participants and artists.

The Arts Council proudly funds Irish Chamber Orchestra.



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# The Emperor

**Beethoven** Octet for Winds in E flat Major

**Linda Buckley** Fall Approaches

**Beethoven** Piano Concerto No.5, in E flat Major, 'Emperor'

## Friday 6 March

University Concert Hall, Limerick

This concert will be recorded for future broadcast on RTÉ Lyric fm

## Saturday 7 March

Whyte Recital Hall, RIAM, Dublin



# Irish Chamber Orchestra

We're the orchestra that invites you in. That saves you a seat. That wants you to feel the same heart-stirring, hair-raising, on-the-edge-of-your-seat feelings that we feel. We do so by pouring heart, soul, and no small measure of skill into our art. By playing old, by playing new, by playing everything with guts and fire.

You'll find us each season in **Limerick and Dublin**, touring regularly in the far corners of Ireland, as well as at some of the most prestigious halls in the world. From playing the classics, to performing with theatres, operas, DJs, or dance companies, we forge new pathways to bring you unforgettable experiences, whoever you are, wherever you are.

We are not afraid to push the boundaries of classical music. Since joining us as Artistic Partner in August 2025, **Henning Kraggerud** has brought a fresh warmth and an adventurous spirit to our work, championing artistic diversity and placing emotional connection at the heart of every performance. His inclusive vision is reshaping our repertoire, inspiring bold new commissions from some of Ireland's finest composers and offering vibrant, human-centred interpretations of the classics.

Most importantly, we believe that music is for everyone. We are a registered charity, delivering a series of successful community engagement programmes alongside our core work. After 18 years, our **ICO Schools** initiative continues to provide valuable free music lessons to children and young people in Limerick City while our **ICO Youth** provides an orchestral platform for teenagers. We are also deeply immersed in the **MA Classical Strings Programme** at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick, where we are proud to be orchestra-in-residence.

It's our rich creative musical heritage that inspires us. It's our unstoppable enthusiasm for what we do, and the people we do it with. As Ireland's national chamber orchestra, we are lucky to call the **University of Limerick** home and are funded by The **Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon**.

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## Kristian Bezuidenhout

### Director/Piano

Kristian Bezuidenhout has established himself as one of the most versatile and compelling musicians of his generation, active internationally as both keyboard player and conductor. Born in South Africa, he began his musical studies in Australia, completed them at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and is now based in London. After initial training as a modern pianist with Rebecca Penneys, he turned to historical performance, studying harpsichord with Arthur Haas, fortepiano with Malcolm Bilson, and continuo playing and performance practice with Paul O'Dette. He first gained international recognition at the age of 21, winning both First Prize and the Audience Prize at the prestigious Bruges Fortepiano Competition.

Bezuidenhout is a regular guest soloist on fortepiano, harpsichord and modern piano with many of the world's leading orchestras and period ensembles, including the Freiburger Barockorchester, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester and Australian Chamber Orchestra. He has collaborated with distinguished conductors and artists such as John Eliot Gardiner, Philippe Herreweghe, Bernard Haitink, Daniel Harding, Trevor Pinnock, Isabelle Faust, Rachel Podger, Anne Sofie von Otter, Mark Padmore and Matthias Goerne.

Alongside his solo career, Bezuidenhout is increasingly sought after as a conductor,

particularly in repertoire of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. He has led projects with ensembles including The English Concert, Tafelmusik, Collegium Vocale Gent, Juilliard 415, Kammerakademie Potsdam and Dunedin Consort. He is Principal Guest Director of both the Freiburger Barockorchester and The English Concert.

His extensive and award-winning discography of over 30 recordings, primarily for Harmonia Mundi, includes the complete keyboard music of Mozart, Beethoven piano concertos, and major vocal and chamber works by Bach, Mozart, Schubert and Schumann. He was nominated as Gramophone Magazine's Artist of the Year in 2013.



## Magdalēna Geka

### Guest Leader/Co-Director

Violinist Magdalēna Geka is a frequent solo and chamber music performer at major venues including London's Wigmore Hall, the Philharmonie de Paris, and Munich's Hercules Hall. In 2014 she made a dazzling debut with the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra and received a nomination for Latvia's Grand Music Award.

Magdalēna is a laureate of numerous international competitions and has performed as a soloist with orchestras in France, Germany and Ukraine. In 2015, she founded the piano trio Sōra, appearing at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland, the Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival in Finland, and La Folle Journée (Nantes Crazy Day). Deeply committed to developing musical life in Latvia, Magdalēna established the Young Latvian Chamber Musicians festival in Saulkrasti in 2013, and in

2015 launched the Ventspils Chamber Music Days, creating opportunities for young Latvian musicians studying abroad to perform at home.

She has a Master's degree from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris and is a former member of Kremerata Baltica and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. Contemporary music is a priority and she has taken part in approximately thirty world premieres collaborating with young composers. She plays a 1697 Giuseppe Guarneri violin, generously loaned by the Swiss Boubo-Music Foundation.

(Vienna's English Theatre) Fedotik in The Three Sisters (West End) and Adrian Green in Casualty (BBC TV).

Linda Buckley



Daniel Bates



## Daniel Bates

### Principal Oboe/Co-Director

Dan Bates is principal oboe with ICO. He also holds principal positions with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the City of London Sinfonia. He has played guest principal for various orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Born in London, Daniel studied at the Royal Academy of Music, Pembroke College, Cambridge and LAMDA drama school. He was the youngest ever winner of the Royal Overseas League Competition and won two major international competitions, in Italy and Romania.

He has performed concertos with the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Mozart Players and the English Chamber Orchestra and has given recitals at the Wigmore Hall and the Purcell Room. He is the artistic director of FitzFest – a community chamber music festival based in Fitzrovia, Central London. As an actor his credits include the title role in The Picture of Dorian Gray

## Linda Buckley

### Composer

Cork born Linda Buckley is an award-winning composer working across electronic and acoustic music, with a strong focus on interdisciplinary collaboration, film, and drone and dark ambient practices. Her acclaimed NMC release from Ocean's Floor was championed by Iggy Pop on BBC Radio 6 as 'beautiful music – here is somebody really special' and hailed by BBC Radio 3 as sublime and brilliant. Critic Bob Gilmore praised her work for engaging with "an area of experience that new music is generally shy of... ecstasy." Buckley has written extensively for orchestra, including works for the BBC Symphony Orchestra and RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. She was elected to Aosdána in 2021 and is an Associate Artist with Chamber Music Scotland. Her film work includes collaborations with Kathryn Ferguson (Nothing Compares), Mark Cousins, Pat Collins, and Tadhg O'Sullivan, with Nothing Compares nominated for Best Score at the IFTA Awards and Cinema Eye Honors. Her awards include a Fulbright Scholarship to NYU, a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, the Frankfurt Visual Music Award, and Gold at the New York Festivals Radio Awards. Recent projects include collaborations with Gudrun Gut, Crash Ensemble, and Andrew Zolinsky, with presentations at Dark Music Days, hcmf//, and New Music Dublin. Buckley holds degrees from University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin, where she completed a PhD in Composition.

# Programme Notes



## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Octet for Winds in E-flat major, Op.103

*1. Allegro 2. Andante 3. Menuetto: Allegro  
4. Finale: Presto*

When Beethoven left his home in Bonn to study with Haydn in Vienna, he took with him several manuscripts, among them the Octet for Winds, with which he hoped to impress his illustrious elder. The plan worked. Haydn subsequently wrote to his patron, the Archbishop Elector, Maximilian Franz, 'On the basis of these pieces, expert and amateur alike cannot but admit that Beethoven will in time become one of the great musical artists in Europe.

Intended as accompaniment to genteel outdoor soirées and scored for pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns, the Octet was composed in 1792 and revised three years later. Though an early work, its high opus number resulted from its much later publication.

Although obligated to provide unobtrusive background music, Beethoven's lacing of well-mannered poise with tongue-in-cheek accents and an animated dialogue between the instruments seems intent on claiming attention.

The opening *Allegro* begins with a confident, fanfare-like idea tossed between oboes and clarinets over bustling figures. Vigorously developed, sudden turns to the minor key lend proceedings a teasing, mischievous edge.

The *Andante* relaxes into a lilting, barcarolle-like sway. A virtual operatic duet for oboe and bassoon, it allows all the instruments their moment in the spotlight.

A lively scherzo in all but name, the Minuet is more a rustic German dance than an elegantly polite diversion. Listen to how its brusque four-note motif is nervously exchanged between instrumental pairings. And how in the Trio the texture thins to be more intimate, chamber-like exchanges, clarinet and bassoon trading fragmentary exchanges punctuated by horn calls.

The *Presto* finale is the last virtuosic flourish to persuade Beethoven's distracted audience to pause their merry-making and listen. First out of the gate is a free-flowing clarinet that receives an immediate response in kind from the other instruments. As high-flying clarinets and horns contest for prominence, the oboes and bassoons readily respond in kind.

Later reworked as the Op.4 String Quintet, the Octet, with its distinctive colour, charm, and lightly cast-off virtuosity, remains an early achievement for Beethoven, a striking transition from court music to the concert platform.

Note by Michael Quinn © 2026

## Linda Buckley (b.1979)

Fall Approaches (Haustid Nalgast)

Fall Approaches (Haustid Nalgast) is a string arrangement of a piece of mine for choir and electronics originally composed for the New Dublin Voices (2007). It is inspired by Icelandic poetry, particularly the practice of rimur chanting. The text set in the choral form is from Haustid Nalgast, an example of rimur, written by Stefan Hvitadel (1887–1933). Rima (plural rimur) is a traditional form of narrative Icelandic epic song

chanted or intoned in a specific manner called ad kveda. The early rimur are primarily based on pre-existing narratives in prose, heroic tales, and mythical or purely fictitious sagas. The Icelanders enjoyed a special form of communal storytelling and poetry recitals from the earliest times, and these seem to have developed into the kvoldvaka (night-vigil), of which the chanting of rimur was an integral part.

Bob Gilmore from his 2008 article 'All Collisions End in Static: the Music of Linda Buckley' offers an interesting insight into the piece: 'In works like Fall Approaches, and in even more recent pieces like Q for female voice and electronics and Fiol for string trio, all premiered this year, Buckley engages with an area of experience that new music is generally shy of, which, simplified and reduced to a single word, I'd call ecstasy. Not the drug-induced euphoria of dance music, but exultant, heightened states of being that are the product of an excitable sensibility, of an emotional response to the world that sees the bright places of life as clearly as the dark.'

### Fall Approaches

The blessed sun goes under the horizon  
The golden clouds are glowing in the sky  
The sensitive river keeps on crying (moved to tears)  
The fall approaches and the winter storm  
Soon we will not see the sun  
Soon the river will be frozen  
Plover disappears and its song is finished  
It's getting dark but the sun in the south  
Covers her with gold  
The dark threatens the northern coast  
The inner desire cries  
For the Southern atmosphere  
Do we just have dark nights  
No relief nor inner rest  
And no amends for suffering?  
The sky above consoles the crying  
Stars glow because of the light from God  
Through the winter nights  
The winter night will barely harm us  
As the lights from above  
Are watching the people

Note by Linda Buckley ©

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## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Concerto No.5, E-flat Major, 'Emperor'

1. *Allegro*
2. *Adagio un poco mosso*
3. *Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo*

Beethoven's Emperor Concerto was completed under bombardment in Vienna in the Spring of 1809, the Austrian capital under siege for the second time in four years as Napoleon Bonaparte laid waste to Europe in pursuit of short-lived glory.

Legend has it that Beethoven, afflicted by excruciating tinnitus, sought refuge in a cellar, burying his head in pillows to dampen the thunderous sound of explosions. 'Nothing but drums, cannons, men, misery of every sort,' he despairingly noted during sustained attrition by the French army.

Another, disputed, legend claims its title was the result of a French officer leaping to his feet at the conclusion of its premiere in newly occupied Vienna in 1811 to declare 'C'est l'Empereur!' in salute to the conquering Napoleon Bonaparte. More likely is that it was attached by the score's publisher, Johann Baptist Cramer, with an eye to attracting sales.

Despite the twin traumas of war and Beethoven's encroaching deafness, the Fifth Piano Concerto is a work of enormous dignity. And of heroic defiance, the piano cast in the role of lionhearted resister to tyranny, refusing to be cowed by affliction, whether man-made or heaven-sent.

Fully half the concerto's entire length, the Allegro first movement erupts into life as the orchestra boldly asserts its dominance with the abrupt call to attention of three sonorous chords.

Immediately taking up the challenge, the piano responds to each with flourishes of arpeggios, trills and scales.

The animated argument between piano and orchestra that follows finds them embroiled in a rapturous series of answers and calls, each provoking the other to ever-more high-spirited ardour. Rising above it all, the piano – valiantly proclaiming its individuality – time and again reclaims dominance, the orchestra obliged to

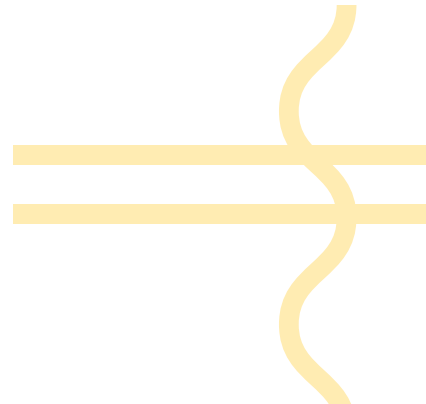
give ground to its insistent refusal to be cowed or silenced.

Pouring oil on troubled waters, the middle movement – marked *Adagio un poco mosso* ('slow but moving forward') – provides balm with the healing grace of a lulling nocturne. Muted strings, restrained woodwinds and a warm chorale of comforting harmonies gloss the passage with a hymn-like quality. It is lit up from within by the cut-crystal clarity of a noticeably reflective piano yearning towards (and often achieving) sublime, pristine poetry of concentrated intensity.

The concluding Rondo, begun without a pause, announces an abrupt change of tone as a rousing piano provokes an exultant response to burst forth from the orchestra. The mood becomes ever-more virtuosic as the piano urges the orchestra to surrender to its rhapsodic vision – a contract the orchestra enters with gleeful exuberance in the ensuing *Allegro ma non troppo* ('fast, but not too much') finale.

Here, Beethoven – the great spokesman for co-operation and community – seems to soothe the soul with a moment of lyrical quiet before stiffening the sinews in a rapturous declaration of strength in unity, piano and orchestra blazing their way towards an invigoratingly emphatic ending in which both can claim to be first among equals.

Note by Michael Quinn © 2026





# Education and Community Engagement

## ICO Schools

ICO Schools is a ground-breaking Irish Chamber Orchestra initiative that offers free music lessons to hundreds of schoolchildren.

## ICO Youth

ICO Youth is our free youth orchestra for young people aged 12-24 years. It focuses on orchestral participation and performance, as well as small chamber music groups with individual lessons boosting confidence and skills.

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## Community Visits

Throughout the year, ICO musicians give time to visit local voluntary organisations and charities to perform for audiences who are unable to attend concerts.

Find out more at

[irishchamberorchestra.com/what-we-do/education-community](https://irishchamberorchestra.com/what-we-do/education-community)

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Here at ICO we are lucky to have wonderful support from our Friends and Patrons. Each year we perform all around Ireland and abroad, while also delivering music education to hundreds of school children in Limerick through our free music education initiatives. Our Patrons and Friends play a vital role in our story, and enjoy a range of exclusive benefits.

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Director/Violin

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May

# Brothers Haydn

**Carolin Widmann**  
Director/Violin

Thursday 14 May Limerick    Friday 15 May Dublin



June

# French Reverie

**Henning Kraggerud**  
Director/Violin

Thursday 18 June Dublin    Friday 19 June Limerick

