

June 2026

Irish Chamber Orchestra

French Reverie

with **Henning Kraggerud** Director/Violin/Viola



Thursday 18 June Whyte Recital Hall, RIAM, Dublin

Friday 19 June University Concert Hall, Limerick



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irishchamberorchestra.com





The Arts Council

More People, More Places, More Spaces

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.



A Welcome from Our CEO



Gerard Keenan
CEO

Good evening, everyone, and welcome.

We're so happy to have you with us for French Reverie — a programme designed as one flowing musical journey through some of France's most beautiful and atmospheric music. Guided by Henning Kraggerud's artistic vision, each piece moves naturally into the next, inviting you to simply settle in and let the music carry you along.

Tonight you'll hear the graceful charm of Fauré, the quiet intimacy of Debussy, and the gentle, reflective world of Satie. Massenet's *Méditation* offers a moment of deep tenderness, before we arrive at something especially close to the orchestra's heart: *Beyond* by Katherine Hunka, written in memory of our dear friend and much-missed colleague, Christian Elliott.

We finish with Ravel's radiant String Quartet, full of colour, vitality, and light, bringing the evening to an uplifting close after this journey through reflection and remembrance.

At its heart, tonight is about connection and storytelling through music: music that can comfort, stir memories, and speak directly to us without words. We hope you'll enjoy being immersed in it, moment by moment.

Irish Chamber Orchestra depends on the generosity and encouragement of audiences like you who believe in the power of live performance and shared musical experiences. If tonight's concert moves you, stay with us, whether by joining us again, telling others about the orchestra, or supporting our work in whatever way feels right to you. Every gesture truly helps us continue creating ambitious programmes, nurturing new collaborations, and sharing music with communities across Ireland and beyond.

Thank you again for being here this evening and enjoy the performance.

French Reverie

Henning Kraggerud Director/Violin/Viola

Fauré Pavane in G minor, Op. 50 (arr. Flavio Regis Cunha)

Debussy La fille aux cheveux de lin (arr. Lee Armstrong)

Satie Gymnopédie No.1 (arr. Elaine Fine)

Massenet Méditation from Thaïs

Hunka Beyond

Ravel String Quartet in F Major (arr. Rudolph Barshai)

Thursday 18 June

Whyte Recital Hall, RIAM, Dublin, 7:30pm

Friday 19 June

University Concert Hall, Limerick, 7:30pm

Part of the Limerick Summer Proms in association with UCH, Limerick

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

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 young people. 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**.

Whether it's your first time or your hundredth time, we are Irish Chamber Orchestra, and you are in for a treat.

See upcoming events —
we've saved you a seat!

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Violin

Sini Simonen Guest Leader
Nicola Sweeney Principal
Emily Nenniger
Kenneth Rice
Oonagh Keogh
Lorenza Sabatini *
André Swanepoel Principal
Anna Cashell
Louis Roden
Diane Daly
Siún Milne

Viola

Joachim Roewer Principal
Lucy Nolan
Robin Panter
Mark Coates Smith
Paulo Alonso *

Cello

Aoife Nic Athlaoich Principal
Peggy Nolan
Richard Angell

Bass

Malachy Robinson Principal

Harp

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Henning Kraggerud

Director/Violin/Viola

Norwegian violinist Henning Kraggerud is Artistic Partner of the Irish Chamber Orchestra and Artistic Director of the Arctic Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra. Renowned for his versatility as a soloist, play-director, composer and educator, he combines technical brilliance with expressive depth. His work as a composer, arranger and improviser — often performing his own music — recalls the spirit of the great violinist-composers of the past.

Kraggerud appears regularly with leading orchestras worldwide, including the Tampere Philharmonic, Royal Danish Opera Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Danish National Symphony, Tonkünstler Vienna, BBC Scottish Symphony and Tasmanian Symphony orchestras. He has performed at the BBC Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, and at Carnegie Hall with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

A prolific composer, his largest-scale work, *Equinox: 24 Postludes in All Keys*, was premiered and recorded with the Arctic Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra. His recent orchestral work *Romantartica* was co-commissioned by the Arctic Philharmonic and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Other commissions include works for the Brodsky Quartet, Britten Sinfonia and Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra.

Kraggerud gave the 21st-century premiere of Johan Halvorsen's Violin Concerto and later recorded it for Naxos to critical acclaim. His extensive discography includes award-winning recordings for Naxos and Simax, including Mozart concertos and the complete solo sonatas of Ysaÿe.

International Chair of Violin at the Royal Northern College of Music, he is also Professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music. Born in Oslo in 1973, he studied with Camilla Wicks and Emanuel Hurwitz and plays a 1744 Guarneri del Gesù, on loan from Dextra Musica.

<http://www.henningkraggerud.com/>



Katherine Hunka

Katherine Hunka

ICO Leader Emeritus/Composer

Katherine Hunka enjoys a diverse and vibrant career as a violinist, chamber musician, composer, and mentor.

For twenty-six years, she led and directed Irish Chamber Orchestra, touring internationally in Germany, China, and Singapore, as well as appearing at festivals across Ireland including the West Cork Chamber Music Festival and Kilkenny Arts Festival. In 2002, she released a solo album with the ICO featuring Astor Piazzolla's *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* and Franz Schubert, which received critical acclaim, including five stars in BBC Music Magazine.

Katherine has been Artistic Director of the Killaloe Music Festival and regularly appears as a soloist and chamber musician at festivals throughout Ireland and the UK. Highlights of her solo career include performing a Mozart Concerto with the City of London Sinfonia, premiering Benjamin Britten's Concerto for Violin and Viola at the Aldeburgh Festival, and most recently premiering David Fennessey's concerto Blood with the ICO in Berlin.

Her ensemble, The Far Flung Trio, is known for its eclectic programming; their album Umbrellas was released on Orchid Classics.

Increasingly focused on composition, Katherine was awarded an Arts Council bursary in 2025. Her works include Pass the Hat for the Solas String Quartet, The Bassist for ICO low strings, and a series of innovative pieces for violin and loop pedal performed at festivals nationwide.

A passionate mentor, she has been a guest professor at Indiana University, is currently a lecturer at MTU Cork School of Music, and serves as Artistic Director of the ConCorda chamber music course. In June 2025, she directed the inaugural concert of the National Youth Chamber Orchestra of Ireland.

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Programme

Notes

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Pavane in G minor, Op. 50
(arr. Flavio Regis Cunha)

The slow, stately rhythm of the Pavane, a refined court dance that originated in Renaissance Spain and Italy, enjoyed a revival in 19th-century France. Fauré borrowed it for his Pavane in 1887 and Ravel for his Pavane pour une infante défunte.

Fauré originally composed it for solo piano, regarding it as an “elegant, but not otherwise important” diversion for *al fresco* gatherings. That was to change when he dedicated it to his wealthy patron, Countess Elisabeth Greffulhe. With her penchant for garden parties on a lavish scale, she encouraged Fauré to orchestrate it with the no-expense-spared addition of dance elements and an optional chorus. The result was one of Fauré’s signature pieces.

Blending poised melancholy with refined grace, the orchestral version of the Pavane evokes a graceful, dreamlike procession – elegant yet understated and perfectly tailored for his benefactor’s candle-lit, moon-haloed garden soirées.

Arranged for a full complement of strings, it begins with a lilting, noble melody, gradually

acquiring all the limpid delicacy of free-flowing watercolours that harmoniously ebb and flow to ink an exquisite picture.

Listen for the sudden moment of drama as faster sequences descend over pedal basses, massed strings surging passionately before calming and subsiding. It feels like the gentle thermal breeze of a summer’s evening when the air has not yet lost the day’s warmth.

As the main theme returns, harmonies bend into new, more elongated shapes before all the voices coalesce, settle and move towards the tenderest of endings. It’s as if the last glimmers of fading dusk flicker out and die as night begins to cloak all in its star-lit shroud.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

La fille aux cheveux de lin (arr. Lee Armstrong)

Inspired by the 19th-century French poet Leconte de Lisle’s poem of the same name, Debussy’s *La fille aux cheveux de lin* is a radiantly charming miniature paying tribute to the titular Girl with the Flaxen Hair.

Composed in 1910, it was Debussy’s second setting of the work, an earlier version for piano and voice written for the amateur soprano Marie-Blanche Vasnier, who was his



muse and his partner for eight years, their age difference – he was 18, she was 32 – eventually too great a gap to sustain their relationship.

Debussy's affection for her is clear in porcelain-delicate music that feels open, warm, and gently radiant. Its exquisitely pure melody, carried along by a softly rocking accompaniment, harmonies shimmering underneath, unfolds with all the immediacy and ease of folk music.

Listen for how it seems to flow, accented by subtle shifts in colour and tone and with an unforced, natural elegance that conjures a moment of idealised bliss that feels idyllically suspended in time – a brief, fleeting moment that even so seems endless and forever.

The warmth of the opening phrase immediately establishes the music's radiant appeal. The tune unfolds in short, vocal-like spans like whispered tokens of love. Delicate inner voices fill out the texture as occasional glints of colour hint at thinly veiled passion, luminous sonorities adding to the sense of controlled ardour and calm contentment.

Erik Satie (1866-1925)

Gymnopédie No. 1 (arr. for strings and harp by Elaine Fine)

The three Gymnopédies (Nude Dances) Erik Satie composed in 1888 may well have been a reference to the annual festival in ancient Sparta where young men danced naked or, as seems more likely, simply without the weapons they habitually carried.

Heard on the piano, for which it was originally composed, the first of the Gymnopédies is sparse and impressionistic, leaving the listener to fill in the gaps of a melody eked out by delicately dabbed notes.

Elaine Fine's subtle arrangement drapes it in a hypnotic cloak of dreamlike calm from the hushed opening where soft strings and harp enlarge upon the original piano version's alternating chords. The result shimmers and gently swells as if casting a magical spell over it. The melody emerges in high strings, floating up

and down like a slow breath inhaling and exhaling as the texture gradually becomes fuller and rounder, filled out by rich, swelling harmonies. The whole builds with quiet, restrained intensity until the serenity of the opening returns to offer a moment of warmth like the last glow of the setting sun.

Jules Massenet (1842-1912)

Méditation from Thaïs

Set in Roman-occupied Egypt, Massenet's Thaïs, a tale of good intentions leading to unexpected consequences, was the most exotic of his 30 operas. When the monk Athanaël attempts to save the courtesan Thaïs by taking her to a convent, he finds himself smitten and declares his love for her, albeit too late as she dies redeemed by a vision of angels welcoming her into Heaven.

The hypnotically beautiful Méditation heard as Thaïs chooses between a continued life of sin or repentance in devotion to God is one of the most sublime pieces of music ever written.

Voiced by a solo violin, the opening melody rises and falls like a deep meditative breath in long, lyrical arcs over hushed strings to capture the dilemma of Thaïs, caught between carnal temptation and the promise of divine forgiveness. The tension of those conflicted emotions steadily builds, dipping into minor-key shadows before climbing to a bright, heartfelt major-key climax. Notice the soaring intensity of the violin that personifies Thaïs, held suspended on high, yearning notes.

As the orchestra adds its own voice passions intensify, creating lush waves of clashing feelings before the violin returns alone, freeing itself from the argument to return to a moment of tranquil resignation. Listen for the false ending where massed strings softly interrupt to offer succour and calm. Their intervention triggers the true finale – an ethereal harmonic fade into silence and peace.

Katherine Hunka (b. 1973)

Beyond

The composer writes:

Beyond was composed in April 2025 upon hearing that our dear friend and colleague Christian Elliott had died. Christian was Principal Cello with ICO for many years, a dedicated musician, and a man of infinite imagination and sensitivity. He loved otherworldly sounds in his own music and arrangements, and such sounds inspired this piece. "Beyond" can be thought of as coming from a distant place. Schubert's Death and the Maiden is a piece that Christian directed with the ICO, music close to his heart. The famous theme from the second movement is quoted in the piece, as well as moments from Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata, another piece very close to his heart.

Notes by Katherine Hunka

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

String Quartet in F Major (arr. Rudolph Barshai)

1. *Allegro moderato – très doux*
2. *Assez vif – très rythmé*
3. *Très lent*
4. *Vif et agité*

Ravel was 28 when he composed his only String Quartet in the Spring of 1903. Dedicated to his teacher, Gabriel Fauré, it was loosely influenced by Debussy's String Quartet, similarly his only such work, composed a decade earlier.

Ravel was at pains to distinguish his Quartet from Debussy's, insisting that his approach was "opposite to that of Debussy's symbolism" and that his work marked a return to what he called "classic standards" as opposed to "the vagueness and formlessness of the early French impressionists".

Cast in four movements, the Quartet lends itself eloquently to a string arrangement, the larger complement of voices enhancing the music's already rich palette of colours and intricately woven textures. Those qualities can be heard straight away on the broad, lyrical main theme

with which it opens. Listen for how the sound of the original four voices remains well defined and clear even as the greater expressivity of massed strings retains and expands its feeling of spaciousness.

A contrasting second theme introduces a more inward, searching mood, the harmony shifting so smoothly that the music seems to change colour almost imperceptibly. One of the pleasures to be gained here is how naturally the lines move between instruments, creating a sense of continuous flow.

The infectiously buoyant second movement is all about forward-driving motion, lightness and rhythmic wit. Its plucked strings and quick exchanges between individual voices flicker in and out of focus to give it an animated, darting character, like dragonflies flitting over the glinting surface of a stream.

The slow third movement provides the quartet's emotional core. It begins with a long, expressive melody and unfolds in a way that feels intimate and suspended. Pay attention to the soft harmonic shifts and the returning hints of earlier material, which imbue it with a vivid feeling of reflection and of memories recalled.

Marked *Vif et agité* (lively and restless), the finale returns to the energy and drive of previous movements. Listen out for the reappearance of earlier themes, how they are transformed under the pressure of gathering momentum and greater urgency, and how Ravel effortlessly combines them to produce a forceful but satisfyingly unified ending.

Notes by Michael Quinn © 2026



Education and Community Engagement

ICO Schools

ICO Schools is a ground-breaking Irish Chamber Orchestra initiative that offers free weekly music lessons to hundreds of primary and secondary school children.

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.

MA in Classical String Performance

A unique two-year full-time programme offering advanced tuition in violin, viola, cello and double bass. Focusing on musicianship and chamber music skills, the MA is run in conjunction with the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at University of Limerick.

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.



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The Gift of Music



With your help, in 2025, ICO Education and Community Engagement...

- Delivered **13,500 free music lessons** to children in partnering primary schools
- Provided **5,040 teaching hours** in violin, viola, cello, double bass, choral and songwriting
- Reached **11,975 young people** through ICO Schools and ICO Youth
- Welcomed **1,418 people** from our local community to ICO concerts
- Took **30 ICO Youth musicians** to Vienna, where they won 3 awards

Learning an instrument changes the course of a child's life. It builds focus, patience, courage and a sense of belonging. Characteristics that stay with them for life.

Join our community of supporters.



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From a Limerick classroom to the Golden Hall of Vienna

In July 2025, thirty young musicians from ICO Youth travelled to Vienna to compete at the World Orchestra Festival. They came home with three awards, including Bronze in the String Orchestra Mixed category.

Behind those awards lies an eighteen-year journey.

Most of these young people started in ICO Schools. Twice a week, 450 children at two DEIS primary schools in Limerick learn violin, viola, cello and singing as part of their school day. Many live in areas where music education would otherwise be out of reach.

From there, they can continue through five inner-city secondary schools, and on to ICO Youth, our free, non-auditioned chamber orchestra for 12 to 24 year-olds. Seventy-two percent of ICO Youth members came through ICO Schools.

In Vienna, they performed at the Musikverein's Golden Hall, met the Irish Ambassador, and worked with professors from Vienna's University of Music. For many, it was their first time outside Ireland. For some, their first time on a plane.

"He was so happy when he returned from Vienna. His teacher has praised how confident he has gotten from all the opportunities with ICO Youth." ICO Youth Parent

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At ICO, we are deeply grateful to our Friends and Patrons, whose support enables us to perform across Ireland and internationally and deliver free music education to hundreds of schoolchildren in Limerick. In return, Friends & Patrons enjoy a range of exclusive benefits and a closer connection to our work.

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Guitar/Vocals

Liz Knowles

Fiddle

Carla De Kleuver-Leurs

Guest Leader



Sun Lines

Wednesday 12 August

St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, 7:30pm

Irish Chamber Orchestra

The Devil, The Witch And The Warlock

Henning Kraggerud Director /Violin

Carla De Kleuver-Leurs Guest Leader

Friday 14 August

St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, 7:30pm



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AUTUMN/WINTER

SEASON 2026

September

NATURE OF SOUND

Oliver Heath, Director/
Guest Leader
Thur 17 Limerick



October

THE PLACE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN WOUNDED

Niall Breslin (Bressie)
Sun 4 Limerick



SPARK & SERENADE

Henning Kraggerud, Director/
Violin/Viola
Thur 15 Dublin | Fri 16 Limerick



November

MOZART ILLUMINATED

Yeol Eum Son, Director/Piano
Thur 19 Dublin | Fri 20 Limerick |
Sat 21 Cork



December

CHRISTMAS MAGIC

Ava Dodd, Soprano
Patrick Barrett, Conductor
Irish Youth Choir
Wed 16 Limerick | Thur 17 Dublin



SPRING/SUMMER

SEASON 2027

February

TRUMPET TALES

Aaron Azunda Akugbo,
Co-Director/Trumpet
Fri 5 Limerick | Sat 6 Dublin



March

PASSION & SONG

Tara Erraught, Soprano
Henning Kraggerud, Director/
Violin
Thur 4 Cork | Fri 5 Limerick |
Sat 6 Dublin



April

PLANET MOZART

Kristian Bezuidenhout,
Director/Piano
Thur 15 Dublin | Fri 16 Limerick |
Sat 17 Waterford



May

NOTES & NOVELS

Henning Kraggerud, Director/
Violin
Thur 13 Dublin | Fri 14 Limerick |
Sat 15 Mayo



June

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA & PAGLIACCI

Wed 2 | Fri 4 | Sat 5 | Mon 7

FALSTAFF

Sun 6

Franco Trinca, Conductor
Waterford

