

# Mozart, Bach & Tchaikovsky

Irish Chamber Orchestra

Carolyn Widmann Director/Violin

3 Timeless Classics

**Wednesday 10 April**

Civic Theatre Tallaght, Dublin

**Thursday 11 April**

St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick

**Friday 12 April**

St. Patrick's Church,  
Newport, Co. Mayo

**Saturday 13 April**

St. Iberius' Church, Wexford





# 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.

April 2024

Irish Chamber Orchestra

Carolyn Widmann Director/Violin

# Mozart, Bach & Tchaikovsky

3 Timeless Classics

**Mozart** Eine kleine Nachtmusik,  
Serenade No.13 for strings, G major, K.525  
**J.S. Bach** Violin Concerto No.1, BWV 1041, A minor  
**Tchaikovsky** Souvenir de Florence, Op. 70

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Civic Theatre Tallaght, Dublin

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(in association with Music for Wexford)



# 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.

Led by the incredible **Katherine Hunka**, we are not afraid to push the boundaries of classical music. Since joining us as Principal Conductor/Artistic Partner in May 2022, **Thomas Zehetmair** has opened a new chapter in our work, stamping his own hallmark on our repertoire. Together, we have performed trailblazing new commissions from some of Ireland's finest composers, and explored wonderful new ways of seeing and understanding the classics.

Most importantly, we believe that music is for everyone. That's why we're also a charity, with a series of successful community engagement programmes. After 16 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. **ICO Teach**, our online tutorial website gives tutors and children access to free, outstanding music education, worldwide. 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 the Irish Chamber Orchestra, and you are in for a treat.



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Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, as well as returns to the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Musikverein, and the WDR Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Cologne.

<https://askonasholt.com/artist/carolin-widmann>

## **Carolin Widmann**

### **Director/Violin**

A wonderfully versatile musician, Carolin Widmann's activities span the great classical concerti, new commissions specially written for her, solo recitals, a wide variety of chamber music and, increasingly, period instrument performances, including play/direction from the violin.

The 2023-24 season will see Carolin return to the Berliner Philharmoniker and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic to perform Jörg Widmann's Violin Concerto No. 2. She will also appear with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken, Filarmonica Toscanini, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, Netherlands Radio Symphony, Polish National Radio Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Irish Chamber Orchestra, the Schwetzingen SWR Festspiele and the Prague Spring International Music Festival.

Recent highlights include Carolin's debuts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic with Esa-Pekka Salonen, Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Maxim Emelyanychev, Munich Philharmonic, Dresden Philharmonic, Barcelona Symphony and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester with Robin Ticciati, her New York debut play/directing the




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# Education and Engagement

## ICO Schools

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

## ICO Youth

The ICO Youth is our free youth orchestra for children aged 12-18 years. It focuses on orchestral participation and performance, as well as small chamber music groups with individual lessons boosting confidence and skills.

## ICO Teach

ICO Teach is our ground-breaking and freely available online teaching resource. Teachers and children can download sheet music, watch video demos featuring Irish Chamber Orchestra musicians, and much more.

## 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.

Find out more at

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# Programme Notes

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, Serenade No.13 for  
Strings in G major, K.525  
I. Allegro II. Romanze: Andante  
III. Menuetto (Allegretto) IV. Rondo: Allegro

Who could not fail to be seduced by a title as whimsical and alluring as A Little Night Music? Not Stephen Sondheim who borrowed it for his 1973 Broadway musical of the same name, lit up by his poignant song 'Send in the Clowns'. And certainly not music lovers who have readily succumbed to its blend of brisk, joyful buoyancy and the most serene and seductive of melodies.

Why Mozart composed the last of his Serenades in the late summer of 1787 isn't known. Nor whether it was written to a commission or speculatively in the hope of one. It seems likely that it was intended for one of the late-night al fresco entertainments that had become a popular fixture of Vienna's midsummer social calendar.

Originally conceived for string quintet, its version for orchestral strings carries itself with greater heft and all the swagger of its symphonic sweep. It is tempting to think of the rousing fanfare of its Allegro opening as Mozart attempting to cut through the chattering hubbub of the evening's social gathering as if to say "pay attention to my music!"

Certainly, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (a title Mozart appended to the score to suggest "a little serenade") insists on being more than background muzak. Instead, it demands to be listened to with insistent, playfully animated high voices giving way to seductive hints of alluring melodies. Listen

for how he seems to return to the beginning as he attempts to persuade dithering ears with ever-more sophisticated ensemble playing. Moving between gracefulness and grandeur, it variously seduces and enchants total engagement.

The serene Romanze that follows offers the most sublime of rewards. Gossamer-light, filigree-delicate and as limpid and liquid as a flowing Spring stream, its sweet gentleness and elegant poise is one of the most bewitching passages Mozart ever composed. Can you spot the three variations it treats its sighing melody to?

Perhaps fearful of attention beginning to drift, the third movement Menuetto announces itself with foot-stamping indignation towards any indifferent or distracted listeners. It insists, demands even, to be heard. Typical of Mozart, even as he scolds he forgives, producing another entrancing melody that casts a spell of its own.

The witty, wily Rondo finale finds Mozart in mischievous mood, tantalising, teasing and testing in equal measure. Especially beguiling are the constant changes of mood, the unexpected shifts between exuberant brightness, rhythmic animation and relaxed lyricism. It is Mozart cocking a snook at distracted listeners at the original Viennese soirée with an unforgettable display of classical elegance and élan. And triumphantly, it is Mozart insisting that he is more than a hack composer of mere background muzak with exuberant, attention-grabbing verve and vivacity that demands to be listened to.

# Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

Violin Concerto No.1 in A minor, BWV 1041

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro assai

The violin was central to much of Bach's music – a conspicuous signature in three of his mighty Brandenburg Concertos and striking out into new territory in the unaccompanied partitas and sonatas.

Given the exquisite sounds the violin makes, it is regrettable, and surprising, that Bach wrote so few concertos for it. Of those he did compose only two for solo violin and another for two violins survive. All three have deservedly become cornerstones of the repertoire, their rapt beauty and elegant intricacy reminding us that Bach was himself accomplished on the instrument.

Evidence of when and where the Violin Concertos were written was lost as Bach moved employment from Cöthen to Leipzig during a period when he would often re-cast previously composed pieces for different instruments. The lack of dates doesn't detract from the multiple attractions of the music.

Cast in the tender and plaintive key of A minor, the First Violin Concerto's three-movement form is borrowed from Vivaldi. As is its use of ritornello, which translates as "little return". In layman's terms that simply means distinct phrases that are restated several times throughout the work. Here the main theme is repeated in alternating fragments between the violin and sections of the orchestra. See if you can recognise how the violin is free to choose multiple sections it repeats while the orchestra restricts itself to using just one phrase. What results is a simple but persuasive example of a favourite Bach device: counterpoint.

Pay attention, too, to those pairs of attractively lively rising notes that begin the movement and seek to catch the ear's attention. And try to identify and latch on to the more decidedly serious-minded undercurrent that also seems intent on making itself heard.

The stately, slow-moving poise of the extended Andante middle movement, arching and aching towards angelic beauty, is carried along by a brooding pulse in the bass line. One that seems to switch its dark gravity off and on at will. When it is active, dissonant ripples flow out in undulating waves; when it is silent, orchestral violins and violas are left to halo the keening solo instrument in a private meditation that one can only guess at and dare not intrude upon.

The animated finale sees Bach bowing to Baroque convention with the use of a gigue – a dance form similar to our own jigs. Although the solo violin and orchestra seem to have reached a mutual understanding, moments of unease from the accompanying ensemble pepper proceedings. Perhaps they feel an agreement is being broken by the violin's tendency to showcase its virtuosity. You can hear those moments of grandstanding in passages calling for dexterous finger work as individual notes are rapidly distributed around the violin's strings, its highest voice flashing with lightning-like brightness against the sober orchestral backdrop.

# Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

(1840-93)

Souvenir de Florence, Op.70

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Adagio cantabile e con moto
- III. Allegro moderato
- IV. Allegro vivace

Who hasn't visited somewhere that lingers in the memory long after you have left it and to where you pine to return? For Tchaikovsky, such a place was the Italian city of Florence, birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. Such are the beauties of the Tuscan capital that nearly a century after Tchaikovsky last visited in the late 1880s it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Tchaikovsky was not alone in falling under Florence's alluring spell. The French novelist Stendhal was so overwhelmed by its treasure troves of art and architecture that "in a sort of ecstasy... life was drained from me. I walked with the fear of falling". Today, a Florentine hospital has a ward dedicated to tourists similarly affected by what has come to be known as Stendhal (or Florence) Syndrome.

No wonder then that like so many before and after him, Tchaikovsky, who wore his heart on his sleeve, would be smitten by the city that produced such cultural giants as Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dante, Machiavelli and Galileo, their endeavours sponsored by generations of the fabulously rich and powerful Medici family.

Souvenir de Florence was originally composed for string sextet – Tchaikovsky's only such work – and received its first, private, performance in late 1890. Clearly it didn't match the composer's memories of the city, nor conjure its wonders and his response to them for he worried away at it for another two years before allowing its public premiere in St Petersburg.

The opening takes its Allegro con spirito (lively with spirit) marking at face value, plunging us into a cascade of remembered emotions competing for attention, the eye darting around to vainly take in the lavish sights until it all gets too much. There is much to listen out for here. Can you spot the emergence of the sweet, expressive second theme and hear the gentle serenade from second viola that follows where accompanying pizzicato (plucked) strings mimic a strumming guitar? And those quavering moments when Tchaikovsky's senses were simply overloaded and a sort of delirium takes over?

That lover's guitar delicately plucks its way through the sonorous, slow second movement, its tone noticeably richer, textures thickening as a sweet romantic theme hovers between lament and lullaby. And then, as if Tchaikovsky had lifted his eyes once more, a rush of sensations flood in again as the sights before him trigger an adrenaline rush he can barely contain.

Composure momentarily regained, the energetic third movement sees Tchaikovsky's Russian spirit assert itself. Certainly, a folk-like spirit is noticeably at play. It is tempting to hear in it a rustic boisterous at odds with the refinement of Florence that even so lends its own radiant glow to proceedings.

Driven along by a Gypsy-like dance, the helter-skelter finale finds Tchaikovsky anticipating his return home and ricocheting around the highlights of Florence one last time. There is wonder woven into the wildness, and generous, gregarious exchanges between various ensemble voices if you can spot them.

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Fiachra Garvey Piano

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Richie Hayes Narrator

**Sunday 7 April**

University Concert Hall, Limerick



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Irish Chamber Orchestra Ensemble  
(West Wicklow Festival)

**Sunday 19 May**

Tramway Theatre, Blessington,  
Co Wicklow



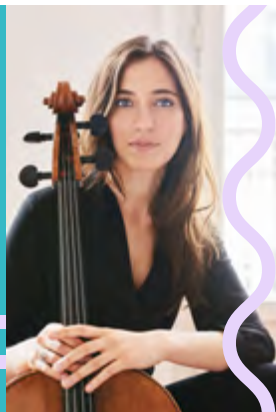
## The Story of a Cello

Irish Chamber Orchestra (Music for Galway/Cellissimo)

Kathrine Hunka Director/Violin Camille Thomas Cello

**Sunday 19 May**

Black Box Theatre,  
Galway



## May Trumpet Sounds

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Works by Elgar, Neruda, Grieg, Bacewicz & Piazzolla

**Thursday 9 May**

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**Friday 10 May**

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Works by Schubert, Beethoven & Mozart

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