

March 2025

Irish Chamber Orchestra

Thomas Zehetmair Conductor

Mick O'Brien Uilleann Pipes

Beethoven 4



Thursday 13 March
Dublin

Saturday 15 March
Limerick

Friday 14 March
Waterford



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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.

March 2025



Thomas Zehetmair Conductor

Mick O'Brien Uilleann Pipes

Beethoven 4

Mendelssohn: The Fair Melusine Op. 32

Áine Mallon: The Mórrígan (*World Premiere*)

Beethoven: Symphony No.4, Op.60, B-flat major

Thursday 13 March

Whyte Recital Hall, RIAM, Dublin, 7.30pm

Friday 14 March

Christ Church Cathedral, Waterford, 7.30pm

Saturday 15 March

University Concert Hall, Limerick, 7.30pm



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 aren't 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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 Cormac Browne

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 Christine Anderson
 Robin Panter
 Mark Coates Smith

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Aoife NicAthlaoich *Principal*
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Thomas Zehetmair



Thomas Zehetmair Conductor

Thomas Zehetmair enjoys international acclaim as a violinist, conductor and founding member of Zehetmair Quartet. Thomas received much inspiration from his work as a soloist with Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Frans Brüggen, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle and Paavo Järvi.

As a conductor, he has appeared with orchestras including London Philharmonic, The Hallé, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orchestra of the Eighteenth-Century, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Hamburger Philharmoniker, Mozarteum Orchester and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León.

He was Chief Conductor of Orchestre de Chambre de Paris and Artistic Partner of St. Paul's Chamber Orchestra and Music Director of Royal Northern Sinfonia.

Thomas has an extensive and varied discography, including Paganini's Caprices, which won a Midem Classic Award. He received Gramophone Awards for his rendition of the Elgar Concerto with Sir Mark Elder and Szymanowski Concertos with Sir Simon Rattle. A Gramophone Award of the Year and four other international prizes were presented to the Zehetmair Quartet for their recording of Schumann Quartets.

Mick O'Brien



Mick O'Brien Uilleann Pipes

Mick is a highly regarded performer and teacher of the Uilleann pipes, whistle and flute, bringing his own style and sense of enjoyment to audiences and pupils alike.

He has recorded and broadcast extensively both at home and abroad as a soloist and with various artists. Though Mick has delved into various music genres, it is as a traditional artist that he is best known.

In 2013, with his daughter Aoife Ní Bhriain and Emer Mayock they released two albums from the Goodman Manuscripts, bringing to life the music collected by Canon James Goodman in the Munster region. Mick and Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh have worked for many years creating a special fiddle and piping duet.

As Anita Botman says in a review of their first album "Kitty Lie Over"
"Now I know why this album is so well loved and has such raving reviews. It's an inventive album and a classic at the same time. I don't like the term "must have" but it does apply to this album."

Mick is a recipient of the coveted TG4 musician of the award, "Gradam Ceoil na Bliana (Musician of the Year 2023).



Áine Mallon



Áine Mallon Composer

Áine Mallon is an award winning, Irish born composer. She is interested in storytelling through music that engage audiences in a shared humanity. Her music has been described as "Traditional yet fresh and new" (- John Rutter CBE). Her current commissions see her working with world class ensembles and soloists such as the Irish Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Choir Ireland, Fidelio Trio, Dumbworld, the ORA Singers - commissioned by Britten Pears Arts; with previous commissions and performances from the Norwegian Soloists Choir, Manchester Chamber Choir, Kirkos Ensemble, the Psappha Ensemble, Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble and the Piatti Quartet. Her music has been performed in many festivals such as the Aldeburgh Festival, New Music Dublin, Cork International Choral Festival, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Clifden Arts Festival; and in venues across Ireland and the UK such as Henry Wood Hall, London; the National Concert Hall of Ireland; the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Áine has been the recipient of many esteemed awards and prizes from distinguished organisations across Ireland and the UK. She has been awarded a prestigious residency at the Centre Cultural Irlandais in Paris to compose a large Orchestral work (2024). Furthermore, she retains status as an Associate Composer with the Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland. Áine is gratefully supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Arts Council England.

www.cmc.ie/composers/aine-mallon



Sergei Prokofiev's



Peter and the Wolf



Dé Domhnaigh, 27 Aibreán 2025
Sunday 27th April 2025

Léiriú i nGaeilge 12:30 PM
Performance in English 3:00 PM

Ticéid/Tickets: €12, €18
booking fees apply

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Programme

Notes

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)

The Fair Melusine, Op.32

Composed in 1834 as a birthday present for his sister, Fanny, the then 25-year-old Mendelssohn considered his concert overture The Fair Melusine to be “the best thing that I have done so far”.

Based on a centuries-old legend, it tells the tale of a young maiden, Melusine, daughter of a human father and water-sprite mother who has been cursed (by her mother, of all people) to assume the form of a mermaid one day every week. When she falls in love with a nobleman, she agrees to marriage only on condition that on the day of transformation she is given absolute privacy. The curious husband, however, breaks his promise and spies on Melusine, discovering her in her transformed state, to which she is now doomed to stay forever.

The sorry story of Melusine was hugely popular during the early 19th century, the tale attracting poets, playwrights and composers, including Goethe, Fromental Halévy and Conradin Kreutzer. It was for an opera by Kreutzer that Mendelssohn composed an overture that he immediately decided had little or no worth. A radical revision produced The Fair Melusine although Mendelssohn now intended it for the concert hall rather than the opera house. Pointedly, he refused any association with the legend despite his work's title, pithily describing it as depicting “a misalliance”.

It opens with a close-up of Melusine in mermaid form, depicted by a graceful, rippling theme from the solo clarinet. Eagle-eared listeners can give themselves a pat on the back if they think they can hear something of Wagner in it. Listen to the beginning of his opera Das Rheingold and you'll see why.

An abrupt key change ushers in a tempest whipped up into an orchestral storm in which individual voices angrily swirl around each other. One can imagine here the emotional turmoil of the moment when Melusine demands of her lover privacy one day every week – and his uncomprehending complaints. The argument is conducted at length, the music capturing its emotional peaks and exhausted lulls, sounding like an opera without words.

Or perhaps it is the moment when the husband, spying on the hidden Melusine, discovers her as a mermaid. Imagine the shock and turmoil that would follow such a revelation.

And after the storm, calm. The truth revealed, Melusine must now live her life as a mermaid. As she takes her final leave from her husband, the music seems to sigh one last declaration of love before Melusine slips beneath the enveloping waves forever.

Áine Mallon (b.1994)

The Mórrígan

- I. *An Omen*
- II. *A Prayer*
- III. *An Answer*

The composer writes;

“The Mórrígan, the Pagan Goddess of War, Fate, and Death, holds a commanding and multifaceted presence within Irish mythology. She is a shapeshifter, a warrior, a queen, and an omen of death, appearing in many forms—whether as herself or as her sisters, Badb or Macha.

At the core of this piece lies the duality of The Mórrígan.



Known as The Great Queen or Nightmare Queen, she embodies both creation and destruction; her influence over war and sovereignty weaving these roles together. To a warrior, seeing The Mórrígan was often an Omen of death. She would appear in stories as The Washer of the Ford, washing the bloody clothes of the person who was to die. This appearance happened either in eerie silence or accompanied by a loud wailing sound, called keening, likened to the well known Irish mythological figure, the Bean Síche (Banshee). While often portrayed as a harbinger of death and chaos, she is equally a force of transformation, rebirth, and protection of the land. The Mórrígan governs the passage between life and the afterlife, frequently taking the form of a crow to guide fallen warriors to their eternal rest.

In researching The Mórrígan, I became fascinated by the persistence of her worship in contemporary practice. I wondered why people today would revere such a seemingly ruthless deity, and the answer—much like the Goddess herself—is layered and complex. At its heart, I believe it reflects the human desire to discover and cultivate power within oneself.

This exploration of the aspects of modern devotion to the Goddess, revealed echoes of the theme of duality: ancient stories meeting renewed worship. This interplay inspired the structure of the piece—the mortal seeking guidance from the divine.

An Omen. A Prayer. An Answer.

Note by Aine Mallon © 2024

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Symphony No. 4 in B-flat major, Op. 60

- I. *Adagio - Allegro vivace*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Allegro vivace*
- IV. *Allegro ma non troppo*

It wasn't the Fourth Symphony's fault that it fell between two of Beethoven's greatest symphonies – the sublime Eroica and thunderous Fifth. Light-hearted, lit up by involving lyricism, and full of surprising shifts of mood, it has many attractive qualities. Schumann described it as being “like a slender Grecian maiden between two Norse giants”.

Beethoven was busy writing his Fifth Symphony when he received a lucrative commission to write a symphony for a private orchestra. Setting the Fifth aside, he began the Fourth in the Summer of 1806, completing it by October. It requires the smallest orchestral forces of any of Beethoven's symphonies.

With an eye on pleasing his generous patron, Beethoven

shrewdly recognised his fondness for Haydn, lacing the Fourth with allusions to the “father of the symphony”. A case, perhaps, of Beethoven having his cake and eating it.

If the key of B-flat major sounds familiar, that's because it was a favourite for symphonies in Beethoven's time, liked for its direct, bright character and its ability, even so, to contain shadows amidst the light.

The Fourth begins, as Haydn often did, with a slow introduction that is not at all like Haydn. Orchestral voices inch their way out of dark, stubborn minor-key gloom. Shards of light begin to break through the murk until dispelling it in a blazing burst of colour and light that would have delighted Haydn. Listen out for the timpani when the mood, temperature and tempo shifts up several gears, a device Beethoven returns to several times in what follows.

The rest of the movement is carefree and ebullient in its celebration of nature. See if you can hear how Beethoven uses his memorable melodies to control his excitable tempo to avoid any danger of it running away with itself.

The second movement is cut from different, finer, cloth. It begins with an exquisite song for first violins, taken up by woodwinds before clarinets introduce a heavenly, floating melody. Beethoven indicated the movement was to be played softly. Listen for the orchestra's gently rocking accompaniment when solo instruments take the spotlight. And for the playful, witty exchanges at its end, where timpani are lying in wait.

The third movement finds Beethoven in dancing mood. And full of mischief. Breaking with tradition, he repeats its balletic first section, powered by energetic cross-rhythms, three times – can you spot where that happens? The expected Trio is a lilting melody for horns and woodwinds. The first section returns at its end, this time abruptly stopped from repeating itself again by disapproving horns.

In the final movement, we are back in Haydn's world of high spirits and jokes aplenty. Beethoven adds his own earthy humour, scurrying things along like a speeded-up silent film chase, before pausing, slowing things down, speeding them up again, and always keeping the listener unsure of what comes next.

There is one last joke when the main theme returns, now voiced in slower, deeper, unsettling tones. Attention duly grabbed, a flourish of exultant chords bring the Fourth to its thrilling end.

Notes by Michael Quinn © 2024 unless stated otherwise

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Education and Community Engagement

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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 12-24 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
[irishchamberorchestra.com/
what-we-do/education-community](https://irishchamberorchestra.com/what-we-do/education-community)

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Henning Kraggerud Director/Violin

Thurs 10 April

Whyte Recital Hall, RIAM, Dublin

Fri 11 April

University Concert Hall, Limerick

Sat 12 April

St. Patrick's Church,

Newport, Mayo



April **Peter and the Wolf**
by Prokofiev

Sun 27 April

University Concert Hall, Limerick



May **Chora**

Luail - Ireland's National Dance Company
Maria Campos, Guy Nader, Liz Roche,

Mufutau Yusuf Choreography

Katherine Hunka Director/Violin

Fri 9 May

Wexford Opera Festival

Tue 13 May

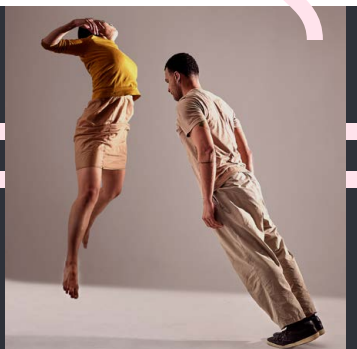
Bord Gais Energy Theatre

Sun 18 May

Lyric Theatre, Belfast

Wed 28 May

Cork Opera House



May **Britten's A Midsummer
Night's Dream**

Blackwater Valley Opera Festival

David Brophy Conductor

Mon 26 May - Mon 2 June, Lismore Castle, Waterford



June **Beethoven Piano
Concertos 2 and 4**

Kristian Bezuidenhout Director/Piano

Thurs 19 June

University Concert Hall, Limerick

Fri 20 June

Siamsa Tire, Tralee, Kerry

Sat 21 June

Whyte Recital Hall, RIAM, Dublin

