

## IRISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

**Irish Chamber Orchestra** is Ireland's most dynamic ensemble. Mixing traditional repertoire with new commissions and collaborating with everyone from DJs to dance companies, **ICO** pushes the boundaries of what a chamber orchestra can do. These days, you are as likely to find us at the *Electric Picnic* as *Mozartfest*, but wherever we perform, the ICO delivers world-class concerts feted for their energy and style.

Each year, Ireland's busiest chamber ensemble presents concert seasons in **Limerick** and **Dublin**, embarks on two national tours, and makes a series of prestigious international appearances supported by **Culture Ireland**. Our Artistic Committee works closely with our Artistic Partners to devise exciting, diverse, and innovative programmes, mixing standard repertoire with new work – often specially commissioned – from the best young Irish composers. This versatile approach enables us to appeal to music fans of every stripe while upholding the highest artistic standards.

Former Principal Conductor and Artistic Partner **Jörg Widmann** was a driving force behind **ICO's** success over many years. His irrepressible energy and pursuit of excellence enabled **ICO** to expand its horizons, attracting outstanding international performers such as **Thomas Zehetmair, Henning Kraggerud, Florian Donderer, Sean Shibe, Brett Dean, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Ruth Killius, Tabea Zimmermann, Igor Levit, and Elisabeth Leonskaja**. **ICO** has performed at leading concert halls and festivals across Europe, the U.S.A., and South America and has released a series of acclaimed recordings on the prestigious *Orfeo* and *Alpha Classics* labels. **ICO** was the first Irish Orchestra to complete a three-year residency at *Heidelberger Frühling* and is currently orchestra-in-residence at *Kilkenny Arts Festival*.

Celebrated Austrian Violinist **Thomas Zehetmair** was appointed **Principal Conductor/Artistic Partner** in May 2022 for a three-year term. **Zehetmair's** enthusiasm and commitment is matched by the orchestra itself, led by the ebullient **Katherine Hunka**, and comprises of 22 outstanding musicians. **ICO's** special rapport, forged by over 20 years of playing – and sometimes singing! – together, creates the unique sound that has captivated audiences all over the world.

The orchestra enjoys outstanding support. The enthusiasm and forward thinking of **CEO Gerard Keenan** has been instrumental in realising some of **ICO's** most exhilarating collaborations, while the board, chaired by **Aibhlín McCrann**, comprises members whose diverse professional expertise is matched by their determination to realise the orchestra's vision.

At the heart of this vision is the belief that music is for everyone. That is why **ICO** has implemented an ambitious and far-reaching strategy that aims to take music out of the concert hall and into the local community, inspiring children to try music for themselves, and supporting them on their journey from first lesson to public performance.

Our ground-breaking initiative, *Sing Out with Strings* (SOWS), offers primary school children in Limerick the chance to learn free music. Now in its eleventh year, the project has been hailed as a model of social inclusion, offering opportunities for young people, developing key life skills, and providing tangible long-term benefits for participants, their families, and the wider community.

The success of SOWS has inspired us to set up a youth orchestra, the ICOYO, which provides aspiring musicians aged 12 to 18 with the support they need to grow. **ICO** is taking all this a step further, providing free music across our country and beyond with a new ground-breaking and freely available

online teaching resource, *Sing Out With Strings Online*. However, it doesn't stop there: the orchestra has made its home at the University of Limerick for over 20 years, and UL's MA in Classical String Performance is run under the auspices of **ICO** – providing a rigorous programme with close, “hands-on” contact to the orchestra, its visiting directors, soloists, and guests.

**ICO** is orchestra-in-residence at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick and is funded by **The Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon**.