

**West Wicklow
Chamber Music
Festival**



20 - 24 MAY

WMF



westwicklowfestival.com



Welcome everyone to the May 2026 edition of the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival.

Time certainly does fly, as we turn nine years old and deliver our 15th festival this May (including our November Winter Weekend editions for those doing the math!). Next year, 2027, will be our big 10th birthday, a milestone of which I'm very proud, as I hope you, our loyal patrons and supporters, are also.

I have always felt the perfect solo piano work to perform at Russborough, a house full of the most spectacular works of art, would be Mussorgsky's epic Pictures at an Exhibition. For the opening concert on Wednesday 20 May the opportunity presents itself. The variety in the narrative of Mussorgsky's work is certainly echoed in the halls of Russborough, and the many stories of the Beits I've come to know and love over the years. As a special commemoration to Sir Alfred, who was a passionate pianist, the festival has commissioned Irish jazz pianist / composer Greg Felton to write a new work, House of Stories, to honour Sir Alfred and the many ups and downs of life at Russborough through the ages. An enormous thank you to the Apollo Foundation, Arts Council of Ireland, and Wicklow Heritage for their generous support of this new commission.

On Thursday 21 May I am thrilled to welcome the Bechstein Trio to the festival, for what I believe will be their Irish debut as a piano trio. The trio formed in 2024 to celebrate the opening of London's newest concert hall, Bechstein Hall. Priya, Guy, and Emmanuel are all individually praised for their stunning artistry. I know they will treat those lucky to be in attendance to a sumptuous programme, featuring two of the most adored trios of all time by Brahms and Mendelssohn, as well as a trio of expressive colour and intensity by festival favourite Rhona Clarke.

I first met the wonderful Marmen Quartet at the Killaloe Music Festival a number of years ago and have known their Irish cellist Sinéad for a considerably longer time. On Friday 22 May they will present two gems for string quartet by Haydn and Debussy. I can confidently say that one would struggle to find a quartet who deliver these works with more passion and

conviction. I'm delighted to join the quartet after the interval for Franck's powerful Piano Quintet, one of his great late works.

Our Rising Stars this May are pianist Georgina Cassidy, mezzo-soprano Hayley Meth, and violist Eve Quigley. Their recital will feature the crowning work for this combination of instruments by Brahms, as well as a new composition by Georgina and the winning work from the festival's Composition Competition, in partnership with the Contemporary Music Centre. Congratulations to all those who prepared works to enter the competition. Whilst the festival can only choose one composer and work for the official prize, I hope the process of entering the competition will stand to each of these young composers who are passionately honing their craft.

Our Saturday night jazz concert will be delivered by the iconic China Moses on 23 May. I invited China to perform at Classical Vauxhall in 2024 (a festival I established and ran in Vauxhall, London) and can still feel the energy of that performance to this day. China's artistry will leave a lasting impact on every person in attendance at her concert, and it gives me great pride to invite a living legend of the jazz world to our little town of Blessington. When you look at the list of venues on China's current tour of Europe and USA, we are in some pretty élite company!

After last year's Farmyard Carnival major new festival commission for children and families, I was determined to deliver something equally special and unique for our family audience this year. Opera Magic, a show created by Philip Blake-Jones of London Festival Opera, will not disappoint. Philip has created a spell-binding show and the perfect stepping stone for children to experience opera for the first time in an interactive, fun, and engaging way. We have the best cast in Rachel Croash (soprano), Sharon Carty (mezzo-soprano), Patrick Hyland (tenor), and Gyula Nagy (baritone), alongside the Opera Magic band of Lynda O'Connor (violin), Paul Grennan (cello), Meadhbh O'Rourke (flute), Patrick Burke (clarinet), and Adam McDonagh (piano).

Our finale pairs star Irish soprano Jennifer Davis with Scotland's favourite tenor Nicky Spence and the equally brilliant Dylan Perez on piano. Jennifer has received rave reviews for her recent stellar leading performance in Irish National Opera's Rusalka, and Nicky Spence is joining us hot on the heels of his run in Glass's Satyagraha at Opéra National de Paris. I fondly remember touring Ireland with Nicky in 2013 for a tribute concert to John McCormack and I've never laughed as much in my life as that week with Nicky; so, audiences will be in for a treat both musically and comically!

Without funding from the Arts Council, Wicklow County Council and Apollo Foundation, staging our festival would not be possible. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all our loyal supporters, volunteers and donors for their generosity and continued enthusiasm for the festival. All donations to the festival charity support artists and arts practitioners.

Thank you for supporting live music. I look forward to speaking with you during the festival. Do say hello!

Fiachra Garvey
Founder and Artistic Director

(P.S. a big warm welcome to our fantastic new festival manager Muireann Ní Dhubhghaill, who joined the festival in January and has been a complete dream to work with!)



Welcome to the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival! It is a real pleasure to be part of the festival team for the first time this year.

Having joined the festival in January, I have had the joy of discovering not only the inspirational artistic vision behind the programme, but also the warmth and dedication of the community that makes it all possible. From our artists and supporters to our volunteers and audiences, this festival is something incredibly special.

Behind the scenes, a huge amount of care goes into every detail of the festival experience, and it has been a privilege to work alongside such a committed and passionate team in bringing this year's programme to life. I am especially grateful for the warm welcome I have received from so many of you already!

Whether you are joining us for a single concert or spending the full festival with us here in Blessington, I hope you find moments of joy, inspiration, and connection in the days ahead.

Please don't hesitate to say hello, I would love to meet you!

Wishing you a wonderful festival,

Muireann Ní Dhubhghaill
Festival Manager

Wednesday 20 May, 8pm, Russborough House

Fiachra Garvey / piano

This concert is kindly supported by Margaret Downes and Roger Phillimore.

L. V. Beethoven (1770-1827)

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109

- i. Vivace ma non troppo – Adagio espressivo*
- ii. Prestissimo*
- iii. Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo*

In the summer of 1820 Beethoven decided to take the spa waters at Mödling. It provided time away from his troublesome nephew Karl who had moved into his Viennese apartment, resulting in his landlord refusing to renew his lease. Beethoven dedicated this Sonata to the daughter of Senator Franz Brentano; he had already written a simple little piece for her in 1812, "to encourage her in piano playing." This time he sent her a letter along with the dedication, telling her: "A dedication – well this is one for which (the word) is not misused as in many cases. It is the spirit which holds together noble and better men on this earth, and which never can be destroyed by time."

The Sonata contains many innovations, with alternating slow and fast sections for example, though this effect had its roots in his Pathétique Sonata of 1799. It is also the first time Beethoven uses variations in one of his finales, an idea he will repeat with great success in his last Sonata in 1822. In addition, the rapid second movement is not a scherzo, although certainly it is a considerably agitated creation. The Sonata was published by Schlesinger in Berlin the next year, 1821.

It opens with a lovely, flowing melody on a sweetly falling curve, with a syncopated left-hand accompaniment. This is alternated with an

arpeggio-like idea in B major. There are no repeats marked and the music plunges quickly into expanding on the opening theme, ending with a glorious restatement of it high on the keyboard. Then it is the turn of the second main theme or subject, which is restated and further developed. A great run, first down then up the keyboard, heralds the Coda, based on an airy presentation of the first theme, before the music accelerates into the second movement without a break. Beethoven uses sonata form here again; his first theme is a vigorous march while the second melody is closely related, so the short development of the ideas almost seems as though it is based on just a single theme. The volume sinks to some pp chords before charging into a ff recapitulation of the themes.

The last movement comprises an original theme and six variations. The theme is a sixteen-bar melody, presented as two repeated eight-bar sections. The First Variation (molto espressivo) is a romantic interlude with its brief sixteen bars also repeated eight bars at a time. The Second Variation (leggieramente) witnesses the development of two ideas successively. The first has a Haydn-like patter to it, using alternating left- and right-hand phrases. A more majestic theme follows, featuring a strong trill. Each idea is presented twice, with the second theme receiving further elaboration on its reappearance.

The Third Variation (allegro vivace) is another double sequence, this time without repeats but featuring hectic counterpoint. Variation Four (etwas langsamer, als das Tema – somewhat slower, like the theme) is a flowing melody switching from bass to treble in overlapping polyphonic phrases. Each of its two parts is repeated, the second half presenting some additional delicate variants before an impressive climax is reached. The Fifth Variation (allegro ma non troppo) is a fugal treatment of two ideas in lively counterpoint; again, there are no repeats. The last variant (Tema prima del tema) is another double sequence involving continuous development. The theme is encased in considerable embellishments, including an exciting sequence of trills leading to spectacular runs. These suddenly evaporate and the theme returns, very straightforward and unadorned, as though sunlight has broken

through some ominous storm clouds. The simplicity creates a magical effect, bringing the Sonata to a heartfelt conclusion.

G. Felton (b. 1979)

House of Stories

This work is a festival commission and has been made possible through funding from the Arts Council of Ireland, Apollo Foundation, and Wicklow Heritage Office.

Greg Felton is a composer, pianist, improviser, and educator from Dublin. He is a full-time lecturer at Dublin City University. He holds an MA in Composition from Waterford Institute of Technology. He has studied music in India and America. The Irish Times has described him as one of the most original piano players on the Irish jazz scene.

The composer has provided the following note:

It was an honour to be asked by Fiachra Garvey, director of West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival and a fabulous pianist, to write a piano piece to honour Russborough House and its owners Sir Alfred and Lady Beit. This is a three-part composition and approximately 15 minutes in length.

Part 1: Soirée

This is inspired by an imagined scene of the Beits entertaining guests with Sir Alfred playing George Gershwin songs at the piano. Acknowledgment is given to the African American composers and performers of early jazz, often the unsung original creators of the music upon which Gershwin and similar jazz-influenced composers based much of their music. Ragtime and Stride musicians, Fats Waller and James P. Johnson, the Great American Songbook, and modernist jazz pianists Herbie Nichols, Thelonious Monk, Lennie Tristano and Jason Moran have been influential here. I aimed to conjure an atmosphere of celebration and dance in the second half of this movement.

Part 2: Stealth and Smoke

This takes inspiration from the more dramatic events of Russborough House's history, the art

robberies and the fire in the West Wing. The syncopated bass ostinato is based on a South Indian rhythmic composition by B.C. Manjunath, a Carnatic percussion virtuoso. Indian classical music uses numbers to create complex rhythms in a very systematic, rigorous and intriguing way. There are heightened levels of tension here which aim to convey distress and destructive forces.

Part 3: Serenity

Drawing inspiration from the artwork at Russborough House and the generosity of the Beits, this movement is lyrical and provides relief after the intensity of Part 2. It speaks of peace, acceptance, stillness and hope for the future.

F. Chopin (1810-1849)

Polonaise in A flat major, Op. 53 'Heroic'

The Polonaise in A flat is one of Chopin's best loved compositions. It was the product of a particularly happy Summer in 1842 spent at Nohant in the company of the painter, Eugene Delacroix, who was a great fan. He told his hostess not to worry about entertainment, as so enjoyed "wandering along garden paths talking about music and spending every evening on a sofa, listening to music when God takes over (Chopin's) divine fingers." The music bursts into energetic action in one of Chopin's most vigorous openings. A darker, muttering central section provides a contrast but the tension is never lost as the opening polonaise theme returns for another dazzling statement and a sonorous conclusion.

INTERVAL

M. Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

Pictures at an Exhibition

Born into a well-to-do family in Pskov, Russia, Mussorgsky was made undertake a military training when he was 16. Around the age of 18 his childhood interest in music was rekindled through contact with composers such as Balakirev and Cui and he studied with the former for a short time. The freeing of the serfs in 1861

ruined the family fortunes and he had to earn his living, becoming a clerk in the Ministry of Communications, though he managed to continue composing in his spare time. Nervous problems and alcoholism led to his disintegration and early death, but he still managed to create a handful of great works.

The painter and architect Victor Alexandrovich Hartmann had died in 1873; though they had not known each other long, Mussorgsky and he had become close friends and the composer was deeply upset by the death, going on a monumental binge from which the art critic Stasov had to rescue him. The following year a memorial exhibition of 400 of Hartmann's works was held, greatly impressing Mussorgsky. He was not noted as a composer for the piano, but he succeeded in writing some of the most brilliantly daring and original music for the instrument ever created.

Mussorgsky had the original idea of linking his ten pictures with a "promenade," which opens the work and makes further appearances, each in a different tempo as though the composer was moving from picture to picture in varying moods.

I GNOMUS (Vivo)

This is a design for a nutcracker in the shape of a gnome; the musical version contrasts a rapid phrase with more stately passages.

PROMENADE (Moderato con moto e con delicatezza)

A leisurely walk takes the listener to the next picture.

II IL VECCHIO CASTELLO (Andante)

The picture shows a medieval castle with a troubadour standing in front, singing his sad love song.

PROMENADE (Moderato non tanto, pesante)

A rather heavy-footed amble introduces the third picture.

III TUILERIES (Allegretto non troppo, capriccioso)

The lively Parisian scene of children playing in the Tuileries Garden provides the setting for this delicate scherzo.

IV BYDLO (Sempre moderato pesante)

A picture of a Polish cart with great wheels, drawn by oxen. Mussorgsky depicts the cart's arrival on the scene and then its departure into the distance.

PROMENADE (Tranquillo)

A thoughtful stroll brings the visitor to painting number five.

V BALLET OF THE UNHATCHED CHICKS (Scherzino. Vivo leggiero)

Another delicate and brilliantly scored scherzo, this time depicting Hartmann's designs for the sets and costumes for a scene in the ballet "Trilby," a Bolshoi production by the great choreographer Petipa in 1871. The birds were canaries, dressed in suits of armour with helmet-like heads.

VI TWO POLISH JEWS, RICH AND POOR (Andante)

Based on sketches Hartmann made when visiting the Polish city of Sandomierz. Later, in Ravel's orchestral version, names were added by an unknown hand: Samuel Goldberg and Schmuyle. The first character is deep and serious, the other more of a chatterbox. Then the music of the two characters is skilfully intertwined.

VII LIMOGES, THE MARKET (Allegretto vivo sempre scherzando)

This is a brilliant sketch of the market at Limoges with French women gossiping and quarrelling vigorously, it is a breathtaking example of painting a sound picture.

VIII CATACOMBE Sepulchrum Romanum (Largo)

Here Hartmann depicts himself examining the Paris catacombs by the light of a lantern. The autograph however mentions "Sepulchrum Romanum." A series of massive chords sets the scene until an eerie tune, which is actually the Promenade theme played slowly, emerges. This second

part of the movement is subtitled “Cum mortuis in lingua mortua” (Andante non troppo, con lamento). The reference “With the dead in a dead language” is to a panel of skulls visible on the left of the picture and Mussorgsky noted in the margin of his manuscript: “the skulls begin to glow.”

IX THE HUT ON FOWLS' LEGS (Allegro con brio, ferace)

A design for a clock in the shape of a hut, standing on chicken's feet and surmounted by two cocks' heads provides the inspiration for this exotic scherzo. Mussorgsky adds the flight of the fearsome Russian witch Baba Yaga on her broomstick for good measure.

X THE HEROES' GATE AT KIEV (Allegro alla breve. Maestoso. Con grandezza)

This was the sketch for a projected monumental city gate at Kiev, which Hartmann envisaged as a huge cupola-shaped edifice like a Slavonic helmet. Mussorgsky adds peals of bells to the tumultuous climax, one of the most difficult passages to play in the whole piano repertory.



Thursday 21 May, 8pm, Russborough House

Bechstein Trio

Priya Mitchell / violin

Guy Johnston / cello

Emmanuel Despax / piano

This concert is kindly supported by Howard Gatiss and Niamh Ní Ghairbhia.

L. V. Beethoven (1770-1827)

Allegretto for Piano Trio in B flat major, Wo039

Beethoven composed this charming single-movement Trio in 1812. He was on his summer holidays and visited his friends the Brentanos in Karlsbad. It was probably to encourage their daughter Maximiliane to pursue her piano studies that he dedicated this Trio movement to her. He would dedicate a further work, his Opus 109 Piano Sonata, to her eight years later. The work was not published during his lifetime and was not printed until 1830 by F.P. Dunst in Frankfurt as a work without opus number (WoO). Written in sonata form, the piano launches the first of the two melodies or subjects at a leisurely pace. They are then repeated.

The melodies are then developed at a leisurely pace before returning for the recapitulation and concluding coda with its final two chords.

F. Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49

i. Molto allegro ed agitato

ii. Andante con moto tranquillo

iii. Scherzo (Leggiero e vivace)

iv. Finale (Allegro assai appassionato)

Mendelssohn's two Piano Trios come from his mature years and demonstrate how well he embraced the rapidly developing style of the Romantic Period. The D Minor Trio was written in 1839 and was hailed by Schumann as a masterpiece, worthy of comparison with the best of Beethoven and Schubert. The piano part is of concerto-like complexity, having been revised by the composer at the behest of his friend Ferdinand Hiller, pianist, composer and biographer, who wanted something impressive to play when performing the work.

The first movement employs two elegantly refined themes. Despite the abundant ideas developed from these promising ideas the relative major (F) is hardly employed at all. The main motif of the first subject (D - C sharp - D) is woven through the music, the same three notes used by Brahms in his Second Symphony in D major. The piano launches the lyrical theme of the slow movement, a close relation to the composer's “Songs without Words,” which is beautifully elaborated in soaring phrases by all three players. The Scherzo is in the same mood as the famous “Midsummer Night's Dream” piece, written three years later. The Finale is an impressive Rondo with a Schubertian main theme. A cantabile melody which is launched in the middle of the movement is brought back for the coda where it is changed from its original B flat to D major and leads into a final burst of fireworks which brings this splendid work to a suitably brilliant conclusion.

INTERVAL

R. Clarke (b. 1958)

Piano Trio No. 2

i. Adagio

ii. Allegro

Born in Dublin, Rhona Clarke studied at

University College Dublin and completed a PhD at Queen's University, Belfast. Her compositions range across choral, chamber, orchestral and electronic music.

The composer has provided the following note:

This work was composed to be included in a programme dedicated to my music for strings and piano presented at the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery on 11 March 2001. The piece has two contrasting movements. In the first of these the violin and cello hold a rather romantic conversation over a barely moving chordal continuo on the piano. A fast, fugal second movement follows; the spare textured, rhythmic style is influenced by Bartók and contains a slower, reflective section about three quarters through, echoing elements of the first movement.

The composer has revised this eight-minute work twice – in 2007 and 2015.

J. Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Op. 8

i. Allegro con brio

ii. Scherzo (Allegro molto)

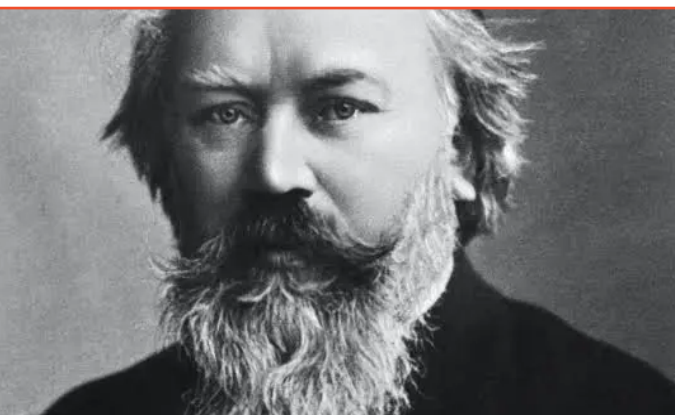
iii. Adagio

iv. Allegro

Brahms originally wrote his first Piano Trio in 1854, at the age of twenty-one. However, as the years passed by, he became increasingly unsatisfied with this youthful creation and finally in 1889 decided on a major overhaul. He told his close friend Clara Schumann “I have written my B major Trio once more... It will not be as muddled as it was... it will be better!” In fact, Brahms undertook major work on three of the movements, leaving the Scherzo largely as it was, though he added a new coda. While he made frequent small alterations, in places making the piano writing easier, his major change in the first movement is a new second theme or subject, and the provision of a more cogent development,

fitting in better to the overall scheme. In the second movement he provided a new countermelody and in his final movement he introduces a cello tune that was virtually a quotation from Beethoven (The song Nimm sie hin denn from the cycle An die ferne Gelibte), a melody also apparent in Schumann's Opus 17 Fantasy. The piano launches the first theme of the opening movement which is promptly appropriated by the cello for a rhapsodic presentation. A new, descending tune provides the second subject and is beautifully stitched into the musical fabric. The material is worked out most engagingly. The Scherzo is placed second with the cello launching the fleeting, staccato theme. The contrasting central section is a country dance, with an easy, swaying melody and is built up to a witty climax.

The piano introduces the slow movement in a chorale-like tune, with the strings making grave comments on its steady progress. The central section did possess two long episodes, but Brahms replaced them with a shorter sequence, using a single wistful melody, presented by the cello. The Finale returns to the tonic key of B major and opens with another cello theme, an agitated idea with rippling piano accompaniment. The new second theme appears first on the piano, a striding, chordal statement. Brahms then reprises his material before moving on to develop his ideas. The second theme eventually returns to guide the music into the final recapitulation and a brisk coda.



Friday 22 May, 8pm Russborough House

Marmen Quartet

Johannes Marmen / violin

Laia Valentin Braun / violin

Bryony Gibson-Cornish / viola

Sinéad O'Halloran / cello

Fiachra Garvey / piano

This concert is kindly supported by Karl Monahan and Dr Stanley Quek.

J. Haydn (1732-1809)

String Quartet in E flat major, Op. 33, No. 2 'The Joke'

- i. Allegro moderato*
- ii. Scherzo: Allegro*
- iii. Largo sostenuto*
- iv. Finale: Presto*

This is the second of six quartets Haydn wrote in 1781, it was the usual practice at the time to write quartets in a set of six. He dedicated them to a Russian aristocrat, the Grand Duke Paul, and they were played at his palace in Vienna on Christmas Day 1781, probably as a Christmas gift for his wife, the Grand Duchess. They are also known as the "Russian Quartets;" the title of "Joke" for No. 2 will become obvious shortly. The six Quartets were published the following year. The Second Quartet lasts around 18 minutes and opens with a boisterous movement. Haydn at this time was developing his personal technical style in which he creates a theme and then "explodes" it, providing short phrases which are used to form the development of the music. This can be clearly heard in the opening movement. Around this time the

use of a Minuet in a symphony or quartet was being replaced by the Scherzo (Italian for Joke), a fast-moving movement in 3/4 time with a gentler central section or trio. This Scherzo is a bouncy affair, almost a waltz, while the Trio section is rather more coy. Haydn was very fond of the viola; he even brought his viola in preference to his violin on his first London trip. And this choice is clearly seen in the slow movement, where the viola leads the lovely melody. It is a very graceful and solemn theme, beautifully executed.

The final movement is a Rondo, in which the main tune is played a number of times, between which different ideas are performed in different keys. Haydn provides two different themes between the repeats of the rondo melody, a brilliantly lively affair. Then, when he should be adding a coda to bring the music to a close, he repeats the first section of the Rondo and follows it with a grand pause – is this the end?, the listener wonders – but no, there are further pauses and snatches of the tune to follow, until no one knows if the music is over – the joke is on Haydn!

C. Debussy (1862-1918)

String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

- i. Animé et très décidé*
- ii. Assez vif et bien rythmé*
- iii. Andantino, doucement expressif*
- iv. Très modéré*

It would not be unreasonable to describe this quartet as the first "Impressionistic" composition. The structure is largely classical although Debussy leans considerably on César Franck's development of "cyclical" writing, but the tone of the music is highly distinctive, bringing a completely new sound world into music. It is dedicated to the Ysaÿe Quartet who gave the premiere in Paris on 29 December 1893. The cyclical concept involves the use of a theme or themes that recur during a composition, often appearing

just as mottoes at first and later blossoming into their full glory. The Quartet opens in the Phrygian mode (equivalent to the white keys beginning on E) with a motto starting with two strongly marked notes (G-F), prominent throughout the work. Soon the violin introduces a flowing melody, to which the cello is attracted with a semiquaver accompaniment. This theme is developed fluently alongside the opening motto until a climax is reached. The violin launches the second main theme and Debussy develops his material with a remarkable assurance, through a series of brief variations mainly from the second subject, with the opening motto always present. The recapitulation presents the themes again in a lively fashion leading to an excited coda, fortissimo.

The Scherzo follows and employs the motto theme considerably altered, sounding more like a new idea. After four plucked chords the viola launches the altered melody. It is developed by the first violin in pizzicato form, busily supported by the others. For the central section, or trio, a semiquaver accompaniment provides the support for a new, sad tune on first violin, again a variant of the motto. The pizzicato opening returns in the final section, with a brief reminder of the middle section before the pace slows and the music just seems to run out of steam, ppp.

The slow movement does not employ the main motto. All four instruments are muted at first and after a few hesitant phrases the first violin introduces a soft, low melody, treated reverently by the instruments. The central section is a little more lively with the cello introducing an even-note theme not unlike a Bach Invention. Sinuous lines slowly work to a climax, and the first section is recalled in a charming variant. Finally, the opening theme returns in full for a mystical coda with a gorgeous high first violin line. This mood is carried over into the opening of the finale, with the motto reappearing in a further variant. Suddenly the cello accelerates the pace, and the others join in for a shimmering crescendo arriving at the main theme, a new melody this time.

This is given vigorous development until the first violin introduces another low-pitched melody based for a last time on the motto. Themes from the earlier movements also return, the scherzo theme appears in a brief fugato, for example. The music is impelled towards a far ranging and harmonically free conclusion, clearly signalling that the impressionist era is upon us.

INTERVAL

C. Franck (1822-1890)

Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 14

- i. *Molto moderato quasi lento – Allegro*
- ii. *Lento, con molto sentimento*
- iii. *Allegro non troppo, ma con fuoco*

Much of Franck's working life was devoted to the organ, he was organist at St. Clothilde in Paris for thirty-seven years and became Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatory. It was only in his final years he really turned his attention to other musical forms and the Quintet, his first chamber-music score for thirty-five years, is one the glories of the repertory. It was first performed in Paris on 17 January 1880, by the Marsick Quartet with Saint-Saëns at the piano who, along with others, thought it rather erotic; indeed Franck may have been inspired by one of his pupils at the time, the beautiful young composer, Augusta Holmes, of part Irish descent. Its erotic overtones may not seem too apparent to modern ears, but it is a work of enormous passion and richly romantic inspiration. After the première, Franck handed his score to Saint-Saëns in gratitude, but he just made a face and walked off, leaving it behind on the piano; it was discovered among wastepaper the next day by one of the staff. Despite this snub, the ever-humble Franck dedicated the work to his younger colleague.

This is probably the first work to employ the "cyclic" process in which a theme is built up from short elements only emerging in full at the end of a movement. It became a popular

form among French composers, particularly in the late 19th century. The first movement opens with powerful chords on the strings alternating with gentle ruminations on the piano. After a number of these, the pace increases to Allegro and the first theme is announced by the four strings in unison. This is expanded vigorously until the music dies away and then rises again to launch the second theme, a three-note rising phrase (Anapaest rhythm - x x X). It is this motto which will provide the main cyclic link across the whole Quintet. It plays an important part throughout the powerful first movement and re-emerges in the middle of the second movement. It then returns at the end of the finale, concluding in the tonic key, like some kind of final pronunciation on the entire work.

After the thunderous climaxes of the first movement, the ensuing Largo offers tranquillity, opening with repeated piano chords and a lazily falling violin theme, gently elaborated on by the quartet. Eventually the piano quietly reintroduces the cyclic theme and it is given a fresh elaboration in place of the usual central or "trio" section. The opening material returns briefly to bring the movement to a serene close. The finale is marked "with fire" and is launched by the second violin followed by the first, while the main theme is hinted at by the piano in detached chords. Unable to contain itself anymore it appears in full on the strings with a whirling piano accompaniment. The piano introduces the second main theme, again a simple staccato motif, close in style to the first idea. These themes are treated to a whirlwind development until the cyclic theme returns in vigorous chords, too, and receives further development. The music sinks to quiet mutterings, with the first violin recapitulating the cyclic theme. A gathering crescendo flings the music into its wonderfully stormy conclusion, one of the most exciting of all codas in chamber music.

Rising Stars Recital
Saturday 23 May,
12pm, St Mary's
Church of Ireland

Hayley Meth / mezzo-soprano
Eve Quigley / viola
Georgina Cassidy / piano

This concert is kindly supported by Krisztina and Sean Eustace.

F. Schubert (1797-1828) Erlkönig, Op. 1
J. Brahms (1833-1897) Zwei Gesänge, Op. 91
R. Clarke (1886-1979) Morpheus
F. Bridge (1879-1941) Three Songs, H.76
R. Clarke (1886-1979) The Seal Man
H. O'Connor (b. 1999) 3 Old Irish Miniatures*
G. Cassidy (b. 1997) 'The Divine Comedy'
Three Songs for Voice, Viola & Piano

*Winning work of the festival's Composition Competition, in partnership with the Contemporary Music Centre.

Our noon Concert commences with Schubert's Erlkönig, Op. 1. One of the great masterpieces of the Lied repertoire, it sets Goethe's dramatic ballad in which narrator, father, child, and the sinister Erl-King are brought vividly to life. This is followed by two songs written by Brahms in 1883 and 1884 for voice, viola, and piano. First Gestillte Sehnsucht (Longing at rest) is a setting of a Rückert poem, while the second Gestliches Wiegenlied (Sacred Lullaby) is a cradle song with Spanish origins. Rebecca Clarke's Morpheus follows, a dreamlike miniature evoking the Greek god of sleep.

Frank Bridge was an important influence on English music in his day, best remembered now as the much-loved teacher of Benjamin Britten. His three songs – Far, Far from Each Other; Where is it That Our Soul Doth Go; and Music When Soft Voices Die – from 1906, are scored for voice, viola, and piano. We then hear Rebecca Clarke's The Seal Man, a dramatic ballad setting of John

Masefield's poem.

The programme continues with a world premiere, the winning work of the festival's Composition Competition in association with the Contemporary Music Centre – 3 Old Irish Miniatures by the Kerry composer Harry O'Connor. Harry has provided the following note:

"These three miniatures for voice and piano are settings of medieval Irish texts, likely written by Irish monks between the 9th and 12th centuries, who scribbled these short poems in the margins of their vellum manuscripts. Numbers 1 and 3 are striking in their references to the natural world, and number 2 is debated as being a very early example of a queer love poem in the Irish language. Musically, I wanted to create a piece which would elicit the beautiful natural imagery of the text: native Irish oakwood in full summer leaf; wild and dramatic Atlantic coastline; and the premodern haven-world of undisturbed, unpolluted nature. The vocal line in the first miniature is reminiscent of the Irish sean-nós (old-style) vocal style, with nuanced rhythmic inflection and ornamentation.

A recurring piano motif suggests the flutter of a blackbird's wings heard through a summer woodland. The second miniature is a heartfelt and declamatory rendition of a minimal and tantalising piece of poetry, which although brief is brimming with sentiment; the simple vocal part is underpinned by outbursts of pianistic colour, as though the plain words hint secretively at a smouldering depth of emotion. The third, a seascape, is an ode to the drama of the Atlantic and its contrasting hues of foam-white and navy. Still and reverent, the miniature aims to depict the strange air of calm which can hang over a raging sea, and the patterns of sunlight which dance across the waves.

Due to the age of the texts, the old language is very removed from contemporary Irish. Spelling and pronunciation vary greatly from that of modern language, and although modern translations exist, I felt it better to respect the original medieval text."

Finally, three songs from one of our most promising young pianists and composers, the award-winning Georgina Cassidy from Gortroe, Co. Cork – Inferno: La città dolente; Purgatorio:

Viola and Piano; and Paradiso: Parting. Georgina has provided the following note: "The work is in three movements, mirroring the structure of the poem set themselves. The first "Inferno" text is taken from the words written over the gates of hell, which the narrator reads before he enters with his guide. The second piece is for viola and piano while the voice rejoins for the third piece. This text is "Parting" by Emily Dickenson, which inspired me to write the set. With the steady 5/4 pace and Lydian mode throughout it provides a perfect melancholic ending – "Parting is all we know of Heaven and all we need to know of Hell."



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For more information, please get in touch with:

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Saturday 23 May, 8pm Tramway Theatre

China Moses / vocals
Kwame Yeboah / piano
Jerome Cornelis / guitar
Max Luthert / double bass
Lox / drums

This concert is kindly supported by Stephen Allcock and Piers Hedley.

China Moses on embracing life's complications, and learning from her mom, Dee Dee Bridgewater (Excerpt from interview with WBG0's Kyla Marshall, April 2026)

Tell us about it's complicated and how it came about.

Well, the title just came from the fact that you always have to find a title for an album, and it was really complicated for me to find one. It was an album that stemmed – I have writing spurts, creation spurts – and it was all triggered by a very lonely night in a brand-new apartment in a brand-new city with a bottle of whiskey and a guitar. I wrote the first song, it's okay (I'm not alone), which is a blues, and after I just kept on writing and creating and making these melodies and putting these words together, and then after a while, I was really searching for a title, and I'm really bad at that. Like my previous album, it's my mom who found the title, Nightintales. So I just kept on saying, it's complicated, it's complicated, and one day I was like, I'm just going to name the album that because not only is it complicated for me to fully explain how I do music without actually playing an instrument, how I hear music in my head, how I'm a natural singer... It's also just complicated being a human, an adult, a woman. It just applies to so many things, and I think I also got really fed up with the fact that on social media there is an ongoing movement of making yourself a better person, the wellness thing and affirmations. And I'm just like, if we keep on trying to trick ourselves into convincing ourselves that life is not complicated, we're always going to keep on waking up with

this hangover because life just has all these unexpected terms and life isn't fair, and there's so many things that are not very positive, but they're actually normal. And if those unpositive things weren't there, we wouldn't be able to appreciate the positive. So, it's complicated, and it's okay.

That is that is the most in-depth response to it's complicated I've ever heard.

I went on a tangent, but I just want to normalise that things are complicated and they're supposed to be and you feel so free and so happy when things move smoothly, when you don't have any resistance, but life always makes these radical turns, and if we all kind of accepted that more, I think we'd be less surprised and we'd know how to adapt better. I grew up adapting. Jazz is about adapting, it's about being able to adhere to any moment, and I guess that's how I see life. So, I thought it was kind of interesting to name the album that, being that I present as a very happy go lucky person.

Tell me a little bit about I can be happy (I can be blue), the song and the video.

The the full title of the song is actually the chorus. I can be happy; I can be blue. I can be the worst person that you ever knew. And it just comes from... I went through a very intense dating period. It's just like my writing. I have big creative periods. I was single for a very long time after I got divorced and one day I woke up and I was like, okay, I need to find a partner now. And so, I got on multiple apps and treated it like a job, had a spreadsheet and everything to keep track of all the different conversations with the different wonderful people I met. I had a whole system in place, and it comes from this one date that I had with this guy who was way too gorgeous for me. Way too handsome. He looked better in person than in his pictures, which is very rare. And he sat down and proceeded to monologue for about 35, 45 minutes about his ex-wife and his mother, and I drank a lot of wine and had decided that he was picking up this bill because it turned into a free therapy session for him. And I went home and wrote this song about the complications of dating. We have so much choice. Everybody wants to love, but not unconditionally. There are so many things, so many lists and things, that people come to the

table wanting, and I had to teach myself to let go of that list and just be and think of the qualities I inherently wanted in my partner, and I actually met a partner who corresponded to those things. Definitely nothing on the list. Absolutely not in the form or anything and I think it's very important to address lighter subjects like that, which are actually heavy subjects. Like most people want to have a partner or multiple partners. Shout out to my polyamorous people. No shade. Most people want human interaction and for years I sang, you know, jazz standards and straight ahead love songs and either, oh, I love you so much or woe is me, you know, someone to watch over me energy. And I was like, in this day and age, we got dating apps. I'm going to make a song about that, and the video totally reflects that and reflects me. I had my favorite spot that I would meet everybody at. And that's the video. And all the beautiful humans that I met were very different physically, because I wasn't looking for a physique. I was looking for a person to understand and who would see me and and I could see them. So, I think dating fatigue is real, especially in big cities, and I tell everybody who's single, listen, treat it like a job. Get an Excel spreadsheet. Do not be scared and also go to therapy, work on yourself, you can heal and date at the same time. But you got to manage those expectations. It's better not to have any and that's a hard thing to unlearn. You know, we can have our basic expectations. Please come to the date, you know, fully dressed and clean, uh, presentable.

Bathed.

Pay your rent. But we're all flawed and that's okay. You know, it's about finding somebody who has that sweet craziness that goes with yours. That's all it is.

I like sweet craziness. Yeah, we all crazy. And it's fine. You are also a radio presenter. Tell me why you've chosen to focus on highlighting artists who are jazz adjacent.

Because that's where I live. I don't fit into any category really. I'm not fully soul or contemporary. I'm not fully jazz. I'm not a jazz singer yet. I evolve and have been evolving since 2008 in the jazz network around the world. I've played all the big jazz festivals and yet, I'm not a jazz singer. So, where do I fit? I could also fit under the category

of black American music and that's what I explain when I do my shows in Europe. But when I come back home to the states, there's always that conversation about do we use the word jazz? Um, jazz is a four-letter word. Isn't important. We don't like this word, you know. And for me, it's a brand. It's a very good brand. And for a lot of people outside of the United States, jazz means quality. It means great musicianship. We have to understand that every place has adopted and adapted, the black American music song, the gift that our ancestors have given to the world. And they have adopted it and adapted it, for better or worse. I've been doing radio since I was 16. I've always had a radio show and my two radio shows... one in France I've been doing for 10 years and one in the UK I've been doing for eight years now. And there's a lot of great music that doesn't get played. So, I started just making playlists that I call jazz adjacent. I can go from Amina Claudine Myers and back that with BIGYUKI with no problem. Because that's the range. And then you can play a Nappy Nina and then go into Hiatus Kaiyote with no problem. I think it's really important to show the variety and the range that, quote unquote, jazz is now. Whether you want to call it that or not, it's what the world calls it. It's a brand now. I have no attachment to that word per se, but I do have attachment to the history and to the culture and to what I represent when I travel the world as a black American woman.

Your mom is an incredible jazz singer, Dee Dee Bridgewater. How has she inspired and influenced you as a performer over the course of your career from that first album in 1998 to now?

My mom always told me to do whatever I want and that I could only do the best with what I had. She is an incredible stage performer, and I have watched her my whole life. So, I definitely learned from her and inherited from her talking on stage, the introduction to the song like Nancy Wilson would do, like Frank Sinatra would do, like Lena Horne would do. I talk a lot on stage. Some people are just like, "It's a musical TED talk for an hour and a half." And I'm like, "Yep, come get this TED talk. We're gonna talk about life, its ups and downs, its corners, and you know, some things that we don't think we're going to talk about. It's all going to get covered in this show. And when you go home tonight, you'll probably want to drink." But I learned from my mom that singing on key is not as important as we think. You know perfecting

your tone and your art and your voice is of course part of my job. But once you're there on stage that's the last thing you want to think about. You want to think about the people in the room. You want to think about the the musical connection between the musicians. You want to listen to the silence and know where you can fit in and what you're linking. You want to be that joining point for the music. I always think that the musicians are like a rainbow of colors and I'm a prism that has to transform their energy and everything they're putting out into one single light that shines onto the audience for them to receive. And then they send back a rainbow to me, and I just act like this interconnection in between the musicians and the audience. And I've seen my mom do that since I can remember. She taught me that the stage was the fun part, that everything else around it was a lot of work. She taught me to be nice and not fake nice, to be genuinely nice, to really just care about humans, care about the people backstage. The people backstage are just as important as the people in front, just as important as the people who pay you, just as important as everybody. And she walks with that grace, you know, after 50 plus years of performing and touring the world. So, I can only wish and hope to be able to keep that tradition going. It's like more of a human emotion thing beyond the art. But she also taught me that it was hard to be a woman bandleader and that you're only as good as your band. And sometimes picking the, you know, when you choose your musicians, when you make your band, sometimes you are going to run with a musician that may not be as talented, but their energy is great and they complete the energy of the band. Perfection is not the key. It's the emotional trance of it all. That's what you're looking for. And for that you have to be somebody who can really observe and give space for everybody around you to be their full selves, to be able to interpret what you have brought to the table. So, she's taught me a lot actually, but nothing about singing interesting enough! You know, every once in a while, she'll be like, "Don't forget to bring breathe." She'll be like, "Don't forget to breathe. Don't sing too hard." That's it. I think everything else she's taught me about vocals she teaches by doing. Every time I end up singing with her on stage, I always tell the audience, "You are all going to witness me get get vocally slapped right now, and I hope you enjoy it. I will do my best, you know, but this is the queen. I'm just a little part of her DNA. I'm still learning. I have training wheels on."

Opera Magic Family Concert Sunday 24 May, 11.30am Tramway Theatre

*Philip Blake-Jones / creative director
& narrator*

Rachel Croash / soprano

Sharon Carty / mezzo-soprano

Patrick Hyland / tenor

Gyula Nagy / baritone

Lynda O'Connor / violin

Paul Grennan / cello

Meadhbh O'Rourke / flute

Patrick Burke / clarinet

Adam McDonagh / piano

This concert is kindly supported by Stephen Hubbard and Charlotte Richardson.

Opera Magic was premiered at the Windsor Festival and has since introduced many thousands of children to opera. The performance is a joyous introduction aimed at inspiring, entertaining, and educating children from all backgrounds, delivered in just one hour.

Opera combines music, drama, fantastical plots, poetry, design, costumes, scenery, and a live theatre experience. All this, plus the thrill of hearing the human voice in its most refined and developed form. It is vital that children experience a positive first-time at the opera! Opera Magic includes arias and ensembles from the great operas of Verdi, Bizet, Rossini, and lighter pieces from the operettas of Gilbert & Sullivan and more.

"Discovering the power of classical music in early childhood was life-changing, and it is a mission of mine to give children the opportunity of hearing opera of a high standard wherever they are.

It never ceases to amaze me how readily children

simply accept this 'sophisticated' art form – they respond with open ears and hearts to the masterpieces of Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Verdi, Bizet and Puccini, and it is a joy to behold!

It is crucial that we encourage the next generation of music lovers at the grass roots level, particularly in areas where performances are not readily available. Opera Magic travels to any location (whether for a classroom of 40 or in a theatre for an audience of 1,500) to ensure that a child's first time at the opera is a magical experience they will never forget."

Philip Blake-Jones

Baritone, Artistic Director of London Festival Opera, and creator of Opera Magic



Sunday 24 May, 3.30pm St Mary's Church of Ireland

Jennifer Davis / soprano
Nicky Spence / tenor
Dylan Perez / piano

This concert is kindly supported by Bernie O'Callaghan & Prof. Patrick Plunkett.

R. Strauss (1864-1949) Zuiegnung / Die Nacht / Heimliche Aufforderung / Cäcilie / Morgen
R. Schumann (1810-1856) In der Nacht
R. Wagner (1813-1883) Dich, Teure Halle (Tannhäuser)
R. Wagner (1813-1883) Winterstürme (Die Walküre)
L. V. Beethoven (1770-1827) O Namenlose Freude (Fidelio)
G. Puccini (1858-1924) O Soave Fanciulla (La Bohème)

INTERVAL

J. Dove (b. 1959) It's My Wedding (The Enchanted Pig)
T. Lehrer (1928-2025) Masochism Tango
N. Coward (1899-1973) Mrs Worthington
Rodgers & Hammerstein People Will Say We're in Love (Oklahoma!)
M. W. Balfe (1808-1870) I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls
J. Joyce (1882-1941) (arr. E. Pendleton) Bid Adieu
R. Burns (1759-1796) (arr. B. Britten) Ca' the Yowes
Trad. arr. C. Hazell/N. Spence The Wee Cooper of Fife
H. Hughes (1882-1937) The Stuttering Lovers
F. L  har (1870-1948) Love Unspoken
F. Bridge (1879-1941) Love Went A'Riding

The programme commences with five songs by Richard Strauss: Zuiegnung, Die Nacht, Heimliches Aufforderung, C  cille and

Morgen, followed by In die Nacht of Robert Schumann. We then move to two arias by Richard Wagner: first Elizabeth's greeting to the Hall of Song – Dich, teure halla from Tannh  user (1845), then Siegmund's passionate praise for spring: Winterst  rme from Die Walk  re (1870). This German selection concludes with O Namenlose Freude, the rapturous love duet from Fidelio (1805) by Beethoven. The first half of the programme concludes with the Act One duet from La Boh  me (1896) by Giacomo Puccini.

The second part of the programme enjoys a lighter touch beginning with It's My Wedding from the children's opera The Enchanted Pig (2006) by Jonathan Dove. Next, we recall the brilliant American satirist and song writer Tom Lehrer and his Masochism Tango. This is followed by a favourite No  l Coward number Don't put your daughter on the stage, Mrs Worthington, written in 1935 when he was travelling home from East Asia and was being bothered by a lady trying to promote her daughter. People will say we're in love is one of the many hits from Rogers and Hammerstein's 1943 musical Oklahoma! when it was introduced by Joan Robert and Alfred Drake.

I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls goes back a century to 1843 to The Bohemian Girl by Dubliner Michael Balfe, as the heroine imagines she had noble ancestry. Bid Adieu is the only known song by James Joyce; it appeared originally in Chamber Music (1907). We conclude with two Scottish songs. Robbie Burns collected Ca' the yowes (Drive the ewes to the hills) in 1794, adding an eighth stanza to the original song, which may have been written by Isabelle Pagan. The folksong The Wee Cooper of Fife tells of a bride who refused to do any work in case she might "spoil her comely hue."

The programme concludes with three contrasting miniatures that explore love through very different lenses.

Artists



Fiachra Garvey

Leading Irish pianist Fiachra Garvey is possessed of a maturity and profound understanding of his art, which when combined with his infectious enthusiasm for music-making, has already captivated audiences in concert halls across Europe and beyond.

1st prizewinner at the prestigious Jaques Samuel Competition (2012), London, Fiachra made his Fazioli Auditorium (Italy) and Wigmore Hall debuts in 2013. Other notable international competition successes including prizes at AXA Dublin International Piano Competition (Brennan Prize and McCullough Bursary), EU Piano Competition Prague (concerto finalist), 3rd Soirees-Concours Internationales de Piano a Collioure, France (Audience award) and Feis Ceoil Dublin (Morris Grant Bursary and Mabel Swainson award). The National Concert Hall Dublin awarded Fiachra the coveted "Rising Star" prize in 2011, which led to a number of solo and concerto debuts.

Fiachra graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, London in 2013 with 1st class honours and distinction in the M.A. in Music Performance. This follows a 1st class honours B.A. in Music Performance from the Royal Irish Academy of Music in 2011 and a 1st class honours DipMus (performance and teaching) from the RIAM in 2008.

Concerto appearances include the Janáček Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra

of Ireland, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Irish Chamber Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra, RIAM Symphony Orchestra, Hibernian Orchestra and UCD Symphony Orchestra; working with eminent conductors including John Wilson, Duncan Ward, Ruth Reinhardt, Theodore Kuchar, Stephen Bell and Mihail Gerts.

Recent highlights include Google Dublin (first classical artist to be invited), Spoleto Italy, Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall Manchester, NCH Dublin, Snape Maltings Aldeburgh, Petworth Festival, New Ross Piano Festival, St Martin in the Fields, Kilkenny Arts Festival, Brighton Festival, Geneva Festival Switzerland, West Cork Music, St Magnus Festival Orkney, Wexford Opera House, Ortús Chamber Music Festival, Killaloe Chamber Music Festival, Drogheda Classical Music, Clifden Arts Festival, a series of solo and two piano recitals in Japan and a tour of China.

Fiachra's debut CD "For the Piano", under the Lyric FM label, was released in 2012: *"brings a deep and infectious enthusiasm, combined with insight and technical comfort."* (Sunday times). His second cd, a live performance from Wigmore Hall was released in 2014.

Fiachra is the founder and artistic director of the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival (Ireland) described as *"One of the best classical music festival in Europe"* (BBC Music Magazine) and Classical Vauxhall (London) described as *"Everything the classical concert in the 21st Century should be"* (iNews).

Fiachra was awarded an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, London (ARAM) in 2018, served on the Board of Directors of the Dublin International Piano Competition from 2016- 2022 and was made a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians in 2021 and a Freeman of the City of London in 2022.

When not performing, Fiachra loves nothing more than returning home to help on the family farm with the yearly lambing, dipping, shearing, harvesting and all the other elegant and refined activities on the farm! Fiachra feels this makes him a more inspired and fulfilled musician.

Bechstein Trio

The Bechstein Trio is a newly formed piano trio which comprises of a roster of outstanding musicians including violinist Priya Mitchell, cellist Guy Johnston, and pianist Emmanuel Despax.

Priya Mitchell has been named as one of the foremost violinists of her generation; previous BBC Young Musician winner Guy Johnston flourishes as leading soloist with world class ensembles; and pianist Emmanuel Despax has gained global recognition as a remarkable performer of romantic and post-romantic music.

Each award-winning member of this exciting chamber ensemble has performed in international venues including Wigmore Hall, Konzerthaus Berlin, Carnegie Hall, and Royal Albert Hall. The Bechstein Trio now looks forward to developing its work together and bringing its performances to audiences around the world.

"[Priya Mitchell] plays with intense expressivity and keen musical insight. The result is at once exciting and refined." New York Times

"Soloist Guy Johnston here gives a towering performance that responds to the score's every shift in mood with complete assurance." BBC Music Magazine

"Despax is a formidable pianist, thoughtful and imaginative. Like an expert painter at the canvas, he carefully layers and tones sound, expertly measuring touch and pedal." BBC Music Magazine

"The Bechstein Trio are a fierce combination to watch play"

"This Bechstein Trio has achieved that magical thing that some performances of relatively unfamiliar classical works do: it's provided a hook for further discovery"



Thoroughly Good Classical Music, Jon Jacob

"What impressed here was the unity of purpose between the players, the careful attention to variation of dynamics, and the keen collaboration and listening out for resonant harmonics"

"This was chamber music playing of the highest order" Plays To See, Tim Hochstrasser



Marmen Quartet

With the courage, vitality and intensity of its performances, the Marmen Quartet has fast established itself on the international scene as one of the most impressive and engaging talents in chamber music. The highlights of its 2025–26 season include concerts at Konzerthaus Dortmund, Rotterdam's De Doelen, Boulez Saal, Wigmore Hall, The Library of Congress and Princeton University, as well as its debut at Beethovenfest Bonn.

The quartet brings its energy and intelligence to a broad variety of repertoire, from Joseph Haydn and Debussy to brand new works. Commissions have included Garth Knox's *Secret Letters* (written for the group as a companion piece to Janáček's *Intimate Letters*), Salina Fisher's *Heal* and Benjamin Staern's *String Quartet no.1*. In January 2026, the quartet returns to String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam for several performances, including a collaboration with percussionist DOMNIQ and a world premiere by Samuel Adams. The quartet made its Australian debut in 2023, playing a work written for them by Hannah Kendall as part of the Australian National Academy of

Music's Quartetthaus project.

The Marmen records for BIS and its schedule also demonstrates the players' wide-ranging musical appetite. Their debut album featured music by Bartók and Ligeti and won the prestigious accolades of Diapason d'Or and Gramophone's Editor's Choice and was selected as a BBC Music Magazine Chamber Choice. Recording plans include music by Debussy, Ravel, Haydn, Chausson and Takemitsu.

The quartet has played in the UK's most prestigious venues, including Wigmore Hall and Cadogan Hall (for the BBC Proms), and its reputation has spread across Europe, with performances at Berlin Philharmonie, Boulez Saal, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Stockholm Concert Hall and Muziekgebouw Eindhoven. The group is a favourite at music festivals, having appeared at West Cork, Lockenhaus, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Rheingau, Heidelberg, Zeister Musiekdagen and Lofoten as well as specialist quartet festivals in Amsterdam and Barcelona, and for the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Further afield, recent North American highlights have included performances at Rockport and Music Mountain chamber music festivals, as well as in Calgary, Kelowna and Victoria, and as part of Capital Region Classical series.

First prize winners at the prestigious Bordeaux and Banff International String Quartet Competitions, the quartet formed at the Royal College of Music in 2013 and has returned there as Quartet in Association. The group held a Guildhall School of Music String Quartet Fellowship (2018–20) and studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Hannover with Oliver Wille, as well as in London with Simon Rowland-Jones and John Myerscough (Doric Quartet). They were mentored by the late Peter Cropper and have received support from the Musicians Company/Concordia Foundation, Hattori Foundation, Help Musicians and Royal Philharmonic Society. The Marmen Quartet is an official Pirastro Artist.

Hayley Meth

Hayley Meth, American mezzo-soprano originally from New York, is currently pursuing her second year of postgraduate studies at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

At Guildhall, she has appeared in numerous performances, including selections from Strauss *Lieder* in the Songs at Six recital series, and operatic scenes in which she has performed the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*, as well as roles in Adamo's *Little Women*, and Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*.

Recent engagements include performances as Suor Dolcina in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano, presented as part of both the Edinburgh International Festival and the BBC Proms in August 2025, Alto II Soloist in Mahler's 8th Symphony with the Bach Choir and Philharmonia Orchestra, and Maria Stuart in Amy Beach's *Eilend Wolken* with the Royal Holloway Symphony.

In 2023, she was selected as a Voice Fellow at Opernfest Prague, where she performed with the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra in the historic Smetana Hall. Most recently, in March 2025, she was named a semifinalist in the Josep Palet International Singing Competition in Martorell, Spain.

This summer she will be an emerging artist at the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices and the American Wagner Project. She will begin the Opera Course at Guildhall this coming September.

Previous operatic roles include Servia (cover) in Respighi's *Lucrezia*, Annio (cover) in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Mrs. Hildebrand and Mrs. Olsen in Weill's *Street Scene*, Dritte Knabe in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.





Eve Quigley

Eve Quigley is an Irish violist from Dublin, in the first year of her master's degree with Gary Pomeroy at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She has performed with the BBC Philharmonic, Irish National Opera Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, and was a 2025 Irish Baroque Orchestra Apprentice.

Eve was awarded the 2025 Irish Heritage Homan Potterton Bursary for Strings, where she performed at Wigmore Hall, and first place in the Guildhall Max and Peggy Viola Prize in 2024. Eve has had masterclasses with musicians including Santa Vízine, Alastair Tait, Máté Szücs and Robert Levin.

Georgina Cassidy

Georgina Cassidy is an Irish collaborative pianist from Cork. After graduating with the highest results of her year and being awarded the BMus Student of the Year from the Cork Institute of Technology, she moved to London to study in the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Caroline Palmer. She has taken part in masterclasses and concerts led by Barry Douglas, Lada Valesova, Julius Drake, Dr Bretton Brown, Iain Burnside and Claude-Michel Schönberg.

In 2025 she was named as a Rising Star of the Blackwater Valley Opera Festival alongside soprano Aimee Kearney. The €12,500 prize, which has generously been funded by Connor and Mareta Doyle, allows the recipients to pursue further educational outreach programs to support their artistic development.

She has performed in venues such as Wigmore Hall, Princess Alexandra Hall ROSL, Barbican Concert Hall, Salterbridge House, Leighton House and Conservatoire



Von Amsterdam. Georgina is currently working full time as the Music Assistant and Pianist for The Harrodian School in Barnes.

China Moses

Singer, songwriter and producer China Moses evolves her artistry in truth. Defiantly real, her music resists what so many labels and critics desire: category. She captivates listeners with her deep pocket, sensitivity and wit, drawing inspiration from endless styles in the expansive lineage of Black American music.

Frank and fearless, China's songs document fleeting emotional states and extended narratives, often leaning into self-reflection both in lyric and phrasing. Her voice is a satin ribbon wrapped around a crackling flame. Listeners fortunate to observe her in live performance know the depth of her song interpretation. In a moment she can revolve a world.

China's 2021 release & The Vibe Tribe EP, which features one of her recent touring bands — some of the creative music world's most striking talents: Marijus Aleksa, Ashley Henry, Luigi Grasso and Neil Charles — received international praise. The Los Angeles-born artist turned life-long Parisian has performed all over the world and appeared on international television and film projects, including cult episode of "Moesha": Songs in the Key of Strife, Julie Delpy's "Lolo," "The Princess and the Frog" (VO in French), Aurore Aubin's "Sammy by Sammy" (VO) and "The Lion King 2019 The Circle of Life" (VO in French). China's theatre credits include "Sally Bowles" in Cabaret and "Billie Holiday" in Cafe Society Swing. For more than a decade, the magnetic on-camera personality and consummate actor has appeared regularly on TV series, including national spots alongside Iggy Pop, Meryl Streep, Will Smith, Ciara, Nile Rodgers, Mariah Carey and Hugh Jackman.

Since 1997, China has issued seven leader releases on a number of major and independent labels including Virgin, EMI, Blue Note, Decca and MPS Records. In 2008, she founded her own production



company MadeInChina, now home to her most recent leader releases This One's for Dinah (2009), Nightintales (2017) and & the Vibe Tribe EP (2021). Provocative as her musical experiences, China's broadcasting resumé currently features host-producer positions at celebrated radio shows "Made in China" on TSF Jazz (France) and "Late Night with China Moses" On Jazz FM (UK). She's one of few women of color to host multiple radio shows across European and UK airwaves.

The self-dubbed high school dropout has been an artist her entire life. Daughter of legendary activist and director Gilbert Moses III and internationally acclaimed musician Dee Dee Bridgewater, China understands the music and its surrounding culture from the inside out. Along her varied musical paths, she has performed with Archie Shepp, Pee Wee Ellis, Theo Croker, John Beasley, Nils Landgren, John Patitucci, Magnus Lindgren, Jamie Cullum, Terence Blanchard, Terri Lyne Carrington, Aloe Blacc, Lakecia Benjamin and Ian Shaw,

sharing stages with legends Roy Hargrove, George Benson, Metropole Orkest Big Band, myriad philharmonics including Bogota, Trier, Dresden, Potsdam, Bilbao, Paris and Szczecin, WDR Big Band, HR Big Band, Metropole Orkest Big Band and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra. She has recorded with Karriem Riggins, Lakecia Benjamin, DJ Mehdi, Meshell Ndegeocello, Fatoumata Diawara, Chilly Gonzales, GURU, Cerrone, DJ Cam, Daru Jones, Étienne De Crécy and Klaus Doldinger. As a songwriter who composes music and lyrics for the majority of her material, China has collaborated with Anthony Marshall, Oli Rockberger, Troy Miller, Alex Webb, Raphael Lemonnier, Gordon Cyrus & Bob Power.

A global artist and citizen, China has performed in more than 800 shows across six continents in the past 12 years. She has appeared at Ronnie Scott's, Jazz Café, Barbican Centre and Royal Albert Hall in London, Olympia, UNESCO International Jazz Day and La Cigale in Paris, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berlin Opernhaus, Elbphilharmonie and Dresdner Philharmonie in Germany and Birdland and Nublu in New York City. One of her hidden skills is that of a powerhouse researcher — as a performing and recording artist, a broadcast professional and an international educator. China's commitment to authentic representation and inclusive perspectives has garnered critical acclaim and peer acknowledgement. She's a member of the 2013 Young Leader graduating class of the French American Foundation, holds the title Chevalier of St Emilion & Bergerac and has lent her expertise as a panellist at the 2020 Montreux Jazz Academy.



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Jennifer Davis

From Cahir in Ireland, Jennifer Davis has been propelled to international attention following a series of sensational role debuts, earning praise for her gleaming, silvery tone, and dramatic characterisations of remarkable immediacy.

The 2025/26 season sees Davis make house and role debuts as Elisabeth in Wagner Tannhäuser for Grand Théâtre de Genève and Marie in Berg Wozzeck at the New National Theatre Tokyo, as well as a return to the Irish National Opera for a role debut in the title role in Dvořák Rusalka.

On the concert platform, Davis makes her BBC Proms debut in a performance of Delius A Mass of Life with Sir Mark Elder and the BBC Symphony Orchestra and gives her debut performance of Mahler Symphony No. 2 with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Sir Donald Runnicles. Recent concert highlights include Mozart Requiem with the Athens Philharmonic, as well as various performances with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, including Brahms Ein deutsches Requiem, Beethoven Symphony no. 9 at Cadogan Hall and a New Year's gala concert led by Gavin Maloney.

Last season Davis made her debut as the title role in Strauss Arabella and appeared as Elsa von Brabant Lohengrin at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. She also made her house debut as Fiordiligi Così fan tutte at the Hamburgische Staatsoper and returned to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in the role of Leonore in Beethoven Fidelio. In the 2023/24 season, Davis made critically acclaimed debuts as the title role in Janáček Jenůfa for the English National Opera, and also as Marguerite Faust for the Irish National Opera.

Other recent highlights include Leonore Fidelio for the Wiener Staatsoper, Freia Das Rheingold for Semperoper Dresden, Helmwig The Valkyrie for English



National Opera, Pamina Die Zauberflöte for Irish National Opera, Donna Anna Don Giovanni for Opera North, Erste Dame Die Zauberflöte for Welsh National Opera, Countess Almaviva Le nozze di Figaro for Lyric Opera Productions, as well as Lena in Sokolović Svadba for Festival d'Aix en Provence.

Davis is an alumna of Jette Parker Young Artist Programme.



Nicky Spence

Hailed by the Daily Telegraph as 'a voice of real distinction', Nicky Spence's unique skills as a singing actor and the rare honesty of his musicianship have earned him a place at the top of the classical music profession. The BBC Music Magazine named him 'Personality of the Year' in 2022, he was made an OBE in the 2023 King's Birthday Honours, and in 2024 was the winner of the RPS Singer Award.

Nicky's roles in the 2025/26 season include debuts at Staatsoper Hamburg as Finn/Bayan Ruslan i Ludmila, and at Opera Philadelphia as Co-Ed 2, Algorithm 3, Neighbor, Death in their world premiere of Complications in Sue. He returns to Opéra National de Paris as Arjuna Satyagraha.

Other recent engagements include the title role in The Excursions of Mr. Brouček to the Moon and to the 15th Century at the Brno Janáček Festival, Laca Jenůfa for the Royal Ballet and Opera, Florestan Fidelio for Maifestspiele Wiesbaden, Boris Kat'a Kabanova for the Glyndebourne Festival and a debut as the title role in Peter Grimes for Welsh National Opera.

Noted in particular for interpretation of Janáček's music, Nicky has appeared worldwide in his operas, being awarded the Leoš Janáček Memorial Medal at the Janáček Brno Festival in 2024.

Nicky gives recitals internationally and has curated a residency at Wigmore Hall.

Dylan Perez

Pianist Dylan Perez is in demand as a recitalist, chamber musician and coach specialising in vocal repertoire. His recent and upcoming appearances include Wigmore Hall, Milton Court, Cadogan Hall, the Birmingham Conservatoire of Music, La Monnaie and the Copenhagen Opera Festival.

Artists with whom he collaborates regularly include sopranos Mary Bevan and Soraya Mafi, mezzo-sopranos Jess Dandy, Ema Nikolovska and Kitty Whately and bass William Thomas. He enjoys a particularly fruitful performing relationship with his husband, renowned Scottish tenor Nicky Spence.

Dylan is the founder of re-sung, a London based song recital series that focuses on the connection between text and music, with special interest on creating new interpretations of masterworks and championing contemporary songs.

His awards include the Gerald Moore Prize for accompanists, the Paul Hamburger Prize for Accompaniment and the Accompanist's Prize at the Bampton Young Singers Competition.

Born in the USA, Dylan began his studies at the University of Michigan before moving to London to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, graduating in 2018 with Distinction.



Philip Blake-Jones

Philip Blake-Jones studied singing with Joy Mammen at the Royal Academy of Music, and privately with Barbara Robotham, David Polloard, David Keren, Iris dell'Acqua, Anthea Moller, Laura Sarti, and Jeffery Talbot. He made his solo debut with Glyndebourne Festival Opera and has also appeared with Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Kent Opera, Pavilion Opera and at Buxton Opera Festival. He appeared on two national tours with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company singing Strephon in Iolanthe, a role he also recorded with the company with critical acclaim. He also appears on Sony Classical's The Best of Gilbert and Sullivan. His concert appearances include the baritone solo in Benjamin Britten's War Requiem with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the bass solos in Handel's Messiah in Florence and Pisa Opera House, Operetta Galas with the soprano Marilyn Hill-Smith, a concert for the annual British Day for an audience of 5,000 with the City of London Sinfonia in Hamburg, and in an Opera Gala at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice.

Greg Felton

Greg Felton is a composer, pianist, improviser, and educator from Dublin. He is a lecturer in DCU where he specialises in composition, rhythm studies, advanced harmony, and jazz piano. He is a represented composer of the Contemporary Music Centre and holds an MA in composition from WIT and an AGSM in Jazz Performance from Newpark Music Centre/Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He studied South Indian classical rhythm and melody in Chennai with Dr KS Subramaniam and Trichur Narendran, creative improvisation in Banff in 2005 with Vijay Iyer, Dave Douglas, Greg Osby, and Misha Mengelberg, and advanced harmony and composition in Pennsylvania in 2004 with Dave Liebman. His compositions have been performed in India, USA, Mexico, Italy, Canada, and Macedonia.

Harry O'Connor

Harry O'Connor graduated from MTU Cork School of Music in 2021 with a First Class Honours BMus (Hons) degree. He has had his music performed at concerts in Ireland and the UK by professional ensembles and soloists alike. In 2019 his 'Fantasy for Piano Solo' received its first performance by concert pianist Santa Ignace, and later that year his 'Pathetic Fallacy' for string ensemble was premiered by the Scotia Ensemble. The former piece was shortlisted in the Classic Pure International Vienna Composition Competition 2019. In 2020 his work 'Introduction and Dance for Piano Solo' won the New Ross Piano Festival composition competition, and was subsequently performed at the 2021 festival by Finghin Collins. The same year, his 'Fantasy for Piano Solo' was selected for the final round of the Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra's 2020 Call for Scores in Los Angeles, USA. In November 2023 his piece 'Atlantic Dawn' was performed by postgraduate music students at the University of Oxford. In February 2024, his piece 'Summer Idyll' was performed by Castalian String Quartet. Harry became a member of the Irish Composer's Collective in 2023.



Education

Education and outreach remain an important part of the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival mission, and we are delighted to be presenting another Rising Stars Recital during the May edition with exciting emerging performers Hayley Meth (mezzo-soprano), Eve Quigley (viola), and Georgina Cassidy (piano). The winning work of the 2026 West Wicklow Festival and CMC Ireland Emerging Composer Competition (Mezzo-Soprano & Piano Award) will be premiered at this recital in St Mary's Church of Ireland, Blessington, on Saturday 23 May. '3 Old Irish Miniatures' is a work by Kerry composer Harry O'Connor and Harry had this to say about his piece and the impact of the award:

"These three songs are settings of medieval Irish texts, likely written by Irish monks between the 9th and 12th centuries, who scribbled these poems in the margins of their vellum manuscripts. Musically, the intention was to create a piece which would elicit the beautiful natural imagery of the text: native Irish oakwoods in full summer leaf; wild and dramatic Atlantic coastline; and the pre-modern haven-world of undisturbed, unpolluted nature. The texts have been set in the original Old Irish language of the medieval period.

I'm absolutely delighted that this piece will be performed at WWF this May, and I want to say a big thanks to the panel for selecting my piece, for the award, and for providing a valuable platform for emerging Irish composers."

— Harry O'Connor

The panel was chaired by Irish composer, performer, and music technologist Dr Jenn Kirby, with input from the Rising Star musicians. Jenn made these comments about the adjudication process:

"It was a real pleasure to adjudicate this year's Emerging Composer Composition Competition for Mezzo-Soprano and Piano. The panel members scored each work individually on artistic quality, suitability for the instrumentation, score readiness for performance, and potential

for repeat performances. After discussing every submission, we arrived at an outstanding shortlist and ultimately chose a winner. The quality and stylistic diversity of the submissions made this a really rewarding and inspiring experience."

— Jenn Kirby

We are always looking to expand our education and outreach programme, so if this is a cause that speaks to you, we would be very grateful for any support and donations to the festival towards enhancing the programme.

Tara Viscardi
Education Manager



A large advertisement for Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort. The background is a scenic view of the resort's grounds, featuring a large manor house, golf courses, and lush greenery. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top, there is a small icon of the manor house. Below it, the name 'TULFARRIS' is written in large, white, serif capital letters, followed by 'HOTEL & GOLF RESORT' in smaller, white, serif capital letters. A horizontal line separates the name from the descriptive text. The text describes the resort as a luxurious 4-star resort nestled in County Wicklow, Ireland, offering stunning views of the Blessington Lakes and Wicklow mountains. It mentions a 45-minute drive from Dublin, delicious cuisine, cozy bars, and deluxe guest accommodations. It also highlights an impressive 18th-century Manor House at its center, surrounded by 200 acres of scenic landscape. The text concludes by inviting guests to indulge in its tranquil ambiance and timeless charm. At the bottom of the advertisement, there are three smaller images: a cozy lounge area with a fireplace and bookshelves, a formal dining table set for a meal, and a modern hotel room with a large bed and a desk.

Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort, a luxurious 4-star Resort nestled in County Wicklow, Ireland, offers stunning views of the Blessington Lakes and Wicklow mountains. Just a 45-minute drive from Dublin, it boasts delicious cuisine, cozy bars, and deluxe guest accommodations. The resort features an impressive 18th-century Manor House at its center, surrounded by 200 acres of scenic landscape. Whether you're planning a wedding, corporate event, or simply seeking relaxation, Tulfarris Hotel invites you to indulge in its tranquil ambiance and timeless charm.

Acknowledgements

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A further thank you to everyone who has donated any amount to the festival over the past year. Donations of all sizes are hugely appreciated.

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Wicklow County Council

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