



## **IRISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**

**Thomas Zehetmair** *Director/Violin*

**Paula Murríhy** *Mezzo Soprano*

**Mozart** Symphony No 31 in D major, K. 297 *Paris*

**John Kinsella** *Nocturne*

**Berlioz** *Nuit D'etat*

**Thursday 21 October, National Concert Hall, Dublin**

**Friday 22 October, University Concert Hall, Limerick**

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

## **BIOGRAPHIES**



### **Thomas Zehetmair** *Director/Violin*

Thomas Zehetmair enjoys enviable international acclaim not only as a violinist, but also as a conductor and chamber musician. He is Chief Conductor of Stuttgarter Kammerorchester and Musikkollegium Winterthur. Zehetmair has appeared as a conductor and violinist with orchestras including Seattle Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orchestra of the Eighteenth-Century, Budapest Festival Orchestra and Hamburger Philharmoniker. He was Chief Conductor of Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, Artistic Partner of St. Paul's Chamber Orchestra and Music Director of Royal Northern Sinfonia with whom he continues his association as Conductor Laureate. In the 20/21 season, Zehetmair conducts the Russian National Youth Symphony Orchestra, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra and returns to Royal Northern Sinfonia and Irish Chamber Orchestra.

He is soloist with Yomiuri Nippon Symphony (Weigle), gives a solo recital at Toppan Hall Tokyo and performs with Zehetmair Quartet in Amsterdam, Germany and the UK. Thomas Zehetmair has an extensive and varied discography as a violinist, conductor and with the Zehetmair Quartet.

His recording of the Paganini Caprices attracted a Midem Classic Award and his rendition of the Elgar Concerto with the Hallé Orchestra under Sir Mark Elder received a Gramophone Award in 2010.

Recent recordings include Brahms Four Symphonies and Bruckner Symphony No.3 with Musikkollegium Winterthur. His latest CD release is Bach Six Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin, selected by the New York Times as one of "The 25 Best Classical Music Tracks of 2019" and also by Die Zeit as one of their favourite recordings of 2019.

The Zehetmair Quartet has been awarded the Paul Hindemith Prize by the City of Hanau for outstanding musical achievement. Thomas Zehetmair was honoured by the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik and holds honorary doctorates from the Liszt University in Weimar and Newcastle University.



**Paula Murrihy** *Mezzo Soprano*

Irish mezzo-soprano **Paula Murrihy** received her BMus from the DIT Conservatory in Dublin before continuing her studies in North America at the New England Conservatory. She was a member of Oper Frankfurt's acclaimed ensemble, participated in the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme, San Francisco Opera's Merola Program and as an apprentice at Santa Fe Opera.

Recent highlights include her debut at the Metropolitan Opera, as Stéphanie in *Roméo et Juliette*, a return to Santa Fe Opera as Ruggiero in *Alcina* and Orlofsky *Die Fledermaus* and the Salzburg Festival as Idamante in Peter Sellars' production of *Idomeneo* conducted by Teodor Currentzis. She recently appeared with the Dutch National Opera as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* and Sesto in *La Clemenza di Tito*, at Opernhaus Zürich as Concepcion in *L'heure Espagnole* and Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, at the Teatro Real in Madrid as Countess of Essex in Britten's *Gloriana*.

On the concert platform she works regularly with MusicAeterna and Teodor Currentzis. She made her debut at the BBC Proms in 2017 in Haydn's *Paukenmesse*, and has appeared with the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris in Handel's *Messiah*, the Spanish National Orchestra in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

In her 20-21 season Paula's sings Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* at the Palau de les Arts in Valencia, Clairon in *Capriccio* at Opernhaus Zürich, and sings the title role *Ariodante* both in concert at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and in her company debut at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. On the concert platform Paula can be heard in Mozart *Requiem* at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* at the Tiroler Festspiele Erl amongst others.



## IRISH CHAMBER Orchestra

The **Irish Chamber Orchestra** is Ireland's most dynamic ensemble. Mixing traditional repertoire with new commissions and collaborating with everyone from DJs to dance companies, the 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 both 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.

The driving force behind our recent success is our Principal Conductor/Artistic Partner **Jörg Widmann**, a composer, conductor and clarinetist whose irrepressible energy and pursuit of excellence has enabled the ICO to expand its horizons, attracting outstanding international performers such as **Thomas Zehetmair**, **Brett Dean**, **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** **Tabea Zimmermann**, **Igor Levit** and **Elisabeth Leonskaja**. The last seven years have seen ICO perform at leading concert halls and festivals across Europe, the U.S. and South America. The ICO released a series of acclaimed recordings on the prestigious *Orfeo* label with another recording due to be released on Alpha Classics in the Autumn. The 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*.

Widmann's enthusiasm and commitment is matched by the orchestra itself, led by the ebullient **Katherine Hunka**, and comprises of 22 outstanding musicians. The 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 the 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 the 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.

The ICO is taking all of 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 the ICO – providing a rigorous programme with close, “hands-on” contact to the orchestra, its visiting directors, soloists and guests.

The 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.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### **Symphony No. 31 in D major, K. 297 (Paris)**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)

*Allegro assai*

*Andante*

*Allegretto*

1778 was not one of Mozart's most productive periods, though he did compose two of his greatest sonatas that year – the Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310 and the Sonata in E Minor, K.304 for violin and piano – as well as the so-called Paris Symphony. He completed the symphony, his first for nearly four years, on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Having travelled to Paris in the hope of permanent employment, he contacted the Concert Spirituel, the most prestigious of the local musical organisations, and was invited to write a new symphony.

Mozart decided that in matters of musical taste the French audiences were “real animals and beasts”, but while scorning their supposed superficiality he could not afford to ignore it. After the symphony rehearsals had not gone well, Mozart commented: “The orchestra scraped and scrambled through it”, suggesting an equal impatience with Parisian musicians. Nevertheless, he wrote confidently to his father in anticipation of a successful premiere, explaining that he had opened his symphony with the “coup d'archet” currently fashionable in Paris - “which the asses here make so much fuss about”. This feature is merely a strong unison attack by the full orchestra, but Mozart duly meets the expectations of the Parisian audience and, after several bars of contrasting elegance from the violins, repeats the gesture. The sheer size of the orchestra – the largest which Mozart had ever used, including clarinets, trumpets, timpani and twenty-two violins – was a luxury which he clearly relished. However, among an abundance of themes in this opening movement the most delightful is very lightly scored - a buoyant melody in quaver rhythm, played by upper strings in octaves over pizzicato cellos and basses. Mozart also sought the admiration of “the few intelligent French who might be there”. Thus, in addition to the required splendour, there are flashes of genius. One example, near the beginning of the development section, is the “overshooting” by a semitone of the scale in the opening theme - from A to the B flat a minor 9th higher.

The central movement was criticised by the director of the Concert Spirituel, Monsieur Le Gros, for its supposedly excessive length and modulation. Mozart provided a replacement, but scholars still debate whether the Andante generally played today is Mozart's original or the substitute. This

flowing G major Andante, with no clarinets, trumpets or drums, exudes elegance and serenity, undisturbed by the many alternations of forte and piano and the short passages of sharply dotted rhythm.

Confounding expectations of another traditional coup d'archet, the opening of the finale is quiet, syncopated, and scored for violins only. As Mozart wrote: "Then comes a forte all of a sudden. So the audience all said 'Sssh' during the piano as I expected – then came the forte and they all clapped!" The second subject, featuring imitative writing, has far more potential for development than the opening theme, thus Mozart devotes the entire development section to it. This is one of Mozart's most virile and brilliant finales.

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### **Nocturne for Cello & String Orchestra /(*Nocturne for John*)**

John Kinsella (b.1932)

*The composer writes:*

"This piece was originally the slow movement of my Violin Concerto No. 2, premiered in 1990. An arrangement for string orchestra has received numerous performances and this new version for cello and strings was commissioned as a birthday present for John Horgan; hence the sub-title.

Melodic lines are spun over a quiet accompaniment – there is a central climax and the contemplative mood returns to bring the Nocturne to a quiet close"

© John Kinsella

### ***Les nuits d'été, Op. 7***

Hector Berlioz (1803-69)

*Villanelle*

*Le spectre de la rose*

*Sur les lagunes*

*Absence*

*Au cimetière (Clair de lune)*

*L'île inconnue*

Although it is the monumental aspects of Berlioz' music which probably attract most attention, even more remarkable are his vast expressive range, his equal mastery of delicate moods, his subtlety and refinement.

In 1839 Berlioz composed two songs – Absence and Le spectre de la rose. To these settings of poems by Théophile Gautier (1811-72) he added four more so that in 1841 *Les nuits d'été* was ready for publication. The six poems are linked by the theme of romantic love – the first and last are songs of hope, while the inner four are tinged with despair. *Les nuits d'été* is one of Berlioz' most exquisitely beautiful works. The original version had piano accompaniment, but the composer's subsequent orchestrations (all 1856 except Absence, arranged in 1843) much more vividly reveal his imaginative insight into the diverse moods.

Berlioz originally intended the songs for different types of voice, but most performances are given by one singer.

*Villanelle* is a charming song of the approaching spring, though with a certain wistfulness. The accompaniment of repeated quavers is maintained almost throughout, with subtle changes of harmony in the second and third verses.

In the deeply eloquent and hauntingly beautiful second song a rose returns as a ghost to haunt the dreams of the young girl who wore it the previous night at her first ball. Following a passionate climax the tremolando accompaniment in the strings recedes before the voice introduces a new melodic line. The orchestral texture is reduced and the final bars are in a slightly slower tempo.

*Sur les lagunes* is sombre and mournful, as the poet evokes a sense of bereavement. Each verse ends with the same descending phrase to the words “Ah! Sans amour s’en aller sur la mer”. In this song Berlioz uses one of his favourite devices – a three-note phrase (violins and horn) which recurs many times at the same pitch but with changes of harmony. The final verse rises to a big climax, before a quiet undulating figure in the cellos suggests both the movement of the boat and a feeling of loneliness.

*Absence* is another melancholy song of separation and longing, its poignancy expressed with simplicity. In a twice-recurring episode (slightly more animated) the vocal part (marked “parlando”) becomes more restricted in melodic range.

*Au cimetière* evokes the ghostly shadows of the graveyard, a pale dove in a yew tree. The solo voice part is again restricted in range, above an accompaniment of steady crotchets but changing harmony. At the reference to a passing phantom, eerie string harmonics combine with a gently nagging “foreign” note in the clarinet.

The final song *L’île Inconnue* (Allegro spiritoso) returns to the more direct tunefulness of the opening *Villanelle*. Here fantasies of distant lands – the Baltic, the Pacific Ocean, Java, Norway – lead the poet to play with the idea of “a faithful shore where love lasts for ever”.

### ***Villanelle***

*Théophile Gautier*

*Quand viendra la saison nouvelle,  
Quand auront disparu les froids,  
Tous les deux nous irons, ma belle,  
Pour cueillir le muguet aux bois;  
Sous nos pieds égrenant les perles  
Que l’on voit au matin trembler,  
Nous irons écouter les merles  
Siffler!*

*Le printemps est venu, ma belle;  
C’est le mois des amants béni,*

*Et l'oiseau, satinant son aile,  
Dit ses vers au rebord du nid.  
Oh! viens donc sur ce banc de mousse,  
Pour parler de nos beaux amours,  
Et dis-moi de ta voix si douce:  
Toujours!*

*Loin, bien loin, égarant nos courses,  
Faisons fuir le lapin caché,  
Et le daim au miroir des sources  
Admirant son grand bois penché;  
Puis, chez nous, tout heureux, tout aises,  
En paniers enlaçant nos doigts,  
Revenons rapportant des fraises  
Des bois!*

### **Le spectre de la rose**

*Théophile Gautier*

*Soulève ta paupière close  
Qu'effleure un songe virginal;  
Je suis le spectre d'une rose  
Que tu portais hier au bal.  
Tu me pris encore emperlée  
Des pleurs d'argent de l'arrosoir,  
Et parmi le fête étoilée  
Tu me promenas tout le soir.*

*Ô toi, qui de ma mort fus cause,  
Sans que tu puisses le chasser,  
Toutes les nuits mon spectre rose  
À ton chevet viendra danser.  
Mais ne crains rien, je ne réclame  
Ni messe ni De profundis;  
Ce léger parfum est mon âme,  
Et j'arrive du paradis.*

*Mon destin fut digne d'envie:  
Et pour avoir un sort si beau,  
Plus d'un aurait donné sa vie,  
Car sur ton sein j'ai mon tombeau,  
Et sur l'albâtre où je repose  
Un poète avec un baiser  
Écrivit: Ci-gît une rose  
Que tous les rois vont jalouser.*

### **Sur les lagunes**

*Théophile Gautier*

*Ma belle amie est morte:*

*Je pleurerai toujours;  
Sous la tombe elle emporte  
Mon âme et mes amours.  
Dans le ciel, sans m'attendre,  
Elle s'en retourna;  
L'ange qui l'emmena  
Ne voulut pas me prendre.  
Que mon sort est amer!  
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!*

*Le blanche créature  
Est chouchée au cercueil.  
Comme dans la nature  
Tout me paraît en deuil!  
La colombe oubliée  
Pleure et songe à l'absent;  
Mon âme pleure et sent  
Qu'elle est dépareillée.  
Que mon sort est amer!  
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!*

*Sur moi la nuit immense  
S'étend comme un linceul;  
Je chante ma romance  
Que le ciel entend seul.  
Ah! comme elle était belle,  
Et comme je l'aimais!  
Je n'aimerai jamais  
Une femme autant qu'elle.  
Que mon sort est amer!  
Ah! sans amour, s'en aller sur la mer!*

### **Absence**

Théophile Gautier

Reviens, reviens, me bien-aimée;  
Comme une fleur loin du soleil,  
La fleur de ma vie est fermée  
Loin de ton sourire vermeil!

Entre nos cœurs quelle distance!  
Tant d'espace entre nos baisers!  
Ô sort amer! ô dure absence!  
Ô grands désirs inapaisés!

Reviens, reviens, ma bien-aimée.  
Comme une fleur loin du soleil,  
La fleur de ma vie est fermée  
Loin de ton sourire vermeil!

D'ici là-bas, que de campagnes,  
Que de villes et de hameaux,  
Que de vallons et de montagnes,  
À lasser le pied des chevaux.

Reviens, reviens, ma bien-aimée.  
Comme une fleur loin du soleil,  
La fleur de ma vie est fermée  
Loin de ton sourire vermeil!

*Au cimetière*

*Théophile Gautier*

*Connaissez-vous la blanche tombe  
Où flotte avec un son plaintif  
L'ombre d'un if?  
Sur l'if, une pâle colombe,  
Triste et seule, au soleil couchant,  
Chante son chant;*

*Un air maladivement tendre,  
À la fois charmant et fatal,  
Qui vous fait mal  
Et qu'on voudrait toujours entendre,  
Un air, comme en soupire aux cieux  
L'ange amoureux.*

*On dirait que l'âme éveillée  
Pleure sous terre à l'unisson  
De la chanson,  
Et du malheur d'être oubliée  
Se plaint dans un roucoulement  
Bien doucement.*

*Sur les ailes de la musique  
On sent lentement revenir  
Un souvenir;  
Une ombre, une forme angélique  
Passe dans un rayon tremblant,  
En voile blanc.*

*Les belles-de-nuit, demi-closes,  
Jettent leur parfum faible et doux  
Autour de vous,  
Et le fantôme aux molles poses  
Murmure, en vous tendant les bras:  
Tu reviendras?*

*Oh! jamais plus, près de la tombe  
Je n'irai quand descend le soir  
Au manteau noir,  
Écouter la pâle colombe  
Chanter sur la pointe de l'if  
Son chant plaintif!*

**L'île inconnue**

*Théophile Gautier*

*Dites, le jeune belle,  
Où voulez-vous aller?  
La voile ouvre son aile,  
La brise va souffler!*

*L'aviron est d'ivoire,  
Le pavillon de moire,  
Le gouvernail d'or fin;  
J'ai pour lest une orange,  
Pour voile une aile d'ange,  
Pour mousse un séraphin.*

*Dites, le jeune belle,  
Où voulez-vous aller?  
La voile ouvre son aile,  
La brise va souffler!*

*Est-ce dans la Baltique  
Dans la mer Pacifique,  
Dans l'île de Java?  
Ou bien est-ce en Norvège,  
Cueillir la fleur de neige  
Ou la fleur d'Angsoka?*

*Dites, le jeune belle,  
Où voulez-vous aller?*

*Menez-moi, dit la belle,  
À la rive fidèle  
Où l'on aime toujours.  
– Cette rive, ma chère,  
On ne la connaît guère  
Au pays des amours.*

*Où voulez-vous aller?  
La brise va souffler.*

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