



PROGRAM: IRISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

NOVEMBER 4 / 7:30 PM

BING CONCERT HALL

ARTISTS

Irish Chamber Orchestra
Gábor Takács-Nagy, *conductor*
István Várdai, *cello*

Violin I

Katherine Hunka (*concertmaster*),
Emily Nenniger, Diane Daly, Oonagh Keogh,
Clíodhna Ryan

Violin II

Andre Swanepoel, Kenneth Rice,
Anna Cashell, Louis Roden, Siun Milne

Viola

Joachim Roewer, Mark Coates Smith,
Robin Panter, David Kenny

Cello

Natasha Szervánszky-Cavaye, Richard Angell,
Aoife Nic Athlaoich.

Bass

Malachy Robinson

Oboe

Daniel Bates, Matthew Draper

Horn

James Palmer, Stephen Nicholls

Bassoon

Ide Ni Chonaill

PROGRAM

Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 49 in F Minor, Hob. I: 49, *La passione* (1768)

Adagio
Allegro di molto
Minuetto
Finale: Presto

C. P. E. Bach: Cello Concerto in A Major, Wq. 172, H. 439 (1753?)

Allegro
Largo con sordino
Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Haydn: Cello Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Hob. VIIb: 1 (1761–1765)

Moderato
Adagio
Allegro molto

Béla Bartók: Divertimento for String Orchestra, Sz. 113 (1939)

Allegro non troppo
Molto adagio
Allegro assai



Irish Chamber Orchestra



The Irish Chamber Orchestra's tour is supported by Culture Ireland.

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809) SYMPHONY NO. 49 IN F MINOR (*LA PASSIONE*) (1768)

Haydn's 49th Symphony, dating from 1768, is a typical example of the *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) movement. Named after a 1776 play by Maximilian Klinger and originally attached to a literary movement, *Sturm und Drang* came to be applied to music of similar temperament. General characteristics include an unusual emotional intensity and restlessness, abrupt dynamic changes, dark, somber textures, and minor keys. Some of Haydn's symphonies with *Sturm und Drang* characteristics actually predate the heyday of the literary movement, but this demonstrates merely that artistic trends cannot be too accurately dated. More remarkably, different composers often produce works of very similar emotional character while oblivious of each other's compositions. Mysteriously, the zeitgeist (or spirit of the time) is "in the air," so to speak.

In common with the majority of nicknames attached to Haydn's symphonies and string quartets, the *La passione* title was not given by the composer. The name, traced to a manuscript copy of around 1780, suggests that performance during Passion Week would be very appropriate. This theory is supported by the meditative nature of the opening *Adagio* and, more shakily, a second movement which (according to Haydn scholar David Wyn Jones) "suggests the earthquake which convulsed Calvary." However, other quite different accounts have more recently been suggested. Musicologist Elaine Sisman has discovered a possible link with a play about an earnest Quaker—Chamfort's 1764 comedy *La jeune indienne* (*Die Quäker* in the German translation).

The slow, dignified opening movement recalls a relatively antiquated form—that of the *sonata da chiesa* or church sonata of the 17th century. It is followed by an *Allegro di molto* of tremendous nervous energy, with syncopated rhythms and wide leaps in the

violins, and then a grimly serious minuet. Unusually, all four movements are in F minor, although the contrasting trio section of the minuet is in F major, letting in a sudden shaft of light. Here, the first horn ascends to a high F. The finale balances the second movement in its tension and breathlessness, but whereas Haydn at least provided some respite in that *Allegro di molto* with a smoother, slightly more relaxed second subject, in this finale he maintains the urgent momentum.

There are numerous characterful and arresting symphonies from Haydn's middle years (including Symphony No. 39 and many in the 40s, 50s, and 60s), but No. 49 must be ranked among the very finest.

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CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH (1714–1788) CELLO CONCERTO IN A MAJOR, WQ. 172, H. 439 (1753?)

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was the most strikingly individual talent among Bach's composer-sons. He composed over 50 concerti, most of them while he was in the employment of Frederick the Great in Berlin. A composer and flutist himself and a man of outstanding intellect though conservative taste, the king grew to dislike C. P. E. Bach's bolder style. Carl Philipp Emanuel is one of those composers who bridge two major periods of music. Though he inherited Baroque forms and style from his father, he outlived him by 38 years, during which time he became one of the most important exponents of the *empfindsamer Stil* (sensitive style, directly expressive of feeling). He was also a pioneer of the *Sturm und Drang* movement—a musical language concerned with individual self-expression and often volatile emotion. It is not such a big step from here to the Romantic period. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven all show the influence of C. P. E. Bach.

Most of C. P. E.'s concerti are for keyboard, but a few of these he arranged for flute or

cello. The A Major Concerto (probably composed in 1753) is one of three works existing in versions for cello. It is surprising that such fine works are so rarely performed when compared with Haydn's two cello concerti.

The Cello Concerto in A Major, Wq. 172, is the most popular of the three cello concerti. The rhythmic vitality of the opening theme sets the tone for the first movement, in which the ritornellos (or little returns of the opening material) alternate with solo episodes. Also noticeable is C. P. E. Bach's penchant for abrupt changes—a more lyrical phrase being disturbed by an incisive rhythmic figure. The cello enters with a rhythmic idea derived from the very opening but soon embarks upon the first of several passages based on rapid scale figuration or, later in the movement, agile string crossing. The slow movement (including a pause inviting a short cadenza) is a deeply felt lament of great eloquence, as suggested by the unusual *mesto* (sad) in the tempo indication. Here the soloist's gravely beautiful phrases evoke weeping as well as any nonvocal music can. The finale opens with terrific nervous vitality, its rhythmic character both urgent and buoyant. There are passages of lower intensity, but abrupt interjections and quicksilver changes of mood—essential elements of C. P. E. Bach's musical language—are always likely.

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JOSEPH HAYDN CELLO CONCERTO NO. 1 IN C MAJOR, HOB. VIIB: 1 (1761–1765)

Written between 1761 and 1765, this concerto is typical of Haydn's early style and is very much like his violin concerti and symphonies of the time. He had written approximately 30 symphonies by then but none of the keyboard or chamber works which are still in the concert repertoire. The Palace at Esterházy was isolated—Haydn referred to it as his "desert"—but he made the best of it and thrived on the uniformity and solitude of his life: "My prince was satisfied with all my works, I was praised,

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as head of an orchestra I could experiment... could improve, expand, cut, take risks, I was cut off from the world, there was no one near me...to make me doubt myself, and so I had to become original."

The C Major Cello Concerto has an interesting history, because although its existence was known from a catalogue prepared by Haydn's copyist at Esterházy, Joseph Elssler, the music was presumed to be lost. In 1961 a manuscript was discovered in the National Museum of Prague, and identification as the C Major Cello Concerto was established by comparing it with the few bars that were given in Elssler's catalogue and by the fact that it contained the signature of Haydn's cellist, Joseph Weigl the Elder.

A novel feature is the frequent use of the then recently invented thumb-position technique, which revolutionized both cello playing and the music that was written for the instrument; the last movement in particular of the C Major Concerto could not be played without using the new technique, which enables the player to go up and down on one string at great speed.
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BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945) DIVERTIMENTO FOR STRING ORCHESTRA, SZ. 113 (1939)

The rapid advance of Nazism in the late 1930s plunged Bartók into a state of panic, protest, and withdrawal. He was convinced that "a new global catastrophe was imminent," but the frantic urge to complete his work alternated with creative paralysis. He was also deeply affected by his mother's illness and death at the end of 1939, and this combination of general and personal grief, which drove him towards the extreme pessimism of the Sixth String Quartet (1939), made him determined to leave Hungary. After the rapturous reception accorded to *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* in 1937, which he was commissioned to write for the Basle Chamber Orchestra, other commissions

followed, including the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1937) and, in 1939, the Divertimento for String Orchestra for the Basle Chamber Orchestra. He wrote it in only a fortnight at Saanen in the massif of Gruyère in Switzerland, where the conductor Paul Sacher had lent him a chalet where he could be insulated from the threatening events of the outside world. World War II broke out 15 days after he completed the work. He actually missed the premiere in June 1940 because he was too busy putting his affairs in order before leaving for the United States. His idea was to write a kind of concerto grosso with alternating ripieno (the full string body) and concertino (a solo quartet), but with all that was going on, he could not write a "diversion" in the entertaining, lighthearted 18th-century manner, and it is the final movement that is closest in character to the divertimento genre. Although the outer movements are full of charm and high spirits, the core of the work is the deeply moving, despairing second movement with its cries of pain and allusion to a funeral march. He was preparing to leave his beloved Hungary, and there are melancholy quotations of a Hungarian character at the end of the first and second movements. The themes of the 2/4 final movement are subtle transformations of those from the 9/8 first movement, and there is an ironic Bartók joke, a trivial pizzicato polka before the whirling glissandi at the end. The structure of the last movement is symmetrical, with a double fugue at the center, the strictness of which is resolved in a Gypsy violin cadenza.

Bartók's move to America in 1940 may seem to mark a change in his style, but the transformation had actually begun earlier. After *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* (1936), which is his most perfectly formed symphonic piece, and the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1937), his music became less strictly organized and more fluid, more marked by extremes. He continued his efforts to emulate Classical forms and genres, but the whole effect is of Romanticism, and in his late works he often used Hungarian themes and rhythms, as in the dotted-rhythm

fugato in the second movement of the Sz. 113 Divertimento. His use of orthodox Baroque forms in these last years includes the concerto grosso aspects of the Divertimento, but the very term "divertimento" implies a severely impersonal work which would allow only limited scope for Bartók's passionately held anti-Fascist and antimilitarist views. In his essay on Bartók, the conductor Ferenc Fricsay says that unlike, for example, the music of Beethoven's *Eroica*, the slow movement of the Divertimento "is the music not of objectified grief but of inconsolable collapse. The middle section is an implacable funeral march, above which we hear hysterical weeping culminating in a cry of pain. The tragic truth stands before us, naked in all its brutality."

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IRISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

The Irish Chamber Orchestra is Ireland's finest chamber orchestra, renowned for its virtuosity, intimacy, program diversity, and outstanding musicianship. The ICO continues to work with Gábor Takács-Nagy (principal artistic partner) and Jörg Widmann (principal guest conductor/artistic partner), opening new doors to music. Under the leadership of Katherine Hunka, the orchestra tours nationally and internationally.

Gábor Takács-Nagy and the ICO commence the 2015/16 season focusing on Schubert, while Jörg Widmann and the orchestra begin a new journey with Weber, Beethoven, and Schumann.

As always, the ICO introduces some of the finest international guest soloists in its 2015/16 season, including one of the world's up-and-coming pianists, Igor Levit. It also expands its long tradition of cross-artform collaborations in September, Handel's comic opera *Agrippina* (the first coproduction between the ICO, Irish Youth Opera, and NI Opera) will play six performances in four cities. UK maestro Jonathan Cohen makes a welcome return as musical director of this production. Celebrated Irish soprano Ailish Tynan makes two appearances in the season, as does Irish pianist

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Finghin Collins. The ICO dedicates a concert to the 1916 Easter Rising commemorations with an emphasis on remembrance and reconciliation. A potpourri of music, songs, and poetry features Irish actor Des Keogh.

Working with some of the world's finest musicians both internationally and nationally, including Claron McFadden, Gilles Vonsattel, Gloria Rehm, Jochen Rieder, István Várdai, Sergei Nakariakov, Tabea Zimmermann, Pekka Kuusisto, James Galway, Jonathan Cohen, Finghin Collins, and Michael McHale, the ICO continues to blaze a trail.

The ICO excels in diverse repertoire ranging from Baroque to modern-day masterpieces and new commissions—enjoying fruitful relationships with an array of Irish composers including Garrett Sholdice, John Kinsella, Linda Buckley, Elaine Agnew, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, Frank Corcoran, and Sam Perkin.

The orchestra has successfully toured across Europe, Australia, South Korea, China, and the United States. Since his first appearance with the orchestra (Berlin 2007), Jörg Widmann has injected unprecedented energy, taking the orchestra to De Singel Antwerp (2011), the Konzerthaus Berlin, and the Rheingau and Lichfield festivals (2013). The ICO undertook a 13-city U.S. tour with flutist Sir James Galway (2013). In 2014, Widmann and the ICO performed at the Storioni Festival Eindhoven, the Heidelberger Frühling Festival, and the Mozartfest Würzburg, in addition to giving concerts in Bregenz, Austria, and Wiesbaden, Germany, with Ailish Tynan. This November the orchestra embarks on a four-city U.S. tour with Principal Artistic Partner Gábor Takács-Nagy and celebrated Hungarian cellist István Várdai.

The year 2016 is a significant one for the orchestra as it commences its first international (three-year) residency in Heidelberg, resulting in several concerts at the distinguished Heidelberger Frühling with Igor Levit. In addition, the ICO will perform in the Cologne Philharmonic Hall and return to the

Mozartfest Würzburg with acclaimed violist Tabea Zimmermann. The orchestra makes its debut at the Tonhalle Zürich (2016) and the Konzerthaus Vienna (2017) and gives a return London performance at Wigmore Hall in the 2017/18 season.

Adding to the orchestra's already numerous CD recordings, the Orfeo label will soon release a series of Mendelssohn symphonies combined with works by Jörg Widmann, as directed by him.

Outside the concert hall, the Irish Chamber Orchestra stimulates minds and hearts with unmatched vitality. Its *Sing Out with Strings* program provides free tuition in singing, song writing, and violin and cello to 300 children throughout Limerick city, developing not only musical skills but also key life skills, using music as a tool for tangible social change.

The Irish Chamber Orchestra is 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.

GÁBOR TAKÁCS-NAGY

A native of Budapest, Gábor Takács-Nagy began studying violin at the age of eight. As a student at the Franz Liszt Academy, he won first prize in 1979 in the Jenő Hubay Violin Competition and later pursued studies with Nathan Milstein. His chamber music teachers were Ferenc Rados, András Mihály, Zoltán Székely, Sándor Végh, and György Kurtág. From 1975 to 1992, he was a founding member and leader of the acclaimed Takács Quartet, performing with legendary artists including Yehudi Menuhin, Sir Georg Solti, Isaac Stern, and Mstislav Rostropovich, and was regularly invited by Sviatoslav Richter to his festivals. The Takács Quartet made many recordings for Decca and Hungaroton. In 1996, he founded the Takács Piano Trio and made world-premiere recordings of works by Hungarian composers Franz Liszt, László Lajtha, and Sándor Veress.

In 1998 Takács-Nagy established the Mikrokosmos String Quartet with compatriots Zoltán Tuska, Sándor Papp, and Miklós Perényi. In 2008 the group recorded the complete cycle of Bartók's string quartets, for which it was awarded the Excellencia Prize by *Pizzicato* magazine. In 1982, he was awarded the Liszt Prize. Gábor Takács-Nagy is considered one of today's most authentic exponents of Hungarian music and, in particular, that of Béla Bartók.

In 2002, following Hungarian tradition, Takács-Nagy turned his attention to conducting, creating his own string ensemble, the Camerata Bellerive (2005), and he was appointed music director of the Weinberger Kammerorchester in 2006 and the Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra (an integral part of the Verbier Festival) in August 2007. He regularly collaborates with pianist Martha Argerich. A DVD of their performances of Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto and Shostakovich's Concerto for Piano, Trumpet, and Strings was released in June 2011.

From 2010 until 2012, Takács-Nagy was music director of the MAV Symphony Orchestra Budapest, recording the world premiere of the epic *Bards of Wales* oratorio by Karl Jenkins. In September 2011, he was appointed music director of Manchester Camerata, one of the UK's leading chamber orchestras, and in September 2012, he became principal guest conductor of the Budapest Festival Orchestra. In January 2013, he was appointed principal artistic partner of the Irish Chamber Orchestra.

Gábor Takács-Nagy is a dedicated and highly sought-after teacher. He is Professor of String Quartet at the Haute École de Musique in Geneva and International Chair of Chamber Music at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. In June 2012, he was awarded an honorary membership in the Royal Academy of Music in London.

ISTVÁN VÁRDAI

Gifted Hungarian cellist István Várdai, 29, has been awarded several prestigious international prizes. Most recently, he won the ARD Cello

Competition in Munich (2014), preceded by the Prix Montblanc (2013), awarded to the world's most promising young musician. In 2008 he won the 63rd Geneva International Music Competition, in addition to winning the Audience Prize, Pierre Fournier Prize, and Coup de Coeur Breguet Prize. He took Third Prize at the Tchaikovsky Music Competition in Moscow (2007) and in 2006 was winner of the Feuermann Cello Competition at the Kronberg Academy. He also was awarded first prize at the 13th International Brahms Competition in Austria and won the David Popper International Music Competition no less than three times (2000, 2003, and 2004).

Since his debut concert in 1997 in the Hague, István Várdai has performed in New York, London, Paris, Prague, Vienna, Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin, Geneva, Dublin, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Florence, Tokyo, and Beijing with great success. He has performed with world-renowned musicians and orchestras including Ádám Fischer, Zoltán Kocsis, Howard Griffiths, Simon Gaudenz, and Gilbert Varga, as well as the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, Geneva Chamber Orchestra, Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Suisse Romande Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and ICO. He has guested at the Santander Festival, Gergiev Festival in St. Petersburg, Pablo Casals Festival (Spain), Festival of Radio France (Montpellier), Bellerive Festival (Switzerland), Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Schwetzingen Festival, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Verbier Festival, and Budapest Spring Festival.

Between 2010 and 2013, he studied at the Kronberg Academy with Frans Helmerson and has been on the Academy staff ever since. He attended master classes with Natalia Gutman, Natalia Shakhovskaya, András Schiff, and János Starker. In 2009, he was awarded the Junior Prima Prize as Best Young Artist of the Year. Várdai initially studied at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest with László Mező (2004) and continued at the Music Academy of Vienna with Reinhard Latzko (2005).

István Várdai's first CD featured works by Janáček and Prokofiev. The Elgar Cello Concerto was released in 2009 by Ysaÿe Records. In 2010, he recorded Baptist Vanhal's Cello Concerto. A 2013 release on the Hänssler label featured works by Mendelssohn, Martinů, Paganini, Beethoven,

and Popper. Last year he released both versions of Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* (Brilliant Classics).

He plays a cello by J. Cuypers (1763) and a modern instrument by Carsten Hoffmann. ❄️



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