

in Fermanagh

The Vanburgh Quartet

The **Vanburgh Quartet** (*Gregory Ellis, Keith Pascoe, violins; Simon Aspell, viola; Christopher Marwood, cello*) has enjoyed a successful international career throughout Europe, the Americas and the Far East. Based in Cork since 1986, it has brought string quartet music to audiences throughout Ireland and has given more than one thousand concerts in venues ranging from small country schools to the major city halls.

In 1996 the Quartet founded the *West Cork Chamber Music Festival*. Its masterclass programme offers inspiration and support to Ireland's younger generations of chamber musicians. The Quartet has consistently championed the work of Irish composers and has commissioned and performed numerous new works.

In November 2016 the Quartet was awarded the *National Concert Hall Lifetime Achievement Award* at a special gala concert.

This will be their final concert in Northern Ireland before they disband

Soloist **William Butt** has appeared with the *Irish National Symphony Orchestra*, the *Orchestra of St Cecilia* and the *Ulster Orchestra*. He has worked with conductors such as Alexander Anissimov, Gerhard Markson and Barry Douglas. He is a founder member of the Esposito Quartet. William plays on a fine cello made by Giovanni Grancino in Milan in 1690.

The Music is Amazing

The *Schubert C-Major Quintet* is one of the greatest pieces of music ever written. Seventy-two people have chosen it as the one piece of music they'd take on *Desert Island Discs*. I have loved it and played it regularly since my brother gave me the LP for my 25th birthday. We also have that sweetest of music, Barber's *Adagio*, in its seldom-heard original string quartet version. And some interesting short pieces, including one by Peter Schickele (alias P D Q Bach) with an Appalachian-and-Bluegrass-meets-European-Classical vibe. And a modern Chinese piece. All very stimulating, edge-of-your-seat stuff!

If you don't come we'll go out of business!

Not emotional blackmail: just plain fact! ***Music in Fermanagh*** is the only organisation in the county putting on serious chamber music to a world standard. We need your support and appreciation!

So, on Sunday 5th February, have an early-ish lunch and come and join us at the Ardhowen at 3 pm. Bring your lunch guests, house guests, friends, neighbours, family.

The Programme

Seán Doherty (1987-) String Quartet No.3, *The Devil's Dream*

A major influence on Doherty's work is the fiddle tradition of Donegal, a style that he describes as *aggressive, driving, and un-ornamented, the tunes are as stark as the bogland, the bowing as jagged as the cliffs*. He learnt fiddle with James Byrne and this quartet is written in memory of his teacher, who died on his walk home from a seisiún in 2008. His final walk is imagined in the slow air, *An Londubh* (the blackbird) and the reel, *The Devil's Dream*.

Doherty tells us that this reel *intrudes as a danse macabre that demolishes the air. The air comes screaming back only to be subsumed by the reel once more. After a quotation of the plainchant Dies Irae, the reel itself disintegrates. From the ashes of the Devil's Dream, the air emerges in its final, transfigured, form.*

Henning Kraggerud (1973-) *Preghiera*

Henning Kraggerud, the Norwegian composer and violinist, is a frequent visitor to Ireland. He is currently Artistic Director of the Arctic Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra. The piece we'll hear this afternoon: *Preghiera*, meaning *Prayer*, has been described as *Middle-Eastern influences mixing with the baroque*.

Zhou Long (1953-) *Song of the Ch'in*

The Ch'in is a traditional seven-stringed plucked zither, which was associated with sages and scholars. From manuscripts back to the 6th century, it appears that Ch'in playing was quite a sophisticated art and involved various ways of plucking the strings, as well as the use of ornaments, range and timbre. These qualities are reflected in Zhou Long's *Song of the Ch'in*, which dates from 1982.

Samuel Barber (1910-1981) *Adagio*

This single piece for string orchestra began life as the slow movement for Barber's *String Quartet Op.11*, written in 1936. In January 1938, Barber sent an orchestration of the movement to the great conductor Arturo Toscanini who introduced the piece to the world in a radio broadcast later that year. It immediately became popular, with its evocation not just of sadness but also serenity, whether in the lush string orchestra sound or the more intimate and unassuming original version for string quartet which we'll hear this afternoon.

Peter Schickele (1935-) *Barn Dance*

Schickele's comic albums, under the pseudonym of P.D.Q.Bach, have tended to overshadow his own 'serious' compositions, which include more than one hundred works for orchestra, choir and chamber ensembles. *Barn Dance* is the

fourth movement of his String Quartet No.1, *American Dreams*, commissioned in 1983. It shows the influence of jazz, bird song and, most noticeably in this movement, dance. It includes fiddle tunes that he played as a boy, a Navajo melody and birdsong motifs, all with an Appalachian edge.

INTERVAL

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) *String Quintet in C major D.956*

This string quintet didn't receive its first public performance until twenty-two years after Schubert's death but it is now regarded as one of the undisputed pinnacles of the Romantic chamber music repertoire. The choice of a second cello, rather than the more usual second viola of Mozart's quintets, gives a rich and distinctive sonority to the work.

Within a few weeks of completing this wonderful quintet, Schubert died at the age of thirty-one.

Richard Pierce