

Irish Chamber Orchestra

Anthony Marwood Artistic Director

The Irish Chamber Orchestra has gained a remarkable reputation as a fresh and vibrant force on the Irish and international music scene. Under the dynamic and charismatic leadership of artistic director Anthony Marwood, the Orchestra is recognised as one of Ireland's world-class cultural assets.

The Irish Chamber Orchestra excels in repertoire ranging from the baroque and classical, through the romanticism of Tchaikovsky and Elgar, to modern-day masterpieces by Philip Glass and commissions by Irish composers such as Elaine Agnew, Rachel Holstead, Raymond Deane, John Kinsella, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin and Bill Whelan.

The ICO undertakes a busy programme of subscription series in its hometown of Limerick and other major cities, regional tours to every corner of the country and international appearances in the world's distinguished concert halls such as Carnegie Hall in New York, London's Wigmore Hall and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

While enjoying a very busy touring schedule within Ireland, the Irish Chamber Orchestra's unique personality has charmed audiences the world over. Most recently, it undertook Irish and U.K. tours with Nigel Kennedy, a tour to five of the new EU member states; a ground-breaking tour of South Korea and China. It also toured to Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Australia and the U.S. Future plans include concerts in Berlin later this year and a U.S tour in 2008.

Maxim Vengerov, Nigel Kennedy and Maria João Pires are just some of the celebrity artists who have welcomed an invitation to work with the ICO in recent years. A highlight of the calendar is the MBNA Shannon International Music Festival, hosted by the Orchestra in Limerick each July.

A wider audience through international television and radio broadcasts has enjoyed the Irish Chamber Orchestra's concerts and recordings. The DVD of the Orchestra's Vivaldi Concert with Nigel Kennedy was released last year on the EMI Label.

The Irish Chamber Orchestra, which is resident at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, is at the heart of the emerging College of Performing Arts at the University of Limerick, where an International String School offering a Master of Arts Degree in Classical String Performance has been established.

The Irish Chamber Orchestra is funded by the Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

Gabriele Mirabassi

Italian clarinetist Gabriele Mirabassi was born in Perugia and studied at the prestigious Morlacchi Conservatory. At first, he focused on performing modern compositions, however, in 1992, the jazz-oriented recording *Coloriage* with accordionist Richard Galliano, helped make a name for him on the European jazz scene. Eventually, Mirabassi chose to focus solely on jazz; and performed at numerous high-profile jazz events in Europe and beyond. **Fiabe** 1995 was a duo outing with pianist Stefano Battaglia, and helped him win an Italian award as the year's top new talent.

Cambaluc (1997) was a larger-scale outing that teamed him with Galliano, his brother Giovanni on piano, guitarist Battista Lena, organist Riccardo Tesi, and the Namaste Clarinet Quartet. Mirabassi teamed with guitarist Sergio Assad for the 1999 duets album **Velho Retrato**, and formed a regular trio with accordionist Luciano Biondi and tuba player Michel Godard. This lineup presented the acclaimed **Lo Stortino** (2000).

At Umbria Jazz 2004 Mirabassi presented **Graffiando Vento**, his first CD with the extraordinary Brazilian guitarist Guinga, defined that year by the *Folha de Sao Paulo* as "the best album of Brazilian instrumental music of the year."

In recent years Mirabassi has extended his collaborations with artists in other fields including the writer Erri De Luca, singer Gianmaria Testa, Barbara Casini and actress Monica Demuru. Currently Mirabassi is working on his new work, the composition **Canto d'ebano** a homage to the African wood and to the passionate (Italian) hands that transform it into a clarinet.

Elaine Agnew

Born in County Antrim, Elaine Agnew studied at Queen's University Belfast and at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama with Kevin Volans and James MacMillan.

Her music has been performed internationally by artists including the Vogler Quartet, Lontano, the Scottish Chamber, the European Union Chamber, the Irish Chamber and Ulster Orchestras, the RTE National Symphony Orchestra, pianist Angela Hewitt and the National Chamber Choir. Many of her works have been broadcast throughout Europe and recorded for commercial release.

Her works have been featured at major festivals including Sonorities, BMIC Cutting Edge, Spitalfields, Belfast Festival at Queen's, the RTE Horizons and NCH Composers Choice Series.

In recent years her music has been performed in South Africa, Malaysia, Vietnam, London and Lithuania and she has twice been a MacDowell Colony Fellow in New Hampshire. This year Elaine was awarded the Annaghmakerrig 25 Mary Fitzmaurice Finan Prize from the Tyrone Guthrie Centre.

Recent works include **The Mdina Gilder** for the National Chamber Choir, **In the Adriatic** written for and performed by Concorde and **Seagull**, a test piece for the 2006 AXA Dublin International Piano Competition. She is currently writing a new piece for young voices and string quartet, a major education commission to celebrate the 4th Centenary Anniversary of the Flight of the Earls and a piece for the DIT Sinfonietta.

As one of Ireland's leading music educationalists, Elaine has directed extensive education and community projects with many orchestras and arts organisations. She is in constant demand for her innovative and creative work in schools, hospitals and prisons and is the Artistic Advisor of Music Network's Continuing Professional Development programme, providing training for professional musicians working in Ireland.

Tommy Peoples

Tommy Peoples is internationally recognised as a huge influence on the Irish traditional music scene both as a player and composer. He was born in Donegal near St. Johnston, in 1948 and had his first lessons from his cousin Joe Cassidy, at 7 years of age. He moved to Dublin at a young age, and then to Co. Clare where he resided for over 30 years. His years in Dublin and Clare brought him into contact with all styles of music making, but he developed his own totally unique style. He features on the first Bothy Band recording and was a member of that band for two years. He has several solo recordings, mostly on the U.S. Shanachie label. His last recording, "The Quiet Glen" was home produced. In 1998 he was awarded the first National TG4 IMRO sponsored traditional musician award. Presently he resides in Donegal where he was born, and performs solo or sometimes accompanied.

Kate Newmann

Kate Newmann is a graduate of King's College Cambridge. She was a junior fellow at the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, Belfast, where she compiled the Dictionary of Ulster Biography. Her first collection of poetry, *The Blind Woman in the Blue House*, was published in 2001. She has had residencies in the community – in Ballycastle, County Antrim – and with the Down Lisburn Health Trust. She is co-director of the Summer Palace Press and was Director of Blemullet Writers' Festival 2005. In October 2005 she introduced and read with Seamus Heaney and Cathal Ó Searcaigh at the Samhain International Poetry Festival in Gortahork, County Donegal. With the assistance of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, a CD of poems, *How Well Did You Love?* was made in collaboration with composers Deirdre McKay, Elaine Agnew and Bill Campbell.

Cathal O' Searcaigh

Cathal Ó Searcaigh has, over the past decade, emerged as one of Ireland's most distinguished modern day poets. "His confident internationalism" according to Theo Dorgan, writing in *Irish Poetry Since Kavanagh*, (Four Courts Press 1996), "has already begun to channel new modes, new possibilities, into the writing of Irish language poetry in our time." Ó Searcaigh is fast becoming a poet of international renown - particularly since the publication of his bilingual collections *Homecoming/An Bealach 'na Bhaile* (Cló Iar-Chonnachta 1993) and *Out in the Open* (CIC 1997). Selections of his work have already been published in translation to ten languages. His latest collection, *Ag Tnúth leis an tSolais* was awarded the Irish Times Literature Prize for Irish Language Books in 2001.

In the past few years Cathal has read his work at Arts Festivals and literary celebrations in Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Wales, Scotland, England and Canada. His readings and his talks at the L'Imaginaire Irlandais festival in France and at the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany gained him international acclaim. He has held various posts as Writer in Residence in universities throughout Ireland - North and South - since 1993. In the spring of 1995, he was elected a member of Aosdána. His collection *Na Buachaillí Bána* (CIC 1996) has received more media coverage than any other volume of verse published in the Irish language in recent years. "The best poems in the collection," according to *The Irish Times*, "are exceptional and single Cathal Ó Searcaigh out, not so much as a maker of poems - of which the Irish language has its fair share - but as one of our finest working poets. This is not meant as faint praise but as a statement of fact."

Ó Searcaigh's harrowing long poem *Gort na gCnámh/Field of Bones* has been made into a highly acclaimed film by Carol Moore. Cathal is a regular contributor to radio and television programmes. His works include a documentary on the Frankfurt Book Fair for RTÉ, a programme on Nepal for TG4 and RTÉ, a documentary on the 18th century poets of South East Ulster for Flying Fox Films and a half-hour interview about his spiritual beliefs for Flying Fox. In 2002 CIC published *Caiseal na gCorr* - a book of photographs of the area where Cathal is from. The photographs are by a Dutch photographer, Jan Voster, and the book includes interviews and poetry with Cathal, who discusses his memories of the area and the influence that it had on his poetry. A travel diary entitled *Seal i Neipeal* was published in 2004.

He was conferred with an Honorary Degree from NUIG in 2000.

Publications to date

Poetry	<i>Miontragéid Cathrach</i> (Cló Uí Chuirreáin 1975) <i>Tuirlingt</i> (Clódhanna 1978) <i>Súile Shuibhne</i> (Coiscéim 1987) <i>An Bealach 'na Bhaile</i> (CIC 1991) <i>Homecoming/An Bealach 'na Bhaile</i> (CIC 1993 . 2, 1995, 1997) <i>Na Buachaillí Bána</i> (CIC 1996) <i>Out in the Open</i> (CIC 1997) <i>Ag Tnúth leis an tSolais</i> (CIC 2000)
History	<i>Tulach Beag Laoich: Inné agus Inniu/Tulach Begley: Past and Present</i>
Editor	<i>An Chéad Chló</i> (CIC 1997)
Other	<i>Caiseal na gCorr</i> (CIC 2002)
Travel	<i>Seal i Neipeal</i> (CIC 2004)

What the critics had to say...

Ó Searcaigh is an outstanding poet - playful, open, ebullient, unafraid of the colours of language, shockingly honest and raw when necessary and a tender, gifted love poet. He is one of our most inventive poets in either language, with a body of work which has transfixed the landscape of his native Donegal.

- *Dermot Bolger, The Tribune Magazine*

well-wrought turns.

- *Alan Titley, Books Ireland*

While Irish books remain half-hidden in shop corners, marginalised just like the gay section, writers like Cathal Ó Searcaigh must continue to be a storehouse of knowledge, and to carry a vocally Irish, vocally gay culture into the future.
- *Hayley Fox-Roberts, Gay Community News*

Ó Searcaigh's presence is conspicuous on the poetic ground carved out for themselves by today's poets. His poetry speaks out to us with the voice of a real person who hides nothing and wears no false or protective face
- *Fear Dorcha Ó Duibheagáin, Borderlines*

There is a quality in some writers that is beyond artifice. Ó'Searcaigh's poetry has this stamp of genuineness beyond any Irish, gifted and gay.
- *Djinn Gallagher, The Tribune magazine*

In Cathal Ó Searcaigh's loveliest poems there rings out most spontaneously a note that is innocent and vulnerable.
- *Michael Longley, Poetry Ireland*

It is as the proudly self-conscious heir of both the authority of the Gaelic poet and the rooted integrity of individuals . . . that ÓSearcaigh adopts his increasingly prominent public persona as the contemporary voice of an unbroken tradition.
- *Philip O'Leary, Irish Literary Supplement*

There is a section of landscape in Donegal in the north of Ireland near Falcarragh, overlooking Tory Island, which has been utterly transformed over the past decade by Cathal ÓSearcaigh
- *Colm Tóibín, Times Literary Supplement*