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**IRISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA (ICO)**

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’re as likely to find the orchestra at *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 the **ICO** to appeal to music fans of every stripe while upholding the highest artistic standards.

The driving force behind **ICO’s** recent success is our **Principal Conductor/Artistic Partner Jörg Widmann**, a composer, conductor and clarinettist whose irrepressible energy and pursuit of excellence has enabled the ICO to expand its horizons, attracting outstanding international performers such as **Thomas Zehetmair, Jean Christoph Spinosi, Tabea Zimmermann, Igor Levit** and **Elisabeth Leonskaja**. The last five years have seen ICO perform at leading concert halls and festivals across Europe and release a series of acclaimed recordings on the prestigious *Orfeo* label. The ICO held 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 comprised of 22 outstanding musicians. The **ICO’s** special rapport, forged 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 McCann**, 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.

Its groundbreaking 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. But 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**.

[www.irishchamberorchestra.com](http://www.irishchamberorchestra.com)

