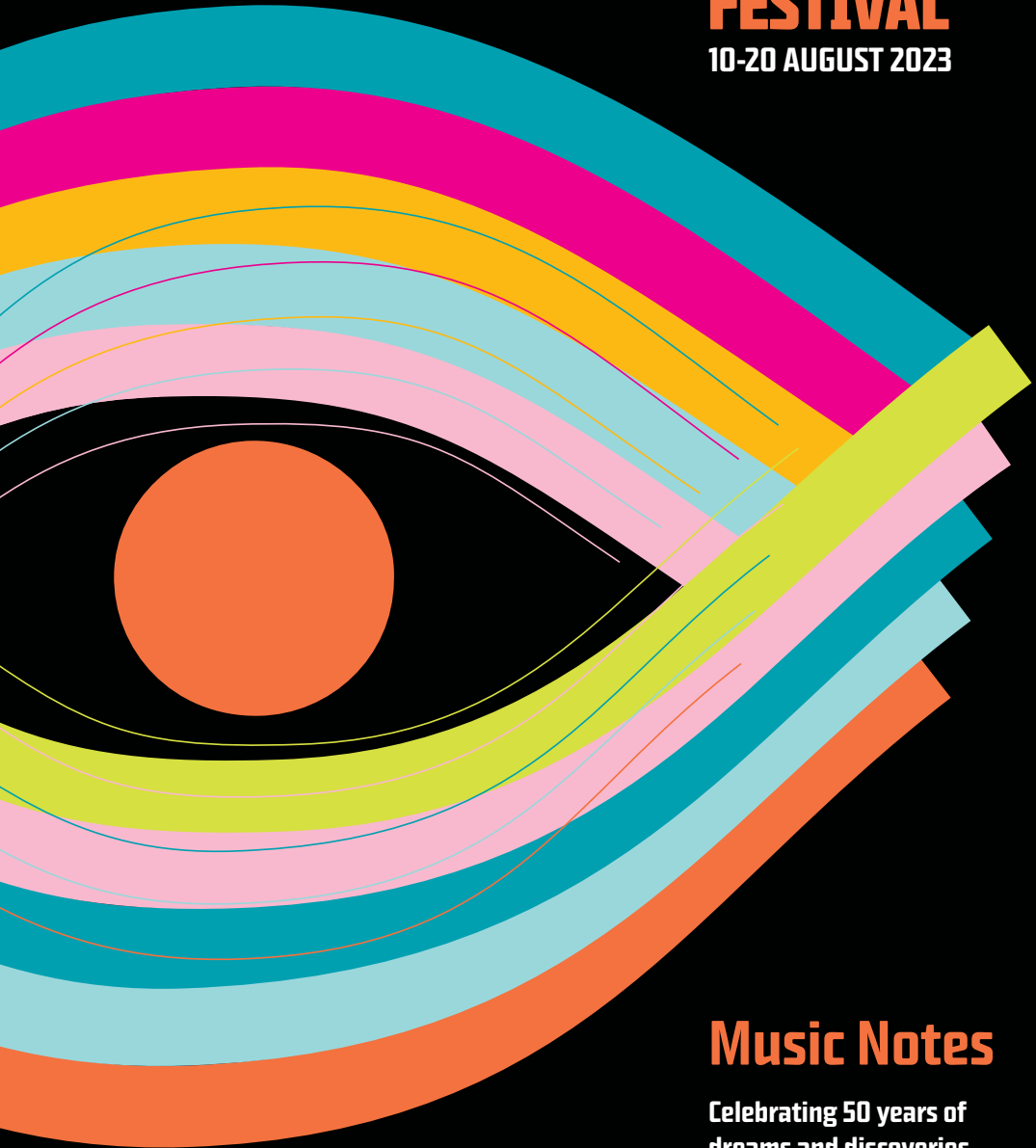


# KILKENNY ARTS FESTIVAL

10-20 AUGUST 2023



## Music Notes

Celebrating 50 years of  
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# LUNCHTIME MUSIC SERIES

## Carducci String Quartet

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### Programme I

Sunday 13 August

#### 'THE STUDENT BECOMES THE MASTER'

**Joseph Haydn** String Quartet in E-flat, op. 33, no. 2 'The Joke'

**Ludwig van Beethoven** String Quartet No. 8 in E minor, op. 59, no. 2

Duration 50 mins approx.  
(without interval)

### Programme II

Monday 14 August

#### 'IT'S ALWAYS DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN'

**Felix Mendelssohn** String Quartet no. 6 in F minor, op. 80

**Joseph Haydn** String Quartet in B-flat major, op. 76, no. 4 'Sunrise'

Duration 50 mins approx.  
(without interval)

### Programme III

Tuesday 15 August

#### '...TO THE NEW WORLD'

**Rebecca Clarke** *Poem*

**Caroline Shaw** *Entr'acte*

**Antonín Dvořák** String Quartet no. 12 in F major, op. 96 'American'

Duration 50 mins approx.  
(without interval)

### Programme IV

Wednesday 16 August

#### 'TURNING POINT PARIS'

**Philip Glass** String Quartet no. 3 'Mishima'

**Maurice Ravel** String Quartet in F major  
**Astor Piazzolla** Four, for Tango

Duration 50 mins approx.  
(without interval)

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## Performers

**Matthew Denton** violin

**Michelle Fleming** violin

**Eoin Schmidt-Martin** viola

**Emma Denton** cello

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## Programme Notes

### Programme I

#### **'THE STUDENT BECOMES THE MASTER'**

#### **Joseph Haydn, String Quartet in E flat, op. 33, no. 2**

#### **'The Joke'**

*i Allegro moderato*

*ii Scherzando: Allegro – Trio*

*iii Largo sostenuto*

*iv Presto*

Haydn wrote his set of six Quartets Opus 33 in the summer and autumn of 1781. They were dedicated to 'Grand Duke Paul of Russia', so they are often known as his Russian Quartets. The first performances of the Quartets probably took place in the Grand Duke's Viennese apartment on Christmas Day that year. The second Quartet is also called '*The Joke*' because of its witty ending and general mood of gaiety. Haydn described the works as being written 'in a new and special way' and they certainly

represent a watershed in quartet writing with their light, elegant touch and often amusing ideas.

He also changed the traditional minuet movement to a scherzo or joke, as can be heard clearly in this work. There is a lilting edge to the first theme of the opening movement, with sudden explosive phrases to add to the general excitement. The scherzando, or 'little scherzo', follows, based on a strongly accented dance. The central section or trio has a flirtatious tone with emphatic glissando or sliding moments to add to the fun. The first violin opens the slow movement with cello accompaniment, presenting a stately song-like melody. There is a second theme delivered in further sinuous lines. The finale is the most famous movement with its very jolly main theme. Having played around with it in a witty exchange between the instruments he reaches the end but, instead of a conventional coda, Haydn returns to his first theme once more and taunts us with 'will I? – won't I?' extensions, finally reaching an inconclusive and puzzling halt.

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**Ludwig van Beethoven,  
String Quartet no. 8 in E  
minor, op. 59, no. 2**

- i Allegro*
- ii Molto adagio. Si tratta  
questo pezzo con molto  
di sentiment*
- iii Allegretto*
- iv Finale: Presto*

The three so-called 'Razumovsky' Quartets were commissioned in 1806 by Count Andrey Razumovsky (1752-1836), a wealthy Russian diplomat who lived in Vienna for many years. Razumovsky was a fine violinist and asked for a Russian theme for each work. Beethoven obliged in the first and second but not in the third. They received a poor reception initially, puzzling listeners and players alike, and were dismissed for being too advanced, but gradually they gained acceptance. Beethoven began work on them in the autumn of 1804 but the main composition was during 1806 and the set was completed by November that year.

The second of the Razumovsky Quartets is full of interesting new directions for Beethoven. It opens with two grand chords leading into a short motif presented between pauses. This is extended and moves

into a powerful sequence leading to another lyrical tune, high on the first violin. This mixture of moods and tempi provides material for a short development section which Beethoven asks to be repeated, an unusual idea but it is quite brief. The slow movement is headed 'to be played with the utmost feeling'. According to his pupil Czerny, Beethoven derived his inspiration from gazing at a starry sky. A long thoughtful theme launches the movement which is immediately repeated with staccato decorations from the first violin. Sudden loud chords break into the contemplative mood but their effect does not last long and the opening mood returns for further treatment. Beethoven now adds a repetitive four-note motto below the principal tune which viola and cello maintain under the lazy sinuous lines from the violins. An emotional climax is reached and gradually fades away with occasional sudden fortissimo chords breaking the calm.

A further slow-moving climax is built up before the movement gradually comes to its serene ending.

The scherzo bursts into life with a perky little tune, first on a sole violin then in a richly

harmonised version for the quartet. The central trio is fascinating for its use of an eighteenth-century Russian folk song, 'Glory to the Sun', presumably given to Beethoven by Razumovsky. It would also be used by Mussorgsky in his opera *Boris Godunov*, as well as turning up in works by Arensky and Rachmaninov. Beethoven gives it a vigorous treatment

before going back to the scherzo theme, *da capo*. There is a delightful jauntiness about the opening theme of the finale. Beethoven brings it back a number of times, creating a kind of rondo, with splendidly vigorous episodes in between the recurrence of the theme itself. An extra spurt, *più presto*, provides an uplifting coda.

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## **Programme II**

### **'IT'S ALWAYS DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN'**

#### **Felix Mendelssohn, String Quartet no. 6 in F minor, op. 80**

- i Allegro vivace assai*
- ii Allegro assai*
- iii Adagio*
- iv Finale (Allegro molto)*

The death of Mendelssohn's beloved sister Fanny in May 1847 left the composer distraught. That summer he took a holiday in Switzerland and it would appear that this unique and powerful composition was written during that important time of reassessment. If it was intended as a kind of requiem, it also provided one for the composer himself who was to die on 4 November the

same year. There is an unusual passion and maturity about the opening movement in which rhythmic ideas predominate in a Beethovenian way. This is not the music of the melodious younger composer but the full expression of a tortured soul.

He places the scherzo second and again a syncopated pulse maintains the mood of yearning and despair. He even resists using the central trio as a contrast, maintaining the sombre mood throughout the movement. The slow movement opens with a touching threnody. It is a fitting lament for a period in which he was experiencing 'the greatest emptiness and bareness in my mind and heart'. The Finale returns to sonata form and syncopated figures rather

than large-scale melodies, thus complementing the opening movement and bringing this magnificent last quartet of Mendelssohn to a moving and, in more ways than one, true finale.

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**Joseph Haydn, String Quartet in B flat major, op. 76, no. 4 H III 78 'Sunrise'**

- i Allegro con spirito*
- ii Adagio*
- lii Menuetto: Adagio*
- iv Finale: Allegro ma non troppo*

This is the fourth of the marvellous set of six Quartets dedicated to the Hungarian Count Joseph Erdödy and published in Vienna in July 1799, appearing shortly afterwards in London. They date from around the same time as the composition of his oratorio *The Creation* and would be his last full set of quartets (at that time quartets were published in sets of six), so they appeared at the peak of his string witting. They are among Haydn's greatest achievements, with the Fourth being particularly engaging. It opens with a remarkable effect: 'like the sun emerging from behind clouds' as one writer has put it. Haydn begins slowly and places slurs joining certain

notes to create the effect of awakening. This later led to the Quartet being called 'Sunrise', not Haydn's name. Soon the pace quickens and a lively movement gets underway with plenty of felicitous touches.

One of Haydn's most profound quartet movements follows. This is the period of 'Chaos' in 'The Creation' and is another reflection on deeply felt emotions which Haydn could express so movingly. There are lovely echoing phrases and dark, solemn comments, perhaps even a touch of grieving, though we do not know of any possible non-musical association at that time. If the late Beethoven Quartets were influenced by anything it must be this grave, thoughtful music. Haydn then sweeps away all this sorrow in a sprightly minuet. The opening theme is graceful and noble, well suited to a society ball, while the central section or 'trio' switches to a very different mood, with a touch of eastern European folk music informing its disjointed phrases. For his finale Haydn creates a perky theme, with a noticeable snap to it. After an extended presentation of this idea, the tempo suddenly increases (*più allegro*) for a racier presentation

of the melody and, as though that was not enough, he

increases the pace further (*più presto*) for the sparkling coda.

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### **Programme III '...TO THE NEW WORLD'**

#### **Rebecca Clarke, *Poem***

Rebecca Clarke (1888-1979) was born in London to American-English parents. She studied viola at the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music, becoming a noted virtuoso on the viola, and was one of the first women to play in a professional orchestra. She spent an increasing amount of time in America, finally settling there and dying in New York at the age of 93. As a composer her music was forgotten over many years but underwent a revival in the early 2000s, helped by the Rebecca Clarke Society. Her *Poem for string quartet* dates from 1924 and is a serene rhapsody on a single theme. The mood is rhapsodic with shifting tonalities in its gentle eight-minute progress, marked *Adagio*.

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#### **Caroline Shaw, *Entr'acte***

Born in North Carolina, into a musical family, Caroline Shaw showed an early talent, starting

to study the violin at the age of two. She took her degree in the violin at Rice University in 2004 and was awarded a PhD in composition at Princeton in 2010. She was the youngest ever recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2012. She has quickly established a leading place in contemporary American music, both as a composer and violinist. *Entr'acte* was written in 2011 for the Brentano Quartet after hearing a performance they gave of Hayden's 'Joke' Quartet. It is structured like a Hayden minuet and trio. She notes: 'I love the way some music suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolour transition'.

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#### **Antonín Dvořák, String Quartet no. 12 in F major, op. 96 'American'**

- i Allegro ma non troppo*
- ii Lento*
- iii Molto vivace*
- iv Finale: Vivace, ma non troppo*

From 1892 to 1895 Dvořák

resided in New York as Director of the National Conservatory there. He was often homesick and was delighted to find a Czech settlement in Spillville, Iowa, where the family of his assistant and secretary Josef Kovarik lived; his father was the village schoolmaster. In the summer of 1893 the whole Dvořák family arrived in America on a visit and the complete entourage, eleven in all, travelled to Spillville for a summer holiday. During their stay three 'Kickapoo Indians' (they were in fact Algonquins) entertained him to some Native American music which greatly fascinated him. Traces of Native American music can be heard in the quartet he wrote that summer, at the same time as he was working on the Ninth Symphony 'From the New World' and the String Quintet, Opus 97. The first performance of the Quartet was given privately in Spillville by Dvořák, Kovarik and the latter's daughter and son around the end of June. The professional premiere was given by the Kneisel Quartet in Boston on 1 January 1894.

The Native American touches are mainly heard in the lovely first movement. These include the syncopated rhythms and the use of a pentatonic melody. The opening is one of the loveliest

in all string quartet writing: the violins provide a rustling *tremolando* as the main theme floats into existence on the viola, its five-note origins are quite apparent and the theme is used as a basis for the melodies in the other movements, too. Two other themes emerge: one is a violin duet and the other is a haunting refrain presented by the first violin over slow chords from the other three players. Dvořák develops his attractive material with considerable style and great assurance, making this the longest movement of the work.

The slow movement is another gem. It is a mono-thematic movement and the glorious, song-like theme is presented first by the violin and then by the cello in its highest registers, creating a particularly poignant effect. Dvořák spins this splendid melody along with grace and passion, maintaining a murmuring accompaniment beneath the melody and its elaborations. The movement ends with a hushed viola *tremolando* as the music sinks into silence. The scherzo is one of Dvořák's wittiest creations. He was always fascinated by animal sounds and bird calls and was particularly enthralled by a local bird in Spillville with a highly repetitive call. It turns up in a three-note phrase known as



'Damn the bird' and provides much fun as the music bowls along. The finale is a brief but highly energetic rondo. There is a short passage that sounds like a hymn and is supposed to recall Dvořák's performances at the church services during his holiday. At the end of the score,

which he sketched in a mere 14 days, Dvořák wrote: 'Thank God! I am content; it has gone very quickly.' The listener has much the same feeling when his joyful and wonderfully tuneful and original work comes to its merry close.

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## **Programme IV** **'BEHIND EVERY GREAT MAN...'**

### **Philip Glass, String Quartet no. 3 'Mishima'**

- i 1957 Award Montage*
- ii November 25: Ichigaya*
- iii Grandmother and Kimitake*
- iv 1962 Body Building*
- v Blood oath*
- vi Mishima – closing*

One of the most significant composers of the second half of the twentieth century, Glass was born in Baltimore, Maryland and studied at the University of Chicago before attending the Juilliard School of Music in New York. A scholarship enabled him to go to Paris where he was a student of the great teacher, Nadia Boulanger. Returning to America he was dissatisfied with musical directions and formed his own group, the

Philip Glass Ensemble, to pursue new ideas, much of which were based on Indian music, having been greatly impressed by Ravi Shankar. This evolved into minimalism which became a major force in contemporary music over the last half century. As well as a number of highly successful operas, Glass worked on film scores and provided the music for Paul Schrader's movie *Mishima*, a documentary about the great contemporary Japanese novelist. Seeking to make further use of his composition he took a number of sections from his film score and fashioned them into his Third String Quartet in 1985. The movements are short, just a couple of minutes each, and feature Glass's minimalist techniques throughout.

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## Maurice Ravel, String Quartet in F major

- i *Moderato très doux*
- ii *Assez vif - très rythme*
- iii *Très lent*
- iv *Vif et agité*

Written in 1902, the same year as the premiere of Debussy's opera *Pelleas et Melisande*, Ravel's only quartet is clearly influenced by the new Impressionistic style. It was given its first performance in Paris on 5 March 1904 by the Heymann Quartet. Each movement begins on the note of A natural and this links the tonic F major to his other keys, mainly D minor and A minor. Ravel, like Franck and Debussy, uses a cyclical form throughout the work with the two themes of the first movement reappearing in various guises later in the work.

The opening movement is beautifully constructed in sonata form and uses 'antique' modes and whole-tone scales, however the themes are clearly melodic and quite delightful. The violin presents the important first theme (*très calme*) immediately: an elegantly soaring melody. The second theme is in much the same

mood, giving the movement a tight aural panorama. Ravel develops his material with an easy confidence, providing a particularly memorable coda.

The scherzo is placed second and makes extensive use of *pizzicato*. The cello opens the central section or 'trio' and there is a hint of the main theme from the first movement in its phrasing. This is more evident in the opening theme of the slow movement, with the theme appearing an octave down. This movement ends with a crescendo, followed by an acceleration into a splendidly passionate climax of almost orchestral colouring.

The finale returns to the triple rhythms of the scherzo set against a quirky 5/8 count. The music opens aggressively and is followed by a more lyrical, high melody on first violin that is clearly linked to the theme from the first movement. Other recollections follow in the swiftly moving tapestry of sound, some more clearly recognisable than others. The music alternates between storm and calm and ends on a rising phrase that suggests more ought to follow.

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**Astor Piazzolla, *Four, for Tango***

Born in Argentina to Italian parents, Piazzolla was mainly brought up in New York, his family having moved there. This allowed him to absorb a wide range of music from Bach to jazz. He started to play the bandoneón, the Argentinean accordion, following in his father's footsteps, and became so proficient that at the age of 13 he was asked to join the great Carlos Gardel's group on tour. Fortunately, his father forbade this, as soon afterwards the entire Gardel company was killed in an air crash. Returning to Argentina he became involved in playing in night clubs where he was heard by Artur Rubenstein who introduced him to the composer Ginastera with whom he studied. He won a scholarship to work with Nadia Boulanger in Paris in 1950 who encouraged his writing

and playing of tangos. He returned to New York in 1955 and launched his controversial 'Nuevo Tango' which caused quite a stir in traditional tango circles. This development included the incorporation of jazz and classical elements into his music, placing him at the forefront of tango composers in the mid-twentieth century. *Four, for Tango* is Piazzolla's only string quartet movement and was written in 1989 for the Kronos Quartet. It is full of fiercely complicated ideas presented in a frenzied dance. He makes use of the instruments in a new fashion with extraordinary phrases, glissandi, knocks and even uses sandpaper. The result is a breathtaking explosion of dance in a unique display of tango rhythms.

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## Carducci String Quartet

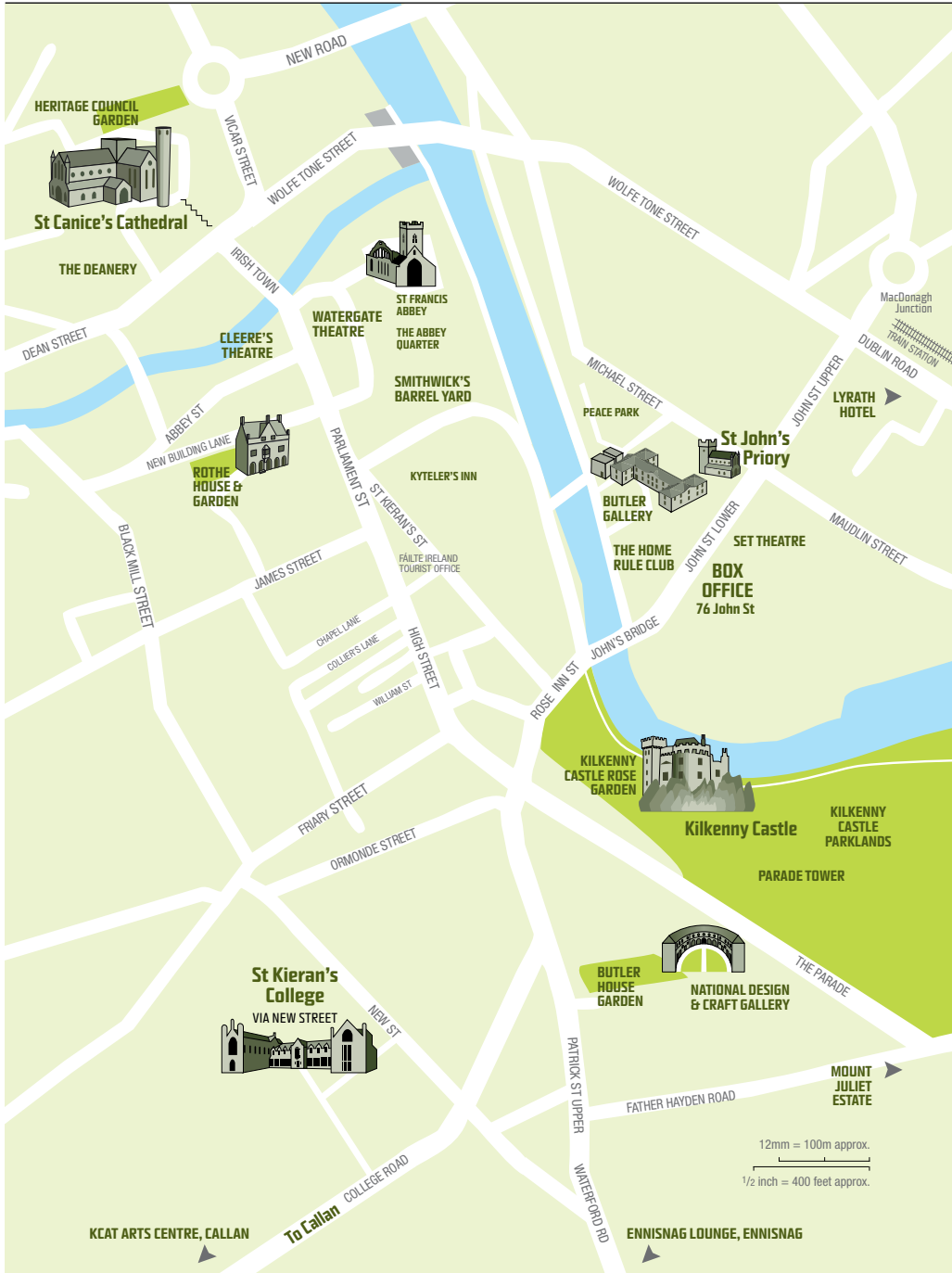


Described by *The Strad* as presenting 'a masterclass in unanimity of musical purpose, in which severity could melt seamlessly into charm, and drama into geniality', the award-winning Carducci Quartet is internationally acclaimed as one of the most accomplished and versatile ensembles of today. Not only mastering the core repertoire, the quartet presents a selection of new works each season and diversifies further with programmes of film music, pop and rock. Founded in 1997, the ensemble has won numerous international competitions, including the Concert Artists Guild International Competition, and First Prize at Finland's Kuhmo International Chamber Music Competition.

Highly celebrated for their diverse approach to programming, the Carducci Quartet has devised numerous projects and is regularly invited to perform new works. Their catalogue of programmes presenting music and spoken word includes focuses on Beethoven, Shostakovich, and on the relationship between Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn.

Education work is an important element of the Carducci Quartet's work, earning them a place on the Royal Philharmonic Society Award shortlist for their family concert 'Getting the Quartet Bug!' The Carducci Music Trust was set up to support their work in schools and with young musicians. They also perform a number of school concerts each year supported by the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust.

# Kilkenny City



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