



## Reviews

### LaFollette, ICO/Takács-Nagy NCH, Dublin

MICHAEL DERVAN

**Mozart** - Symphony No 27. **Haydn** - Cello Concerto No 1. **Dvorák** - Sextet in A Op 48

Gábor Takács-Nagy has appeared in Ireland as leader of both the Takács String Quartet and the Takács Piano Trio. His recent short tour with the Irish Chamber Orchestra marked his debut here as a conductor, and showed him to be as inspirational a leader in front of an orchestra as he was in the context of a chamber ensemble. His programme was an unusual one, opening with one of Mozart's less well-known symphonies, following with a cut-down version of Haydn's C major Cello Concerto, and ending with a string-orchestra arrangement of Dvorák's String Sextet, Op 48.

His handling of the 17-year-old Mozart's lightweight Symphony in G, K199, was breezily elegant, with a highly appealing svelte finish to the central Andantino. The soloist in the Haydn was the young cellist, Bartholomew LaFollette, and the performance was strings-only. The parts for oboes and horns were simply omitted and although this did not result in a loss of any actual musical material, it did limit the internal contrasts Haydn had calculated for the piece. LaFollette, however, is such an easy and graceful performer, and showed such a rhythmically nimble facility of movement, it's unlikely many listeners were troubled by the change. LaFollette was as free in touching the heartstrings as he was in dashing off dazzling runs, though his tempo in the Finale sounded just *too* fast, moving beyond grace and wit into racing territory.

The ICO's last tour unexpectedly presented Mendelssohn's Octet as an octet pure and simple. Under Takács-Nagy the performance of the Dvorák Sextet was presented with the orchestra's full string complement. Paradoxically, however, it sounded less orchestral and more chamber music-like than the Mendelssohn. Although the violins proportionally outnumbered the other sections of the orchestra, Takács-Nagy ensured that the low- and mid-range richness of the original scoring was faithfully rendered.

The music-making had an airy openness and freedom. The colouring of the string tone was sensuous, the timing of give-and-take impeccable, the moments of high spirits utterly irresistible. Every minute detail was shaped and delivered with a sense of loving care, as if this were simply *the* most precious of musical offerings.