



IN CONCERT

IRISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

National Concert Hall, Dublin
April 22

The vision of the Irish Chamber Orchestra (ICO) is one of world class status and if it continues like this, it may get its wish sooner than expected. It takes a world authority to recognise world class, and word has it that guest Hungarian conductor Gabor Takacs-Nagy, founder of one of the greatest groups in this area, has been unstinting in his praise for the orchestra. Perhaps, he has given it the good news already.

The euphoria of this spring tour under his charge comes hot on the heels of a recent mini-tour under artistic director Anthony Marwood. His handling of Schoenberg's powerful symphonic poem, *Transfigured Night*, was deeply satisfying and still lingers in the memory – a bit like Wayne Rooney's winning goal against AC Milan on Tuesday.

Takacs-Nagy's intuitive and spirited direction coaxed every morsel of commitment from this highly focused outfit in a programme of Mozart, Haydn and Dvorak. The Mozart (No 27) is a jaunty light-weight symphony, written when he was just 17, but it contained many hints of impending grand lyrical second passage was particularly appealing.

Dvorak's *Sextet in A* was written just months after the breakthrough of his *Slavonic Dances* and, as one would expect, full of the sort of rhythms and melodies that lay at the core of his musical genius. The slow-moving second movement, with its gypsy influences and intertwining of melancholy and elation, was as captivating in its beauty as it was surprising in its abrupt and humorous coda.

In between, the Haydn cello concerto (No 1 in C) proved a stunner, not least because it introduced to Dublin audiences an outstanding new talent in US cellist Bartholomew LaFollette. He is the

first recipient of ICO's Árdán award, a recently introduced patronage by the ICO for outstanding talent.

Papa Joe's long-lost concerto stirred much excitement when it was discovered in the early 1960s, not least because it proved to be one of the first great works to introduce the new thumb-under style of cello playing. The opening *moderato* and *adagio* movements were delivered with panache, with the young man's cello singing with saxophone-like mellowness.

However, it was the final movement that produced the defining statement of this memorable concert, as the young man scorched his way up and down the strings with terrifying confidence. I swear I got a whiff of blistering cello varnish half-way down the hall.

The reaction was spontaneous combustion as the audience burst into whoops, hollers and unrestrained applause. Oh, what a feeling, as those young people used to sing in *Fame*.

Rating: *****

Reviewed by **Dick O'Riordan**