

IIB Bank Music in Great Irish Houses Festival

6th - 14th June

Kildare, Wicklow, Drogheda, Cork, Dublin, Belfast, Clare

**Experience world class music in the romantic intimacy of
Ireland's historic houses and buildings**

This summer, Ireland's great historical homes will resonate with the captivating and magical sounds of the 38th **IIB Bank Music in Great Irish Houses Festival**. This world-class music festival will appeal to a broad range of music lovers. Artistic Director, Ciara Higgins, has created a vibrant and imaginative programme for her second season. Building on the success of 2007, which attracted record audiences over the course of the event, **Music in Great Irish Houses** continues to grow in popularity and affection with every festival.

Ireland's longest running chamber music festival will feature renowned Irish and international musicians in some of Ireland's most beautiful and historic houses across Kildare, Wicklow, Drogheda, Cork, Dublin, Belfast and Clare.

Over the years, the Music in Great Irish Houses Festival has brought Irish audiences the finest chamber music in the world and showcased it in the environs of our national architectural heritage. This year is no exception, offering a wide range of music performed by a mixture of established artists and ensembles in addition to special collaborations with musicians from home and abroad.

The Festival will visit some of Ireland's most impressive buildings, returning to perennial favourites such as Killruddery House and Castletown while visiting the 18th Century Beaulieu House in Drogheda and Dromoland Castle in Co. Clare for the first time.

Programme highlights include the only Irish performance of Bach's monumental *Well-Tempered Clavier* by phenomenal pianist Angela Hewitt over two evenings at the National Gallery of Ireland, where she will perform this challenging and epic work. Widely acknowledged as one of the pre-eminent Bach interpreters of our time, this promises to be both a moving and unforgettable experience for Festival audiences.

The British Belcea Quartet makes the first of two Festival appearances in the architecturally celebrated CIT Cork School of Music, which will also host the opening night of the 2008 Festival. Castletown House, birth place of the Festival, welcomes these dynamic musicians for the second of their Festival appearances.

The James Gandon designed historic King's Inns will provide the backdrop for the Dublin debut of Canadian soprano Measha Brueggergosman who is rapidly establishing herself as a world class performer. Recently hailed by Gramophone Magazine as 'Jessye Norman's heir', she will be partnered by the legendary pianist Roger Vignoles in a selection of intoxicating cabaret songs.

The immensely talented Capuçon brothers perform in two concerts. The first a fascinating programme of music by Ravel, Kodály and Schulhoff for violin and cello, and in the second, they are joined by the prize-winning pianist Nicholas Angelich in some of the “greats” in the chamber music repertoire including trios by Shostakovich and Brahms.

Following his critically acclaimed appearance at the 2007 Festival, violinist extraordinaire Pekka Kuusisto returns to “headline” the 2008 Gallery Gathering, a specially designed project for young audiences offering masterclasses and performances. Collaborating with some of Ireland’s finest musicians, he will offer a diverse range of programmes over the season including a special arrangement of Stravinsky’s *A Soldier’s Tale* along with music by Messiaen in his centennial year, and a selection of poignant and uplifting music written in the concentration camp of Theresienstadt.

As always, there is a strong representation of Irish talent in the Festival. Belfast-born Jonathan Byers brings his Badke Quartet “home” following its triumph at the 2007 Fifth Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, and seven cellists who have contributed significantly to Irish musical life join forces with American Steven Doane for a celebration of their instrument on the Festival’s final night. They will be joined by another prize-winning Irish musician, soprano Celine Byrne.

All of these performances are enhanced by a series of masterclasses by Angela Hewitt, Steven Doane and the Belcea Quartet. There is a chance to “Meet the Musicians” before a number of their performances and special education workshops with children in the Dublin area.

Notes:

Music in Great Irish Houses would like to express its profound gratitude to its title sponsor IIB Bank whose ongoing support and active participation has helped and encouraged the Festival to expand its activities.

Special thanks to the Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism, Seamus Brennan T.D., the Office of Public Works and members of the Northern Ireland Assembly for their assistance and grateful acknowledgement of the support of the Embassies of Canada, Finland and France. The Arts Council, RTÉ Lyric fm and The National Gallery of Ireland deserve special recognition. Our thanks also to the venues, our benefactors, concert sponsors, and the Classic and House Friends for their faithful support over the years.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Box Office: 01 664 2822

Online: www.ticketsireland.ie / 1890 305 305 (includes booking fee)

For further information about the IIB Bank Music in Great Houses Festival,
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