EUROPEAN DOCTORS ORCHESTRA

Sunday June 28th, 2026 City Hall, Cork

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Cork School of Music

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In 2026, Irish Guide Dogs proudly celebrates 50 years of transforming lives across Ireland. Since our founding, we have matched more than 2,000 Guide, Assistance and Community Dogs with individuals and families, helping people with visual impairments and children with autism live more independent and fulfilling lives. All services are provided free of charge, with 85% of our €5 million annual funding coming from the generosity of the public, corporate supporters and legacies. We are deeply grateful to the European Doctors Orchestra for their support, and to everyone attending today's concert. We hope you enjoy it.

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European Doctors Orchestra

The European Doctors Orchestra was founded in 2004 by plastic surgeon Miklos Pohl and GP Mike Lasserson, with the first concert held in Blackheath Halls, Greenwich, London. Our purpose is to raise money for health-related or children's charities, to spread the joy and appreciation of music as widely as we can, and to create a nurturing space for doctors from all over Europe to enjoy a restorative weekend of playing music and socialising.

We are now a full Symphony Orchestra with 100 players. We have played over 40 concerts and have nearly 500 present or past players who come from 23 different European countries. We have supported 28 charities and raised over £250,000. The doctors pay their own accommodation and travel, and a registration fee that covers all expenses, including the cost of the concert. The cost of your ticket today goes directly to our chosen charity.

Today’s concert

Neil Thomson - Conductor

- Richard Wagner (1813-1883): Entry of the Gods into Valhalla, from Scene IV of Das Rheingold (1848-1869)
- Jean Sibelius (1865-1957): Violin Concerto in D minor, Opus 47 (1903, revised 1905)
- Interval
- Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971): Le Sacre du printemps (The Rite of Spring) (1911-1913)

Neil Thomson - Conductor

Neil Thomson studied violin and viola at the Royal Academy of Music and conducting at the Royal College of Music with Norman Del Mar. He also attended the 1989 Tanglewood Summer School, where he worked with leading conductors including Seiji Ozawa and Leonard Bernstein.

He has conducted many of the UK’s foremost orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and Royal Scottish National Orchestra, as well as major orchestras across Europe (RTÉ Concert Orchestra), Asia, and the Americas.

Since 2014, Thomson has been Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Goiás Philharmonic Orchestra in Brazil, helping establish its international reputation and earning national recognition through the Order of Rio Branco.

An acclaimed recording artist, he has led numerous projects for Naxos Records, particularly championing Brazilian music. He has collaborated with distinguished soloists worldwide and is also known for conducting live film concerts. A respected teacher, he served as Head of Conducting at the Royal College of Music from 1992 to 2006 and continues to mentor conductors internationally.

Mairéad Hickey - Violinist

Irish violinist Mairéad Hickey has performed as a soloist with the Irish National Symphony and Concert Orchestras, Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, Orchestre de Bordeaux Aquitaine, Kremerata Baltica, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Camerata Ireland and with conductors such as Christoph Eschenbach. Her Carnegie Hall debut was described as '...magical, penetrating to the heart and soul of the music.' (New York Epoch Times)

A passionate chamber musician, Mairéad has performed with Sir András Schiff, Barry Douglas, Tabea Zimmermann, Renaud Capuçon, Steven Isserlis, Christian Tetzlaff, Alain Altinoglu, Kirill Gernstein, and the Vanbrugh Quartet. Mairéad has performed at festivals around the world, including West Cork, Clandeboye, Rheingau, Colmar, Gstaad and Kronberg.

She is the co-founder and co-artistic director of the Ortús Chamber Music Festival in Cork. Mairéad was Irish NCH Young Musician of the Year 2010 – 2012. She won third prize at the 2016 Louis Spohr Competition and the Hoffmann prize at the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad 2022.

Mairéad plays a 1702 Giovanni Tononi violin. She is supported by Music Network's Music Capital Scheme, funded by the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport. Music Network is funded by The Arts Council.

Dr. Mark Lee - Leader

Mark (Hun Sik) Lee is a Korean-born violinist and violist who studied at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire under Susanne Stanzeleit, with further guidance from Robin Ireland and Lucy Russell, graduating with First Class Honours.

During his studies, he received the Sylvia Cleaver Prize and support from several foundations and also participated in masterclasses with internationally renowned artists.

Mark has played with EDO previously as a medical student and is delighted both to lead the orchestra on this occasion and to share that he has just graduated with his medical degree at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry this year and looks forward to pursuing a dual career in both fields.

Player list

Violin 1
Mark Lee (Leader), UK, Medical Student
Aoife O'Callaghan, Ireland, Psychiatry
Bettina Leube, Germany, General Practice
Chan Lee, UK, Ophthalmology
Conor Molony, Ireland, General Practice
Daniel Lehane, Ireland, Anaesthesia
Eoghan Ferrie, Ireland, Emergency Medicine
Jean McMullin, Australia, General Practice
Joanna Chodkowska, Poland, Oral Surgeon
Marko Zivin, Slovenia, Pathophysiology
Maxton Pitcher, UK, Gastroenterology
Nadhya Quershi, UK, Anaesthetics
Rachel Rynne-Lyons, Ireland, General Practice
Richeal Ni Riordain, Ireland, Oral Medicine
Ulrike Schatz, Germany, Endocrinology

Violin 2
Abi Berger, UK, Lead Clinician NHS Practice
Anette Friedrichs, Germany, Infectious Diseases
Carmel Whitford, Ireland, General Practice
Christoph Becker, Germany, General Practice
Christopher Aldren, UK, ENT Surgeon
Cristina Vitan, UK, General Practice
Eleanor Davies, UK, Medical Student
Emily Boyle, Ireland, Vascular Surgery
Fridolin Steiner, Switzerland, Internal Medicine
Jella von Groeling-Mueller, Germany, Paediatrics
Klaus Misch, UK, Dermatology
Malgorzata Sobisz-Blachowiak, Poland, Internal Medicine
Paula Starritt, Scotland, General Practice
Stefanie Hirt, Switzerland, Dentistry
Stephen Brearley, UK, General and Vascular Surgeon
Su Kingsley, UK, Healthcare Management

Viola
Dan Agranoff, UK, Infectious Diseases
Deniz Suer, UK, Medical Student
Diana Cassell, UK, Child Psychiatry
Dorothee Engers, Germany, Internal Medicine
Frances Flinter, UK, Clinical Genetics
Frazier Stevenson, Portugal, Nephrology
Maja Hurley, Ireland, Radiology
Mall Eltermaa, Estonia, Gynaecology
Marjoan Oolbekkink, Netherlands, Geriatrics/Palliative Care
Olga Hejtmajer, Netherlands, Child Psychiatry
Outi Valkonen, Finland, Clinical Neurophysiology
Sam Ross, Scotland, General Practice
Sonia Tiboni, UK, Paediatric Surgery

Cello
Anne Cowham, UK, Anaesthetics
Alfons Kunzle, Switzerland, Orthodontics
Brian Foster, UK, Anaesthetics
Carole Collins, UK, Gastroenterology
Caoimhe Cronin, Ireland, Paediatrics
Harri Hyppola, Finland, Internal Medicine
John McCaffrey, Northern Ireland, Anaesthetics
Ralph Zachariah, Switzerland, Medical Oncology
William Lehane, Ireland, Anaesthetics
Xanthe Cross, UK, General Practice

Double Bass
Bela Resch, Hungary,Obstetrics
Catherine Friend, Ireland, Psychology
Catherine Stack, UK, Anaesthetics
James Robb, Scotland, Children's Orthopaedics
Patricia Zangger, Switzerland, Anaesthesiology
Robert McFarland, UK, Vascular Surgery

Flute and Piccolo
Cynthia Lalli, UK, General Practice
Gabi Lipshen, UK, Community Paediatrics
Marieke Zeeman, Netherlands, Internist
Michael Cave, UK, Cardiology
Sue Crimlisk, UK, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Oboe and Cor Anglais
Anne Rees, Wales, Community Paediatrics
Alfred Pollard, UK, Radiology
Dave Tomson, UK, General Practice (retired)
Lukas O'Brien, Ireland, Pharmaceutical Industry
Livy Kenyon, UK, Ear Nose and Throat Surgeon

Clarinet
Elisabeth Flammer-Meijst, Switzerland, Internal Medicine
Jonathan Caudle, UK, General Practice
Karen Riddle, UK, General Practice
Susanne Gebhardt, Germany, Internal Medicine
Torsten Hecke, Germany, Public Health

Bassoon and Contrabassoon
Anne Laurent, France, Emergency Medicine
Grace Meadows, UK, Music Therapy
Kevin O'Sullivan, UK, Anaesthetics
Peter Hutchinson, Scotland, GP
Tim Dornan, UK, Endocrinology
French Horn
Edgar Dorman, UK, Abortion Care
Frank Edenborough, UK, Adult Cystic Fibrosis Medicine
Ian Needham, Switzerland, Psychiatry
James Hollingshead, UK, Colorectal Surgery
Jude Danby, UK, General Practice (retired)
Kate King, UK, General Practice
Roger Langford, UK, Anaesthetics
Timon Stumber, Germany, Medical Student

Trumpet & Bass Trumpet
Catherine Brennan, UK, General Practice
Heather Evans, Wales, General Practice (retired)
Jose Manuel Sanchez Moreno, Spain, Cardiology
Neil Roberts, UK, Anaesthetics
Peter Medland, UK, Anaesthetics
Robin Schwerdtfeger, Germany, Fetal Medicine

Trombone
Birgit Kovacs, Germany, Rheumatology
Clemens Bassler, Germany, Dermatology
Konrad Scheurer, Germany, Orthopaedics

Tuba
Walter Kutz, USA, Otology
Zosia Switaj, Ireland, Student

Percussion
Anna Lensebraten, Norway, Anaesthetics
Caitriona Ni Chathasaigh, Ireland, General Practice
Laurent Chardonnal, France, Anaesthetics
Samuel Hock, Germany, Paediatrics
Vicky Pyne, UK, General Practice

Harp
Mathilde Granjon, France, Paediatrics

Thanks

The EDO Cork organising committee (Aoife O'Callaghan, Caitriona Ni Chathasaigh, Conor Molony, Daniel Lehane, Julia O'Leary) would like to give special thanks to: Cork City Hall, Cork School of Music for their wonderful and generous use of their rehearsal spaces, Anne Marie Pappin, head of harp and the team of porters, Ceclia Madden - Limerick School of Music, Clayton Hotel, Clíona Doris - TU Dublin Conservatoire, Cronin's Coaches, Darina Sloan, Dave Whitla, Eamonn O'Rian & Adrian O'Mahony, Elmarie Mawe & Conor Tallon, Hook and Ladder, Imperial Hotel, Leonardo Hotel, Maldron Hotel, Joe O'Brien & Glen Rovers GAA, Liam Daly, Liz Nolan and all the Lyric FM presenters, Michael Murphy - Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Our Tutors: Alex Petcu, Chris Marwood, Dave Whitla, Ilona Adams, Maria Mulcahy, Oleysa Igoldy, Roddy O'Keeffe, Tom Crowley, Proinnsias O'Cathasaigh and Alannah Kissane Casey, UCC and Aula Maxima.

Music Programme by Rohan Shotton

Richard Wagner (1813-1883):
Entry of the Gods into Valhalla, from Scene IV of Das Rheingold (1848-1869)

Wagner's Ring tetralogy remains one of the greatest cultural achievements of recent centuries. More has been written about The Ring than almost any other piece of music. Loved, despised and (mis)interpreted by musicians, philosophers and dictators since its premiere, it examines in 15-hour macrocosm the relationship between insatiable power-lust and the redemptive power of love.

Wagner's life reflects a readily identifiable pattern in his development from youthful radical on the barricades of the 1849 Dresden uprising to an archly establishment figure in later life. His early life and the operas Die Fliegende Holländer, Tannhäuser and Lohengrin are defined by Hegel's philosophies, and the proposition that in the quest of the spirit to realise itself, the arts, politics and science of the old world must die, to be replaced by 'the new'. In 1854, however, Wagner discovered the arch-pessimist Arthur Schopenhauer, and became obsessed with the idea that human events and existence are an unfulfilled and ultimately irrelevant striving. Music, supreme and unique among the arts, however, is offered as an escape from the bleak pessimism of life. Through immersion in the aesthetics of music, we can be freed from the dark reality of life. Wagner's later operas, Tristan und Isolde, Die Meistersinger and Parsifal, are intrinsically post-Schopenhauerian works.

The Ring, however, was composed over the course of twenty-six years, during which time the composer discovered his revered philosopher. The poem, or text, of the Ring was composed backwards, long before reading Schopenhauer or writing any music. Taking inspiration from the same Nordic sources which

similarly moved JRR Tolkien, Wagner began in 1848 by writing a standalone entitled Siegfrieds Tod (Götterdämmerung). This was followed by Der junge Siegfried (Siegfried), Die Walküre and Das Rheingold. Although Wagner toyed with a new Schopenhauer-inspired ending, there is ultimately little evidence of clear influence of the philosopher on the poem of The Ring (Wagner having uniquely written his own libretti).

Schopenhauer's influence instead lies in the music of The Ring. In creating the Gesamtkunstwerk ('total artwork'), Wagner sought to combine music, drama, art and poetry into an unprecedentedly superior package. The discovery of Schopenhauer came after he had completed the score to Das Rheingold, and from this point on, music is elevated to a level far beyond the other artforms. Early in Die Walküre we are swept into the heady richness of Siegmund's hymn to love (Winterstürme). Although there is still an absence of the arias and recitatives from the French Grand Opera tradition which so repelled Wagner, the music is unmistakably more powerful from this point. Wagner's radical elevation of orchestral music to the limelight of opera also owes a debt to Greek tragedy and his particular fascination with the Greek chorus. He saw the orchestra as a very attractive modern successor to the Greek chorus' commentatory role, and through leitmotifs (short musical themes representing people, objects, places or ideas), the orchestra is able to paint vivid pictures which elaborate, temper or contradict the text to create the true meaning of the piece.

Das Rheingold was ultimately described by Wagner as a 'Preliminary Evening' to preface The Ring. The story begins at the bottom of the Rhine, where the dwarf, Alberich, robs the Rhinemaidens of their beloved Rhine Gold, renouncing love and forging a powerful ring. Meanwhile, Wotan, Chief of the Gods, needs treasure to pay the giants he commissioned to build Valhalla. He takes the ring for his own after tricking Alberich, who curses the ring. Though tempted to hang onto the ring, Wotan is persuaded by the Earth Goddess Erda to surrender it as payment to the giants. In the final scene, depicted in this orchestral excerpt, the gods triumphantly enter Valhalla across a rainbow bridge while the Rhinemaidens bewail their lost gold. The music is triumphant, but there remains a shadow of impending catastrophe.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957): Violin Concerto in D minor, Opus 47 (1903, revised 1905)

- Allegretto moderato
- Adagio
- Allegro ma non tanto

Sibelius' seven symphonies constitute one of the most perfect sets in the genre in terms of tracing the development of their composer and rewriting the rules of the format. His first symphony, written under the Russian occupation of Finland, is intensely Russian in style, and could perhaps have been an eighth by Tchaikovsky. From that point onwards, Sibelius tirelessly refined and reworked the form of his symphonies, via the majestic second and the bleak desolation of the fourth to the unique seventh symphony. The cliché of his works having an 'organic' quality is not unjustified: more than almost any

composer, his ability to form a continuously developing musical line from evolving motifs results in music of immensely satisfying architecture.

This development was achieved while struggling with his place in the world. Although he achieved huge success at home, to the point that his fiftieth birthday was declared a national holiday, he was tormented by doubts about his ability to cement himself as a progressive artist, rather than a decadent, anachronistic Romantic relic. At the same time, Schoenberg and Stravinsky were rejecting the symphonic tradition, and Strauss had turned to elaborate tone poems. Though Mahler persisted with the symphony, his scores bulged with rapidly escalating demands for vast orchestral forces in epic, 90-minute works. Sibelius' seven symphonies instead become progressively smaller, shorter and lighter, culminating in the single-movement, twenty-minute seventh. While he is commonly considered one of the great nationalist composers, and there are elements of Finnish folklore to be found in his music, Sibelius had no real congenital affinity for the nation's landscapes or culture, having been raised in a Swedish-speaking household.

The seven symphonies were by no means Sibelius' only contribution to orchestral music; he wrote a number of successful tone poems, several cantatas and a wealth of music for the stage. Strikingly, however, he only wrote one concerto. The violin was the obvious choice of solo instrument for this venture. Sibelius himself had once been an aspiring virtuoso, writing 'When I play, I am filled with a strange feeling; it is as though the insides of the music opened up to me'. He was devastated when his audition for the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra was unsuccessful. A second violin concerto was later drafted, though these sketches were abandoned and recycled into the sixth symphony.

What we now know as the Violin Concerto had its roots in 1899, when the composer wrote to his wife that 'I have got wonderful themes for the violin concerto'. By 1902, he was professionally successful, if personally chaotic. His first two symphonies and Finlandia were proving popular, but alcohol and money issues were seriously hampering his writing. The latter perhaps affected the premiere of the violin concerto. This had been promised to the virtuoso Willy Burmester, who had been hugely enthusiastic about the prospect, but the erratic composer was late in completing the score and at the last moment, instead gave the premiere to the conservatoire teacher, Victor Nováček. This injudicious swap did no favours to the new concerto, which was full of exceptionally taxing technical requirements. Nováček was a fine teacher, but was no virtuoso, and inevitably, the critics were unimpressed. The score was put to one side for a couple of years, until in 1905, Richard Strauss and the Staatskapelle Berlin premiered a revised version, which is what we hear today.

Throughout the concerto's three movements, the soloist is at least equal partner to the orchestra, playing almost continuously in the first movement and being intrinsic to the work's architecture. In the first movement, for example, the development section is represented almost entirely by the soloist's expansive cadenza. The formidable technical difficulties which so challenged the premiere still remain, but they never give the impression of fireworks for the sake of fireworks. In the slow movement, attractive woodwind

figures take a prominent role as both soloists and accompaniment, and the finale sees the concerto to the finish line with a lively and muscular dance, which the critic Donald Tovey famously described as a 'Polonaise for polar bears'.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971): Le Sacre du printemps (The Rite of Spring) (1911-1913)

Part 1 - Adoration of the Earth
Introduction
Auguries of Spring
Dances of Adolescent Girls
Game of Abduction
Spring Rounds
Games of the Rival Tribes
Procession of the Sage
The Sage
Dance of the Earth

Part 2 - The Sacrifice
Introduction
Mysterious Cirlces
Glorification of the Chosen One
Evocation of the Elders
Ritual Action of the Elders
Sacrificial Dance

In the history of all music, Stravinsky's Rite of Spring probably holds the dubious honour of having had the most written about it per minute of music. At around 33 minutes' duration, it is a fraction of the length of Wagner's Ring cycle (around 15 hours), but has probably garnered just as much controversy. The ballet's wildly unsettling music has become symbolic of the advent of modernism in music, and tales of riots at its premiere continue to snowball in hyperbole. In the composer's own words, the ballet 'Represents pagan Russia and is unified by a single idea: the mystery and the great surge of the creative power of spring'.

In 1911, Stravinsky was living relatively comfortably in Paris. He had achieved considerable popular and critical success with his ballets The Firebird and Petrushka in the preceding 12 months, both commissioned by the impresario Sergey Diaghilev for his Ballets Russes. While writing Firebird in 1910, the idea for what would become The Rite of Spring, his third Diaghilev commission, came to the young composer. Stravinsky recalled his artistic vision in Robert Croft's Conversations with Igor Stravinsky: 'In my imagination, I saw a solemn pagan rite: wise elders, seated in a circle, watching a young girl dance herself to death whom they are offering as a sacrifice to the god of Spring in order to gain his benevolence.' In seeking some degree of cultural and historical authenticity, he sought the help of the folklorist Nikolai Roerich, to whom the ballet would ultimately be dedicated. Work began on Rite in Switzerland in 1911, and soon the composer was able to play through the score on the piano to Diaghilev. When Diaghilev delicately asked Igor "Will it last a very long time this way?", Stravinsky drily replied "To the end, my dear".

The score was completed after a minor delay, and the premiere was billed for the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris on 28 May 1913. Stories about this event are legendary, though popular accounts of the riot which apparently took place in the theatre while the music played are probably at least in part apocryphal. Two weeks earlier, the premiere of Debussy's ballet Jeux had sparked considerable controversy, with significant critical bile thrown at the choreographer, Vaslav Nijinsky, who had also prepared Rite. There was, therefore very likely a certain frisson in particular Parisian artistic circles before

a note was played. Stravinsky reflected that the trouble began 'When the curtain opened on the group of knock-kneed and long-braided Lolitas jumping up and down'. But were people really rioting and challenging one another to duels in the aisles? Did a furious Camille Saint-Saëns really rush out of the theatre, muttering that if the opening solo was a bassoon, he was a baboon? Did the police have to be called, and did the whole affair leave Stravinsky hospitalised for a fortnight?

These stories are likely very highly embellished. There was almost certainly some shouting and whistling, and a few missiles seem to have been thrown at the stage. By many accounts, it was quite routine for a police presence to be on-hand at such performances, perhaps following the uproarious scenes at the Paris premiere of Wagner's Tannhäuser in 1861. Saint-Saëns may not have even been present. Stravinsky may have had a pyjama day while nursing a sore head, but the cause of his ensuing hospital admission was actually a bout of typhoid fever.

Why, then, is the legend of the Rite so persuasively believable? The music is carved into two parts, containing 14 dances. The first part portrays aspects of the seasonal life of the primitive tribe, followed by depiction of the sacrificial rites in Part 2. Though modest in length, it is scored for an orchestra large enough to make Mahler blush, calling for quintuple woodwinds, 8 horns including 2 Wagner tubas, 6 trumpets including piccolo and bass trumpet, 2 tubas, 2 timpanists and a battery of percussion. The music is abrasive and unlike anything the Parisians would have heard before, run through with complex rhythms, erratic metres, distorted melodies and frequent changes in pulse.

Stravinsky's own commentary on the ballet is reproduced here:

Part One: The Adoration of the Earth
The spring celebration. It takes place in the hills. The pipers pipe and young men tell fortunes. The old woman enters. She knows the mystery of nature and how to predict the future. Young girls with painted faces come in from the river in single file. They dance the spring dance. Games start. The Spring Khorovod The people divide into two groups opposing each other. The holy procession of the wise old men. The eldest and wisest interrupts the spring games, which come to a stop. The people pause trembling before the great action. The old men bless the earth. The Adoration of the Earth. The people dance passionately on the earth, sanctifying it and becoming one with it.

Part Two: The Sacrifice
At night the virgins hold mysterious games, walking in circles. One of the virgins is consecrated as the victim and is twice pointed to by fate, being caught twice in the perpetual circle. The virgins honour her, the chosen one, with a marital dance. They invoke the ancestors and entrust the chosen one to the old wise men. She sacrifices herself in the presence of the old men in the great holy dance, the great sacrifice.

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