

ConTempo quartet is Galway's ensemble in residence since 2003 and RTE quartet in residence since 2014.

All members of ConTempo quartet have received the degree of Doctor Honoris causa from The National University of Ireland Galway in June 2016.

Bogdan Sofei & Ingrid Nicola - violins  
Andreea Banciu - viola & Adrian Mantu - cello

"The ABBA of the classical music"  
Winners of 14 International Prizes

"Polished and professional group ... full of exuberance and with a fine sense of ensemble ... real sensitivity ... exceptional performance"  
The Strad/ Wigmore Hall

### Biography

Formed in 1995 when students at the Music University in Bucharest, Romania, the ConTempo Quartet became one of the most celebrated young quartets performing today, having won a record of 14 International Awards and touring the world extensively, performing over 1400 concerts in 46 countries.

They have studied with the most celebrated string quartets of the world, such as Amadeus, Alban Berg , Tokyo, Emerson, Hagen and Quartetto Italiano.

From 1999 to 2002 the ConTempo Quartet was offered a Fellowship at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where each member coached chamber music groups at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and accomplished their research on Beethoven's String Quartets Cycle under Siegmund Nisel's guidance.

In 2003, after an International Audition, ConTempo became "Galway Ensemble-in-Residence" on the West coast of Ireland, embarking on a unique project, which entered now into the 2nd decade, under the umbrella of Galway Music Residency, sponsored by the National University of Ireland Galway, the Arts Council of Ireland, City and County Councils.

In 2013, after an European Audition ConTempo was selected and offered the new RTE String Quartet in Residence position of the State National Radio Television of Ireland.

ConTempo String Quartet has won a record of 14 International prizes in competitions such as London, Munich, Hamburg, Rome, Graz, Berlin, Bucharest & Prague (1st Prize at GrosserForderpreise Competition in Munich-Germany, 1st Prize at Valentino Bucchi competition in Rome-Italy, 1st Prize at Tunnel Trust Competition in London-UK, 1st Prize at Mozart competition in Romania, 2nd Prize at Johannes Brahms International Competition in Hamburg-Germany, Audience Prize and 3rd Prize at London String Quartet Competition in UK, 3rd Prize at Schubert und die Musik der Moderne Competition in Graz-Austria, 3rd Prize at Max Reger Competition in Weimar-Germany, The Wigmore Award-London) and The Romanian Musical Critics Union Prize in Bucharest.

ConTempo has toured the world extensively, performing at many major International festivals in Europe, Asia and North America, including Berliner Festwochen, George Enescu Festival in Romania, Haydn Festival in

Eisenstad, Radio France Musique, Europa Musicale in Munich, Festival Clasique-au-Vert in Paris, Belfast Festival at Queens and King's Lynn Festival (where ConTempo played as soloists with London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Elgar's Introduction and Allegro).

They performed more than 1200 Chamber Music Recitals in venues such as: Carnegie Hall in NY, Wigmore Hall, St. John's Smith Square and St.Martin-in-the-Fields in London, Berliner Philharmoniker, The Waterfront in Belfast, Max Joseph Saal in Munich, Theatre Chatelet in Paris, Auditorium in Brussels, Gedai University in Tokio, Opera House in Tel-Aviv, NCH in Dublin, San Marino, Toronto, Madrid, Palazzo Quirignale in Rome, Lisbon, Stockholm Concert Hall, Vatican, Amsterdam, Graz, Beijing, the Atheneum in Bucharest and Royal Academy of Music in London (where they performed on four Guarneri instruments Elgar's Introduction and Allegro accompanied by a full orchestra performing on Stradivari instruments from RAM & Mr.Josefovitz collections).

ConTempo had the honor to be invited to perform in front of great world personalities such as the late

Pope John Paul II at Castel Gandolfo in Italy, for Prince Charles in UK (in London and Highrove) , for Nelson Mandela/former President of South Africa, for the President of Ireland,Michael D Higgins, the EU Ministers, the Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney and for the famous Hollywood actors Angelica Houston, Angela Lansbury, Martin Sheen and Merv Griffin.

Filmmaker Bob Quinn produced a documentary about ConTempo's residency in Galway, "ConTempo Goes West", which was premiered at the Galway Film Fest.

The quartet has participated in numerous television and radio broadcasts in England (where they recorded quartets by Shostakovich, Debussy, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Bartok & Constantinescu for BBC), France (Radio France Musique and TV Mezzo), Italy ( RAI), Austria ( ORF), Germany (Sat3), Romania (TVR) and Ireland (Lyric FM, TG4 & RTE).

ConTempo recorded the music for Tom Hanks & Steven Spielberg's television drama "Band of Brothers".

They composed, arranged and performed the music for the Danish silent film "The Abis" (1910).

The quartet also took part in the documentary "Deutschland, Deutschland", an ORF & Sat3 production about Haydn and Siegmund Nissel's lives.

Other professional recordings include:

Deutsche Schallplatten, Mozart & Brahms Clarinet Quintets with Ryo Kondo, released in Japan;

Music of Boydel (quintet for baritone, flute & string trio, quartet n.1 and oboe quintet), Dublin, CMC;

UNIVERSAL, with british clarinettist Emma Johnson (Mozart clarinet quintet and Ave Verum);

SONY,Soundtrack from Spielberg & Hanks TV Series "Band of Brothers", Beethoven;

QUARTZ, music by Osvaldo Golioy, "Dreams and prayers of Isaac the blind" for Kletzmer Clarinet & quartet, Jane O'Leary & Nick Roth clarinet quintets.

Recently they released a new CD with the famous Irish traditional musicians Mairtin O'Connor & Cathal Hayden (a fusion between Romanian, Irish Traditional and Classical Music);

George Crumb's "Black Angels" Live video recording from Athenuem for TVR.

ConTempo took part in various projects, working closely and recording the music of many contemporary composers such as Jane O'Leary, Alec Roth, Naresh Sohal, Cristopher Fox, Deirdre McKay, Jennifer Walsh, Ian Wilson, John McLachlan, Ed Benet, Rohna Clark, Graine Mulvey, David Flynn, Rob Canning, John Kinsela, Anne Weissman, Donnha Dennehy and Steve Reich.

In the last three years they have premiered over 40 new compositions.

Collaborations with different artists and musical genres is a very important part of ConTempo's musical life.

They are often seen playing early, renaissance or baroque music.

They are also keen on jazz and pop music as well as argentinean & brazilian music, where they play on either modern or electric instruments.

ConTempo performed alongside well known classical artists including members of the Amadeus, Vellinger, Arditti, Vanbrugh, Casals, Maggini, Balanescu and Endellion Quartets or with Barry Douglas (France/Ireland), Emma Johnson (UK), John O'Connor, Hugh Tinney, Finghin Collins (Ireland), Yuko Inoue (UK), Chen Zimbalista (Israel), Jerome Pernoo (Paris), Peter Donohoe, Martin Roscoe (UK), Gilbert Kalish (USA), Douglas McNabney (Canada), or well known groups like BBC Singers, Berlin's RIAS Choire, Galway Brogue Singers, Henry Oguik Dance Company or Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, both from London.

ConTempo performed along well know singers, such as Julie Feeney, Mick Flannery or (maimuta?).

They've been invited to teach in International solo and Chamber music courses in Ireland (ConTempo Summer School in Galway, Royal Irish Academy of Music and DIT in Dublin, Concordia in Kilkenny, Music on the Shannon, IAYO etc.), in the UK (Royal Academy of Music-London, Reading School of Music), in Japan (Gedai University of Music, Tokyo), in Romania ( Sibiu, Brasov and Bucharest) and in Rome, Italy.

ConTempo took part in various composition workshops held by Dublin Institut of Technology, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Contemporary Music Centre, Association of Irish Composers, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Maynooth University, Icon Arts Academy & Music University in Romania, Derry University etc.

GALWAY MUSIC RESIDENCY

[www.thegalwaymusicresidency.ie](http://www.thegalwaymusicresidency.ie)

Since 2003, ConTempo have been Quartet in Residence on the West Coast of Ireland embarking on a unique project.

Highlights of ConTempo's residency in Galway include:

Attracting internationally known musicians from all genres to Galway and performing collaborative concerts.

An annual Summer School, Spring School and Autumn School for young musicians

An education programme in County Galway schools

Introducing the classical music to primary and secondary schools (ConTempo visited more than 200 schools)

Junior & Senior Leaving Cert Programmes (lectures in over 100 schools for over 15.000 students in the past 10 years)

An annual ConTempo Summer Festival, which has featured collaborative artists such as Emma Johnson, Martin Lovett, Bruno Giuranna, Hugh Tinney, John Feeley and Máirtín O'Connor.

Contemporary Music Projects (ConTempo worked closely with both well known and young Irish composers and performed or recorded dozens of new string quartets written by them)

Lectures and modules (on subjects as Music history, Contemporary music, Experimenting new technics, Music and media, Film music, Music and human rights, Music and poetry in Italy, Romanian Trad Music etc.) presented both locally at NUIG, GMIT, DIT or Internationally at Gedai Tokyo, Icon Arts Romania etc.

Apprentice Ensembles scheme (national competition for chamber music groups; three ensembles are invited to Galway and offered scholarships to take part in master classes offered by ConTempo for a year)

National composition competitions for both students and well known Irish composers (composers are invited to Galway to discuss and work with ConTempo during a three month period followed by a national tour)

ConTempo Festival Orchestra

Interacting with musicians from different musical genres (Irish traditional, jazz, Balkan, Yiddish, Klezmer, Tango, electronic etc.)

Interacting with other artists (dancers, poets, visual artists, film directors, painters, writers, photographers etc.)

Concert series (including Beethoven Cycle, Mozart - Ten Celebrated Quartets, Haydn's year, Shostakovich & Bartok, George Crumb's Black Angels)

RTE RESIDENCY

<http://www.rte.ie/about/en/press-office/press-releases/2013/1129/489934-rte-announces-contempo-quartet-as-new-resident-quartet/>

<http://www.galwayindependent.com/20131204/news/national-gig-for-galway-ensemble-S28746.html>

## REVIEWS

"At the end of this concert, I would like to offer my cordial thanks to the musicians of the Contempo Quartet, who with their sensitivity and skill have offered us a moment of deep aesthetic contemplation. The alternation of serene and lively, dramatic and nostalgic passages has been for all of us an opportunity for involvement and reflection. I wish the talented musicians a successful professional career and an even more satisfying human fulfilment." The Pope Giovanni Paolo II

"Polished and professional group ... The Mozart was given a delightfully skittish reading, full of exuberance and with a fine sense of ensemble ... real sensitivity ... exceptional performance" The Strad/ Wigmore Hall

" In the ConTempo's typical fashion, risks were taken, and unusual rewards achieved... the sense of something exceptional at work in the music was unmissable in this performance." The Irish Times

" ... Amazing technique and rhythmic homogeneity ...Very impressive way to approach Enescu's quartet, an extremely difficult work, belonging to the first class quartets of the 20th century ... ConTempo succeeding to demonstrate this with great intensity and fervour." Süddeutsche Zeitung

"Far and away the most outstanding performance was given by the Con Tempo Quartet, playing Beethoven's op. 132 ...well-balanced tone and firmly articulated rhythms ... everyone in the audience was convinced of the superiority of the Con Tempo ... there was no doubt that it was the best in the finals." The Times (London International String Quartet Competition)

"The string playing was both intimately engaged and subtly but distinctly extrovert. Lively and intricately balanced, the ConTempo worked the gallery acoustic to best advantage, and their sound ranged from a full bodied richness to a searing, almost period-instrument quality ... lucky Galway" The Irish Times

"The combination of English clarinettist Emma Johnson and the Galway-based Romanian ConTempo Quartet meant a truly musical gala at Castletown House on Saturday...The ConTempo Quartet were her magnificent partners. How fortunate for Galway to have such a fabulous foursome as its first 'Ensemble-in-Residence'!!" IRISH INDEPENDENT

"Debussy's String Quartet ...Masterfully played by the Romanian ConTempo Quartet... The grand finale was Carnival of the Animals by Saint-Saens ... deliciously played in its original chamber version by Peter Donohoe, Martin Roscoe, the ConTempos plus Emma Johnson (clarinet), Laura Jellicoe (flute), Chris West (double bass) and John Abendstern (percussion), its inclusion was a joyous, colourful and delicious irony." Yorkshire Post/The French Impressions, International Fest Leeds

"It was a sort of homecoming for composer/singer/songwriter Julie Feeney, playing in the Galway Arts Festival in her home county, and teaming up with Galway's resident ensemble

ConTempo for a memorable concert. . .the combination of instruments and voice was inspiring." The Irish Times

"The marriage of string quartet and accordion was a happy one, first delicately and subtly ... [then] by turns ethereal and frenzied, with the high, relentless sound of the accordion meeting the lower cello and building to a wild energy." The Irish Times

"A group set on pushing the interpretative envelope ... performance full of imaginative daring... ConTempo quartet conveyed..the strong sense of a quartet on form and in its prime." The Irish Times

" ... a professional string quartet ... well-balanced ... very good technique ... their articulation and phrase are extremely clear." Münchener Merkur

" ... exceptional concert performed by ConTempo Quartet formed by extremely gifted young musicians, who were rewarded with long stormy applause ... the audience was subjugated by their sensitivity and virtuosity." Wildungen Landes Zeitung

"I have not heard for a long time even at professional well-established ensembles such a performance, that is at the same time impetuous and well-balanced, tender and rigorous, ingenuous and vivid." Actualitatea Muzicala

" ... the four musicians have the sense of ensemble, as well as the instrumental and interpretative inspiration that animates and guides them towards an exquisitely special encounter with the music." La Sicilia

"I am happy to predict an excellent career for this fine ensemble" Martin Lovett (Amadeus Quartet)

ConTempo at Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast

" The concert is being given by the Rumanian ConTempo Quartet, which has been resident ensemble in Galway since 2003. Its style is emotional, unbounded and vibrant – a thousand miles distant from the stuffy image so unfortunately and often so mistakenly associated with chamber musicians.

Opening with George Crumb's Black Angels quartet proves that there is to be no pussyfooting in this concert – no soft toned easing into the more 'difficult' music the audience is here to sample.

The ConTempo hold back nothing and the performance is exhilarating...I find a real immediacy in the bright, exaggerated extroversion of the ConTempo Quartet's music making which is as unusual and as refreshing as it is pleasurable."

By Philip Hammond/ Culture