

Biography

The German-Irish cellist Nuala McKenna (*1993) grew up in a musical family and started playing the piano at the age of four under her father's guidance and then received her first cello lessons at the age of eight. Only four years later she was admitted to the Conservatory in Lübeck in the cello class of Prof. Ulf Tischbirek. She continued her studies with Jean-Guihen Queyras in Freiburg and later with Ivan Monighetti in Basel where she obtained her Bachelor's degree with distinction. After completing the Master's degree in 2018, Nuala is currently studying in the soloist class with Prof. Conradin Brotbek at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Stuttgart.

She gained further inspiration and experience during masterclasses by renowned musicians such as Frans Helmerson, Miklos Perenyi, Steven Isserlis, Truls Mørk, Philippe Muller, Gabor Tacaks-Nagy, Ferenc Rados and Troels Svane.

Since 2012, Nuala has been a member and solo cellist of the Balthasar-Neumann-Ensemble conducted by Thomas Hengelbrock. Here she discovered her passion for authentic historical performance and playing on gut strings. In the 2013/14 season she played as an academist with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. Afterwards she completed a two-year academy at the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen led by Paavo Jarvi.

In March 2019 Nuala started her new position as solo cellist in the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen.

As a finalist of the Dutch Classical Talent, Nuala played a concert tour with a solo program in all major halls of the Netherlands during the 2018/19 season.

She took part in several international festivals such as the Verbier Festival, International Bach Festival Gran Canaria, Schwetzingen Festspiele and Podium Festival Esslingen. In the Netherlands she performed at the Grachtenfestival, 'Klassifest', 'Wonderfeel Festival' and the Cello Biennale Amsterdam. She is the artistic director of her own festival 'Musikfest Kahleby', founded in the summer of 2016.

She played chamber music with renowned artists such as Maria Joao Pires, the Talich Quartet, Boris Garlitsky, Augustin Dumay, Miguel da Silva, Olli Mustonen, Axel Strauss and Jean-Guihen Queyras and performed as a soloist with the Göttinger Sinfonieorchester, Kammerorchester Kiel and the Kammerorchester Schleswig.

Nuala has been awarded a Diapason D'Or, the most prestigious of French music magazine award as well as the 'Les Clefs Resmusica' award for her debut CD, newly released in March 2021, with works for solo cello from the 20th century.

As a laureate of the 'Wettbewerb des Instrumentenfond der Deutschen Stiftung Musikleben', Nuala has been playing a cello with the label 'Joseph Guarnerius, from the 2nd half of the 18th century' for almost eleven years now.