Spotlight: Catherine McHale and Caoimhín O’Brian

Catherine and her husband Caoimhín are both cellists who have attended Apple Hill’s Summer Chamber Music Workshop. They live in the Republic of Ireland.

Tell us how you first became involved in Apple Hill?

I first got a scholarship to Apple Hill 16 years ago after playing the Brahms Clarinet Trio at the Donegal/Derry workshop! When I met Caoimhín in University I knew he would love it as much as I did and we went over for another two summers.

What are you doing now? What is it like?

Myself and Caoimhín are now both engineers in Ireland's energy industry. I work on generating and trading the electricity and he operates the system and gets the power to homes and businesses. Caoimhín has just been awarded a job in Brussels so we are looking forward to a new adventure there in 2020! Music still plays a huge part in our lives and we both still play cello in the Hibernian Orchestra in Dublin with other fellow Irish Apple Hillers. We are heavily involved in the artistic development and management of the orchestra and love giving back to other like-minded musicians.

How has what you learned at Apple Hill helped you in what you do now?

Apple Hill is such a diverse and multicultural community and we both feel that our experiences there have really helped us move with the ever changing society we are now finding in Ireland and Europe. Apple Hill also gave us such amazing and unique opportunities to learn and perform chamber music that we would never have had the opportunity to do elsewhere, from Bach Goldberg variations to John Adams Shaker Loops!

Can you tell us about one of your favorite Apple Hill memories?

We both have so many amazing memories both musical and nonmusical! Being involved in the first ever Dirt Road Ensemble was so much fun, every faculty concert was always so inspirational! Skit nights with Mike Kelley trying out his best Irish accent while accompanying him with some Irish traditional music still gives us a giggle..."I be thanking you now..."