

NEW  
MUSIC  
DUBLIN

CORCORAN AT NEW  
MUSIC DUBLIN

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29th April 2022, 12.30pm | Kevin Barry Recital Room, National Concert Hall, Dublin

**Frank Corcoran** *Nine Looks at Pierrot*

**Rhona Clarke** *Non-Stop*

**Frank Corcoran** *Melodies and Mobiles*

**Elaine Agnew** *Green*

**Frank Corcoran** *Caoinnes and Canons* (World Premiere)

**Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble**

**Sinead Hayes** conductor

**Joanne Quigley-McParland** violin • **David McCann** cello

**Aisling Agnew** flutes • **Sarah Watts** clarinets • **Daniel Browell** piano

## PROGRAMME NOTES

Great minds think alike. Hard Rain commissioned a new work from Irish composer Frank Corcoran for their new 2021/22 season, only to discover that New Music Dublin had done the same. It felt appropriate, therefore, that Hard Rain's performance at NMD this year should celebrate these two new works and include Corcoran's *Nine Looks at Pierrot*, a work that features on the ensemble's recent album release.

Sandwiched between this celebration of Corcoran's music we have two works previously commissioned by the ensemble. From Hard Rain's 2020/21 commissioning season we present Rhona Clarke's propulsive and unrelenting *Non-Stop*. Elaine Agnew's *Green* is hot off the press and is one of this season's newly commissioned works. This is a second chance to hear it if you missed its premiere in Hard Rain's *Ink Still Wet 5* concert in January.

### **Frank Corcoran** *Nine Looks at Pierrot*

These short nine miniatures for a 'Pierrot' Ensemble line-up obviously refer to the shadowy little figure behind Schoenberg's masterpiece. I use here his five instruments in order to colour my 'Looks' or to 'look at' pictures of this traditional figure from Commedia dell' Arte. Pierrot is clown and ironist and suffering human being in one (unlike Petruschka he is no carved puppet or doll...). The brittle, bright, short portraits of the first three 'Looks' give way to the 'lusingando' of the fourth, though it too is smothered. No. 5 is whimsical, no. 6 mysterious, no. 7 trilling and thrilling, no. 8 bursting, catastrophic laconicity. No. 9, the longest is also the darkest: plangent bass clarinet and low piano bemoan and announce a thunderous end before a short last recall of Pierrot's 'lusingando' playfulness brings a sharp ending. 'Sic transit gloria.'

— Frank Corcoran

### **Rhona Clarke** *Non-Stop*

*Non-Stop* arose out of a desire to create a visceral and fast-paced work. The main idea, heard at the start and repeated elsewhere, comes from an earlier piece: *A Different Game*, Piano Trio No 4. I felt that this material had scope for further expansion and so used it again in combination with tapping on the body of the stringed instruments, tapping or slapping the frame of the piano, repeated-note articulations on the woodwind and the occasional scalic or melodic lines which burst into the texture. Above all, a definite pulse but irregular meter underpins the musical discourse. Combined with an unchanging tempo throughout, this gives a persistent, energetic and almost mechanical quality, but also with a definite sense of playfulness.

— Rhona Clarke

*Non-Stop* was commissioned by Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble for their 2020/2021 concert series with support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland National Lottery Funds.

## **Frank Corcoran** *Melodies and Mobiles*

I sent all 13 (?) dog-chewed pages off to my Wicklow copyist today. 'Speed, bonny score, like a bird on the wing'.

I use the alto flute throughout, also the bass clarinet. I went back to my early 'Mobiles' macro counterpoint of my seventies - *Piano Trio* (1978) and *Wind Quintet* (1978) both have good writing. Here I wanted to go back to that airy lightness, transparent, often gossamer effect of multitempi, my 'holes' into my diagonal or oblique harmonies. It's heavy with my tritones and minor seconds, following on from last year's *Caoines and Canons*.

— Frank Corcoran

Commissioned by Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble with funds from Arts Council N.I.

## **Elaine Agnew** *Green*

During the first lockdown BBC Radio 3 commissioned a number of composers to write short Lockdown Postcards - my resulting *Glás* for solo oboe reflected our yearning at that time for the great outdoors and how every year without fail, the world re-greens itself as young green shoots push their way up through cracks in the concrete. As I was writing *Glás*, I imagined a much larger grown-up version, and so for this commission *Green* I took a number of the smaller cells or shoots and assigned them to an instrument and then let nature take its course!

— Elaine Agnew

Commissioned by Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble with funds from Arts Council N.I.

## **Frank Corcoran** *Caoines and Canons*

Tritones sing sorrow. The minor second sighs and weeps.... Composers since Gesualdo know that. *Caoines and Canons* uses both intervals galore in an endless chain of suffering that is as old as Lutoslawsky's *Musique Funebre* of the fifties...

My tone-row is broken, mangled. This is musical suffering, intervallic woe. (And the shadow of that great Irish Famine Caoine, *Sail Óg Rua* is near.)

My work tells and yells, its canons short, breathless. No programme but, yes, a narration of sorrow as old as Vergil's *Sunt Lacrimae rerum*.

This one-movement essay in sadness ( - But exactly what is 'sadness?') sings its own story, its Caoine in string and wind tones.

At the end, my bass-clarinet sounds that age-old, three-tone motif of the Gregorian requiem mass, 'KYR (IE)' .

— Frank Corcoran

### **PRINCIPAL FUNDER**



## BIOGRAPHIES

### Frank Corcoran

Frank Corcoran was born in Tipperary in 1944 and studied in Dublin, Maynooth, Rome and Berlin (with Boris Blacher). He was the first Irish Composer to have his Symphony No. 1 (1980) premiered in Vienna. He was a music inspector for the Department of Education in Ireland from 1971 to 1979. He was awarded a composer fellowship by the Berlin Künstlerprogramm in 1980, a guest professorship in West Berlin in 1981, and was professor of music in Stuttgart in 1982. Since 1983 he has been professor of composition and theory in the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Hamburg. From 1989-90 he was visiting professor and Fulbright Scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and he has been a guest lecturer at Princeton University, CalArts, Harvard University, Boston College, New York University and Indiana University among others.

Awards include Studio Akustische Kunst First Prize 1996 for his *Joycepeak Music* (1995), Premier Prix at the 1999 Bourges International Electro-acoustic Music Competition for his composition *Sweeney's Vision* (1997), the 2002 Swedish EMS Prize for *Quasi Una Missa* (1999). In 2013 his *Eight Haikus* won the I.F.C.M. First Prize. *Two Unholy Haikus* won the Sean O'Riada prize at the 2013 Cork Choral Festival.

CDs of his music have been released on the Black Box, Marco Polo, Col-Legno, Wergo, Composers' Art, IMEB-Unesco, Zeitklang and Caprice labels. *Rhapsodic Celli – The Music of Frank Corcoran* was released in 2017 by national Irish radio station Lyric RTE FM. In 2021, Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble released its double-CD *A Terrible Beauty* including Corcoran's *Nine Looks at Pierrot*.

Corcoran is a founding member of *Aosdána*, Ireland's state-sponsored academy of creative artists. [frankcorcoran.com](http://frankcorcoran.com)

### Rhona Clarke

Rhona Clarke was born in Dublin where her early musical experiences were in piano and choral singing. She studied music at University College, Dublin, and completed a PhD at Queen's University, Belfast. Clarke's output includes choral, chamber, orchestral and electronic works. She has received commissions from RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, The Sydney Philharmonia Chorus, Chamber Choir Ireland, the Choir of the Chapels Royal, Cork International Choral Festival, Concorde, Galway Music Residency, Music Network and the National Concert Hall, among others. Her music has been performed and broadcast throughout Ireland and worldwide.

*SHIFT* for orchestra, a work commissioned by RTÉ and performed by the RTÉNSO conducted by Gavin Maloney, was selected to represent Ireland in the 2014 International Rostrum of Composers. Since 2009 she has been collaborating with visual artist Marie Hanlon, including short experimental films with music, live music with visual projections and joint exhibitions. Her chamber music includes four works for piano trio, which have been performed by Concorde, the Fidelio Trio and the Vienna Mozart Trio and three string quartets performed by ConTempo, Quatuor Voce, and Birds On A Wire quartets.

Her music has been featured at a number of Contemporary Music Festivals including New Music Dublin, Sounding A Voice, Valentia Island Chamber Music Festival, Great Music in Irish Houses, Belfast Chamber Music Festival, *Donne in Musica* (Italy) and *Begegnungen* (Austria). Her work has been recorded on various compilation albums and two portrait CDs: one of her chamber music performed by The Fidelio Trio, and the most recently of her choral music performed by The State Choir LATVIJA, both on the Métier, Divine Art Recordings, label.

Clarke has been a member of *Aosdána*, Ireland's affiliation of creative artists since 2006.

## **Elaine Agnew**

Elaine Agnew's many works have been performed worldwide by artists including the Škampa Quartet, RTÉ National Symphony and Concert Orchestra, Sir James Galway and Angela Hewitt and featured at major festivals including the BBC London Proms, Slovenian Unicum Festival and London BMIC Cutting Edge in many prestigious venues: the Carnegie, Wigmore and Royal Albert Halls.

Recent premieres include *Remarkable*, commissioned by Arts Care and the Ulster Orchestra, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and *Turnabout*, commissioned by Maiden Voyage Dance. Recent and future premieres include *Neighbours* by Wicklow ensemble Sonamus, *Thy Kiss* by the Choral Scholars of UCD, *Skinny Dipping* for New Dublin Voices and her opera *Paper Boat* commissioned for Galway 2020 Capital of Culture, alongside works for Walled City Music, Charles Wood Singers and Belfast Philharmonic Society.

In 2008 she was appointed as the first RTÉ lyric fm Composer-in-Residence and in 2015 elected to *Aosdána*, Ireland's state-sponsored body of creative artists.

## **Sinead Hayes (conductor)**

Sinead Hayes is no stranger to the world of contemporary music. Now in her sixth season as conductor of the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble, she has already this season premiered Raymond Deane's new opera *Vagabones* for Opera Collective Ireland, working with the Crash Ensemble, and was musical supervisor for Irish National Opera's production of the installation opera *This Hostel Life*.

Highlights of the 2018/19 season included returns to Northern Ireland Opera to conduct Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* and *Caffrey: The Chronic Identity Crisis of Pamplémousse*, as well as being assistant conductor and chorus master for all of Irish National Opera's mainstage productions including Verdi's *Aida* and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*.

Hayes graduated with a BMus in violin and composition from City University London, and completed her MMus in orchestral conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester. She has participated in numerous masterclasses across Europe with mentors including Johannes Schlaefli, Peter Eotvos and Martyn Brabbins.

Highlights of the 2019/20 season include working for the first time with the Ulster Orchestra and conducting a new opera by Elaine Agnew for Galway European Capital of Culture 2020, alongside premiering works by Irish composers with HRSE.

## Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble

Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble (HRSE) is a contemporary music group from Belfast devoted to the performance of modern and contemporary music. It was founded by Greg Caffrey in 2013, who remains the Artistic Director, and its remit is to give a voice to Irish composers and to perform their music in the context of works by leading exponents of contemporary music from elsewhere in Europe and the rest of the world. It aims to programme music that otherwise cannot be heard live locally, while serving as an outlet for the talent of highly specialist performers and acting as a meeting point for their innovation, ideas and enthusiasm.

HRSE are ensemble in residence at Queen's University Belfast and are based at the Sonic Arts Research Centre QUB, a state of the art facility opened by Karlheinz Stockhausen in 2004. [hardrainensemble.com](http://hardrainensemble.com)



Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble

# NEW MUSIC DUBLIN 2022

Welcome one and welcome all to New Music Dublin 2022. It's so good to see you!

I very well remember just after the end of the last live, in-person festival in March 2020, standing at the bus stop on what was the day of the first confirmed Covid case in Ireland, wondering how long it would be before we were all together again: a few months at most, I reckoned. Certainly not later than the 2021 Festival?

And yet ... here we all are, 2 years and one fully-digital 2021 lockdown New Music Dublin later - finally together, Back in the Room. I'm not feeling the need to add to the screeds and reams that have been written and will be written about the pandemic; suffice to say, I suspect very few of us right now are able to say exactly how we feel about what just happened to us for the past 2 years.

Which is probably the perfect state to be in for coming to this smorgasbord of a festival! Here you will find musical expression for a vast array of emotional states: joy, elation, confusion, melancholy, nostalgia, awe, contentment, despair, exasperation, bliss, relief, rapture, dismay, tenderness - and many others we don't really have words for, often all at the same time, and often all piled one on top of the other.

You'll also find an increasing variety and diversity of people writing and performing the music that you hear. This festival we are delighted to include world premieres by young composers for young performers in the Cór na nÓg and Cór Linn programme, thrilling new work from emerging under-represented voices in the NCH Creative Lab project, new work by and for young musicians in BrassFest, new work with sign language in George Higgs' ground-breaking new performance, and the up-and-coming compositional voices represented by the Irish Composers' Collective. Add to this work by a whole raft of Ireland's most garlanded, radical and highly-regarded professional composers and music creators, and - well - there's something by everyone, not just for everyone!

Our hope is that somewhere in amongst the 39 world premieres, 10 Irish premieres, multiple repeat listens and everything else that is going on in the 25 concerts this weekend, there are likely to be expressions for many things you have been feeling recently. Whether it's something massive and orchestral, or something choral, or something played by a solo musician, or something heard via a hidden loudspeaker somewhere, it may catch you unawares, just like that - and remind you, that although we have all been desperately separated from each other these past two years, someone somewhere, maybe quite a lot like you, also felt what you were going through back there. Although we went through it all by ourselves, we also, in no small measure, went through it all together.

And here we all are! Welcome back!!

**John Harris**

Festival Director, New Music Dublin

## NEW MUSIC DUBLIN

*Thursday 28 April 2022*

### MUSIC ALLIANCE IRELAND LAUNCH

**TOTEMIC:** Nathan Sherman and Alex Petcu  
presented by Ergodos

**CHORAL SKETCHES:** Chamber Choir Ireland

**ÉTUDES:** Kevin Volans and Jill Richards

**PERSONHOOD:** Oslo Sinfonietta and Andreas  
Borregaard

**TONNTA** presented by Ergodos

*Friday 29 April 2022*

**AMPLIFY LIVE** with Contemporary Music Centre

**CORCORAN AT NMD:** Hard Rain  
SoloistEnsemble

**YOU HEARD IT FIRST:** Crash Ensemble

### ICC ALBUM LAUNCH

**IN MEMORIAM / IN CELEBRATION:**  
National Symphony Orchestra and Ensemble  
Interforma

**AVENUE AZURE** presented by Ergodos

**SONGS FROM THE BRAIN BOOK:** Diatribe  
album launch with Diamanda La Berge Dramm

*Saturday 30 April 2022*

**BRASSFEST** in partnership with RIAM

**LANDSCAPE SERIES** presented by Diatribe

**MUSIC FOR 5 SILENT POEMS:** George Higgs

**PUTTING IT INTO MUSIC:** Crash Ensemble

**A BRIEF DESCENT INTO DEEP TIME:**  
Chamber Choir Ireland

**DIATRIBE – JAZZ TRIPLE BILL**

*Sunday 1 May 2022*

**NARLI RECORD FAIR**

**THINGS THAT NEVER DIE:** Cór na nÓg and  
Cór Linn

**NCH CREATIVE LAB FINALE**

**NARLI AGM 2022**

**ISABELLE O'CONNELL PIANO**

**DELIVERANCE:** RTÉ Concert Orchestra

**THE POSSIBILITIES FROM HERE ARE  
ENDLESS:** Crash X Diamanda Dramm

**COLM O'HARA 10TET** presented by Diatribe

*Throughout the festival:*

**ULYSSES JOURNEY 2022:** newly  
commissioned music and film works

**WINGFORM:** an installation of music and  
light

**REACTIONS** film screenings

**HAUNTOLOGY**

**NMDX** (hosted by The Contemporary Music  
Centre, Ireland and New Music Dublin)

New Music Dublin is a partnership between:

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