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Composing the Island

A century of music in Ireland 1916–2016

Sponsored by Bord na Móna and presented by RTÉ and the National Concert Hall as part of RTÉ 1916 and Ireland 2016

7-25 September, 2016
National Concert Hall, Dublin

An exciting new centenary project, *Composing the Island: A century of music in Ireland 1916-2016*, has been launched by Heather Humphreys, Minister for Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts & the Gaeltacht with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra on the stage of the National Concert Hall. Over three weeks in September (7th – 25th), *Composing the Island* will present 29 concerts of orchestral, choral, instrumental, song and chamber music by Irish composers written between 1916 and 2016.

The generous support of **Bord na Móna** has enabled **RTÉ** and the **National Concert Hall** to give this musical story the attention it deserves as a major cultural flagship for the Ireland 2016 centenary programme.

How this music developed, and the times and circumstances in which it was written will unfold over 3 weeks of concerts which will include 6 major orchestral concerts performed by the **RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra** and the **RTÉ Concert Orchestra**. Over the course of the festival, almost 200 works by some 90 different Irish composers will be performed and recorded for broadcast; with additional concerts of choral, chamber, song, mixed ensembles and instrumental music recitals, alongside a series of supporting talks, related events and an accompanying published book.

Many of Ireland's leading performers will take part. They include **Crash Ensemble, Chamber Choir Ireland, Concorde, Vanbrugh Quartet, Fidelio Trio, Hugh Tinney**, and **Robin Tritschler** and, given the vital role played by the army musicians during the early years of the state, a performance will be given by the **Band of the Defence Forces School of Music**.

To coincide with the festival, *'The Invisible Art - A Century of Music by Irish Composers: 1916-2016'*, a full colour illustrated book, will be published by New Island in association with RTÉ. The content, commissioned for the publication from an array of writers covering this key period in Irish musical composition, will bring to life music composition in Ireland across a 100 year period. The book is edited by **Michael Dervan**, music critic of The Irish Times.

Audiences will encounter music by familiar names – such as Harty, Boydell, Ó Riada and Barry – alongside lesser-known yet significant figures – such as Rhoda Coghill, Ina Boyle and many confident contemporary voices.

John Horgan Chairman of Bord na Móna said,
“We in Bord na Móna are delighted to be sponsors to this important retrospective of Irish composed music. In providing an opportunity to this generation to listen to and admire the music of the last century, we hope that even greater music will be heard and appreciated in the next”.

Moya Doherty, Chair of the RTÉ Board said:

”It is wonderful to take the opportunity afforded by the centenary year to reflect the story of how contemporary Ireland has emerged through the prism of our arts and the voices of our composers. Given the pivotal role played by RTÉ in broadcasting music from the early days of the new State and, in particular, through an ongoing commitment to providing orchestral music that dates back to 1948, we are proud that as part of RTÉ 1916, *Composing the Island* and the major publication that will be *The Invisible Art* will tell that ongoing story and will celebrate and showcase our music in a way and on a scale that has never before been attempted.”

The CEO of the National Concert Hall, Simon Taylor said,

“The National Concert Hall is delighted, in this the centenary year, to have the opportunity work together with RTÉ in devising this significant project in which the story of Irish classical music is chronicled and told over a 100 year period. This may be the first time that audiences will have the opportunity to really delve into and enjoy the unfolding of this musical story that encapsulates the essence of the classical music landscape between 1916 and 2016. Our thanks go to RTÉ and in particular to our sponsors Bord na Móna for their unwavering and generous support.

Along the way, some of the highlights will include:

- The earliest orchestral piece, an Irish Rhapsody from 1914 by Charles Villiers Stanford, friend of Brahms and Offenbach, teacher of Vaughan Williams and Holst.
- The newest orchestral composition, c, commissioned by RTÉ especially for *Composing the Island* from Birmingham-based Dubliner Andrew Hamilton, whose teachers include Kevin Volans, will premiere at the festival.
- A new work by Ian Wilson, exploring the human, personal aspects of 1916 through the last words of the captured leaders of the Rising.
- Additional world premieres by Ronan Guilfoyle, Philip Hammond, Stephen McNeff and Eoghan Desmond.
- A century of choral music with **Chamber Choir Ireland**.
- Two recitals of The Irish Song Book with **Robin Tritschler** and **Rachel Kelly**.
- The groundbreaking string quartet by Frederick May, one of the most individual statements from an Irish composer in the first half of the 20th century.
- Other significant chamber music from across the century played by the **Vanbrugh** and **RTÉ Contempo** quartets and **Fidelio Trio**.
- Striking recent orchestral works including Donnacha Dennehy’s *Crane* with its title reflecting that symbol of the construction boom of Celtic Tiger Ireland; and Stephen Gardner’s *NEVER...NEVER...NEVER* drawing its title from a famous Ian Paisley speech protesting against the signing of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.
- Recitals by leading Irish pianists **Hugh Tinney** and **Michael McHale**.
- ‘Here and Now’: 21st century music in the **Crash Ensemble** new music marathon.
- **RTÉ Cór na nÓg** presenting music written especially for children’s voices since 1980
- Festival finale with the **RTÉ Philharmonic Choir** and the **RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra** in a choral concert that brings *Composing the Island* back full circle, with two works from the 1920s by now largely forgotten figures, Norman Hay and Rhoda Coghill.

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