

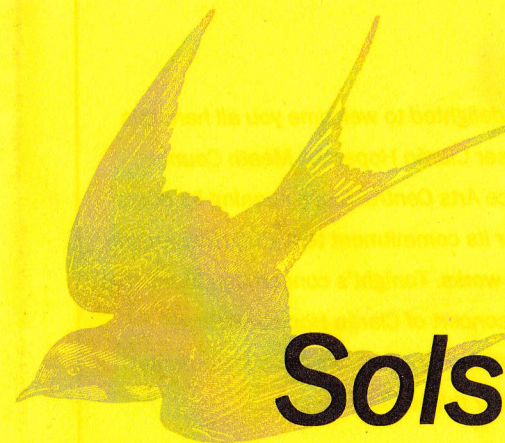
Fergus Sheil is one of Ireland's leading conductors. He has appeared in concert with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, the Ulster Orchestra, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Northern Sinfonia and many others. He has worked with the Irish and Australian National Youth Orchestras and is conductor of the Dublin Youth Orchestra.

In Opera, he has worked for Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera Ireland, Opera Theatre Company and Wexford Festival Opera. He is currently music director of Lyric Opera Productions.

Strongly committed to contemporary music, Fergus Sheil has conducted 30 premieres of new works including Arvo Pärt's *The Deer's Cry*, which he premiered with the Latvian State Choir in Drogheda in 2008. From 2002 – 2004 he worked as director of Crash Ensemble, Ireland's leading new music group.

Internationally Fergus has undertaken engagements in the UK, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, France, USA, South Africa and Australia. He has made numerous recordings for radio broadcast for both RTÉ Lyric FM and BBC Radio 3.

With thanks to Ciarán Hope, Elaine Agnew, Fergus Sheil, Deirdre Kinahan, Shay Carry, Solstice Musicians, Gerardette Bailey, Cathy Martin, Rachel Carey of Meath County Council Arts Office, Belinda Quirke, Ronan Fingleton, Áine Kiernan and staff of Solstice Arts Centre



Solstice

Monday 21st June 8.00p.m.

Solstice Arts Centre

Elaine Agnew

Maisy Daly's Rainbow (2008)

Interval

Ciarán Hope

Childhoods End (2003)

In God We Trust (2009)

A Park Bench (2005)

Ryan's Cry (2009)

Two Lovers Quarrel (2008)

Solstice (2010) Premiere



Ciarán Hope

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2 Lovers Quarrel (2008)

Solstice (2010) *Premiere*

Funded by Meath County Council, "Solstice" was commissioned under the Per Cent for Art Scheme attached to Solstice Arts Centre ACCESS Capital programme.

Brona Cahill (violin 1) Feilimídh Nunan (violin 2)

Beth McNinch (viola) Gráinne Hope (cello)

Rebecca Halliday (cor anglais) Ian Forbes (bassoon)

Anne Macken (flute) Tristan Russcher (piano)

Conductor Fergus Sheil

***Childhoods End* flute, cor anglais, bassoon, piano & string quartet, 2003**

Written in 2003 as the soundtrack to a short animation film, the original arrangement was for orchestra and electronics.

Childhoods End, follows the story of Philmore Fauntleroy. In the vein of Edward Scissorhands, we learn that this little boy was built by his mother, but has no eyes. The music speaks for him as he goes back and forth asking his mother for eyes, and back to his room to dream of new eyes. Eventually, she relents, and he gets his eyes, but things don't end as well as you'd expect. Poor little Philmore can't handle the horrors of the world that he sees...

Selections from the TV series Joni and Friends

A 2009 writing assignment on the TV series *Joni and Friends* led to a fresh wave of creativity for Ciarán. The series, which follows a group working to improve the lives of children with severe disabilities, required music to help convey the questions and challenging experiences the children faced everyday. The writing style was simple, emotional and reflective, capturing the dignity and innocence of the children's interactions with the world surrounding them.

In God We Trust

piano & bassoon, 2009

This piece was originally written in 2009 for clarinet and piano, but has since been arranged for several solo instruments including cello, viola and bassoon.

The first selection from the show, *In God We Trust*, is a meditative exploration of the idea of God, spirituality and trust that calls for dramatic, expressive performance from the soloist. The piece begins with an opening piano call to the senses, that is soon followed by a passionate melody from the bassoon, supported by a hypnotic ostinato style piano motif. As the melody develops, it transforms it into a more passionate minor-key theme. The piece develops these main ideas until the very end, returning to the calm mood of the opening.

Ryan's Cry

flute & string quartet, 2009

Originally written in 2009 for flute, clarinet and chamber orchestra, this arrangement for flute and string quartet, capturing the essence of the composition in a clear manner.

The second selection, *Ryan's Cry*, reflects on a deep inner cry that comes through us all from time to time. That cry generates an unwavering primal will to live or persevere that we reach for in moments of deep spiritual or physical distress. Originally written for flute, clarinet and chamber orchestra, this arrangement concentrates of the contrapuntal nature of various interacting melodic patterns. The piece opens with a long and heartfelt tone from the flute, however the violin soon enters and joins the flute with a haunting romantic melody. The central episode is more dramatic in mood, before a forceful melodic rendition in the cello re-introduces the main theme above evolving counterpoint within the second violin and viola parts. Finally, the cry fades.

A Park Bench

flute, cor anglais, bassoon, piano & string quartet, 2005

Written for guitar, clarinet, bass clarinet, flute and chamber orchestra as part of the 2005 GRACE feature film score. The movie tells the story of a young woman's battle with terminal illness.

The piece *A Park Bench* is a description of sitting contemplating on a bench in a park with nature. Opening with a lush melody on the soulful cor anglais, the piece is pushed forward by a languid counter melody on the piano. Eventually they are joined by an evocative combination of violin and flute, before the entire ensemble enters softly to provide a rich harmonic texture to the lazy counterpoint. A sonorous interplay evolves between bassoon

and cor anglais above the string harmonies before the violin proclaims one last melodic phrase as the piece

Two Lovers Quarrel flute, cor anglais, bassoon, piano & string quartet, 2008

From the feature film score to *SCREW CUPID*, this piece was originally written in 2008 for full orchestra and electronics.

The piece is an impressionistic work that calls for strong, dramatic playing from the violin and flute. The opening (grave) begins with exposed piano and cor anglais notes over sustained violin tones. The entire ensemble swells to a climax, signifying a clash, before falling away again. After a short *larghetto* exploring the calm after the storm, the solo violin is joined by a passionate romantic melody from the flute, in a touching *andante moderato* passage. Another clash emerges from the beauty in the form of a electronic texture full of confusion and isolation. Eventually, from the darkness, beauty emerges again, in the form of a new piano idiom. The final section begins with a short transition, before solo violin guides the ensemble to a sad uncertain ending.

Solstice flute, cor anglais, bassoon, piano & string quartet, 2010

This piece was commissioned and written in 2009-2010 under the Per Cent for Art Scheme attaching to Solstice Arts Centre's ACCESS Capital programme. 'Solstice' is intended to be the 'signature' piece for the Arts Centre.

To capture the essence of County Meath in the commissioned work, the composer felt the strongest connection with both the shifting times of daylight and nightfall, and with the juxtaposition of the seasons. As the name of the centre summing up what he loved most about Meath's essence, he felt compelled to call the piece 'Solstice'.

Using the title as a significant aspect of the form of the music, the piece evolves from a simple genesis and along the way evokes change and possibility as it irrevocably marched towards its climax, reminiscent of the sun's rise on those fateful days of solstice, with which our county and ancestors are so irrefutably intertwined.

Drawing on the harmony that exists between the solstice inflections through the year and times past, the composer chose a melody that he describes as being "androgynous in its origins". Is it contemporary, classical, or traditional? Is it ancient? Layering the melodic evolution above the energetic evolution of the piece, presents the melody in several of its forms, culminating in its most traditional yet classically rich rendition as the piece climaxes and ultimately ends with the listener left to ponder, in the silence of a Solstice.

For tonight's concert, the original music from the play will be performed live with the narrator telling the story as interludes between the music pieces. Representing the colours of the rainbow and highlighting particular characters like Mammy Latino and Master Kane, the music also provides soundscapes for threshing and an adventurous car journey!

Elaine Agnew In 2008, Elaine was appointed as the first RTÉ Lyric fm Composer-in-Residence in association with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, and her first two commissions are featured on the recent CD *Hiccup*: RTÉ Lyric fm commissions 2002-2008. A second year's residency in 2010 includes appearances for RTÉ Cór na nÓg and a fanfare *Jump Up* for the newly appointed Principal Conductor Alan Buribayev and the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra.



Elaine's many works have been performed worldwide by artists such as Lontano, the Vogler Quartet, the European Union Chamber Orchestra, the Irish Chamber Orchestra and pianists Angela Hewitt and Romain Descharmes. Many of her works have been recorded for commercial release, most recently *Seagull* on the Irish Diatribe label with pianist Isabelle O'Connell.

Elaine has directed extensive education and community projects and is in demand for her innovative and creative work in outreach. She is Artistic Advisor of Music Network's Continuing Professional Development Programme. She is currently working on commissions from the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the Skampa Quartet and the young Carlow choir *Aspiro*. Elaine was awarded a Major Individual Arts Award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to work on a new chamber opera and has recently returned from Australia where she worked with composer and mentor Elena Kats-Chernin.

Deirdre Kinahan is Artistic Director of Tall Tales Theatre Co. and playwright. She has written many plays including *MOMENT*, *Salad Day*, *Hue & Cry*, *Melody*, *Attaboy Mr Synge*, *Rum & Raisin*, *Summer Fruits*, *Knocknashee*, *Passage* and *Bé Carna*. For children; *Maisy Daly's Rainbow*, *Rebecca's Robin*, *Snow Child* and *The Tale of the Blue Eyed Cat* and for Radio: *Bogboy* (RTE1).

Deirdre is a winner of the Tony Doyle Bursary 09 with BBC NI and is currently under commission to The Abbey Theatre. Her play *Hue & Cry* features at the First Irish Festival in New York this year and *MOMENT* plays at the Bush Theatre, London in Spring 2011. Deirdre's plays receive regular production both in Ireland and internationally and are published by Samuel French Ltd., www.irishplayography.com and Tall Tales/Liberty Press.