

Hard Rain  
Soloist Ensemble

25 — 2024

SEASON



PRINCIPAL FUNDER



Ensemble in residence at QUB



QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST

Northern Ireland's  
cutting edge  
contemporary  
music group

Year	Percentage of people who have ever been in a romantic relationship
1990	85%
1995	85%
2000	82%
2005	88%
2010	85%



# Arts Council of Northern Ireland

## Foreword

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**The Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble occupy a unique position at the top of Northern Ireland's contemporary classical music scene. They offer audiences something very special indeed: the chance to experience music that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to appreciate live, performed at the highest possible level by an exceptional group of musicians. In addition to introducing audiences to the widest range of modern genres and musical influences, as regular commissioners of new work, the Ensemble supports the continuing creation and development of new music. Their concerts are renowned for the premiering of new pieces by Northern Ireland's leading composers alongside other landmark international works.**

The achievements of the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble reflect the core values of the Arts Council's strategic plan, 'Championing the Arts 2024-34', particularly in their ambition to develop and showcase chamber music that is experimental, innovative and excellent. As principal investor through our National Lottery funds, we are proud to support another outstanding programme from one of the most interesting and dynamic ensembles currently performing anywhere on these islands.

**Ciaran Scullion**

Head of Music and Opera,  
Arts Council of Northern Ireland



# Welcome from the Artistic Director

**Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble's 24/25 season retains a focus on local composers while also moving beyond our Belfast base with a growing number of international endeavours. This action-packed 12<sup>th</sup> year of concerts brings the global contemporary music scene ever-closer.**



**Aisling Agnew**

Artistic Director Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble

Building on our connections in Ireland and internationally, this season offers an extensive range of collaborative activities and imaginative programmes. Listeners across NI are inherently curious, adventurous and excited by innovation, and so we are thrilled to share a wealth of new music with our growing local audiences as well as bringing the richness of current Irish composition further afield.

We celebrate collaborations with illustrious artists (composers, sound-artists, instrumentalists, singers, song-writers, conductors, dancers, choreographers, film-makers, writers and poets) which enhance our connections across the arts and open doors to new locations and concert formats.

Whilst we begin our Concert Season as always in Autumn, the summer months of 2024 remained busy with workshops this year. Starting several new partnerships, we enjoyed working with *Ulster Touring Opera*, at the first *NI Film-Scoring Summer School* with *Dumbworld* in Derry, and the first *Belfast Conducting Workshop*. With some sessions in August unfortunately impacted by the shameful xenophobic riots across our city, we also highlight and celebrate the cultural diversity and positivity that reflects Northern Ireland's changing demographics. We take some inspiration from this year's Venice Biennale entitled **Stranieri Ovunque - Foreigners Everywhere**. From a series of works by the Paris-born and Palermo-based Claire Fontaine collective, consisting of neon sculptures in different colours that render in a growing number of languages the words "Foreigners Everywhere". The phrase comes, in turn, from the name of a Turin collective who fought racism and xenophobia in Italy in the early 2000s.



*“ The expression Stranieri Ovunque has several meanings. First of all, that wherever you go and wherever you are you will always encounter foreigners– they/we are everywhere. Secondly, that no matter where you find yourself, you are always truly, and deep down inside, a foreigner.”*

### **Adriano Pedrosa**

With this in mind, we are delighted to present *Songs of Travel*, a new work by Elaine Agnew. This *Creative Europe Cooperation Project* aims to raise awareness and foster empathy for climate change and migration through music and explores the personal stories of five individuals as they fled their troubled homelands of Syria, Vietnam, Italy, Turkey and Ukraine in search of new beginnings in Europe.


Environmentalism is perhaps most pronounced in our *Irish Forests, Rivers, Peatlands* programme. In using specialist field recordings from specific locations in Antrim, Donegal and Wicklow, we highlight the need for protective measures to be taken in maintaining unique and beautiful landscapes. We're proud to bring this programme, conceived at SARC, to *Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival* and also introduce it to local audiences at *Sound of Belfast festival*.

Our *Elemental* programme for the launch concert in Belfast and *Castleconnell Autumn Concert Series* with RTE Lyric FM in Limerick also takes inspiration from the great outdoors. Each highly-atmospheric piece shines a spotlight on our environment, history, mythology, language, and creative processes.

Conflict is the inspiration behind our *Peaceline Perspectives* programme which we bring further afield again this year to *University of Sheffield*. Having recently performed a version of this in Berlin at Classical:NEXT, this programme includes voices from across the city and resonates particularly strongly with audiences by setting a unique context for the music, especially when reflecting on Belfast's recent UNESCO City of Music status.

Portraits of significant composers allow us to focus on the output of leading figures of contemporary music such as *Piers Hellawell*, with whom we enjoy continued close collaboration. In bringing this programme to *St Andrews University New Music Week*, we celebrate Piers' honorary professor role there and mark his enormous contribution to new music in Ireland also. We also celebrate the anniversary year of two giants of *Italian Virtuosity*: Luciano Berio and Domenico Scarlatti by making musical connections across the centuries. Collaborating with us on this concert at *Ulster Museum* and also for *Distant Plains* in December we are delighted to join forces once more with the incredible *Maiden Voyage Dance*.





Collaborations with *Hashtag Ensemble* from Warsaw throughout 2025 will see their musicians join our ensemble for our *International Women's Day* concert featuring new Northern Irish and Polish music. We return the favour in July when Hard Rain musicians travel to Warsaw to perform at *AzTak festival*.

*Ink Still Wet* continues to present the newest of new music with an exclusive programme of world premieres, recent revisions and featuring some of the most established and exciting emerging composers in Northern Ireland. This year we bring the concert to both Belfast and Derry in a new partnership with *Northern Lights Project* and supported by *Ulster University*.

Local history brings us to the *Titanic Museum* for a one-day residency with *Ulster Youth Orchestra*, while music which takes inspiration from poetry and prose fills our *Folds of Time* concert, a very special Irish/French programme imbued with depth and poignancy and featuring a host of wonderful guest artists.

As always, the *thank yous* are so important, the most important of which goes to our principal funder the **Arts Council of Northern Ireland** for supporting the many strands of our work. We are honoured to be Ensemble-in-Residence at **Queen's University**, to have the opportunity to work with the wonderful staff and students all year round and be housed in their fantastic facilities. Thanks once more to **PRS Foundation**, whose funding through the Talent Development Network supports our *Ink Still Wet* scheme for which we have 17 composers involved and 5 awarded commissions. Thanks to **British Council** for supporting our *2025 UK/Poland initiative* and to **Creative Ireland** for supporting our *Contemporary Cities* project with Limerick City Council. Most of all we thank our supportive friends of the ensemble and our amazing audiences who take this journey with us.

Hard Rain continue to push the boundaries, and your enthusiasm, excitement and support for what we do is what makes it all worthwhile.

**Aisling Agnew**

Artistic Director Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble



# Season at a Glance





## Elemental

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2024, 6pm

Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast  
Free

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024, 8pm

All Saints Church, Limerick,  
*Castleconnell Autumn Concert Series*  
€15/10

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## Surround Sounds:

Irish Forests, Rivers  
and Peatlands

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024, 5pm

SARC, Queen's University Belfast  
Free, reserve tickets

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024, 4pm

Huddersfield Town Hall, *Huddersfield*  
*Contemporary Music Festival*  
£16/£6 (under 30)

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## Peaceline Perspectives

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024, 7.30pm

Firth Hall, University of Sheffield, Sheffield  
£5

## Distant Plains

with Maiden Voyage Dance

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024, 7.30 pm

Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast  
£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

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## Ink Still Wet

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025, 7pm

Recital Room, Foyle Arts Centre,  
Ulster University, Derry  
£8/5

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025, 7.30pm

Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast  
£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

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## Sólás

Charity Concert

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2025, 6.30pm

Waterfront Hall, Belfast  
£10-20





## Featured Young Artists

Orla McGarrity &  
Laoise Corrigan

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2025, 4pm

Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast  
£5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

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## Piers Hellowell Portrait

New Music Week St Andrews

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025, 7.30pm

Laidlaw Music Centre, St Andrews  
Free

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## Songs of Travel

Hashtag Ensemble  
Collaboration

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 1.10pm

Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast  
Free

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## Pierrette

International Women's Day  
Concert, Hashtag Ensemble  
Collaboration

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 7.30pm

Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast  
£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

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## Ulster Touring Opera The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 2pm & 4pm

St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh  
£0-10

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## New Music Dublin Surround Sounds

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025, 3.30pm

Kevin Barry Room,  
National Concert Hall Dublin  
€17.50

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## The Sinking of the Titanic with Ulster Youth Orchestra & Limerick School of Music

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025, 5pm

Titanic Museum, Belfast  
Free



## Beijing Modern Music Festival

Belfast to Beijing

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Central Conservatory of Music,  
Beijing (China)

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## Folds of Time

in Association with  
Ulster Touring Opera

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025, 7.30pm

Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast  
£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

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## New Music Biennial GLOW

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 4.30pm

St Georges Hall, Bradford  
Free (ticketed)

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## Italian Virtuosity

with Maiden Voyage Dance

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2025, 6pm

Ulster Museum, Belfast  
£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

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## AżTak Festival

Hashtag Ensemble  
Collaboration

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Contemporary Music Centre Hashtag Lab,  
Warsaw (Poland)

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## New Music Biennial GLOW

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2025, 1pm

Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre,  
London  
Free (ticketed)

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More info and how to book at  
[www.hardrainensemble.com](http://www.hardrainensemble.com)





25



2024

SEASON



# Elemental

## Season Launch

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
Harty Room, QUB, Belfast  
6pm

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024  
All Saints Church, Castleconnell, Limerick  
Castleconnell Autumn Concert Series  
8pm  
€15/10

*Elemental* presents a unique narrative of our island. With composers featured from all corners of the country, each highly-atmospheric piece shines a spotlight on our environment, history, mythology, language, and creative processes. Intertwining instrumental reflections and inspired environmental sound worlds, this programme is a journey. Featuring some of Ireland's most established composers at the forefront of new music alongside innovative emerging composers who are shaping the future of Irish classical music.

The Castleconnell Autumn Concert Series is sponsored by Limerick City and County Council, Arts Council and Creative Ireland. The series is presented in collaboration with RTÉ Lyric FM for The Full Score Programme with Liz Nolan.

### **Green (2021)**<sup>B\*\*\*</sup>

**Elaine Agnew (1967)**

flute (piccolo), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin,  
violoncello, piano

### **Flow State (2022)**<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>

**Amy Rooney (1983)**

flute (alto flute), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin,  
violoncello, piano

### **Flourishes (2023)**<sup>B\*\*</sup>

**Laura Heneghan (1999)**

flute (piccolo), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin,  
violoncello, piano

### **Macalla Mhacha (2023)**<sup>B\*</sup>

**Anita Mawhinney (1974)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### **To those who wait (2008)** World premiere

**Fiona Linnane (1978)**

violin, piano

### **Beneath the Dark Blue Waves (2019)**<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

**Jane O'Leary (1946)**

flute, bass clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

<sup>B</sup> Belfast Concert  
<sup>\*</sup> Commissioned with funds from ACNI  
<sup>\*\*</sup> Finalist in the 6<sup>th</sup> Peter Rosser Award

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from ACNI  
<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> Commissioned by New Horizons Music for HRSE,  
with funds from ACNI



# Surround Sounds:

## Irish Forests, Rivers and Peatlands

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Sound of Belfast, SARC, QUB, Belfast

5pm

Free (reserve tickets)

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024

hcmf//, Huddersfield Town Hall

4pm

£16/£6 (under 30)

This programme takes a unified approach to the intertwining of instrumental and environmental sounds. The three composers are field-recording practitioners focusing on sites which are sensitive to environmental change. These sites are the focus of continuous listening and recording practices over several years. Each piece deals with a particular ecosystem: forests, rivers and peatland – unique habitats which share sonic qualities as well as presenting distinct features. The sites are across counties Antrim, Donegal and Wicklow, a mix of public and private spaces with a range of human engagement and intervention.

These works cultivate active listening for both performers and audiences, a kind of ‘listening in the field’. This is explored through open compositional approaches, including graphic and audio scores as well as the use of field recordings from each of the sites, as well as live electronic elements. The programme is presented in an immersive spatial audio format (ambisonics), inviting the audience to a shared listening experience.

***These hills used to be forests* (2024)\*** World premiere  
hcmf//

**Robert Coleman (1989)**

flute (piccolo), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin,  
violoncello, piano, fixed media

***Soft Ground* (2024)\*** World premiere hcmf//

**Lara Weaver (1998)**

flute, clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello,  
piano, live electronics

***Crana* (2024)\*** World premiere hcmf//

**Pedro Rebelo (1972)**

flute, clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello,  
piano, live electronics

**Belfast concert contains composer talks  
and extracts from each piece**

\* Commissioned by HRSE, in collaboration with SARC



# Peaceline Perspectives

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024  
Firth Hall, University of Sheffield, Sheffield  
7.30pm  
£5

Peaceline Perspectives: Voices from a Divided City features highly evocative pieces by Northern Irish composers from the last decade. The music is interwoven with voices and soundscapes inspired by Belfast's Peaceline which separates the nationalist and loyalist communities. This performance showcases the work of multiple composers whose musical voices are shaped by their shared heritage. Greg Caffrey's *Tout* (a slang term meaning informer) reflects on the horror, danger and mistrust prevalent during Northern Ireland's Troubles. Elaine Agnew's *I want to tell you* consists of instrumental duos accompanying a pre-recorded voice track of victims, survivors and displaced families affected by conflict, while Eduard Zatriqi's *War Games* brings the programme to an impassioned and dramatic conclusion.

## **Revolver(2020)\*\***

**Ed Bennett(1975)**

flute, clarinet(bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano

## **I want to tell you(2013)**

**Elaine Agnew(1967)**

violin, violoncello, recorded voice track

## **Counterweight(2024)\*\*\*\* UK premiere**

**Ailis Ni Riain(1974)**

contra-bass clarinet, fixed media

## **Tout(2022)\***

**Greg Caffrey(1963)**

flute, piano

## **War Games(2016)\*\*\***

**Eduard Zatriqi(1987)**

flute(piccolo), clarinet(bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano

\* Commissioned with funds from ACNI

\*\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from ACNI

\*\*\* Winner of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter Rosser Award

\*\*\*\* Commissioned by Sarah Watts in partnership with the University of Sheffield, funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund



# Distant Plains

## with Maiden Voyage Dance

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Harty Room, QUB, Belfast

7.30pm

£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

Connecting Celtic nations to Asia Pacific, this programme brings together some of the most exciting voices in contemporary music. Virtuosity bounds forward in Sam Chambers award-winning piece and we showcase solo works by Sean Doherty and Liza Lim which requires wielding not one, but two bows. Celebrating new connections with Wang Lu (China/USA), Luka Ventner (Aotearoa/NZ), Lisa Robertson (Scotland) and Geoff Hannan (England/Ireland) and with inspiration drawn as widely as possible from sources such as Greek mythology, Mongolian Folk Music, Orkney and St Magnus, modern satirical TV and Italian Baroque music, this is a unique exploration of local and international composition.

We're delighted to welcome *Maiden Voyage Dance* for the first of this season's collaborations. *Maiden Voyage* is an artist-led commissioning company offering discoveries in dance with, by, and for, artists, audiences, and participants.

### ***The Dismemberment of Pentheus* (2023)\***

**Sam Chambers (1991)**

flute(alto flute), clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### ***Vestiges* (2023) Irish premiere**

**Luka Venter (1994)**

flute, violin, violoncello

### ***Birgisherað* (2017) World premiere**

**Lisa Robertson (1993)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello

### ***Divisions II* (2017)\*\***

**Sean Doherty (1987)**

solo violin

### ***Invisibility* (2009)**

**Liza Lim (1996)**

solo violoncello

### ***Breaking News* (2024) World premiere**

**Geoff Hannan (1972)**

flute, bass clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### ***From the Distant Plains II* (2010/2015)\*\*\* Irish premiere**

**Wang Lu (1982)**

flute(piccolo), clarinet(e-flat clarinet, bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano, finger cymbals

\* Winner of the 6<sup>th</sup> Peter Rosser Award

\*\* Commissioned by Claire Duff, with funds from ACNI

\*\*\* Commissioned by Toshio Hosokawa and the Takefu Music Festival





# Ink Still Wet VIII

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025

Recital Room, Foyle Arts Centre, Ulster University, Derry

7pm

£8/5

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025

Harty Room, QUB, Belfast

7.30pm

£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

*Ink Still Wet* is our annual celebration of cutting-edge premiere performances. Presenting five newly-commissioned works through PRSf Talent Development Network, we showcase a range of ensemble and solo works written specially for Hard Rain in 2024. These are programmed alongside new outings of revised works by Peter O'Doherty and Simon Mawhinney alongside Ian Wilson's recent *When I Became the Sun* for solo flute and ensemble. We're delighted to partner with the Northern Lights Project and Ulster University in Derry and to welcome guest performers Lina Andonovska, Alex Petcu and Ben Gannon for these premiere performances.

**new work (2024)\* World premiere**

**Omar Zatriqi (1987)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion

**new work (2024)\* World premiere**

**Sam Chambers (1991)**

solo violin

**new work (2024)\* World premiere**

**Anselm McDonnell (1994)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion, electronics

**In Blue and Gold (1998/2024)**

**Simon Mawhinney (1976)**

flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, vibraphone

INTERVAL

**Inflorescence (2020/2024)**

**Peter O'Doherty (1973)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion

**new work (2024)\* World premiere**

**Fionnuala Fagan-Thiébot (1981)**

solo flute, electronics

**When I Became the Sun (2023)\*\***

**Ian Wilson (1964)**

solo flute, piccolo (alto flute), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano, percussion

\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from PRSf Talent Development Network

\*\* Commissioned by Lina Andonovska, with funds from the Arts Council of Ireland



# Sólás

## Charity Concert

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Waterfront Hall, Belfast

6.30pm

£10-20

Hard Rain are delighted to perform alongside Northern Ireland Opera, M'ANAM, The Ulster Consort and The Cross Border Youth Orchestra in this fundraising event for Sólás Special Needs Charity. Based on Belfast's Ormeau Road, Sólás was established 15 years ago to provide practical supports to children and young people, (2-18yrs) with moderate to severe disabilities and their families. They are raising funds for a new purpose-built community facility.

Hard Rain will perform two beautifully atmospheric pieces both inspired by poetry. Greg Caffrey's *These are the Clouds About the Fallen Sun* was written "as an elegy, and reflects a very personal interpretation of the Yeats poem. So, rather than the accepted reading of the poem as a requiem for the demise of traditional values in the face of modernity, I have expressed here a more orthodox sense of loss. Technically the piece reflects my preoccupation, at the time of writing, with the creation of more spacious and 'beautiful' sound-worlds... The piece was written in memory of my late brother Marc Caffrey". Claude Debussy's impressionist masterpiece *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* was inspired by Mallarmé's poem and is presented here in a new arrangement for Pierrot Quintet.

***These are the Clouds about the Fallen Sun*** (2013)

**Greg Caffrey (1963)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

***Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*** (1894 arr. 2016)

**Claude Debussy (1862-1918)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano



# Featured Young Artists

## Orla McGarrity & Laoise Corrigan

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Harty Room, QUB, Belfast

4pm

£5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

Hard Rain are proud to present this recital in partnership with the Ulster Youth Orchestra. Here our two Featured Young Artists perform as soloists and with the ensemble. This year we have chosen Violinist Orla McGarrity, who is currently pursuing a Masters at RNCM in Manchester, and Flautist Laoise Corrigan, who is currently studying at Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

The programme is bookended by two recent works: Raymond Deane's 2023 commission for Hard Rain *Skew Weft* and Kevin Free's *Kittens in the Kitchen*, a finalist in the Peter Rosser Award 2024. Our Young Artists include a range of virtuosic and atmospheric solos from local composers Deirdre McKay and Daniel Quigley, alongside international counterparts: a Japanese-inspired work from Dutch composer Wil Offerman, a Dance from leading American flautist-composer Valerie Coleman, and Preludes by the Soviet-born Austrian-American Lera Auerbach.

### **Skew Weft**(2023)\*

**Raymond Deane**(1953)

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### **Danza de la Mariposa**(*Dance of the Butterfly*)(2008)

**Valerie Coleman**(1970)

solo flute

### **Tsuru-no-Sugomori**(*Nesting of Cranes*)(1999)

**Will Offerman**(1983)

solo flute

### **Masque Incidental**(1960)

**Toru Takemitsu**(1930-1996)

flute, violin

### **If a Tree Falls in the Forest**(2024) *World premiere*

**Daniel Quigley**(1999)

solo violin

### **Secundum**(2001)\*\*

**Deirdre McKay**(1972)

violin, piano

### **Preludes**(1999)

**Lera Auerbach**(1973)

violin, piano

### **Kittens in the Kitchen**(2023)\*

**Kevin Free**(1992)

flute (alto flute), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano

\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from the Arts Council of Ireland

\*\* Finalist in the 6<sup>th</sup> Peter Rosser Award

\*\*\* Commissioned by Belfast Music Society



# Piers Hellawell Portrait

## New Music Week St Andrews

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025

Laidlaw Music Centre, St Andrews

7.30pm

Free

In a long and distinguished career, Piers Hellawell has produced a body of work characterised by boundless invention, genuine discovery and deep integrity. His enduring creative partnerships are reflected in this programme presented by Hard Rain, with whom he has enjoyed a long-standing collaboration. As one of the UK's most distinguished Educators (Professor of Composition at Queen's University of Belfast 1981–2024, and now Honorary Professor of Composition at the University of St Andrews), this concert also showcases two highly talented students of Piers from the past and present. Their works will be performed alongside some of Hellawell's most celebrated chamber pieces from across the span of his composing career. His music is published by Edition Peters (London) Ltd.

St Andrews New Music Week was established in 2015 with the aim of creating a festival that draws together specialist performers to work with students on the music of emerging and establishing composers from around the world. The festival has given many notable world and territorial premieres and also forged many interdisciplinary connections. Hard Rain are delighted to be featured this year, giving workshops and performances alongside St Andrews' students and collaborating with Grammy Award-winning Lucy Schauffer for this special portrait concert.

### **Fictions** (2015)\*

**Piers Hellawell** (1956)

flute (piccolo, alto flute), bass clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### **Copicornua** (2020)\*\*

**Piers Hellawell** (1956)

solo horn

### **Five Go to Mystery Moor** (2017)\*\*\*

**Daniel Barkley** (1989–2018)

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### **Up By The Roots** (2016)\*\*\*\*

**Text: Sinéad Morrissey**

**Piers Hellawell** (1956)

violin, violoncello, piano, reader

### INTERVAL

### **Truth or Consequences** (1991)\*\*\*\*\*

**Piers Hellawell** (1956)

clarinet, violoncello, piano

### **Woodsmoke** (2023)\*\*\*\*\*

**Piers Hellawell** (1956)

clarinet, piano

### **3 Miniatures by G K Chesterton** (2024)

**Michael Chamberlain** (2003)

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, mezzo-soprano

### **Ground Truthing** (2018)\*\*\*\*\*

**Piers Hellawell** (1956)

flute (piccolo), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano

\* Commissioned by Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players  
\*\* Commissioned by the Royal Academy of Music for their '200' Celebration

\*\*\* Finalist in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter Rosser Award

\*\*\*\* Commissioned by Fidelio Trio, with funds from PRSf Beyond Borders

\*\*\*\*\* Commissioned by Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, with funds from BT

\*\*\*\*\* Commissioned by Francesco Paolo Scola

\*\*\*\*\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from ACNI



# Songs of Travel

## Hashtag Ensemble Collaborations

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
Harty Room, QUB, Belfast  
1.10pm  
Free

*Songs of Travel* is a Creative Europe Cooperation Project that aims to raise awareness and foster empathy for climate change and migration through music. In collaboration with the Austrian game developers Causa Creations, Elaine composed the specifically curated soundtrack for *Songs of Travel*, an interactive graphic novel that explores various aspects of and collectively paints a vivid picture of the topic of migration through the personal stories of five individuals as they fled their troubled homelands of Syria, Vietnam, Italy, Turkey and Ukraine in search of new beginnings in Europe.

Premiered at Music for Galway's 2024 Cellissimo Festival with the original soundtrack performed live against a large-scale projection of the visual novel, *Songs of Travel* was then performed in Sweden (Fairplay Chamber Music), Norway (Valdres Sommersymfoni), the Netherlands (Piano Biënnale) and most recently featured as part of an exhibition Substanz at the Künstlerhaus Gallery in Vienna.

### ***Songs of Travel* (2024)\***

**Elaine Agnew (1967)**

clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello,  
piano, percussion

\* Commissioned by Music for Galway, with funds from the Creative Europe Cooperation Project



# Pierrette, Int. Women's Day Concert

## Hashtag Ensemble Collaborations

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Harty Room, QUB, Belfast

7.30pm

£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

This Northern Irish/Polish programme for International Women's Day features some of the most original voices in contemporary music. With challenging, provocative, political, and even amusing subject matter, Hard Rain and Hashtag merge together to explore and execute compelling works by composers with whom we independently enjoy close collaborations.

This British Council funded initiative *Against Adversity* is presented as part of the 2025 UK/ Poland partnership. This aspect of the project sees these two cutting-edge ensembles, both formed in 2013, join forces for performances in Belfast and Warsaw.

### ***Dance with my Breath* (2015)**

**Agnieszka Stulgńska (1978)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### ***The Wind Cries over the State of her House* (2022/24)**

**Amelia Clarkson (1995)**

flute (alto flute), clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion

### ***spit it out* (2018)**

**Zaneta Rydzewska (1991)**

flute, clarinet, violin, viola, violoncello

### ***Pierrette* (2025) World premiere**

**Anita Mawhinney (1974)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion

### ***Polka is a Czech Dance* (2023)\***

**Nina Fukuoka (1988)**

flute (piccolo, alto flute), clarinet (e-flat clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano, fixed media, electronics

### ***Ghost Memories* (2024)\*\* World premiere**

**Deirdre Gribbin (1967)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, percussion

\* Commissioned by Darmstädter Ferienkurse

\*\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from ACNI



# New Music Dublin

## Surround Sounds: Irish Forests, Rivers and Peatlands

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025

Kevin Barry Room, National Concert Hall Dublin

3.30pm

€17.50

This programme takes a unified approach to the intertwining of instrumental and environmental sounds. The three composers are field-recording practitioners focusing on sites which are sensitive to environmental change. These sites are the focus of continuous listening and recording practices over several years. Each piece deals with a particular ecosystem: forests, rivers and peatland – unique habitats which share sonic qualities as well as presenting distinct features. The sites are across counties Antrim, Donegal and Wicklow, a mix of public and private spaces with a range of human engagement and intervention.

These works cultivate active listening for both performers and audiences, a kind of 'listening in the field'. This is explored through open compositional approaches, including graphic and audio scores as well as the use of field recordings from each of the sites, as well as live electronic elements. The programme is presented in an immersive spatial audio format (ambisonics), inviting the audience to a shared listening experience.

### ***These hills used to be forests*** (2024)

**Robert Coleman (1989)**

flute, clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano, fixed media

### ***Soft Ground*** (2024)

**Lara Weaver (1998)**

flute, clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano, live electronics

### ***Crana*** (2024)

**Pedro Rebelo (1972)**

flute, clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano, live electronics





# The Sinking of the Titanic

## with Ulster Youth Orchestra & Limerick School of Music

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Titanic Belfast

All-day Pop-up Performances &

5pm Ensemble Performance

Free

Hard Rain, Ulster Youth Orchestra and Limerick School of Music count down the hours to their joint ensemble performance at 5pm, appearing around the atrium of Titanic Belfast at every hour with short chamber ensemble performances. Visitors can wander between different spaces during the performances, hearing the music from many different angles.

*The Sinking of the Titanic* is inspired by the story that the band on the *RMS Titanic* continued to perform as the ship sank in 1912. It imagines how the music performed by the band would reverberate through the water for some time after they ceased performing. Composed between 1969 and 1972, the work is now considered one of the classics of experimental minimalist music. The only previous performance in Belfast was given by the Gavin Bryars Ensemble in 2012, during the centennial year of the disaster.

***The Sinking of the Titanic*** (1969)

**Gavin Bryars (1943)**

flexible instrumentation



# Beijing Modern Music Festival

## Belfast to Beijing

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China

*Belfast to Beijing* seeks to find common ground between two distinct musical cultures, through music inspired by folk history, culture and heritage. *Gortnagarn II* is a personal reflection on our connection with place, and landscape; a meditation on belonging to a very specific patch of earth and *Macalla Mhacha*, based on Celtic mythology, tells the dramatic story of Macha, ending with her famous curse against all of the men of Ulster. *These are the Clouds About the Fallen Sun* is an elegy which reflects a very personal interpretation of the Yeats poem, an expression of loss, while *Iron Horses* tells a story of a young national hero in Chinese history, Huo Qubing, who was a distinguished military general of the Western Han dynasty. The style is based on folk songs, and is imitative of traditional Chinese instruments.

*Beijing Modern Music Festival* is one of the most prestigious contemporary music festivals in Asia. Hard Rain will be in residence from 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> May, featuring this unique programme of Irish & Chinese music, while engaging with students at the *Central Conservatory of Music* through workshops and talks.

### ***These are the Clouds about the Fallen Sun* (2013)**

**Greg Caffrey (1963)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### ***Iron Horses* (2020)**

**Yue Song (1991)**

flute (piccolo), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, cello and piano

### ***Macalla Mhacha* (2023)\***

**Anita Mawhinney (1974)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### ***Gortnagarn II* (2016)\*\***

**Ryan Molloy (1983)**

alto flute, bass clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

\* Commissioned with funds from ACNI

\*\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from ACNI



# The Folds of Time

In Association with Ulster Touring Opera

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Harty Room, QUB, Belfast

7.30pm

£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

This Irish/French programme presents four pieces, each remarkably haunting in its own individual way. Greg Caffrey's new song-cycle is based on Michael Longley's 2022 collection of poems whilst Dominique Lemaître, in this dedicated piece for Hard Rain Ensemble, asks *'Is it a time lost or a time found? Or simply a suspended time?'* Gareth Williams joins the ensemble for his first *Irish Songs from the Last Page*, an exploration of where the stories and books that we read take us, and how those stories stay with us and shape us and intertwine with our memories. And with particular poignancy we present the Irish premiere of Sylvain Quoirin's beautiful six-movement suite of songs based on Meabh Quoirin's poetry about the loss of her beloved daughter Nóra.

***The Slain Birds* (2023)\*\* World premiere**

**Greg Caffrey (1963)**

piano, baritone

***Les Plis du Temps* (2024) World premiere**

**Dominique Lemaître (1953)**

alto flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

***Song from the Last Page of Guests of the Nation***

**(2024)\*\* World premiere**

**Gareth Williams (1977)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano, voice

***Nóra* (2023) Irish premiere**

**Sylvain Quoirin (1952)**

flute, harp, violin 1 & 2, viola, violoncello,  
double bass, sopranos 1 & 2

\* Commissioned with funds from ACNI

\*\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from ACNI



# New Music Biennial

## GLOW

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2025  
St Georges Hall, Bradford  
4.30pm  
Free (ticketed)

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2025  
Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, London  
1pm  
Free (ticketed)

A shimmering, magical sound-world blending the Magnetic Resonator Piano with a contemporary chamber ensemble, weaving semi-improvised elements and field recordings with intricate extended techniques. GLOW was commissioned by Hard Rain in 2025, and written by the innovative composer-pianist Xenia Pestova Bennett, who also joins the ensemble on stage.

### **GLOW** (2025)

**Xenia Pestova Bennett** (1979)

magnetic resonator piano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, shadow piano, video and electronics

**New Music Biennial** is a three-day festival celebrating the best new music across all genres from the country's most exciting composers. Organised by PRS Foundation, Southbank Centre and Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture - and presented in partnership with BBC Radio 3 and NMC Recordings - the festival supports and provides a platform for talented organisations and music creators who are pushing the boundaries of new music.



# Italian Virtuosity with Maiden Voyage Dance

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Ulster Museum, Belfast

6pm

£10/5 (Free for QUB students & staff)

*Italian Virtuosity* presents two of Italy's great composers connected by this 2025 anniversary year (born 240 years apart) and also by their unrivalled commitment to redefining instrumental virtuosity.

The programme showcases works that span each composer's lifetime, highlighting their own personal development alongside the impressive and sustained quality of their musical output. This concert is also conceived as a visual expression of virtuosity; by collaborating with *Maiden Voyage Dance* we will explore the unique movement within each Sequenza & Sonata.

Established in Belfast by Artistic Director Nicola Curry in 2001, *Maiden Voyage* is principally funded annually by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, supported by Belfast City Council and by individual Trusts and Foundations and recently through co-commission awards from the new all-island dance company *Luail*.

**Sequenza I for Flute** (1958)

Luciano Berio (1925-2003)

**Sonata in D minor kk. 9**

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1727)

**Sequenza VIII for Violin** (1976)

Luciano Berio (1925-2003)

**Sonata in A major kk. 113**

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1727)

**Sequenza IXc for Bass Clarinet** (1980)

Luciano Berio (1925-2003)

**Sonata in G major kk. 427**

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1727)

**Sequenza XIV for Violoncello** (2002)

Luciano Berio (1925-2003)



# AzTak Festival

## Hashtag Ensemble Collaboration

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025

AzTak Festival, Warsaw, Poland

Tickets on sale from [hashtag-ensemble.org](https://hashtag-ensemble.org) or on the door

The second part of our collaboration with Hashtag Ensemble, this concert at AzTak festival is a British Council funded initiative *Against Adversity* presented as part of the 2025 UK/ Poland partnership. This aspect of the project sees these two cutting-edge ensembles, both formed in 2013, join forces for performances in Belfast and Warsaw. Highlighting the festival's theme for 2025 of Contemplation, we perform works by some of our closest collaborators: Greg Caffrey, Amy Rooney and Ryan Molloy, all of which bring a distinctly reflective and personal process to the music.

### ***These are the Clouds about the Fallen Sun* (2013)**

**Greg Caffrey (1963)**

flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

### ***Flow State* (2022)\***

**Amy Rooney (1983)**

flute (alto flute), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin, violoncello, piano

### ***Gortnagarn II* (2016)\*\***

**Ryan Molloy (1983)**

alto flute, bass clarinet, violin, violoncello, piano

\* Commissioned by New Horizons Music for HRSE, with funds from ACNI

\*\* Commissioned by HRSE, with funds from ACNI



# The Ensemble

From left to right: **David McCann**, **Joanne Quigley McParland**,  
**Daniel Browell**, **Sarah Watts**, **Sinead Hayes**, **Aisling Agnew**



Photo: Neil Harrison



## **Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble is Northern Ireland's cutting edge contemporary music group, featuring a world-class group of musicians who specialise in the performance of modern music.**

Showcase performers at *Classical:NEXT* in Berlin 2024, Hard Rain was founded by composer Greg Caffrey in 2013. They have given multiple premieres and developed a dedicated following for new music in their home city of Belfast.

Hard Rain feature on several successful recordings, including *Up By the Roots* (Delphian), *The Tyndall Effect* (Métier) and their debut double CD *A Terrible Beauty* (Diatribé). A former *Guardian* pick of the week with works by eleven Irish composers, it is

*"...an extraordinary demonstration of the sheer range of colour it is possible to extract from this type of ensemble... in terms of performance standard and range of music commissioned, this CD set makes one look forward with anticipation to Hard Rain's second decade promoting Irish composition."*

### **The Journal of Music**

In addition to their well-established Concert Season at home, and having performed at festivals around Ireland such as *New Music Dublin*, *Sonorities Festival*, *Walled City Music*, *Tempered Music Festival*, *Belfast International Festival* and *Crescent Festival of Irish Contemporary Music*, Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble have given highly-acclaimed performances further afield

at *Musicahora Festival* in Chile, *Nieuwe Noten* in Amsterdam, *Säälchen*, *Holzmarkt* in Berlin and at *Birmingham Conservatoire*. They are Ensemble-in-Residence at Queen's University Belfast and as dedicated Industry Professionals, the ensemble works closely alongside students and fellow creatives at QUB, performing in two of the finest venues in Belfast; the Harty Room and the Sonic Lab at SARC. As such, they are able to explore the full spectrum of acoustic and electronic music, which is also reflected in their programming.

*"Every once in a while, a group of like-minded artists come together and shake things up. They become the catalyst of something special, pushing the boundaries of creativity and taking their chosen art form to new places and new heights. A decade ago, just such a moment occurred with the birth of the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble. The only contemporary classical music repertoire ensemble in Northern Ireland, Hard Rain's championing of innovative New Music is acknowledged as pioneering on these islands... They have built new audiences for the music, performing works that we would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience live, and all to the highest possible standards. In doing so, they have reconnected Northern Ireland's music making with the best of modern classical music from elsewhere in the world... We are proud to support such an accomplished, dynamic and ground-breaking company."*

### **Ciaran Scullion**

Head of Music and Opera,  
Arts Council of Northern Ireland



Hard Rain's mission is to give a platform and visibility to the vibrant community of local composers, performing their work alongside the music of leading exponents of contemporary music worldwide. Through extensive commissioning (around 80 pieces to date) and programming of cutting-edge contemporary music, Hard Rain gives audiences access to music and composers' voices that would otherwise not be heard. The ensemble's repertoire ranges from virtuosic solo works to chamber, electronic and contemporary opera and they frequently explore cross collaboration with other artistic organisations including dance, visual arts and written word.

*" Hard Rain Ensemble successfully conveyed rich orchestral textures and sonorities...I was struck by the striking range of colours and the virtuoso demands of the works; hats off to all the soloists for rising to the challenge so well. The Hard Rain Ensemble did an excellent job breathing life into these exciting new works"*

**Robert Beattie**

Seen and Heard International

With several international engagements throughout the next season, Hard Rain look forward to showcasing the finest local creative talent abroad. They are passionate about bringing Irish music to wider audiences on a worldwide platform and are also looking forward to collaborations with other ground-breaking ensembles: Hashtag Ensemble (Poland) in 2025, and Third Angle New Music (USA) in 2026. The ensemble is excited to explore the possibilities of meaningful exchange and co-curation with other artistic organisations worldwide.

**Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble**

<b>Aisling Agnew</b>	flute
<b>Sarah Watts</b>	clarinet
<b>Joanne Quigley McParland</b>	violin
<b>David McCann</b>	cello
<b>Daniel Browell</b>	piano

They are excited to welcome multiple guest artists to perform with the group this season including:

**Conductors**

<b>Jonathan Mann</b>	<b>Sinead Hayes</b>
<b>Matthew Lynch</b>	<b>Benjamin Haemhouts</b>
<b>Paul McCusker</b>	<b>Lilianna Krych</b>
<b>Matthew Quinn</b>	

**Instrumentalists**

<b>Lidia Jewloszewicz-Clarke</b>	
<b>Darragh Morgan</b>	<b>Michael Trainor</b>
<b>Alex Petcu</b>	<b>Lina Andonovska</b>
<b>Ben Gannon</b>	<b>Richard Allen</b>
<b>Marta Piórkowska</b>	<b>Susie Griffin</b>
<b>William Curran</b>	<b>Rohan Harron</b>
<b>Eva Richards</b>	<b>Alexander Bernstein</b>
<b>Tristan Russcher</b>	<b>Ciaran McCabe</b>
<b>Gongbo Jiang</b>	<b>Nicholas Rippon</b>
<b>Jennifer Sturgeon</b>	<b>Xenia Pestova Bennett</b>
<b>Zuzanna Edmonds</b>	<b>Caimin Gilmore</b>
<b>Ronan McKee</b>	<b>Sam Staunton</b>
<b>Elias Rooney</b>	<b>Andrew Douglas</b>
<b>Clare Hadwen</b>	<b>Aoife Magee</b>
<b>Ioana Petcu-Colan</b>	

**Singers**

<b>Lucy Schauer</b>	<b>Rebecca Murphy</b>
<b>Rebekah Coffey</b>	<b>Malachy Frame</b>



# Workshops, Opportunities & Mentorships



Hard Rain are **Ensemble-in-Residence** at Queen's University, and therefore dedicate specialist time to working with students and staff across the university. As **Industry Professionals** we work primarily with performance, composition and audio-engineering students. The ensemble has an active approach, assisting in workshops, classes and bespoke sessions to assist in creative development and offer a crucial insight into the profession. Alongside regular pedagogic activities, this also means we centre our rehearsal and performance events in the exceptional facilities of the university, and are proud to be housed here.

*" Our Artist-in-Residence scheme is of unmeasurable importance. Not only does it create an opportunity to programme multiple concerts per year in our two venues, The Harty Room and The Sonic Lab, thereby bringing live performance to a dedicated regular audience that HRSE have built up over a decade, but these concerts provide a critically important vehicle for the dissemination of work by Northern Irish composers, many of whom have been commissioned by HRSE. Aligned to this is our Industry Professionals scheme... HRSE's contribution to our teaching provision includes a regular series of workshops for UG/PG composers, plus valuable hands-on experience for students studying sound recording/engineering."*

**Simon Mawhinney**

Head of Music and Professor of Composition QUB

In addition to our role at QUB we run various schemes for emerging composers and performers.

Our **Ink Still Wet** scheme which is funded through PRSf Talent Development Network offers a crucial platform for development to emerging composers based in Northern Ireland. This includes workshops, networking events, performance opportunities and commissions. This season we have 17 composers on the scheme, with 5 selected for commissions: Anselm McDonnell, Omar Zatriqi, Bianca Gannon, Sam Chambers and Fionnuala Fagan-Thiébot.

*" HRSE have played a vital role in creating programmes and composer development schemes that ensure that music creators and new music audiences are at the centre of efforts. They work tirelessly to offer transformative support to composers and reach new audiences for the benefit of all involved. The impact of their work locally, nationally and internationally is clear for all to see."*

**Becci Scotcher**

Senior Grants & Programmes Manager, PRSf



For aspiring performers, we select **HRSE Featured Young Artists** each year. This scheme is open to *Ulster Youth Orchestra* performers (present and recent alumni) and auditions are held each September. With several opportunities to sit-in, and perform within the ensemble each Young Artist also helps to create a programme featuring contemporary solo works for their instrument. This is an important platform for our highly-talented musicians and this season we are delighted to welcome Orla McGarrity (violin) and Laoise Corrigan (flute).

Our long-standing association with the **Ulster Youth Orchestra** goes from strength to strength. With introductory workshops held during the summer course for UYO musicians, we then build towards our annual workshop and performance in April. For many young musicians, this is an important step in discovering contemporary repertoire, and often their first exposure to experimental music and extended techniques. This season HRSE and UYO are delighted to collaborate with *Titanic Belfast*, presenting contemporary chamber works together as well as a larger ensemble performance of Gavin Bryars *The Sinking of the Titanic*.

*"Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble collaboration with the Ulster Youth Orchestra began in 2015 and has been a very valuable and enjoyable partnership from the outset. HRSE is a perfect partner for UYO as our members are at the point in their emerging career paths where workshops and mentoring are most valuable. To be able to offer specialised training in contemporary music by experts in the field is a unique opportunity that should be available to all of Northern Ireland's young musicians."*

**Paula Klein**

General Manager, Ulster Youth Orchestra



**HRSE Featured Young Artist**  
**Orla McGarrity**



**HRSE Featured Young Artist**  
**Laoise Corrigan**

In 2024 Hard Rain participated in the inaugural **NI Film Scoring Summer School** in connection with *Dumbworld*. The ensemble offered advice and feedback, while recording a wide variety of newly-composed film scores. This also marked the beginning of a new association with *Ulster University* and we're looking forward to returning to work with the students in Derry throughout this season.

*"Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble, known for their dedication to modern and contemporary music, brings valuable experience to this initiative. Our organisation is proud to partner with Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble and Ulster University in supporting the growth of emerging talent in music composition for screen."*

**Brian Irvine**

Co-Artistic Director, Dumbworld







Hard Rain have also been working alongside **Ulster Touring Opera**. Having participated in a workshop with UTO Composer-in-Residence, Anna Ramzy (supported by ACNI Minority Ethnic Artist Mentoring and Residency Programme) we continue the association this season with creative collaborations, including workshops and performances with *Ulster Youth Opera*.

*“ Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble are the leading contemporary music ensemble in Northern Ireland and bring a vast wealth of experience and knowledge... it is with great excitement that we will partner with this ground-breaking ensemble. Ulster Touring Opera has quickly become an established organisation making waves in Irish opera, whilst HRSE have a strong interest in cross-collaboration, and vast experience working with many other arts organisations. We see excellent potential for development in this creative partnership.”*

**Dafydd Hall Williams**

Artistic Director, Ulster Touring Opera

Hard Rain are also active outside of NI. Having recently launched *Contemporary Cities*, a new partnership with Limerick City and County Council, this initiative funded by Creative Ireland involves Hard Rain working alongside Limerick School of Music and collaborating in new music workshops and performances.

In February we will also work with students at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow, and with student performers and composers at The University of St Andrews as part of New Music Week 2025.



# New Repertoire — Bespoke Music



Two newly composed works, for Hard Rain, have been initiated thanks to funding from Arts Council of Northern Ireland Commissions Fund 2024. These two commissions for full ensemble include a new work from Deirdre Gribbin entitled *Ghost Memories* and *Song from the Last Page of Guests of the Nation* by Gareth Williams We're very excited to be collaborating with both and to give the premieres of these works during this 24/25 season.

Special dedications for Hard Rain also feature throughout this season: Dominique Lemaître *Les Plis du Temps* will receive its première performance in May while Geoff Hannan's new work *Breaking News* will be première in December. On International Women's Day we première a new work by Anita Mawhinney; *Pierrette* which is a contemporary re-exploration of the famous lovelorn clown, Pierrot.

As always, we present brand-new works by emerging composers funded through PRSf Talent Development Network. This year there are two strands to HRSE's *Ink Still Wet* scheme, solo works have been commissioned for piano, violin and flute by Bianca Gannon, Sam Chambers and Fionnuala Fagan-Thiébot, and we have commissioned ensemble works by Omar Zatriqi and Anselm McDonnell.

Our *Irish Forests, Rivers and Peatlands* programme which receives its première performance at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, is a collaboration between Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble and SARC: Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Sound and Music. For this programme, three bespoke new pieces have been composed in 2024 by Pedro Rebelo, Lara Weaver and Robert Coleman.

Previous HRSE commissions will receive continued exposure this year such as Jane O'Leary *Beneath the dark blue waves*, Raymond Deane *Skew Weft*, Amy Rooney *Flow State*, Piers Hellawell *Ground Truthing*, Elaine Agnew *Green*, Ed Bennett *Revolver* and Ryan Molloy *Gortnagarn II*. Previous Peter Rosser Award finalists also receive further performances; Sam Chambers *The Dismemberment of Pentheus*, Eduard Zatriqi *War Games*, Laura Heneghan *Flourishes*, Kevin Free *Kittens in the Kitchen* and Daniel Barkley *Five Go to Mystery Moor*.





# Recordings

Hard Rain have an extensive catalogue of live concert recordings online, and are also proud to perform on three highly-acclaimed CD recordings, featuring some of our closest collaborators:

**The Tyndall Effect** (Métier) 2024

Gráinne Mulvey

**Up By the Roots** (Delphian) 2020

Piers Hellowell

**A Terrible Beauty** (Diatribes) 2021

Jane O'Leary

Amy Rooney

John Buckley

Frank Corcoran

Greg Caffrey

Iain McCurdy

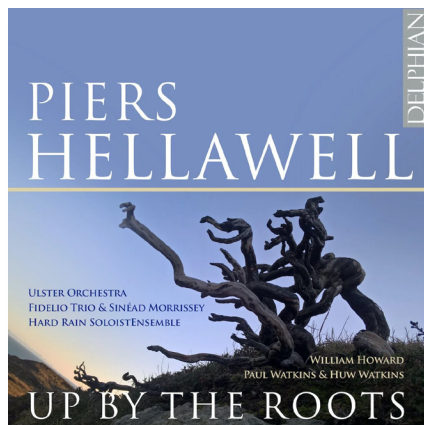
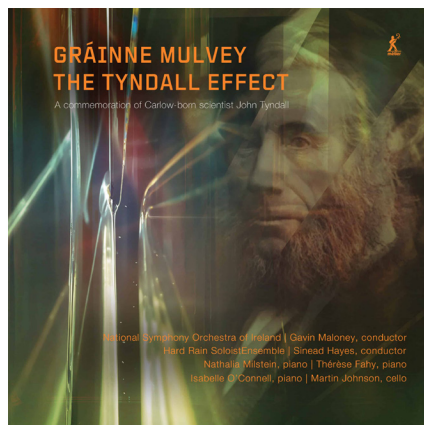
Gráinne Mulvey

Kevin O'Connell

Simon Mawhinney

Ryan Molloy

Rhona Clarke





*"...an extraordinary demonstration of the sheer range of colour it is possible to extract from this type of ensemble... in terms of performance standard and range of music commissioned, this CD set makes one look forward with anticipation to Hard Rain's second decade promoting Irish composition."*

**The Journal of Music**

*"...this is a very impressive first recording from the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble, showcasing the wealth of musical talent which currently exists across Ireland."*

**Musicweb International**

*"A Terrible Beauty on the Diatribe label showcases more than a dozen pieces performed by the Belfast-based Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble. As you would expect from such a compilation, the stylistic range is wide, from the delicate tracery of John Buckley's Three Mobiles after Alexander Calder, the grand gestures of Iain McCurdy's Found Sounds Lost and the sparkling sound world of Gráinne Mulvey's Luca to the neo-expressionism of Frank Corcoran's Nine Looks at Pierrot"*

**The Guardian**

*"...the seven-strong ensemble, held seamlessly together by conductor Sinead Hayes, is clearly a tightly-knit unit, secure enough to allow individual members to shine and showcase when called into the spotlight. Such flexibility proves to be one of the group's defining strengths, together with the fluent reciprocity that binds them together."*

*"...a vitality and confidence in contemporary Irish music fully at ease with its multi-accented voice and wider relationship with Europe and beyond."*

*"Handsomely presented by Diatribe, the exemplary recording, in Belfast's Sonic Arts Research Centre, merits a listen on headphones for its detail and well-framed immediacy."*

**Limelight Magazine**

*"The first-rate players of the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble and conductor Sinead Hayes are committed to bringing new music to life with technical prowess and attention to detail."*

**Deon Price**

Journal of the International Alliance for Women in Music

# Friends

Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble is a registered charity (NIC102506) and therefore a not-for-profit organisation. Your support enables us to continue to provide world class performances of cutting edge contemporary music to audiences in Northern Ireland and beyond. The most enjoyable way to support us is to continue to attend our concerts and to bring your friends and family along to share the experience.

Otherwise, you may want to support us by becoming an official Hard Rain Friend.

## Rain Support on Us:

This season we continue our **Friends of Hard Rain** scheme. We are asking our Friends to join us under the HRSE Friendship Umbrella by making one of a choice of monthly donations.

### DRIZZLE CONTRIBUTOR

£5 per month or £60 per year

This contribution could, for example, help fund travel expenses for a performer.

### HARD RAIN CONTRIBUTOR

£10 per month or £120 per year

This contribution could help towards the cost of music purchase/hire for a concert.

### DELUGE CONTRIBUTOR

£25 per month or £300 per year

This contribution could help towards fees for our wonderful performers.

Ask us for our Standing Order Mandate at [info@hardrainensemble.com](mailto:info@hardrainensemble.com)

Or make a single **Cloudburst** donation:

If you would like to make a single donation it would be gratefully received.

Donations can be made using the "Donate Here" button on our website.  
[www.hardrainensemble.com](http://www.hardrainensemble.com)

Or by cheque (though cheque donations incur bank charges).

We can also furnish you with our bank details if you would like to make a transfer from your account. Contact: [info@hardrainensemble.com](mailto:info@hardrainensemble.com)

Or you can donate when you buy a ticket for our events through Eventbrite.

**Monsoon** contribution for businesses and organisations.

Perhaps you are affiliated to an organisation or business that would like to make a bespoke corporate Monsoon donation as sponsorship. If your business or organisation is on the cutting edge, why not use a cutting edge ensemble to promote what you do? Why not meet with us to discuss ways in which we could collaborate:

To enquire contact us at [info@hardrainensemble.com](mailto:info@hardrainensemble.com)

These are difficult times, so the schemes above are aimed only at those HRSE supporters that can genuinely afford to contribute. Otherwise, having you at a concert is brilliant support on its own. We are holding our ticket prices for Season 2024/25 at £10/5 because we feel high quality contemporary music should be accessible to everyone.

If you would like to contact us about donations or anything else, you may do that through our website contacts page or email: [info@hardrainensemble.com](mailto:info@hardrainensemble.com)



# Thank You



**No cultural programme of this magnitude could possibly exist without the financial, and in-kind support of our funders and partners. We would particularly like to thank our principal funder the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for their ongoing support, and are additionally grateful for financial support from PRSf Talent Development Network for *Ink Still Wet*. We are delighted to have the support of British Council for *Against Adversity* as part of UK/Poland 2025 and Creative Ireland in supporting *Contemporary Cities*. We are grateful to Culture Ireland, particularly for our involvement in *hcmf///* and we also thank ACNI for awarding us with two unique commissions.**

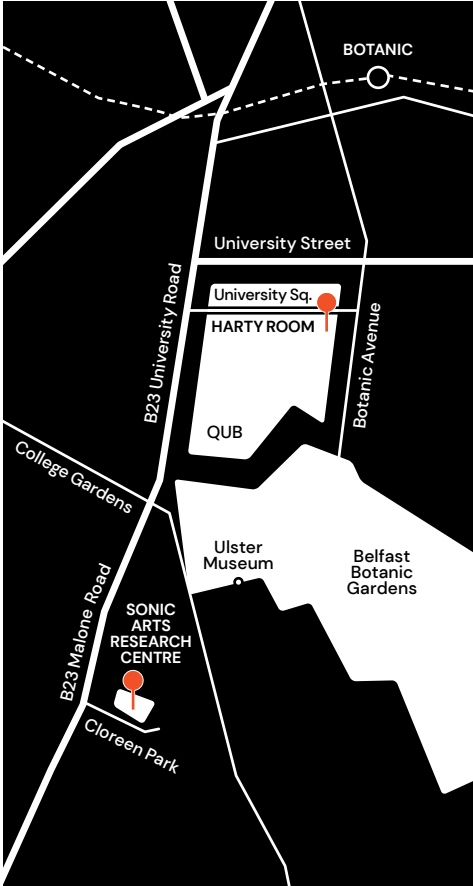
Support from Queen's University School of Arts, English and Languages, who host our residency, is invaluable. Also essential to the season's success are our various project collaborators this year: Limerick School of Music, Music Generation, SARC, Sheffield University, Northern Lights, Ulster University, Ulster Consort, St Andrews University, Music for Galway, Hashtag Ensemble, Titanic Belfast, Ulster Youth Orchestra, New Music Dublin, Ulster Touring Opera, Maiden Voyage Dance, Ulster Museum and Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland.

A final and sincere thanks goes to all the incredible supporters of this wonderful music. We appreciate your adventurous spirit and feel honoured to have your valued attendance at our events. From the occasional foray into new music, to the regular attendees whose familiar faces we look forward to seeing, we are so very grateful for your ongoing support.

Lastly, we thank all of the composers who have trusted us with their amazing pieces. From those local and international, and at all ends of the career spectrum, we love bringing your music to life.



# Principal Season Venues



## Sonic Arts Research Centre

Queen's University Belfast  
4 Cloreen Park  
Belfast, BT9 5HN



## Harty Room

Queen's University Belfast  
Junction College Sq. & Botanic Avenue  
Belfast, BT7 1NN



# How to Book

# Contact

## Tickets will be available:

Through the Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble website  
[www.hardrainensemble.com](http://www.hardrainensemble.com)



Or directly from our Eventbrite sites –  
a digital link to which will be provided  
in our mailouts and social media.

Or on the door.

**Tickets £10/5** (Free for QUB students & staff)

General box office/event enquiries:

[info@hardrainensemble.com](mailto:info@hardrainensemble.com)  
[www.hardrainensemble.com](http://www.hardrainensemble.com)

Sign up to our mailing list



## Aisling Agnew

Artistic Director

[info@hardrainensemble.com](mailto:info@hardrainensemble.com)

## Paul McCusker

Concerts Manager

[concerts@hardrainensemble.com](mailto:concerts@hardrainensemble.com)

## Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble

Music Department & Sonic Arts Research Centre  
School of Arts, English and Languages

Queen's University Belfast

Music Building

University Road

Belfast

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# Credits

We acknowledge support from the following organisations:

PRINCIPAL FUNDER



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Partner organisations & collaborators





*" The establishment of HRSE in Belfast over the last decade has been the single development of greatest significance for new music in Ireland over that period."*

**Professor Piers Hellawell**

Composer



Artwork & Design  
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