



presents

IARLA Ó LIONÁIRD, ÚNA MONAGHAN & KEVIN MURPHY

Wed 1 September **Roscommon Arts Centre**, Roscommon

Thu 2 September **Droichead Arts Centre**, Drogheda

Fri 3 September **Lime Tree Theatre**, Limerick

Sat 4 September **Linenhall Arts Centre**, Castlebar

Sun 5 September **The Dock** Summer Sessions at the Market Yard, Carrick-on-Shannon

Tue 7 September **St. Ann's Church**, Dublin 2

Wed 8 September **glór**, Ennis

Thu 9 September **Dunamaise Arts Centre**, Portlaoise

Fri 10 September **Triskel Arts Centre**, Cork

Sat 11 September **Riverbank Arts Centre**, Newbridge

Sun 12 September **Pavilion Theatre**, Dún Laoghaire

Tue 14 September **St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre**, Listowel

Wed 15 September **St. Joseph's Church**, Clifden (Clifden Arts Festival)

Fri 17 September **Grand Junction**, London (Irish Music and Dance in London)

Sat 18 September **The MAC**, Belfast (Moving on Music)

Sun 19 September **Hawk's Well Theatre**, Sligo

On tour 1 – 19 September 2021

Programme Notes

By Ellen Cranitch

So how was it for you?

A question being asked with more and more frequency as we move back into a world of social interaction, gatherings and public live performance. The events of the past 18 months (or lack of them) have been challenging for so many, and this cautious re-awakening brings with it many concerns about logistics and need versus want, but it also brings retrospective analysis of the time itself, how we dealt with long periods of isolation, quietude, economic uncertainty and the unpredictability of the global situation.

For artists, musicians, dancers and performers, the whole point of live performance is the immediacy of being in a room with other people, doing the thing. How to navigate the loss of that threw up many questions and dilemmas, not all of them solvable with PUP payments and a hastily assembled YouTube video.

These questions were a recurring theme when I spoke with the three world class musicians Úna Monaghan, Iarla Ó Lionáird and Kevin Murphy, who are finally about to get on the road together on this sixteen-date Music Network tour. Needless to say they are excited to be in front of live audiences again, but also reflective, their excitement qualified by the parenthesis of the past year and a half. All have used that time wisely and creatively, out of both economic necessity and having a lot of time on hand.

For Úna, a gifted harper, composer, sound engineer and astrophysicist, the challenges were complex. With many performing opportunities cancelled, she, like many others felt compelled, and in some cases, was expected, to turn to creating video content in order to remain 'productive' and to satisfy certain commission briefs. "But I'm not a video maker. Sure, I was happy to do it in one respect, and I'm glad there is a record of what happened during that time, but I'm not skipping through the flowers, thinking it gave me a whole new perspective on things. I feel for the real video artists."

The studio has been a refuge for Iarla Ó Lionáird, and he is happy to be releasing a new album with Steve Cooney over the coming months. "It's been a long winter though, and I think records that come out of this period will reflect the effect it had on people". He values the interaction that he, Úna and Kevin were able to enjoy during two brief windows between lockdowns, and the opportunity to witness

creative processes unlike his own. "All musicians are complex, and I find it fascinating to work with people who have their own angle on the creative process. In The Gloaming (the band who have achieved the nearest thing to trad superstardom in recent years) we have become used to how it all works, so this is a great chance to re-engage with the creative juices".

Cellist Kevin Murphy has also managed to remain busy and focused, working on tunes, writing soundtracks (including for a forthcoming documentary by Anja Murray on Ireland's natural world) and upgrading his knowledge of recording technology. But that brought its own sense of frustration. "I sometimes found it a bit depressing, not knowing when this would be all over, and wondering what's the point? I have all this new material, I know it works in my head, but I have no place to try it out in a live situation. Hopefully the hounds will be released shortly and we'll find out!"

All three musicians have a very deep well of experience from which to draw, and their willingness to search and challenge their own identities is a crucial part of their conversation. They have been sharing ideas and investigating a variety of material, from the traditional to found sounds, field recordings, poetry, abstract electronic soundscape and improvisation. Iarla observes how others can help you realise the potential of your own source material, and how new life can be breathed into work by the collective engagement of the participants. All three were comfortable bringing ideas to the table, and commenting on them, and all three were clear and unequivocal that now is the time to be brave, to be vulnerable, and to not fall back on some formula that already exists.

And this would be a good time to mention you, The Audience. In all the conversations with these three musicians, they returned again and again to how much they are looking forward to performing in a room with real people. How the lack of audience has been stultifying for the development of their art, and how the interaction, communication and energy that a live audience generates simply cannot be replicated by a laptop. Iarla again reflects on how in his own background of sean-nós, the performer would shun audience interaction, but that he now, in his own practice, finds it a source of nourishment. "I often reflect that over the past ten or fifteen years, Irish people have become superb audiences – they go very deep into the experience of being in a room with music, of allowing themselves to communicate in a profound way with the performer. I love that and I have missed it."

We have all missed it. Welcome back.

Biographies

Iarla Ó Lionáird

Iarla Ó Lionáird has carved a long and unique career in music both internationally and in Ireland. From his iconic early recording of the vision song “Aisling Gheal” as a young boy to his ground-breaking recordings with Dublin’s Crash Ensemble and New York’s Alarm Will Sound, he has shown a breadth of artistic ambition that sets him apart. Preferring not be categorized, his performances and recorded output follows an ambitious arc that challenges musical identity, from sean nós song to worldbeat (Afro Celt Sound System), from alt folk (The Gloaming) to opera (Donnacha Dennehy’s *The Hunger* on Nonesuch).

A twice Grammy-nominated artist, Ó Lionáird has worked with a stellar cast of composers internationally including Dan Trueman, Nico Muhly, Linda Buckley, Gavin Bryars and David Lang and performed and recorded with such luminaries as Peter Gabriel, Nick Cave, Robert Plant and Sinead O’Connor. His unique singing style has carried him to stages and concert halls all over the world, from New York’s Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House and beyond.

He has performed as a soloist with concert and symphony orchestras including the Ulster Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra at The Kennedy Centre, USA, the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and the RTÉ Concert Orchestra. He has also recorded and performed with a wide range of chamber and smaller ensembles including Contemporaneous, Alarm Will Sound, So Percussion, Eighth Blackbird, The Vanburgh Quartet, Publiq Quartet, Quartetto Maurice and Crash Ensemble.



His voice has graced the silver screen with film credits extending from *The Gangs of New York* to *Hotel Rwanda* and most recently as featured vocalist in the film *Calvary* starring Brendan Gleeson and featured singer in the film *Brooklyn* starring Saoirse Ronan. He is the vocalist with the critically acclaimed Irish/American band The Gloaming.

Úna Monaghan

Úna Monaghan is a harper, composer, researcher and sound artist from Belfast. Her recent work has combined traditional music with bronze sculpture, sound art and movement sensors. She performs with harp and electronics, and released an album of her compositions, named *For* in 2018. She collaborates, improvises and performs with poets, visual artists, computers, writers, musicians and others. Úna has held artist residencies at the Centre Culturel Irlandais Paris, the Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas Montréal and the Future Music Lab at the Atlantic Music Festival, Maine, USA. Úna also works as a sound engineer specialising in Irish traditional music, and experimental, live electronic and multi-channel music, a role in which she works worldwide.

Her compositions have been presented on BBC and RTÉ television and radio, in theatre productions and at international festivals and conferences such as the International Computer Music Conference, York Festival of Ideas and New York Electroacoustic Music Festival. Úna was awarded a PhD from the Sonic Arts Research Centre at Queen’s University Belfast in 2015 and held the Rosamund Harding Research Fellowship in Music at Newnham College, University of Cambridge from 2016-2019. Her research examines the intersections between Irish traditional music, experimental music practices, improvisation and interactive technologies. In 2019 she received the inaugural Liam O’ Flynn Award from the Arts Council of Ireland and the National Concert Hall Dublin, and in 2020 a BAN BAM award from Moving On Music and Improvised Music Company.

Kevin Murphy

Kevin Murphy is a cellist, multi-instrumentalist, composer and songwriter from Cork. He is a founding member of critically acclaimed Irish experimental bands Slow Moving Clouds and Seti The First, and his new solo project called Blind Stitch is due to release a debut album, *The Emperor's Lung*.

He co-composed the score for Michael Keegan Dolan's *Swan Lake/Loch na Heala* which *The Guardian* described as "the second-best dance production of the 21st Century". He also co-composed the scores for the feature film *Tomato Red* (2017) directed by Oscar long-listed director Juanita Wilson, for *The Lodgers* (2018) which featured at the Toronto Film Festival, and for the acclaimed Irish director Kim Bartley's new feature documentary *True Grit* (2020).

Kevin has featured as a guest musician with many Irish and international artists such as Gavin Friday, Rick Danko and Dave Gahan of Depeche Mode. He has also collaborated with Irish traditional and folk musicians such as Cormac Breathnach, John Spillane, Phil Callery and Ger Wolfe in live settings and on recordings. His band Seti The First co-wrote two songs on The Waterboys' 2017 album *Out Of All This Blue*. He also participates in the People Collective spearheaded by Justin Vernon (Bon Iver) and Bryce and Aaron Dessner (The National). This has resulted in collaborations with the above artists and others in festivals across Europe in recent years including the Funkhaus in Berlin 2018 and Sounds from a Safe Harbour Cork in 2017.

