

Michael Alcorn

(b. 1962)

“Much of my musical thinking is informed by technology and computers. While I enjoy the new soundworlds offered by these resources, I like to intervene where possible in the process. As Frank Zappa puts it, “The computer can't tell you the emotional story. It can give you the exact mathematical design, but what's missing is the eyebrows”.”



Photo: Jill Jennings, Christopher Hill Photographic

Michael Alcorn studied at the University of Ulster and completed a PhD in composition with John Casken at the University of Durham. In 1989 he was appointed composer-in-residence at Queen's University, Belfast, where he continues to teach in the School of Music. He is particularly active as a promoter of new music

technologies and was appointed director of SARC, the Sonic Arts Research Centre based at Queen's University, Belfast, in 2001. He has been a visiting composer at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics at Stanford University, and at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver.

His compositional activities range from music for conventional instruments to works for live or taped electro-acoustic performance. His music has been performed and broadcast in the UK, Europe, North and South America and the Far East. He has received commissions from the BBC, the Nash Ensemble, Singcircle, the Smith Quartet, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, Opera Theatre Company, the Ulster Orchestra and the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. His work has been programmed at a number of international computer music conferences and he was a featured composer at the Elektrisk Helg Festival in Malmö, Sweden, in 1997, and at the All Ireland Festival in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 2001.

Selected Works

ORCHESTRAL

Macha's Curse (1997)

3222 4231 timp 2 perc str

MS 14'

Commissioned by the BBC for the Ulster Orchestra. Premiere: 2 May 1997. Waterfront Hall, Belfast. Ulster Orchestra, conductor Charles Hazlewood. Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Images of Revolution (1994)

Children's workshop piece

3222 4231 timp 2 perc str, 4 student ensembles

MS 30'

Commissioned by the Ulster Orchestra with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Premiere: 8 March 1994. The Diamond, Coleraine. Ulster Orchestra, conductor John Finucane. Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Incantation (1987 rev. 1992)

3222 4131 str [12.10.8.6.4]

MS 16'

Premiere: 18 May 1987. Great Hall, University of Durham. University of Durham Symphony Orchestra. Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

ENSEMBLE

Fanfare for Kabuti (1990)

3 tpt

MS 1'

Commissioned by the Old Museum Arts Centre, Belfast, with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Perichoresis (1990)

fl+picc, ob, cl, bn+cym, hn+cym

MS 15'

Commissioned by the Belfast Music Society with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Premiere: 10 October 1990. University of Ulster at Coleraine. Nash Ensemble. Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Making a Song and Dance... (1989)

cl vn vc pf

MS 14'

Commissioned by the Sonorities Festival of 20th Century Music with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Premiere: 24 April 1989. Sonorities Festival, Harty Room, Queen's University Belfast. Sequenza. Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Recycle (1987)

fl+afl, ob+ca, cl, hn, trb, perc [xyl, bon, low+high gong, vib, glock, bdm, tam-tam], vn, db

MS 9'

Premiere: 14 November 1987. Northern Sinfonia, conductor John Casken.

In a roundabout way (1986)

fl+afl, ob, cl, bn, hn
MS 7'
Premiere: 11 March 1987. Van Mildert College, Durham, England. Durham New Music Ensemble.

SOLO INSTRUMENTAL

Time Domains (1985 rev. 1986)

pf
Contemporary Music Centre Editions / CMC 1006 11'
Premiere: 1987. University of Durham, England. Clive Broadbent (pf).
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Concerto for Solo Clarinet (1984)

cl
MS 12'

VOCAL AND CHORAL

Calypso's Song to Ulysses (1987 - 1988)

S-solo, afl, ssax, va, db, perc [vib, mar, 5 cyms, crot]
MS 9'
Premiere: February 1988. University of Durham. University of Durham New Music Group.

In Dulci Jubilo (1985)

ssaab, org
Text: Traditional
MS 7'
Premiere: . Assembly Hall, University of Ulster, Jordanstown. University of Ulster Chamber Choir, conductor Donal Cullington.

BAND

Mambo (1998)

3 fl, 2 ob, 2 cl, 2 bn, 4 hn, 2 tpt, 2 trb, btrb, tuba, perc
MS 14'
Commissioned by the Ulster Orchestra with funds provided by the the Arts Council of Northern Ireland National Lottery Unit.
Premiere: 6 February 1998. Ulster Hall, Belfast. Ulster Orchestra, conductor Vernon Handley.

ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC AND MIXED MEDIA

Crossing the Threshold (2001)

vn, live electronics [MAX/MSP]
MS 10'
Commissioned by Darragh Morgan with funds provided by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.
Premiere: 1 February 2001. Tabernacle, London. Darragh Morgan (vn).
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Resonant Air (2000)

tape 12'
Commissioned by the Galway Arts Festival 2000 with funds provided by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.
Premiere: 22 July 2000. Containers exhibition, Galway Arts Festival, Aula Maxima, National University of Ireland, Galway.
Recording: Containers. Galway Arts Festival 2000. GAF01.

Patina (1998)

tape 16'
Commissioned by the Sonorities Festival with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland National Lottery Unit.
Premiere: 14 May 1998. Sonorities Festival, Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast.
Recording: In Parallel. Barbara Freeman BF01.

Caoine (1996)

str [5.2.3.3.1], IRCAM Signal Processing workstation, live electronics
MS 10'
Commissioned by the University of Limerick with funds provided by Toyota, Ireland.
Premiere: 31 October 1996. Sionna International Festival of Music, Limerick City Art Gallery. Irish Chamber Orchestra, director Fionnuala Hunt.
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

The Old Woman of Beare (1994)

2 vn va vc, IRCAM Signal Processing workstation
Text: Brendan Kennelly
MS 20'
Commissioned by Kyoto International Music Festival.
Premiere: 23 November 1994. Xebec Hall, Kobe, Japan. Smith Quartet.
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

A Slow Dance (1992)

satb, live electronics, tape
MS 16'
Commissioned by New MacNaghten Concert Series with funds provided by the London Arts Board.
Premiere: 22 October 1992. New MacNaghten Concerts 1992, St Giles Church, Cripplegate, Barbican, London. Singcircle, director Gregory Rose.
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Double Escapement (1992)

pf, tape
MS 9'
Premiere: 20 July 1995. Frost Amphitheater, USA. Nick Hopkins (pf).
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Voyager (1990)

4 - 9 instr. [variable], tape, live electronics, slide projection
MS 13'
Commissioned by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for the 1989 - 1990 Young Arts Festivals.
Premiere: 24 January 1990. Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh. Schoolchildren.

Jubilate (1986 - 1987)

pf, tape
MS 12'
Premiere: 18 January 1987. Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin. Gillian Smith (pf).
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Hanging Stones (1985)

tape, slide projection 34'
Premiere: April 1995. Drama Studio, Queen's University Belfast.
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.