

Kevin O'Connell

(b. 1958)

“Our main duty to music is to create it.”
(Igor Stravinsky)



Photo: Eugene Langan

Kevin O'Connell was born in Derry and began composing when he was twelve. He studied composition with Redmond Friel before completing a music degree at Trinity College Dublin. He subsequently taught composition there and at Queen's University Belfast.

His output includes opera, orchestral, vocal and chamber works. He completed his first BBC Radio 3 commission at the age of twenty-five. Other commissions followed, including *From the Besieged*

City (1989) for the Ulster Orchestra and mezzo-soprano Linda Hirst. In the 1990s he wrote three chamber operas, two of which (*Sensational!* and *My Love My Umbrella*) were written for Opera Theatre Company. *My Love, My Umbrella* toured Ireland and the UK and was performed at the 1998 Düsseldorf Festival of Contemporary Opera while *The Fire King* was conducted by the composer in productions in Northern Ireland and Los Angeles. *North*, a BBC Radio 3 commission, was premiered by the Ulster Orchestra in 1998 and was also performed by the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra 2001.

In 2000 Kevin O'Connell was appointed composer-in-residence for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council. As part of this residency he wrote a large-scale string quartet for the Lotus Quartet who premiered the work in 2002. A shorter string quartet, *Tuned in Fits*, was written shortly afterwards and was premiered by the Hugo Wolf Quartet. Recent works include an ongoing series of piano études, the first of which – *Étude 2000* – has been performed by numerous pianists including Joanna MacGregor and Alexei Naboulin, among others. Other recent works include *Apollo and Marsyas* (2003), a dramatic cantata commissioned by the Crash Ensemble with a text written by the composer.

A recurrent pre-occupation of Kevin O'Connell has been the relation of words to music and the relation of both to society. He was artistic director of the 2005 RTÉ Living Music Festival and is a member of Aosdána, Ireland's state-sponsored academy of creative artists.

Selected Works

ORCHESTRAL

North (1997 - 1998)

3222 4231 timp 2 perc str
MS 20'

Commissioned by BBC Radio Three.

Premiere: 15 May 1998. Sonorities Festival, Queen's University, Belfast. Ulster Orchestra, conductor Robert Houlihan.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

The Carman's Whistle (1997)

after William Byrd

2011 0200 pf hrp gui str [3.3.2.2.1]

MS 8'

Premiere: 15 April 1997. Trinity College, Dublin. TCD Ensemble, conductor Kevin O'Connell.

Einzeichnung (1987)

1111 1000 perc pf str

MS 12'

Commissioned by The Irish Chamber Orchestra with funds provided by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

Premiere: 11 December 1990. National Concert Hall, Dublin. Nua Nós, conductor Dáirine Ní Mheadhra.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Concertino (1984 - 1985)

1111 1000 hrp cel str [1.1.1.1.1]

MS 12'

Commissioned by the BBC.

Premiere: 30 April 1985. Harty Room, Queen's University, Belfast. Aquarius Ensemble, conductor Nicholas Cleobury.

ENSEMBLE

Piano Trio (2001)

MS 20'

Commissioned by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

Tuned in Fits 2000

String quartet

MS 11'

Premiere: March 2002. Dublin Castle. Hugo Wolf Quartet.

String Quartet (2000)

MS 40'

Commissioned by Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council.

Premiere: 4 March 2002. Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown County Hall, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. The Lotus String Quartet.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Contratempo (1999)

fl vc

MS 5'

Premiere: 12 March 2000. Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin. Elaine McPherson (fl), David O'Connell (vc). Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1993 - 1995)

MS 27'

Commissioned by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Premiere: 12 September 1996. Guildhall, Derry. Raphael Wallfisch (vc), John York (pf). Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Carrickfergus (1993)

pf [4 hands]
MS 9'

Commissioned by David Hazlett.

Premiere: 5 August 1994. St. Rémy en Provence, France. David Hazlett and Mala Goldberg (pfs).

Tenebrae (1992)

cl vn vc
MS 11'

Commissioned by Sequenza with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Premiere: 1992. Harty Room, Queen's University, Belfast. Sequenza. Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Sonata for Saxophone and Piano (1988)

Contemporary Music Centre Editions / CMC 3102 14'
Commissioned by Gerard McChrystal.

Premiere: October 1987. Guildhall, Derry. Gerard McChrystal (sax), Kathryn Page (pf). Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

String Trio (1987)

MS 14'

Commissioned by The Irish String Trio with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Premiere: September 1987. Magee College, Derry. Irish String Trio. Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

SOLO INSTRUMENTAL

Motus (2004)

bcl
MS 5'

Premiere: 31 May 2005. Linen Hall Library. Sarah Watts (bcl).

Étude No. 2 (2002)

Fuga à 4 voci
pf

MS 10'

Premiere: 29 October 2002. St Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle. Alexei Nabioulin.

Chorale, Toccata and Fugue (2001)

org
MS 12'

Premiere: 2 September 2001. St Michael's Church, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. David Adams (org).

Étude 2000 (1999)

pf

Contemporary Music Centre Editions / CMC 1020 5'

Commissioned by the AXA Dublin International Piano Competition 2000 with funds provided by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

Premiere: 9 November 2000. 'Mostly Modern' series, Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, Dublin. David Adams (pf).
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Slätter (1999)

db
MS 6'

Premiere: 12 March 2000. Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin. Malachy Robinson (db).

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Epithalamium (1998)

vc
MS 3'

Premiere: 29 August 1998. Derry. David O'Connell (vc).
Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

VOCAL AND CHORAL

Three Sacred Songs (2004)

S-solo, pf
MS 5'

Premiere: 25 June 2005. St Iberius' Church, Wexford. Mairead Buicke (S-solo), Deborah Kellegher (pf).

Apollo and Marsyas (2003)

A dramatic cantata for Soprano, Baritone and Instruments
S-solo, Bar-solo, fl+picc, cl+bcl, perc, gui, pf, vn, vc, tape
Text: Kevin O'Connell

MS 30'

Premiere: 12 June 2004. O'Reilly Theatre, Belvedere College, Dublin. Sylvia O'Brien (S-solo), Martin Higgins (Bar-solo), Crash Ensemble, conductor Fergus Sheil.

Recording: *Contemporary Music from Ireland, Volume Seven*. Contemporary Music Centre 2008. CMC CD07

O to be a Dragon (1998 - 1999)

Seven songs on poems of Marianne Moore

Bar-solo pf

MS 25'

Premiere: 9 November 2000. 'Mostly Modern' series, Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, Dublin. Conor Biggs (Bar-solo), David Adams (pf).

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

All the Livelong Way (1998)

satb

Text: Samuel Beckett

MS 11'

Commissioned by National Chamber Choir with funds provided by the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

Premiere: 8 October 1998. Blackrock College, Dublin. National Chamber Choir, conductor Colin Mawby.

Recording: *Pie Jesu*. National Chamber Choir of Ireland, conductor Colin Mawby. Black Box 2000. BBM1030.

My Love, My Umbrella (1997)

Chamber opera

S-solo, A-solo, T-solo, Bar-solo, cl+bcl, vn db pf

Text: James Conway, John McGahern

MS 80'

Commissioned by Eastern Touring Agency with funds provided by the Arts Council of England.

Premiere: 9 October 1997. Stamford Arts Centre, England. Niall Morris, Fiona McAndrew, Richard Jackson, Kate McCarney, Opera Theatre Company Ensemble, conductor Robert Dean, director Chrissie Poulter, designer Stephen McManus.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

The Fire King (1995)

Chamber opera in four scenes

S-solo, A-solo, T-solo, 2 Bar-solo, fl, ob, cl, bn, hn, pf, 2 vn, va, vc

MS 90'

Commissioned by British Telecom.

Premiere: 2 October 1995. The Playhouse, Derry. Ad hoc ensemble, conductor Kevin O'Connell, director Joe Devlin.

Sensational! (1992)

Chamber opera

S-solo, T-solo, Bar-solo, 2 vn va vc pf

Text: Gerard Stembridge

MS 20'

Commissioned by Opera Theatre Company with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Premiere: 17 November 1992. Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin. Kathleen Tynan (S-solo), Nick Sears (T-solo), Omar Ebrahim (Bar-solo), Opera Theatre Company, conductor Mark Armstrong.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

From the Besieged City (1988 - 1989)

Mez-solo, 2222 4221 timp perc str

MS 20'

Commissioned by Derry City Council.

Premiere: 27 October 1989. Guildhall, Derry. Linda Hirst (Mez-solo), Ulster Orchestra, conductor David Jones.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

Fáilte don éan (1988)

satb

Text: Séamas Dall Mac Cuarta

MS 4'

Commissioned by St Eugene's Cathedral Choir for the Seán Ó Riada Memorial Trophy 1988.

Premiere: April, May 1988. Cork International Choral Festival. St Eugene's Cathedral Choir, Derry, conductor Donal Doherty.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.