

# Séan Ó Riada

(1931 - 1971)

“Even if one were to imagine a young Irishman familiar with the latest serial music he would be most unlikely to also have access to traditional music. And yet it is this impossible combination that Ó Riada simply and stylishly demonstrates in his life and work.”

John Montague, 1970



Photo: RTE

Séan Ó Riada was born in Cork. He studied music at University College Cork with Aloys Fleischmann and received his BMus in 1952. He was assistant music director at Radio Éireann, Ireland's national radio and television station, between 1954 and 1955 and was music director at the Abbey Theatre from 1955 to 1962. He lectured in music

at University College Cork from 1963 until his premature death in 1971.

Although best known for his pioneering work in Irish traditional music, Ó Riada wrote a number of original compositions which incorporated modern compositional techniques. These include a series of orchestral works given the Greek title *Nomos*, written between 1957 and 1966; the pastoral elegy, *The Banks of Sullane* (1956) and *Four Hölderlin Songs* (1956). He also wrote music for several films, including *Mise Éire* and *Saoirse*.

## Selected Works

### ORCHESTRAL

#### **Nomos No. 6 (1966)**

2121 2140 perc str

MS 13'

Premiere: 1967. Belfast Festival, Belfast. Ulster Orchestra.

#### **Seoladh na nGamhan (1959)**

Festival Overture

2222 4231 timp perc hrp str

MS 9'

Premiere: 1959. Cork Symphony Orchestra, conductor Séan Ó Riada.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

#### **Nomos No. 4 (1958)**

pf-solo, 1000 1001 timp perc xyl str

MS 14'

Premiere: 20 February 1959. Dublin. Charles Lynch (pf), Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra, conductor Séan Ó Riada.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

#### **Hercules Dux Ferrariae: Nomos No. 1 (1957)**

str [9.9.6.6.3]

Woodtown Music Publications Ltd. 17'

Premiere: 13 September 1957. Phoenix Hall, Dublin. Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra, conductor Carlo Franci.

Recording: *Vertical Man*. London Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor Carlo Franci. Claddagh Records. CSM1.

#### **The Banks of Sullane (1956)**

2222 4100 timp perc xyl hrp cel pf str

MS 7'

Premiere: 12 July 1957. Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra, conductor Éimear Ó Broin.

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

#### **Overture Olynthiac (1955)**

2121 4220 timp 2 perc hrp str

MS 7'

Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

### VOCAL AND CHORAL

#### **Aifreann 2 (1970)**

unison choir, pf

Text: Ordinary of the Mass

Gael-linn

#### **Ceol an Aifrinn (1968)**

Music for the Mass

unison voices, org

Gael-Linn

**Lovers on Aran (1968)**

medium voice, pf  
 Text: Seamus Heaney  
 Woodtown Music Publications Ltd. 2'

**Sekundenzieger (1966)**

medium voice, pf  
 Woodtown Music Publications Ltd. 1'

**Hill Field (1965)**

medium voice, pf  
 Woodtown Music Publications Ltd. 2'

**Four Hölderlin Songs (1964)**

voice pf  
 MS 8'  
 Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

**Ceathramhainti Éagsamhla (1962)**

satb  
 MS 2'  
 Commissioned by the Cork International Choral Festival  
 for the First Seminar on Contemporary Choral Music.  
 Premiere: May 1962. Cork.

**The Lords and the Bards (1959)**

Radiophonic work  
 S-solo, A-solo, T-solo, B-solo, satb, 3222 4331 timp 2  
 perc hrp str, speakers  
 MS 49'  
 Commissioned by Radio Éireann for the Prix Italia 1959.  
 Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

**Five Epigrams from the Greek Anthology (1958)**

satb, fl, hpd  
 MS 10'  
 Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

**Nomos No. 2 (1957 - 1963)**

Bar-solo, satb, 3222 4431 timp perc xyl hrp pf hpd str  
 MS 52'  
 Premiere: 23 April 1965. Dublin. Herbert Moulton (Bar-solo), Colman Pearce (Hpd), RTÉ Singers, RTÉ Choral Society, RTÉ Symphony Orchestra, conductor Tibor Paul.  
 Recording: CMC Sound Archive.

**Three Poems by Thomas Kinsella (1954)**

medium voice, pf  
 Woodtown Music Publications Ltd. 5'  
 Premiere: 1954. Dublin. Tomás Ó Súilleabháin (Bar-solo).  
 Recording: *Vertical Man*. Bernadette Greevy (Mez-solo), Veronica McSwiney (pf). Claddagh Records. CSM1.

## BAND

**Ceol Máirseála i gcóir Socraide (1968)**

pipes, 2 fl, ob, 9 cl, 2 asax, 2 tsax, bn, 4 cnt, 2 tpt, 4 hn,  
 euph, 2 trb, btrb, 3 tuba, timp, 2 perc  
 MS 8'