

Gerald Barry's opera *The Intelligence Park* at IMMA

Gerald Barry's opera, *The Intelligence Park*, widely regarded as one of the most innovative and compelling operas of recent times, will be presented in a concert performance at the Irish Museum of Modern Art on Wednesday 18 May 2011. Described by *The Irish Times* in 1990 as "the most original piece of music to come out of Ireland this century", the opera is set in Dublin in 1753 and embraces love, power, prison and an eclipse of the sun. Presented in collaboration with Crash Ensemble, the production forms part of an exciting season of performances being staged at IMMA in May to mark the 20th anniversary of the Museum's foundation in 1991.

The Intelligence Park, to a libretto by Vincent Deane, tells of a composer, Robert Paradies, who has lost the power to write but rediscovers it through his obsession with an Italian singer, the castrato Serafino. However, a triangular love affair involving Paradies, Serafino and Jerusha – the daughter of a wealthy merchant whom Paradies has been advised to marry but who is also the object of Serafino's affections – complicates matters, bringing with it anger, betrayal and a conflict between private love and public duty.

When first produced in London for the Institute of Contemporary Arts/Almeida Festival in 1990, it met with an extraordinary critical response. For *The London Evening Standard* it was "a clenched fist of an opera." *The Independent* said that "the joy of the opera... is that it is driven by music of an energy and pace unheard of in most contemporary work. Barry...one of the true originals."

The Times said: "Never mind what the piece is about: it just quite shockingly is. It exists".

A BBC recording of the opera is available on the NMC label.

Gerald Barry has written four other operas: *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* for Channel 4 Television, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* for RTE/ENO/Basel Opera, *La Plus Forte (The Stronger)* for Radio France, and most recently, *The Importance of Being Earnest* for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Barbican, London. *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* has been performed in London, Aldeburgh, Berlin, Paris, Los Angeles, New York and Amsterdam. *La Plus Forte* has reached Paris, Amsterdam, Toronto, Miami, London and Dublin and has been described as the beginning of 21st century opera. *The Los Angeles Times* said that *The Importance of Being Earnest* was "sensational", and "maybe the most inventive Oscar Wilde opera since Richard Strauss' *Salome* more than a century ago."

Crash Ensemble was founded in 1997 by composer and Artistic Director Donnacha Dennehy and has since attracted enthusiastic audiences for its adventurous repertoire. The ensemble has commissioned or premiered works by composers including Gavin Bryars, Arnold Dreyblatt, Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Terry Riley, and has also worked with Louis Andriessen and Steve Reich, among others. As well as performing regularly throughout Ireland, Crash Ensemble tours internationally. Crash features on recordings by labels such as NMC, Cantaloupe and most recently Nonesuch, with the release of *Grá agus Bás* by Donnacha Dennehy later this month.

The opera is conducted by Richard Baker and the singers are Sarah Gabriel, soprano, Loré Lixenberg, alto, Roderick Williams, baritone, Andrew Watts, countertenor, John Daszak, tenor, Stephen Richardson, bass and Gavin Jones, boy soprano.

The performance begins at 8.00pm.

Tickets €20.00, concessions €15.00. Booking on www.imma.ie.