



## Context:

In 2019 CMC and Sounding the Feminists (STF) began a two-phase research project which aims to investigate the gender balance of publicly funded composer opportunities on the island of Ireland. This research is funded by the Arts Council of Ireland. The wider context for the project is that it is in the public interest to know and understand how public funding for musicians is distributed along gender lines. The project is influenced by *Gender Counts* (2016), a quantitative study by #WakingTheFeminists researchers, which examined gender balance in the Irish theatre world and made recommendations that have subsequently been adopted by relevant organisations.

A successful completion of the Phase I CMC-STF project was achieved by the STF Research Associate Dr Ciara L. Murphy. Dr Murphy (who previously worked on *Gender Counts*) undertook a scoping project, the findings of which are detailed in the March 2020 'Scoping the Project Report' (see below). This report addresses the feasibility of the project, while also establishing an authoritative list of funding and commissioning organisations that offer specific composer funded opportunities, and determining the availability of relevant records for the project. The original timeframe being considered for this research was a thirty-year period from 1988-2018.

Phase II commenced in December 2021, with funding secured through CMC's annual Strategic Funding from the Arts Council of Ireland. After giving further consideration to the Phase I report, as well as the time elapsed since the completion of Phase I (March 2020) and the commencement of Phase II (December 2021), in addition to the intervening pandemic, the partners agreed with the stakeholders that the Phase II research will span the timeframe of 2004-2019.

## **Scoping Project Report**

### **Sounding the Feminists Research Project, in partnership with the Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland (Phase I)**

#### **Project Details**

The Sounding the Feminists Research Project, conducted in partnership with the Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland (CMC) is examining the gender balance of publicly-funded composer opportunities across the island of Ireland during the last thirty years of its performance history. This project has two phases. Phase I is a scoping project, that has been funded by the Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, that aims to determine the availability, condition, and accessibility of data on composers and public funding from the island's top commissioning and funding bodies. Phase II aims to undertake research and data analysis in order to determine the gender-balance of publicly-funded composer opportunities across the island by analysing data obtained in Phase I and expanded on in Phase II.

#### **Initial Research Aims and Objectives**

1. Obtain and analyse the gender breakdown of who received funding in the last 30 years, what it was received for (status of work, duration, scale, platform) and how much was received.
2. If applicable, obtain and analyse the gender breakdown of who applied unsuccessfully for that same funding (e.g. if no women applied in a specific instance, that is statistically relevant data).

#### **Proposed Research Methodology**

##### **Central Research Questions:**

1. What is the gender balance in publicly-funded composer opportunities on the island of Ireland between 1988-2018.
2. How much funding was received by composers during this time frame and what was it received for (status of work related to duration, scale, and platform).

## **Methodology**

Sounding the Feminists will be collecting data on the composer role across publicly-funded composer opportunities on the island of Ireland from 1988-2018. It will do this by:

- Survey of the CMC database from 1988-2018.
- Create a list of publicly-funded compositions from this database.
- Expand and confirm this list of publicly-funded compositions by engaging with each commissioner directly.
- Create a list of the ten top publicly funded commissioners of compositions from each decade (1988-1997, 1998-2007, 2008-2018).
- Cross-check CMC database material with the material from each of the identified commissioners for each decade.
- Survey the social, political, and cultural contexts that will inform each decade. For example: the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the various periods of economic fluctuations on the island of Ireland, as they will affect funding and artistic output.
- Collate all of this information and analyse the data in terms of gender of composer.
- Further analyse this data in relation to amount of funding received, the duration of the work, the scale of the work, and the platform of the work (including tours and repeated performances).
- Present the quantitative findings and contextualise that data in terms of the contexts outlined above.

## **Definitions**

Gender: This study will recognise gender, not as a fixed biological binary, but as a fluid and self-defining identification. We will categorise individuals according to the gender they publicly identified as at the time of the relevant composition. For example, if a person identified as a woman in 1989 and as a man in 2013 then that person will be counted as a woman in 1989 and as man in 2013. This decision is made on firm methodological ground as it reflects the gender of the person at the time the commission was considered and funded.

Composition: This project is concerned with analysing Contemporary Western Art Composition which we define as an original piece of work or music, either vocal or instrumental (including electronics), the structure of a musical piece, or the process of creating or writing a new piece of music.

Composer: People who create new compositions in line with the definition above.

## **Data Protection**

This project is guided by the strictest policies on privacy and data protection.

## **Challenges Uncovered**

The primary challenge for this project has been the acquisition of data from the relevant commissioning organisations. Recent development around data protection, for example, GDPR, has resulted in difficulties accessing records for the purposes of analysis.

Sounding the Feminists Research Associate (Ciara L. Murphy) cross-checked the CMC Database information with The Arts Council of Ireland/An Comhairle Ealaíon annual reports from 1988-2017 and discovered a massive discrepancy in the data available via those annual reports year-on-year. The earlier annual reports (from 1988-1997) contained a significant amount of useful and relevant data which enabled a comprehensive cross-check of the CMC data. However from 1998 onwards the structure and presentation of this data in The Arts Council of Ireland/An Comhairle Ealaíon annual reports becomes less clear and less comprehensive and this hindered the cross-check of the CMC Database for the years 1998 onwards. In fact, it became impossible to cross-check data from 2007 onwards due to the manner in which data is presented and compiled in the annual reports from 2007 onwards.

Similarly, no publicly accessible data is available on commissioning in the Local Authorities annual reports. Therefore, Sounding the Feminists requested access for the data required from The Arts Council of Ireland/An Comhairle Ealaíon, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Wexford County Council, and Galway City Council with the following results:

- Informal inquiries directed to the four organisations above yielded the following results:
  - The Arts Council of Ireland/An Comhairle Ealaíon met with representatives from Sounding the Feminists and advised the research group to submit a formal request for information which was done on Thursday 21st November 2019. The Arts Council of Ireland/An Comhairle Ealaíon responded to this request in December 2019 advising that they would co-operate with STF to assemble a sample data provision over a 5 year period (2014-2018) and offered to assemble and collate data covering Music/Traditional Music/Opera for:
    - Gender of composers applied for and amounts applied for.
    - Gender of composers for whom commissions were awarded and amounts awarded.

- The Arts Council of Northern Ireland responded positively to Sounding the Feminists formal request for information and advised that they would co-operate with data gathering and collating where possible and appropriate.
- Wexford County Council advised Sounding the Feminists to submit a Freedom of Information request which was submitted by Ciara L. Murphy on Thursday 31st October 2019. This request was subsequently denied on the basis that no records exist.
- Galway City Council were initially contacted on Thursday 31st October and have responded with our inquiries with the relevant information.

### **Proposed Project Outcomes and Recommendations (Phase I):**

Based on the findings of Phase I of this Research Project, **Sounding the Feminists** recommends that publicly funded music organisations should:

- Track applications and awards granted by gender
- Publish gender statistics alongside programme announcements
- Have a clear and focused policy for achieving gender parity across all roles, including parity of pay.
- Champion the advancement of women and non-binary composers and artists

### **In Phase II this project seeks to:**

- Publish the findings emerging from the Research Project.
- Develop a Commissioning and Programming strategy for diverse programming in Ireland, based on the results of the analysis and guided by the Advisory Board alongside community input.
- Develop an updated Guidelines for Commissioning Fees in Ireland document, in collaboration with CMC Ireland and the Association of Irish Composers and guided by the Advisory Board alongside community input.
- Use the findings to inform several artistic activities such as a commission, exhibition, and launch.
- Create and make available an online archive of material pertaining to the project.

Ultimately, we envision that this project will facilitate the end of reliance on anecdotal information in determining policy and practice; it will instead uncover and offer an analysis of concrete data which will provide stakeholders with an overview of the sector and thus a baseline to improve gender balance and diversity across musical genres.