

UNEVEN SCORE:

An Assessment of the
Gender Balance for Publicly
Funded Composer Opportunities
on the Island of Ireland
2004-2019

 SOUNGING
THE
FEMINISTS

the
contemporary
music centre
Ireland

ABOUT

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FOREWORD

***Uneven Score* was commissioned by research partners the *Contemporary Music Centre (CMC)* and *Sounding the Feminists (STF)* in order to assess the gender balance of publicly funded composer opportunities on the island of Ireland. The report serves to document gender within contemporary music composition between 2004-19. *Uneven Score* is a snapshot of a time in our recent musical history when gender balance for commissioning opportunities was not a consideration at national level. It is our sincere hope that this report stimulates cultural change.**

This research was conducted over two phases by the independent Research Associates; Dr Ciara Murphy and Dr Michael Lydon. CMC and STF thank them both for their commitment to the project. We also sincerely thank members of the Project's Advisory Board for generously sharing their expertise, guidance, and sound editorial judgements, and the supporting organisations and institutions who have cooperated in providing their data. We would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Arts Council/*An Chomhairle Ealaíon (ACI)*.

The research undertaken in this report focuses on the area of composer commissions throughout the island of Ireland over a 15-year period. The intention is to provide a starting point from which further research will be done. It is our hope as commissioners that the findings in this report will inform, progress, and augment gender balance in composition within Ireland.

Evonne Ferguson
Director, Contemporary Music Centre

Karen Power
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INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Sounding the Feminists (STF) is an Irish-based, voluntary-led collective of composers, sound artists, performers, musicologists, critics, promoters, industry professionals, organisations, and individuals, committed to promoting and publicising the creative work of women musicians.

The Contemporary Music Centre (CMC) is Ireland's resource organisation for New Music. CMC supports artists active in New Music from Ireland and aims to increase engagement with the artform. CMC maps the landscape of New Music from Ireland, ensuring the collection is a living resource.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This research project investigating gender balance of publicly funded composer opportunities across the island of Ireland from 2004-19 was commissioned by the *Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland (CMC)* and *Sounding the Feminists (STF)* in partnership. The success of this research project was dependent upon the support of the Arts Council/*An Chomhairle Ealaíon*, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the participation of organisations and institutions that have offered commissioning opportunities. The research project was funded through CMC's annual Strategic Funding from the Arts Council/*An Comhairle Ealaíon*.

PRINCIPAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Obtain and analyse the gender breakdown of publicly funded music commissioning opportunities on the island of Ireland from 2004-19.
- Consider the parameters of the funding: fee(s), status of work, duration, scale.
- If applicable, obtain and analyse the gender breakdown of those applying for that same funding.
- Develop recommendations for more diverse programming of contemporary music on the island of Ireland, with the aim of informing future policy making.

IRELAND, GENDER & CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

Existing statistics from the Contemporary Music Centre (CMC), the Association of Irish Composers (AIC), the Irish Composers' Collective (ICC) and the Arts Council/*An Chomhairle Ealaíon (ACI)* indicate that from 2004-19 there were fewer women than men composing contemporary music on the island of Ireland.

In an article published in 2019, Adrian Smith writes: 'data from the CMC shows that out of the 212 composers registered, 46 (22%) are female*'. The Association of Irish Composers currently lists 102 composers on its website, 33 (32%) of which are female, while the Irish Composers' Collective has 16 female members (26%) out of a total membership of 62' (2019). Smith suggests that 'we can broadly estimate that the percentage of female composers is somewhere in the region of 25-30%' (ibid). Mark Fitzgerald writes: 'One would therefore expect at least a 25-30% representation of female composers even where a 50:50 balance is not achieved' (2017). It is important to note that some Irish composers are not members of CMC, AIC, and ICC.

ACI gender statistics acquired for this research suggest that from 2012-19, women accounted for 35-37% of ACI Individual Awards applicants.

From 2012-19, of the 502 applicants for a Bursary Award:

- 185 were women (37%)
- 32% of women who applied were successful
- 27% of men who applied were successful

From 2012-19, of the 312 applicants for a Projects Award:

- 110 were women (35%)
- 25% of the women who applied were successful
- 30% of the men who applied were successful

The ACI data does not exclusively represent composers of contemporary music. The data nonetheless presents supplementary insight into the gender of individuals applying for public funding.

This report recognises that from 2004-19, 25-32% of Irish composers were women.

Although there are no existing statistics on non-binary composers, based on the results of this research project, this report recognises that from 2004-19, 0.5% of Irish composers identified as non-binary.

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS/ INSTITUTIONS

The successful completion of the research project would not have been possible without the support of the Arts Council/*An Chomhairle Ealaíon (ACI)*, Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) and organisations and institutions that have offered commissioning opportunities. CMC and STF would like to acknowledge the support and publicly thank the following:

Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon:
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Sinéad O'Reilly (Head of Local, Place & Public Art)

Arts Council of Northern Ireland:
Ciaran Scullion (Head of Music)

Belfast Music Society:
Bethany Simpson (Concerts Manager)

Chamber Choir Ireland:
Majella Hollywood (Chief Executive)

Concorde Ensemble:
Jane O'Leary (Founder)

Cork International Choral Festival:
Elaine FitzGerald (Festival Manager)

Crash Ensemble:
Siân Cunningham (CEO)

Ergodos:
Garrett Sholdice (Co-Founder)

Fidelio Trio:
Darragh Morgan (Co-Founder)

Galway Music Residency:
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Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble:
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Irish Chamber Orchestra:
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Music Generation:
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Aidan O'Donnell (MG Tipperary)

Music Network:
Sharon Rollston (Chief Executive)

National Concert Hall:
Robert Read (CEO)
Lesley Bishop (Choirs Administrator)

National Symphony Orchestra & Chorus:
Anthony Long (General Manager)

New Ross Piano Festival:
Finghin Collins (Artistic Director)

Quiet Music Ensemble:
John Godfrey (Director)

RTÉ Orchestras, Quartet & Choirs:
John O'Kane (RTÉ)

RTÉ lyric FM:
Sinéad Wylde (Head)

Ulster Orchestra:
Patrick McCarthy (Head of Artistic Planning and Operations)

West Cork Chamber Music Festival - West Cork Music:
Helen Dawson (Programme Coordinator)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is evident from the statistical analysis carried out in this research project that Contemporary Music in Ireland had a marked gender imbalance from 2004-2019.

As part of this study, we collected data of funding opportunities offered by organisations/institutions and funding bodies. Full details of the data collection process and structure of this report can be found on the Contemporary Music Centre's website cmc.ie/uneven-score

From 2004-19, these funding opportunities offered by organisations/institutions and funding bodies resulted in 784 compositions of contemporary music by Irish composers and/or composers who were resident on the island of Ireland at the time of commission. We examined the gender disparity of these commissions.

In addition, we examined commissioning opportunities directly and indirectly funded by the Arts Council/*An Chomhairle Ealaíon (ACI)* and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI).

We also assessed the gender disparity of 152 operas produced on the island of Ireland from 2004-19.

784

commissioned compositions
of contemporary music by Irish composers

KEY FINDINGS

The key findings from this study are as follows:



31%

Of the 784 compositions assessed, **women were commissioned 244 times (31%)**. Men were commissioned 539 times (69%). There was 1 commission for a composer who identifies as non-binary.



22%

There were 191 individual composers commissioned. **There were 42 women (22%) commissioned**, 148 men (77.5%), and 1 commission for a composer who identifies as non-binary (0.5%).



22%

We can determine that **women represent 22% of the individual composers commissioned**. These women collectively composed 31% of the commissions.

38

The average age of women commissioned was 38.
The average age of men was 45.

~~50/50~~

Only 2 of the organisations, institutions and funding bodies assessed have commissioned 50/50 women and men.
This amounts to 3%.



24%

From 2004-19, ACI directly and indirectly awarded €6,057,702 to Irish composers via Bursary Awards, Cnuas, and Music Commissions Awards.
→ **Women received €1,436,396 (24%).**
Men received €4,621,306 (76%).



28%

In accordance with ACNI's official data retention policy, we were unable to access information on some ACNI funding. However, we can determine that from 2012-19 ACNI directly and indirectly gave 123 awards to composers from the island of Ireland via Major Individual Awards and other funding.
→ **Women received 35 funding opportunities (28%).**
Men received 88 funding opportunities (72%).



Of the 152 operas assessed, which includes both historic and contemporary productions, **3 were composed by women.**

1!

Of the 3 operas composed by women, **2 were composed in collaboration with other composers.**



We observed a **notable failure by many organisations/institutions to keep adequate records** of the gender balance of those commissioned. These failures impeded this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined in this section are informed by the key findings from *Uneven Score*. It is acknowledged that since 2019 improvements have been made in the gender balance of publicly funded composer opportunities on the island of Ireland. Due to delays in publishing the report, these changes are not reflected in the research findings. Some aspects of these improvements are nonetheless evident in the recommendations.

The recommendations are authored by:

Dr Ann Cleare

STF Director of Operations for the Project

Dr Brenda Donohue

Project Advisory Panel

Evonne Ferguson

CMC Director

Dr Michael Lydon

Project Research Associate

Dr Áine Mangaang

Project Advisory Panel

Dr Karen Power

Project Advisory Panel

Dr Laura Watson

Project Advisory Panel
Commissioning, Policy,
and Cultural Change

”

Gender equality issues need to be mainstreamed at all stages of policy making or project programming, but it is especially important to take it into account at the planning stage, when the problems, concerns and needs of the beneficiaries are identified and the ways to address them are defined.

Council of Europe*

→ **We call for significant cultural change in the commissioning of contemporary music on the island of Ireland.** To implement cultural change, we recommend that each commissioning organisation/ institution consider gender mainstreaming in their commissioning and policy making. Gender mainstreaming is an approach to policy-making that considers both women's and men's interests and concerns.

→ **We recommend that each commissioning organisation/ institution devise and implement an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) plan.** We encourage that any EDI plan considers the various protected characteristics recognised by Ireland's Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015) which outlaw discrimination on nine characteristics: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, religion, age, race, and membership of the Traveller community.

Note*: For further information see Council of Europe (2023) 'What is gender mainstreaming?', Council of Europe. Available at www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/what-is-gender-mainstreaming

EDUCATION AND REPRESENTATION

→ We call on the Department of Education (Ireland) to address the exclusion of women composers from the Leaving Certificate Music curriculum. Since its design in the mid-1990s the senior-cycle music syllabus has failed to include even one work by a woman composer in the ‘set works’**. This matter was brought to wide attention in 2015 following Dr Laura Watson’s article on the subject, yet nothing has changed**. We acknowledge that merely adding women to the curriculum will not automatically lead to qualitative change towards gender equality. Gender mainstreaming means integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and activities. It is therefore a tool for achieving gender equality. We call on the Department to consider gender mainstreaming to address gender inequality across all music syllabus cycles.

- We call on all individuals involved in the creation of contemporary music on the island of Ireland to acknowledge that representation matters. We call for a cultural change in the visual representation of gender across all aspects of contemporary music. This cultural change should challenge long-embedded visual misrepresentation of women in music.
- We would particularly welcome a sustained effort to visually represent high profile commissions for Irish women composers.

Note**: For further information see Andrea Cleary (2023) ‘We need to change our tune towards representation of women in Leaving Cert music’, Business Post. Available at businesspost.ie/life-arts/andrea-cleary-we-need-to-change-our-tune-towards-representation-of-women-in-leaving-cert-music and Laura Watson (2015) ‘Sexism and the Leaving Cert. Music Syllabus’, Journal of Music. Available at journalofmusic.com/opinion/sexism-and-leaving-cert-music-syllabus.

TRANSPARENCY

- We call on commissioning organisations/institutions in receipt of public funding to keep adequate records of those commissioned. These records should signal the gender the commissioned composer identifies as at the time of commission. These records should be archived and if possible published in the organisation/institutions’ yearly reports.
- We call on commissioning organisations/institutions, policy-makers, academics and archivists to make a concerted effort to conserve archives where women’s work is most present. An archive acknowledging the success of women composers in part assures these composers are represented in future research and discourse. A failure to archive puts the legacy of women composers in Irish contemporary music at risk.

NOTES

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Phase One and Two of this research is available to read and download from www.cmc.ie/uneven-score

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