



# WHO DO WE SAY WE ARE?

Irish Art 1922|2022

THE MUSIC

“Painting is silent poetry; poetry is art that speaks.”

– SIMONIDES OF CEOS

“Art is how we decorate space.  
Music is how we decorate silence.”

– ANONYMOUS

“Music is the art which is most  
nigh to tears and memory.”

– OSCAR WILDE

“There is only one art and that is the art of living.”

– JACK B. YEATS

# DEDICATION

## ***Who Do We Say We Are?*** ***Irish Art 1922 I 2022***

1922 was a seminal year for Ireland and the concept of Irishness: the modern Irish state was founded; James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Ireland's first modernist novel, was published in Paris; and the Irish Race Congress, a consequential gathering and accompanying art exhibition that served as a reckoning moment for Irish identity politics, was held in the French capital.

Ireland's art, our music and literature, have always played a central role in the assertion and representation of Irish nation- and statehood internationally. In 2022, as part of Ireland's official commemorative decade of centenaries, the Irish Government is supporting *States of Modernity*, an ambitious series of interlinked cultural events and exhibitions taking place in the Midwest US, Ireland, and European capitals to reflect on the events of one hundred years ago, to examine the journey Ireland and Irish identity have travelled over the past century of statehood, and to look ahead to Ireland's next century.

***Who Do We Say We Are? Irish Art 1922 I 2022*** in the Snite Museum of Art is a central element of *States of Modernity*. It approaches 1922 not as a resolved moment in time, but a starting point for a careful exploration of Irishness and Irish art through the first century of Irish statehood. Irish culture – our music, our art, our dance, our literature – is at the very core of Irish identity and a key protagonist in the assertion of Irish nationhood and the building of Irish statehood. Ireland's culture is at essence a multi-modal experience with music and song enriching and adding layers of feeling and

meaning to the appreciation of works of art, and to their impact. ***Who Do We Say We Are? Irish Art 1922 I 2022*** and this musical accompaniment make an important and unique contribution to Ireland's commemorative program and to our understanding of the relationship between Irish art and identity as the Irish State enters her second century. It is for this reason the Consulate is proud to support the musical response to the artworks and themes of the exhibition composed chiefly by the peerless Liz Carroll and curated both by her and by Marty Fahey of the O'Brien Collection.

The Irish Government is grateful for the tireless and inspired work of our partners in this exploration of the forging of modern Ireland and Irish identity, including: Cheryl Snay and David Acton at the Snite Museum of Art, Marty Fahey and the O'Brien Family of the O'Brien Collection, Patrick Griffin and Mary Hendriksen of the Keough Naughton Institute, Ciaran O'Neill and Billy Shortall of Trinity College Dublin, and Nora Hickey M'Sichili of the Centre Culturel Irlandais Paris. My thanks also to my colleagues in the Department of Foreign Affairs Eugene Downes, Sarah Keating, and Nik Quaife for their contributions.

– **Kevin Byrne**, Consul General  
Consulate General of Ireland to the Midwestern US

# PRODUCER'S STATEMENTS

It is a singular honor to be asked to write music for the paintings, the artists, and the time that was – Paris in 1922. One of the first pieces I wrote for this CD was the waltz, “La Valse des Artistes,” symbolic of the bal-musette music in France at that time. It is joined on Track 8 with the fabulous, “The Rakes of Mallow,” which is a polka that was played at the concerts of music and song in 1922. It’s a great melody! (Movie director John Ford had to think so too when he featured it in his movie, “The Quiet Man.”) It’s the kind of tune that says here we are, we are Ireland. With that combination of tunes in mind, the stage was set to respond to art with both music of the time and, for me, music from the heart.

For my part there are ten tunes here composed for individual and multiple paintings. Writing music to accompany the notable pieces of Irish art which were done before and since the exhibition in Paris has been most enjoyable. I’ve delved into biographies of the artists, explored their own words about their art, read critiques and reviews of single paintings as well as perspectives on artists’ entire bodies of work. As a

traditional Irish music composer, most tunes naturally well up from the sonic world I’m steeped in. Writing tunes that honor and respond to the artistic expression and creativity of another medium, painting, has opened another source of inspiration, one that melds visuals with sound. I hope in some small way, through the music, to add something that speaks to you the listener in looking at the art.

I am enormously grateful to the Seamus Egan Project (Seamus Egan, Jenna Moynihan, Owen Marshall, and Kyle Sanna) for their musicianship and all-around brilliance in collaborating on the arrangements. There are four tracks with music originating from the concerts held in 1922, performed by The Goodman Trio, Jenna Moynihan, Damien and Colman Connolly, and Seamus Egan. There are additional composed tunes for the occasion by Marty Fahey and fiddler Liz Knowles. All of us loved the chance to express ourselves with our music in honor of our fellow artists.

– Liz Carroll

The opportunity to participate in the planning of the exhibit **Who Do We Say We Are? Irish Art 1922 | 2022** and this companion CD of music has been a rare and wonderful pleasure. The commitment to these projects by all the partners – musicians, sponsors, colleagues and other supporters – has been steadfast and heart-warming.

This exhibit traces the trajectory of Irish art as an essential expression of culture from a key moment in 1922 – the *Exposition d' Art Irlandais*, which was staged as part of the Paris Congress in January of that year, to the current day. In so doing, it looks at the role and messaging of Irish art, music, etc., as ways we can explore vital and enduring themes, including the very nature of 'Irishness' itself.

This CD looks through a 'musical lens' at the works of art and the themes to which they speak. It does so both by recreating some of the pieces chosen for the musical programs in 1922 and by imagining and crafting new musical responses to the pieces of art chosen for this current exhibition. Now and again, select pieces of

poetry are also presented alongside the images and music so that the power of Irish cultural expression can be experienced together rather than in isolation from one another. The branches of the arts are often explored by experts as separate and specific fields of study (*literature, poetry, fine arts, performing arts, music, etc.*) This project attempts to show, by contrast, that these artistic expressions are really 'cultural siblings'; they often speak most powerfully when they are influenced or inspired by each other and are given the opportunity to share valuable and nuanced insights about each other.

Finally, we hope that this exhibit and exhibit CD sparks a desire for further multi-disciplinary engagements between the branches of Irish creative expression and that the abiding dynamism within the Arts enables us all to more fully understand and appreciate the rich, deep and ever-evolving nature of 'Irishness.'

– **Marty Fahey**

Curator, The O'Brien Collection

“...That all the arts be united again, painting and literature, poetry and music. Bless synthesis...”

– WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, 1937

## 1. FREESPACE

### THE HORSE AND TRAP (Slip Jig)

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JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle & percussion)

SEAMUS EGAN (flute & percussion)

OWEN MARSHALL (bouzouki & percussion)

KYLE SANNA (guitar & percussion)

*"The potency of art is that it leaves to future generations a window into the spirit of the age. Architecture, the mother of the arts, defines how we live and how we construct our culture."*

"...Last year I visited the Venice Architecture Biennale, curated by friends and colleagues at the RHA, Yvonne Farrell and her founding partner of Grafton Architects, Shelley McNamara. An award-winning practice, recent winners of World Building of the Year, these are inspiring women, big thinkers, world leaders. Taking as a theme the idea of **FREESPACE** – imagining radical ways to think about the spaces in and around the spaces we inhabit – their manifesto was a call for architects to contribute, engage and refresh the continuity of architectural culture. *"We need to tend to culture, like tending to a garden,"* they say in their introduction to the Biennale. *"In architecture time is not linear. Architecture brings past, present and future together."*

– James Hanley (*The Spaces in Which We Live*)

The melody **Freespace** responds to James Hanley's description of the deliberate process of creating, admiring, living with and being influenced by architecture. So how is architecture woven into our experience of this exhibit? In addition to being housed and organized in a space which will inevitably affect how

“I call architecture frozen music.”

– JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

“We shape our buildings;  
thereafter, they shape us.”

– WINSTON CHURCHILL

we respond to the exhibit, the influence of architecture is very much on display in some of the artworks themselves.

In Osborne's **At the Breakfast Table**, Blackshaw's **Joe Bell's Council House**, and O'Donoghue's **Revolution Cottage**, the spaces we inhabit may seem only to be the objects or settings in the paintings, but it is *how* we inhabit these spaces and *how* they shape so much of our lives – like silent witnesses – that are the *subjects* of these works. The melody also responds in a less obvious way to Lily William's **Hibernia** who used her home and studio as a safe haven – a *"free space"* – during the 1916 Uprising when this piece was painted and thereafter as well. Dr. Sinéad McCool has written the following in her essay on Williams for this exhibit's catalog:

*"[Lily] and her siblings, Norah, Flo and her brother Jack lived in 11 Lower Beechwood Avenue Ranelagh where a secret room was built. And she relates further that, "When he cleared the house in the 1940s, Fred Williams discovered a hidden room whose door was concealed by a wardrobe." Her studio was also used for men on the run during the campaign for independence, and on one occasion Eamon de Valera used it to hide in."*



Walter Osborne (1859-1903)  
*At the Breakfast Table*, 1894  
Oil on canvas

1



2

Elizabeth "Lily"  
Williams  
(1874-1940)  
*Hibernia*, 1916  
Pastel on paper



Hughie O'Donoghue (1953-)  
*Revolution Cottage*, 2015  
Oil on canvas

3



4

Basil Blackshaw  
(1932-2016)  
*Joe Bell's  
Council House*,  
1984  
Oil on canvas

**The Horse and Trap:** Until well into the 20th c, when the people of rural Ireland left their homes, they generally moved from place to place either on foot, by bike, by donkey and cart and, on special occasions, by horse and trap. (Travelling by hired car, bus or train was quite rare and more of an urban mode of transport.)

This melody recalls the novelty and jauntiness of that method of travelling.

William Conor (1881-1968)  
*The Jaunting Car*, 1930s  
Oil on canvas



## 2. THE EAGLE'S WHISTLE (Melody)

JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)

MÁIRÍ CHAIMBEUL (harp)

OWEN MARSHALL (guitar & harmonium)

There are several iterations of this melody – an air, a March, and a lullaby – but how it was performed at Paris 1922 Conference, we cannot know. Here are some historical notes on the melody dating back to 1890:

“The Eagle’s Tune,” “Fead an Iolair,” “Fead an Fhiolair.” Irish, March (2/4 time). G Major. (Joyce, O’Neill). Joyce (1873) identifies this as the marching tune of the O’Donovans whose ancient lands consisted of the territory of Hy Fidhgeinte, a district lying west of the river Maigue in county Limerick.

“I gave a setting of this in my *Ancient Irish Music* (“Eagle’s Whistle (2) (The)”: and there are two others in the Stanford-Petrie Collection (“Eagle’s Whistle (3) (The)”).

*These three are in 3/4 time: whereas the setting I now give is in 2/4, which is no doubt the proper original form, inasmuch as this was the marching tune of the O’Donovans (see my *Ancient Irish Music*, p. 53).*

*The Cork MS. has this remark: ‘The legend tells that with this tune the eagle whistles his young to rest’” (PW Joyce, 1890).*

This particular rendition was arranged by Jenna for her CD, “Woven” released in 2015. This recording is from that CD and is courtesy of Jenna Moynihan.



Paris 1922  
program



### 3. TRANSLATION-ROTATION (Hop Jig)\* THE APPROACHING STORM (Reel)+

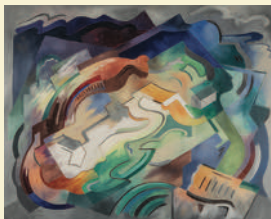
\* © LIZ CARROLL / GROW YOUR OWN MUSIC (BMI)  
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JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)  
SEAMUS EGAN (flute & bodhran)  
KYLE SANNA (guitar)  
OWEN MARSHALL (bouzouki & harmonium)

How does one challenge and then set aside some of the most cherished conventions in the canons of western art to seek an earlier, purer mode of artistic expression? With vision and courage. Mainie Jellett and her artistic colleagues felt the need to start over and in so doing, a fresh world of Cubist art came to life. Part of the methodology of their journey was to start with the basic building blocks: *line, color, simple shapes, rhythm, space* and to explore and apply those components with commitment and rigor. ***The Land, Éire*** is a late example in her practice where these 'components' are brought to bear to convey her vision of *the entirety of the Irish landscape*, rather than a particular view, as in traditional landscape paintings.

The so-called 'secret sauce' for Jellett's version of Cubism was called "**Translation-Rotation**": this refers to the way in which the basic building blocks of her art were set down, modified and put to use. The melody composed for this painting uses a 'painterly' form of this method as we get to hear the basic musical components come together into an assembly, a melody...a painting with sounds.

***The Approaching Storm*** responds not just to what we see in this epic painting but to what we are asked to presume from the painting's title – the approach of an Atlantic storm off the coast of Mayo. The melody turns in and back on itself as the energy in storms often do.



7  
**Mainie Jellett**  
(1897-1944)  
***The Land, Éire,***  
1940  
Oil on canvas

Ambassador Daniel Mulhall is a connoisseur of fine poetry and has kindly offered a couple of apt examples for us to consider in the context of this exhibit / exhibit CD.

***Inis Oírr:*** by Derek Mahon

A dream of limestone in sea-light  
Where gulls have placed their perfect prints.  
Reflection in that final sky  
Shames vision into simple sight;  
Into pure sense, experience.  
Atlantic leagues away tonight,  
Conceived beyond such innocence,  
I clutch the memory still, and I  
Have measured everything with it since.



8  
**Patrick Graham**  
(1943-)  
***Approaching Storm,***  
2007  
Oil on canvas

#### 4. SAVOURNEEN DEELISH / A MHURNIN DILIS

(And My Own True Love) (Air)

THE GOODMAN TRIO:

MICK O'BRIEN (uilleann pipes)

AOIFE NÍ BHRIAIN (fiddle)

EMER MAYOCK (flute)

There are many references to the origin of this melody dating back into the 1700s. It is listed as being an ancient Irish air, an English air and a Scottish air.

*"Francis O'Neill, in Irish Minstrels and Musicians (1913, Chapt. VIII), relates the story of blind harper Arthur O'Neill (told in his Memoirs), who, about the year 1760, played on the harp of Brian Boru through the streets of Limerick. O'Neill, an esteemed musician, was shown the harp, kept in a city councilor's town house and was allowed to string and tune it. "At the suggestion of his host, O'Neill hung the harp from his neck, being then young and strong, and paraded through the streets of that patriotic city, followed by an audience of five or six hundred people – gentle and simple – as he played the melodious strains of "Savourneen Dheelish" and other tunes not named. Niel Gow <1727-1807>, a Scottish fiddler and composer of renown) confirms it is "A favorite Irish air.", as indicated in a note in the Fourth Collection of Niel Gow's Reels, 2nd ed., originally 1800; p.10.*

While the air may be an old Irish one, the song "Savaourna Deelish Eileen ogue" was written by English comic dramatist George Colman the Younger (1762-) as part of his 1791 musical drama **The Surrender of Calais**.

– [www.tunearch.org](http://www.tunearch.org)

The Goodman Trio looked to several sources for their performance focusing mainly on one found in a (Canon) Goodman manuscript and which he copied from Thomas Moore with the title 'Tis gone and for ever' taken from Moore's verse. The variations heard in the solo fiddle section are derived from a version presented in *Frank Roche, ed., Airs and Fantasies, Vol. 4, Dublin, Cork & Limerick, 1932, p. 4*

#### 5. PRISMS (Reel)

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JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)

SEAMUS EGAN (banjo & bodhran)

OWEN MARSHALL (bouzouki & harmonium)

KYLE SANNA (acoustic guitar & electric guitar)

Though the use of vibrant color in painting was prevalent in the works of the Post-Impressionists and Fauvists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such instances were rare – almost non-existent – in Irish art during the same time period. Irish artists moved away much more slowly from the conservative, muted and quieter tonalities of their mentors and forebears. (Though, paradoxically, many Irish towns were ablaze with bold and colorful building facades, still, their interiors and artwork reverted to the more conservative color norms.) The earliest and greatest exception to this 'rule' can be found in the work of Roderic O'Conor.



9

Roderic O'Conor  
(1860-1940)  
*The Farm, Provence,*  
1913  
Oil on canvas

O'Connor's long sojourns in various parts of France exposed him to a different quality of light and warmth as well as to the work of other Continental artists responding to the same influences around him.

In Ireland, one had to wait until the mid-to late 1920s for Jack Yeats to turn towards vivid coloration. Mainie Jellett and a few others followed later, but still, vivid color was a rare sight in Irish art.

Speculation for this revolves around the topic of **climate** – both as it relates to weather and to the conservative religious influences that, together, kept many a tendency towards artistic displays of *effusiveness* or *vibrancy* in check. (Interesting to note that this sense of 'reserve' did not hold sway in music, dancing or storytelling in the same way it did in painting.)

In the work of Diana Copperwhite, *Inner Garden State*, we see color and form that advances and retreats; lines and shapes are carefully juxtaposed – like a wonderful wordless melody – these are all discreet and inter-woven moments of perception, awareness and appreciation that have power and value. Revealing the raw power of beauty, like a garden itself, Copperwhite's paintwork is lyrical, fluid, subtle and strong all at the one time.

As a response to both the O'Connor and Copperwhite paintings, *Prisms* provides a lush "sonic garden" from whence this lovely Reel emerges.



10

Diana Copperwhite  
(1969-)  
*Inner Garden State*,  
2019  
Oil on canvas

## 6. CAOINEADH EOGHAIN RUA (The Lament for Owen Roe)

SEAMUS EGAN (flute)

A beautiful, mournful and mysterious melody with a provenance that is unclear and debated.

*"There is some dispute over who this air is named for. Some argue for Owen Roe O'Neill, nephew of "the Great O'Neill" and commander of the Irish army which drove out the English in the mid-17th century. Others claim the lament is for Owen Roe O'Sullivan (Eoghain of the sweet month) the great 18th century poet from the province of Munster."*

– [www.tunearch.org](http://www.tunearch.org)

We know that a piece called *The Lament for Owen Roe* was one of the pieces played during one of the two concert performances at the 1922 Paris Congress: we do not know for certain if it was this version of the lament or another by the same name, composed by Turlough O'Carolan, the famous Bard. We believe that you will enjoy this version, the more rarely heard of the two.

## 7. REFLECTIONS ACROSS THE BOG

© LIZ CARROLL / GROW YOUR OWN MUSIC (BMI)

JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)

KYLE SANNA (guitar)

OWEN MARSHALL (harmonium)

Created shortly after leaving Achill in 1919, *Reflections Across the Bog* was painted by Paul Henry somewhere in the West of Ireland, a region that Henry became most famous – even synonymous – for illustrating in his work. It is widely felt amongst art commentators that the image(s) of the West of Ireland that many can conjure in

their imagination today – indeed during any time in the last 100 years – often presumes a visual memory of an encounter with a Paul Henry painting or print. Several of his paintings were used by the railway lines and by the Irish government as posters to encourage travel and so his widely distributed images and style became familiar to many both within and outside of Ireland.

Though it seems counterintuitive to imagine this, paintings in the canon of Irish art rarely depict rain or scenes where it is actively raining – as such, this is a noteworthy exception. Sheets of mist and gently blowing rain emanate from the clouds, crisscrossing in a pattern for the viewer which conjures an almost visceral awareness of the near ever-presence of moisture in the Irish sky.

The melody seems to capture this same crisscrossing pattern sonically and in the same soft, subtle meditative manner. The poem suggested by Ambassador Daniel Mulhall is also a fitting companion for this painting and this melody.



**Paul Henry (1876–1958)**  
*Reflections Across the Bog*, (1919-21)  
Oil on canvas

11

### **Windharp**, by John Montague *(for Patrick Collins)* \*

The sounds of Ireland,  
that restless whispering  
you never get away  
from, seeping out of  
low bushes and grass,  
heatherbells and fern,  
wrinkling bog pools,  
scraping tree branches,  
light hunting cloud,  
sound hounding sight,  
a hand ceaselessly  
combing and stroking  
the landscape, till  
the valley gleams  
like the pile upon  
a mountain pony's coat.

\* *Patrick Collins (1911-1994) was one of Ireland's most esteemed painters.*

### **8. LA VALSE DES ARTISTES** (Waltz)\* **THE RAKES OF MALLOW** (Polka)

\*© LIZ CARROLL / GROW YOUR OWN MUSIC (BMI)

DAMIEN CONNOLLY (button accordion)  
COLMAN CONNOLLY (piano)

#### **Why Paris?**

*"Paris was chosen as the venue because it was seen by many as the cultural capital of the world.*

*By demonstrating the range and quality of Irish culture and contemporary art and design, the State presented a public display of artistic independence to support its claims of political independence.*

By showcasing Irish sovereignty and cultural uniqueness on a foreign stage, the new Irish State presented a self-defined, political view of itself, saying “this is who we are and this is how we see ourselves.”

Politically, the Treaty had divided the Dáil, which was made up of individuals who were previously united in their common national and international political objectives. Art and cultural expression was something both sides of the divide could embrace and support.

Chief organiser of the musical evenings, Arthur Darley, also delivered the lecture on Irish music and re-enforced the nationalistic aspirations of the concerts, declaring that Ireland never bowed to a conqueror and after centuries of suffering and persecution still “gloriously preserved” her life and music and “she will once more be the land of song.”

– **Dr. Billy Shortall**, *Exposition d’ Art Irlandais*, 1922

Liz Carroll wrote in her Producer’s note about her enjoyment in writing *La Valse des Artistes*. It is the kind of waltz that one would have heard in Paris back in 1922, and the kind of waltz still popular in France today.

“The painting of the future will be *national* in its growth but *international* in its speech.”

– JACK B. YEATS, *Paris Congress*, 1922

As to *The Rakes of Mallow*, probably because of its inclusion in the soundtrack to “*The Quiet Man*” – followed by its presence at decades’ worth of St. Patrick’s Day commemorations – it has acquired a



### Congrès Irlandais à Paris, January 1922.

Group includes Sean T. O’Kelly, Eoin MacNeill, Eamon de Valera, Countess Markievicz, Mary MacSwiney, Harry Boland, Douglas Hyde, and Jack B. Yeats.

6

sort of “paddy-whackery” status in the world of Irish traditional music: simply put, the melody has become rather hackneyed and over-played. We all had some understandable reservations about these associations but, happily, Damien and Colman’s handling of the piece strips away these accretions and their rendition restores the respectability of the melody without losing its welcome jaunty character.

### 9. CNOC AN PHOBAIL (Hill of the People)\* THE THREE-LEGGED STOOL (Jig)+

\* © LIZ CARROLL / GROW YOUR OWN MUSIC (BMI)  
+ © MARTY FAHEY / THE DREAMER (BMI)

JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)  
SEAMUS EGAN (flute & bodhran)  
KYLE SANNA (guitar)  
OWEN MARSHALL (bouzouki & harmonium)  
MARTY FAHEY (button accordion)

Charles Lamb, born in Portadown, Co. Armagh began his painting career as a house painter in his father's decorating firm. Between 1913 and 1922, he attended the Belfast School of Art and then the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin where his prominent mentors included Margaret Clarke, James Sleator, Patrick Tuohy and Sean Keating, themselves all noted students of the great painter and teacher, William Orpen. The influence of this tutelage, especially in the direct engaging gaze of the subject, is evident in ***The Turf Cutter***.

Time spent in Brittany, France, in the 1920s sensitized Lamb to the nuances of rural customs and culture. He eventually settled and remained in and around Carraroe in Connemara, Galway starting in 1935, where he raised his family, painted and offered summer school sessions for aspiring young painters. Having spent so much time in this area, Lamb was not a visitor but rather more like a native: his work is imbued with that sense of easy familiarity and nuanced knowledge that informed his choice of his subjects, his observations and then the paintings themselves. ***The Turf Cutter*** captures some of the characteristics of the resilience and ruggedness of the people of Connemara: they possessed a self-assured straightforwardness combined with a faith, fortitude, determination and perseverance in the face of daily hard work and adversity.

Just outside of Carraroe, in Connemara is ***Cnoc an Phobail*** (Hill of the People) which used to be the gathering place for locals and non-locals alike as a sort of pilgrimage site to celebrate special events, such as Patron's Day and St. John's Eve. It is easy to imagine that both Lamb and his neighbors would have visited this hill on such occasions.

Three-legged stools have the somewhat unlikely quality of being more stable than four-legged stools – especially

on the uneven floors of old Irish cottages or in barns. Simply put, they adjust more effectively to the flooring conditions on which they are set. In Irish vernacular furniture, one such type of three-legged stool is called a "creepie" because that designation refers to the ability to creep closer to the open hearth for warmth given that the piece itself took up so little floor space. As well, these stools are unusually low to the ground (only 8"-12" high) because many Irish cottages had chimneys with sub-standard drafts which resulted in the open turf fires billowing smoke out into the room: the low stool allowed one to be seated comfortably below the "smoke-line."

***The Three-Legged Stool*** is meant to emulate the simplicity of this disarmingly simple but clever piece of vernacular furniture; of a type one would certainly expect to see in the humble cottage of ***The Turf Cutter*** and his family.



12

Charles Lamb  
(1893-1964)  
***The Turf Cutter***,  
late 1920s  
Oil on canvas



13

*“People still talked about him as if he was living locally. Because I never knew him – he was gone [to America] long before my time, it was hard for me to think of him alive; but think of him I did. His music had left a powerful impression. It was said he had a world of tunes. We never heard anything from him.... The only thing [my mother] would ever say is that “we had his fire” if he ever came back.*

*In those times, if someone went to America and a house was emptied out, the neighbours would take a blazing sod of turf from that hearth and place it in their own – in that way, the fire was kept alive for the people if they came back. You’d hear of houses that had ‘three or four fires in them’ and that’s what people would mean.”*

– **Christy McNamara and Peter Woods**, *The Living Note: The Heartbeat of Irish Music*, (p. 14)

The two aspects of this track join together in honoring the importance of the turf and turf fires in rural Ireland – with the simple, soulful music so often played by those firesides. This tune was composed, and is played here, on a 1940s Hohner button accordion – of the type often played in those old cottages. If you have ever sat quietly in the main room of an Irish cottage with a turf fire blazing



14

**Amelia Stein**  
(1958–)  
*Hand Cut Turf,*  
*Port a’Chlóidh,*  
*North Mayo,*  
2015  
Gelatin silver print  
© Amelia Stein

away, perfuming the room with its distinctive aromatic smell, then you know instinctively why the experience was so evocative. Much of that is now in the past, the stuff of memories – but very warm and fond memories indeed.

## 10. IRELAND’S FAREWELL

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JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)  
KYLE SANNA (guitar & piano)  
OWEN MARSHALL (bouzouki & harmonium)

One sees and hears the word *“Diaspora”* often in the context of articles and discussions about the centuries’ old phenomenon of Irish emigration. As of the start of this century, more than 70 million people around the globe could trace their lineage back to Ireland and are, therefore, part of the *Diaspóra na nGael*: above all else, the organizers of Irish Race Congress of 1922 sought the recognition and support of this widely dispersed but highly influential group.

*“The Irish Free State engaged politically and economically with its diaspora for practical reasons.*



**Congrès Irlandais à Paris, January 1922.**  
 (Note the signs for the various delegations from around the world.)

6

*Politically, to canvass politicians in their adopted countries to put pressure on the British administration to grant Irish independence. Economically, the diaspora abroad were seen as having connections on which to build trade and economic relationships with their adopted countries.*

*Remittances sent home by the Irish abroad were important. The diaspora were also essential in the Irish psyche, and success abroad by Irish people was celebrated. With this in mind, the Paris Congress proposed compiling a 'Register of notable Irish men and women' abroad as well as schemes to promote*

*Irish studies in foreign universities. The 'diaspora' paintings in this exhibit may be considered in this context..."*

– Dr. Billy Shortall (August, 2021 email)

**Farewell to Ireland**, by Patrick Hennessy: President John F. Kennedy was regarded by millions as the pinnacle of the success and achievement of the Irish Diaspora: the fondest hope, the most daring dream, cut short. It was not unusual to see a picture of JFK (alongside an image of the Pope) in a place of prominence in the homes of Irish Catholics both in Ireland and in the US, even decades after his assassination.

**Portrait of Jim O'Brien**, by Colin Davidson; **Woman's Work**, by Martin Gale and **Image of Beckett**, by Louis Le Brocquy each convey something of the character and experiences of the Diaspora. Taken together, these paintings conjure a broad mixture of feelings: sadness, loss and struggle; longing and nostalgia; hope and striving; perseverance and achievement.

These emotional ingredients are captured and conveyed here in this beautiful composition and its soulful arrangement.



15

**Martin Gale (1949-)**  
**Women's Work**,  
 2000  
 Oil on canvas



16

**Colin Davidson (1968-)**  
**Portrait of Jim O'Brien**, 2014  
 Oil on canvas





17

Patrick Hennessy  
(1915–1980)  
*Farewell to Ireland*,  
1963  
Oil on canvas



18

Louis Le Brocquy  
(1916–2012)  
*Image of Beckett*,  
1994  
Oil on canvas

## 11. SLEEPING IN TIR NA NÓG (Melody/Song)

LIZ KNOWLES (fiddle / hardanger d'amore / piano)  
ELIZABETH CRONIN (voice – Cuir Chodladh)

This track and the notes, poetry and images that accompany it, is a wonderful example of what can happen when one chooses to see a piece of art from many vantage points: *prose, poetry, music and art*. Each of these responses grant us a unique insight into the painting and, taken together, they create a truly kaleidoscopic experience of the painting. They are a testament to the power that art has to inspire and to move the imagination.

“**Tir na nÓg** is the legendary land of youth, a mythological island, believed to be off the west coast of Ireland, to which according to folklore, the lovers Niamh and Oisín, eloped. W B. Yeats, Jack’s elder brother, described it in his *Fairy Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) as the:

**‘Country of the Young, for age and death  
have not found it; neither tears nor  
loud laughter have gone near it’.**

One of W. B. Yeats’s most famous poems, *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), recounts the travels and adventures of Oisín through the mystical isles of Tir na nÓg. The subject clearly appealed to Jack Yeats also. In 1943 he painted another major work connected to the myth, *A Blackbird bathing in Tir na nÓg* (1943, Private Collection).

The boy in Yeats’s painting is not Oisín nor a Celtic warrior but a modern figure. He may be a self-portrait of the artist as a youth, according to Hilary Pyle (*Jack B Yeats, A Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, no.491). His body and face is sculpted out of thick paint and his smiling expression conveys the pleasure of this moment, when he is caught between the sensual delights of nature on a summer’s day, and the imaginative stimulation of a storybook filled with



Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957)  
*In Tir Na nÓg*, 1936  
Oil on canvas

19

great tales and adventures. The emotional intensity of the painting is conveyed through its rich colours, most notably the combination of blues and greens, a favourite mixture in Yeats's paintings of the 1930s. The rich and varied application of pigment creates a capricious surface, full of movement and life. It emphasizes the tenuous position of the main figure, the youth, whose enjoyment of real and imagined form is only temporary. There is a suggestion that the pulsating landscape and myths will continue after he has gone. But the physicality of the vigorous brushwork and the power of the colour takes precedence over the narrative, forcing the viewer to engage in the sheer exuberance of the construction of the painting itself and its effects."

– Dr. Róisín Kennedy

***Sleeping in Tir na nÓg:*** In January of 2020, I spent three weeks isolated in a cottage on a cliff as an artist in residence at the magical Cill Rialaig, near the very westernmost edge of County Kerry. When I returned

home from that experience, I brought with me a body of musical work that existed only in fragments – pieces of a story yet untold. The invitation to respond musically to ***Tir na nÓg***, however, with its legendary theme, its rich textures and colors, and the unanswered questions it presents, became the door through which that story began to take on form.

Alongside my composed fragments, another melodic strain floated in – the song *Cuir Chodladh* (Irish for 'put to sleep'), which came from a book of songs by traditional singer Elizabeth Cronin collected by the BBC. The final piece is a musical collage, a conversation between memory, melody and the Yeats painting.

– Liz Knowles



Lillie Morris  
*Tir Na nÓg*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas

20

There are two additional aspects to this artistic response: a poem for the Yeats painting by Linda Aldrich and a painterly response from artist Lillie Morris. Alongside the music, both add further insights and nuance to our appreciation for the painting.

*“In Tír na nÓg, Jack B. Yeats, 1936”*

I'd like to think poetry is doing it, the far-off gaze taking him out of the world or further into it,

looking at nothing and everything at once, how when absorbed, time expands the moment,

puts him where he is and not there at all, as he disappears into the clean photosynthesis

of a sunny day – the ocean, the boats, the people on shore, the grass growing over and around him.

I know this can happen, how something catches us up into the light of all that transpires, the moist green

of summer, the ocean's glint, the words before words, that first buzz fit of love in the heart. He does seem

happy, our young man, in this lush magma of paint, and does he hold a book of color sketches, and so rises

from his own palette, from the center of his own dancing landscape, a reddish smile, the dark flash of his eyes?

We see how young he is and are reminded of ourselves when we knew how to begin, how to find our way back

into the beauty of making. The music, too, we remember, though we must be still as moss to hear it.

– Linda Aldrich

As you look at Lillie Morris' painting, imagine an ethereal and aerial view of Yeats' landscape as the imagination

and the soul soars.... The Infinity symbols “arrived” mysteriously for the artist while painting this – of course, they are perfect symbols in this context.

## 12. JACK B. YEATS: “THE ART OF LIVING”

RTE Archives (clip from RTE interview with Eamon Andrews, October 10, 1947)

As prolific a painter and writer as Jack B. Yeats was, he rarely gave interviews, lectures or spoke in detail about his art practice. This clip, an excerpt from a longer interview from RTE's Archives, captures a sense of his thoughts and feelings about art.

*“...I dislike the word ‘art’ as to painting. There is only one art and that is the art of living.*

*Painting is an occupation within that art and that occupation is the freest of all the occupations of living. There is no alphabets, no grammar, no rules*



**Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957)**  
*Until We Meet Again*, 1949  
Oil on canvas

*whatever. Many hopeful sportsmen have tried to invent rules and have always failed. Any person or group of persons who try to legalize such rules do a disservice to this occupation of living...."*

Earlier in the same year his beloved wife Mary Cottenham White – "Cottie" – passed away leaving him bereft. Many point to this event as somewhat of a pivot point for Yeats – then in his mid-70s – who turned more resolutely towards a concentration on the subject of *mortality* in his work.

It is instructive to hear his words after hearing responses to *Tir Na nÓg*, 1936 (The Land of Eternal Youth) and before *Until We Meet Again*, 1949, a later and more sombre perspective on life from him.

### 13. UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN THE ART OF LIVING (Slip Jig)

© LIZ CARROLL / GROW YOUR OWN MUSIC (BMI)

JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)  
SEAMUS EGAN (mandolin & flute)  
KYLE SANNA (guitar)  
OWEN MARSHALL (harmonium & bouzouki)

*"Until We Meet Again can be seen as a metaphor of the deep spiritual kinship that exists between horse and man, at the meeting point of land and ocean, looking past the material realm of the everyday to a world beyond where they can be reunited."*

– **Nicholas Orchard**, *Christies*

After witnessing the horrors of World War II followed by the passing of his beloved wife "Cottie" in 1947, Yeats then lost the sister to whom he was closest, Susan "Lily" Yeats, earlier in the same year that *Until We Meet Again*

was painted, 1949. The 78-year-old painter began to explore the subject of *mortality* more deeply. That said, the later 1940s and early 1950s also represented a time of great productivity in Yeats's output, as if a sense of urgency was taking hold – perhaps as an antidote for his melancholy.

Appropriately, this piece begins in the wistful cadence of a hymn but transitions to the more deliberate and hopeful pace of a slip jig – a musical biography, of sorts, for the painting.

### 14. WHEN WE WERE KINGS (Waltz/March)

© MARTY FAHEY / THE DREAMER (BMI)

MARTY FAHEY (piano)  
KYLE SANNA (electric guitar & acoustic guitar)  
JENNA MOYNIHAN (fiddle)  
OWEN MARSHALL (guitar)  
SEAMUS EGAN (flute)

*"The land has an important place in an Irishman's heart. It tugs at him and makes him feel guilty if he leaves it. The literature, the language is full of the land. .... It is not surprising that the land remains the dominant motif in Irish art both directly as a landscape subject or, indirectly as it influences the artists' use of light, colour, atmosphere and shape. Even in the more abstract works there still remains a strong sense of place...."*

*".....The importance of landscape is probably the single most important element that distinguishes Irish art from the international mainstream."*

– **Frances Ruane**, *Irish Painting and Sculpture of the Seventies*, 1980



Seán Keating (1889-1977)  
*King O'Toole*, 1930

Oil on canvas

22

One of the enduring themes in Irish art revolves around the subject of land, i.e., its beauty, its ability to sustain the people living on it, its contested ownership over the centuries and the epic battles fought over it, etc. In the case of *King O'Toole*, the “behind the scenes” narrative involves the Wicklow shepherd Joe O'Toole, the loss of his ancestral lands and his seasonal response to that ancient but enduring injustice.

As a frequent visitor to Seán Keating’s studio outside of Enniskerry and, when en-route to the local Market Day where he sold his sheep, O'Toole recounted the stories to Keating of the tribulations of the once noble and local chieftains, Clan O'Toole. Allegedly, after selling his sheep and then celebrating his good fortune – or lamenting his bad luck – O'Toole would then fortify his courage at the local pub.

After leaving the pub, O'Toole would then make an unannounced visit to see owners of Powerscourt House – whose ancestors were responsible for the dispossession of the O'Toole’s lands – for the purposes of angrily recounting the details of this historic injustice. As Lord Powerscourt was also the local magistrate, O'Toole’s visits always ended in the same fashion: Joe was incarcerated for a couple of days, fined and then sent back to the hills – until the next Market Day when the performances were repeated.

The tune which begins as a slow Waltz is meant to capture O'Toole’s melancholic gaze as he recalls his family’s sad saga. The melody then takes on the cadence of a March as “King O'Toole” is moved to march down the avenue of Powerscourt House for his seasonal confrontation with the descendants of those who disinherited him of his birthright. The courage to speak his mind – *unbowed and unconquered in spirit* – bestowed on him a type of “moral authority” to act as the titular head of the ancient Clan O'Toole. (Every King deserves his own March!)

**Perhaps this is also a fitting end to this musical encounter with the exhibit. Thank you for listening.**

“ King O'Toole, who appears thoughtful and self-controlled, gazes off to the distant left. The sideways gaze was an artistic device developed in the late Renaissance; it signified intelligence and education. Keating favored this method of illustration to illustrate his confidence in the citizen hero of Ireland.... ”

– DR. ÉIMEAR O'CONNOR, “A Rising People”, 2014

# MUSICAL NOTES

Form, structure, rhythm, texture, gesture, repetition, motif, mood ... this the language of art and architecture, it would seem at first glance, but it is also the language of music (and dance). Music, especially Irish Traditional Music, not only occupies that space *between* art and craft, artist and artisan, high and low, but also happily and easily *subsumes* these false dyads. "It is not either/or, but rather both/and," as co-curator of this CD, Marty Fahey, is wont to say. He is right. Traditional music may once have been understood as coming exclusively from 'The Folk,' to invoke Gottfried Herder, but it is now a global art form and expansive genre that encompasses *sean nós* singing in Connemara to techno-trad in Tokyo and everything in between.

For centuries, Irish music indexed 'the nation' in very specific ways, sometimes generating stereotypes that could be positive or negative. But the melodic contours and rhythms, conveying joy or grief, remained steadfastly recognisable as somehow indelibly 'Irish.' As music transcends borders, moving with ease across space and time, it does not mean it loses its connection to people, place, and tradition. It is living and breathing, capable of embracing a plurality of ideas and expressions in the changing worlds of its practitioners. In the one hundred years since the establishment of the Free State, Global Ireland, Ireland and its Diaspora, have changed and with it the meaning of Irish Traditional Music.

To answer the question this exhibition asks – "*Who Do We Say We Are?*" – co-curators Fahey and Carroll have wisely stayed within their own musical home, exploring through the prism of traditional music. Together, they have curated an ensemble of highly skilled composers, arrangers and performers who draw their inspiration from the materials

of the exhibition, with stunning new compositions from the inimitable Liz Carroll anchoring a project that includes four items played at the original 1922 Paris Congress. The resultant collection does not disappoint. Expansive, cinematic textures unfurling dreamlike, sit with ease beside old school, traditional tune settings, within whose deceptively simple structures, a universe of expressive possibilities lies. Lovingly worn-down tunes are given new life in dynamic settings, while newer compositions honour older forms and styles, flecks of past graces dancing like dappled sunlight on their surface, while connecting to that beneath the visible. Arresting voices from past oracles are sampled viscerally emplaced, lending texture and weight. Such intertextual references are also present in the very styles of the musicians who have honed their craft for years. Theirs is the language of past and present, consonance and dissonance, modal and dronal, and of the embodied 'nea.' It is also one of experimentation, exploration, and cosmopolitan assurance that professional musicians bring.

The 1922 Congress organisers knew of music's power to appeal to the Diaspora as it sought for recognition of the nascent Free State from across the globe. It seems fitting that this musical project should be dominated by musicians of the Diaspora, rooted in Chicago and the East Coast of the United States. Along with the Irish-based musicians, these extraordinary artists offer a rich and textured look at inspiration and the creative process, inviting you on an aesthetic, cultural, and yes, political journey that I hope proves as rewarding to you as it has to me.

– **Dr. Aileen Dillane**, University of Limerick

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– **Marty Fahey**

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- ♦ Liz Carroll ([lizcarroll.com](http://lizcarroll.com))
- ♦ Marty Fahey ([martinfahey.com](http://martinfahey.com))
- ♦ Seamus Egan Project ([seamuseganproject.com](http://seamuseganproject.com))
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- ♦ Irish Art-Amplified ([irishstudies.nd.edu/initiatives/special-projects/irish-art-amplified/](http://irishstudies.nd.edu/initiatives/special-projects/irish-art-amplified/))

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