

'THE EARTH HAS MUSIC FOR THOSE WHO LISTEN': CREATIVITY IN MUSIC IN IRELAND



Lorraine Byrne Bodley

In the light of government's Culture and Creativity Capital Plan, which details an intent to fortify investment in a range of cultural activities and enterprises, the Royal Irish Academy's Culture and Heritage Working Group has undertaken to generate position papers highlighting modes of creativity associated with public culture, public institutions and vernacular culture. Written by senior academics with strong ties to many of the state's cultural institutions, these papers constitute a set of reflections regarding the necessity for and social benefits of supporting enhanced attention to the creativity of Irish life.

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Mary Canning, MRIA.

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Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann  
Royal Irish Academy

**CREATIVITY** is a function of being human: a common thread that can make sense of individual experience and communicate it, even in immensely complex forms, over great distances and many centuries. The Royal Irish Academy, Ireland's leading body of experts in the sciences, humanities and social sciences, has a long tradition of investigating, communicating, celebrating and supporting creative work in culture and the sciences on the island of Ireland, and representing it internationally. While recognising that creative expression can have significant economic importance, the Academy warmly welcomes the Creative Ireland initiative as an investment by the state in humane values, independent of commercial consideration.

Every culture finds ways of encoding hard-won wisdom, humour and expertise as resources for individuals and communities; every generation finds new ways to understand and use its heritage. Long famous for creative output in the form of books and film, Ireland has adapted quickly and flexibly to new forms of media culture, in rural as well as urban areas. Irish traditional music now has players and audiences across the globe, as the Irish language has speakers and learners. Meanwhile, research demonstrates that the Ireland of the past was much more receptive to in-migration, and to music and other cultural influences, than has been generally understood.

A major challenge in our globalised world is for encounters between cultures to be peaceful, respectful and mutually enriching. Diverse forms of national creativity deserve our fullest support. It should be noted, however, that creativity resists codification and commercialisation. The Royal Irish Academy, a hub of critical thinking, brings together expertise in many areas. It sees in Creative Ireland an opportunity to dig deep into that expertise, integrating the aims of celebrating Ireland's cultural heritage, honouring the cultural capital and creativity of in-migrants, and enhancing our country's international standing. The Academy offers these short papers on aspects of culture and heritage as discussion documents for Creative Ireland.





# ‘THE EARTH HAS MUSIC FOR THOSE WHO LISTEN’<sup>1</sup>: CREATIVITY IN MUSIC IN IRELAND

Culture is an intermediary between historical and subjective reality, between the outer world of experience and the inner world of thoughts and feelings. It leads us to question reality, ask what it is about and at the same time formulate our own questions and responses. This paper is an attempt to answer some of the challenges of cultural enrichment outlined by the Creative Ireland Forum. It not only asks what music’s role is in relation to this initiative, but what exists now, and what it could and should be. The state has set out its values in the five pillars for nurturing creativity in our schools and across communities, investing in our creative infrastructure and media production, and unifying our

I am grateful to Council Members of the Society for Musicology in Ireland, the RIA Working Group on Culture and Heritage, in particular to Mary Canning, also to Luke Drury for his generous engagement with an early draft of this paper. Sincere thanks to Dr Kerry Houston and Dr Aidan Thomson for their reader’s reports; their expert observations on an earlier draft are reflected in this text.

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is popularly attributed to Shakespeare and George Santayana. The closest attribution is by the amateur American poet, Reginald Vincent Holmes: ‘The earth has its music for those who will listen/ Its bright variations forever abound;/ With all the wonders that God has bequeathed us/ There is nothing that thrills like the magic of sound’. See Reginald Vincent Holmes, 1955: ‘The Magic of Sound’, *Fireside fancies* (Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, Michigan), 27.

global reputation. In order to realise these aims, it is central to have a vision the whole way up, and to make a connection across all educational levels and various sectors in society. While acknowledging the flourishing culture and international reach of Irish traditional music and popular music culture, this paper calls for a broader understanding of Irish musical culture specifically in relation to European art music, music education and music research, all of which are more marginalised in Irish society. It does so in the firm belief that addressing these three areas will benefit all forms of music making in Ireland and establish educational and existential processes that encourage a deeper understanding of music across all sectors of society.

This paper argues for the importance of making music an active force within the life of our society, for if music is perceived as a passive activity or at best an activity parallel with that life, its scope and nerve are lessened. Music is not only for the delight of those growing up, it is central for perception and reflection, for the future nurture of adults and for the tranquil restoration of the elderly. Music transports us to a different dimension of being human: it simultaneously offers an escape from life but also a means of understanding it. This paper, therefore, touches on the ethical role of music and the essential humanism of art. It recognises that music has a special contribution to make, not just as entertainment but to the advancement of knowledge.

## Music in primary education

In order to achieve the first pillar of the Creative Youth programme—‘to develop the creative potential of every child and young person’—we must first acknowledge that the sad reality in Ireland is that many children pass through primary school without even a very basic musical experience. No school would eliminate the study of history, mathematics or language from its curriculum, while the study of music, which embraces so many aspects of these fields and can contribute to our understanding of them, is often ignored. The well-grounded and comprehensive primary school music curriculum, drawn up by the Department of Education and Skills in 1999,<sup>2</sup> is implemented in a very sporadic manner depending on how confident primary school teachers feel about their ability to teach music.<sup>3</sup> Many of these trainee teachers have received a primary and secondary education in which there was little or no provision for music, which makes it much more difficult to address at third and fourth level, especially when the number of hours of BEd training devoted to music has recently been halved.<sup>4</sup> The Creative Youth programme will only rectify this deficiency if music education is seen as a continuum and the right building blocks are put in place at primary level. The cost of excluding music from the learning experience in primary schools has been the focus of recent discussion in the United States, where educators have argued that the marginalisation of music in favour of maths and

<sup>2</sup> See National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, ‘Music’, available online at: [www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/The-Arts-Education/Music](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/The-Arts-Education/Music) [last accessed 1 June 2012]. For a critical response to the curriculum, see John O’Flynn, 2002: “‘New ways to listen and learn?’ Some challenges presented by the revised music curriculum”, *Irish Educational Studies* 21/2, 89–109.

<sup>3</sup> This issue is long debated internationally, cf. Deirdre Russell-Bowie, 2009: ‘What me? Teach music to my primary class? Challenges to teaching music in primary schools in five countries’, *Music Education Research* 11, 23–36; Susan Hallam, Pamela Burnard, Anne Robertson, Chris Saleh, Valerie Davies, Lynne Rogers and Dimitra Kokatsaki, 2009: ‘Trainee primary-school teachers’ perceptions of their effectiveness in teaching music’, *Music Education Research* 11(2), 221–40; Robert A. Wiggins and Jackie Wiggins, 2008: ‘Primary music education in the absence of specialists’, *International Journal of Education and the Arts* 9(12), 2–26; Hilary Holden and Stuart Button, 2006: ‘The teaching of music in the primary school by the non-music specialist’, *British Journal of Music Education* 23(1), 23–38; Sarah Hennessy, 2000: ‘Overcoming the red-feeling: the development of confidence to teach music in primary school amongst student teachers’, *British Journal of Music Education* 17(2), 183–96; Neryl Jeanneret, 1997: ‘Model for developing preservice primary teachers’ confidence to teach music’, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 133, 37–44; and Janet Mills 1989: ‘The generalist primary teacher of music: a problem of confidence’, *British Journal of Music Education* 6(2), 125–38.

<sup>4</sup> The only exception to this is the BMusEd degree, which is delivered jointly by the School of Education in Trinity College Dublin, the Royal Irish Academy of Music and DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. This admirable degree programme, which is the only music degree in Ireland for those wishing to become school classroom music teachers, was set up with the intention that graduates would be able to take positions as specialised music teachers in either primary or secondary schools, directly advancing music education in Ireland. Such specialised positions at primary level have not yet been granted.

reading under the ‘No Child Left Behind’ policy has had a detrimental effect on learning and development across the curriculum.<sup>5</sup> While this paper argues for the intrinsic value of music education as a basic human right, it also acknowledges the subsidiary roles it plays in society.

Education prepares children for life:<sup>6</sup> it teaches them how to behave and opens up possible pathways for the kind of human beings they might like to become. The study of music is one of the best ways to learn about human nature. Performing in a choir or an orchestra are early steps towards understanding democracy and individuality. Music has the power to evoke deep primal feelings at the core of shared human experience. In multicultural classrooms, it has an important role in bringing children closer together, fostering understanding.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, for Goethe, art was a voyage to the ‘other’ not concentrating on oneself, which is very much a minority view today, where art is continually linked with roots, identity and belonging. For school children struggling academically, music is often the one subject that offers a vital sense of connection because it demands a permanently passionate attitude regardless of the level of aptitude.

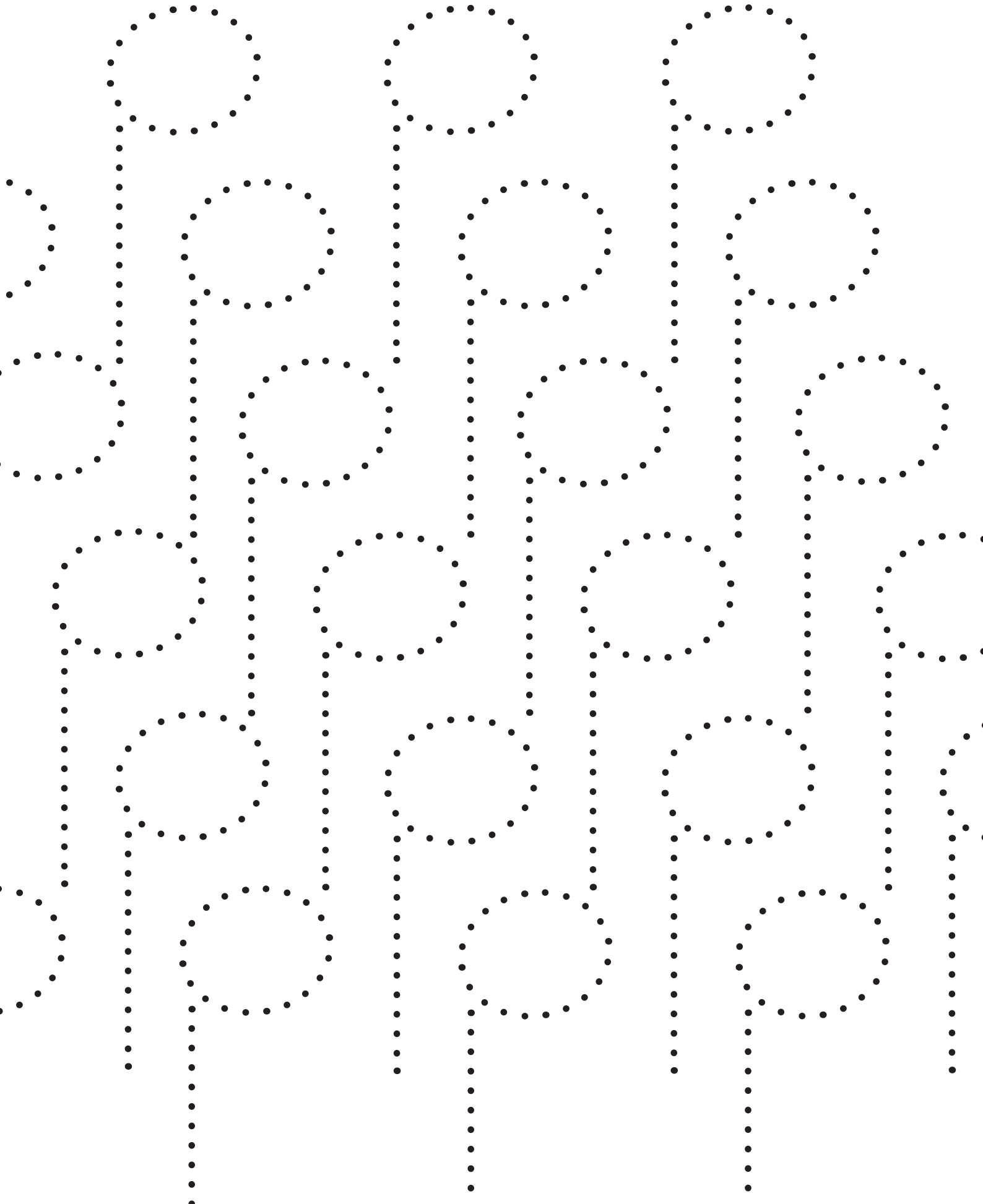
For musical ability to develop organically, it must be nurtured at a very early age so it becomes a necessity rather than a luxury. Music is a discipline, and in order to perform well children need to have courage and the ability to strike a balance between the stomach, the head and heart. This dialogue between the intuition, intellect and emotions is central to the thinking of individuals (and groups) and transformative in the development of children’s character. Performing music allows children an opportunity to learn one of the most difficult and valuable lessons in life: how to live with discipline yet with passion; how to experience freedom within order. Such rational understanding of music is not only possible, but absolutely necessary in order for creativity to have free reign.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Michael L. Mark, ‘The No Child Left Behind Act’ in Michael L. Mark (ed.), 2008: *Music education: source readings from Ancient Greece to today* (3rd edn; Routledge, New York and London), 378–9 and, in the same volume, Donald A. Hodges, ‘Why study music?’, 357–60; MENC: The National Association for Music Education. ‘The value and quality of arts education: a statement of principles’, 344–8; and the Yale Seminar on Music Education, ‘Music in our schools: a search for improvement’, 319–25. For further reading, see also Patricia Sheehan Campbell, 2004: *Teaching music globally* (Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford); and David J. Elliott, 1995: *Music matters: a new philosophy of music education* (Oxford University Press, New York).

<sup>6</sup> The ancient Greeks recommended music as an essential part of education for the young on a par with mathematics and astronomy, see, for example, Aristotle, *Politica*, Book VIII, Section 5, in Michael L. Mark, *Music education: source readings from Ancient Greece to today*, 9–18: 15.

<sup>7</sup> For interesting reading on music in the intercultural classroom, see John O’Flynn, 2005: ‘Re-appraising ideas of musicality in intercultural contexts of music education’, *International Journal of Music Education* 23(3), 191–203 and Patricia Sheehan Campbell, 1997: ‘Music, the universal language: fact or fallacy?’, *International Journal of Music Education* 29(1), 32–9.





## ‘Music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all, but you are the music while the music lasts’<sup>8</sup>

Performing well is so much more than learning to read or even interpret the score, it is about internalising the music until you inhabit it. All children deserve to know what it is like to digest a piece of music until it is part of them, not just at the first stage of enjoying, but at the second stage of building a memory bank of music, classifying and comparing, which adds an intellectual dimension in addition to feeling. Building up this kind of musical experience whereby the intelligence of the human ear is developed requires sustained effort, and it is vital that children’s creativity be nurtured by musicians. In order to attain the aim of developing the creative potential of every child we recommend appointing one specialised music post to every Irish primary school, so that generalist teachers are supported by specialist instructors, who have the ability to introduce students to the power and reality of music. Children will be greatly enriched by current workshops with artists, but this does not address Creative Ireland’s long-term aim of developing the creative potential of every child, for which a solid strategy for music education is needed.

Musical talent and auditory intelligence are areas that are often segregated from the rest of human life, commonly perceived in terms of their function as entertainment or assigned to the esoteric realm of elite art. The mastery of a musical instrument is not a *sine qua non* for understanding a piece of music, but learning how to listen is.<sup>9</sup> In our society we have the ability to listen to almost any piece of music at will, but the number of recordings readily available stands in inverse proportion to the poverty of musical perception. A full experience of music requires a readiness of spirit, and total absorption on the part of the listener. Such accessibility does not come through familiarity but through arousing students’ curiosity and interest, opening up their worlds to new realms of knowledge and experience.

<sup>8</sup> T.S. Eliot, 1941: ‘The Dry Savages’, *Four Quartets* (Faber & Faber, London; reprinted 1991).

<sup>9</sup> For further reading on this topic, see Robert Walker, 2003: ‘A worthy purpose for music education: the development of intelligent listening’, *Australian Society for Music Education*, 118–21.

## Transforming second-level music education

While we welcome a second-level syllabus with a broad frame of musical reference and more diverse musical experience, we also recognise that students' frame of reference has narrowed greatly in recent years. In the past at third level you could assume a foundational knowledge of art music. Today, the music that dominates students' lives is popular culture; art music is losing its authority and the ability to read a score is beginning to disappear. While we are proud to preserve our national musical heritage and celebrate that ethnicity, we also need a culture that is alive to itself and has the intelligence to look beyond. We are Irish and European, which means we are also part of a greater European intellectual and musical cultural heritage. We need to acknowledge that heritage by developing a core musical knowledge in music literacy<sup>10</sup> and music history across all educational levels and in the wider social and cultural context. If students do not have a strong foundational knowledge, it is very difficult for them to engage with music creatively and critically.

<sup>10</sup> Falling music literacy levels are a worldwide problem: see, for example, Edward P. Asmus, 2004: 'Music teaching and music literacy', *Journal of Music Education* 13(2), 6–8; Geoffrey Lowe and Steven Belcher, 2012: 'Direct instruction and music literacy: one approach to augmenting the diminishing?', *Australian Journal of Music Education* 1, 3–13.

## Rewarding creativity in young researchers

Our education system is already encouraging curiosity, creativity, problem solving, critical thinking and love of investigation, which is the bedrock on which the five pillars of Creative Ireland are based. It is vital that we reward high-quality creativity by supporting our graduate students who have not only acquired the necessary skills to produce a doctorate but to present new ideas, nationally and internationally, to network and create opportunities, as well as to endure the necessary long hours of isolation in order to produce an original piece of research. During their four years of research they have learnt to push boundaries, developed resilience and acquired the cognitive flexibility to reformulate research questions. They have learnt that being true to their own solitude, their own specialist knowledge, is what links them vitally and keeps them most reliably connected with others. By the time they have attained a doctorate they should be able to pause momentarily, enjoy the luxury of looking back on the distance covered, but they also deserve to find another stepping stone ahead of them. Most of our young researchers are being left midstream;<sup>11</sup> we need to create opportunities in which their best-dreamt possibilities are corroborated and their hopes are replenished.

We need to create opportunities whereby young researchers can develop their skills and experience, continually renewed and revived by some future transformation. While we recognise the reality that many of our researchers do not end up in academic positions, one of the aims of Creative Ireland could be the creation of postdoctoral positions that recognise the cultural significance of musicology and promote the greater good of our discipline. Being a good postdoctoral researcher today involves immense creativity—a notion that is neither widespread nor commonly accepted. In recent years universities have shown a strong commitment to student entrepreneurship by seeking more empowered and connected graduate studies programmes, but there needs to be a receptiveness in Irish society to the kind of creativity and skills our graduates have gained, so we do not lose that expertise to other countries.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The lack of employment prospects for doctoral graduates in music and in the humanities more broadly is a widely-acknowledged in Ireland and internationally. It would be very helpful if statistical research on Doctorates in Music in Ireland were commissioned by the Irish Research Council.

<sup>12</sup> In popular discourse on high-skilled migration the term 'brain drain' is a loaded phrase, implying serious loss. For an introduction to the discussion as to whether this loss actually occurs in practice, see John Gibson and David McKenzie, 2011: 'Eight questions about the brain drain', *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 25(3), 107–28.

In Ireland, doctoral graduates are perceived as being over qualified for the secondary school sector, unlike in Germany and France where it is completely acceptable and respectable to hold a teaching position. Two issues could be addressed at once if the skills our doctoral students have gained could be employed to raise the level of music education in Ireland. We recommend reinstating remuneration for a postgraduate qualification in music in second level education, which would also encourage students and teachers to deepen their knowledge of the discipline.<sup>13</sup> The recent introduction of the two-year Professional Master of Education actively discourages students from undertaking a master's in music because they can now have an all-in-one masters and professional qualification. At present, if students complete a masters or doctorate in music, they still have to undertake two years of pedagogical training.

Opportunities and prospects in industry as well as academia need to be created for doctoral graduates in musicology, music education, composition or music performance. Those working in industry, archives, broadcasting, concert management, programming and promotion need to embrace the musical entrepreneurship and expertise of graduates in our country. There is so much uncatalogued music lying in boxes in our National Library, which has no professional music librarian. Unlike in the UK, Germany and North America, Ireland has no specialised music publisher, and funding is required to bring this national reservoir alive. Also unlike many other European cities, our collection of musical instruments of Irish and European heritage is not on display; while these situations prevail, approaching the question of awakening these instruments for public performance cannot even be contemplated.

There is an urgent need to develop an Institute for Musical Research in Ireland to advance such issues in music education and to promote scholarly research in music both nationally and internationally. We have an excellent archive and resource centre in the Contemporary Music Centre, which actively promotes the work of Irish composers throughout the

<sup>13</sup> In recent years there has been a growth in international studies addressing the impact of different types of professional development programmes for teachers. Few studies, however, have directly addressed the role of higher research degrees, such as a doctorate, as a strategy for teachers' professional development or the impact of these degrees on the quality of teaching for students and the wider school environment. For preliminary research on this topic, which has been undertaken in Poland and Portugal, see Marta Kowalczyk-Walędziak, Amélia Lopes, Isabel Menezes and Nuna Tormenta, 2017: 'Teachers pursuing a doctoral degree: motivations and perceived impact', *Educational Research* 59(3), 335–52. For a broader discussion on the ethics and common motivation for undertaking further music education, cf. Scott D. Harrison, 2011: 'There's a fine line between pleasure and pain: why students enrol in higher degrees in music and music education', *Australian Journal of Music Education* 1, 66–75. For related research on this topic in Ireland, see Andrew Loxley and Aidan Seery, 2012: 'The role of the professional doctorate in Ireland from the student perspective', *Studies in Higher Education* 37(1), 3–17.

island of Ireland and preserves the contemporary music landscape in Ireland for future generations.<sup>14</sup> The Irish Traditional Music Archive collects, preserves, organises, and makes accessible and publicly available the contemporary and historical materials of Irish traditional song, instrumental music and dance.<sup>15</sup> Dublin is one of the few European capital cities without an equivalent centre for the promotion of musical research.<sup>16</sup> The Society for Musicology in Ireland (SMI) works hard to address this lacuna with virtually no resources.<sup>17</sup> The SMI should be supported in its aim to develop into a national institute that promotes cutting-edge and applied music research in Ireland and internationally, and actively mediates that knowledge to the general public.

It is absolutely necessary to support a living tradition of music research and make expert musical knowledge as widely available as possible to contemporary artists and audiences by giving full direct reference access; by giving limited remote access by internet; by extensive broadcasting, lecturing and publishing activities on all areas of music research; by nurturing links with those working in the music industry; and by cooperating with a wide range of other organisations engaged in performance, teaching, broadcasting, publishing, and archiving.<sup>18</sup> Even making the *Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland* available online would immediately enhance awareness both nationally and internationally of the extent of our musical heritage across all disciplines and sectors in Irish society.<sup>19</sup> Investing in a leading-edge research centre for music would represent an ethical triangle between government, higher education and industry, which would employ Irish and international researchers and deliver innovations that greatly improve the quality of Irish musical life. Ireland has produced hundreds of masters and doctoral students in musicology who are up to and fit for such challenges. They deserve our help in making their best contribution.

<sup>14</sup> For further information on the Contemporary Music Centre, see [www.cmc.ie](http://www.cmc.ie) ( 17 September 2018).

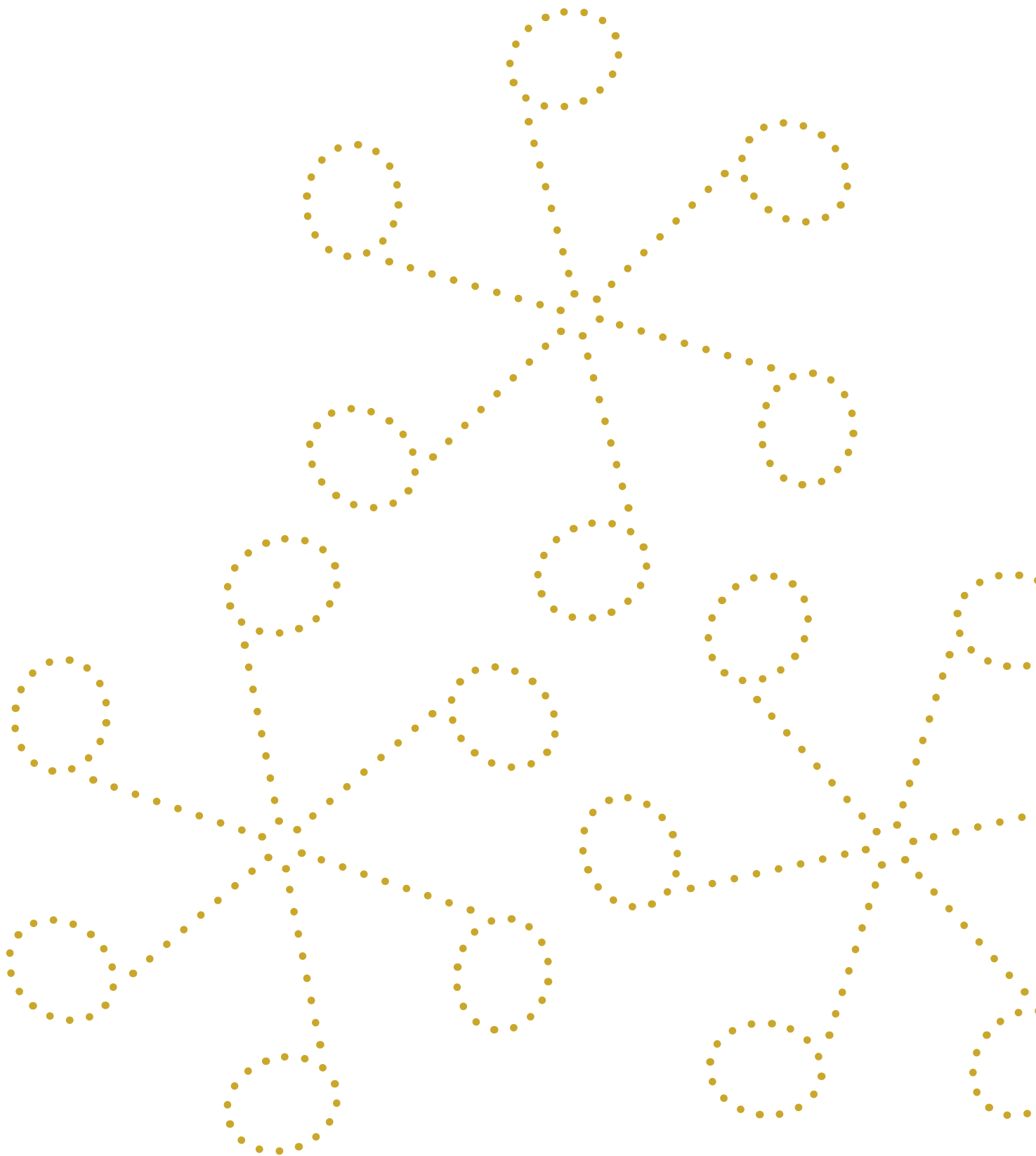
<sup>15</sup> Further information on the work of the Irish Traditional Music Archive is available at: [www.itma.ie](http://www.itma.ie) ( 17 September 2018).

<sup>16</sup> For a model example, see the Institute for Musical Research at Royal Holloway, University of London: [www.the-imr.uk](http://www.the-imr.uk); see also the archives of this institute when it was based at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, available at: <http://music.sas.ac.uk> ( 17 September 2018). An equivalent investment in four world-class Science Foundation Ireland Research Centres has already been set up in Ireland backed by €114 million in government and Irish industry funding; see Kevin O'Sullivan, 'Four new research centres to be set up under €114m investment', *The Irish Times*, 7 September 2017; available at: [www.irishtimes.com/news/science/four-new-research-centres-to-be-set-up-under-114m-investment-1.3212798](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/science/four-new-research-centres-to-be-set-up-under-114m-investment-1.3212798) (3 June 2018).

<sup>17</sup> For more on the work of the SMI, see: [www.musicologyireland.com](http://www.musicologyireland.com) ( 17 September 2018).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the Society for Music Education in Ireland (<http://www.smei.ie>), the Research Foundation for Music in Ireland ([www.musicresearch.ie](http://www.musicresearch.ie)) and the Irish National Committee for the International Council for Traditional Music in Ireland ([www.ictm.ie](http://www.ictm.ie)), all accessed 17 September 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), 2013: *The Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland* (UCD Press, Dublin).



## Creativity in scholarship and civic engagement

As a nation, we have seen the intrinsic value of education as distinct from practical training for earning one's living. It is also true to say that there is a strain of anti-intellectualism in and beyond Irish life such that the long hours and multiple demands placed on academics are completely misunderstood in the public fora.<sup>20</sup> To be an academic has always been to court varying degrees of opprobrium, including charges of esoteric elitism and detachment from the 'real world' and concerns of 'real people'. At a time when Creative Ireland is calling for a new level of connectedness across society, it is worth noting that these very tensions between university and society have existed since the establishment of the University of Berlin in 1809 by Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the most illustrious ministers for education in Europe's educational history, and were voiced by John Henry Newman in 1845 in *The Idea of a University*, one of the world's most famous essays on higher education. Both educationalists believed in the exchange of knowledge between university and civic society but they also recognised the essential freedom that is required to pursue creativity and advanced research. Humboldt went as far as to argue that it was through fulfilling this longer-term aim that universities not only served the state's purposes, but served them on an infinitely higher plane. Humboldt's educational vision stands in direct contrast to the market thinking of the neo-liberal present, which sees research as an investment from which there needs to flow tangible economic dividends and which must be ever-more efficient and economically productive. While some might be tempted to dismiss this Prussian reformer as a romantic, outdated in the real world of politics, this would be to deny something crucial: namely that academics are under the same pressure, if not increasing pressure, to find public relevance.

An international forum on 'Public Musicology' held at the National Concert Hall in Dublin on 26 April 2017 showed how open musicologists are to forming connections with the wider society, to linking ideas to lived experiences.<sup>21</sup> What is not widely understood by the general public, however, is that the increase in specialism in universities—as scholars focus their time more deeply within a sub-discipline—along with the recent focus on academic citation

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion on this topic, see Mary P. Corcoran and Kevin Lalor (eds), 2012: *Reflections on crisis. The role of the public intellectual* (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin), in particular Tom Garvin's essay, 'The assault on intellectualism in Irish higher education', 29–40. For further reading, see Michael D. Higgins, 'The role of the university at a time of intellectual crisis', address by President Michael D. Higgins on receipt of Doctorate of Laws from the National University of Ireland, Dublin Castle, 25 January 2012.

<sup>21</sup> For readings in the sociological and philosophical tradition of American pragmatism, see Richard Sennett, 2008: *The craftsman* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT); John Dewey, 1916: *Democracy and education: an introduction to the philosophy of education* (Macmillan, New York); and the well-known conceptualisation by C Wright Mills, 1959: *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, Oxford).



rates—mainly generated by international, refereed journal articles as opposed to broader indicators of societal impact—potentially mitigate against musicologists who wish to engage in societal transformation. In widening the remit of our influence, therefore, we have to think hard about how to do this effectively and ethically, and we also have to try to do it constructively. We need to be mindful in distinguishing between the role that musicologists play in opening up new repertoire and enriching the conceptual and musical vocabulary at the disposal of citizens, and the role we play as experts in our field, our role in the construction and transmission of knowledge.

There is very little understanding in the public fora, however, for what it means to be an academic (in a philosophical-theoretical sense) or the meaning of our work, beyond the day-to-day demands it places on us. In the past decade there have been enormous changes in academic life: all human activity now has to serve public utilitarian needs, production, and progress; somehow the original force of the ‘academic’ has to be won back. While the philosophical attitude of *theoria* on the one hand and, on the other hand, the attitude of carrying out the absolute requirements for the fulfillment of various goals are by no means mutually exclusive, it seems to me that our ultimate and genuine wealth—which makes it worthwhile to be human—is our ability to grasp what is; our ability to be conscious of being itself. It is this striving after knowledge, to discover the foundation of reality and of existence, that drives all our creative work down through the centuries and across all disciplines. That we can attain to our real spiritual possessions only through silent contemplation—concerning ourselves with truth and nothing else—this is something that is easy to lose sight of through the many burdens placed on our time and energies.

To be a musicologist is a calling, a vocation: a life-long process of understanding. Musicologists give meaning to their lives through passionate engagement with their work, and this kind of critical self-awareness lies at the heart of being an enlightening educator and a good citizen in the republic of knowledge. Since 2008 academics have carried increasing workloads: lecturer–student ratios in Ireland are neither in line with OECD recommendations nor with our European competitors; travel grants in universities are less than they were thirty years ago; publication and public engagement grants are limited, all of which affect the dissemination of research. We would like to witness a progressive improvement in the support for creativity in music research. A good starting point would be the reinstatement of IRC single-scholar grants, which would cost very little but would support the kind of blue-sky thinking that Creative Ireland espouses.

## National orchestras, composers and society

Creative achievement in life and art involves the overleaping of necessity, the artful dodging of the next obvious move, the peremptory addition of the unpredictable. Liberated thinking is one of our most valuable freedoms in an era in which political systems, social constraints, moral codes and political correctness often control our thinking. As with a university, the orchestra should be a place of exploration, where one's life is given over to an ideal. There is an urgency to the existence of a national orchestra that goes far beyond making a living as a professional musician. It is clear that the government can see this from the values it espouses, but an arch needs to be built between developing new initiatives and having a broader perception of what our cultural heritage should be.

The fifth pillar of the Creative Ireland programme stresses the importance of how we wish to be perceived across Europe and specifically mentions the example of the Nordic traditions. Finland, a country that is comparable in size to ours, supports twenty-nine orchestras,<sup>22</sup> while Ireland struggles to maintain two professional

<sup>22</sup> Included in this listing are 15 professional symphony orchestras, 9 chamber and semi-professional orchestras; for further details, see <https://www.sinfoniaorkesterit.fi/en/orchestras/> (2 June 2018).

orchestras in Dublin, in addition to the National Youth Orchestra, the Irish Chamber Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra.<sup>23</sup> In contrast to Ireland, musical training in Finland is an integral part of child development from a very early age, where it includes a holistic programme of instrumental training, music theory, aural skills development, music history, ensemble work, composition and musicology, and there is a continuum between music training and professional practice.<sup>24</sup> In Ireland there is a contradiction between nurturing new talent through funding the development of youth orchestras through Music Generation and failing to maintain national orchestras that such students can aspire to join. Failure to maintain our national orchestras will also have a knock-on effect on amateur orchestras around the country, militating against the development of creativity in communities that Creative Ireland espouses.

<sup>23</sup> For more on these orchestras, see, respectively, [www.nyoi.ie](http://www.nyoi.ie) for the Youth Orchestra, [www.irishchamberorchestra.com](http://www.irishchamberorchestra.com) for the Chamber Orchestra, and [www.ulsterorchestra.org.uk](http://www.ulsterorchestra.org.uk) for the Ulster Orchestra. All accessed 17 September 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Further information can be obtained at: [www.isme.org](http://www.isme.org) and <http://www.musicedu.fi/> (2 June 2018).

The Creative Ireland Forum calls for connections to be made across various sectors of society. Surely a cross-departmental responsibility for developing a national strategy for orchestras in Ireland would illustrate this policy and place creativity and the arts at the centre of public policy. Ireland had to wait until 1948 for a national orchestra to be established, and until 1981 for our National Concert Hall to be founded; 2018, the Year for European Culture and Heritage, is not the time to regress. Even the idea of merging the two Dublin-based orchestras is contrary to the spirit of our age, in which we claim to celebrate and cherish cultural diversity. Not only should both orchestras be maintained as separate entities, but we also need to strengthen our orchestral tradition in a global context by restoring the National Symphony Orchestra to its full complement of players by offering opportunities to young musicians to fill the empty seats. Music has its fullest intensity and expression when it is heard live, and to deny orchestras their rightful place in society is to deprive everyone one of the most magical experiences in life.

One of the reasons that has been suggested for merging the two symphony orchestras is declining audience numbers at RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra concerts in recent years. Certainly orchestras are a symbol of prosperity, but perhaps the reason for the orchestral crisis is educational as well as economic. The decline in theoretical and historical knowledge among students in Ireland and internationally is widely lamented,<sup>25</sup> which means that music institutions—opera houses and concert halls—have to do much more to attract and educate the general public. In North America, where applied musicology is much more prevalent, the aging sector of society openly expresses its thirst for knowledge and forces cultural institutions to make a connection.<sup>26</sup> Here again is a golden opportunity for our graduate students to apply the skills they have gained in the imaginative promotion of series that would reinvent the orchestra’s entire interface with society and address a lacuna in society.

The announcement of €78 million invested in a major refurbishment of the National Concert Hall (2018–27) as Part of Project Ireland 2040—which includes the development of the Education and Outreach Centre—offers further employment opportunities for

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the report by Gwen Moore, 2015, *The changing landscape of higher music education: findings from policy and practice* (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick,).

<sup>26</sup> For an imaginative example of an enterprise designed to transform how music is consumed, see [www.groupmuse.com](http://www.groupmuse.com) (17 September 2018). Under this initiative, chamber musicians can be hired to perform in private homes in a way that pays homage to former centuries. A further example of how younger generations are finding new ways of engagement with classical music is evident in Kaufman Music Centre’s *Face the Music*, a dynamic youth ensemble dedicated to studying and performing music by living composers; see [www.kaufman-musiccentre.org/face-the-music](http://www.kaufman-musiccentre.org/face-the-music) (17 September 2018).

music graduates, educationalists and scholars to share their knowledge with the general public. Imaginative projects in which the National Concert Hall has engaged, such as the centenary project, *Composing the island: a century of music in Ireland 1916–2016*, and *Sounding the Feminists* are admirable and highly-successful ventures in making new music available to the general public. The theme for 2018 as year of culture and heritage, ‘Make a connection’, encourages academics, artists, community, policy makers and politicians to come together in a broad collaborative effort to shape a better present and a better future. This is an occasion for scholars to educate and present insights into an exciting new repertoire that the general public has not yet had an opportunity to experience.

The educational and cultural significance of the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra Friday night series—broadcast live on RTÉ Lyric FM—which combines performances from core classical and contemporary music repertoires, including new commissions by contemporary composers, needs to be acknowledged. One of the many functions of a symphony orchestra is to help people make connections between the study of music from the past and performance of music in the present. It is absolutely essential for audiences to be in touch with contemporary music in order to understand the newness of the music of the past. In order to make an audience aware of the newness of sound in Schubert’s *Eight Symphony*, the orchestra needs to make it sound as if it is being composed and staged at that very moment. Contemporary music, on the other hand, needs to be played with the understanding of music a century old. Part of the problem with new music is that works are not repeated often enough. By preparing a new piece very well but never performing it again, the orchestra cannot achieve the familiarity that is required to play that piece with enough freedom. Performing new music demands clarity that can rarely be achieved in premieres of very difficult music, so it is necessary to finance a situation whereby second and third performances can be ventured. Composers and audiences need that precision, because in the field of new music familiarity is the touchstone of acceptance and understanding.

While Ireland has produced a rich repository of popular and traditional music—and the extremely active engagement of contemporary Irish art music composers is amply evidenced in the Contemporary Music Centre—much of our art music has been created in adverse conditions. Many Irish composers have spent their lives for the sake of music, furthering music; many have contributed to the national life of their time, responding artistically to political violence and fostering important cultural developments. In the popular imagination we have always privileged literature over music: new works and significant birthdays of our national playwrights, poets and writers are rightly recorded by the press, but the same attention is not awarded to our national composers. We need to

begin to celebrate more readily Ireland's contemporary composers, for our national culture would be very diminished without their contribution.

In conclusion, the state of music in Ireland is a humanitarian problem and we need to acknowledge the reality and the difficulties of changing this situation, while having the imagination and courage to be uncompromising when addressing it. In a time of economic retrenchment, when the true meaning of music is in danger of being eclipsed, it is easy to feel powerless to effect change, but there are many ways in which we can take an active influence. It is my aspiration that this paper will encourage not only reflection on existing structures and their consequences, but also issue-related action. It is intended to perform a useful catalytic function whereby ideas developed in the academy (through research and publishing of various kinds) travel beyond that space and become 'translated' into action and change. Even in difficult economic times it is possible to be a compass, to shine a light, by inspiring others to learn through scholarship grounded in a genuine passion for one's subject. All of us surely have something to contribute to this. It is my hope that this paper will offer some insight into the challenges each sector faces, so that together we can embark on a re-imagining process.

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