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Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland: John McLachlan

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McLachlan, John. (b Dublin, 5th Mar. 1964). Composer. McLachlan studied at DIT CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA, the ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY OF MUSIC and TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN where he received a PhD in musicology in 2001 for investigating the relationship between analysis and compositional technique in the music of the post-war avant garde. He has also studied privately with KEVIN VOLANS. He was a featured composer in the RTÉ NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA's Horizons series in 2003 and 2008 and has represented Ireland at numerous international festivals including the ISCM World Music Days in Slovenia in 2003 and Croatia in 2005. In 2006 his work *Grand Action* was commissioned as a test-piece for the AXA DUBLIN INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION. In addition to his work as a composer he is also active as a music journalist and has written numerous articles for the *Journal of Music in Ireland* (2000–10). Since 1999 he has served as executive director of the ASSOCIATION OF IRISH COMPOSERS and in 2007 he was elected to AOSDÁNA.

McLachlan's aesthetic is largely shaped by his concern to explore ways of imparting a sense of narrative and expectation to his music without recourse to pastiche rhetorical devices. Much of his music is structured in large, contrasting block-like sections of homogeneous material which change suddenly from one to the next, surprising the listener. The material within these sections is propelled by a rigorous focus on subtle rhythmic and melodic permutations which result in both surface opacity and gradually increasing tension. A representative example of his approach is perhaps the string trio *Radical Roots* (2003), where scale fragments are continually reshaped over an extended period before being abruptly cut off by a new section of dissonant chords.

SELECT COMPOSITIONS

ORCHESTRAL: *Concerto for Chamber Orchestra* (1988); *Here be Dragons* (2003); *Triptych* (2004); *Octala* (2007) [also for cl, bn, hn, str qt, db (2007)]; *Incunabula* (2007); CHAMBER ENSEMBLE: *Two Lyric Sketches for String Quartet* (1987 rev. 1991); *Heuristic Pieces* (1990 rev. 2003), cl, hn, vn, va, vc; *Suspirations I* (1991), 3 tpt, hn, trbn; *Concords* (1997), cl, vn, vc, pf; *Suspirations II* (1991 rev. 1992), cl, ob, hn, vn, vc, db; *Suspirations III* (1991 rev. 1993), cl, ob, hn, tpt, vn, db; *Frieze* (1993), fl, ob, cl, hn, perc, vn, vc, db; *meetings with remarkable men* (2001), 4 perc; *Filament of Memory* (2002), 4 gui; *Radical Roots* (2003), vn, va, vc [rescored 2 pf, 2005]; *neo-plastic coloured shapes* (2003), str qt; *The Metal Pig* (2004), cl, vn, vc, pf; *Ghost machine* (2004), vn, pf; *Fragile* (2004), afl, gui; *leaves loose* (2006), pic+fl+afl+bfl, ob+ob d'amore+cor ang, cl+bcl; *Wonder* (2008), cl, glock, org, el-gui, vn, db; *Extraordinary Rendition* (2008), vn, vc, pf; *Natural Order* (2009), vn, vc, pf; SOLO INSTRUMENT: *Five Movements for Piano* (1983); *Four Short Pieces for Guitar* (1988); *Two Piano Studies* (1994); *From the Strings of a Rainbow* (1996), pf; *Fifteen Easy Miniatures* (1998), pf; *Archaeopteryx* (1996 rev. 1997), pf; *Here be Dragons* (2001 rev 2003), org; *Soft Landing* (2009), org; *Nuance* (2003), pf; *Grand Action* (2005), pf; CHORAL: *Two Akhmatova Settings* (1986), text Anna Akhmatova, SATB; *Two Poems in Memoriam Stevie Smith* (1986) text Leland Bardwell, SATB; *Lord, What Love Have I* (1988), text Psalm 119, vv. 97-104, SATB, org; *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven* (1995), text, W. B. Yeats, SAATB; ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC: *The Red Thread* (2000), gui, el-ac; *Golden Circle* (2010), fl, cl, vn, vc, pf, el-ac.

SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

Association of Irish Composers: *Hugh Lane November Series* (Michael Darcy, Hibernia Trio: CD, AIC001, 2000) Two Lyric Sketches for String Quartet

Contemporary Music Centre: *Contemporary Music from Ireland, Volume 4* (David Adams: CD, CMC CD04, 2004) Here be Dragons

— *Contemporary Music from Ireland, Volume 9* (Maria McGarry: CD, CMC CD09, 2010) Grand Action

[David Adams:] *Irish Contemporary Organ Music* (CD, 2008) Here be Dragons

[John Feeley, Laura Chislett, Pavlos Kanellakis :] *Islands: Contemporary Irish Solo Works for Guitar* (CD: 2010) Four Short Pieces for Guitar

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Aosdána

Association of Irish Composers

AXA International Piano Competition

DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama

ISCM World Music Days

Royal Irish Academy of Music

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra

Trinity College Dublin

Volans, Kevin