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# Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland: Michael Holohan

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**Holohan, Michael.** (b 27<sup>th</sup> March 1956). Composer. Holohan graduated from UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN in 1978 and later pursued further studies at QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST. In the eighties and nineties he attended masterclasses in France with Boulez, Messiaen, Xenakis, Berio and Lachenmann. He served as chairman of the ASSOCIATION OF IRISH COMPOSERS from 1987 to 1989 and was later appointed chairman of the Droichead Arts Centre in Drogheda. His music has received a number of national and international awards including the Celtic Music Prize at the Celtic Film and Radio Festival in Brittany in 2002. He was elected to AOSDÁNA in 1999.

Influenced by his experiences of new music on the continent, Holohan's early works are notable for their experimentalism with aspects of serialism, exotic scales and extended performance techniques. With his move to Drogheda in the mid-eighties however, the abstraction of his early music receded somewhat as he began to embrace the myths and landscape of the Boyne Valley as a source of inspiration. His style in works such as *Cromwell* (1994) and the *Mass of Fire* (1995) became more tonal although the presence of modernist surface features continued to remain an integral part of his music. From the mid-nineties onwards traditional Irish music began to feature in Holohan's work and he has written a number of works for the uilleann pipes and Irish Bronze Age horns. A consistent theme throughout his career has also been his engagement with Irish and European literature as evinced by his considerable output and settings of poets such as SAMUEL BECKETT, SEAMUS HEANEY, Dermot Healy, Seán O'Riordáin, John F. Deane, Susan Connolly, Paul Durcan, Ivan Lalić and Tomas Tranströmer.

*Adrian Smith*

### **Bibliography**

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[http://www.cmc.ie/composers/article\\_list.cfm?composerID=62](http://www.cmc.ie/composers/article_list.cfm?composerID=62)  
Interview with the composer conducted on 10/12/2010

### **Select Compositions**

#### **STAGE**

*His Final Journey*, 2004, Film Score (Dublin 2004). fl., ob., cl., hn, perc.

*Sometime City*, 1986 Film Score (1986 ). s-cornet, el-gui., b-gui., vn, vc., pf., kbd, perc.

*Childscapes*, 1984 Film Score (1984). fl., ob., recr, el-gui., vn, pf., org, el-pf., orff instruments, glock, perc.

*Where a single footprint lasts a thousand years*, 2009 Theatre Score (Dublin 2009). speaker, vv, whistle, bronze age horns, kbd, perc, el-ac. texts Ernest Shackleton, Bill Manhire

*Clay and Eveline*, 2009 Theatre Score (Dublin , 2009). speaker, pf. text James Joyce

*Running Beast*, 2007 Theatre Score (Mellifont 2007). uill-pipes, 2vn, va, vc., db, hpd, bodhran, perc. text Donal O'Kelly.

*Three Continents*, 1986 Dance score (Kinvara, 1986 ). el-ac.

*The Selfish Giant*, 1987, Dance Score (Dublin 19880. el-ac.

#### **ORCHESTRA**

*The Ferry across the Boyne*, 1993 (Drogheda 1993). string orch.

*Cromwell*, 1994 (Drogheda 1994). Orch.

*Leaves of Glass*, 1995 (Dublin 1995). Orch.

*Building Bridges*, 1995 (Dublin 1995). Orch.

*The Lost Land*, 1996 (Toronto 1997). S, uill-pipes, speaker, orch. text Pearse Hutchinson, Davoren Hanna.

#### BAND

*Ritual Landscapes*, 1986 (Drogheda 1987). sop cor, 9 cors, flugel hn, 3 hn, 2 bar hn, 2 ten trbn, bass trb, 2 euph, 4 tubas, 2 perc.

*Lament for Limerick*, 1985 (Drogheda 1986) sop cor, 9 cors, flugel hn, 3 hn, 2 bar hn, 2 ten trbn, bass trb, 2 euph, 4 tubas, 2 perc.

#### ENSEMBLE

*Nada No. 1*, 1979 (Dublin 1979). cl., pf.

*Triangulum*, 1977, rev. 1986 (Dublin 1978). fl., cl., perc.

*Nada No 2*, 1982 (Arklow 1982). ob., pf

*Waves*, 1987 (Maynooth 1987). fl., ob., cl., pf.

*Cassandra*, 1989 (Dublin 1989). el-fl, perc.

*Justice Singleton's Minuet*, 1989 rev. 1994 (Drogheda 1994). recr, kbd, str.

*I send my love along the Boyne*, 1990 (Dowth 1990). fl., str.

*Ancient Land*, 1991 (Drogheda 1991). 2 pf., 2 perc.

*Macehead*, 1992 (Dublin 1992). bronze age horns, uill-pipes, perc.

*What the Hammer*, 1994 (Dublin 1994). Speaker, perc, el-ac. text Dermot Healy.

*The Purple Mountain*, 1999 (Castlebar 1999). bronze age horns, cor. ang, perc.

*Knowth*, 1999 (Dublin 1999). carynx, trumpa creda, bronze age hn, large bodhran, crothal.

*A Snail in my Prime*, 2000 (Newgrange 2000). speaker, Mez., throat singer, 3 bronze age horns, iron age tpt, conches, bfl., uill-pipes, vc, marimba, bodhran, stones, perc. text Paul Durcan.

*Wedding Song*, 2001 (Drogheda 2001). tpt, pf.

*His Final Journey*, 2004 (Dublin 2004). fl., ob., cl., hn, perc.

*Walking into Eternity*, 2004 (Dublin 2004). fl., hn, iron age tpt, el-gui., el-pf., marimba, perc.

*What the Yew Tree told me*, 2005 (Drogheda 2005). wicklow pipes, marimba, db, perc.

*The Legend of Fraoch*, 2006 (Dublin 2006). 3 bronze age hns, perc.

#### SOLO

*Prelude*, 1976 (Dublin 1976). org.

*Song of the Sirens*, 1977 (Dublin 1977). fl.

*Mobiles*, 1978 rev. 1995 (Drogheda 1995). pf.

*Dawn Mantra*, 1978 rev. 2009. pf.

*By a River*, 1985 (Dublin 1985). pf. (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy of Music 2003)

*Even the Olives are Bleeding*, 1988 (Dublin 1988). el-fl.

*Aoise*, 1988 (Dublin 1988). pf. (Dublin: Leinster School of Music)

*By the Brook*, 1994 rev. 1999 (Drogheda 1995). pf.

*Omaggio*, 1996 (Drogheda 1996). pf.

*Doodles and Dreams*, 1997 (Drogheda 1997). pf. (Dublin: Contemporary Music Centre 2003)

*The Crooked Mile*, 1997 (Drogheda 1997). pf. (Dublin: Leinster School of Music)

*The Old Swing*, 1997 (Drogheda 1997). pf. (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy of Music 1997)

*The Lads*, 2000 (Galway 2000). cl.+bcl.

*The Listoke Preludes*, 2000 rev. 2009 (Drogheda 2000). pf.

*The Road to Lough Swilly*, 2001 (Dublin 2001). uill-pipes.

*Echo Lullaby*, 2003 (Drogheda 2003). pf.

*Monaincha*, 2002 (Dublin 2003). pf. (Dublin: Contemporary Music Centre 2003)

*An Fear as an Fingal*, 2003 (Naul 2003). uill-pipes.

*The Snotgreen 'C'*, 2004 (Dublin 2004). fl.

*Leafy-with-Love Banks*, 2004 (Inishkeen 2004). fl.

*Carving the High Cross*, 2006 (Dublin 2006). pf.

*Capranica*, 2008 (Monaghan 2008). pf.  
*Byrd in Blue*, 2008 (Dublin 2008). pf.  
*The Bonny Light Horseman*, 2010 (Drogheda 2010). pf.  
*Reverie*, 2010 (Drogheda 2011). pf.

#### CHOIR

*An Stoirm*, 1981 (Cork 1981). satb. text Seán Ó Riordáin.  
*Bagairt na Marbh*, 1982, rev 2002 (Cork 1982). satb. text Seán Ó Riordáin.  
*Sos*, 1984 (Cork 1984). satb. text Seán Ó Riordáin.  
*From March '79*, 1985 (Dublin 1985). sa[div]. text Tomas Tranströmer.  
*Deus Meus*, 1985 (Dublin 1985). ssa. text ancient Irish  
*Spalpann an Ghrian*, 1986 (Dublin 1986). satb[div]. text Michael Holohan.  
*Anahorish*, 1988 (Dublin 1988). sa. text Seamus Heaney.  
*Oracle*, 1988 (Dublin 1988). sa. text Seamus Heaney.  
*To You*, 1988 (Dublin 1988). ttb. text Charlie Donnelly.  
*A White Rose*, 1988 (Dowth 1988). ttb. text John Boyle O' Reilly.  
*The Street Cries of Dublin*, 1987 (Dublin 1988). satb. text Michael Holohan.  
*All in! All in!*, 1988 (Dublin 1988). sa, fl., ob., mouth org., whistles, kbd. text Michael Holohan  
*Solstice*, 1992 (Drogheda 1992). ttb[div]. text Susan Connolly.  
*The Ship*, 1993 (Dublin 1993). ttbb [div]. text Susan Connolly.  
*Cúl an Tí*, 1993 (Drogheda 1993). S, A, 4 recr, 2 glock, 4 pots, kdb, perc, str. text Seán Ó Riordáin.  
*Mass Of Fire*, 1995 (Drogheda 1995). satb, 4 tpt, trbn., euph, timp, org., str,  
*Winter in Meath* 1997 rev. 2006 (Cork 2002). satb. text John F. Deane.  
*My Place of Clear Water*, 1997 (Drogheda 1997). sa [div]. text Seamus Heaney.  
*Dowth*, 1997 rev 2006 (Dublin 2009). satb. text Susan Connolly  
*Quis est Deus?*, 2001 rev. 2006 (Cork 2002). satb. text ancient Irish.  
*River*, 2006. satb. text Susan Connolly.  
*Duet*, 2006. satb. text Susan Connolly.  
*In the Empty Hills*, 2009. ssa. text Wang Wei

#### VOICE

*Kubla Khan*, 1974 (Dublin 1974). S, pf. text Samuel Taylor Coleridge.  
*Lullaby for a Baby Toad*, 1975 (Dublin 1976). S, pf. text Stella Gibbons.  
*Autumn under the Trees*, 1976 (Dublin 1976). S, fl., gui., pf, perc. text Geoffrey Grigson.  
*The Smallest Miracle*, 1976 (Dublin 1976). S, pf. text Séan Aylward.  
*4 epigrams of Callimachus*, 1978 (Dublin 1978). A, recr, gui, perc. text Callimachus.  
*Not Waving but Drowning*, 1981 (Dublin 1984). A, Bar., pf. text Stevie Smith  
*The Stevie Smith Trilogy*, 1984 (Dublin 1984). A, Bar., pf. text Stevie Smith  
*On A Dark Night*, 1985 (Dublin 1985). S, fl., gui., perc. text John F. Deane  
*Burn Out*, 1986 (Dublin 1986). S, fl., cl. text Ian Douglas.  
*Thomas MacDonagh*, 1987 (Drogheda 1987). S, cor. ang., pf. text Francis Ledwidge.  
*The Wheel*, 1987 (Dublin 1987). S, cl., gui., perc. text Marin Sorescu.  
*The Given Note*, 1989 (Drogheda 1989). S, pf. text Seamus Heaney.  
*A White Rose*, 1990 (Drogheda 1990). 2 T, Bar. text John Boyle O' Reilly.  
*The Potter's Field*, 1990 rev. 1997 (Dublin 1990). v, pf. text Ivan Lalić.  
*Song-Breath*, 1994 (Drogheda 1994). Mez., pf. text Susan Connolly  
*Falcon*, 1995 (Dublin 1995). S or T. text Davoren Hannna.  
*The Dream of Aengus*, 1997 (Newgrange 1997). S, throat singer, 2 bronze age hn, psalter horn, fl., uill-pipes, gui., vn, vc., bronze bell, sones, bass drum, perc, text Michael Holohan.  
*Ár nAthair*, 2001 (Dublin 2001). v, org.

*Portrait of the Artist*, 2001 rev. 2004 (Dublin 2001). Mez., afl. text Paul Durcan  
*Small is my land*, 2004. S, pf. text Māra Zālīte, Knuts Skujenieks, Andrejs Eglītis.  
*One Fine Day*, 2006 (Dublin 2006). S, fl, vn, pf. text Samuel Beckett.

#### ELECTRO ACOUSTIC

*Moon-splinters*, 1989 (Drogheda 1989). el-ac. text Susan Connolly  
*The Source*, 1990 (Drogheda 1990). el-ac.  
*July 23<sup>rd</sup> Dawn*, 1990 (Dublin 1990). el-ac. text Michael Holohan  
*The Ancient Gallery*, 1991 (Dublin 1991). el-ac  
*Whaleroads*, 1991 (Dublin 1992). el-ac  
*Stone Dreams*, 1994 (Drogheda 1994). el-ac

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#### Selected Writings

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