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# Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland: Deirdre Gribbin

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**Gribbin, Deirdre**, (b Belfast 24<sup>TH</sup> May 1967). Composer. Gribbin studied with KEVIN VOLANS at QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST, with Robert Saxton at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and with Per Nørgård in Copenhagen. In 1999 she was awarded the Chester Schirmer Fulbright Fellowship studying at Princeton University and the following year she received a PhD in composition from Royal Holloway College, University of London. She has received a number of awards including the Huddersfield Festival Composition Prize in 1991 for her piano piece *Per Speculum in Aenigmate* (1991), the Arts Foundation Award in 1998 for her first opera *Her Persephone!* (1998) and in 2003 her orchestral work *Empire States* (2002) was chosen as a winning finalist at the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers. She has served as director of the Society for the Promotion of New Music, was Fellow Commoner in Creative Arts at Trinity College Cambridge and is a Fellow in Composition at Trinity College of Music, London.

After studies with Nørgård in Denmark, the influence of the Nordic sound on Gribbin's writing manifested itself with an increasing concern for instrumental colour and orchestral textures. This aspect of her style is revealed most strikingly in a series of large scale works including *Empire States* for symphony orchestra and the concertos *Venus Blazing* (2001) for violin and *Goliath* (2006) for percussion. Her first opera *Hey Persephone!* sets the story of Demeter and Persephone in modern day Glasgow while aspects of her Northern Irish background surface in *Tribe* which deals directly with the political and sectarian issues of 'The Troubles'. Her orchestral work *Unity of Being; A peace anthem for Northern Ireland* received its US premiere in October 2001 opening the 'UK with New York Festival', the first international event in New York post 9/11. Since then much of her work has aimed to push beyond the boundaries of the traditional performance environment. She appeared in character playing percussion in her violin concerto *Venus Blazing* as an emissary from the planet Venus and works collaboratively with theatre director Lou Stein and Bruce Springsteen's lighting designer Jeff Ravitz on theatricalising her orchestral music with stage sets, lighting and costumes. Her recent work has included the completion of the string quartet trilogy *What the Whaleship Saw* (2004), *Calum's Light* (2007) and *Merrow Sang* (2007) while she has also set a number of works by Nobel Prize winning poet Seamus Heaney, most notably *Anahorish* (2008), a gift to the poet for a lifetime achievement award from QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST and a song cycle *Island People* (2010). She is currently writing a piano concerto *The Binding of the Years* for the RTÉ NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA's and pianist Finghin Collins.

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Actual Word Count: 444

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*Adrian Smith*

### **Selected Bibliography**

Bob Gilmore: *Unity of Being: The Music of Deirdre Gribbin*, *The Journal of Music in Ireland*, (2005).

Deirdre Gribbin: 'Seize the Time', <http://www.deidregribbin.com/interviews>

Gary McKeone: 'Deirdre Gribbin-An Interview', *Wasafiri International Contemporary Writing Issue no 62*, (2010)

Jonathan Grimes: 'Interview with Deirdre Gribbin',  
<http://www.cmc.ie/articles/article1180.html>

### **Selected Compositions**

*Hey Persephone*, Opera, 1998 (Aldeburgh 1998). 4 S , 2 Mez., A , Ct, 2 T, Bar., 3 children's vv, cl., trbn., 2 perc, accdn, hp, str., bgui.

*Scenes from 'My Kingdom'*, Film Score, 2003. S, uill pipes, sax., perc, bgui., accdn, str.

*The Possessed*, Radio Play, 2006 ( 2006). el-ac.

*Crossing the Sea*, Opera 2008 (London 2008). Mez., 2vn, va, vc.

*Callanish*, 1989 (London 1991). Orch.

*Elasticita*, 1991 (Saarbrucken 1993). Orch.

*Unity of Being*, 2001 (Belfast 2001). Orch.

*Empire States*, 2002 (Dublin 2003). Orch.

*Venus Blazing*, 2001 (Newcastle 2002). vn solo, pic., afl., 2 cor. ang., 2 bcl., 2 cbn, 2 hn, 2 tpt, trbn., perc, str.

*Mare Tran*, *Crossing the Sea*, 2003 (Belfast 2004). Mez., str.

*Goliath*, 2006 (Belfast 2006). perc solo, lamberg drums, orch.

*The Isamnon Fragments*, 1990 (London 1990). 4 tpt, hn, 3 trbn., btrbn, tuba.

*High*, 1990 (Hoy 1991). fl., ob., cl., bn, hn.

*Narrative for a Harlequin*, 1991 rev. 1996 (London 1991). tpt, pf.

*Venusian Year*, 1993 (Dublin 1994). cl., hn, perc, vn, vc., db.

*Jack B.*, 1993 (Belfast 1993). vn, va, vc., pf.

*And now the shadows are too long*, 1993 (London 1994). cl., pf.

*Tribe*, 1997 (Copenhagen 1997). fl., ob., cl., bn, 2 hn, tpt, trbn., 2 perc, pf., hp, 2vn, va, vc., db.

*How to make the water sound*, 1997 (Petworth 1997). vn, vc., pf.

*To Bathe Her Body in Whiteness*, 1999 ( London 1999). fl., ob., cl., perc, vn, va, vc., db.

*Celestial Pied Piper*, 2000 (Huddersfield 2000). cl. solo, fl., cl., sax., hn, 2 perc, vn, va, vc., db.

*Amazing Face*, 2000 (Cork 2000). 2 vn, va, vc.

*Speaker's Corner*, 2003 (Cork 2003). 2 vn, va, vc., pf.

*What the Whaleship Saw*, 2004 (London 2004). 2 vn, va, vc.

*Calum's Light*, 2007 (London 2007). 2 vn, va, vc.

*Merrow Sang*, 2007 (Galway 2007). 2 vn, va, vc.

*Fantasia Icon*, 2010 (London 2010). 2 vn, va, vc.

*Giles*, 1989 (Belfast 1989). fl.

*Per Speculum in Aenigmate*, 1991 (Huddersfield 1991). pf.

*North*, 1995 (Bucharest 1995). va.

*Hells Kells*, 1995 (Berlin 1995). accdn.

*Waking in Laughtears*, 1996 (London 1996). pf.

*Rothko Chord*, 1997 (London 1997). pf.

*The Sanctity of Trees*, 1997 (Bath 2007). gui.

*A Space Between Words*, 1998 (Geneva 2002). vn.

*The Blue Poet*, 2001 (London 2001). vc.

*Decorated Skin*, 2003 (Cheltenham 2003). pf.

*Celtic o Salsa*, 2004 (Dartington 2004). pf.

*Te Deum*, 2003 (Cambridge 2004). satb, org.

*Yeats Sang*, 2005 (Dublin 2005). satb.  
*Anahorish* 2008, (Belfast 2008 S, vn, hp, pf.  
*Island People*, 2010 (Dartington 2010). S, tpt, 2 vn, va, vc.

### **Discography**

Contemporary Music Centre: *Contemporary Music from Ireland Vol.6* (Karol Szymanowski Quartet: CD, CMC CD06, 2006)  
Deirdre Gribbin: *Venus Blazing* (Bradley Creswick, NSOI cond. Gavin Moloney: CD, RTECD 125, 2010)  
[Fidelio Trio:] *Bulb* (CD, NMC D147, 2008)  
[National Chamber Choir of Ireland:] *Ad Multos Annos* (CD, NGI 01, 2004)  
[Various Artists:] *Rational Option Insanity* (Concorde Ensemble: CD, Black Box BBM1015, 1999)

### **Index**

Arts Foundation Award  
Chester Schirmer Fulbright Fellowship  
Collins, Finghin  
Guildhall School of Music and Drama  
Heaney, Seamus  
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Nørgård, Per  
Princeton University  
Queen's University Belfast  
Ravitz, Jeff  
Royal Holloway College, University of London  
RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra  
Saxton, Roger  
Society for the Promotion of New Music  
Springsteen, Bruce  
Stein, Lou  
Trinity College Cambridge  
Trinity College of Music, London  
UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers.  
Volans, Kevin