

BAM

2016 NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC PETER JAY SHARP BUILDING 30 LAFAYETTE AVENUE BROOKLYN, NY 11217—1486

Donnacha Dennehy's riveting new opera, *The Hunger* featuring Alarm Will Sound premieres at BAM, Sep 30 & Oct 1

Spellbinding soprano Katherine Manley makes her New York debut

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor.

The Hunger

By Donnacha Dennehy

Alarm Will Sound

Conducted by Alan Pierson

Directed by Tom Creed

Presented in association with Irish Arts Center

Set and video design by Jim Findlay

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House (30 Lafayette Ave)

Sep 30 & Oct 1 at 7:30pm

Tickets start at \$20

Talk: Understanding *The Hunger*

Co-presented by BAM and Irish Arts Center

With Tom Creed, Maureen O. Murphy, Donnacha Dennehy, and other panelists to be announced

Oct 1 at 4:30pm

Irish Arts Center (553 West 51st Street)

Free with RSVP

More information at irishartscenter.org

Sep 1, 2016/Brooklyn, NY—Rooted in the emotional, political, and socioeconomic devastation of Ireland's Great Famine (1845-52), *The Hunger* is a powerful new opera by renowned contemporary composer Donnacha Dennehy, making its New York premiere at BAM on September 30 and October 1. Performed by the chamber band Alarm Will Sound, soprano Katherine Manley, and legendary *sean nós* singer Iarla Ó Lionáird, the libretto principally draws from rare, first-hand accounts by Asenath Nicholson, an American humanitarian so moved by the waves of immigrants arriving in New York that she travelled to Ireland to bear witness, reporting from the cabins of starving families. By integrating historical and new documentary material, the opera provides a unique perspective on a period of major upheaval during which at least one million people died, and another million emigrated—mainly to the US, Canada, and the UK—forever altering the social fabric.

An evening-length work, *The Hunger* is punctuated by video commentary and profound early recordings of traditional Irish folk ballads mined from various archives including those of Alan Lomax. Performing a score that fuses a lush, modern sound with elements of minimalism, the instrumentalists surround a looming desolate landscape bereft of nourishment, on which the vocalists act out this devastating human story. As it progresses through its layered narrative, the opera addresses complex issues of governance and economic policy—balancing Nicholson’s personal, historical voice with video clips from modern thinkers including Paul Krugman, Noam Chomsky, and Branko Milanovic—imparting ideas about income inequality, food insecurity, and political economics which resonate today.

About the Artists

Born in Dublin in 1970, **Donnacha Dennehy’s** work is featured in festivals and venues around the world, such as the Edinburgh International Festival, Royal Opera, Carnegie Hall, the Barbican, BAM, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in the UK (which opened its 2012 Festival with a portrait concert devoted to Dennehy’s music), Dublin Theatre Festival, ISCM World Music Days, WNYC’s *New Sounds Live*, Bang on a Can, Ultima Festival, Musica Viva Lisbon, the Saarbrücken Festival, the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, and the Gaudeamus Festival in Amsterdam.

Dennehy has received commissions from Dawn Upshaw, Kronos Quartet, Alarm Will Sound, Bang on a Can, Third Coast Percussion, Icebreaker (London), and Contact (Toronto), RTE National Symphony Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, BBC Ulster Orchestra, and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, among others. Collaborations include pieces with the writer Enda Walsh, choreographers Yoshiko Chuma and Shobana Jeyasingh, and visual artist John Gerrard.

Returning to Ireland after studies abroad in the US, France, and Holland, in 1997 he founded Crash Ensemble, Ireland’s renowned new music group. Alongside the singers Dawn Upshaw and Iarla O’Lionáird, Crash Ensemble appears on the 2011 Nonesuch release of Dennehy’s music, entitled *Grá agus Bás* which NPR named one of its “50 favorite albums” of 2011. In October 2014, RTE Lyric FM released a retrospective CD of Dennehy’s orchestral music. Dennehy’s recent opera *The Last Hotel*, with a libretto by Enda Walsh, was met with critical acclaim in the UK when it premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2015. It has since had runs at the Dublin Theatre Festival, the Royal Opera, and St. Ann’s Warehouse. His commissioned work in collaboration with Nadia Sirota, *Tessellatum*, premiered earlier this year at Symphony Space.

Previously a tenured lecturer at Trinity College Dublin, Dennehy was appointed a Global Scholar at Princeton University in 2012. He joined the music faculty at Princeton in 2014.

Alarm Will Sound has established a reputation for performing demanding music with energetic skill. ASCAP recognized its contributions to new music with a 2006 Concert Music Award for "the virtuosity, passion and commitment with which they perform and champion the repertory for the 21st century." Its numerous recordings and performances have been described as "equal parts exuberance, nonchalance, and virtuosity" by the *Financial Times* and as "a triumph of ensemble playing" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. *The New York Times* says Alarm Will Sound is "the future of classical music" and "the very model of a modern music chamber band." They appeared at BAM previously as part of the *Nonesuch Records at BAM* celebration during the 2014 Next Wave Festival.

In 2011 at Carnegie Hall, the group presented *1969*, a multimedia event that uses music, images, text, and staging to tell the compelling story of great musicians—John Lennon, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luciano Berio, and Leonard Bernstein—striving for a new music and a new world amid the turmoil of the late 1960s. In 2010, the ensemble developed and performed the Dirty Projectors' *The Getty Address* in its new iteration as a live performance piece at Lincoln Center, Disney Hall, and the Barbican. Alarm Will Sound's members began playing together while studying at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY combining diverse influences in composition, improvisation, jazz and popular styles, early music, and world music.

Katherine Manley studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama, Glasgow and the Benjamin Britten International Opera School at the Royal College of Music, London. A Samling Foundation and Susan Chilcott Scholar, Manley has been supported by a Wingate Scholarship, Ian Fleming MBF Award, and an Independent Opera Fellowship.

Some of her roles include Creuse in David McVicar's new production of Charpentier's *Medée*, English National Opera; Zenna Briggs in Michel van der Aa's *Sunken Garden* for ENO at the Barbican Theatre and at the Holland Festival; Lucia in *The Rape of Lucretia* for Angers/Nantes Opera; both Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Arpago in *L'Incoronazione di Dario* with Garsington Opera; Poppea, Fortune, and Virtu in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with English National Opera and Glyndebourne on tour; and Melanto and Amore in *The Return of Ulysses* (The Young Vic) for English National Opera. Manley made her Edinburgh International Festival debut singing *The Indian Queen* and her US stage debut as Oriana in Handel's *Amadigi* for Central City Opera, Colorado.

Recent engagements include portraying Eliza Doolittle in Robert Carson's *My Fair Lady* at the Châtelet, Paris; *St. Matthew Passion* with Britten Sinfonia; Max Richter's *Memoryhouse* at the Barbican; Judith Weir's *Natural History* for Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele; *La descente d'Orphée* at the Wigmore Hall; and Michel Van der Aa's *Blankout* for the Finnish National Opera. Manley portrayed the wife in the world première of *The Last Hotel* by Donnacha Dennehy and Enda Walsh at the Edinburgh Festival, Dublin, London Covent Garden, and St. Ann's Warehouse.

Iarla Ó Lionáird (pronounced ear-lah o-linnard) was born in the West Cork Gaeltacht (primarily Irish speaking) area of Cuil Aodha in 1964. The area was rich in singers and the 12 Ó Lionáird children were no exception. Their mother taught them many traditional songs, passed down from her own mother, and her sister, Elizabeth Cronin. Ó Lionáird began performing at the tender age of five, his first radio broadcast was at age seven, and he recorded "Aisling Gheal" at age 12 for the Gael Linn label. He also performed with the Cor Chuil Aodha (choir of Chuil Aodha), founded by Sean O' Riada.

Since then he has worked in radio, film and TV production, and is the lead singer for the Afro Celt Sound System. Ó Lionáird has a Bachelor's in Education from Carysfort College in Dublin and taught primary school for seven years, while still maintaining a strong interest in matters musical and performing as time allowed. In 2003 he completed a MA in Ethnomusicology at the University of Limerick. Ó Lionáird lives in County Kilkenny with his wife and their three children.

For press information, contact Sarah Garvey at sgarvey@bam.org or 718.724.8025.

Credits

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor.

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Co-produced by Alarm Will Sound and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

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General Information

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn's only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers a dinner menu prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera

House evening performances. BAMcafé also features an eclectic mix of live music for BAMcafé Live on Friday and Saturday nights with a bar menu available starting at 6pm.

Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater); D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue
Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center
Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM
Car: Limited commercial parking lots are located near BAM. Visit BAM.org for information.

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.

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