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CLASSICS



Irish
National
Opera



LANDMARK

DONNACHA DENNEHY & ENDA WALSH

THE FIRST CHILD



THE FIRST CHILD

An Opera by Donnacha Dennehy (music) and Enda Walsh (text)

A co-production by Irish National Opera and Landmark Productions
in partnership with Crash Ensemble.

World premiere at the O'Reilly Theatre as part of Dublin Theatre Festival
in October 2021.

Recorded at the Cork Opera House in September 2022.

IRISH NATIONAL OPERA
CRASH ENSEMBLE
Ryan McAdams Conductor

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THE FIRST CHILD

1	An Opera. Beginning	1.39	17	From this day a line is drawn	3.18
2	Ignored by time	3.11	18	Well over our weekly consumption of alcohol	4.08
3	So, this is your first child, how exciting	4.29	19	From where I'm standing	3.15
4	The woman I was yesterday has been changed	1.12	20	Will you see him again	6.46
5	Room	2.11	21	In their bed within their room	8.49
6	I'm sheltering from the rain	4.19	22	Could the moon have decided	6.44
7	When you find the right person	2.23	23	The story is beginning again...	3.32
8	If bottles aren't sterilised properly	3.13	<hr/>		
9	Does the light forget ever	2.32	Total timings	89.02	
10	Karen checks out Simon on Instagram	1.30			
11	I saw you in the yard this morning	1.23			
12	Only last week I was saying to the boys	4.26			
13	Could the moon decide to leave me there	6.28			
14	And you said	1.50			
15	Dance	5.23			
16	Do you live around here	6.21			

CAST

Man Eric Jurenas *Countertenor*

Girl Caia Leseure *Actor*

Simon Emmett O'Hanlon *Baritone*

Alva Niamh O'Sullivan *Mezzo-soprano*

Gary Dean Power *Tenor*

Older Woman Joan Sheehy *Actor*

Karen Sarah Shine *Soprano*

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Theo Cosgrave

Clare Griffin

Joya Hobson

Priya Hobson

Catherine Leahy

Harry McEvilly

Molly Verdier

Nora Verdier

Ryan McAdams *Conductor*

Elaine Kelly *Assistant Conductor/Chorus Director*

Richard McGrath *Répétiteur*

David Sheppard *Sound Designer*

Sinéad Diskin *Associate Sound Designer*

CRASH ENSEMBLE

Susan Doyle *Flute / Alto Flute / Piccolo*

Leonie Bluett *Clarinet*

Patrick Burke *Clarinet / Bass Clarinet*

Clóna Warren *Bassoon / Contrabassoon*

Hannah Miller *French Horn*

Barry O'Halpin *Guitar / Microtonal Piano*

Alex Petcu *Percussion*

Eliza McCarthy *Piano/Microtonal Piano / Celesta*

Dermot Dunne *Accordion / Microtonal Piano*

Diamanda La Berge Dramm *First Violin*

Larissa O'Grady *Second Violin*

Cian Ó Dúill *Viola*

Kate Ellis *Cello*

Malachy Robinson *Double Bass*

A Note from the composer

Donnacha Dennehy

The First Child is the last opera in my trilogy with Enda Walsh. It feels to me to be the most intense of the three, powered along by a kind of tidal energy. And yet within that, I'm forever seeking the melody in these broken characters. In some way, the opera is about the impact that circular forces can have on our life and on nature. Though it



has a dystopian looping structure to it ultimately, there is also a kind of catharsis unleashed by the power of it. I should let you know that three of the players within Crash Ensemble also double up as microtonal pianists, playing notes between the equal tempered scale. Quite often these relate to the overtone series, but at other times they present strange doppelgängers of their equal-tempered equivalents. The bulk of the opera was written during the pandemic, and one can almost feel the music yearning and bursting to break the banks set up around it, just as the principal character is driven by furious forces that have been bottled up within her. Writing this opera was probably the most intense (and exhausting!) creative experience of my life so far.

A Note from the librettist

Enda Walsh

The First Child is the third in a trilogy of operas by Donnacha Dennehy and Enda Walsh: The Last Hotel (2015), The Second Violinist (2017) and The First Child (2021)

We didn't set out to make a trilogy. In our first opera – *The Last Hotel* – myself and Donnacha Dennehy were interested in the ordinary being faced by something dark and unfathomable. The clash of those two things. Of a character losing a sense of themselves – becoming untethered and committing a terrible act. In *The Last Hotel*, an assisted suicide. In the second opera – *The Second Violinist* – a double murder. The trilogy just happened. I would think of them as salacious Sunday World stories – that on the surface were cheap and nasty – that morphed into something entirely different through the expression of music and opera. Narratives that are much larger than the characters themselves have always interested me. Very ordinary people whose lives are altered by a story they started and a story now which can't be stopped. *The First Child* has a greater structural complexity than the previous two. It reveals itself incrementally and cuts between the normal and the mythic. It's passed through the strange minds of the central characters. It's shaped by obsession and unstoppable hate. It moves sharply from darkness to comedy

– and it tries, I hope, to understand what it is that makes us do these terrible things. I feel an extraordinary privilege to have been able to make this opera with Donnacha Dennehy, Ryan McAdams and Crash Ensemble – and with such wonderful singers and creative collaborators for INO and Landmark. Though the work is undeniably dark – the process and the expression of it – has been gloriously light.



THE FIRST CHILD *Libretto*

Track 02

Chorus Ignored, ignored by time is chance and luck, sat in the corner all dumb and shot. No odds to win, no boon to break and in the tide her story's wrote. Accident turns a colour black and sat in the corner all dumb and shot. No odds to win, no boon to break and in the tide her story's wrote. Time will drag her to that dark, sat in the corner all blind and shot. No odds to win, no boon to break and in the tide her story's wrote. Where all's real and all are ghosts. And what of him when he can't breathe? Carved in her skin is what he'll be. Ignored by time is chance and luck, sat in the corner all dumb and shot.

Track 03

Karen So, this is your first child? How exciting. It must be overwhelming.

Simon It is

Karen Are you and your wife tired already?

Simon When we're not completely exhausted, when the baby is quiet, for the four hours a day he does sleep we do look at each other, my wife and I and we tell each other that we are happy. Is that your name there on your

name tag? Can I call you, Karen, Karen?

Karen I think that one Karen is enough.

Simon Very good, very funny. My name is Simon.

Karen Do you have any concern with the baby carrier, Simon?

Simon I'm a little concerned that the baby might fall out onto the ground and crack his head right open.

Karen Like anything it takes a little bit getting used to but the baby carrier is secure and safe and warm. You can zip your coat around baby in wintertime and by next summer, as baby gets a little bigger, there's ventilation in the baby carrier for the little one to kick his legs and wave his little arms about.

Simon Can I still be using this carrier in the summer?

Karen You could be using your carrier right through to infancy. It can hold a 30 pound child.

Simon I guess I'll be saving on gym membership if I'm still heaving Aran around the town.

Karen 'Aran', What a nice name. Did your wife choose it or was it you, Simon?

Simon I leave all the big decisions to my

wife Alva. It is easier that way. She always has terrific taste while I tend to choose things a little too quickly.

Karen I think you've been very judicious with this decision, Simon.

Simon Only because you allow me to. You're an excellent sales assistant, Karen.

Karen It's because I really like people. Some people say that they like people but they don't particularly like people at all. They prefer dogs or food or air travel, Simon.

Simon Because of you I'm going to buy this baby carrier from your ever-so-slightly grumpy colleague over there.

Karen I think that's a wonderful decision, Simon.

Track 04

Karen The woman I was yesterday has been changed for a new woman. Where before I was left alone with my past. Now my mind is being drawn from there to here, to what will be. The universe walked him into the shop. It felt like someone squeezing my heart, stealing my breath. Story and past aligned as he was pulled towards me and contact was made. With me and Simon.

Track 05

Girl (*spoken*) Fuck!

Track 06

Simon I don't want you to think that I'm stalking you. I'm sheltering from the rain. We expect it in Ireland but when there's this much rain you really want to kill yourself.

Karen Are you happy, are you happy with your baby carrier?

Simon As I walked about town I thought that men and women were looking at me in an accusatory way. I'm sure that's not the case and I'm just being foolish. But I saw my reflection in a shop window. I thought I looked like a man impersonating a pregnant woman. What a lovely smell, is that you?

Karen Yes, I think that's me.

Alva I was looking around Boots and I couldn't find you anywhere.

Simon I had to leave because Aran started getting restless.

Karen Sometimes the air conditioning is too warm for baby.

Simon They turn up the heat to keep you there.

Karen I know that's what we do. It often drives people out. I prefer the cold.

Simon I think we all do.
Karen What a lovely baby boy.
Alva I'm sorry but who are you?
Simon This is Carole, the woman who sold me the baby carrier. Carole this is Alva. I was just saying that I saw my reflection in a shop window and I thought that I looked like a pregnant woman.
Alva All middle-aged men start to look like women. Even without the baby carrier they're carrying too much oestrogen. Simon said you were helpful, and I have to thank you for that. Like all men he hates shopping. He thinks he's above shopping – that his mind is on a much higher plain. He's only useless at shopping because he's useless at so many other things. Simon is a science teacher at a secondary school. Did he tell you that? Don't you find that men are very superior minded especially when they are useless bastards. That's why he called you Carole when in fact her name tag says Karen.
Simon Karen of course, sorry Karen. Karen.
Karen Are you happy with the baby carrier, Alva?

Alva Do you mean the purchase or Simon?
Simon She likes to tease me, and I like to be teased.
Alva Do you have another half, Karen?
Karen I'm in between two halves now at the moment.
Simon She likes to keep her options open.
Karen I like to keep my options open.
Alva Do you like dating men?
Karen I often like to date men, but longer relationships are much harder.

Track 07

Alva When you find the right person and your whole body tells you that. They become your world and time. You see them in everything. In the days and years before you meet they're suddenly there. They reset your life and write your future days and years. It's a universe they make. New life is born from that first look from him to you. Then. Then. Then. Then. One day an actual life, a brand-new world made from two is born. He is there that child with his own light and we spin, us three, together in our union we spin.
Karen *(spoken)* Fucking rain.

Track 08

Girl *(spoken)* Hello? Hello, who is this? I know who this is. Just leave me alone.
Karen During the first year of your baby's life, he's at his most vulnerable. If bottles aren't sterilised properly viruses and parasites can make your baby ill, yes very ill. Your baby could develop anything from mild thrush to a serious bout of vomiting or diarrhoea.
Girl *(spoken)* Go away!
Karen It's best to clean the equipment after a feed and before the milk has had a chance to dry hard. Use hot, soapy water and a clean bottle brush. Take extra care when washing the teats to make sure milk curds come off, as they can survive the sterilising process. 'Nature Mother's Steam Steriliser' is a chemical-free sterilising system designed to kill ninety point nine per cent of harmful bacteria. Natural mothers love the worry-free system that sterilises without the risk of harsh detergents, chemicals or dishwasher...or or or or...

Track 09

Chorus Does the light forget ever, does it stall, does it stay, does it sit above colour as the night becomes day? Does it feel its day fade, as its breath grows weaker in the evening shade? Does light cry ever, can I stay, can I stay as colour turns to black and dies today? Does night forget ever, does it stall, does it stay, does it smile to itself as it darkens the grey? Does it feel itself tire, as its breath sings weaker with the morning choir? Does darkness cry out, can I stay, can I stay as black turns to colour and night dies today?

Track 11

Girl *(spoken)* I saw you in the yard this morning and you looked disgusting. The question we're all asking each other is - do you ever wash? I told the others that you don't. Don't you know that we can smell you? It was agreed that someone had to be honest with you and it was decided that it would be me. Maybe you think that you smell of flowers, that your greasy hair, that your clammy skin that all of it goes unnoticed, well we do notice

it, you shit. What gives you the right to turn up each morning and walk through the yard and stink the air with your stink. Helen said she saw you crying in the toilets at break time. Is that true? Were you crying because we fucking hate you, because we make up names and stories about you...?

Track 12

Gary Only last week I was saying to the boys that marriage is dead. Let, let me lay my cards on the table, let, let, let, let me get it out of the way. I have many friends, Karen, drinking partners and the like. They are people who will always have a role to play in the 'Life of Gary'. But permanent intimacy is an altogether different kettle of fish. How would it seem to see the same face, day in, day out - the same voice, the same words, the same patterns of speech and all of that kicked around your semi-detached in Raheny or wherever? Only last week I was saying to the boys that a person's idiosyncrasies lose their appeal after a second encounter. Imagine, oh imagine the terrible

purgatory of living with someone who was blasé with their dental regime?
Karen Been on Tinder long, Karen?
Karen An early adopter, about 7 years now.
Gary Been out in the field, seen some action?
Karen In those first days there were very few fish in the pond. I wondered why I tortured myself with something that looked like it had crawled out from under a large rock, journeyed across a road and had been run over by a caravan. Not that looks are important, but when you have a personality like a sack of shit, a nice complexion matters. Like you, Gary, I don't understand the draw of monogamy. Like you I need the space around me. Life suffocates in so many other ways. Life suffocates in so many other ways. I don't need a partner to remind me of that, day in...
Gary ...day out
Karen What would you like to do tonight?
Gary Tonight... I'm happy with anything at all.
Karen Anything... There's too much on my mind for any sort of intimacy. Intimacy can wait 'til later.
Gary / Karen Intimacy can wait 'til later.
Gary Sure

Karen ... 'til after the boxset.
Gary We can sit on the couch and drink and eat Monster Munch and watch a thriller.

Track 13

Nurse Could the moon decide to leave me there? The moon's breath it takes me from the shore. Pulled out into, into the sea and the sand is left. I cry out from the tide. Call out 'til I'm gone. And sad for the moon that each month's the same path. Unanswered my call and silently I crawl.
Chorus Beneath
Nurse Beneath the sea its sadness grows. From the sand did it hear, did it hear my call? Has it grown more cruel, for unanswered the moon? Did, did it reach me too soon, take my life too soon?
Chorus Beneath the moon, to travel as it walks, to push with life and pull towards death. To wander in half-life and breathe in with the tides. Movement is set, pattern is sewn, the end is upon her, the start is in song.
Nurse Could the moon decide to kill me there? Pulled out into, into the sea and the sand is left. I cry out from the tide - cry out 'til I'm gone. Unanswered

my call and silently I fall. And deep in the sea.
Chorus Beneath the moon, to travel as it walks
Nurse And deep in the sea my sadness grows. Has it grown more cruel, for unanswered the moon? Did it reach me too soon, take my life too soon?
Chorus Beneath the moon, to travel as it walks, to push with life and pull towards death. To wander in half-life and breathe in with the tides. Movement is set, pattern is sewn, the end is upon her, the start is in song. Pulled out into, into the sea and the sand is left. He calls out from the tide, calls out 'til he's gone. Movement is set, pattern is sewn, the end is upon her, the start is in song.
Woman (*spoken*) And you said
Track 14
Older Woman (*spoken*) 'I saw you in the yard this morning and you looked disgusting. The question we're all asking each other is – do you ever wash? I told the others that you don't'. And you said, 'don't you know that we can smell you? It was agreed that

someone had to be honest with you and it was decided that it would be me'. And you said, 'Maybe you think you smell of flowers. That your greasy hair, that your clammy skin, that it all goes unnoticed. Well, we do notice it you shit. What gives you the right to turn up each morning and walk through the yard and stink the air with your stink. Helen said she heard you crying in the toilets at breaktime. Is that true? Were you crying because we fucking hate you. Because we make up names and stories about you'. And you said...

Track 16

Simon This is a surprise - do you live around here? You never said.

Gary We had to get a taxi, it cost a fortune. Gary by the way. You know these people?

Simon Sort of and she vaguely knows us. All I do know that Karen is a wonderful shop assistant. She helped me with a baby carrier last month.

Gary Is that right, you know these people?

Alva Why do I see you everywhere? Don't you have pubs wherever you live?

Gary She fancied a change from the usual and she said she quite liked this place.

Simon It is quite nice. We like this place.

Gary So where's your little baby then, it's not here, is it?

Alva We're here every Sunday for the carvery. Are you following us?

Simon We thought we'd leave the baby at home. He's there with Alva's Mom. Sometimes you just need some grown-up time. Simon by the way.

Gary I have to say it's refreshing to hear a new dad say that. Too often children suck the life out of their parents. I can see it in their eyes. Parents pass me and my friends as we are out enjoying ourselves in a local hostelry. I'd look up from my pint and see their faces pressed up against the pub window and staring at us, deep envy in their little eyes. Sad, really. So, what do you do to make money, Simon?

Simon I teach science in a secondary school.

Gary So not a great job then? 'Cause people don't like to understand science, do they? That's what I read. That science is a thing that people don't like.

Alva How did you two meet? Somewhere nice, somewhere romantic, I bet?

Karen On Tinder.

Alva You're joking me?!

Karen No, I'm serious, on Tinder.

Simon People are scared of science. I don't know why that is. As a boy it was the only way I could understand the world, through rules and patterns and cycles of life. An understanding of science and you will find your place. Without that the world would feel like chaos, you would feel alone.

Gary As a little boy I always had a love of money. It was unavoidable that one day I would become a bookie.

Alva Simon and me haven't had sex in over a year. He said he couldn't touch me when I was pregnant and since he was born Aran sleeps with him in the bed.

Karen Doesn't a baby need its mother more?

Alva I always have nightmares that I, that I smother him, so I prefer to sleep in the spare room. Without my child there'd be nothing for us.

Gary *(spoken)* Fuck it
(sung) I say we all get trashed.
Drink the day away and forge
new relationships.

Alva People are surprised I found my vocation in the wellness industry. As

a child I was difficult and argumentative – popular, obviously – but cold and distrustful of others. Kindness and happiness are lucrative businesses, but I never wanted to give myself away completely. I'm a better human than that. Was there something in your childhood that made you interested in selling baby clothes, Karen? Were you a happy child, back then? Were you loved by people? Children do need love.

Karen From, from some people there was love.

Track 17

Girl *(spoken)* I will never forget you. I'll remember and keep these tapes. I'll remember the school yard and what you're doing to me – how they're laughing, you fucking bitch. Don't you care you're hurting me? I'm a child like you! Don't you care what you're doing? You're really hurting me! You're hurting me!

Chorus From this day a line is drawn and filled with hate for hate is strong and grown from hurt for hurt runs deep. Loud the line that hate does write. This story told to choke her life.

Girl (*spoken*) You will not rest! I will turn up at your door. When I'm older I will find you. I'll write what you did to me every night and dream that I will get to you. You hurt me and I will take your words and store them and I will find you. I will fucking find you.

Nurse Loud the line, loud the line.

Chorus No tears will fall upon her cheek. No hurt will wake her in the night. No words will fill and mark her life. For what she spoke she'll die tonight. She'll die tonight for what she spoke.

Nurse & Chorus New life will fill and take her life. No hurt will wake her in the night.

Chorus The tears they die, as will her light.

Girl (*spoken*) Alva do you hear me?! I will find you! Alva! I will fucking find you...

Nurse & Chorus For loud the line that hate does write. Her spoken words will choke her life. And filled with hate for hate is strong and grown from hurt for hurt runs deep.

Nurse For hurt runs deep.

Track 18

Simon Each one of us is well over our weekly consumption of alcohol.

Gary (*spoken*) Oh yeah

Simon The bad news is that I have more wine left over from Christmas in the garage. Bottles of wine.

Alva We rarely have visitors and obviously you two have made quite the impression. On Simon's salary we could have barely afforded a ditch in Meath, but the wellness industry being the way it is, I bought this new build with a tiny mortgage.

Simon Welcome to our house.

Alva Yes, welcome to my house. Too late to take your shoes off.

Simon Should we, should we, should we keep it down because of, you know, Aran? Maybe the music's gotten a little crazy.

Gary Let the kid get used to it. Noise never hurt a child.

Alva I'll check on him soon. Simon, could you get me some wine.

Karen There's so much of you in your son. He's a beautiful boy, is what I mean.

Alva He is a beautiful boy.

Gary Did you always want kids or was he a bad surprise?

Alva Marriage is transitory, but a child is forever. Your child is closer to you than anyone. He's the new you, the line continued, the future you right here. And there he sleeps upstairs in his little room, his life giving me life, life to carry on.

Gary You don't seem the type of woman who would want kids, Karen. Why do I think that?

Karen I don't know why.

Gary Is a family something you ever dreamt of? The pitter-patter of tiny Karens, selling baby's clothes and finding men on Tinder.

Simon Let's start with the Barolo and work back to the cheap seats. We rarely have visitors and obviously you two have made quite the impression. Welcome to our house.

Alva Obviously you two have made quite the impression, welcome to my house.

Track 19

Gary From where I'm standing, you're spending too much time with 15-year-olds. You're not sounding like a man who's grown up in the world. That's all I'm saying, that's why I'm

saying it. Being a teacher you're not properly out in the real world. Routine has made and kept you, day in, day out, year after year, same words, same nonsense, same ordered life, over and over and over...

Simon Are you serious? Are you being serious, I can't tell, is he being serious, Alva?

Alva Aren't you going to answer him? For fuck's sake.

Gary He can't answer me. There is no answer. I've answered my question by asking it. Karen give me a cigarette...

Simon I invite you into our house...

Gary Her, her house.

Alva That's right, my house.

Simon Ok. I invite you into her house and you drink my wine and you, and... are you serious, are you being serious, Gary?

Gary You don't think I can be a serious man?

Simon What does that even mean? How can you be so rude?

Alva How can you be such a rude man, Gary? You are being rude, you know?

Gary Someone like Karen can't see the type of people you both are, but I can see it, I see it right here.

Simon I think we're all done.

Alva Just leave.
Gary Oh you think you're better than us. Better than me and her.
Karen Leave, leave.
Gary You think I'm impressed with this and you. I'm not impressed one bit. Your manicured life, your polite ways. Borolo wine?! I've been wanting a lager all fucking day, and we've been drinking red wine since lunchtime! Lunchtime!
Simon It was lunch, for Christ's sake!
Gary Bottles of wine in your garage! Fucking bottles of wine. And both of your names, for fuck's sake! Alva and Simon, Simon and Alva! Making your new world here in Cabra of all fucking places! Cabra! Cabra! Cabra!

Track 20

Alva Will you see him again? Will you see him again?
Karen No, I won't see him no.
Alva Well, unless he calls again.
Karen I won't see him, not now or ever.
Alva There'll be others, you hope.
Karen There are always others.
Alva Will you marry someday? Will you have a little child like I have? Will someone

Karen Maybe I'll have someone who'll sit with me when I'm old. I hope that I will have someone.
Karen turns to her. Alva seeing the knife.
Alva So, you're here to hurt me, this is the time? Is this what I deserve for what I did? How's it written our story's end? How can it finish when hate holds so deep? Unquestioned, unable to stop or pause and taken outside and above the girl I once was. And altered and changed by you and no longer as I knew but outside and above this soured and made bad by you. I sit with my family, I travel in the back of cars, I walk through parks and shops a girl in teenage years, the small dramas of suburban life, the nothing of everything. Except you. What wrong is there? What badness still exists in you? How strong this bond that shaped me so, that soured my mind, that built my hate. Was it written back then this moment? A line drawn from there to here. My

blood on the floor and you above my body soon cold and knife in hand, my house at your back, you walk through the night, the balm of revenge. Delight. Delight. And go. The blame is all yours for what in me was ruined. How strong this bond that shaped me so, that soured my mind, that built my hate. Only yours is the blame. The poison made at birth. The burden is mine from teenage days when we first met 'til now. Go now and return to nothing. Go drown, go drown in your hate and let us be.

When Karen stands up her hand is bleeding badly – she's cut herself with the knife.

She drops the knife on the ground.

Karen then looks over to the moses basket where Aran is sleeping.

Karen calmly walks over and lifts the baby out of his bed – carefully wraps Aran tighter in his blanket.

She holds him, kisses him gently – and walks back towards the centre of the stage.

Track 21

Karen In their bed within their room behind their walls they sleep their sleep. And in their sleep their dreams unfurl and further deep 'til time is none.
Chorus Walk. Walk.
Karen Unseen this walk by those who dream but from the dark the stars will watch. And from the stars what words are said, 'cause lost these words in empty space. The trees sleep too, no calls to stop. I walk the road that future's wrote.
Chorus In their bed within their room they sleep their sleep. And in their sleep their dreams uncurl and further deep 'til time is none.
Karen And further still and hold him tight and dead my body but clear the night. Houses fold into the grey and take with them the ones who dream and take with them the girl who maimed, who killed me then and carves my day 'til days are done. Gone the houses and long the road while up above the stars unheard, and soon will die, as will the moon, while in my arms he moves, he moves.
Chorus In their bed behind their walls they sleep their sleep. And in their sleep

their dreams uncurl and further deep
'til time is none.

Karen Long the road and darkness dies and
cars they pass. Unseen this walk
as country folds, a life unseen
amongst the crowd, a life unloved,
unheard 'til now. A smaller road that
time did break and from this road the
sea calls out.

*Karen walks to the far stage left,
into the darkness with Aran.*

It calls to me to walk towards and
he screams loud, and dead is me.
Upon the sand his face is seen, within
the waves her words still maim. Who
sees the blame but the unseen moon,
walk on until further and be free.

Chorus In their bed within their room behind
their walls their sleep it ends. And on
their street their cries are heard, for
time has called and he is gone. For
time has called and he is gone. For
time is called and he is...and he
is gone.

*When Karen walks back into the
light – she's no longer holding Aran.
She holds his blanket.*

*All this time – the Nurse has been
watching her.*

Track 22

Nurse Could the moon have decided to
leave me there? The moon's breath it
takes me from the shore. Pulled
out into, into the sea and the sand
is left. I cry out from the tide. Call
out 'til I'm gone. Unanswered my call
and silently I fall deep into sea, deep
into sea, my sadness grows. Has it
grown more cruel, for unanswered the
moon? Did it reach me too soon, take
my life too soon? There in your room
and never alone. Kept in this half
life you'll stay in this tide. Unable to
rest, unanswered your call and deep
in my sea your suffering grows. And
deep in my sea your suffering grows.

Nurse & Chorus Movement is set, pattern is
sewn, the end is upon her, the start
is in song.

Chorus Ignored by time is chance and luck,
sat in the corner all dumb and shot.
No odds to win, no boon to break and
in the tide her story's wrote. Accident
turns a colour black and sat in
the corner all dumb and shot.

No odds to win, no boon to
break and in the tide her
story's wrote. Time will
drag her to that dark,
sat in the corner all
blind and shot. No
odds to win, no
boon to break
and in the tide
her story's wrote.
Where all's real
and all are
ghosts. And
what of him
when he can't
breathe?
Carved in her
skin is what
he'll be. Ignored
by time is chance
and luck, sat in
the corner all
dumb and shot.





IRISH NATIONAL OPERA

Irish National Opera is Ireland's largest opera company and provides inspirational, vibrant and ground-breaking opera of exceptional quality with a wide national reach, accessible to everyone. Committed to maximising public engagement and building enthusiastic audiences for opera, INO regularly performs large-scale productions in Dublin, Cork and Wexford, and brings touring productions to venues of all sizes throughout Ireland and beyond. The company is dedicated to showcasing internationally acclaimed, world-class Irish opera singers alongside guest artists from all over the world. With a long-term commitment to the development of a strong, sustainable opera ecology in Ireland, INO finds, nurtures and develops talent across all areas of their work. Through innovative programming and community engagement, INO works with people of all ages and backgrounds and creates transformational social impact to support the next generation of outstanding talent that is representative of modern-day

Ireland. Irish National Opera is funded by The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon. Its international touring is supported by Culture Ireland.

LANDMARK PRODUCTIONS

Landmark Productions is one of Ireland's leading theatre producers, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2024. It produces wide-ranging work in Ireland and shares that work with international audiences. Led by Anne Clarke since the company's foundation, its productions have received multiple awards and have been seen in leading theatres in London, New York and beyond. It co-produces regularly with a number of partners, including, most significantly, Galway International Arts Festival, Irish National Opera and the Abbey Theatre. Its 33 world premieres - and counting - include new plays by major Irish writers such as Enda Walsh, Mark O'Rowe and Deirdre Kinahan, featuring a roll-call of Ireland's finest actors, directors and designers. Numerous awards include the Judges' Special Award at the Irish Times Irish

Theatre Awards, in recognition of ‘sustained excellence in programming and for developing imaginative partnerships to bring quality theatre to the Irish and international stage’; and a Special Tribute Award for Anne Clarke, for her work as ‘a producer of world-class theatre in the independent sector in Ireland’. Landmark’s art-led work is funded by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon. Its international touring is supported by Culture Ireland.

DONNACHA DENNEHY COMPOSER

Donnacha Dennehy is one of Ireland’s most prominent composers, described as “thrilling” (*The Guardian*), “mesmerizing” (*The New York Times*), and “arrestingly beautiful” (*The New Yorker*). His music has been performed at major festivals and venues including the Berliner Festspiele, Edinburgh International Festival, Carnegie Hall, Barbican London, Royal Opera House, BAM New York, Holland Festival, Kennedy Center, and Schleswig-Holstein Festival. After studies abroad Dennehy



© Hugh O'Conor

returned to Ireland to found Crash Ensemble in 1997, which has become the country’s leading contemporary music group. His recordings include *Grá agus Bás*, *The Hunger*, and *Land of Winter* on Nonesuch, as well as releases with NMC Records, Bedroom Community, New Amsterdam and Cantaloupe. Dennehy is especially noted for his large-scale vocal and instrumental works. He has written a trilogy of operas with Enda Walsh: *The Last Hotel*, *The Second Violinist* and *The First Child*.

Other major pieces include the docu-cantata *The Hunger*, co-produced by

Alarm Will Sound and Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and *Land of Winter*, premiered by Alarm Will Sound at Beethovenfest. He has received major international awards including the FEDORA—Generali Prize for Opera, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Koussevitsky commission. Dennehy is Professor of Music at Princeton University and his music is published by G. Schirmer in New York.

ENDA WALSH LIBRETTIST

Playwright, director and screenwriter **Enda Walsh** is the librettist and director of the operas *The Last Hotel* (Wide Open Opera and Landmark Productions), *The Second Violinist* and *The First Child* (Irish National Opera and Landmark Productions), composed by Donnacha Dennehy. He also directed Bartók’s *Bluebeard’s Castle* for INO. He first came to prominence with *Disco Pigs*, winner of the George Devine and Stewart Parker Awards. His plays *The Walworth Farce* and *The New Electric Ballroom* won Fringe First Awards at the Edinburgh Festival with *The Guardian*



© Pat Walsh

calling him “one of the most dazzling wordsmiths of contemporary theatre.” His stage adaptation of John Carney’s film *Once* transferred from off-Broadway to Broadway, where it won eight Tony Awards including Best Book. Other acclaimed works include *Ballyturk*, the musical *Lazarus* with David Bowie, *Arlington* and *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*. For film, Walsh wrote the screenplay for Steve McQueen’s *Hunger*, winner of the Camera d’Or at Cannes. Recent projects include *Small Things Like These*, starring Cillian Murphy, *Die, My Love* and *Ish* directed by Imran Peretta at the Venice Film Festival 2025.

ERIC JURENAS COUNTERTENOR

Countertenor **Eric Jurenas** made his Irish National Opera debut as Andronico in Vivaldi's *Bajazet* and also appeared in Donnacha Dennehy and Enda Walsh's *The First Child*, produced with Landmark Productions. A Juilliard graduate, he has sung at the Vienna State Opera creating the role of Guardian Angel in Olga Neuwirth's *Orlando*, which was named Best World Premiere of the Year by *Opernwelt*. Other notable roles include the title role in Handel's *Rinaldo* at Theater an der Wien, Opéra Royal de



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Versailles and Moscow; Arsamene in *Xerxes* at Oper Frankfurt; Arbace in Vinci's *Catone in Utica* at the Glimmerglass Festival; Narciso in *Agrippina* at the Royal Opera House London, Munich Opera Festival and Komische Oper Berlin; and Herald in Reimann's *Medea*. On the concert stage he has sung David in Handel's *Saul* at the Göttingen International Handel Festival, the recital *Time stands still* at the Innsbruck Early Music Festival and premieres at the Pierre Boulez Saal, Berlin.

CAIA LESEURE ACTOR

Caia Leseure was born in 2008 to an Irish mother (artist Nina Hynes) and French father (music producer and film composer Fabien Leseure). Caia was the solo dancer in Donnacha Dennehy and Enda Walsh's opera *The First Child* for Irish National Opera and Landmark Productions with performances at Dublin Theatre Festival, Galway International Arts Festival and on tour across Ireland. Growing up in Berlin speaking English, German and French, she studied



contemporary dance at the Sasha Waltz dance school. With them she took part in the 'Tanztreffen der Jugend' at the Berliner Festspiele 2023, a leading competition for dance schools from all over Germany, with residency and performances in the Festspiele. In June 2024 she performed in *In C* with Sasha Waltz company at Radialsystem V in Berlin and later that year she appeared as a solo dancer in Nina's show *I Am The Machine* at Dock 11. Caia attends the Ellen-Key Oberschule in Berlin and plans to complete the German Abitur. Caia loves books and films, going to the fitness club and has diverse circles of friends. Spending her early school years

at the Berlin Bilingual School gave her respect and appreciation of diversity and a multicultural environment.

EMMET O'HANLON BARITONE

Irish-American baritone **Emmett O'Hanlon** is a graduate of the Ryan Opera Center at Chicago Lyric Opera, the Juilliard School of Music and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He made his Irish National Opera debut creating the role of Simon in Donnacha Dennehy and Enda Walsh's *The First Child*. He



© Simon Pauly

has sung Figaro in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Semperoper Dresden and Austin Opera, Pierrot in Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* and the title role in Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* at Deutsche Oper am Rhein, and Schaunard in Puccini's *La bohème* at Los Angeles Opera. At the Metropolitan Opera he has covered roles in works by Mason Bates and John Adams. On the concert stage he has performed Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* and reprised *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with the New World Symphony and the Louisville Orchestra.

NIAMH O'SULLIVAN
MEZZO-SOPRANO

Mezzo-soprano **Niamh O'Sullivan** has sung widely with Irish National Opera where her roles include Alva in Dennehy and Walsh's *The First Child*, Maddalena in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Charlotte in Massenet's *Werther*, Ursule in Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, Mercédès in Bizet's *Carmen*, Tisbe in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Asteria in Vivaldi's *Bajazet* and Kate Pinkerton in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. International

highlights include Carmen for English National Opera, Offred in Poul Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale* for Detroit Opera Rossweisse in Wagner's *Die Walküre* at Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Octavian in R. Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Sonyetka in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the BBC Proms, and the Page in R. Strauss's *Salome* with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Antonio Pappano. A committed recitalist, she has performed at Wigmore Hall with the BBC orchestras and regularly in Ireland with duo partner Gary Beecher.



© Andrea Antosikova

DEAN POWER
TENOR

Irish tenor **Dean Power** created the role of Gary in Dennehy and Walsh's *The First Child* for Irish National Opera and Landmark Productions. His international career has taken him to the Salzburg Festival, Opéra de Lille, Opernhaus Zürich, Teatro Real Madrid, Opéra Bastille Paris, Glyndebourne Festival, Theater St. Gallen, Gärtnerplatztheater Munich, The Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, and The Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra in Venezuela.



© Laura Minucci

As a former ensemble member of the Bayerische Staatsoper, his roles included Steuermann in Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*, Walther von der Vogelweide in *Tannhäuser*, Graf Elemer in *Arabella*, Froh in *Das Rheingold*, Scaramuccio in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Jaquino in *Fidelio* among others. With Canadian pianist James Hurley, he co-curated *The Great Irish Poets Songbook*, touring in Ireland, Munich, Paris and Newfoundland.

JOAN SHEEHY
ACTOR

Joan Sheehy is an actor and director from Granagh, Co. Limerick. She made her first appearance with Irish National Opera in *The First Child* and has performed with all the leading Irish theatre companies, touring extensively both nationally and internationally. Her most recent appearances have included *Wreckquiem* (Lime Tree Theatre), *The Empty Nest* (Viking Theatre, and on tour), *Theatre for One* (Cork Midsummer Festival), and *Red Army* (Lime Tree Theatre). She played Úna in the



SARAH SHINE SOPRANO

Soprano **Sarah Shine** created the role of Karen in Dennehy and Walsh's *The First Child* for Irish National Opera and Landmark Productions. For INO she has also sung Adele in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Sophie in Massenet's *Werther*, and appeared in Linda Buckley's *Glauch* as part of *20 Shots of Opera*. She has performed internationally with the Opéra National de Paris, Bregenz Festsspiele and at Norway's Barokkfestival, where she sang the title role in Handel's *Atalanta*.



celebrated feature film *An Cailín Ciúin*. Joan has directed some acclaimed productions, *Birthday Party* (Belltable Arts Centre), *In the Middle of the Fields*, *Dracula: A Journey into Darkness*, and *Dracula: Lucy's Passion* (Abbey Theatre), as well as *The Rising of the Women* (The GAFF, Limerick). Film and TV credits include *Der Irland Krimi*, *Harry Wild*, *End of Sentence*, and *As Luck Would Have It*.

She has also toured Michael Gallen's *Elsewhere* with French ensemble Miroirs Étendus. Other highlights include Sophie in *Werther* at the Bregenz Festsspiele and *Looking for Bernstein* with the Académie de l'Opéra National de Paris. She has appeared at the Salzburg Festival as a member of the Young Singers Project, performing in Marius Felix Lange's *Der Gesang der Zauberinsel*. A graduate of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, she studied with Veronica Dunne. Sarah is the recipient of support from Siemens, The Arts Council of Ireland, Limerick City Arts Council and the Christopher Lynch Operatic Bursary.

RYAN MCADAMS CONDUCTOR

Ryan McAdams is Principal Conductor of Crash Ensemble. With Irish National Opera and Landmark Productions he has conducted Dennehy and Walsh's *The Second Violinist* and *The First Child*, and for Irish National Opera, Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict*. International engagements include *Così fan tutte* for



Saratoga Opera, appearances with the Orchestre National d'Île-de-France, Belgian National Orchestra, Istanbul State Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana in Palermo, and concerts with the orchestra of the Teatro Filarmonico di Verona. He has also conducted at the Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele. McAdams was the first recipient of both the Sir Georg Solti Emerging Conductor Award and the Aspen-Glimmerglass Prize for Opera Conducting. In the United States he has served as Conducting Fellow at Tanglewood, Assistant Conductor at the Aspen Music

Festival and Apprentice Conductor at Lorin Maazel's Castleton Festival. As a Fulbright scholar he was Apprentice Conductor of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra under Alan Gilbert. He studied at the Juilliard School and Indiana University.

CRASH ENSEMBLE

Crash are amazingly ordinary people doing extraordinary things: a group of world class musicians who play the most adventurous ground-breaking music of today. They commission, collaborate, explore, investigate and experiment with a broad spectrum of music creators and artistic collaborators working across all genres, artforms and disciplines. As well as performing throughout Ireland, Crash regularly perform internationally, with appearances in the last few years at the Edinburgh International Festival, The Royal Opera House (London), The Barbican (London), Carnegie Hall (NYC) The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Washington DC), Virginia Tech (Virginia), GAIDA Festival (Lithuania)



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and residencies at The Huddersfield Contemporary Music festival (UK) and Princeton University (NJ). Crash's music is available on their own label, Crash Records and they also have recordings on Nonesuch, Cantaloupe, NMC, Ergodos and Bedroom Community labels. Crash is funded by the Arts Council of Ireland, Dublin City Council and Culture Ireland (international touring) and is resident at the National Concert Hall, Dublin and at Kilkenny Arts Festival, Ireland.





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