

Dublin Sound Lab

Michael Quinn (harpsichord)

Fergal Dowling (computer)

Music for harpsichord and electronics

28 November 2009 at 8.00pm

St Werburgh's Church, Dublin

- Ailís Ní Ríain, *2 Steep 4 Sheep* (harpsichord and tape)
- Nick Collins, *Suite with Interruptions* (harpsichord and computer)
- Fergal Dowling, *More fun with numbers* (harpsichord and tape)
- J.S. Bach, Movements from *Goldberg Variations* (harpsichord solo)
 - Julio d'Escriván, *reGoldberg* (harpsichord and computer)
 - Fergal Dowling, *Stops IV* (harpsichord and computer)

Dublin Sound Lab is a contemporary music performance group specialising in new electroacoustic music and computer-mediated performance.

The group was formed in 2008 by organist Michael Quinn and composer Fergal Dowling to promote and perform new and established works by Irish and international composers.

Ailís Ní Ríain – 2 Steep 4 Sheep (harpsichord and tape)

Composer and playwright Ailís Ní Ríain was born in Cork in 1974. She studied music at UCC, York University, Manchester University and the Royal Northern College of Music. She is an international prize-winning composer (ISCM) and published playwright (*Tilt*, Nick Hern Books). She combines her interests in composing and writing to produce works which explore her myriad artistic interests. She is particularly interested in sound installation, voice theatre, opera, public art, music-theatre & presenting contemporary music in diverse spaces.

She has been represented by the Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland since 1999 and as a playwright by Casarotto Ramsay & Associates (London). She has lived in the North of England since 1996 and currently resides in a small village called Walsden in Greater Manchester. Her music has been performed in the USA, Italy, Holland, UK, Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Serbia, Greece, France and on Irish, German and Greek radio and released on CD.

Current projects include the Sawn-off Opera – a suite of mini-operas. Her debut play *Beaten* (as known as *TILT*) will receive its Swedish premiere when it will run during November 2009 at the Göteborgs Stadsteater in Gothenburg, Sweden.

2 Steep 4 Sheep (some hills are) (2006) for harpsichord and pre-recorded CD was commissioned by Manchester's HarpsichordFest and is dedicated to and was premiered by the renowned British harpsichordist Jane Chapman in 2006. The piece was inspired by my move to the hilly countryside in the Pennine Moors in 2006. Outside my window all I could see were sheep precariously balanced on every surrounding hill as far as the eye could see. Then, one by one, they began to tumble down the hillside to their deaths. A pastoral nightmare... The piece also involves a 'Sheep Expert' who looks at the issue of stress and sheep. Sheep do get stressed despite their placid demeanours; their emotional range is often wide and is explored through the sounds they make. The piece then takes a jaunty pastoral leap over the Pennine heather before settling into the darker world of hills that are simply too steep for sheep.

Ailís Ní Ríain

Nick Collins – Suite with Interruptions (harpsichord and computer)

Nick Collins is a composer, performer and researcher in the field of computer music. He lectures at the University of Sussex, running the music informatics degree programmes and research group. Research interests include machine listening, interactive and generative music, audiovisual performance, sound synthesis and music psychology. He co-edited the *Cambridge Companion to Electronic Music* (Cambridge University Press), and is fond of the non sequitur. He is an experienced pianist and computer music performer, and active in both instrumental and electronic music composition. He has occasionally toured the world as the non-Swedish half of the Swedish audiovisual laptop duo 'klipp av'.

In **Suite with Interruptions (2009)**, a computer waits to interrupt the musical life of a harpsichordist. Its autonomous interjections take the form of transformations of material the human musician has played, or of microtonal harmonies drifting through the room. The score of the suite for the harpsichordist is itself characterised by sudden changes of mood. At any point the human player becomes aware of a computer contribution they must either suddenly arrest their onwards progression and wait for calm before they continue, or struggle on against the computer onslaught.

The work is generative, so its exact duration cannot be predicted in advance, and how many times the interruptions occur may vary with the computer programme's own whim.

Nick Collins

J.S. Bach – Movements from the Goldberg Variations (harpsichord solo)

The *Goldberg Variations*, as they are known today were published by Bach as the fourth part of his *Clavierübung* series in 1741. This German title literally means 'keyboard practice', but in Bach's day it implied an integrated and holistic approach to keyboard playing – encompassing spiritual and aesthetic dimensions – and should not be understood as denoting mere technical exercise. The *Goldberg Variations* consists of a theme (Aria) and thirty variations which exploit a wide variety of keyboard techniques, while traversing a broad range of expressive gestures, Baroque dance types and contrapuntal techniques. The inclusion of dance types (such as a giga and a passepied) links the movements heard here to Nick Collins's *Suite with Interruptions*, which itself evokes the dance found in Baroque suites.

Julio d'Escriván – reGoldberg (harpsichord and computer)

Julio d'Escriván is a composer who uses music technology, both for concert music, and in its applications to film, video and new media. He is at present helping set up the Digital Performance Laboratory as part of Anglia Ruskin University's Cultures of Digital Economies Research Institute. Between 1991 and 2003 he was a successful writer/producer of music for film and TV for Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Julio has been twice winner of awards at the Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition, France, in 1987 and 1989. He has also won awards for his film (Festival de Mérida, 2008) and advertising work (Premios ANDA) in Venezuela as well as mentions in the National Composition prizes there. His music has been performed at numerous music festivals in countries such as The Netherlands (Gaudeamus), Spain

(Centro Reina Sofía), the Basque Country (Festival Klem), France, England, Ireland, Argentina, Sweden, Mexico, Norway, and the USA. His work has been broadcast in America and Europe on stations such as BBC Radio 3, VPRO Amsterdam, Radio Nacional de España, and RAI (Italy), among others.

reGoldberg is a 'remix' of Bach's Aria and Variation 14 from the 32 Goldberg variations. It aims to provide an electroacoustic commentary on one Goldberg Variation (A reVariation!). The piece follows the traditional 'performer and tape' format of the 70s and 80s but fixed sounds are triggered via a laptop, cueing software designed specifically for this purpose. A contrast between expressive 'ad lib' passages and strict rhythmic performance is possible thanks to the trigger system. Most of the electronic sounds are derived from the harpsichord itself, but in a good tradition of formal inconsistency, some are not.

Julio d'Escrivan

Fergal Dowling – Stops IV (harpsichord and computer)

Fergal Dowling is a composer of electroacoustic and instrumental music. Born in Dublin, he studied composition with Kevin O'Connell and Donnacha Dennehy at Trinity College Dublin. With the assistance of the Elizabeth Maconchy Composition Fellowship, awarded by the Arts Council of Ireland, he completed a PhD in composition at the University of York in 2006. He lectured in music technology at Dundalk Institute of Technology (2006–2008) and his work as a researcher has produced software-based compositional aids and audio processing tools dealing mainly with sound spatialisation and real-time interactive strategies.

Many of his works make use of computer-mediated performance strategies to combine electronic parts with instrumental or vocal forces. Since 2001 he has employed 'granular spatialisation' to render multi-channel works for large, three-dimensional loudspeaker arrays. His *Manchester Material* (for 8 loudspeakers) was selected for the ISCM World New Music Days, Gothenburg 2009.

His works have been presented in concert and as installations in Ireland, England, Germany, Sweden, Canada, the USA, Spain, Brazil and Japan. He has performed his own computer-based interactive music throughout Europe with various groups such as Ex-Machina, Concorde, Ensemble Chimera, Projektgruppe Neue Musik Bremen, EAR Ensemble, Grup XXI, Improvised Device, notes inégales, and Dublin Sound Lab. With *Electroacoustic Revue* (EAR) he organised a series of international electroacoustic music festivals in Dublin (2005–07) and was represented in their Composer's Choice concert at the National Concert Hall, Dublin (2006). Together with the organist Michael Quinn, he co-founded Dublin Sound Lab in 2008.

Stops IV (for harpsichord and computer) (2009) is part of a series of compositions for instrumentalist and computer. The common aim of the works in this series is to rebalance the erstwhile independent roles of composition and performance more equally between the instrumentalist and the computer operator. The composition takes the form of a computer-based strategy which the players 'sound out'. Here, sound-events generated by the harpsichord are recognised and automatically recorded by the computer. As more sound-events are detected and recorded, their start or end points are used to trigger playback of previously recorded cues. The computer operator chooses how the new events trigger the previously recorded events, whether simultaneous or in sequence. In this version, a score is provided to describe one possible sequence of musical steps through the field of options.

The *Stops* series have common formal and stylistic features. In all of these works, sounded material is always produced in the performance space in real time; there is no pre-recorded or prepared material. The sounds are never processed or treated in any way (other than being recorded and replayed), and there is no sound synthesis. Exactly when and what to record is decided during the performance, and the decision is based on aspects of the ongoing performance. The process uses extensive direct quotations of the actual performance to create sequential repetitions and layerings. These processes result in frequent elisions, gaps and re-orderings of the temporal flow. The objective is to make self-contained, self-referential and concentrated musical arguments, which reveal an evolving relationship between instrumentalist and computer (operator).

Michael Quinn

Michael Quinn co-founded Dublin Sound Lab with Fergal Dowling in 2008. He is an organist and harpsichordist with a keen interest in contemporary and early repertoires. He has premiered works by Jacques Bank, Fergal Dowling and Robert Keeley, and collaborated with composers such as Wim de Ruiter, Daan Manneke and Winfried Michiel.

Michael studied music at Trinity College, Dublin, and King's College London. He began organ studies with David Lee at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and later studied with Jos van der Kooy at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague, assisted by a Dutch government scholarship. He also studied harpsichord with David Adams, Patrick Ayrton and Laurence Cummings. Michael co-founded The Crow Street Consort, a vocal and period-instrument ensemble, in 2007.

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