



Submission to the Future of Media Commission

8 January, 2021

About The Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland

The Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland (CMC) aims *‘to nurture the creation, performance and dissemination of, and engagement with, new music from the island of Ireland.’* CMC is the all island resource organisation for contemporary music from Ireland, and is funded by the Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

CMC is Ireland’s *Embassy of Sound*, being ambassadors for new music from Ireland in our mission to document, develop and promote:

Document - CMC ensures that the contemporary music landscape in Ireland is documented for current access and preserved for future generations

Develop - CMC establishes a supportive environment for artists who create and perform new music from Ireland, providing a range of services to CMC represented and emerging composers

Promote - CMC aims to ensure that music from Ireland reaches and engages a broad public, on the island and internationally, through an innovative programme of events, our online presence and amplification of the activities of the sector

CMC is a vital connector for contemporary music from Ireland. We connect artists with audiences, with organisations, and with one another. CMC’s expertise developed over thirty years is accessed from right across the sector, making CMC critical to the arts infrastructure. CMC is a powerful force in support of artists’ careers and practice, providing advice, professional development, collaborations, performances, residencies, and national and international contacts/networks. As the only all island Library and Archive for contemporary music and operating a vital score-copying service, CMC serves as the sole distributor of the works of many composers from Ireland.

For CMC, engaging audiences with contemporary music from Ireland is at the heart of what we do. CMC engages a wide range of audiences for new music from Ireland through performance and discussion events, and through engaging content on CMC's website. CMC produces in-house the only dedicated podcast on new music from Ireland *amplify*. Always pioneering the use of new technology, CMC's new online Discovery Platform will enable users to engage with CMC's collection in an innovative way.

Context of this submission

CMC notes that, in the working definitions in the Terms of Reference for the Future of the Media Commission (FOM), public service content refers to content that:

- informs, educates and entertains the Irish public with regard to matters of Irish culture, identity, sport, language and other matters inherent to Ireland and the Irish people; and
- ensures that creative Irish talent gets the opportunity to have their work reach audiences in Ireland and, where possible, further afield.

RTÉ has played a crucial role in the development of music in Ireland in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It has done this through its broadcasting on radio and television, its employment of musicians and composers, its commissioning of new music by composers from Ireland, its featuring of music in programmes and broadcasts, its orchestras, choirs and quartet, through recording, archiving, publishing, by presenting awards and live music events, initiatives like composers-in-residence, etc. CMC acknowledges the value of significant initiatives by RTÉ in recent years in support of contemporary music from Ireland, and appreciates working in partnership with RTÉ to deliver a number of these initiatives:

- **Composer Lab** - RTÉ NSO, RTÉ lyric fm and CMC partnership professional development programme for four composers from Ireland, with mentorship from an established composer from Ireland. This project supports the creation of four new works every year for the NSO for live broadcast on RTÉ lyric fm and RTÉ online
- **New Music Dublin** - RTÉ's performing groups and RTÉ lyric fm are partners in the flagship annual new music festival **New Music Dublin (NMD)**, and concerts with Irish content are shared by RTÉ lyric fm through the EBU network. CMC and NMD host an international delegate programme **NMDX** during the festival, to which we invite specialist new music broadcasters to engage with contemporary music from Ireland
- The **screenings** of RTÉ NSO performances on RTÉ Television
- **RTÉ lyric fm's** support across their schedule during the pandemic for those active in contemporary music in Ireland, including for example increased broadcasts and focus on *Blue of the Night*; concert recordings of Irish performing groups on *The Full Score*; contemporary Irish Opera on *Opera Night* and new releases being featured on *Sound Out*.
- **RTÉ Culture** consistently presents quality content profiling the vibrant and diverse contemporary music scene in Ireland

- **A series of commissions** for RTÉ lyric fm's 20th Birthday in May 2019
- **Composing the Island: A century of music in Ireland 1916-2016** - this initiative took place over three weeks in September 2016, presenting 27 concerts of orchestral, choral, instrumental, song and chamber music written by composers from Ireland between 1916 and 2016
- RTÉ lyric fm's hosting of the **EBU Ars Acustica Group** in 2016

However, it is our view that, due to lack of significant investment, the overall trend in recent years is one of a reduction by RTÉ in its support for contemporary music and living composers from Ireland. Among other things, this trend is evident from the following:

- RTÉ no longer has a Director of Music or Head of Music
- RTÉ has no clear music policy
- The role of Managing Director of Orchestras, Quartet and Choirs has been vacant for over six months
- The Helen Boaden orchestras report in 2018 detailed a list of problems with RTÉ's support for the two national orchestras, with the result that RTÉ is now losing the National Symphony Orchestra
- The fact that music by living composers from Ireland is almost invisible in the programming of RTÉ Radio 1 and RTÉ Television
- The fact that music and arts programmes have been moved to the periphery of the schedule on RTÉ Radio 1 and RTÉ Television
- The lack of investment in in-depth coverage of the full range and diversity of musical life in Ireland across the network
- The lack of newly composed music by composers from Ireland in programming by the RTÉ NSO (less than 3% in the 2019/20 Season) and the lack of performances of past commissions of works by living composers from Ireland by the RTÉ Orchestras
- No *Composer-in-Residence* position with the RTÉ Orchestras & Choirs
- The recent cessation of support for the RTÉ string quartet
- Cessation of the dedicated contemporary music concert series *Horizons* by the RTÉ NSO
- The role of Head of RTÉ lyric fm has been vacant for over six months
- The RTÉ lyric fm Limerick studios were threatened with closure in 2019, threatening the infrastructure necessary to deliver a national radio service for music
- The pause in activity on the RTÉ lyric fm label since early 2020
- The cessation of the RTÉ lyric fm *Composer-in-Residence* programme
- No dedicated programme on living composers and contemporary music from Ireland on RTÉ lyric fm and across the RTÉ network
- A reduction in outside broadcast facilities allocated for concert recordings around the country

As the all-island resource organisation for contemporary music from Ireland, it is our view that it is imperative that, in partnership with the vibrant and innovative music sector on the island, RTÉ is at the forefront of the enrichment of music in the country. In this regard, the potential for RTÉ to support CMC in its mission '*to nurture the creation, performance and dissemination of, and engagement with, new music from the island of Ireland*' is significant. The possibilities for RTÉ to offer exciting engagement for audiences across the RTÉ network, through support for artists active in the vibrant and diverse contemporary music scene in Ireland, are great. CMC believes that it is imperative that the FOM Commission recognises the contribution of living composers and contemporary music to Irish cultural life, and the necessity of its inclusion across the RTÉ network for the benefit of artists and their audiences and the benefit of musical development across the island of Ireland.

We therefore recommend the following:

1: A new vision for RTÉ Lyric FM

CMC is a founder member of Music Alliance Ireland (MAI). MAI is an alliance of music organisations, working together for the development and representation of music in Ireland. As a member of MAI, CMC is calling for a new vision for RTÉ lyric fm.

RTÉ lyric fm is a significant element of Ireland's cultural infrastructure, offering access to classical, jazz, world and contemporary music in a uniquely Irish context. In its 20 years to date, RTÉ lyric fm has become a station that not only reflects the musical life of the island, but is embedded in many aspects of that musical landscape. For the two hundred and fifty composers that are represented by CMC, the performers who specialise in their music and the promoters who programme their music, RTÉ lyric fm is recognised as an essential part of the national music infrastructure.

Since it went to air in May 1999, RTÉ lyric fm has been responsible for increased dissemination of new music from Ireland in a range of ways, including:

- regular broadcasts
- the establishment of the RTÉ lyric fm label
- *Horizons* and *Nova*, the dedicated programmes for new music (1999 - 2017)
- representation for new music from Ireland internationally through its active membership of the EBU, the International Rostrum of Composers and the Ars Acustica
- commissioning new works by composers from Ireland across a broad spectrum
- hosting a Composer-in-Residence for over a decade.

Broadcasting is essential for the dissemination of works by composers from Ireland, the sector that CMC represents. RTÉ lyric fm is the only channel on the island of Ireland that regularly broadcasts recordings (and live performances) of works by composers from Ireland. In RTÉ lyric fm's broadcasting of music by composers from Ireland, it is often the case that the recordings are from privately financed releases by the composers or produced by small specialist independent labels. Without RTÉ lyric fm, these recordings would remain undiscoverable.

In addition, the RTÉ lyric fm label has provided for the documentation and dissemination of works by composers from Ireland, works that would likely have remained inaccessible to and unappreciated by a broad public at home, and entirely unknown to an international audience.

Dissemination by RTÉ lyric fm extends also to an international audience through both the RTÉ player and RTÉ lyric fm's active contribution to the EBU network, with performances of works by composers from Ireland reaching an international radio audience of upwards of 2 to 3 million listeners. The EBU network is a significant dissemination channel for contemporary music from Ireland and a supportive element in the global reach of the music industry on the island, including performers, festivals, promoters and commissioners.

CMC and RTÉ lyric fm have worked closely on many initiatives since 1999. CMC has a long-standing partnership with RTÉ lyric fm on the selection and administration of the Irish works that are submitted to the IMC's International Rostrum of Composers and, on many occasions over the years, Irish works have been successfully shortlisted for the recommended list. In the important area of professional development, in May 2019, *Blue of the Night* featured the live broadcast of new symphonic works created by four composers from Ireland through **Composer Lab**, a project between the RTÉ NSO and CMC. This live broadcast of the **Composer Lab** project in a *Blue of the Night* special was awarded Silver in the category of *Irish Music Programme or Initiative* at the 2019 IMRO Radio Awards.

Given the pivotal role that RTÉ lyric fm has established for itself in Irish musical culture over two decades, CMC is extremely concerned at the current lack of direction for and investment in the station. In recent years, we have observed a long line of cuts to resourcing the national music and arts radio service, and the proposed closure of the RTÉ lyric fm studios in Limerick in 2019 threatened the infrastructure necessary to deliver a national radio service for music.

CMC recommends that the following steps be taken as soon as possible:

- (i) The appointment of a new Head of Station at RTÉ lyric fm
- (ii) A clear statement of RTÉ's strategic vision for the future of the station, including studio location, programme development, music commissioning and financial and human resourcing
- (iii) The establishment of a plan for the future management and development of the RTÉ lyric fm record label in a manner that aims to maximise support for living composers and contemporary music from Ireland
- (iv) The establishment of an advisory board for RTÉ lyric fm with members drawn from across the diversity of Irish musical life including from the flourishing contemporary music sector
- (v) A policy for and commitment to commissioning, recording and broadcasting of music by living composers from Ireland, including exploring with the new Station Head the establishment of quotas for music by composers from Ireland and recordings by Irish artists
- (vi) Reinstatement and enhancement of the RTÉ lyric fm *Composer-in-Residence* initiative

Despite the fact that the station has been under-resourced in the past, it has maintained a loyal listenership including an increase in weekday reach and share in the latest JNLR figures (October 2019-September 2020):

- RTÉ lyric fm has increased its reach from 3% to current reach of 4% of the adult 15+ population (or approx 140,000 A15+).
- RTÉ lyric fm has also increased its share of all minutes listened to on weekdays from 1.8% to 2.2%.
- RTÉ lyric fm's weekday share in Dublin stands at 3.5% (2fm stands at 3.3%)

As RTÉ lyric fm embarks on a third decade as the national music and arts channel, CMC believes that now is the time to forge a new vision for the station and to secure investment in a service so integral and crucial to the success of composers from Ireland, to audiences who engage with their music, and to sustaining a flourishing creative Ireland.

2: The appointment of an RTÉ Group Head of Music

CMC is a founder member of Music Alliance Ireland (MAI). MAI is an alliance of music organisations, working together for the development and representation of music in Ireland. As a member of MAI, CMC is calling for the appointment of an RTÉ Group Head of Music.

RTÉ needs a thriving music sector just as the music sector needs a dynamic RTÉ. Despite the fact that music is an essential element of RTÉ's broadcasting output, there is no clear leadership role in RTÉ driving its engagement with the sector and a vision for music output, as there is, for example, in sports and news.

It is not satisfactory that, in management structures, music is subsumed into 'arts and culture' or 'music and entertainment.' There is a Group Head of Arts and Culture, a Group Head of Entertainment & Music, Heads of Music in different radio stations, and the position of Director of RTÉ Lyric fm, Orchestras and Choirs is vacant. There is no clear music leadership at higher management level in RTÉ with a well-resourced role. The result is that music broadcasting at RTÉ lacks leadership, investment and joined-up thinking in programming.

CMC recommends that the following steps be taken as soon as possible:

- (i) The appointment of a new RTÉ Group Head of Music, who will lead a new vision for music programming across all of RTÉ's television and radio stations and online
- (ii) The establishment of a clear policy on music, leading the engagement with the Irish music sector
- (iii) Ensuring that in-depth coverage and presentation of the full range and diversity of music from Ireland is at the heart of Irish public service broadcasting
- (iv) Re-establishment of the support for the RTÉ String Quartet (or alternative chamber music group) and development of long-term support for ensembles, artists and groups from other genres
- (v) Articulation and execution of a clear policy on commissioning of composers from Ireland and musicians by all RTÉ music groups

In addition, CMC recommends development of the following CMC/RTÉ partnership projects as soon as possible in support of contemporary music from Ireland:

- (i) Joint initiatives to engage a broad public with the rich contemporary music content from the RTÉ archives, including concert recordings and features
- (ii) Joint initiatives to stimulate national debate and discussion on contemporary music across the RTÉ network

(iii) A *Composer-in-Residence* initiative for the RTÉ performing groups in partnership with CMC

(iv) Establishment of an annual awards programme for contemporary music from Ireland (akin to the RTÉ Radio1 Folk awards) in partnership with CMC and with support from both Arts Councils, IMRO and other music organisations across the island

(v) Development of imaginative large scale musical experiences across the country in partnership with CMC, that engage a broad public with contemporary music from Ireland and living composers from Ireland

(vi) A range of joint professional development programmes to nurture future composer talent and specialist performer talent

3. Establish a new training and internship programme as soon as possible to attract new generations of musical talent

As a member of the MAI, CMC is calling for the establishment of a new training and internship programme for the development of specialist music broadcasting talent in all areas of the network - production, engineering, presentation and digital content.

Currently, RTÉ has no regular internship, trainee or graduate scheme. This makes it impossible for new generations of musical talent who are interested in broadcasting to find a clear career path into the station, and it also means that RTÉ does not develop new diverse talent, as it should, whether it is in presenting, producing, researching or engineering.

As part of a new engagement with the music sector, CMC recommends the establishment of an internship/trainee/graduate scheme that would attract Irish musical talent and enable them to become part of the future of the station.

It should be recognised that the development of specialist expertise for music broadcasting will enrich not only the output across the network, but also enrich music in Ireland. In RTÉ, specialist expertise is developed and nurtured to a high level in areas such as news, current affairs, sport, documentaries, drama, features, etc. It is essential that RTÉ recognises that specialist expertise must also be developed for the delivery of engaging music content and initiatives across the network. The music sector on the island is vibrant, diverse and innovative and, in supporting the development of specialist music broadcasting expertise, RTÉ secures quality content for audiences and meaningful partnership with the music sector. Increased musical expertise in the RTÉ network across all sectors would not only benefit the Irish music sector, but also reflect the centrality of music to RTÉ's output.

Conclusion

With adequate funding, strategic vision and leadership, RTÉ has the potential to fulfil its role as the Irish public service broadcaster in maintaining an environment that supports music that challenges, provokes, consoles and inspires. Appreciating the audience member who values both music that has survived for generations and new music that is pushing the art form of music forward, RTÉ has the power to lead audiences into new musical experiences, providing a road map for journeys through musical roads less travelled, a media environment in which the contribution of living composers is explored and their music is celebrated.

CMC has enjoyed fruitful, strategic and multi-faceted relations with RTÉ throughout CMC's 30+ years, and we look forward to working in partnership with RTÉ into the future, to explore how we can continue to amplify together the vibrant and diverse landscape of contemporary music from Ireland.