

IRC-Harrison Medal 2022

On behalf of the Council of the Society for Musicology in Ireland it is my honour this evening to deliver a citation for the recipient of the IRC-Harrison Medal 2022, Dr Ita Beausang. This is awarded in recognition of Dr Beausang's outstanding contribution to contextual studies of music in Ireland, from the late-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. As many here are aware, the SMI bestowed honorary membership to Ita in 2010, and she was later awarded honorary life membership by the Society for Music Education in Ireland in 2014. Respectively, these mark Ita's enormous contribution to the musicology community in Ireland, and to local and national developments in music education.

Tonight we celebrate Dr Beausang's career as an outstanding and leading musicologist. Before outlining several highlights of this I want to acknowledge some sources. Primary sources are of course Ita's scholarly publications, while secondary sources include Dr Elaine Kelly's entry in *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* from 2013 and Dr Axel Klein's Wikipedia entry, that receives regular updates. For this evening's citation, I also approached some SMI friends who have worked closely with Ita on past and recent projects, to gather some first-hand insights from those benefiting from Ita's exceptional historical knowledge and academic scholarship, along with her innovative and creative approach to research.

Dr Ita Beausang is a graduate of University College Cork and emeritus scholar at TU Dublin Conservatoire from where she retired in 2001. Studying at University College Cork when the Professor of Music there was Aloys Fleischmann, she graduated with a BMus in 1956, going on to be awarded an MA in 1958, and completing her PhD on Anglo-Irish music in 1962. Hers was the first Irish PhD in Musicology. Having taught at the Cork School of Music from 1954-1960, she much later worked as research assistant on the Royal Irish Academy's *New History of Ireland* (published by OUP), once again working with Aloys Fleischmann. Appointed lecturer at the VEC College of Music, Dublin in 1986 (later DIT Conservatory and now TU Dublin Conservatoire), she was Acting Director there from 1995-1996. Some years earlier, Dr Beausang played a leading role in researching the history of that institution for the publication *From Municipal School to Dublin*

Institute of Technology: A Musical Journey, 1890-1993, authored by Jim Cooke.

A sentence that stands out in Kelly's entry on Ita for the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* is the following:

Beausang's academic career has been indelibly shaped by the thinking of her mentor Aloys Fleischmann; she has notably followed his example in viewing teaching and research as two sides of the same coin.

I include this because, although we are focusing tonight on one side of that coin, it is of course inextricably linked to the other side, Ita's lifelong dedication to the progress of music and music studies in Ireland.

I will shortly address the major contribution of Dr Beausang's three books, respectively, from 1966, 2018 and 2022, but first present a whistle-stop tour of her scholarly outputs in between these notable achievements.

Dr Beausang was one of the first Irish musicologists – alongside Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin – to contribute to publications that addressed specialist and non-specialist audiences alike, including many pieces in *New Music News*, *Journal of Music in Ireland*, *The Jarvey*, and *Education Magazine*. She was an Advisory Editor for the afore-mentioned *Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, edited by Harry White and Barra Boydell, to which she also contributed as an author. Dr Beausang has also been a leading contributor to many volumes on aspects of music history in Ireland, including her chapters in:

Irish Musical Studies, Volumes 5, 9 and 12,

Aloys Fleischmann: A Life for Music in Ireland

My Gentle Harp. Moore's Irish Melodies

Women and the Nineteenth-Century Lied

Invisible Art. A Century of Music in Ireland

Music Preferred. Essays in Honour of Harry White

And most recently,

Creative Impulses, Cultural Accents: Brian Boydell's music, advocacy, painting and legacy

So now to the distinction of Dr Beasuang's three books: her sole-authored monograph *Anglo-Irish Music, 1780-1830*, CUP, 1966 under her name before marriage, Ita Hogan; her co-authored monograph, *Ina Boyle (1889-1967): A Composer's Life* with Seamus de Barra in 2018, also published by CUP. Finally the co-edited volume *Women and Music in Ireland*, to be published by Boydell and Brewer later this year.

In the foreword to *Anglo-Irish Music*, Aloys Fleischmann notes the difficulties facing historical musicologists in the Irish context in the mid-twentieth century, especially given the absence of key historical records following the burning of the Four Courts in 1922. Benefitting from so many historical studies of music published since that book, it is perhaps difficult for us to appreciate the inspired and challenging endeavour that this project represented. Fleischmann states:

From her thorough exploration of the contemporary annals, Dr. Hogan has created a vivid picture of the musical scene and of Irish social life around the turn of the last century.

In the volume, Hogan chronicles various aspects of musical life among the Anglo-Irish ascendancy from 1780 to 1830, including a survey of composers, classical genres, music in theatre, concert organisation, musical societies, folk music collections, music sellers and publishers, and primary source material on music. Moreover, she considers these various developments through a rise and fall framework, revolving around the 1800 Act of Union with Great Britain. Yet, Hogan avoids a reductive interpretation of that trajectory, first by surveying a broad range of music-related activities, including outside Dublin and also embracing private music-making, alongside accounts of music in public spaces; and second, by providing a wealth of detail on music in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, and in particular, the agency of what in today's terms might be regarded as volunteer and civic society. This was groundbreaking research that would inspire a future generation of historical musicologists in Ireland.

The Ina Boyle book comprises five chapters by Dr Beausang on the composer's life, complemented by Seamus De Barra's extended essay offering analytical insights into Boyle's oeuvre. This represents another major and highly significant undertaking by Dr Beausang. She opens the preface by stating that when commissioned to carry out the project, 'I had heard neither her name nor her music, although she was the first Irishwoman to undertake a symphony, a concerto or a ballet, and was also one of the most prolific composers in twentieth-century Ireland'. Arguably, it is only the most exceptional of musicologists who can dive into a completely new project such as this. Here, once again, Dr Beausang demonstrates her scholarly prowess in dealing with primary sources, now in hard copy and digitised formats, and on this occasion combined with interviews and email communication with those who knew Boyle. Not only does this lead to a detailed, insightful and reflective biography, but as noted by Niamh Nic Gabhann in *Irish Studies Review*, 'Beausang positions Boyle's life and career within the cultural changes in Ireland throughout her lifetime, reflecting shifting cultural trends, the impact of major global political events, and the importance of specific national institutions'. Remarkably, and as touched on below, Dr Beausang's research on Boyle did not end with the book publication, as she also championed and continues to champion the composer's music and legacy through a range of public-facing and practice-based research projects.

Regarding the forthcoming *Women and Music in Ireland*, Dr Laura Watson has provided the following note:

[Dr] Jennifer O'Connor-Madsen and I have had the deep privilege of coediting the book *Women and Music in Ireland* with Ita Beausang....As well as investigating the careers of public figures such as composers and performers in the worlds of classical music, Irish traditional music, and contemporary art music, the book brings attention to women's less visible contributions. For example, it shines a spotlight on educators who taught music in domestic settings and on musicians who worked behind the scenes to build infrastructures... that remain central to Ireland's musical life today.

Ita's chapter, 'Daughters of Hibernia: Seen and Not Heard?', is undoubtedly the most wide-ranging in its panoramic view of the book's overall themes. It traverses the eighteenth to

the twenty-first centuries; it explores issues such as women's historically restricted participation in Dublin's choral societies, their roles in music education, and contemporary efforts to address the gender equality gap in Ireland's music professions ...Ita has brought invaluable wisdom and experience to the editing project; in particular, she has substantially enriched our understanding of the bigger picture of women and music in Ireland.

I'm sure that any revised entry on Ita Beausang for the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* would not only mention the original influence of Aloys Fleischmann on her scholarship from those UCC days, but would rightly also emphasise Dr Beausang's exceptional mentorship of a subsequent generation of musicologists. Dr Aylish Kerrigan very generously offered the following example of how that influence might work:

Ita always found a way in the most impossible situations and helped me to see that research entailed exciting discoveries. She is a wealth of information and capable of nurturing keen interest in all aspects of research... When I attempted to gain personal access to the Arnold Schoenberg Centre in Vienna and received negative responses, Ita just happened to be going to Vienna herself, made a visit to the Schoenberg Center and found a very open and wonderful contact for me to engage with. Several weeks later I had the precious Schoenberg manuscripts in my hands and was able to draw astounding conclusions.

To finish, I'd like briefly to address the public-facing aspects of Ita's work in musicology, which has been highly innovative in the Irish context. As Dr Anja Bunzel noted in correspondence, Dr Beausang must be one of the first musicologists in Ireland to have been involved in publicly sourcing funds. This was for a major recording of Ina Boyle's works by way of crowdfunding, as a result of which selected works of Boyle were recorded by the BBC Orchestra in 2017. She has also represented Irish musicology through public outputs (CMC interviews, RTÉ's 1916 commemorative events 'Composing the Island', and many RTÉ Lyric fm features). As noted by one of her recent research collaborators, Dr Orla Shanon:

In relation to her more recent work with the Ina Boyle Society Ltd., Ita has directly facilitated many important

performances and recordings of Boyle's music, particularly at the Wigmore Hall in London, and her role testifies to her ongoing commitment to Irish musicological research.

We will shortly hear Dr Beausang's IRC-Harrison talk, 'Twenty Years a-Growing: SMI, 2003-2023', a fitting choice of topic as we on SMI's Council prepare some special celebratory events to mark two decades since the establishment of our Society. But of course the seeds of Irish musicology go back much further than this. And key to this has been the groundbreaking individual scholarship of Dr Beausang from the mid-1960s, her extensive contributions to a wide range of research outputs, many of these enriched by her expertise in historical and contextual studies, with others critically concerned with contemporary developments of music in Ireland; through to her more recent accomplishments in collaborative book projects and public musicology. It is my great honour therefore to now invite Dr Gráinne Walshe to jointly present the 2022 IRC-Harrison medal to our esteemed and highly distinguished colleague, Dr Ita Beausang.