

DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC
AT PRINCETON



Friday, September 9, 2022, 7:30 PM
Richardson Auditorium

Princeton Sound Kitchen presents
Donnacha Dennehy: *Land of Winter*
Alarm Will Sound, Alan Pierson

Alarm Will Sound—a 20-member chamber orchestra that focuses on performances and recordings of contemporary music—performs Princeton University composition faculty member **Donnacha Dennehy**'s new work *Land of Winter*.

The use of photographic, video, or audio equipment is strictly prohibited. Please turn off or mute electronic devices for the duration of the performance.

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PROGRAM

Donnacha Dennehy *Land of Winter*

PERFORMERS

Alarm Will Sound:

Erin Lesser, flute

Michelle Farah, oboe

Amy Advocat, clarinet

Elisabeth Stimpert, clarinets

Michael Harley, bassoon and contrabassoon

Nicolee Kuester, horn

Tim Leopold, trumpet

Michael Clayville, trombone

Matt Smallcomb, percussion

Chris Thompson, percussion

John Orfe, piano

Courtney Orlando, violin

Clara Kim, violin

Matt Albert, viola

Stefan Freund, cello

Miles Brown, bass

Daniel Neumann, Audio Engineer

Alan Pierson, Conductor and Artistic Director

Gavin Chuck, Executive Director

Peter Ferry, Assistant Director of Artistic Planning

Annie Toth, General Manager

Jason Varvaro, Production Manager

Tracy Mendez, Development Manager

PROGRAM NOTES

Donnacha Dennehy

Land of Winter

Alarm Will Sound

Alan Pierson, conductor

The Latin name for Ireland was *Hibernia* which translates as ‘land of winter.’ I suppose the country seemed cold to the Romans. It seems cold to many, especially in July. In a way it is the quality of light that demarcates the seasons, from the shorter days of either grey or piercing light in the winter to the warmer, longer but mercurial light of summer. I like this play between light and time, and it inspires this piece that plays with a connection between time (expanding and contracting temporal processes) and light (harmony, often overtone-hued). Occasionally, the resonance of the term ‘land of winter’—something perennially stuck in its last cycle—engenders a terrifying force in the piece (the linear push towards death, perhaps, or even a kind of climate endgame). Comfort and regeneration are found in the circular recurrences.

Structurally, the piece is divided into twelve sections (which I consider as months) connecting to each other continuously. The piece starts in December, and culminates at the end of November, ready to start all over again in winter, as it were. An advent chorale by Bach lurks behind the surface occasionally, influencing the larger harmonic motions, and sometimes working as a generator of upper partials that remain on the musical surface after the chorale itself is erased. In the final movement, November, the chorale itself is gradually revealed in looping windows that create a new, slowly evolving modal harmony out of its re-constituted chronology.

The composition of this piece was supported by a Guggenheim Fellowship awarded in 2021, and is dedicated to Alan Pierson, my friend who has been so crucial to my music over the last fifteen years.

ABOUT

Alarm Will Sound is a 20-member band committed to innovative performances and recordings of today's music. They have established a reputation for performing demanding music with energetic skill. Their performances have been described as “equal parts exuberance, nonchalance, and virtuosity” by the *Financial Times of London* and as “a triumph of ensemble playing” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The *New York Times* says that Alarm Will Sound is “one of the most vital and original ensembles on the American music scene.”

With classical skill and unlimited curiosity, Alarm Will Sound takes on music from a wide variety of styles. Its repertoire ranges from European to American works, from the arch-modernist to the pop-influenced. Alarm Will Sound has been associated since its inception with composers at the forefront of contemporary music, premiering pieces by John Adams, Steve Reich, David Lang, Mary Kouyoumdjian, Tyondai Braxton, Augusta Read Thomas, Derek Bermel, Meredith Monk, and Wolfgang Rihm, among others. The group itself includes many composer-performers, which allows for an unusual degree of insight into the creation and performance of new work.

Alarm Will Sound is the resident ensemble at the Mizzou International Composers Festival. Held each July at the University of Missouri in Columbia, the festival features eight world premieres by early-career composers. During the weeklong festival, these composers work closely with Alarm Will Sound and two established guest composers to perform and record their new work.

Alarm Will Sound may be heard on eighteen recordings, including including *For George Lewis* | *Autoshchediasms*, their most recent release featuring music of Tyshawn Sorey; *Omnisphere*, with jazz trio *Medeski Martin & Wood*; a collaboration with Peabody Award-winning podcast *Meet the Composer* titled *Splitting Adams*; and the premiere recording of Steve Reich's *Radio Rewrite*. Their genre-bending, critically acclaimed *Acoustica* features live-performance arrangements of music by electronica guru Aphex Twin. This unique project taps the diverse talents within the group, from the many composers who made arrangements of the original tracks, to the experimental approaches developed by the performers.

Alarm Will Sound collaborates with artists who work beyond the bounds of classical music. *Alarm System*, the Matt Marks Impact Fund, and *Video Chat Variations*, a YouTube series developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, are initiatives that have created cross-genre music with electronica artists Eartheater, Jlin, King Britt, and Rashad Becker; jazz composer-performer Dave Douglas; multimedia artists Mira Calix, Bakudi Scream, and Damon Davis; soundtrack composers Brian Reitzell and JG Thirlwell; producer Valgeir Sigurðsson, and singer-songwriter Alyssa Pyper.

In 2016, Alarm Will Sound in a co-production with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, presented the world premiere of the staged version of Donnacha Dennehy's *The Hunger* at the BAM Next Wave Festival and the Touhill Performing Arts Center. Featuring Iarla O'Lionárd (traditional Irish singer) and Katherine Manley (soprano) with direction by Tom Creed, *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.

In 2013 – 2014, Alarm Will Sound served as artists-in-residence at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. During that season, the ensemble presented four large ensemble performances at the Met, including two site-specific productions staged in museum galleries (*Twinned*, a collaboration with Dance Heginbotham and *I Was Here / Was I*, a new theatrical work by Kate Soper and Nigel Maister), as well as several smaller events in collaboration with the Museum's educational programs.

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, Paul McCartney, Luciano Berio, Yoko Ono, and Leonard Bernstein—striving for a new music and a new world amidst the turmoil of the late 1960s. *1969*'s unconventional approach combining music, history, and ideas has been critically praised by *The New York Times* (“...a swirling, heady meditation on the intersection of experimental and commercial spheres, and of social and aesthetic agendas.”)

Alarm Will Sound has been presented by Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, (le) Poisson Rouge, Miller Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Kitchen, the Bang on a Can Marathon, Disney Hall, Kimmel Center, Library of Congress, the Walker Arts Center, Cal Performances, Stanford Lively Arts, Duke Performances, and the Warhol Museum. International tours include the Beijing Modern Festival, Now Hear This (Korea), the Holland Festival, Sacrum Profanum, Moscow's Art November, St. Petersburg's Pro Arte Festival, and the Barbican.

The members of the ensemble have also demonstrated our commitment to the education of young performers and composers through residency performances and activities at Princeton University, the University of Michigan, University of Maryland, Shenandoah University, the Community Music School of Webster University, Cleveland State University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Missouri, Eastman School of Music, Dickinson College, Duke University, the Manhattan School of Music, Harvard University, New York University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

For more information and to join the mailing list, visit Alarm Will Sound's website at www.alarmwillsound.com

Alan Pierson has been praised as “a dynamic conductor and musical visionary” by *The New York Times*, “a young conductor of monstrous skill” by *Newsday*, “gifted and electrifying” by the *Boston Globe*, and “one of the most exciting figures in new music today” by *Fanfare*. In addition to his work as artistic director of Alarm Will Sound, he is Principal Conductor of the Dublin-based Crash Ensemble, has served as Artistic Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and has guest conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, the London Sinfonietta, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Steve Reich Ensemble, Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble ACJW, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, the New World Symphony, and the Silk Road Project, among other ensembles. He is co-director of the Northwestern University Contemporary Music Ensemble, and has been a visiting faculty conductor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and the Eastman School of Music. Mr. Pierson has collaborated with major composers and performers, including Yo Yo Ma, Steve Reich, Dawn Upshaw, Osvaldo Golijov, John Adams, Augusta Read Thomas, David Lang, Michael Gordon, La Monte Young, and choreographers Christopher Wheeldon, Akram Khan and Elliot Feld. Mr. Pierson received bachelor degrees in physics and music from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a doctorate in conducting from the Eastman School of Music. He has recorded for Nonesuch Records, Cantaloupe Music, Sony Classical, and Sweetspot DVD.

Called “thrilling” by *The Guardian* and “arrestingly beautiful” by the *New Yorker*, **Donnacha Dennehy**’s music has featured in festivals and venues such as the Edinburgh International Festival; Royal Opera House, London; Carnegie Hall, New York; Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam; Barbican, London; and BAM, New York among others. In addition to three operas with the writer Enda Walsh, *The Last Hotel*, *The Second Violinist* and *The First Child* (Landmark Productions and Irish National Opera), recent large-scale commissions include *The Hunger*, a docu-cantata for Alarm Will Sound (presented by BAM, New York and Opera Theatre St. Louis), *Broken Unison* for Sō Percussion (co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall and Cork Opera House); *Overcasting* (commissioned by the LA Phil); *Tessellatum* for Nadia Sirota, Liam Byrne and microtonal viol consort; and pieces for Dawn Upshaw, The National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Third Coast Percussion, Kronos Quartet, and the Doric Quartet. He continues to maintain a close artistic connection with the group he founded in Ireland, Crash Ensemble, and they feature in his opera, *The Second Violinist*, which won the 2017 FEDORA-Generali Prize for Opera (Salzburg/Paris). Portrait albums of his music have been released by Nonesuch, New Amsterdam, Cantaloupe, NMC and Bedroom Community. His new violin concerto for Augustin Hadelich was premiered in the Netherlands in October 2021 and will receive further performances in the United States in the 2022 – 2023 season. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2021. Dennehy is a professor at Princeton University and his music is published by G. Schirmer, New York.



