

Agus í á bá,
As she drowned,

for the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra

Kerry L Hagan
2019

Programme Note:

The longest river in Ireland, the Shannon, played crucial parts in the history of Limerick and, of course, the entire Shannon region. The river continues to impact local economy and culture, from power generation to geographical boundaries. It is a source of unique research opportunities in marine biology. And its course from the Shannon Pot to the Atlantic Ocean passes through many regions and cultures of Irish life.

The river was named for Sionann, the granddaughter of Lir. In different versions of the story, Sionann died as a result of reaching for the fruit of knowledge. Whether she ate the fruit directly, whether it was a berry or something else, or whether Sionann ate a salmon that ate a berry is a matter of who tells the tale.

Whether it was because women were banned from knowledge, or all humans were banned, or whether Sionann herself was cursed, the consequences of gaining her knowledge caused the waters to overflow, or perhaps break a dam of some kind, and wash her out to sea. In contrast, Fionn mac Cumhaill became a great warrior for similar actions.

Whether the Shannon river already existed, or whether this flood created the Shannon river, Sionann's tale gave the Shannon river its name.

Whether it was the fruit she ate or some demi-god-like powers of a granddaughter of Lir, Sionann may have infused the river with the source of life and prosperity in the Shannon region.

Depending on the version of the tale, the story leads to fascinating observations on water myths, the feminine in mythology, the feminine in post-Christian Ireland and a myriad of thought-provoking questions on religion, gender and origin.

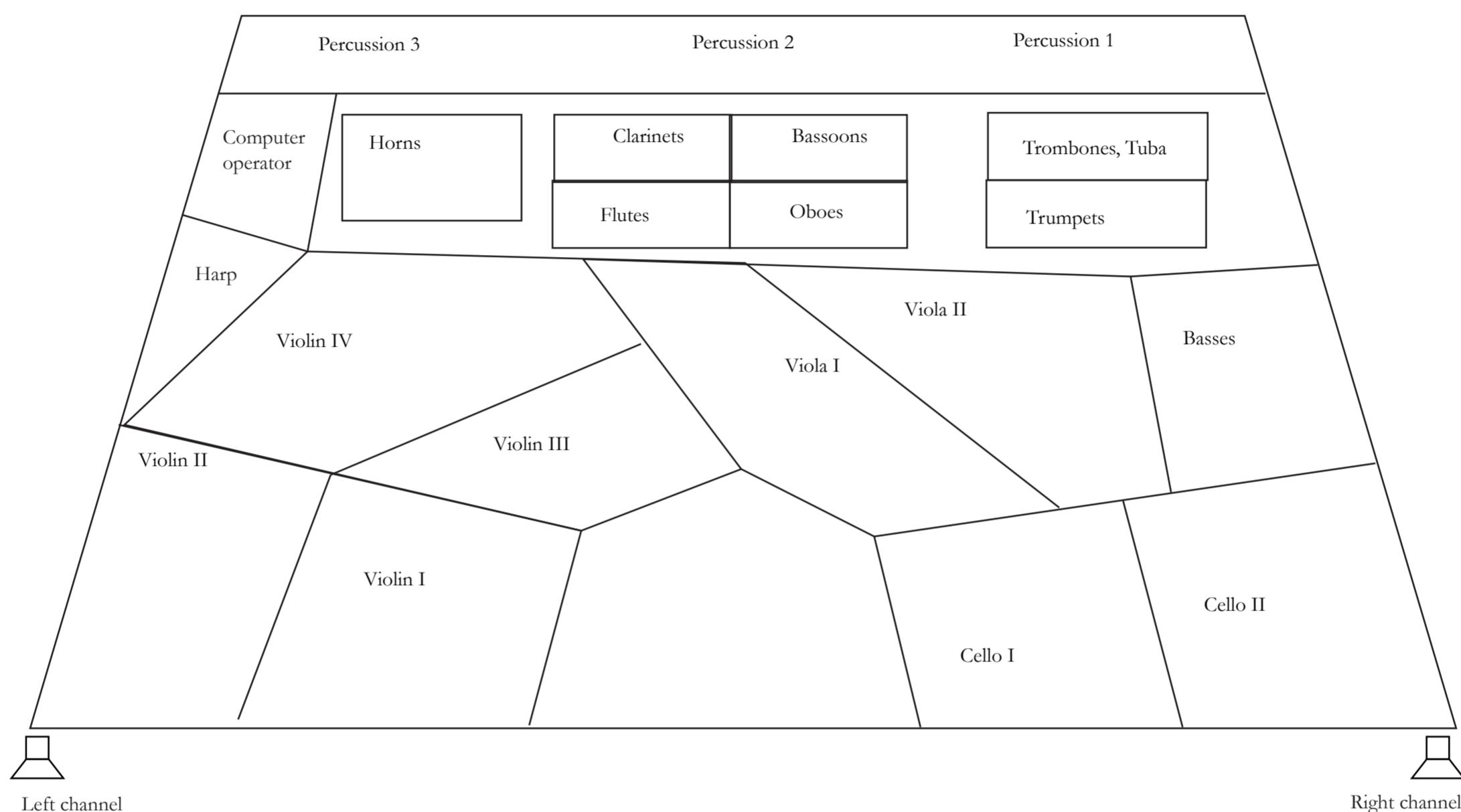
Agus í á bá (As she drowned) is a reference to Sionann's tale, and in many ways, a reference to all of the resulting mythology, questions of femininity, the origins of life, and the power of omniscience. Ultimately, this work refers to the historical and contemporary roles of the Shannon river in Limerick.

All of the electronic materials derive from recordings from various points along the Shannon river: small weirs in towns, rapids in Limerick City, falls in creeks and tributaries running into the Shannon, and beaches that line the wide estuary of the Shannon's connection to the Atlantic Ocean. Sometimes these sounds are more obviously aquatic in nature, but more often, some physical quality of the recordings are used to generate new sounds.

The orchestral part, though not particularly narrative in nature, sequences through colouristic paintings of my personal experiences along the Shannon river. However, if there is any story to be told, the title and the ending of the piece is the point: the story of Sionann continues, both drowned and still drowning. And, the story of the Shannon region is ongoing, more of a question than a conclusion.

Orchestra Seating Chart:

In order for the spatial arrangement of the instrumental parts to match the stereo movement of the electronics, the ideal orchestra seating chart is:



Percussion List:

Percussion 1:

- Triangle (standard beater)
- 5 Temple blocks (hard rubber mallets suitable for temple blocks)
- 100cm Tamtam (hard and soft mallets for tamtam)

Percussion 2:

- 20-in Suspended Cymbal (hard and soft mallets)
- Maracas
- Vibraphone (bow and hard mallets)

Percussion 3:

- 15-in Suspended Cymbal w/ cymbal chain rattler attached (standard hard cymbal mallets and soft mallets suitable for use on both bass drum and cymbal)
- Bass Drum (standard bass drum mallets suitable for loud rolls and small soft mallets suitable for use on both bass drum and cymbal)
- 4-octave Xylophone (soft and hard mallets)

Performance Notes:

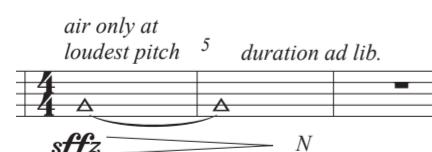
Dynamics (all)

The **ffff** and **pppp** dynamics indicate a relative dynamic, as loud or as quiet as possible on the instrument and pitch, where all other dynamic markings are used conventionally. Therefore, there may be passages where material marked **pppp** is actually louder than other parts marked **ppp** and **fff** is quieter than **ff**. **N** (niente) is used with crescendo/decrecendo to indicate starting or stopping from silence.

Quarter tones (all)

Quarter tones need not be precise to the cent but should approximate the pitch between semitones. Therefore, they may be achieved in the most comfortable way possible. For winds, this may mean alternate fingerings or embouchure adjustments, as the performer prefers.

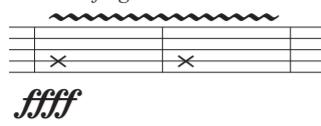
Air only (winds)



The pitch of the 'air only' notehead is arbitrary. The performer should use the fingering for the loudest possible air sound. The diminuendo to niente should be held for the duration most comfortable for the performer on their specific instrument, but no longer than what is indicated in the score.

Key noises/fingernail taps (winds)

*key noise or tap instrument
with fingernails ad lib.*



The pitch of the 'key noise' notehead is arbitrary. The performer should trill or click the loudest fingerings that create key noise. If the performer cannot perform key noises, the fingernails should be struck against the instrument at the loudest possible sound. The speed of the clicks should be as fast as possible, but not necessarily even or steady.

Flutter tongue (winds)

Flutter tongue is indicated by a tremolo marking and *f/z* above the note.

Pedal tones (brass)

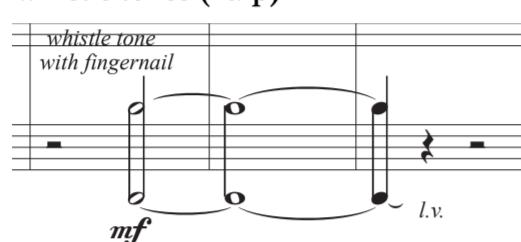
The pitches for pedal tones are indicated so that no brass instrument is in tune with another, but the rough and unsteady timbre of the pedal tones should be exaggerated, not reduced.

Hand slap (harp)



The bass strings of the harp should be slapped open-handed, aiming for a gong-like sound.

Whistle tones (harp)

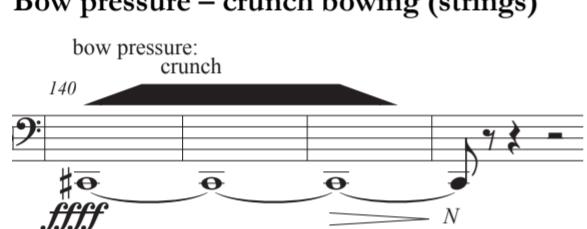


The long line from a high to low notehead (without ledger lines) indicates a whistle tone on the harp. This should be performed with fingernails on one or more low wire-wound strings. The performer should continue scraping the nail up and down the string for the duration of the note indicated, then allow it to ring and die away naturally.

Harmonics (strings)

Almost all harmonics in the work are natural harmonics. The natural harmonics in the strings are notated by a \circ where the sounding and fingered pitches are the same, and a diamond notched head with actual pitch provided in parentheses above where the touch point and sounding pitch are different. String numbers and pitch fingerings are specified so that the harmonic glissandi follow a specific sequence of pitches or for the unsteadiness of that particular harmonic. Many of the harmonics are weak, fragile and unstable. Although all efforts should be made to reach the correct pitch at the specified start of the note, the natural time it will take to get the string to speak and for pitch adjustment, as necessary, is a fundamental part of the effect in the opening section. Artificial harmonics are notated conventionally with pitch, touch point and resulting pitch given.

Bow pressure – crunch bowing (strings)



Over-heavy bowing resulting in a 'crunch' sound is indicated by a thick line above the note. The thickness of the line indicates the weight of the bow, so that the normal pitch changes into the crunch timbre.

Col legno gettato/tratto (strings)



Gettato (ricochet) should be performed entirely with the wood of the bow for the loudest possible sounds. The notation indicates that the performer should continue to strike at the pitch indicated, *ad lib*, for the duration of the arrow until the rest indicated.



Tratto should be performed mostly on the wood of the bow, but some hair can be mixed into the bow if the levels of the string sections cannot be heard above the rest of the orchestra. In the place where the bow changes from ordinario bowing to col legno tratto, with the **ffpp** dynamic, the effect should be that of suddenly loud, distinct pitches quickly changing into scratches.

Mutes (trumpets)

Standard orchestral straight mutes are required.

Electronics:

The electronics run on the latest version of Pd Vanilla (downloadable from <http://msp.ucsd.edu>). The software is free and open source, so can run from any operating system. Instructions for running the patch is detailed with the distribution folder.

The electronic part requires stereo output, with the speakers ideally located as indicated in the seating chart above.

The performer should sit within the orchestra in order to follow the conductor for cues and dynamics.

Acknowledgements:

Jonathan O'Neill, Síle de Cleir, Nora Ní Mhurchu (agus a máthair): Thug siad cúnamh dom le gramadach na Gaeilge. Is liomsa amháin aon bhotún atá ann.

My colleagues at the University of Limerick, the folks at The Contemporary Music Centre (Ireland), Dave Fennessy, Steve Ashby and Erik Gustafsson: *Agus i á bá* would not exist if not for their time, resources and assistance. Go raibh mile maith agaibh.

Agus í á bá, As she drowned.

Kerry L Hagan

A complex musical score page for orchestra and percussion, page 30. The score includes parts for Piccolo, Flute 1, Flute 2, Oboe 1, Oboe 2, Cor Anglais, Clarinet in Bb 1, Clarinet in Bb 2, Bass Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon 1, Bassoon 2, Contrabassoon, Horn in F 1, Horn in F 2, Horn in F 3, Horn in F 4, Trumpet in C 1, Trumpet in C 2, Trumpet in C 3, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Triangle, Temple Blocks, Tamtam (100 cm), Suspended Cymbal 1, Maracas, Vibraphone, Suspended Cymbal 2, Bass Drum, Xylophone (4 octave), Harp, Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, Violin IV, Viola I, Viola II, Cello I, Cello II, Double Bass, and Computer. The score features various dynamic markings like ff, f, mf, pp, and ppp, as well as performance instructions such as 'air only at loudest pitch', 'duration ad lib.', 'hard mallets', 'laisser vibrer', 'mute with hand', 'sim.', 'whistle tone with fingernail', 'fragile and unstable', and 'a.b. Harmonics are fragile and unstable. It is acceptable if notes do not speak at first or if the wrong pitch occurs initially'. The page number 30 is in the top right corner.

Agus í á bá,

31 key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

35

40

45 B = 60

50

C = 70 accel.

Picc.

Fl. 1 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

Fl. 2 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

Ob. 1 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

Ob. 2 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

C. A. ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

Bb Cl. 1 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

Bb Cl. 2 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

B. Cl. ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

Bsn. 1 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

Bsn. 2 ffff key noise or tap instrument with fingernails ad lib.

C. Bn. ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

Hn. 1 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

Hn. 2 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

Hn. 3 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

Hn. 4 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

C Tpt. 1 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

C Tpt. 2 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

C Tpt. 3 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

Tbn. 1 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

Tbn. 2 ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

B. Tbn. ffff tap instrument or bell with fingernails

Tuba ffff

Trgl.

Perc. I T. Bl.

T.T.

Susp. Cym. 1

Perc. 2 Mrcs.

Vib. with bow mf lx lx lx f

Susp. Cym. 2

Perc. 3 B. Dr.

Xyl. soft mallets f hard mallets f

Hp. f lx mf lx lx lx f

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vln. IV

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I N mf

Vc. II N mf

D.B. N mf

cue: 6 pp cue: 7 pp cue: 8 pp cue: 9 pp

Comp. cue: 6 pp cue: 7 pp cue: 8 pp cue: 9 pp

Agus í á bá,

$\text{♩} = 100-120$

11

This image shows a single page from a full orchestra score. The page is filled with musical notation for numerous instruments, including Picc., Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoon, Horns, Trombones, Tuba, Percussion (T. BL., T.T., Susp. Cym., Vib., Xyl., Hpf., Drums), and Strings (Vlns., Vla., Vcs., D.B.). The score is organized into two systems, each starting with a measure number (60 or 61) and ending with a repeat sign. The music features a variety of dynamics (e.g., ff, mp, cresc., decresc.), articulations (e.g., slurs, grace notes, accents), and performance techniques (e.g., hard mallets, soft). Large, bold numerals (5, 7, 16, 16) are placed on the right side of the page, corresponding to specific measures. The page is also marked with rehearsal numbers (cue: 10, cue: 11) and includes a tempo marking (Adagio).

90

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
C. A.
Bb Cl. 1
Bb Cl. 2
B. Cl.
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
C. Bn.

Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Hn. 3
Hn. 4
C Tpt. 1
C Tpt. 2
C Tpt. 3
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
B. Tbn.
Tuba
Trgl.

Perc. 1
T. Bl.
T.T.
Susp. Cym. 1
Perc. 2
Mrcs.
Vib.
Susp. Cym. 2
Perc. 3
B. Dr.
Xyl.
Hpf.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. III
Vln. IV
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B.

cue: 21 cue: 22 cue: 23 cue: 24 cue: 25 cue: 26 cue: 27 cue: 28 cue: 29 cue: 30 cue: 31 cue: 32

cue: 21 cue: 22 cue: 23 cue: 24 cue: 25 cue: 26 cue: 27 cue: 28 cue: 29 cue: 30 cue: 31 cue: 32

109 Picc.

110 Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

C. A.

B♭ Cl. 1

B♭ Cl. 2

B. Cl.

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

C. Bn.

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Hn. 3

Hn. 4

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

C Tpt. 3

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Trgl.

Perc. 1 T. Bl.

T.T.

Susp. Cym. 1

Perc. 2 Mrcs.

Vib.

Susp. Cym. 2

Perc. 3 B. Dr.

Xyl.

Hp.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vln. IV

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I

Vc. II

D.B.

Comp.

115

120

125

cue: 33

cue: 34

cue: 35

cue: 36

cue: 37

cue: 38

cue: 39

cue: 40

cue: 41

cue: 42

cue: 43

cue: 44

cue: 45

Agus í á bá,

