

# GREAT WOMEN

a new work  
for voice and  
electronics  
by  
Gráinne Mulvey

Elizabeth  
Hilliard  
soprano



métier

# Great Women

for voice and electronics  
(2020)

by

Gráinne Mulvey

Elizabeth Hilliard

soprano

playing time: 26:03

# Great Women

This piece is a celebration of the strong, remarkable Irish women who have helped shape the social and political landscape through their striving for equality and liberation. Among those whose words are set are pioneering patriots such as Countess Markievicz and Rosie Hackett, alongside such equally inspiring contemporary figures as our former Presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese.

The tape part includes readings from Markievicz' letters and speeches courtesy of the National Library of Ireland and the Falvey Library in Villanova University, USA, with excerpts from a statement by Rosie Hackett.

The Markievicz texts express the desire to see women emancipated, the affection she had for her beloved sister Eva, outrage over the behaviour of activists and politicians that deter and derail progress and yet, they also show her stoicism and compassion for others, while spending most of her life incarcerated in many prisons. Rosie Hackett's witness statement recalls the raid on the Irish Transport and General Workers Union shop, during Easter week in 1916 and Connolly's reaction. The piece toward the end includes extracts from the inaugural speeches of both former Presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese, which are embedded in the textures of the tape part.

Almost all sounds on the tape derive from those recordings read by the renowned soprano, Elizabeth Hilliard, treated in the manner of musique concrète (with just a very few "atmospheric" field recordings added), while the live part uses many extended vocal techniques such as overtone singing, fragmentation of text, vocalise, etc. The aim is to integrate the recorded sounds and live voice into a single continuum, giving the work a sense of unity reflecting the shared vision, aspiration—and, above all, struggle—of generations of Irish women through the last century.

The work is gratefully dedicated to my dear friend Elizabeth Hilliard, with my sincerest gratitude.

© Gráinne Mulvey, January 2021

# The Texts of 'Great Women'

We have got to get rid of the last vestige of the Harem before woman is free as our dream of the future would have her

*Excerpts taken from two speeches by Constance Markievicz (below):*

Lecture to the Students' National Literacy Society, Dublin, 1909.

Speech to the Irish Women's Franchise League, Dublin, October 1915.

High Walls hang round on every side  
A cage of cruel red,  
The sickly grass is bleached and dried,  
As brick the flower bed

The fierce rays of the sun down beat,  
The burning flagstones scorch our feet  
As in the noonday's blighting heat  
We walk with weary tread

*Two stanzas of Countess Markievicz's poem from Aylesbury Prison, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1916*

How I long to see you. I am getting more and more bored and inquisitive here! What is the meaning of it all? We wonder more and more. Is it political or military? Anyhow it is not to their credit and will certainly rebound on our oppressors. Myself, I think it is about the best thing that could have happened for Ireland, as there was so little to be done there, only propaganda, and our arrests carry so much further than speeches. Sending you to jail is like pulling out all the loud stops on all the speeches you ever made or words you ever wrote!

*Holloway Jail, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1918*

Did you see Mr P on my case? I call it wicked. He has taken the opportunity of my being locked up to try and create an impression that I am advocating a general pogrom of the police. If he succeeds in creating this impression, he will also create a situation of grave danger for every policeman in Ireland.

*Cork Prison, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1919*

I was alone in the shop the day it was raided. I had heard that from very early that morning, raids were being carried out on printing places and that they were being continued on shops. Premises in Capel Street, where the Gaelic Press was printed, had been raided. In the shop, we sold "Spark", "Nation", and all those advanced papers that other shops would not sell. That morning, I had sold a copy of one of these papers to a man, who told me that shops were being raided. I said; "They won't get anything here". He was only gone, when the police came in.

When the police entered the shop, they asked for the papers. I said; "Wait till I get the head". I told the men in the printing office that the police were in the shop on a raid, and that Connolly was to be got. Connolly was in, and they had him down in a jiffy. The policeman was behind the counter. Connolly rushed down as quickly as he could. He just saw them with the papers and said: "Drop them, or I will drop you".

*Statement by Rose Hackett WS 546 File No S.190 Easter week 1916*

I take it as a great compliment that so many of you, the rising young women of Ireland, who are distinguishing yourselves every day and coming more and more to the front, should give me this opportunity. We older people look to you with great hopes and a great confidence that in your gradual emancipation you are bringing fresh ideas, fresh energies and above all a great genius for the sacrifice into the life of the nation....

Lately things seem to be changing...so now again a strong tide of liberty seems to be coming towards us, swelling and growing and carrying before it all the outposts that hold women enslaved and bearing them triumphantly into the life of the nation to which they belong....

Women, from having till very recently stood so far removed from all politics, should be able to formulate a much clearer and more incisive view of the political situation than men. For a man from the time he is a mere Lad is more or less in touch with politics, and has usually the label of some party attached to him, long before he properly understands what it really means...

Now, here is a chance for our women... Fix your mind on the ideal of Ireland free, with her women enjoying the full rights of citizenship in their own nation, and no one will be able to side-track you, and so make use of you to use up the energies of the nation in obtaining all sorts of concessions – concessions too, that for the most part were coming in the natural course of evolution, and were perhaps just hastened by a few years by the fierce agitation to obtain them....

You will go out into the world and get elected onto as many public bodies as possible, and by degree through your exertions no public institution – whether hospital, workhouse, asylum or any other, and no private house – but will be supporting the industries of your country...

*Speech by Constance Markievicz*

Aequalitate Omnium feminarum

(Equality for all women)

Aequalis occasione iustitia e libertate

(Equality, opportunity, justice and liberty)

Vires et iustitia omni populo

(Powers and justice to all people)

*Gráinne Mulvey – words compiled from Latin phrases*

Now here is a chance for our women... Fix your mind on the ideal of Ireland free, with her women enjoying the full rights of citizenship in their own nation, and no one will be able to side-track you, and so make use of you to use up the energies of the nation in obtaining all sorts of concessions – concessions too, that for the most part were coming in the natural course of evolution, and were perhaps just hastened a few years by the fierce agitations to obtain them....

You will go out into the world and get elected onto as many public bodies as possible,

*Speech by Constance Markievicz*

Citizens of Ireland, mná na hÉireann agus fir na hÉireann, you have chosen me to represent you and I am humbled by and grateful for your trust.

The Ireland I will be representing is a new Ireland, open, tolerant, inclusive. Many of you who voted for me did so without sharing all of my views. This, I believe, is a significant signal of change, a sign, however modest, that we have already passed the threshold to a new pluralist Ireland. The recent revival of an old concept of the Fifth Province expresses this emerging Ireland of tolerance and empathy. The old Irish term for province is *coiced*, meaning a 'fifth'; and yet, as everyone knows, there are only four geographical provinces on this island. So where is the Fifth? The Fifth Province is not anywhere here or there, north or south, east or west. It is a place within each one of us - that place that is open to the other, that swinging door which allows us to venture out and others to venture in. Ancient legends divided Ireland into four quarters and a 'middle', although they differed about the location of this middle or fifth province.

While Tara was the political centre of Ireland, tradition has it that this Fifth Province acted as a second centre, a necessary balance. If I am a symbol of anything I would like to be a symbol of this reconciling and healing Fifth Province.

*President Mary Robinson – Extract from her inaugural speech  
3<sup>rd</sup> December 1990, Dublin Castle, Dublin, Ireland.*

A uaisle,  
Lá stairiúil é seo im'shaol féin, i saol mo mhuintire, agus i saol na tíre go léir.

Is pribhléid mhór í a bheith tofa mar Uachtarán na hÉireann, le bheith mar ghuth na hÉireann i gcéin is i gcónaí.

This is a historic day in my life, in the life of my family and in the life of the country. It is a wonderful privilege for me to be chosen as Uachtaran na hÉireann, to be a voice for Ireland at home and abroad.

I am honoured and humbled to be successor to seven exemplary Presidents. Their differing religious, political, geographical and social origins speak loudly of a Presidency which has always been wide open and all embracing. Among them were Presidents from Connaught, Leinster and Munster to say nothing of America and London. It is my special privilege and delight to be the first President from Ulster.

The span of almost sixty years since the first Presidential Inauguration has seen a nation transformed. This Ireland which stands so confidently on the brink of the 21st century and the third millennium is one our forebears dreamed of and yearned for; a prospering Ireland, accomplished, educated, dynamic, innovative, compassionate, proud of its people, its language, and of its vast heritage; an Ireland, at the heart of the European Union, respected by nations and cultures across the world.

*President Mary McAleese – Extract from her inaugural speech  
11<sup>th</sup> November 1997, Dublin Castle, Dublin, Ireland*

# Elizabeth Hilliard

Elizabeth Hilliard is a singer based in Dublin. She is widely regarded as an exceptional performer, and an imaginative and dramatic communicator, of new music. She works in close collaboration with Christopher Fox, Jennifer Walshe, Gráinne Mulvey and David Bremner, and is considered an authoritative interpreter of their vocal music. She has been supported in her career with bursaries and residencies from the Arts Council / An Comhairle Ealaíon, Creative Ireland, South Dublin County Council and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

Current projects include a collaboration with Louise Manifold (video artist), they most recently developed a video installation *The Escape Wheel*, a work based on the performance, mechanism, design and action of Jacques-Droz Automata (exhibited at The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon and Depo, Istanbul) an algorithmic screen-share text improv collaboration and an experimental opera, *Slow Recognition*, both with composer David Bremner, and development of scenes by composer Evangelia Rigaki with text by Marina Carr as part of the Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland CMC Colleagues scheme.

2021 performances include the world premiere of Gráinne Mulvey's *Great Women* at the Great Music in Irish Houses Festival (June 2021); St. Brigid's Day 2021 celebration presented by CMC and Irish Embassy, Hungary performing Gráinne Mulvey's *Carlow Song-Cycle* with guitarist Anselm McDonnell (February 2021); a song recital with pianist David Bremner for the Finding A Voice Festival featuring songs by Nadia Boulanger and Rhona Clarke (March 2021); a solo live-stream recital featuring works by Enno Poppe, Chaya Czernowin, Steven Daverson and Os Ard, the Irish language version of Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonate* collected in Jennifer Walshe's *aisteach.org* archive (July 2021).

Highlights of her career to date include an invitation to London with the Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland to perform in both The Irish Embassy in London and Cafe OTO for the 2018 launch of CMC's promotional album *new music::new Ireland three*; presentation of and musical director of Béal 2016, a 2-day festival of the unaccompanied vocal-ensemble music by Jennifer Walshe, including the Irish premiere of much of her music and a newly-commissioned work.



Elizabeth's debut album *Sea to the West* in 2016 was acclaimed by Colin Clarke in Fanfare Archive as 'a highly specialized but massively rewarding disc'. She performed in Jennifer Walshe's *Ireland: A Dataset* in the Imagining Ireland series live-streamed by the National Concert Hall of Ireland, which was highlighted by Alex Ross in the New Yorker as one of the Top 10 Performances of 2020.



Elizabeth Hilliard

# Gráinne Mulvey

Gráinne Mulvey was born in Dublin, Ireland. She studied under Professor Nicola LeFanu and was awarded a DPhil in Composition from the University of York in 1999. She also holds an MA in Composition from Queen's University, Belfast, under Professor Agustín Fernández, and a BA(Hons) degree from Waterford Institute of Technology, under the late Dr. Eric Sweeney.

She is Head and Professor of Composition at the Conservatoire, Technological University Dublin, Ireland.

Her music has been widely performed both in Ireland and abroad and she has received many broadcasts of her work by radio stations across the globe. One of her earliest works *Étude*, for piano (1994), was selected for that year's International Rostrum of Composers in Paris, an honour that was to be repeated with 2004's orchestral work *Scorched Earth*, and in 2015 with *Diffractions* for orchestra, in Slovenia. She was a featured composer in the 2007 *Horizons* concert series, with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, conductor Robert Houlihan, performing three of her orchestral works. She has the distinction of being selected for the ISCM World Music Days in consecutive years with *Akanos*, for orchestra (Lithuania, 2008) and *Stabat Mater*, for 17 voices a cappella (Växjö, Sweden, 2009).

She has won various prestigious competitions, notably the RTE Musician of The Future (Composers' class) in 1994, the Sligo International Festival Composers' Competition, in 1999 and the St. John's Memorial University Award, Waterford and Newfoundland in 2003. She received a "most distinguished musician and special mention" at the IBLA International Foundation Competition in 2016. She is a joint winner with visual artist Mihai Cucu, in the Music Video category of The Cutting Edge Film Festival 2016, in the USA, for her electronic piece *Proclamation*.

She has received commissions and performances, notably from Concorde and Jane O'Leary, (who have championed her music both in Ireland and abroad, receiving four commissions), the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, the Ulster Orchestra, the Northern Sinfonia (UK), the Romanian Radio Chamber Orchestra, the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, the Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra

(Czech Republic), Orchestre De Lorraine, France, pianists Cheryl Pauls (Canada) and Slawomir Zubrzycki (Poland), Matthew Schellhorn, (UK), David Bremner, (UK), soprano Elizabeth Hilliard, the Chamber Choir Ireland, the Bruce Gbur Bassoon Ensemble (USA), the TampereRaw Ensemble (Finland), trombonist Barrie Webb, BlackHair (UK), the Sepia Ensemble (Poland), flautist Joe O'Farrell, cellist Martin Johnson, (principal, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra), Palomar Ensemble (USA) with both *Arachnid*, and then *Interstices* performed in Feb. 2013, Hard Rain Soloists Ensemble, MISE-EN Ensemble, Platypus Ensemble, among others.

Two of her pieces: *Sextet Uno* and *Rational Option Insanity*, have been recorded by the Concorde Ensemble, on the Black Box label in 1999. Her *Soundscape* for violin, cello, percussion and tape, was issued on CD by the Avantgarde Akademie in Schwaz, Austria in 1996. *Akanos* was included on the CD *Contemporary Music from Ireland, Vol 7* (CMC). Her piece *Calorescence*, (2013), for piano is released on the new CMC label: *New Music: New Ireland Vol. 2*. The *Gothic* CD released by the pianist Mary Dullea includes her piece *Étude*.

*Phonology Garden* and *Eternity Is Now*, recorded by soprano Elizabeth Hilliard, have been issued on the CD *Sea To The West* Métier Label. Her portrait CD *Akanos* is out on the Navona label Cat: NV5943 by PARMA Recordings Llc, since February 2014. Her piece for installation *Aeolus* was released in 2018 on the Métier Label and another piece *Proclamation* was released on the Audior 5 volume of electronic music in Italy, Dec. 2018. She won placement on a CD for her piece *Interference Patterns* which was released by RMN Music Ltd in September 2018. Her piano piece *The Thriving Port of Ros XII* was released by the New Ross Piano festival Committee in September 2018.

Her music has been performed in the UK, Poland, France, Japan and Canada, and Germany during 2015, 2016 and 2017. Other performances during 2018 included the countries: Ireland, Scotland, France, Denmark, Vienna and the US. She is represented by the CMC Ireland, AIC, IMRO, IAWM, (International Alliance for Women in Music) BabelScores, Contemporary Music Online Library, Donne In Musica and is a member of *Aosdána*, Ireland's organisation of creative artists and was elected to the Toscaireacht in 2019.

**[www.grainnemulvey.com](http://www.grainnemulvey.com)**



Gráinne Mulvey

# Acknowledgements

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We gratefully thank the Contemporary Music Centre: Linda O'Shea Farren, Communications & Projects Manager, for her tremendous help, Director Evonne Ferguson and all at CMC for their unswerving support for this project.

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Thanks so much to Studio Engineer Ben Rawlins, for his excellent recording, production mixing and mastering – we are eternally grateful, and thanks so much to Joe O'Farrell for copying the score."

Thanks so much to Divine Art Recordings CEO, Stephen Sutton for this great opportunity and this special release on the Métier label – we are absolutely delighted.

Statement of Rosie Hackett from the Military Defence Archive of Ireland.

As composer, I wish to thank the amazing, stellar Soprano Elizabeth Hilliard, as without her initiation, this project would not have happened. I am eternally grateful. Thank you so much Liz.

Recorded at Hellfire Studio, Dublin on 1 February, 2021

Recording engineer: Ben Rawlins

Cover image: Countess Constance Markievicz in the uniform of the Irish Citizen Army, c. 1916, photographed by the Keogh Bros. studios. Ref: KMGLM.2015.0676.

Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Museum/OPW.

Photo of Gráinne Mulvey: Rory Moran

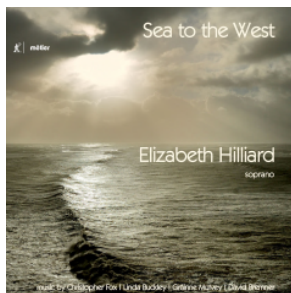
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