

SEAN DORAN was born in Derry, Northern Ireland, August 1960. He was educated at St. Columb's College (1972-79) and graduated with a BA Hons Music from the University of East Anglia (1980-83) during which he founded the University's Opera Society and honed his newly adopted craft as a conductor of music-theatre; he concurrently studied clarinet at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London. He began musical life as an Irish traditional musician winning the Ulster Championship in 1974.

After UEA, Sean commenced a BMUS in Ethnomusicology at Goldsmith's College London (1985) but subsequently left to co-found with colleague Paul Jackson the *Innererklang Music Theatre* in London, Patron of which was to be the conductor Simon Rattle (1985-1990). IMT presented staged productions and new work at the TATE, Almeida Theatre and the London International Opera Festival among other venues. During these early years, Sean also realized his passion for landscape through sheep shearing and straw carting with a shepherd friend in Kent. He also worked as a freelance music critic writing for The Times, Independent and other media. In 1988 he became the inaugural arts officer in Luton with a programme that featured the early career appearances of Lemn Sissay, Adam Thorpe, Catherine Yass & instigated one of the most sensationalist arts controversies of the 1980s. In the same year he was hired as a lead co-author for the first *Rough Guide to Ireland*.

1990 +

In 1992, Sean was invited to programme his first festival, IMPACT 92, a year-long festival in his hometown of Derry. Artists he programmed included the RSC *Electra*, RNT *Fuente Ovejuna*, Maly Theatre's *Gaudeamus*, Opera Factory's *Poppea*, Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*, American National Theatre of the Deaf's *Hamlet* and Fiona Shaw's *Hamlet* with John Lynch. In 1993 he was Chief Executive of *Armagh Together* followed by programming the multi-arts *Oktoberfest* in Derry. He is ever thankful to two early mentors of this era for starting his festival career: Kevin McCaul, Director of Culture at Derry City Council and David Grant former Director of the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Sean then took up directorships of three international multi-arts festivals:

1. Artistic Director and CEO of the **UK Year of Literature & Writing 1995** (Arts Council Great Britain initiative) in Wales for which he persuaded former US President Jimmy Carter to be Honorary President and former UK Prime Minister James Callaghan as Vice President alongside writer patrons *Saul Bellow, Arthur Miller, Edna O'Brien, Seamus Heaney, E L Doctorow, Paul Simon, Bono, Bjork, Nadine Gordimer, Jane Campion* and *Chen Kaige* among others. The year involved 30 genre mini festivals and over 900 writers.

2. Artistic Director of the **Belfast Festival at Queen's** 1997 & 1998 (a department of Queen's University Belfast) - its first newly appointed AD in 25 years and first Northern Irish Artistic Director - for which he secured the debut appearances in Ireland of *Philip Glass*, *Robert Wilson*, *DV8*, *Yoko Ono*, *Willem Dafoe*, *Nick Cave & Kylie Minogue* (who opened the 1997 Festival), *Bill Viola*, *John Cale*, *Merce Cunningham*, *Ian Bostridge* and with colleague Liam Browne the writers *Brian Eno*, *Martin Amis*, *Christopher Hitchens*, *E Annie Proulx*, *Julian Barnes*.

2000+

3. Artistic Director & Chief Executive of the **Perth International Arts Festival** (2000-2003), a department of the University of Western Australia and Australia's largest and oldest festival, for which he commissioned Antony Gormley's 51 sculpture installation *Inside Australia* (2003), Deborah Warner's 13 venue installation *The Angel Project*, produced Australia's first homegrown Wagner Ring opera *Gotterdammerung* and founded its annual Writers Festival, first ever contemporary music venue *The Watershed* and first residency chamber music festival curated by pianist Julius Drake. In 2001 Sean was awarded The Centenary Medal by the Australian Government for his services to the arts in Australia.

In 2003, Sean was appointed Artistic Director and Chief Executive of the **English National Opera** (2003-2006), the first Irishman to lead one of England's national arts companies. At ENO he took the company to the Glastonbury Festival Pyramid Stage (2004) with a 100 piece orchestra and 9 singers for Wagner's *Valkyrie* Act 3 and also grassed Trafalgar Square in preparation for its first ever opera, *La Boheme*.

During his tenure at ENO he commissioned film director Anthony Minghella's *Madam Butterfly* and Improbable Theatre's production of Philip Glass's *Satyagraha*, both co-productions with the Metropolitan Opera New York. His other ENO world premiere commissions included Deborah Warner's production of Britten's *Death in Venice* (2006), Mark Morris's *King Arthur*, Chen Shi Zheng's *Orfeo* by Monteverdi, choreographer Mark Morris's *King Arthur* and Richard Jones's production of Gerald Barry's *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*.

During his ENO tenure Sean's strategic leadership reversed a 10 year decline in box office and helped to secure the first ever SKY sponsorship in the arts of £3m - then the largest corporate arts sponsorship in the UK. His directorship and programming at ENO led to the company being awarded an unprecedented all eight Olivier Award nominations in its two opera categories for 2006. His tenure completed with ENO in surplus.

2010 +

In 2012 as part of the UK Cultural Olympiad, Sean founded the **Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival** in Northern Ireland. From 2012-2015 the HD programme saw first ever visits to Ireland of the Berliner Ensemble with *Waiting for Godot* and the 15 dancer Maguy Marin Dance Company's MAY B along with headline appearances of Robert Wilson's Krapp's Last Tape; Festival Associates Adrian Dunbar's *Catastrophe*, Netia Jones' *Stirrings Still*, Alan Milligan's *Beckett Chess Set* and Joseph Kosuth's *Waiting*; visual art by Oscar Winner Steve McQueen, Sir Anthony Gormley's *Tree for Waiting for Godot*, Tacita Dean, Derek Jarman and artists Germaine Greer, Frank Skinner, Miranda Richardson, Dame Harriet Walter and David Soul of Starsky & Hutch.

In 2015 Sean co-founded the **Frielfest: Brian Friel International Festival** with his long-time work partner Liam Browne, due to return to Derry and Donegal August 2017. The inaugural festival featured *Dancing at Lughnasa*, all women talks programme *Amongst Women* and dancing across the Peace Wall and bridges in Belfast. This was accompanied by an inaugural **A Wilde Weekend** in Enniskillen in 2015 and the founding of the **Paris Beckett Festival** in 2016.

2017 +

Working with Liam Browne, as part of their newly formed *artspreneur* styled partnership **DoranBrowne**, Sean co-curated the 2017 **Home of St Patrick Festival** as well as the Celebratory Opening Weekend and Opening Year Programme (September 2016-September 2017) for the new **Seamus Heaney HomePlace** in NI which has featured artists including Stephen Rea, Michael Morpurgo, Richard Long, Lisa Hannigan, Paul Muldoon, Fiona Shaw, Dorothy Cross, Alan Hollinghurst & Olwen Fouere.

His most recent work was to curate with Liam Browne the **Sgt Pepper at 50: Heading for home** festival in Liverpool June 2017 securing 13 international world premiere commissions involving Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller, choreographer Mark Morris in a new 60 minute dance work and new short film with writer Frank Cottrell Boyce, a project for which the Daily Telegraph recently described him as '*now considered the pre-eminent Festival Director in Europe*'.

In July 2017 Sean was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts by the Ulster University in recognition of his work at English National Opera and in the international arts world. He now lives in London with his wife, opera singer Ruby Philogene MBE Professor of Voice at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and has one son, Lughan, from his first marriage to Finola O'Doherty living in Perth, Western Australia.