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Mary Ann Kennedy An Dàn -Gaelic Songs for a Modern World

New CD set for Summer Release on ARC Records

EUCD 2737



*Artist: Mary Ann Kennedy - Màiri Anna NicUalraig Label: ARC Music CD #: EUCD2737
Genre: Gaelic – All liner notes Gaelic/English . Release: International release date: 28th
July 2017*

'An Dàn' is a Watercolour Music Production.

Cover portrait: Michael Marra Cover design: Nick Turner / Sarah Ash

Showcasing Gaelic as a living, breathing language of today, 'An Dàn' is the debut solo album from broadcaster, writer, producer and award-winning musician, Mary Ann Kennedy. Mary Ann Kennedy is a much-loved and respected BBC Radio 3 personality at both a national and regional level, fronting major series and specials on world and traditional Scottish and Irish music. 'An Dàn' celebrates her Gaelic world of urban and rural, from the homeland to the diaspora, and is Mary Ann Kennedy's first solo album.

Mary Ann Kennedy – aka Màiri Anna NicUalraig – was born 100 miles south of Ardgour in the multicultural and multilingual city of Glasgow. Glasgow, known as 'Baile Mòr nan

Gàidheal in Gaelic, literally means the 'City of the Gaels'. Born into a family whose mother tongue was Gaelic, her mother, Kenna Campbell, grew up in a renowned family of tradition-bearers – The Campbells of Greepe on the Isle of Skye. Her father, Alasdair Michie's home was the Hebridean island of Tìree.

Mary Ann's musical career in its many incarnations has been recognised with major awards, including the *Concours Internationale de l'Harpe Celtique* at the Lorient Festival Interceltique, the international Celtic Media Festival's Radio Presenter of the Year, and the coveted double gold at Gaeldom's premier festival, the National Mòd. With her tradition-bearer family, the Campbells of Greepe, the major biography and album project 'Fonn' won the Arts and Culture award at the first National Gaelic Awards, and her choir, Còisir Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, is recognised as one of the country's top choral ensembles.

'An Dan' is Mary Ann's first voyage as a soloist, yet throughout, Mary Ann's deep commitment to preserving Gaelic musical traditions is apparent. Mary Ann accomplishes this not only by re—creating what has gone before, but through new songs that help to shape its future. As Mary Ann so deftly writes, "The truest respect one can pay one's culture and heritage is to make sure it's a part of a continuum".

For Mary Ann, who oftentimes refers to herself as an 'urban Gael', 'An Dàn' is a collection of Gaelic songs for the modern world. The word 'Dàn' translates as both 'destiny' or 'fate' as well as 'song'. 'Seinn, Horo, Seinn' (Sing!) is the album's opening track, a call to look forward to new ideas while honouring the past. The song started life as part of a commission for the Highland Festival, a seminal 90s event which gave rise to bands such as Mary Ann's Ciar. The band won the all-time Best Album accolade at the inaugural Scots Trad Music Awards, and earned Mary Ann a Saltire Award. 'Seinn, Horo, Seinn' and 'Eadar-Thìr' (Between-Land) were both written and composed by Mary Ann. 'Eadar-Thìr' was inspired by St. Columba's island of Iona, "Between the two: the edge of creation and heart of the world".

As Mary Ann writes, "Songs of ... love and loss, nature and nurture, war and peace, spiritual and temporal, place and people... refracted through the facets of the linguistic prism that gives the Gaelic language and soul its particular outlook on the world and that gave rise to the unfathomable riches of our Gaelic song tradition... this is an album of present and future: this is my own 'heart's music'."

'An Dàn' also celebrates Gaelic's poetic riches. 'Taigh an Uillt', is written by one of Gaelic's 20th century literary greats, Iain Crichton Smith. Glasgow born and Lewis-raised, the Argyll village became his beloved home in later years. As Mary Ann observes, 'Taigh an Uillt' is a "miniature village national anthem" celebrating the village on the shores of Loch Etive.

'Òran do dh'Iain Dòmhnallach' (Song for John MacDonald) is a setting of an exquisite elegy poem written by Iain MacDonald from the island of Tìree in honour of cousin and fellow islander John MacDonald who died saving the life of 2nd Lt. Jock Stewart at the battle of Arras in the Great War. It features a sample from a southern African Tswana song about homeland, reflecting Jock Stewart's post-war life in South Africa and Ghana.

'Mise Fhuair' (I Have Won the Apple) and 'Sìth na Coille' (Forest's Peace) were both authored by one of Gaeldom's most revered poets, Aonghas MacNeacail. Mary Ann's songwriting took off through her work with Aonghas, with whom she also created 'Aiseag'

(The Ferryboat) for the first UK New Music Biennial in 2014. Mary Ann regards Aonghas as one of her greatest artistic influences as well as a friend and mentor.

Other Gaelic poetry on ‘An Dàn’ also features poetry from Mary Ann’s cousin Catriona Montgomery on ‘Dàn Ùr do Fhlòraidh NicNill’ (A New Song for Flora MacNeil); Aonghas Pàdraig Caimbeul with ‘Gràdh Geal Mo Chridhe’ (My True Love) and George Campbell Hay for ‘Air Leathad Slèibhe’ (On a Hill-land Slope).

The last song on ‘An Dan’, ‘Grioglachan’ (Constellation), deserves special mention.

‘Grioglachan’ is a poignant song of praise and dedication to cousin, godmother and singing soul-sister of Mary Ann, Maggie Macdonald, who died from cancer in 2016. Maggie sang in Mary Ann’s choir as well as being a founder member of Cliar, and the words were written by fellow chorister, Marcas Mac an Tuairneir. Mary Ann reflects, “We gathered in the town, hundreds of us, and sang our breaking hearts out. Madge loved to watch the stars: Marcas sets a new star in the sky... sparkling silver as ever.”

String quartet, samples and soundscapes, choral richness, guitars, uilleann pipes and strings provide the sweeping journey of ‘An Dàn’. All liner notes written in both in Gaelic with English translations. ‘An Dàn’ is being released worldwide on July 28th through ARC Music.

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An Dara Sealladh

**‘An Dara Sealladh’: ‘Stepping Out’ Commission for Aberdeen Performing Arts
Mary Ann Kennedy & Nick Turner, Artists in Association, Aberdeen Music Hall 2016**

Nick Turner: *Soundscape & Programming*
Mary Ann Kennedy: *Piano, Spoken Word*

Guest artists

Rona Wilkie: *Violin, Voice*
Marit Fält: *Lätmandola*
Ben Torrie: *Aberdeen Music Hall Steinway Grand*

‘An Dara Sealladh’ is the Gaelic term for the Second Sight. As Nick and I worked on this commission, inspired in different ways by the beautiful Strachan murals situated around the balcony walls of the Music Hall, I found myself considering ideas of perception, both visual and conceptual. I wanted this piece to reflect how different perceptions of the same object, sound or idea could have an impact on how a person might then engage with the same, much as the whole APA artistic programme connected with the Music Hall’s refurbishment aims to do.

The murals were originally created by Aberdeen artist Robert Douglas Strachan over a period of years around the turn of the 20th Century. The images are of Apollo and his Muses, and various episodes of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. Strachan was better known as a contemporary stained-glass artist, with work in places such as King's College, Aberdeen, Edinburgh Castle, St. Giles' Cathedral and the Peace Palace in The Hague. These early murals however show him emerging from the European Art Nouveau movement, and associating with the concept of Gesamtkunstwerk, or 'Total Works of Art'.

As these murals were visual artistic representations of musical subjects, we decided to bring them full circle, back to a musical evocation of the Hall and its role in city life. The murals have looked down on the goings-on of the Music Hall since the first decade of the 1900s and have observed not just music-making, dancing and other artistic performances and pastimes, but the whole gamut of Aberdeen entertainment, from bazaars to boxing matches.

'An Dara Sealladh' reflects and refracts all this using a variety of inputs, including found-sounds from around the Music Hall building, from radiators to stage floorboards; convolution reverb situated in the auditorium itself; the sounds of the various in-house instruments, including the Wills organ and Steinway grand piano; the Scandi-Scottish flavours of guest artists Marit and Rona, and composed and improvised elements of music deconstructing and eventually coalescing into the final strains of one of Aberdeen's most famous songs, 'The Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen'. The song was originally composed by Englishwoman Mary Webb, and her piano, now in the Music Hall's Mary Garden Room, also features in the soundscape.

The voices of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire can also be heard: during our artistic association, we encountered a wide range of attitudes to the Music Hall, with some folk finding it a rather imposing building whose granite pillars were not calculated to be welcoming. They would be right in interpreting the original builders' intentions, but certainly not today's! But we also heard many warm, loving and funny reminiscences from local audience members and performers, and some of these were also incorporated to reflect the Hall as belonging to the people, something we consistently saw during our time on this project.

The text reflects my own Gaelic-speaking background, and comes from 'Carmina Gadelica', Alexander Carmichael's great collection of hymns, prayers, charms and incantations collected in the 19th Century, and first published at the time of the murals' creation. It is an extract from an incantation for 'Latha Sealbhach', the Auspicious Day – while work is still on-going and not yet ready, and in this case, looking forward to the grand re-opening of the refurbished Music Hall.

*Fhir a dh'imeheadh a màireach,
Dèan fuireach beag mar a tha thu,
Gun an dean mi lèin an t-sàth dhut;
Tha fuireach is fuireach dhà sin:
Chuireadh an lìon is cha d'fhàs e,
Tha a' chlàimh air caor an fhàsaidh,
Tha bheart-fhighe 'n coille Phàdraig,
Tha 'm bac anns a' chraoibh an àirde,
Tha an spàl aig Rìgh na Spàine,
Tha 'n t-iteachan aig a' Bhànri'nn,*

*Tha bhaineach gun bhreith dh'a màthair,
Fhir a dh'ìmicheadh a màireach.*

*Thou man who wouldst travel to-morrow,
Tarry a little as thou art,
Till I make a shirt of thread for thee;
There is waiting and waiting for that:
The lint was sown but has not grown,
The wool is on the sheep of the wasteland,
The loom is in the wood of Patrick,
The beam is on the highest tree,
The shuttle is with the King of Spain,
The bobbin is with the Queen,
The weaver is not born to her mother.
Thou man who wouldst travel tomorrow.*

We would like to thank Dr. Clare Willsdon of the University of Glasgow for sharing her knowledge on the Strachan murals and helping to explain their place in a broader historical context. Thanks also to Dr. Deborah Lewer, also of the University of Glasgow and the Solas Festival, for effecting the introduction. Our thanks also to Lesley Anne Rose, Head of Production, and the whole Aberdeen Performing Arts team involved in the Music Hall's renaissance, and to Bea Dawkins Dunsmore, Emerging Artist Sound with the 'Stepping Out' programme.

Further reference to the murals can be found in Dr. Willsdon's 'Mural Painting in Britain 1840-1940: Image and Meaning' (Oxford University Press, 2000).

'An Latha Sealbhach' can be found on p. 322 of 'Carmina Gadelica', Vol. 5 (Alexander Carmichael, ed. James Carmichael Watson: Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1954).

Mary Ann Kennedy, Artist in Association

May 8th 2017, Watercolour Music, Ardgour

Anna Raven - Searching for Stillness

This is the second collaboration between Nick Turner and Anna Raven for a new exhibition of her work based on travels throughout the Highlands and Islands. Initial showing opens at Resipole Studios on March 14th and runs for six weeks .

Over the last two years, my life has developed a rhythm, something of my own internal weather. My time is now spent divided between two speeds, the pace of living in our world, married, a mother, working from home and in a Highland economy where almost everyone multitasks in order to survive and the other, yearned for, silence and solitude where I have time to stop, go inwards and fulfill the dream of keeping still.

As I have got older, I sometimes dream of becoming a nun! Those of you who know me will also know how unlikely that is. Having failed the eleven plus, I went to a Catholic grammar school as a fee paying protestant and it was quite possibly the unhappiest years of my life. But looking back, it was not entirely the fault of Sister Christopher and Sister Scolastica who banned me from RE for asking to be taught comparative religion before learning the Catholic Dogmas. Things were very unhappy at home and so I felt quite lost at a time in life, adolescence, when children struggle anyway and without a place of safety, either at home or at school, my life was miserable.

If I became a nun now, it would not be to give my life to the duties of a faith. It would be to pass on the responsibility of daily life in order to focus on more etherial things; watching nature and becoming an advocate for our precious natural environment through increasing my understanding and painting the journey. That too is a sort of faith, a faith in nature. My father told me I was a Panist but having no classical education myself, this may be a simplification. There now seem to be lots of forms of nature worship but my connection is not really a formal thing; I just follow an instinct, largely taught by him.

This is what I try to do on my island visits. It comes at a time in our hectic world when there is an increasing understanding of needing to step out, to embrace solitude and creativity. As the number of retreats and residencies proliferate, we are lucky that there is a general acknowledgement of the need to slow down, go inwards and rebalance. The day before I left Eigg in January, I found a book in Sweeny's Bothy by Jenny Diski, 'On Trying to Keep Still'. As I read it, I felt as if the book had been written for me, about me and by me, it resonated so deeply. Another woman who doesn't like to go out, who likes to live in the quiet of their own home but actually has a reputation as a travel writer and the ruses she dreams up of posting herself letters to remote parts of the world as her imagined self travels from poste restante to poste restante collecting the envelopes. In part then, this exhibition is a tribute to her who sadly died last year.

The suggestion by John Maclean that I could stay in his shepherd's hut on Iona during the months of November and December has now developed into my form of pilgrimage. My year is punctured by periods of solitude, exploring islands where the western seaboard meets the North Atlantic and learning to look, listen and feel the path to a creative response. This exhibition is about that journey.

Mary Ann Kennedy An Dàn

Liet International Song Competition Final – Norway, April 2017

Grioglachan



Mary Ann is delighted to announce that she is a finalist in the Liet International songwriting competition. Liet supports songwriters in the minority languages of Europe, and Mary Ann will be representing Scottish Gaelic this year – the only Celtic entry for the 2017 final. Liet travels to different parts of Europe each year, and for 2017 will be in Kautokeino in Arctic Norway, as part of the Sami Spring Festival there.

Mary Ann will be accompanied by co-writer, Marcas Mac an Tuairneir, and members of her beloved Inverness Gaelic Choir. They will join her band members, Finlay Wells on guitar, Lorne MacDougall on whistle and Euan Burton on bass. Her song is 'Grioglachan' (Constellation), an elegy for her cousin and godmother Maggie, who was Mary Ann's greatest musical partner-in-crime. She loved to watch the stars, and this song sets her as a new star in the sky.

[Liet International](#)

Grioglachan Marcas Mac an Tuairneir: Mary Ann Kennedy

“Noticing at midnight another star, before unseen,
Presented in the firmament, gentle in its flickering”

Big sister, big cousin, shopping queen, godmother, voice-in-harmony, partner-in-crime, at the heart of both my families, both my singing families. Maggie was never supposed to leave us when she did. We gathered in the town, hundreds of us, and sang our breaking hearts out. Maggie loved to watch the stars. Marcas sets a new star in the sky, and she's watching out for us as she always did, sparkling silver as ever.

Marcas: 'Grioglachan' was written in extremis, on a day that nobody within the Gaelic creative community could fully comprehend. I did not feel capable of encapsulating Maggie's considerable legacy within a paucity of lines and verses, conscious, even, that poetry can fail to extrapolate fully on any life, well lived. Despite my own limitations, it was imperative to put aside the banality of life's daily toils in order to knit together some kind of understanding of the news and the loss of a person so well loved for their gift of kindness and encouragement - and indeed, to do so in the only way possible for me. I hope that these lines serve as an appropriate memorial to our lovely friend but was certain, when I heard Mary Ann's setting of the poem, that through her music she had managed to fine-tune that nebulous understanding and had translated that which I had not succeeded in writing adequately in the moment.

Grioglachan Marcas Mac an Tuairneir: Màiri Anna NicUalraig

“Mothaichear aig meadhan-oidhche, reul eile nach faicear riamh
Ùr-thaisbeanta san iarmailt, ’s e liath macanta mìn”

Marcas: Chaidh 'Grioglachan' a sgrìobhadh ann an èigin, air là ris nach robh duine an dùil air saoghal ealain na Gàidhlig. Sheachain mi iomradh a dhèanamh air dìleab Magaidh, tuigseach gu leòr nach bu sho-dhèanta iomradh beatha sam bith a dhèanamh ann an gainnead rannan goirid. A dh'aindeoin sin, cha b' urrainn dhomh ach gnìomhan àbhaisteach an là a chur gu taobh, gus tuigse is ciall a dhèanamh den naidheachd is sinn air cuideigin a chall a bha prìseil, coibhneil is brosnachail, anns an dòigh as nòs dhomh. Tha mi an dòchas gum freagarraich na loidhneachan seo cuimhneachadh ar bana-caraid laghaich, ach a' chiad uair a chuala mi tionndadh Màiri Anna dheth, bha mi cinnteach gun robh i air loinn a chur air mo chiall fhìn, is gum mìnicheadh a cuid ciùil na rudan nach gabhadh sgrìobhadh.

Grioglachan (Constellation) Marcas Mac an Tuairneir: Mary Ann Kennedy

Tha cuimhne leam aon uair
Is sinn nar seasamh ràgh air ràgh,
Mus deach làmhnan a thogail, gus ar
Tàladh càch a chèile.

Bu tu a thionndadh comharra
Gu duanag sa bhad is a
Thogadh lionra eadarainn
Le fàisgeadh clis do làimhe.

Bu tu, le priob do shùla,
Bha ri balbhanachd do shocair
Is bhoillsg an gàire ort
Mar loinne slige-neamhnaid.

Lean sinn do shoillse, mar bu
Tu an crann is an ceòl na
Ghath fo sheòl geal balgach,
Do na ghèilleadh sinn le chèile.

Nis 's sinn a sheòlas tusa null,
Mar shoitheach air an abhainn,
Is an naidheachd na shradag
Do lòchrain an cois dà bhruaich.

*Crois-tara Àrd nam Manach,
Baile an Fhraoich is Druim na Drochaid,
Gus do chomharrachadh is
Do dheò beò a chumail annainn.*

Saoil an sioft na spiricean
Eu-dìon as ùr nan stèidhean,
Gus do stiùireadh os ar cionn,
'S tu gad chumail bhuainn.

Nar làithean nì sinn ceangal
Eadar solais àrd' an speura
Gus faoisnich ar tuigse dheth
Mar dhealbh maoiseach airgid.

Mothaichear aig meadhan-oidhche
Reul eile nach faicear riamh
Ùr-thaisbeanta san iarmailt,
'S e liath macanta mìn.

Ceòl air tighinn gu aona cheann,
Aithnichidh sinn co-chòrdachd;
Guth nach cluinnear seo nas mò,
Ach an co-sheirm nan cruinne.

*Grioglachan ga ghleusadh
Na bhogha thar na Gàidhealtachd,
Na shìneadh eadar ar cathair-bhaile,
Borgh na Hearadh, Ghlaschu 's a' Ghnìoba.*

*I remember the instance of us
Standing row on row,
Before the raising of the hands
That drew us in, together.*

*It was you who could translate
The marks to melodies in an instant,
And put the cadence in motion
With a quick squeeze of the hand.*

*It was you, with one wink,
Who would communicate your ease
In the smile that shone out of you
Like a mother's pearlescent sheen.*

*We cleaved to your light, as if
You were the mast and the music,
The wind below white, billowing sail,
To which, together, we surrendered.*

*Now we sail with you, out,
Like a pinnace on the river,
As the news sparks like torches,
Either side of the banks.*

Beacons in the Black Isle,
Muirtown and Drumnadrochit,
To mark you in your passing,
While your vitality lives within us.

*Wondering if the steeples shift,
Newly vulnerable in their foundations,
To guide you up, beyond,
As you are taken from us.*

*In our day, we divine the lines,
Between those heavenly bodies,
Let understanding emerge,
Across that silvered mosaic.*

*Noticing at midnight,
Another star before unseen,
Presented in the firmament,
Gentle in its flickering.*

*Music come to final climax,
We will know that harmonic;
A voice no longer heard of here,
Outwith the music of the spheres.*

A constellation fine-tuned
Into a bow across the Highlands,
Stretching out from our capital,
To Borge, Greepe and Glasgow.

Mary Ann Kennedy House Concert

Featuring Finlay Wells

**WATERCOLOUR MUSIC
HOUSE CONCERTS 2017**



Mary Ann Kennedy
with Finlay Wells

New Gaelic song from Mary Ann's debut
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