



## Ina Boyle *The Magic Harp*

For a listing of concert performances of *The Magic Harp* during the composer's life, see Ita Beausang *Ina Boyle (1889-1967) A Composer's Life*, Cork University Press, 2018, p.147.

The following listing (apart from the Proms 1923 performance) adds the known BBC performances/broadcasts.

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Ina Boyle's *The Magic Harp* was given its Proms première in Prom 23 on Thursday 6 September 1923 by the New Queen's Hall Orchestra, conducted by Henry Wood.

*The Magic Harp*'s first BBC broadcast was on Monday 28 November 1927 at 9.15pm in a concert of Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Boëllmann, Boyle and Debussy from 2LO London and 5XX Daventry.

Entitled **A National Symphony Concert**, the National Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Sir Landon Ronald.

*Radio Times* comment:

INA BOYLE , an Irish Composer of the present day, received one of the Carnegie Trust's awards for her Rhapsody, *The Magic Harp*. Its poetic basis comes from a legend thus told by Eva Gore-Booth in a note to her poem *The Harper's Song of the Seasons*:--

The Durd-Alba (the wind among the apple trees) was the magical harp of the ancient gods of Ireland. It had three strings — the iron string of sleep, the bronze string of laughter, and the silver string, the sound or which made all men weep. These three strings were also supposed to evoke the three seasons into which the year was then divided.

There are, after the slow introduction, three clear sections of the piece, each preceded by a silent bar and a pause. These portions may be taken as suggesting respectively the iron, bronze, and silver strings.

On Friday 1 June 1928 on 2BE Belfast, E. Godfrey Brown conducted the Orchestra [sic], topping and tailing *An Irish Programme* (including songs and a play) with two orchestral works: Stanford's Irish Rhapsody No.4 in D minor at 7.45pm, and at 8.45pm, Ina Boyle's *The Magic Harp*.

A similar programme was broadcast on 2BE Belfast on Monday 25 June 1928, but this time no conductor was named. 'The Orchestra' began *An Irish Programme* with *The Magic Harp* at 7.45pm and closed the evening at 8.50 with *Two Irish Tone Sketches* by Walton O'Donnell.

On Tuesday 10 September 1929, again on 2BE Belfast, E. Godfrey Brown conducted 'The Orchestra' in a programme of *Rhapsodies*: Butterworth's English Rhapsody, *A Shropshire Lad*; Ina Boyle's Irish Rhapsody, *The Magic Harp*; Vaughan Williams' *Norfolk Rhapsody*, No. 1; and Holst's *Somerset Rhapsody*.

The work was revived by the Ulster Orchestra for a BBC Radio 3 recording which was broadcast on Monday 4 February 1991 at 9.45pm. Proinnsias Ó Duinn conducted Vaughan Williams - Overture, *The Poisoned Kiss*; Ina Boyle - *The Magic Harp*; John Gardner - *Lapis Lazuli*; and Tippett - *Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles*.

David Byers, September 2021