

## **Ailbhe McDonagh biography**

Ailbhe McDonagh is a renowned Irish cellist who has earned international recognition as both a soloist and chamber musician. According to Fanfare Magazine, “*she plays with flawless technique, faultless intonation, and a strong yet meltingly sweet tone*”. Ailbhe has performed at prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Yale Norfolk Festival, and the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival, as well as being a celebrated concerto soloist. Ailbhe has given performances for the Irish President at Áras an Uachtaráin, appears regularly on national television and radio, and her recordings have been broadcast worldwide.

As an accomplished chamber musician, Ailbhe collaborates with the acclaimed pianist John O’Conor, with her sister Orla McDonagh, and with violinist Lynda O’Connor. She is a member of the Ficino Ensemble and the traditional Irish music crossover group Trio Elatha, where she brings her unique cello arrangements of traditional Irish music.

In addition to her performance career, Ailbhe is an established composer with over 250 published works and commissions to her name. She has released several collections of her music through London-based publishers Boosey & Hawkes, notably the popular pedagogical book series ‘*It’s a Piano Thing*’ (2017) and ‘*It’s a Cello Thing*’ (2021). Her compositions have been featured in the syllabi of leading music institutions worldwide, and she has received commissions from prestigious festivals and organisations, including the Appalachian Chamber Music Festival, USA, the Dublin International Chamber Music Festival, Ireland, and the Hamburg Chamber Music Festival, Germany.

Ailbhe is a respected teacher and has been a member of the cello faculty at the Royal Irish Academy of Music since 2010. She is also in demand as a masterclass instructor around the world. Her debut solo album, ‘*It’s a Cello Thing*’ (2012), was named CD of the Week on Ireland’s national classical music station, RTÉ Lyric FM. Her 2020 album, ‘*Skellig*’, recorded with her sister Orla, was also well-received featuring in the Irish Examiner’s Top Albums of the Year.

In 2021, Ailbhe released ‘*Beethoven: Complete Cello Sonatas*’ with John O’Conor on the Steinway label, which was highly praised by critics and fans alike. The recording was positively reviewed with Classical Music Sentinel stating “*McDonagh and O’Conor*

*coalesce perfectly, as if propelled by the music's undertow, and echo each other's expressive mien with dynamic balance"* and proclaiming it as one of their Essential Recordings. Classical Explorer remarks that the duo *"take the opening of Op. 102/1 to whispered heights, and again later there is a most appealing sense of two-as-one. They find buoyant, almost dancing, rhythms"*. AllMusic gave the album 4.5 out of 5 stars.

In 2023, she will release her new album, *'The Complete Bach Cello Suites'* which will be the first such recording of these masterful works by an Irish cellist. Ailbhe performs on an Andrea Postacchini cello from 1833.