

Ailbhe McDonagh performer bio c. 300 words

Ailbhe McDonagh 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 Carnegie Hall, the Yale Norfolk Festival, and the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival. She 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.

In addition to her performance career, Ailbhe is an established composer published by Boosey & Hawkes. Her compositions have been featured in syllabi worldwide, and has received commissions from festivals in Ireland, USA and Europe. Her debut orchestral work 'Irish Isles Suite' was recorded and released by the RTÉ Concert Orchestra in 2023.

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’, was featured 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. Classical Music Sentinel states "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 proclaims it as one of their Essential Recordings. AllMusic gave the album 4.5 out of 5 stars.

In 2024, she released her new album, ‘Bach: Complete Solo Cello Suites’ on the Steinway & Sons label. This is the first such recording by an Irish cellist.

Ailbhe has been a member of the strings faculty at the Royal Irish Academy of Music since 2010. She is also in demand as a masterclass instructor.

Ailbhe performs on an Andrea Postacchini cello from 1833.