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Press Release

For Immediate Release

The Galway Early Music Festival, May 28-30, 2010 Music & Madness in Galway

Dance Mania, Addiction, Ecstasy, Love...and lower ticket prices!

The music reaches new heights and the ticket prices are down at the Galway Early Music Festival, May 28-30. Madness? Exactly! *Music and Madness* is the theme of this year's festival and festival goers can look forward to a wonderful variety of "mad" music from the medieval, renaissance and baroque periods.

The 2010 Festival programme ranges from the dance epidemics of the Middle Ages, where entire communities of people would join hands, dance, leap, scream and shake for hours, to the madness of love, so beautifully expressed in medieval & renaissance vocal music, to the madness of the gambler who plays to his ruin, and finally to the ecstatic chant music of religious visionaries and mystics such as Hildegard von Bingen. In addition, a madman that can fly and horns that cure a wounded warrior feature in the popular Saturday free events that run throughout the Latin Quarter of the city.

There is music here for everyone: well-known composers such as Handel, Purcell and Dowland, exotic anonymous dances, secular love song, beautiful sacred music from the western chant tradition and the martial & healing music of pre-historic Irish horns. Performed on instruments both familiar and strange (recorder, lute, baroque guitar, viola da gamba, lirone, early Irish horn and early Irish harp to name a few) by performers of international fame, these concerts and events are a very special treat.

Cantoral and Vox Prophetica start the Festival on an ecstatic note with medieval chant in the very special venue of the chapel of the Poor Clares, Nuns' Island. Featuring the music of the 12th century visionary, Hildegard von Bingen, and her contemporaries. Cantoral, the Female Chant Schola of the Irish World Academy, and Vox Prophetica, students of the BA Voice and Dance, Irish World Academy, University of Limerick, directed by Catherine Sergent, let us hear the music of heaven in the soul soaring chants of Hildegard and her contemporaries.

In ***The Devil made the Game***, **Quadrivium** are addicted to cards – 16th century playing cards that have printed music notation and images of mad goings on on them. They've found a Japanese card game as well, where lines of poetry must be matched. This all goes into a royal flush that mixes 17th century and contemporary music.

The vault of St Nicholas will echo with wild dance music and mad songs that chart medieval and renaissance attitudes to madness, hysteria and the healing powers of

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music, in **Ensemble eX**'s wonderfully visual *Possessed*, featuring dancer and baroque guitarist Steve Player (who thrilled audiences in his performance with The Harp Consort last year) as well as Early Music stars Caitriona O'Leary (voice), Francisco Turrisi (percussion), and Clara Sanabras (voice & guitar).

Love is a madness, a torment, an illness that nothing can cure. This is one thing that has not changed over the millennia! **Ensemble Retrospect**, Clara Sanabras (voice & baroque guitar) and Harvey Brough (voice & psaltery), reflects this in *"La Llorona" and other tales of momentary madness*. Of all ghost stories shrouded in mystery, that of La Llorona is probably the best known. Tracing back many centuries into Mexican border folklore, there are countless variations on her story, but they all carry the same theme: the weeping woman seeking her children, whom she drowned for the love of a man, in a moment of madness. Such "moments of madness" are commonly found in many folksongs across the ages and continents. Clara and Harvey will sing and play a selection of such early folksongs, as well as some of their original compositions.

The Latin Quarter of Galway is the centre of the ever-popular free events on the Saturday of the Festival. Manic dancers, card players, chess players, a town crier and other featured events make The Latin Quarter the place to be on Saturday, 29 May. Special Saturday events feature a **Moonfish Theatre Co** production and Simon O'Dwyer's **Pre-historic Irish Horns**.

This year **Moonfish** and **Pre-Historic Horns** are coming together for a magical re-telling of the medieval Irish legend of *Mad Sweeney (Buile Shuibhne)*. Sweeney has been driven mad in battle and taken to the treetops in an amazing flight around Ireland. Mad, sad, funny and scary in turn, the show features inventive shadow puppetry and the music of the prehistoric Irish horns.

Healing Horns, an installation in the City Museum during the Festival, gives a chance for everyone to test the story, found in Irish legend, of the wounded warrior, who is placed first in a vat of freshly killed beef and then is laid within a circle of horn players whose music completes the cure. Individual recordings of seven horns placed in a circle allow visitors to stand, sit or lie in the middle of the circle and see how the sound and vibrations of the horns affect them. (No vats of freshly killed beef, though!)

This year the Festival inaugurates its new and exciting **Film and Music** event with a talk by Eric Fraad on the nature of madness as understood from the medieval through the baroque eras. The talk features a film showing of parts of Mr. Fraad's production of **Handel's Messiah** first performed at the Utrecht Early Music Festival. The production is set in Bedlam and conveyed as a massive psychological experiment that attempts within the course of an evening to cure the inmates of the asylum.

Concerts, talks, film, and family events in the heart of medieval Galway create the wonderful atmosphere of this gem of a Festival, May 28-30, 2010.

For a full programme and to book tickets online visit www.galwayearlymusic.com, contact Galway Early Music at info@galwayearlymusic.com or pick up a Festival programme, available around the city from May. Tickets are also available in Charlie Byrne's Bookshop, Middle st.

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