

1. Busking on Shop Street (Galway Suite – 1. Movement)

The County of Galway has been my home for the past 20 years, and Galway City never fails to entertain. Street performers from all over the world, and practicing a wide range of arts, are drawn to this city which always has shown its appreciation for buskers. Nowadays my own daughter is one of them, enjoying the generosity and friendliness Galway's Shop Street has to offer.

2. Rush Hour at Eyre Square (Galway Suite – 2. Movement)

Cities all over the globe unite in the frustrations of Rush Hour. Trying to get out of Galway City around Rush Hour is no fun, believe me, but it did inspire this [animated? / lively? dynamic? Spirited?] piece.

3. Galway Market (Galway Suite – 3. Movement)

Galway's famous bustling street market has been trading in Church lane by St Nicholas' Church in the heart of the city for literally centuries. Every weekend you will find a large variety of fresh produce and locally crafted artwork. This piece takes us on a ramble through the market, feasting our eyes and ears on different stalls as we walk along.

4. Higher Ground Meadow (for Eli)

Higher Ground Meadow is a twelve-acre wildflower field in the English countryside with panoramic views over Dorset and Somerset, which has been transformed into a natural burial ground. In the late summer of 2019, a very dear family friend, Eli, unexpectedly passed away. He was only 20 years old and full of life and dreams. Eli was buried at Higher Ground Meadow and this piece is dedicated to his memory.

5. A Shadow Pink Petals (Pink Petal Suite – 1. Movement)

We are traveling further north for our next suite. There is a magical place in County Monaghan, called Annaghmakerrig. Here, the Tyrone Guthrie Centre holds a forest, a marvellous swimming lake, a stunning manor house, and surrounding cottages and art studios which accommodate visiting artists. Beside the lake, there is a Rhododendron tree which sheds its brightly pink petals in mid-June. During my first stay at Annaghmakerrig, many years ago, the pink petals covered the entire path and looked like a bright and colourful shadow. This piece aims to reflect its magic.

6. Heron in the Rain (Pink Petal Suite – 2. Movement)

Hérons are such dignified creatures, with an earnest wisdom which gives them a certain gravity. Observing a heron in the rain one evening, I got lost in my own heavy thoughts, and it took me by great surprise to see the heron suddenly taking off so easily and gracefully with its giant wings.

7. Dance of the Dragonflies (Pink Petal Suite – 3. Movement)

It is blue damselflies that dance and play at the shores of Annaghmakerrig lake. They are not shy either to land on your arms and legs when you sit still for a moment. Their dancing appears so lively and joyful and full of elegance!

8. Curious Encounter (Nous Suite – 1. Movement)

9. When the Wind changes (Nous Suite – 2. Movement)

10. Dare Dance with Me (Nous Suite – 3. Movement)

The Nous Suite was written for Duo Nous, consisting of Oikos Quartet's first violinist Christy and cellist Liesbet. This Suite plays with the excitement and dynamics of two people getting to know each other. This Suite has also been made into a stunning choreographed video performance by Duo Nous, filmed in the beautiful Book Tower of Ghent. If you haven't seen it yet, do look it up on YouTube!

11. The blue Half-Door (Lelia's Cottage Suite – 1. Movement)

12. 'Je suis au Jardin' (Lelia's Cottage Suite – 2. Movement)

13. I made Cake (Lelia's Cottage Suite – 3. Movement)

14. Buzzing Business (Lelia's Cottage Suite – 4. Movement)

This Suite is dedicated to the home - a charming thatched cottage by the sea in the West of Ireland - of Lelia Doolan. Lelia is an extraordinary woman with extraordinary ideas and visions and extraordinary energy and determination to make those ideas and visions become reality. A celebrated film and TV producer, she has been described as the godmother of independent film in Ireland, while the Arch Bishop once called her 'mad, bad and dangerous'. She is also a theatre director and a human rights activist. And this fascinating woman doesn't age: Wikipedia claims she was born in 1934, but no one who meets her buzzing around the place would ever believe that!

Lelia's mother's favourite song was 'Bless this House', which became the theme for the first movement, 'The Blue Half-Door'. The title of the second movement, 'Je suis au Jardin', quotes a sign that hung on Lelia's front door when I came to visit her once – and you never know where you will find her, lying in the hammock, on her knees weeding or picking berries. The third movement celebrates Lelia's delicious almond cake, which I enjoyed at her round kitchen table a number of times. Recently, Lelia has invited a colony of bees to reside in her garden. Sharing the wild flowers and blossoming trees, they fit right into the buzz of the place - which the fourth movement of this Suite reflects.

15. Departure (Oikos Suite – 1. Movement)

16. On the Road (Oikos Suite – 2. Movement)

17. Awake at Night (Oikos Suite – 3. Movement)

18. Arrival (Oikos Suite – 4. Movement)

The Oikos Suite describes a journey. In my mind, this journey is not necessarily voluntary. It might be a journey forcing someone to flee their country. It might also be an inner journey where paths have to be chosen, although at times one might not feel ready for it. Or maybe it is about the challenges of life itself, that we all share, when we are thrown in at the deep end and have to find a way through our very own adventure. The Oikos Suite is also a musical tale of hope.

19. Et Amor

Et Amor is a spiritual piece of reflection. The second part is based on the Gregorian Chant from the 8th century, 'Ubi Caritas' which has a special meaning for the exceptional man whom this piece is dedicated to and whom I feel very grateful and fortunate to have met.

20. Beannacht – for solo cello

Beannacht means 'Blessing' in Irish. This solo work in 4 short movements is written for and performed by my dear friend Liesbet whose interpretation makes it truly come to life. Thank you, Liesbet - for Beannacht, and everything else.