

Trade is a one-act chamber opera by Emma O'Halloran about a secret encounter between a married, closeted Older Man and a young sex worker in a cheap north Dublin hotel room, exploring power, shame and the longing to escape their lives.

## About Trade (the opera)

- Composer: **Emma** O'Halloran (Irish, Grammy-nominated for this double bill).
- Librettist: Emma O'Halloran and Mark O'Halloran (adaption of his stage play.)
- Setting: A small hotel room in working-class Dublin, where a middle-aged client and a younger "rent boy" meet for a paid encounter that becomes a raw confrontation with their own failures and desires.
- Story focus: Both men feel trapped in very different lives - the Older Man with a wife and children, the Younger Man with a girlfriend and new baby - and the opera probes masculinity, internalised homophobia and class through their tense negotiation of sex, money and intimacy.

## Roles and musical forces

### Christopher Hillier - baritone, Callum McGing - tenor

- Principal roles:
  - Younger Man (tenor), a vulnerable sex worker who insists he is "just doing this for the money" but gradually reveals fear, rage and tenderness.
  - Older Man (baritone), a closeted husband and father whose neediness and self-loathing spill out as the night unravels.
- Forces: Written for voices and chamber ensemble with electronics, balancing gritty text-driven vocal lines against a restless, atmospheric score that heightens the claustrophobia of the room.

## The creative "dream team": Elaine Kelly and Greta Nash

### Elaine Kelly – conductor

- Irish conductor Elaine Kelly has become closely associated with Trade, leading the world-premiere production with Beth Morrison Projects at New York's PROTOTYPE Festival and subsequent performances with Irish National Opera.
- In interviews about the double bill, she has described the final stretch of Trade as "devastating and beautiful at the same time," underlining how the score pivots from hard-edged realism to something almost tender and luminous as the men face the emotional cost of their choices.

- Critics have highlighted Kelly’s conducting as a key reason the work lands so powerfully, noting the tight pacing and her ability to keep the vocal lines conversational while maintaining musical tension.

## **Greta Nash – director**

- Greta Nash is a multi-award winning Melbourne-based film director and writer, known for intimate, character-driven work and insight into liminal life moments, which translates naturally to Trade’s fragile, one-room encounter.
- Moving into contemporary opera/theatre direction with Trade, Nash brings a filmic eye for close-up psychology, focusing on the tiny shifts in body language and distance between the two men that signal changing power dynamics across the night.

## **Why they’re a “dream team” for Trade**

- Trade lives or dies on emotional detail and pacing: Kelly shapes the musical arc so that silences, surges and sudden eruptions in the orchestra mirror the men’s shifting control, while Nash’s screen-informed staging can keep the room feeling both dangerously intimate and painfully small.
- Both artists have a strong interest in contemporary, socially engaged storytelling, making them a natural pairing for O’Halloran’s score, which fuses operatic expressiveness with the raw language and rhythms of a modern Irish play.

## **Themes and tone**

- Trade avoids moralising and instead presents “complicated, messy human beings” interrogating each other and themselves; the audience is invited to empathise with both, even as they make deeply questionable choices.
- The opera’s tone moves between dark humour, grinding tension and sudden, piercing vulnerability, ending without a neat resolution but with a sense that both men have been forced to see themselves more clearly.

## **Grammy-nominated digital recording is available for purchase:**

<https://signalrecords.com/product/trade-mary-motorhead-digital-only/SIGCD951/>