

# *If the River is Hidden*

by **Cherry Smyth & Craig Jordan-Baker, with Eimear McGeown on flute**

1 June 2022

## For Immediate Release

**Cherry Smyth** is delighted to announce a new writing performance in collaboration with **Craig Jordan-Baker** and **Eimear McGeown**. 'If the River is Hidden' presents Smyth's long, sinewy poem, running through a lyric essay by Jordan-Baker, accompanied by McGeown on flute, that responds to the writers' 8-day walk from the source to the mouth of the River Bann. The walk itself featured in BBC Radio Ulster's *Your Place and Mine*, *Belfast Telegraph*, *Irish News* and the *Banbridge Chronicle*.



Smyth, Jordan-Baker and McGeown, who all share Northern Irish heritage and live in England, ask how to belong in the North. The Bann becomes a metaphor for longing, belonging and letting go of grief as well as the continuity of family and its legends. The road north stands not only for the frequent inaccessibility of the river, but for the path of writing and friendship, which creates a flow that does not depend on water or a specific landscape.



*How many words between us? How many steps on the road? How much hedge trimming the fields? How many clouds gauzing the sky? How much sand dredged from Lough Neagh? How much rain squeezed from the hills into the Bann? How can a field of trickles end in an ocean?*

*If the River is Hidden* explores the third space beyond Republicanism and Unionism; the threat to the health of the river; and the joy carried by conversation sifted in a beautiful, mostly rural, environment.

*Blood is a river we step into twice,  
home in our veins, elsewhere in our arteries,  
fed by the same breath.*

**Cherry Smyth**, raised in Portstewart, overlooking the mouth of the Bann, now wonders why she is living in London. Two poetry collections, *When the Lights Go Up*, 2001 and *One Wanted Thing*, 2006 were published by Lagan Press. Her third collection *Test, Orange*, 2012, was published by Pindrop Press and her debut novel, *Hold Still* (Holland Park Press) appeared in 2013. *Famished* (Pindrop Press, 2019) a book-length poem, explores the Irish Famine and how imperialism helped cause the largest refugee crisis of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Famished* was developed as a collaborative performance with composer Ed Bennett and vocalist Lauren Kinsella and toured Ireland in 2019, featuring at the Dublin Book Festival.

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**Craig Jordan-Baker's** family hail from Banbridge, from where his grandfather emigrated to England during WW2. His debut novel *The Nacullians* (époque press, 2020), is the darkly comic story of a working-class family of Irish descent and was praised by the *Irish Times* as 'a multi-layered treatise on memory and the stories we tell ourselves'. As well as fiction, Craig has numerous drama credits and his stage adaptation of Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* toured the UK in 2015.

Twitter @ CraigJordanBak1

[Craig Jordan-Baker — The University of Brighton](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/craig-jordan-baker)

**Eimear McGeown**, originally from Craigavon, has made London her home. Eimear is an internationally renowned exponent of both the classical and Irish flute. Her solo performance featured on BBC's 'Last Night of the Proms' and she won the All Ireland Champion of the Camerata Ireland Young Musician of the Year twice. You can find her debut album *Inis* on Spotify.

Instagram: @eimearflute

[www.eimearmcgeown.com](http://www.eimearmcgeown.com)

*If the River is Hidden* will be published in book-length form in 2022 and be performed at venues in NI and London from September 2022.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Cherry Smyth at [mail@cherrysmyth.com](mailto:mail@cherrysmyth.com) or at 07799 827786 or Craig Jordan-Baker at [c.jordan-baker@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:c.jordan-baker@brighton.ac.uk) or on 07963 691795

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