

**Aaron Dessner, Bryce Dessner, Jon Hopkins, Aoife McArdle, Cillian Murphy, Max Porter Present *All of This Unreal Time* at MIF 21**

Six critically acclaimed artists have come together in a new collaborative partnership to presentthe world premiere of *All of This Unreal Time*,a unique cross artform collaboration which candidly explores one man’s failings.

*‘I came out here to apologise. You know. I find myself, at the midpoint of my life, in a dark wood, and now I’m here, in the forest of my mind, and every tree is shame, every living thing is a reprimand, and I realise, I must speak freely now, before I lose you.’*

A man – any man, everyman – walks alone through night and the city. From subway to pavement to wide open marshland, he confesses his failings: emotional, physical, political. To whom, and for what? Ashamed and alarmed, he considers both the smallness of human life and the scale of the world, and ultimately our most pressing obligation: to care for those alongside us, and for the earth that sustains us.

A film starring Cillian Murphy, written by Max Porter, directed by Aoife McArdle and with music by Aaron Dessner, Bryce Dessner and Jon Hopkins, *All of This Unreal Time* will be presented as an immersive installation at Manchester Central in surround sound.

**Aoife McArdle** said: *“It was easy to be inspired by the range and power Cillian has as an actor and the poetry of Max’s words. Rainy, empty, lockdown streets became vivid canvases. Working with all of these artists has been one of the purest collaborative journeys I’ve been on.”*

**Cillian Murphy** said: "*I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to make this work during turmoil and sadness of 2020. It has been a great journey of collaboration working with these uniquely talented artists to bring Max Porter’s beautiful words to life.”*

**Max Porter** said: *"It's been a joy creating this piece with these people whose work I admire so much. What started as a conversation with Cillian has become this living breathing hybrid of film and music, language and light. We had no idea the world would look this way when we set out to make this piece, but we did know we wanted to make a work about being humbled, scared, ashamed and amazed. So we hope it works well for these times, and keeps moving and changing as the viewer brings their own feelings and thoughts to it."*

Manchester International Festival Artistic Director & Chief Executive, **John McGrath** says*: “MIF has always been a Festival like no other – with almost all the work being created especially for us in the months and years leading up to each Festival edition. But who would have guessed two years ago what a changed world the artists making work for our 2021 Festival would be working in?*

*From legendary Argentinian artist Marta Minujin’s decision to give the world’s most famous clock, Big Ben, a temporary new home in Manchester to Cephas Williams’ celebratory activist artwork Portrait of Black Britain, the ways in which artists have used the opportunity of the Festival to reflect on life now has been inspiring. Our programme is very different to the one we had almost-fully planned at the start of last year, but I hope it feels urgent and right.”*

*“We hope MIF21 will provide a time and place to reflect on our world now, to celebrate the differing ways we can be together, and to emphasise, despite all that has happened, the importance of our creative connections – locally and globally.”*

**Creative Team**

Max Porter - Writer

Cillian Murphy - Actor

Aoife McArdle - Film Director

Aaron Dessner, Bryce Dessner & Jon Hopkins - Composers

Mary Hickson - Creative Producer

Michael Brown - Production Designer

Commissioned and produced by **Manchester International Festival.**

**ENDS**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Listings information**

**All of this Unreal Time**

**Thursday 1 – Sunday 4 July, various times (Press night 2 July, 7pm)**

Manchester Central

Film available to watch on demand at mif.co.uk from 2 July

Tickets from £15

**About Manchester International Festival**

Manchester International Festival (MIF) is an artist-led festival of original, new work and special events reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture. MIF21 takes place from 1 - 18 July 2021.

Staged every two years in Manchester, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Philip Glass and Phelim McDermott, David Lynch, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, The xx, Robert Wilson and Zaha Hadid Architects.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work, staged in venues across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. MIF works closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible and ensures that work made at MIF goes on to be seen around the world.

MIF supports a year-round Creative Engagement programme, bringing opportunities for people from all backgrounds, ages and from all corners of the city to get involved during the Festival and year-round, as volunteers, as participants in shows, through skills development and a host of creative activities, such as Festival in My House.

MIF will also run The Factory, the new landmark cultural space currently being built in the heart of Manchester and designed by the internationally-renowned architect Ellen van Loon of Rem Koolhaas’ OMA. The Factory will commission, present and produce one of Europe’s most ambitious and adventurous year-round creative programmes, featuring bold new work from the world’s greatest artists and offering a space to create, invent and play.

Attracting up to 850,000 visitors annually, The Factory will add up to £1.1 billion to the economy over a decade and create up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs. Its pioneering programme of skills, training and engagement will benefit local people and the next generation of creative talent from across the city, whilst apprenticeships and trainee schemes are already underway during the construction phase.

MIF’s Artistic Director and Chief Executive is John McGrath.

[mif.co.uk](https://mif.co.uk)

**Aaron Dessner** is a New York-based musician, composer and producer, best known for his work in Grammy Award-winning alternative band The National, whose albums he has co-written and co-produced since the group’s inception in 1999. He began producing outside projects almost a decade ago, developing his own distinctive sound and approach, and an ability to connect with artists from disparate genres, whether it’s Sharon Van Etten’s breakthrough album *Tramp*, the delicate craftsmanship of Irish artist Lisa Hannigan, or the haunting gothic blues of up-and-coming singer-songwriter Adia Victoria.

His studio, Long Pond, near Hudson, New York, has become a creative oasis for Dessner and his collaborators -- a place where the beauty of the woods and the water makes it easy to get lost in the moment. “The best music happens when you aren’t overthinking or putting too much pressure on yourself,” he says. “What is most rewarding for me now is to write music and share it with other musicians, to see what strange alchemy happens when someone else adds their own voice, emotion and ideas into it. I think every idea is worth chasing, and every experiment is worthwhile. Sometimes what seems like a discardable fragment is actually the seed of a great song.”

Dessner also collaborates with Bon Iver’s Justin Vernon on their collaborative project Big Red Machine, and co-founded international music festivals including the Eaux Claires Music & Arts Festival in Wisconsin, Boston Calling, and the National’s own Homecoming festival in Cincinnati. Along with Bryce, Vernon and a community of musicians and creatives, he launched the 37d03d (PEOPLE) collective in 2016. 37d03d produces multi-artist events and operates an independent record label, all with the goal of supporting and encouraging spontaneous collaboration.

**Bryce Dessner** is a vital and rare force in new music. He has won Grammy Awards as a classical composer and with the band The National, of which he is founding member, guitarist, arranger, and co-principal songwriter. He is regularly commissioned to write for the world’s leading ensembles, from Orchestre de Paris to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and is a high-proﬁle presence in ﬁlm score composition, with credits including Alejandro González Iñárritu’s *The Revenant*, for which he was Grammy and Golden Globe nominated. This year his album Tenebre with renowned German string orchestra, Ensemble Resonanz, won both an Opus Klassik award in Germany and a Diapason d’Or in France.

Dessner collaborates with some of today’s most creative and respected artists, including Philip Glass, Katia and Marielle Labèque, Paul Simon, Sufjan Stevens, Jonny Greenwood, Bon Iver, Nico Muhly, and Steve Reich. His orchestrations can be heard on the latest albums of Paul Simon, Bon Iver and Taylor Swift.

In addition to his role as one of eight San Francisco Symphony Collaborative Partners, Dessner is currently Artist-in-Residence at London’s Southbank Centre and with Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. His recent major works include C*oncerto for Two Pianos* for Katia and Marielle Labèque, premiered by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and recorded for Deutsche Grammophon; *Trombone Concerto* which premiered in Cologne in 2020; *Voy a Dormir* for Kelley O’Connor and the Orchestra of Saint Luke’s; *Skrik Trio* for Steve Reich and Carnegie Hall; the ballet *No Tomorrow* co-written with Ragnar Kjartansson; and *Wires* for Ensemble Intercontemporain. In 2019, Gautier Capuçon premiered a new work by Dessner commissioned by Fondation Louis Vuitton and the Los Angeles Philharmonic premiered *Triptych (Eyes for One on Another)*, a major theatre piece integrating the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe. Also in 2019, New York’s Metropolitan Museum featured a song by Dessner in one of its ﬁrst contemporary installations. Most recently Dessner scored the music—involving full orchestra and a 200-member choir—for the Louis Vuitton catwalk show in March 2020 as part of Paris Fashion Week. Future projects include a world premiere with Sydney Dance Company and the Australian String Quartet.

Dessner’s albums include *St. Carolyn by the Sea* on Deutsche Grammophon; *Aheym*, commissioned by Kronos Quartet; *Tenebre*, performed by Ensemble Resonanz (2019); and *When we are inhuman* by Dessner, Bonnie ‘Prince’ Billy and Eighth Blackbird (2019). Dessner’s other ﬁlm score credits include *The Two Popes*, which was nominated for a World Soundtrack award. In spring 2019 The National released its latest album, *I am Easy to Find*.

Also active as a curator, Dessner is regularly requested to program festivals and residencies around the world, at venues such as at the Barbican, Philharmonie de Paris, and Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie. He co-founded and curates the festivals *MusicNOW* in Cincinnati, *HAVEN* in Copenhagen, *Sounds from a Safe Harbour* and *PEOPLE*.

Bryce Dessner lives in Paris.

**Jon Hopkins** is a classically trained composer and electronic musician from England whose solo and collaborative works, including deeply cerebral ambient techno recordings and immersive film scores, have received widespread acclaim as well as Grammy and Mercury Prize nominations. Initially gaining exposure through his work with Brian Eno, Coldplay and King Creosote beginning in the mid-2000s, he gradually found his voice as a solo artist, blending intricately crafted beats with serene, meditative textures. *Immunity* (2013) and *Singularity* (2018), two intense, ambitious sets of spiritually minded techno and ambient tracks, were among the decade's most lauded electronic albums.

Growing up in Wimbledon, Hopkins was a gifted child pianist who studied piano at the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music for five years. Along with his fascination with the works of Ravel and Stravinsky, he also fell in love with electronic music at a young age and was a fan of synth pop acts like Depeche Mode and Pet Shop Boys. During his teens, he started making acid house and drum'n'bass, using the money he won from piano competitions to buy himself synths and recording gear.

Hopkins joined Imogen Heap’s band as a keyboardist and toured with her throughout 1998. He signed to Just Music in 2001, and recorded his debut album, *Opalescent*, while working part-time as a studio session musician in Wembley. His next album, 2004's Contact Note, had a more cinematic feel and featured vocals by Heap as well as Lisa Lindley-Jones. It gained the respect of Brian Eno, who recruited Hopkins to play keys on his 2005 album *Another Day on Earth*, beginning a long-running collaboration between the two. Around this time, Hopkins also began another extended creative relationship with King Creosote, producing the Scottish singer/songwriter's 2007 album Bombshells . That year, Eno invited Hopkins to work on Coldplay’s 2008 album *Viva la Vida or Death and All His Friends*, on which he played various keyboards and co-produced several tracks with Eno. Along with serving as the opening act on Coldplay’s 2008 world tour, he composed music for *Entity*, a piece by choreographer Wayne McGregor that was performed worldwide.

Hopkins also worked on his own music, and released his third solo album, *Insides*, in May 2009. Combining strings, piano, and dubstep-tinged bass along with synths and beats, the album reached number 15 on the Billboard Dance/Electronic Albums chart. Hopkins continued to collaborate, working with Tuung on their 2009 EP *Seven Gulps of Air* and joining forces with Eno, Underworld’s Karl Hyde, longtime friend Leo Abrahams and the Neck as Pure Scenius, an improv group that played a series of concerts. Hopkins also began composing for film, working with Eno and Abrahams on the score to Peter Jackson’s *The Lovely Bones*. On his own, he wrote the music for the 2010 short film Rob and Valentyna and Gareth Edwards’ sci-fi film Monsters, which was also released in 2010 and earned an Ivor Novello Award nomination for Best Original Score. That year, Hopkins reunited with Abrahams and Eno on the improvisation-based album *Small Craft on a Milk Sea*. In 2011, he and King Creosote released the largely acoustic *Diamond Mine*; the culmination of seven years' worth of work, it was nominated for a Mercury Prize. The pair followed it with two EPs, 2011's *Honest Words* and 2012's *The Jubilee*.

[*Diamond Mine*](https://www.allmusic.com/album/diamond-mine-mw0002112965) influenced [Hopkins](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/hopkins-mn0000822040)' 2013 album, [Immunity](https://www.allmusic.com/album/immunity-mw0002506311), an organic-sounding set of energetic dance music and more reflective moments that also earned a Mercury Prize nomination. After writing the score for the 2013 film *How I Live Now*, he returned with 2014's [*Asleep Versions*](https://www.allmusic.com/album/asleep-versions-mw0002756520), an EP of tranquil and vocal-heavy versions of tracks from *Immunity* featuring vocals from [King Creosote](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/king-creosote-mn0000075582) and [Braids](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/braids-mn0002548827)' [Raphaelle Standell-Preston](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/raphaelle-standell-preston-mn0002627135). In 2015, [Hopkins](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/hopkins-mn0000822040) contributed a volume to the[*LateNightTales*](https://www.allmusic.com/album/latenighttales-mw0002813601) mix series, and reissued [Opalescent](https://www.allmusic.com/album/opalescent-mw0000753483) in 2016 to celebrate its 15-year anniversary. Early in 2018, the single *Emerald Rush* heralded the release of his fifth album, [Singularity](https://www.allmusic.com/album/singularity-mw0003163872), that May. The full-length was [Hopkins](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/hopkins-mn0000822040)' biggest critical and commercial success, reaching number nine on the U.K. album chart and receiving a Grammy nomination for Best Dance/Electronic Album. [Hopkins](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/hopkins-mn0000822040) collaborated with [Kelly Lee Owens](https://www.allmusic.com/artist/kelly-lee-owens-mn0003184750) on the single *Luminous Spaces*, released in late 2019. The following year, he issued the ambient piece *Scene Suspended*, as well as *Singing Bowl (Ascension)*, the first in a series of compositions titled Meditations.

**Aoife McArdle** is one of the world’s leading music video and commercials directors, known for poetic visuals and rhythmic portraits of ordinary life that veer effortlessly between the authentic and the surreal. Her work often features streetcast, unknown actors in leading roles. She has created films for Jon Hopkins, Anna Calvi, Bryan Ferry, U2, Nike, Honda, Absolut and Playstation and been awarded multiple times at Cannes Lions, UKMVAs, D&ADs, Ciclope, Clios and British Arrows. Her debut feature, the arthouse drama KISSING CANDICE screened at both Tiff and Berlinale to critical acclaim. Aoife recently directed two episodes of the Amblin series *Brave New World*, based on the novel by Aldous Huxley. She is also directing and producing three episodes of *Severance* for Apple TV+ starring Patricia Arquette. Aoife is currently developing her latest feature *Monuments* with the BFI.

One of the most acclaimed, versatile actors of his generation, **Cillian Murphy** has starred in major studio hits, award-winning independent films, a celebrated television series and on the stages of London, New York and around the globe.

Murphy next stars in John Krasinki’s *A Quiet Place Part II* (Paramount, April 23), opposite Emily Blunt. Recently on film, Murphy played a soldier opposite Mark Rylance in Christopher Nolan’s groundbreaking World War II epic *Dunkirk* and starred in Sally Potter’s *The Party* alongside Emily Mortimer, Patricia Clarkson, Timothy Spall and Bruno Ganz.

Murphy first garnered international attention for his performance as Jim, the reluctant survivor in Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*. In 2005, he made an indelible impression as Dr. Jonathan Crane/The Scarecrow in Christopher Nolan’s *Batman Begins*, for which he received a London Film Critics Circle Award nomination. He reprised the role in Nolan’s *The Dark Knight* and *The Dark Knight Rises* and later reunited with the director to play the billionaire heir apparent/mark in the critically acclaimed hit *Inception*.

In 2006, Murphy garnered a Golden Globe nomination for his performance as the transgender outcast Patrick "Kitten" Brady in Neil Jordan's *Breakfast on Pluto* and starred opposite Rachel McAdams in Wes Craven’s thriller *Red Eye*.

In Ken Loach’s Cannes Film Festival Palme d’Or winner *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, Murphy portrayed a guerilla fighter who battles the Black and Tan squads that attempt to thwart Ireland's bid for independence. In 2007, he re-teamed with Boyle and writer Alex Garland (*28 Days Later, Ex Machina*) on *Sunshine*, a thriller in which a group of scientists attempt to re-ignite a dying sun. For *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* and *Sunshine*, Murphy garnered consecutive British Independent Film Award nominations.

In 2012, Murphy appeared in *Broken*, which opened the International Critics' Week section at the Cannes Film Festival and won the Best British Independent Film Award. Directed by Rufus Norris from a screenplay by Mark O'Rowe, the drama about a young North London girl who witnesses a violent attack co-starred Tim Roth and Eloise Laurence. For his role as teacher Mike Kiernan, Murphy received his third British Independent Film Award nomination.

Murphy’s diverse filmography also includes Sean Ellis’ *Anthropoid* with Jamie Dornan, Ben Wheatley’s *Free Fire* with Brie Larson, Ron Howard’s I*n the Heart of the Sea* with Chris Hemsworth, Claudia Llosa’s Berlin Film Festival entry *Aloft* with Jennifer Connelly, *Perrier’s Bounty* with Brendan Gleeson and Jim Broadbent, John Crowley’s dark comedy *Intermission* with Colin Farrell and Kelly Macdonald, Peter Webber’s period drama *Girl With a Pearl Earring* with Scarlett Johansson, Anthony Minghella’s *Cold Mountain* and John Carney’s *On the Edge*.

For television, Murphy stars in the BAFTA Award-winning hit series *Peaky Blinders* as Tommy Shelby, the most ruthless brother in a family of Birmingham gangsters. Created by Steven Knight (E*astern Promises, Dirty Pretty Things*), Peaky Blinders refers to the family’s practice of sewing razor blades into the peaks of their caps. The series, for which Murphy also serves as an executive producer, now airs on BBC One; outside Ireland and the UK, *Peaky Blinders* is available via Netflix.

On stage, Murphy regularly collaborates with Irish playwright Enda Walsh. At St. Ann’s Warehouse in Brooklyn this spring, he starred in *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*, a new production based on the award-winning novel by Max Porter that was adapted and directed by Enda Walsh. *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* is a moving story of a widower and his young sons which becomes a profound meditation on love, loss and living. Originally produced by Complicité and Wayward Productions, the play premiered at the Black Bo Theatre in Galway before moving to the O’Reilly Theatre in Dublin and the Barbican in London. Following critically acclaimed, sold out runs in Ireland, Murphy and Walsh’s previous collaboration, *Ballyturk*, ran at the National Theatre in London; Mikel Murfi, and Stephen Rea co-starred. Murphy previously starred in Walsh’s *Misterman*, also at the National. Originally produced for the Galway Arts Festival, *Misterman*, is a stunning monologue in which the actor explored the depths of a young man’s physical and psychological collapse. For the run at St. Ann’s Warehouse in Brooklyn, Murphy received the 2012 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Solo Performance. He also received The Irish Times Theatre Award -- Best Actor for the original production in Galway. Murphy first made his mark on stage with a stunning performance in Walsh’s *Disco Pigs*. After receiving commendations for Best Fringe Show at the 1996 Dublin Theatre Festival and the Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival in 1997, *Disco Pigs* went on to tour extensively in Ireland, the UK, Canada and Australia. Murphy later starred in the film version directed by Kirsten Sheridan.

In 2006, Murphy made his West End debut at the New Ambassador Theatre in John Kolvenbach’s *Love Song*, directed by John Crowley. His stage collaborations with Tony Award-winning director Garry Hynes include T*he Country Boy, Juno and the Paycock*, and *Playboy of the Western World* at the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin. Murphy also starred as Konstantin in the Ed*inburgh Fest production of The Seagull directed by Peter Stein, as Adam in Neil LaBute’s* The Shape of Things at the Gate Theatre in Dublin and as Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Kilkenny Castle.

Murphy directed the music video for MONEY’s *Hold Me Forever* and starred in videos for Feist’s *The Water* (directed by Broken Social Scene’s Kevin Drew), Paul Hartnoll’s *The Clock* and Fionn Regan’s *The Meetings of the Waters*.

Murphy also has a long-standing relationship with BBC Radio 6 Music. This Autumn he presents the new program “Cillian Murphy’s Limited Edition.” The 13-part series begins Monday, October 19 (12AM – 2AM) and features Murphy’s nocturnal playlist. Most recently, his “Music Mixtape” series aired on Friday evenings from April to June 2020.

**Max Porter** is the author of *Lanny*, longlisted for the Booker Prize and being produced for film by Rachel Weisz, and *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*, which won the International Dylan Thomas Prize, the Europese Literatuurprijs and the BAMB Readers’ Award and was shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Award and the Goldsmiths Prize. His work has been translated into 30 languages. Complicité and Wayward’s production of *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* directed by Enda Walsh and starring Cillian Murphy was performed in Galway, Dublin, London and New York. Max Porter was previously editorial director of Granta Books where his authors included Han Kang, Eleanor Catton, Rebecca Solnit and Mark O'Connell. He has collaborated with artists and musicians including Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Joan Shelley, Tunng, Nicola Hicks and Catrin Morgan. His latest book is *The Death of Francis Bacon* (Faber, January 2021).