

# erin hart



Erin Hart, photo by Paddy O'Brien

## FROM THE CRITICS...

### BOOKLIST:

"Few writers combine as seamlessly as Hart does the subtlety, lyrical language, and melancholy of literary fiction with the pulse-pounding suspense of the best thrillers."

### PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY:

"Emotionally and intellectually gorgeous... Hart's language sings."

### NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW:

"Hart writes with a lovely eloquence about how character is shaped by the music, the architecture and the history of this harsh and beautiful land..."

mail@erinhart.com  
www.erinhart.com

Before straying serendipitously into crime fiction, Erin Hart trained to become a theater director, and has been variously employed as a stage manager, propmaster, editor and copywriter, writing teacher, journalist and theater critic. Born in Crawfordsville, Indiana, and raised in Rochester, Minnesota, she was educated at Saint Olaf College and the University of Minnesota. After college Erin began promoting the work of traditional musician friends and helped co-found the local Twin Cities Irish Music & Dance Association. Erin met her husband, Irish accordion player Paddy O'Brien, just after returning from a trip to Ireland—when he asked her onstage to sing.

Erin came to writing quite late, and by way of her first love, theater. Starting graduate school in the mid-1980s, the available choices were business administration or creative writing—she chose writing by default, and embarked on a second career as a freelance arts journalist and theater critic. Throughout the 1990s, her work appeared in print in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, *Minnesota Monthly*, and *Skyway News*, and for several years she was the regular theater critic for Minnesota Public Radio. She also began to write memoir, essays, and short fiction. When her short story, "Waterborne," won the Glimmer Train Short Story Award for New Writers in 1996, she began to receive inquiries from literary agents.

While visiting friends in Ireland one summer, Erin heard an intriguing tale about a beautiful red-haired girl whose perfectly preserved, severed head was discovered in a desolate Irish bog. That true story was the inspiration for the first book in a planned series of crime novels set mostly in Ireland, revolving around archaeology, forensics, history, and traditional music and folklore. *HAUNTED GROUND* was translated into ten foreign languages, as was the second novel in the series, *LAKE OF SORROWS*, chosen as a 2004 Minnesota Book Award finalist. *FALSE MERMAID* (2010) was named one of the Top Ten Crime Novels of 2010 by *ALA/Booklist*. The fourth novel in the series, *THE BOOK OF KILLOWEN*, was a 2013 Minnesota Book Award finalist.

"People often ask why I chose Ireland as a setting, and I have to say that I think Ireland chose me," she says. "It's a place I've been drawn to more than any other ever since I was a child. There's something about Ireland's complex and contradictory nature, all those layers of history one on top of the other—that lends a particular resonance to the stories I feel compelled to tell."

Erin has taught writing at the Loft, History Theatre, and various other venues. She is also accomplished traditional singer with several recordings to her credit, including a CD entitled *The Sailor's Cravat*. She is a member of the Authors' Guild, Mystery Writers of America, and Sisters in Crime. Erin lives in Minnesota and tours regularly with her husband, Irish button accordion player, poet, and memoirist Paddy O'Brien. They make frequent visits to Ireland, going to music sessions, and carrying out essential research in bogs and cow pastures and castles and pubs.



Paddy O'Brien, photo by Bob Kessler

#### FROM THE CRITICS...

**IRISH MUSIC MAGAZINE:**

“At once a wakeup call and a reminder of the things that matter in Irish traditional music.”

**THE BOSTON IRISH REPORTER:**

“Like listening to a conversation between old friends...”

**IRISH MUSIC MAGAZINE:**

“The music. Button box wizard Paddy O'Brien gets it. Really gets it... Not the current fashion. Not the current 'hot' group. Not 'the buzz.' The music. Period. Full stop.”

paddyobrien@qwest.net  
www.paddyobrien.net

A product of County Offaly in the midlands of Ireland, Paddy O'Brien is regarded by serious players and collectors of Irish traditional music as one of the tradition's most important repositories; in a musical career that spans more than fifty years, he has collected more than 3,000 compositions—jigs, reels, hornpipes, airs, and marches, including many rare and unusual tunes.

Paddy's mastery of the two-row button accordion has been acknowledged through many prestigious awards: he was named Oireachtas champion four times, and All-Ireland senior accordion champion in 1975. In Ireland, he played and recorded with the famed Castle Ceili Band and Ceoltoiri Laighean.

In 1978, Paddy began playing regularly in the United States, in Washington D.C., Saint Louis, Saint Paul, San Francisco, Boston, New York, and many places between. He has toured with Irish traditional music trios Bowhand, Hill 16, and Chulrua, among others. He has been featured on six recordings with Shanachie Records since 1978, and in 1988 released his first solo album, “Stranger at the Gate,” on the Green Linnet label. His second solo recording, “Mixing the Punch,” was released by New Folk Records in 2011, and his work has been included on many live recordings and compilations of Irish traditional music.

Paddy has appeared numerous times on National Public Radio, and taught at the Swannanoa Gathering, the Goderich Celtic Week, and the Catskills Irish Arts Week, and at the prestigious Willie Clancy Summer School held in Milltown Malbay, County Clare, and has served several times as a master artist in the Minnesota State Arts Board Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. He has played and toured with many wonderful musicians, including James Kelly, Martin Hayes, Susan McKeown, Tommy Peoples, Peter Ostroushko, and many others at concerts and festivals all around North America, Ireland, and Europe. In 2007 he was invited to play Irish music for enthusiastic audiences in Moscow.

In 1995, Paddy embarked on what was to become a milestone project in Irish traditional music, to record and assemble background information on 500 jigs and reels from his vast repertoire. The result of that effort, *The Paddy O'Brien Tune Collection: A Personal Treasury of Irish Traditional Music* (now three volumes comprising a staggering 1,500 tunes), has received accolades from players of Irish music around the world. Paddy was named **Irish Traditional Composer of the Year** at the 2012 Gradam Ceoil Irish Music Awards, the highest international honor in Irish traditional music. Also in 2012, his memoir, *The Road from Castlebarnagh: Growing Up in Irish Music*, was published by Dublin's Orpen Press and has received glowing reviews and around the globe.

Paddy currently tours nationally and internationally as a solo musician, and also plays dances and concerts around Minnesota and beyond with his trio Chulrua, and his seven-piece folk orchestra, O'Rourke's Feast. He also tours with his wife, crime novelist and traditional singer Erin Hart.