



# **IRISH THEATRE INSTITUTE**

STRATEGIC STATEMENT  
(revised) 2020 - 2022

# IRISH THEATRE INSTITUTE IS...

a resource organisation for theatre, funded by the Arts Council with project support from Culture Ireland and Dublin City Council. The Institute (ITI) seeks to maximise creative opportunities and resources for theatre-makers and producers across theatre in an all-Ireland and international context. Guardians of traditions as well as a catalyst for change, mentors, collaborators and leaders, we are committed to keeping theatre alive and thriving, as relevant and exciting today as it ever has been.

## Overview | OUR MISSION

ITI nurtures, promotes and drives the ambition of Irish theatre makers and Irish theatre, from its grassroots beginnings to its presentation on the world stage.

We provide mentoring, training and continuing professional development for theatre makers, from writers and performers to producers, directors, behind-the-scenes staff and company managers. We run workshops and seminars. We offer artistic and creative support and practical advice. We provide information on everything including funding, budgeting, networking and resource sharing, ensuring it is easily accessible to everyone, from emerging talents to established artists.

Mindful of the nation's history and the great traditions of Irish storytelling and performance, we gather, host and share information on the story of theatre in Ireland, digitally on tailor-made websites and searchable databases as well as in physical reports and materials.

Away from the spotlight, we care about Dignity at Work issues, working conditions and the welfare of theatre makers, and are committed to leading through good practice and example.

We are passionate about the future. We support new work and new producing opportunities as theatre reaches out to new audiences, not only in Ireland but across the globe, engaging audiences and enriching people's lives through presentations that reflect changes in Ireland's social, cultural and demographic landscape.

# ITI AND ITS ROLE IN IRISH THEATRE

Since its establishment ITI has taken a leading role in the support of Irish theatre. Sometimes taking the lead, building initiatives to pull the sector out of recessionary paralysis, more often working quietly in the background, tending the theatre ecology and putting its energy into bringing out the best in every theatre artist with whom it interacts.

Nimble and flexible, ITI has adapted its programme focus to changing circumstances over the years but has been always ambitious for and confident about Irish theatre, as consistent champions of scripted work and catalysts for national and international theatre career development. Exemplified by its Co-Directors, ITI is knowledgeable and experienced in all aspects of making theatre, has an international perspective, excellent relationships, an incisive grasp of sectoral needs and an astute ability to recognise quality work.

ITI's unique offering is its long-term investment in people – artists – and in theatre as an artform. We want to do more than deal with individual issues. We want to influence the sector – in a macro way – through ITI's actions. To steward, guide and support artists to make work – not just any work, but really good work – and to be able to confidently carve out a theatre career, in Ireland and abroad. Along with the new arts policy environment – including the Arts Council's Making Great Art Work, Creative Ireland, Culture 2025 and Project 2040 – this creates an appropriate moment for ITI to review and reaffirm its resource organisation role. In recent years, other organisations have joined ITI in designing and delivering artist-support programmes, particularly for emerging artists and those at an early stage of their careers. At the same time, ITI has identified new resource gaps, particularly for mid-career artists. We see a need for a more comprehensive approach to supporting theatre practitioners and believe ITI can deliver that through its programmes and events. We are well-placed to inform and influence national cultural policy and capable of playing a brokering role, if required, between state agencies and the sector to bring those policies to life. We have identified a need to resource the next-phase skills needs of “emerged” artists to support their ongoing artistic excellence. Related to this, we see the urgent need to improve working and living conditions for artists, particularly in the less recognised areas of wellbeing, dignity and personal as well as career development. We know about the increasing importance of career internationalisation and the need to upskill artists to avail of opportunities overseas.

In this document, we are laying out the strategic direction ITI needs to take in the next three years to become the resource organisation we believe the sector needs. We are setting out our ambition to grow the organisation beyond the particular and exceptional skills and experiences of its Co-Directors, to scale the organisation - in people, in capacity, in funding and in physical infrastructure - to become a true Institute that can best deliver for theatre in Ireland.

# OUR VALUES

- **CREATIVITY**

*ITI commits to imagination, vision and creativity, bringing into being the new, both in our own work and in the artistic work we support.*

- **LEADERSHIP**

*ITI commits to being a leading arts and resource organisation of ambition and vision.*

- **RESPECT**

*ITI commits to respectful collaboration with individual artists and all who engage with the organisation.*

- **EXCELLENCE**

*ITI commits to achieving artistic and professional excellence in everything we do.*

- **INCLUSION**

*ITI commits to geographical and demographic inclusion in all its activities and to ensuring diversity and gender equality.*

## **OUR GOALS**

- **TO SUPPORT THEATRE ARTISTS AND MAKERS**
- **TO PROMOTE THE ARTFORM**
- **TO STRENGTHEN THE IRISH THEATRE SECTOR**

# GOAL I: TO SUPPORT THEATRE ARTISTS AND MAKERS

## OUR AIMS

- I. We will lead and collaborate to enable artists and theatre makers to make excellent work for audiences, old and new
- II. We will provide high level, relevant mentoring, training and continuing professional development opportunities and programmes for theatre artists and makers, across all stages of their careers, in response to their needs and the changing realities of the theatre-making environment, nationally and internationally
- III. We will provide practical supports and information to artists through our comprehensive online and in person information provision and theatre resources
- IV. We will look to improve, with suitable partners, the working and welfare conditions for artists by influencing national cultural policy by commissioning and disseminating research and best practice evidence, and by delivering seminars and workshops

## HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR AIMS

- I. We will lead and collaborate to enable artists and theatre makers to make excellent work for audiences, old and new:
  - a. We will continue to develop artistic partnerships that enable work to be made and presented - such as creating/producing schemes Show in A Bag and Duets (with Fishamble / Dublin Fringe), and collaborations on commissions, readings and productions.
  - b. We will place an emphasis on collaborations, networking and touring – as well as bespoke mentoring and upskilling – to assist artists to develop sustainable careers.
  - c. We will take a national view, designing programmes to ensure that artists working in less populated areas of the country are less isolated and have access to the necessary supports to make work.
  - d. We will work with others to design delivery models and supports that meet the needs of artists as well as venues and festivals of various shapes and sizes.
- II. We will provide high level, relevant mentoring and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for theatre artists and makers, across all stages of their careers, in response to their needs and the changing realities of the theatre-making environment in Ireland and beyond:

- a. We will commission qualitative research into CPD and mentoring needs of the theatre-making community, particularly artists, with a view to increasing the quality, range and capacity of support/upskilling programmes for theatre artists.
  - b. We will continue our established mentoring programmes – bespoke mid-career mentoring, Six in the Attic (resource sharing and mentoring), prime (CPD for older actors) and Six in the Attic Alumni (continuing mentoring and off-site partnerships).
  - c. We will grow the capacity among established SITA alumni artists through a dedicated “Artists as Mentors” development programme where following training, they will provide mentoring with upcoming mentee artists – an initiative which is underpinned by an ethos of progression and transformative learning.
  - d. We will expand our existing collaborations and partnerships with Local Authorities with a view to extending the geographic reach of our mentoring and other programmes, in line with the varied needs of artists in different parts of the country.
  - e. We will design and deliver a new programme of seminars and workshops on welfare, wellness and living and working conditions for theatre artists in partnership with relevant agencies and organisations and with international comparisons and evidence.
  - f. We will design and deliver a new series of skills development opportunities for actors and other theatre practitioners for example, training in Irish language fluency, digital innovations in theatre practice and carbon management in theatre production.
- III. We will provide advice and supports to artists through our comprehensive online and in-person information provision and theatre resources:
- a. We will continue our guardianship and development of comprehensive ITI online theatre resources.
  - b. We will continue to provide in-person Information Clinics, both on-site and mobile, as well as phone and email support for artists.
  - c. We will continue the provision and development of a wide range of practical training opportunities and access to advice for self-producing and independent artists: including funding, strategy, budgeting, legal and social welfare issues.
  - d. We will build our vital “pitching” skills development initiatives, helping artists to hone their ability and build confidence to present their own work, particularly in an international context.
  - e. We will continue and build on the provision of national and international touring expertise to enable the development and sustainability of more touring opportunities for artists.
- IV. We will look to improve working and welfare conditions for artists by influencing national cultural policy and research, by commissioning and disseminating research and best practice evidence, and by delivering seminars and workshops:

- a. We will pursue the rollout of the 'Speak Up and Call it Out' Code of Behaviour to ensure it is embedded in Irish theatre practice.
  - b. We will seek out, commission and disseminate research to demonstrate best practice and models that can provide evidence to influence national policy for the benefit of theatre artists, including social welfare, employment and workplace issues.
  - c. We will advocate for the inclusion and enforcement of working condition standards (including workplace wellbeing standards such as IBEC's Keep Well Mark) in national cultural policy.
  - d. We will pursue programmes focused on the personal wellbeing of artists and will place this at the heart of our own work by creating safe spaces, ensuring discretion and prioritising our sense of care in all artist interactions.
  - e. We will lead by example, embedding best practice and standards in all of ITI's own programmes and policies.
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## **GOAL II: TO PROMOTE THE ARTFORM**

### **OUR AIMS**

- I. We will continue to map the dramatic repertoire and theatre history of the island of Ireland, telling the nation's story through playwriting and production from our founding mothers and fathers to our contemporaries
- II. We will provide confident artform leadership for Irish theatre, representing the artform in Ireland and internationally, both now and into its future
- III. We will become more strategically flexible and even more responsive to sectoral needs, to enable the creation of theatre work, from conception to production to presentation, that is representative of changes in the social, cultural and demographic landscape of Ireland
- IV. We will cultivate, support and encourage the sector's and the public's engagement with the Irish theatre repertoire, with Irish theatre and with the Institute itself

### **HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR AIMS**

- I. We will continue to map the dramatic repertoire and theatre history of the island of Ireland, telling the nation's story through playwriting and production from our founding mothers and fathers to our contemporaries.

- a. We will continue to build *PLAYOGRAPHYIreland* and continue to research and update our extensive new Irish play resource, Irish Playography / Playography na Gaeilge
  - b. We will pursue strategic national partnerships to maximise the reach, potential and sustainability of our databases – particularly Irish Playography, Playography na Gaeilge and IRISHTHEATRE.ie – through expert analyses and published reports.
  - c. We will develop the ePlays script library, increasing the number of titles and improving the purchasing experience.
  - d. We will develop relevant and focused relationships in the education sector – particularly third level theatre and archive areas – to strengthen ITI’s custodial and cataloguing work.
- II. We will provide confident artform leadership for Irish theatre, representing the artform in Ireland and internationally, both now and into its future.
- a. We will review theatre making and practice in Ireland today, through a “State of Play” programme of curated events, discussions and publications as part of the 20-year celebration of PLAYOGRAPHYIreland to mark the Centenary of the establishment of the Irish state in 2021/2
  - b. We will champion the potential for Irish language theatre in Ireland.
  - c. We will establish a new strategic relationship with Culture Ireland, beginning in 2020, which will complement Arts Council international arts policy and will ensure opportunities for Irish theatre makers abroad are optimised.
  - d. We will explore and develop new relationships with European partners to animate relevant and important collaboration projects (which could be funded via Creative Europe, Erasmus Plus or other EU funding schemes).
  - e. We will represent Irish theatre at international networks, markets and symposia such as IETM, ENICPA, SIBMAS, APAM, ISPA, Edinburgh International Festival and more.
- III. We will become more strategically flexible and even more responsive to sectoral needs, to enable the creation of theatre work, from conception to production to presentation, that is representative of changes in the social, cultural and demographic landscape of Ireland.
- a. We will provide bursaries, residencies, engagements and opportunities for new and emerging playwrights from diverse backgrounds
  - b. We will maintain writers’ programmes such as the Phelim Donlon Annual Playwright’s Bursary and Residency in association with Tyrone Guthrie Centre Residency and will continue to support the Stewart Parker Trust Awards.
  - c. We will continue and extend our dramaturgical support/mentoring to playwrights who wish to produce scripts, including those working in the Irish language.

- IV. We will cultivate, support and encourage the sector's and the public's engagement with the Irish theatre repertoire, with Irish theatre and with the Institute itself:
    - a. We will create and curate PLAYOGRAPHYIreland events, generate findings reports and produce publications to inform, share and animate the repertoire for the amateur sector and the general public
    - b. We will produce new online assets, including podcasts, to highlight and promote the depth of resource in PLAYOGRAPHYIreland, and other ITI online resources and publications, for theatre practitioners.
    - c. We will devise and resource a profile / visibility-building plan for the work of the Institute to engage more widely with the sector and the public.
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## **GOAL III TO STRENGTHEN THE THEATRE SECTOR OUR AIMS**

- I. We will participate in and contribute to national cultural policy discourse with a view to embedding policy points that address theatre sector issues
- II. We will build stronger relationships with national and regional cultural agencies to identify new areas for development and, together, to progress initiatives of mutual interest and of sectoral benefit
- III. We will strengthen ITI as an organisation, growing our expertise, improving our management model, broadening our income base and enacting policies that improve our capacity to deliver this strategy and to better serve the needs of a more diverse sector
- IV. We will lead an investigation into the feasibility of a sustainable, enhanced, building-based Irish Theatre Institute, an enriching infrastructure dedicated to the theatre community to provide technical support, professional development, research insights and physical spaces in which artists can create and play

## **HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR AIMS**

- I. We will participate in and contribute to national cultural policy discourse with a view to embedding policy points that address theatre sector issues:
  - a. We will prioritise conversations with agencies involved in national policy development that impacts on the theatre sector, in particular the Arts Council (*Making Great Art Work*), Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (*Culture 2025, Project 2040, Speak it Up and*

*Call it Out*), Culture Ireland, Creative Ireland, Foras na Gaeilge and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

- b. We will particularly strengthen our relationship with the Arts Council regarding its strategic priorities for practitioners, artform development and touring, with a view to working in concert for the benefit of the theatre sector.
  - c. We will identify sectoral research needs such as a Wellbeing Study of theatre practitioners and work with appropriate partners on research projects of mutual interest and of sectoral benefit.
- II. We will deepen relationships with national and regional agencies and sectoral organisations to identify new areas for development and, together, to progress initiatives of mutual interest and of sectoral benefit:
- a. We will prioritise regular engagement with ITI's key stakeholders and project funders.
  - b. We will continue to develop our existing partnerships with organisations such as Dublin Theatre Festival, Dublin Fringe Festival, Fishamble the new play company, Dance House, Theatre Forum, Town Hall Theatre Galway, Galway 2020, Age & Opportunity (Bealtaine Festival), Tyrone Guthrie Centre; and partners in Pathways to Production (Baboró, Branar, Galway Theatre Festival, Druid).
  - c. We will deepen our relationship with Dublin City Council and other city stakeholders with a view to securing additional work space for theatre and theatre artists in Dublin City.
  - d. We will deepen our partnerships with Local Authorities around Ireland building on our successful partnership with Galway County, Galway City and Roscommon County Councils via the Agents of Change (Invitation to Collaboration) programme.,
- III. We will strengthen ITI as an organisation, improving our management model, broadening our income base and enacting policies that improve our capacity to deliver this strategy and to better serve the needs of a more diverse sector:
- a. We will engage in an independent review of our artists' programmes to measure impact and evaluate and monitor effectiveness in order to inform our programme of work in our next Strategic Plan in 2022 -26
  - b. We will enhance the organisational model of the Institute to enable its sustainability and growth, including a management succession plan, organisational capacity-building programme, CPD and education opportunities for long and short-term team members.
  - c. We will aim to broaden ITI's income base, and to this end will commission, resource and implement a fundraising and development plan, which includes philanthropic giving and developing new relationships with key donors, trusts and foundations.
  - d. We will endeavour to employ the highest Governance Standards in the management of the organisation. We will apply best practice policies as an employer to ensure the health, dignity, wellbeing and career progression of those who work with ITI.

- e. We will review and amend policies to better meet disability and access standards and requirements, ensuring improving disability access at 17 Eustace Street.
  - f. We will introduce policies to reduce ITI's environmental impact and carbon footprint.
- IV. We will lead an investigation into an enriching infrastructure dedicated to the theatre community and providing technical support, professional development, research insights and physical spaces in which artists can create and play in an accessible, sustainable and enhanced building-based Irish Theatre Institute:
- a. We will commission a feasibility study on the service, resource and space requirements for an evolved Irish Theatre Institute (in Dublin but with a national remit), including the development of a sustainable business and governance model, and taking into account the needs and demands of the Irish theatre sector for such a resource.
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# EVALUATING SUCCESS

We are committed to research and evaluation as part of our revised three -year strategy, both to review the progression of our stated objectives and also to evaluate the impact of our work with and for artists, the artform and the sector.

We have identified strategic objectives under each of our three priority areas to inform our work over the next three years and will create an annual plan that sets out how we will achieve our priorities for each year, drawing from our overarching five-year strategy 2017-2021, revised 2020-2022 .

These annual plans will identify a range of measures that we will monitor, to track delivery against our objectives but also to help us understand our own work and the health of the theatre sector - and theatre practitioners - in Ireland. Monitoring will range from quantitative tracking of activity and programme participant feedback (already in place and informing our programme development and delivery) to additional analysis of existing data, focus groups, qualitative research and other evidence gathering to specifically track the success/impact of achieving certain objectives.

ITI would look to work with the Arts Council on identifying capacity-building initiatives to address skills gaps in the theatre sector and, if possible, to repeat the skills audit after five years to measure the impact of such initiatives.

ITI commits to undertaking a **strategy review** (end 2020) to inform its strategy for 2023-27. Both Board and executive team will be involved in reviewing progress and open to changing direction on some objectives if necessary to better serve the needs of artists, the artform and the sector. We plan to solicit the input of the sector and key funding partners to inform this mid-strategy review.

## STAFF & BOARD (Aug 2019)

Co-Directors: Siobhán Bourke | Jane Daly

General Manager: Eláine Donnelly

Programme Coordinator: Leigh Hussey

Administrator: Katherine Murphy

Playography Researcher: Claire Keogh

Board of Directors: Jane Brennan | Chris Morash | Damian Downes (Chair) |

Bernardine Maloney | Andrea Martin | Cian O'Brien |

*Presented and approved by the Board of Irish Theatre Institute in August 2019.*