

DANCE IRELAND

Strategy

2018 | 2023



Moving Forward Together

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Statement from Chairperson

Ireland enjoys a long tradition of dance. It is an indigenous practice that has evolved over centuries and which continues to be one of the most potent expressions of who we are and how we are.

It is at once personal and political, intimate and expansive. It inspires, delights, confounds, confronts and connects us. We see this at dance events large and small, professional and amateur. We experience it on our sofa surrounded by family and friends watching the ever popular weekend TV dancing shows. No matter the genre – from ballroom to ballet, contemporary to capoeira, traditional to tap - dance moves us all and we are the better for it.

For these reasons and for many more, Dance Ireland's ambition for dance in Ireland is bold and inclusive. Our vision is of an Ireland where dance is valued and is vibrantly, actively and confidently part of people's lives. Achieving this, we believe, would ensure a sustainable future for dance in this country and make it a credible career for those committed to dance as their profession. There is much to do to achieve this vision and ensure that future. Dance Ireland exists to make it happen.

In reflecting on where we have come from and what we are now setting out to do, one thing is clear: we cannot do this alone. We are at our best, at our most successful, at our most progressive, and at our most enabling when we work together.

Dance demands collaboration in its creative processes.

Its development is similarly strengthened, expanded and opened up by artistic associations and funding partnerships such as those we have hugely benefitted from and wish to sustain and grow with for example The Arts Council, Creative Ireland, Culture Ireland and Dublin City Council, among many other strategic partners. We must embrace the changing landscape of dance in Ireland, now with excellent centres and colleagues in Belfast, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Longford and continue to create the international connections that are so vital to the ecology here.

At our best Dance Ireland is a community of creative professionals bound by a commitment to the development of dance in Ireland. To be at our best we must come together as a community with a strong sense of common purpose and share responsibility for the future of dance in Ireland. We will enable this, buoyed by the confidence and focus that comes with the development of a strategy such as this.

By working with us, by supporting us, you invest in your future, our future and the future of dance in Ireland. This strategy provides us with the roadmap to secure a better dance future for us all.

We look forward to the next five years. We hope you do too.

John Malone
Chairperson

Introduction from Chief Executive

In the first full year of this strategy Dance Ireland will celebrate its thirtieth birthday. It is a landmark moment for the organisation which was established as the Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland at a time of crisis for the profession.

The fact that APDI survived and now thrives as Dance Ireland is testament to the resilience and resolve of its originating members and to the ongoing commitment of those who followed their lead. That foundational impetus – to bring dance artists together to sustain and grow dance as a practice and as a profession - is still key to who we are and what we do. We are a dance development organisation and a community of innovative collaborators, creative partners and colleagues working together to enable great dance to be made and shared.

Having the resource of DanceHouse has expanded our core purpose and now we enable both professional artists and enthusiasts to achieve their creative potential, to express themselves and be the best they can be in and through dance. We can say this clearly and with confidence now, as a result of our work to develop this strategy, which is the first for the organisation.

For us the process to develop the strategy was as important as the priorities we now share here. It involved an extensive programme of consultation with our Board, executive and stakeholders. It brought us back to a close engagement with our members. It facilitated honest dialogue and robust discussion. It supported recognition of what we have achieved whilst also acknowledging the challenges posed by our growth and development as an organisation, now balancing the demands and opportunities of a building with the needs of our members. This process has reminded us of what matters most.

**Our members are at the heart
of everything we do and all that
we stand for.**

The five pillars of this strategy – advocacy, connection, innovation, progression and sustainability - affirm this and provide a clear framework for our work. We will continue to actively listen and proactively respond to the needs of our members. We will also adopt new approaches to support: developing a sharper curatorial eye and creating opportunities for members to enable each other. We are a community. It is only by coming together and working together that dance as an artform will be progressed and made viable as a career. Our future is our collective responsibility.

I look forward to working with our members, the Board and committed team to ensuring that future. It has been vividly set out for us in this strategy. We go forward re-invigorated by that clarity of purpose and with a renewed sense of pride in what we do: enabling the development of dance in Ireland.

Paul Johnson
Chief Executive

Statement of Inclusion

Dance Ireland embraces and values all forms of dance practice including but not limited to classical ballet, contemporary dance, traditional Irish dance, ethnic forms, somatic practices, social dancing and hybrid movement forms.

We also recognise and welcome new ways of working in dance through interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary practice. We work to enable all those who share our love of dance, from the professional to enthusiast, to achieve their creative potential.



Who We Are



Dance Ireland is Ireland's national dance development organisation and, true to our origins, we are proud to continue to be the representative body for the professional dance community in Ireland.

Our bold ambition is for dance to be valued and vibrantly, actively and confidently part of people's lives. Achieving this, we believe, would ensure a sustainable future for dance in Ireland and a credible career for those committed to dance as a profession. We exist to make this happen.

In 2006, Dance Ireland moved to a purpose-built facility, DanceHouse, in Dublin's north-east inner city. Operated under licence from Dublin City Council, DanceHouse has become nationally and internationally recognised as the home for dance in Ireland. A flagship dance hub, comprising six state-of-the-art studios, we also provide our community access to an Artists' Resource Room

for individual or group work, with archive, library and hot desk facilities, break-out spaces and smiling welcome. Having this resource has helped us hugely advance what we can achieve for dance.

We use all the opportunities afforded by DanceHouse, our own expertise and connections alongside those of our national and international partners to create a programme of work that engages the public and supports the professional, crossing the boundaries of age, experience and genre. As such we enable the development of dance as an art-form, as an activity to be accessed and enjoyed, as well as working to progress professional practice.

To that end, we offer dedicated support to our members who are professionals working in dance, movement and choreography currently or are aspiring to do so in the near future, and also to those who support and are connected with dance, movement or choreographic work.

In Dance Ireland, we come together as a community of creative professionals, sharing a passion for dance and the resolve to make it the very best it can be.

Our Vision

Our vision is of an Ireland where dance is valued and is vibrantly, actively and confidently part of people's lives.

Our Mission

To enable the development of dance as an art-form, a professional practice and an activity of interest by:

Expertly supporting all those working professionally in dance.

Creating enticing opportunities for participation that transcend age, ability and access.

Brokering connections between people, practices and place in Ireland and internationally.

Inspiring confidence and encouraging curiosity about dance.

Fostering an actively engaged and informed dance community.

Being a strong voice for dance.



Our Values

Artist-centred

We put the dance artist at the centre of all that we do. We respond to the needs and ideas of the dance community and take the lead in advocating for and exemplifying the conditions and environment in which dance will thrive as a profession, a practice and a passion.

Discovery

Every day in our studios, people explore new ways to express themselves through dance. We encourage and champion that spirit of inquiry which seeks to learn, to grow, to try something new. By doing so, we seek to build audiences for dance, inspire confident participation and progress professional practice.

Connection

We engage at home and abroad to forge the relationships, find the opportunities and create the connections that inspire dance artists and our programme. We enable people, places, ideas, communities and genres of dance to come together - to ignite action, provoke thought or, simply, for fellowship and fun.

Expertise

We combine a breadth of experience and a depth of expertise with artistic insight and practical understanding. We share what we know generously and create opportunities for others to develop and share their knowledge and skills too, in and out of the studio.

Openness

We embrace all forms of dance and are for all those who love dance: professional or participant. We are open to new ideas, new ways of working and new collaborations. We aim to be honest and straightforward in all our dealings and actively seek feedback.

Our

Strategic

Priorities



Advocacy

To build the profile of dance and be a leading, expert voice advocating for the dance profession and the art-form.

Connection

To build and strengthen relationships that deliver on our ambitions and those of our members.

Progression

To work with dance artists at all stages of their career to support their artistic and professional development.

Innovation

To champion and facilitate the development of new work, new ideas and new ways of working.

Sustainability

To ensure our future as a well-managed, well-funded and well-governed organisation.

Advocacy



Goal: To build the profile of dance and be a leading, expert voice advocating for the dance profession and the art-form.

We believe there is scope to enhance the understanding and appreciation of dance as an art-form, to increase public engagement with dance and to boost levels of public subsidy for dance. This makes advocacy an urgent and important task for Dance Ireland.

Objectives (what we are setting out to do to achieve the goal)

We will build understanding and appreciation of dance and promote engagement with it.

We will make the case for increased funding for dance with key funders and policy makers.

We will empower and up-skill our members and those within the wider dance community to be confident advocates for their profession.

We will lead the discussion to improve the living and working conditions of those working professionally in dance.

How will we know we have achieved this goal?

We will have curated high-profile, celebratory days of dance which, along with ongoing marketing activity and audience development training and support initiatives, will have raised interest in dance and have deepened and expanded engagement.

We will have achieved increased funding for the dance sector.

We will have a community of members who are actively and expertly championing their profession and contributing to its progression.

We will have contributed research and positively influenced decision-making by government and policy-makers to advance the living and working conditions of professional dance artists.

Connection

Goal: To build and strengthen the relationships that deliver on our ambitions and those of our members.

Dance is a highly collaborative art-form that transcends borders and boundaries. We value the role partnership and collaboration plays in the creative process and in promoting engagement with dance. Much of our success to date has been achieved through working in association with others. This is why we will continue to prioritise creating and encouraging connections between people, places and practices, nationally and internationally.

Objectives (what we are setting out to do to achieve the goal)

We will maintain and build our network of partners at local, national and international levels and develop specialised partnership programmes to maximise our impact.

We will curate a national and international programme of dance-specific and multi-disciplinary encounter and exchange.

We will enable networking and community-building opportunities online and at live events.

We will expand and promote our evening and weekend public programmes to forge greater engagement with those interested in dance as a participant.

We will review and strengthen our Access and Participation programme to enhance how we support and deliver dance in the community initiatives.

We will provide experiential learning opportunities for artists looking to develop the skills to work collaboratively with communities of place and/or interest.



How will we know we have achieved this goal?

We will have sustained and built on our relationships with local, national and international partners and have identified new partners and programmes that expand the impact of our work.

We will have a cohort of members who have personally and professionally benefitted from engagement with leading individuals, practices or organisations.

We will have a vibrant, informed community of professionals who come together to support each other via our online member forum and at live events such as the 'Made in Ireland' showcase and annual conference.

We will have increased attendance at and interest in our public programmes.

We will have worked with Dublin City Council to strengthen access and participation opportunities for participants from our immediate locale and the wider community, which will be regarded as models of best practice.

We will have developed a national training programme for dance facilitators working in social and community contexts.

Progression



Goal: To work with dance artists at all stages of their career to advance their artistic and professional development.

We are committed to supporting all those who engage with dance to achieve their creative potential. With a track record of high-quality training and development activities, over the next five years we will maintain and build on what we have established, alert to the challenges of an ever-changing and increasingly demanding profession.

Objectives (what we are setting out to do to achieve the goal)

We will expand our programme of ongoing professional training that supports artistic practice and technical skill development.

We will provide a programme of continuing professional development training that offers practical supports for working as a dance artist.

We will develop our 'Healthier Dancer Days' programme to support our members physical and mental well-being.

We will provide career coaching and mentorship opportunities for dance artists at all stages of a career.

We will continue and expand our Associate Artist programme.

How will we know we have achieved this goal?

We will have expanded the range and availability of our professional classes and other technical training opportunities to a year-round programme that encompasses a diversity of dance genres.

We will have a community who feel confident about and equipped to deal with the administrative demands of working as a dance professional.

We will have a community of dance professionals who trust, regularly engage with and benefit from an expanded 'Healthier Dance' programme.

We will have an established coaching and mentoring programme that is recognised as a model of best practice for those working in creative careers.

We will have 13 Associate Artists working with Dance Ireland and in partner organisations annually.

Innovation

Goal: To champion and facilitate the creation of new work and new ways of working.

Excellence and experimentation in dance are central to its development. We want to be at the forefront of that development by providing opportunities for research and interrogation of practice as well as by creating the conditions and offering the supports that encourage new thinking, new work or ways of working.

Objectives (what we are setting out to do to achieve the goal)

We will develop fully-resourced residencies specifically to support artists wishing to explore new approaches to making and presenting work, whether online, live or site-specific.

We will develop a programme to support and encourage new forms of collaboration outside an arts context e.g. dance and science.

We will continue and strengthen HATCH, our programme that specifically supports established professionals to extend the boundaries of their practice.

We will establish research residencies with leading third-level institutions in Ireland and Europe.

How will we know we have achieved this goal?

We will have suite of residencies that are widely acknowledged as having supported and enabled the development of new work from inception to public presentation.

We will have a suite of work that calibrates and promotes dance in a new contexts.

We will have a cohort of members whose practice has been informed by a committed process of experimentation and reflection.

We will be contributing to academic discourse about dance nationally and internationally.



Sustainability

Goal: To ensure our future as a well-managed, well-funded and well-governed organisation.



As Dance Ireland looks to secure its future, we must review and strengthen our operation and organisational capabilities in a number of key areas including income generation, governance and HR, with the well-being of staff paramount. Retaining and growing a strong and engaged membership who value Dance Ireland is also key to our future success.

Objectives (what we are setting out to do to achieve the goal)

We will develop and maintain a sustainable financial model with diversified revenue streams.

We will ensure that an effective system of governance and control operates within the organisation.

We will ensure that the structure of the organisation and the capabilities of the Board and staff are aligned with those required to deliver the strategy.

We will develop an organisational culture that brings our values to life.

We will grow and diversify our membership base and increase member engagement and satisfaction with Dance Ireland.

How will we know we have achieved this goal?

We will have strong financial integrity, have addressed our longer-term financial needs and have diversified our revenue streams.

We will have best practice systems and processes in place in relation to governance, HR, IT, finance and risk management, with high levels of accountability and transparency.

We will have a fit-for-purpose organisational structure and a highly motivated and appropriately skilled Board and executive team.

We will have a culture that enables each member of staff and each professional member to be at their best and that supports the delivery of the strategy.

We will have a diverse, vibrant and supportive community of creative professionals who value Dance Ireland and contribute to the development of dance in Ireland.

With thanks

Our strategy development process involved an extensive programme of consultation and discovery including:

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with board members, executive, key national and international stakeholders and associates.

An online survey open to members and the general public.

Desk research into comparable and competitor organisations.

Workshops with executive staff.

Literature review including *Dance Ireland Research Report*, Madeline Boughton (2017), *Making Great Art Work*, The Arts Council (2015), *Culture 2025 – Éire Ildánach, A Policy Framework*, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (2016) and *The City Arts Plan, 2014 – 2018*, Dublin City Council (2014).

The strategy was also greatly informed by our Engagement Process with members, facilitated by Susan Coughlan, and by the research project undertaken by Madeline Boughton.

We would like to thank all those who contributed their time and best thinking to the development of this strategy.

We acknowledge, with thanks, the support of consultant Janice McAdam in this process and the direction provided by the Strategy Steering Group led by John Malone (Chair), with Richard Johnson (Deputy Chair), Paul Johnson (Chief Executive), Dr. Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain and Maria Nilsson Waller.



Images throughout are by Ewa Figaszewska

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