



AUDITORIA

A REVIEW OF PLANNING, PROGRAMMING AND
PROVISION FOR PERFORMING ARTS VENUES IN IRELAND

FOREWORD

I am delighted to present the Auditoria report. It was commissioned by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to inform the implementation of the third Arts Plan and the Arts Strategy Programme of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The Auditoria project was a comprehensive review of the physical infrastructure of the performing arts throughout Ireland, undertaken during 2000 and 2001.

The review, which concentrated on venues in receipt of funding from the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, conducted detailed analyses of the operations and programming of fifty-four venues and arts centres. Non-Arts Council funded venues such as the National Concert Hall and the University Hall in Limerick were not included in this review however, the data and statistics provided by Music Network in respect of music venues were noted.

An important element of the Auditoria project was the detailed technical survey of over a hundred venues throughout Ireland. The creation of an electronic database, available on the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon's website www.artscouncil.ie/auditoria, has been welcomed as a valuable resource by the sector.

The review took account of the probable effect which the enlarged network of venues would have in terms of access for audiences to a programme of high-quality and well presented drama, dance and opera productions as well as the probable increased levels of funding which would be sought from the Councils by the managements of that increased circuit.

I am pleased to say that since the report was written, a number of recommendations have been implemented. In particular, the decision to offer funding to the Theatre Forum which, in turn, is addressing many of the needs identified in the report. It is clear that certain findings, for example in the areas of capital programme, audience development, repertoire, touring and local partnerships remain pertinent to future debate. In this context, three key issues arise: the availability of touring productions; the financial sustainability of the enlarged network; and the long-term sustainability of venues in relation to the population base they serve. In the coming months, Council will seek to encourage debate on these issues, not least in dialogue with our local authority partners and with the arts sector.

I want to thank all those who contributed to the Auditoria project. Those who participated in the various focus group workshops, the members of the Steering Committee who gave very generously of their time and experience and the specialist consultants who undertook detailed modules of the project.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the report's author Phelim Donlon and editor Medb Ruane. Together they have delivered an excellent document, which provides us with a basis for informed debate and discussion, as the Arts Council enters a new phase of planning for the performance arts in Ireland.

Mary Cloake

Director

August 2004

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Arts Council/an Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland want to broaden and enhance audiences for the arts. For this aim to become a reality, audiences need opportunities to access quality arts activities and to choose from among wide-ranging varied programmes. The Councils share a long-term objective to create a network of effective, efficient performing arts venues.

In November 1999, the two Arts Councils set up the Auditoria Project, a data and analysis based survey of the performing arts venues. Auditoria assesses the current state of theatres and performing arts centres, identifies areas for action and details recommendations for both Councils and their respective Governments about funding priorities and criteria for the future.

Objectives

The terms of reference of the report were to:

- Prepare a benchmark database about the physical infrastructure for the performing arts throughout the island (theatre buildings and arts centres); this database should be capable of being updated regularly so as to provide accurate topical information to the Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
- Provide both Arts Councils with a means of relating infrastructural support programmes to expenditure on performing arts production and touring (including music, opera, drama and dance) and of ensuring that appropriate supports are provided to enhance the programming capability of venue managers, while optimising the efficiency of touring organisations.
- Provide advice to the Arts Council about appropriate levels and structures for assisting newly developed CDIS (Cultural Development Incentive Scheme) venues in relation to grant-aid.
- Provide a means for the Arts Councils in

Ireland to offer advice to their respective parent Departments in relation to capital investment in performing arts infrastructures.

Background

At the beginning of the 1980s, the number, quality and geographical spread of performing venues throughout Ireland was relatively poor (See Appendix 1). Three key developments helped to change that picture.

The Cultural Development Incentive Scheme (CDIS)

Established in 1996 by the then Minister for Arts and Culture, Michael D. Higgins, TD, the Scheme was supported by EU funding to provide capital grants for an improved physical infrastructure for arts and cultural organisations. It contributed €25,517,444 (£20,096,622) to 30 arts organisations. CDIS decisions have on-going funding implications for the Arts Council as projects come on stream because the feasibility studies submitted to Government during the application process assumed Arts Council income support.

The National Lottery in Northern Ireland

Established in April 1995, this lottery funded 28 venues from 1st April 1995 to 27th October 2001 at a total cost of STG£20,310,658. The awards are made up of capital and revenue funding, so some venues received funds in both categories.

The ACCESS Programme

Established in May 2000 by the then Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Island, Síle de Valera, TD, its purpose was to provide once-off capital funding to arts, cultural and heritage organisations so as to help provide and develop arts and cultural centres around the country. The Minister set up an advisory committee to review applications and make recommendations on priorities. Phelim Donlon, the Auditoria project director, was a member. The budget of €47.7 (£36m) was allocated to 44 organisations, €33m of which went to 29 arts venues. Building is due to start in 2002 and most new venues are due to come on stream by 2005. The Auditoria project had, however, already

started when the ACCESS programme was established and research work was completed by the time the ACCESS funding decisions were announced. Further research was therefore carried out to assess the impact of the ACCESS funding decisions on the overall built infrastructure and to identify remaining gaps. That research informs final recommendations in this report. A detailed analysis of how ACCESS decisions will impact on the key gaps identified at the start of the Auditoria project is set out in Chapter 2.

Local Authorities

The Arts Council's survey of local authority expenditure on the arts over the four-year period 1994-1997 found that various funds from central sources had stimulated a growth in expenditure. Such funds included capital grants from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, project grants from a range of EU schemes, as well as Arts Council funding.

Local authority revenue funding of municipal venues rose by 38%, from £812,688 to £1,121,758, during the period. Some 78% of this expenditure, however, was made by one local authority on a single project, namely by Dublin City Council on the development of the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art.

Capital expenditure rose by 92%, from £527,779 to £1,012,402, during the period. In 1997, capital expenditure on the arts rose by £276,555: an increase of 38% over 1996. This expenditure did not relate solely to performing arts venues, but included investment in purchases for municipal collections.

Capital investment by local authorities in new and/or refurbished performing arts venues was very significant in the period 1998-2001 particularly in the cases of Donegal, Cork, South Dublin, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Laois, Westmeath, Kildare and Waterford. These authorities also provided grants to performing arts venues in their areas, particularly new venues.

Any subsequent surveys will, if undertaken,

reflect the extent of the significant commitments to performing arts venues by certain local authorities, as well as highlighting others whose levels of support need to be brought into line as a priority.

Process

The Auditoria Steering Committee was appointed in January 2000. The five-person team included Siobhán Ní Éanaigh (Chairperson), Imelda Foley, Susan Coughlan, Kevin O'Sullivan and Glenn Patterson, who was subsequently replaced by Maurna Crozier. It met seven times in Dublin and Belfast.

Phelim Donlon, former Drama Officer with the Arts Council, was appointed project director on a full-time basis in the Republic of Ireland. He was supported by project managers Jennifer Traynor (to Dec. 2000) and Sián Cunningham (from Dec. 2000), who was project assistant from June 2000. In Northern Ireland, it was decided to manage the project within the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

The six key elements of the project comprised:

- Commissioning and analysing three major pieces of research:
 - a detailed technical survey of 100 venues throughout Ireland and creation of a web-based database;
 - a financial analysis of audited accounts over three years from 17 theatres and arts centres in the Republic;
 - a programming analysis of 54 theatres and arts centres with performing arts facilities throughout Ireland.
- Conducting extensive site visits throughout Ireland;
- Conducting focus groups comprising a representative sample of venue managers and production companies in the Republic;
- Analysing the impact of ACCESS funding decisions on the geographical spread of performing venues and identifying the revenue grant implications for the Arts Council;
- Analysing the specific needs in Northern Ireland and key urban areas in the Republic – Dublin, Cork, Limerick and

- Waterford;
- Interviewing key informants.

Scope

Performing arts venues in the Republic of Ireland tend to fit into two broad classifications: theatres and arts centres. Theatres provide dedicated venues for live dramatic, dance and musical performances while arts centres provide space for a range of artistic activities, including live theatrical and musical performances, together with non-performance activities such as visual art exhibitions, workshops, etc.

It was decided that the project would cover three types of venues:

- Venues currently in receipt of revenue funding by either Council were to be fully surveyed and profiled;
- Other existing venues operating on a full-time basis and under professional management;
- Newly emerging spaces or those planned to open in the short-term.

Other venues used occasionally by local arts officers or promoters were to be noted, but reference was expected to be minimal. It was also agreed that throughout the work of Auditoria, regard would be had to the different strategies and resources in relation to capital investment and expenditure between the two Councils.

The range of data to be collected was to cover:

- Demographic location, physical and technical facilities, financial profile, artistic policies – in venues and in touring theatre, opera, dance and music companies and ensembles;
- Audiences: attendances and profiles;
- Organisational structures including board composition and staffing levels;
- Artforms programmed.

Structure of the report

The key findings of the research are set out in Chapters 2-5, with the Recommendations set out in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 covers the performing arts infrastructure; Chapter 3 provides a financial analysis; Chapter 4 analyses programming; Chapter 5 looks at Northern Ireland.

2 THE PERFORMING ARTS INFRASTRUCTURE

Purpose

The purpose was to analyse existing venues, to place them in an infrastructural context and to create a database profiling key performing arts venues throughout Ireland. The database is available on www.artscouncil.ie/auditoria.

Key findings

- The CDIS and ACCESS funding have created an on-going revenue grant 'liability' for the Arts Council.
- There is very little useful 'intelligence' on audience profiles and behaviours.
- Three areas in the Republic with no professionally managed performing arts venue infrastructure will remain after ACCESS funding is distributed.
- Dublin needs an international-level lyric house as a priority.

Existing venues

Dublin city

In Dublin, opportunities to experience performing arts to a quality and scale that every other European capital enjoys routinely are limited. With quality of life an important consideration for attracting and retaining top employees, Dublin's lack of suitable venues contributes negatively to the overall work/life package that Irish authorities are increasingly using to attract global investment.

While many European cities were busy reconstructing, refurbishing and restoring theatres and concert halls in the post-war decades, and building new venues in strong, self-confident styles, Dubliners lost the Theatre Royal, the La Scala Opera House (Capitol), and the Queens Theatre. To this day, Dublin, a major European city, has no municipal theatre. The situation for the performing arts in Dublin is totally unsatisfactory in larger venues, i.e., from 1,000 seats upwards. This is an area of critical

deficit and in most urgent need of remedial attention.

The Olympia Theatre has become a rock/pop venue in recent years, with consequent deterioration of the internal fabric of what was once a fine 1,250 seat theatre; it is now no longer an acceptable venue for patrons of drama, dance, opera or non-amplified music events.

The Gaiety Theatre, which has survived despite many vicissitudes and benefited from careful maintenance and refurbishment by its current management, helped by a grant from the Millennium Committee, remains, in effect, the only serviceable venue for opera and musical presentations. The Gaiety Theatre is in addition the only Dublin city venue where drama productions requiring an audience of at least 1,000 seats to be viable can be mounted. However, the Gaiety's stage, back-stage areas and facilities are not adequate for larger-scale drama, dance and opera productions.

Some entrepreneurs try to address this deficit by promoting large-scale musical, dance and opera productions at the Point Depot on a strictly commercial basis, yet the experience for audiences there is highly compromised acoustically, as well as in terms of sight lines and facilities. It falls far short of the standards other first-rate lyric venues offer paying patrons.

The RDS's various spaces are suitable for large rock or pop promotions, and for circus-type shows, but none are capable of developing first class lyric house standards.

The National Concert Hall has adapted gradually to the needs of opera and dance, with some success. While certain limitations persist because the venue was not designed to house such work, audience facilities are superior to the Point Depot. Car parking remains a problem, but the NCH is centrally located and more convenient to public transport than the Point. Aside from these large buildings Dublin city has a number of small to medium scale

venues suitable for presenting performing arts events. As well as the Abbey and the Gate and other occasionally used venues, Dublin city has eight venues with seating capacities ranging from 50-100; five venues have seating capacities ranging from 100-250; two venues have seating capacities ranging from 300-550 and one venue has a seating capacity ranging from 600-650. (The new venue at Liberty Hall, Dublin opened subsequent to the completion of this report).

While most of the Dublin venues are well equipped and suitable for drama, unfortunately, very few of these venues are suitable for dance, except the Project Arts Centre and the Samuel Beckett Theatre. None is suited to opera, although Opera Theatre Company has managed with difficulty to use the Samuel Beckett Theatre, the Gate, the Tivoli, the O'Reilly Theatre in Belvedere and the RDS library.

Some venues programmed non-amplified music events of various kinds for a number of years, while others, including the National Concert Hall's John Field Room, tended to concentrate on music performances.

Apart from the National Concert Hall, the dearth of custom-built music venues means that concerts and recitals involving various forces, both vocal and instrumental, are given in a variety of buildings with problematic acoustic conditions, compromised seating arrangements and inadequate audience facilities.

Greater Dublin area

A number of new theatres and arts centres have emerged or are planned for the Greater Dublin area. Most received CDIS and/or ACCESS funding, as well as local authority capital investment by Fingal, South County Dublin, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown and Dublin City Council. They create what can be interpreted as a M50 circuit, making new spatial links between traditionally dispersed neighbourhoods and communities.

Completed venues include:

- Civic Theatre in Tallaght;

- Pavilion Theatre in Dun Laoghaire;
- Draíocht Theatre and Arts Centre in Blanchardstown;
- Ballymun Arts Centre in Ballymun (AXIS).

The Civic, Pavilion and Draíocht are operating varied programmes of drama, dance, music and opera as well as developing a commitment to generate their own work. The Civic Theatre has entered into co-production arrangements with production companies, and has also toured Civic Theatre productions to other regional venues. If this pattern is developed, other venue managers and audiences will benefit.

Planned venues include:

- DCU, Glasnevin, (the Helix opened in 2002 subsequent to the report);
- Ballyfermot Arts Renaissance Centre, Ballyfermot;
- Dundrum Town Centre Theatre;
- Millbank Theatre (re-development), Rush, Co Dublin;
- Northside Arts Centre, Coolock.

These venues will serve growing populations in Ballymun, Ballyfermot, Coolock, Dundrum and Rush and provide important facilities to their communities.

The Lambert Puppet Theatre in Monkstown has been an important centre for puppetry for many years, consolidated recently with the very successful Puppet Festival launched in co-operation with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

Lyric house: Dublin needs a lyric house as a priority, with all appropriate facilities (including extensive back-stage work areas and storage, a main auditorium of 2,500/3,000 and smaller rehearsal/workshops/studio spaces of varying capacities upwards of 500 seats, a range of complementary retail outlets and administration offices).

The house should be a signature building, as the Opera House is for Sydney, and as the

Waterfront has become for Belfast. The design would be a suitable project for an architectural competition, and its development would generate significant economic activity and spin-off employment. The project would stimulate public curiosity and debate and would build confidence on an unprecedented scale.

The building could become the 'house' of a grant-aided performance company, e.g., Opera Ireland, as well as the context within which an opera orchestra could be created. At the same time, it would offer Irish audiences a world-class service, while creating an exciting base for singers, dancers, musicians, choreographers and creative artists in all repertoires. The Opera de la Bastille in Paris is an excellent model upon which to base Dublin's new lyric/choreographic venue because of its state-of-the-art design, facilities and capacities.

Regional cities

Cork city: Cork has a number of small, medium and large-scale venues, making it well-equipped in terms of its population base. The leading role of Cork Opera House – not only for Cork City and county but for Munster and nationally – cannot be over-emphasised. The Opera House accommodates drama, music, dance and opera productions to very high standards in the 1,000 seat main auditorium, as well as smaller productions in the Half Moon Theatre seating 100-150 persons.

The Everyman Palace Theatre, seating up to 628 persons, enhances further the range of performing arts productions that can be programmed for Cork audiences.

The Institute for Choreography and Dance at Firkin Crane is a custom-built venue for dance performances and choreography, while Cork City Hall has proved very satisfactory for large concerts by the National Symphony Orchestra and other orchestras, and during the Cork Choral Festival.

Medium-scale drama and smaller recitals can be presented at Triskel Arts Centre, the new

Granary Theatre and the CAT (Cork Arts and Theatre) Club.

Galway city: Galway is less well provided for than Dublin or Cork. Until the Town Hall Theatre opened in 1996, indigenous and visiting companies found it almost impossible to bring their work to Galway audiences.

Galwegians transformed their disadvantage positively by developing outdoor/street spectacles (Macnas) and by making temporary locations, even tents, into venues for their famous Arts Festival.

The Black Box, which is now available for large-scale arena-type presentations, adds a further important facility to Galway's stock of performing arts venues, but the city still lacks a well-appointed, venue for drama, music, dance and opera productions which are large-scale and which need audience capacities of over 600 to be viable.

Limerick city: Limerick is poorly provided for in terms of well-designed, viable performance arts venues. While the University Concert Hall is a valuable and important music venue, only the Belltable Arts Centre can be used by indigenous or touring drama and dance companies and is itself very limited in terms of flexibility of presentation configurations and in terms of the scale of work it can accommodate. A new home for the Belltable is an urgent priority for all concerned with giving Limerick audiences better service.

Waterford city: Waterford has a good range of spaces: Garter Lane Arts Centre seats 180; the Forum can be configured for 200, 300, and 600 seat audiences; and the newly-refurbished bijou Theatre Royal seats 600.

Infrastructure review

Long-term objectives envisage a sustainable network of well-designed, well-managed, well-maintained and viable performing arts venues that give audiences a point of access to varied high-quality programmes. On that basis, the

Auditoria survey found that a 40 kilometre (25 miles) distance between similar venues is the optimal span for ensuring that each has a viable audience base. Local factors such as transport and immediate geography may help or hinder audience viability but in general, long-term objectives will be advanced by assessing progress in addressing gaps in provision, avoiding mutually disadvantageous overlaps and growing the range of activities available to particular audiences within the 40 km frame.

Table 1: Areas of poor infrastructure for performing arts, before and after ACCESS funding

Areas of poor infrastructure – before ACCESS funding

South and West Co Donegal
 South Co Leitrim/North Co Vavan
 Co Monaghan
 Co Meath
 South Roscommon/East Galway
 East Mayo
 Co Offaly
 Co Carlow
 North Tipperary
 South Kerry/West Cork
 Co Waterford (apart from Waterford city)

Areas of poor infrastructure – after ACCESS funding

South and West Co Donegal
 Co Offaly
 Co Carlow
 Co Waterford (apart from Waterford city)
 East Mayo

Geographical spread: impact of ACCESS

The research showed 11 areas in the Republic of Ireland with an inadequate built physical infrastructure for the performing arts. The ACCESS funding decisions addressed about half of those, shown in Table 1 below.

The grants to Liberty Corner Project in Dublin and Daghdha Dance Company in Limerick will complement the work of the Institute for Choreography and Dance in Cork and will create a national network of support for dance.

The grants to the Glór Irish Music Centre in Ennis, to the KCAT Centre in Kilkenny, to

Newbury House in Cork and to Kino in Kiltimagh, Co Mayo will provide very valuable facilities for artists and audiences in many artforms.

The grants to Abbeyfeale Riveroak Theatre Complex, Ionad Ealaíona Béal Mhuirthéad Teo, Dundrum Town Centre Theatre, Little Theatre, Gorey, and Millbank Theatre in Rush will extend and enhance the circuit of small to mid-scale performing arts venues.

Ballykeefe Amphitheatre, Kilkenny, Ferns Community & Arts Renaissance Centre, will provide encouragement and practical support for these community-based initiatives.

A number of the awards will address in a very significant way some of the infrastructural deficits already noted in this report:

- Courthouse Arts Centre, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim – serving South Leitrim and North Roscommon – will complete a line from Mullingar through Longford to Sligo and Enniskillen. The centres are all on or about the critical 40 km distance from each other.
- Navan Arts Centre will be a most significant addition to the network of venues nationally and will provide a welcome facility for audiences not only in Navan itself, which is ear-marked for strategic growth in the context of the National Development Plan, but throughout Co Meath. It will also put Navan at the centre of a circuit of venues including Mullingar, Virginia, Dundalk, Drogheda and Blanchardstown.
- Dundalk Town Hall Theatre & Gallery Re-development: This fine venue will be upgraded so as to be capable of receiving larger-scale performing arts productions as well as continuing to host a wide range of middle-scale touring companies. It will be a natural focus for audiences based in South Co Monaghan as well as Co Louth, and will become a logical point on a circuit of large-scale touring with Newry Town Hall, the Market Place Theatre in Armagh and Ardhowen Theatre in Enniskillen, as well as a circuit of smaller-scale touring with Newry Arts Centre, Garage Theatre in Monaghan, and Droichead Arts Centre, in Drogheda.
- Dean Crowe Theatre, Athlone, Re-development: This grant, together with the improvements and refurbishments recently carried-out, will mean that audiences in East Galway, and North Offaly as well as Athlone itself will have an excellent facility, and will make Athlone the important, long-needed, staging-point on touring company circuits.

- The Mall Arts Centre, Youghal: This development will restore a venue with particular architectural merit in an attractive setting that will serve audiences in West Waterford, East Cork and the Blackwater region and will be an attractive stage between Waterford City and Cork City for touring production companies.
- Mermaid County Wicklow Arts Centre: This development will be a most welcome facility for this important Co Wicklow town, and will serve as a strategic venue for touring companies as well as for the indigenous performing arts organisations.
- Carnegie Arts Centre, Kenmare, Co Kerry: This development will address the needs of audiences in South Kerry and West Cork in an area of great natural beauty but a difficult travelling environment. It will offer touring companies an opportunity to bring their productions to audiences in an area, which has been poor in infrastructure up to now.

Other areas

Three areas will remain without professionally managed performing arts venues when the ACCESS funding and other local developments are taken into account, as shown in Table 1. These are:

- South and West Co Donegal;
- Co Offaly;
- Co Waterford (excluding Waterford city).

However, at present there is no evidence of strong local structures or support for any new initiatives, a prerequisite for their sustainability and success. The research shows that the long-term success of a new performance centre depends on the following factors:

- A well-established, local arts organisation with the expertise and commitment to manage the initiative;
- Strong demand in the area for a performing arts venue and evidence that this would translate into future audiences.

The Arts Councils therefore should not be prepared to fund, or support the funding of new venues, until there is strong evidence of the factors outlined above being in place.

Management

Boards

Boards and shared visions: Research showed that in many cases difficulties have arisen because a venue's board members may not share a common vision and have widely varying views about what the venue should be and how it should operate. Board meetings often do not function as effectively as they ought. This is due in part to the lack of an agreed vision, mission, policies and objectives. It is also because some members see themselves as 'representatives' of narrow or marginal sectoral interests, rather than as individuals sharing collegiate responsibility to act in the best interests of the company. This was particularly noticeable with board members who are nominated by local and national agencies, which may have a funding interest in a venue.

Board numbers: Board size often creates serious difficulties for the Chairperson and Chief Executive in making the board function efficiently and effectively. Many existing venues have 12 or more members while others have as few as six or less. Good governance practice favours smaller boards comprising 6-8 members with relevant expertise and commitment.

Staff

Staffing levels: Almost all funded theatres have a core full-time staff ranging from 5-11 and a large part-time staff ranging from 8-20 covering the operations of box-office, stage crews, ushers, cleaners, salespersons, and so forth. Producing houses tend to have larger than average staff complements.

New venue staff ratios

The structures and staff complements of a number of venues that started recently are setting new standards that are valuable in assessing the needs and evaluating the performance of middle-scale venues (seating capacities in the range 350-400.)

Table 2: Capacity and staffing complements at new venues

Venue	Seating	Full-time staff	Part-time staff	FÁS staff
Pavilion	321-420	11	10	10
Draíocht	286-375	11	11	11
Civic	306	7	9	9
An Grianán	345	4	5	5
Market Place	397	8	10	10
Town Hall, Galway	393	7	10	10

Key functions: The most common full-time positions are shown below, with titles differing across venues.

- Director
- General Manager
- Production Manager
- Marketing/Press/PR
- Box Office/F.O.H. Manager
- Admin. Assistant
- Education/Outreach/Y.P.T
- Stage Manager/House Technician
- Finance Officer/Accountant
- Visual Arts Officer
- Development/Sponsorship

Part-time staff tends to be engaged as box-office staff, stage crew, ushers/programme sellers, bar staff or cleaners. Casuals will normally be engaged as additional stage or front-of-house staff for particular events or productions.

The use of and dependence on FÁS staff continues to be a crucial aspect of the operations of many older venues and, as table 2 shows, some of the newer venues. The incidence of reliance on FÁS staff is diminishing overall but the transition to engagement of full-

time or part-time pay-roll employment is a difficult and problematic process for managements.

Recruitment and Retention: The research shows that some of the most committed and talented managers are leaving the business as a result of 'burn-out' – the relentless struggle to try to sustain an operation with inadequate resources - human, financial and/or physical.

In the current economic climate, people who might otherwise enter or remain in the theatre professions are attracted to better-remunerated careers. This is a considerable challenge for all concerned with the professional management of the stock of venues throughout Ireland.

Nonetheless, a significant pool of candidates presents itself for employment in the general arts administration and venue management spheres. Many have a qualification in arts administration as well as experience on work placements, or other employment.

The most problematic area of specialist staffing is technical crew. Almost all venues report difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff with the requisite training and qualifications to operate and exploit the increasingly complex, sophisticated equipment and capacities available.

General

Training and development: Appropriate in-house training and/or skills enhancement for staff over a range of operations in performing arts management occurs in varying degrees in almost all venues.

Information technology: IT and computers have become very valuable tools for venue managements in the areas of accounting, box-office procedures, creation of mailing lists, and by extension, marketing, audience development, networking and programming. However, these technologies could be exploited further to improve management practice, and, in particular, to achieve quicker and more

frequent box-office reports and returns for both the house and visiting managements than is generally the case at present.

Audience research

Existing audience research

The research revealed that, with one notable exception, every 'feasibility study' commissioned by those seeking to establish a new venue or to refurbish/extend an existing venue, was over-generous in its audience estimates. The projected audience/hinterland the venue would serve was nearly always too extensively estimated: population numbers frequently did not tally with official census figures, and the proportion of such populations that it was confidently asserted would be regular attendees at events were nearly always assessed over-optimistically.

Some venues and a few touring theatre companies have undertaken surveys and research in order to learn more about their audience. A once-off study was conducted in 1998 (see Previous Research below). However, there is no regular, comprehensive national survey aimed at learning more about the level and profile of audiences for the arts, such as attendance patterns of those attending performances, their programming preferences and other 'competing' leisure time pursuits. This lack of knowledge about audience behaviour and preferences is a constraining factor in Arts Council and local authority policy development. The Auditoria project considered conducting such a survey to inform recommendations, but the cost proved to be well beyond the budget.

Previous research:

Lansdowne Market Research undertook research in 1998 for the Arts Council. The study, based on a representative sample of 1,400 adults, provided useful indications about people's general attitudes and behaviours towards the arts, government and local authority support for the arts, sponsorship of the arts, and attendance at and participation in the arts (see below). These findings suggest that

it is unwise to project regular/frequent playgoers at higher than 10% of a catchment population, even assuming proactive marketing and promotion.

Key findings of Lansdowne Research: The key findings show that 26% attended a play in the previous year – 47% of them went once, 48% between 2-6 times, and 5% more than 6 times; 4% attended a performance of orchestral music and opera during the year – 33% of who attended opera more than once, and 50% of who attended orchestral music performances more than once.

Table 3: Factors preventing people from attending or taking part in arts activities of interest

Can't afford the expense (27%)	Nobody to go with (8%)
Family and other commitments (25%)	Fear of going out in the evening (7%)
Too far away and inconvenient (25%)	Access to building (3%)
Health (13%)	Inadequate information (1%)
Transport (13%)	

A significant number of venues have come on stream since the study was conducted in 1998. It is therefore likely that the figure of 25% of respondents giving 'too far away/inconvenient' as a reason for non-attendance would be much lower now. However, it is disappointing that 'expense' is such a deterrent for so many respondents, given the high prices people are prepared to pay for entertainments such as rock concerts, sports events, etc. It is particularly disappointing when a significant number of arts events are free; and almost all are offered at well below the economic price and since most venues offer concessions. This suggests a need for venue managers to be more proactive in their marketing and more creative in determining price structures.

Auditoria database

Some 100 venues, north and south, were selected for detailed technical survey on the basis of being in receipt of annual funding from either Council or being venues regularly receiving Council-funded production companies. Some 400 other venues, visited

occasionally by grant-aided production companies or used by local arts officers/voluntary groups, were recorded less extensively. The purpose was to create a web-based database.

The database is intended for use as a benchmark by the Arts Councils, venues and companies. It includes comprehensive data on physical dimensions, front of house facilities, auditorium formats, stage dimensions, lighting, sound and rigging facilities, controls, dressing-rooms, get in/out access, as well as management details and visual material.

Maurice Power, theatre consultant, designed the comprehensive questionnaire. John Riddell, the Belfast-based freelance lighting designer and production manager who was formerly lighting designer in residence at the Lyric Theatre, undertook the survey. Details are available on www.artscouncil.ie/auditoria.

3 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Purpose

The purpose of the financial review was to draw funding policy conclusions from an analysis of trends in income and expenditure, particularly in programming/artistic versus administrative expenditures, and to assess financial viability and level of capital investment.

Summary of research findings

The research revealed that performance venues have a high level of dependency on the Arts Council and other state subsidies to meet their running costs. All those approved for ACCESS funding projected an annual subvention from the Arts Council in their feasibility studies, despite having no such commitment or guarantee. The CDIS and ACCESS building grants combined have created a very significant, on-going dependence on subsidy from local authorities, the Arts Council and other public agencies.

The key findings show that:

- **Artistic programmes:** Some organisations spent 25% or less of total expenditure on their artistic programmes.
- **Commercial income:** A surprisingly high number of venues, particularly arts centres, have no income from merchandising, bar, restaurant or shop facilities. This suggests that self-financing has not been an integral element of their strategies or of their building's design.
- **Loss-making initiatives:** A number of venues run facilities such as bars and restaurants at a loss.
- **Break-even strategies:** Many venues appear to budget for break-even. This implies that commercial opportunities are being lost or foregone because managements anticipate that increases in non-grant income could lead to a reduction in long-term funding from the Arts Council.

Process

The review comprised a detailed analysis of the financial profile of 18 Arts Council grant-aided theatres and arts centres undertaken by Richard Guiney of Léargas Consulting Ltd, using audited accounts for 1997, 1998 and 1999 as the basis of the exercise. The 1999 audited accounts of six other organisations were also used to inform the analysis. A list of those involved in the study is included in Appendix 2.

The data was analysed under a broad range of income and expenditure headings. This presented a number of difficulties because of the different ways venues categorised income and expenditure. Where necessary, financial statements were re-analysed to facilitate consistent presentation of data and comparison of results.

Theatres and arts centres serve different constituencies and thus have distinctive financial profiles. The information pertaining to each is therefore separately analysed and presented. Venue-based theatre companies such as the National Theatre and the Gate were included in the review for completeness.

It was not possible to include data about theatres and arts centres in Northern Ireland because the financial records of most venues are consolidated into the financial accounts of the local authorities that own and operate them. Furthermore, there is not an adequate basis of comparison with experience in the Republic because the Arts Council of Northern Ireland provides direct annual revenue funding to comparatively few performing arts venues.

Key findings

The key findings of the research are shown below under the following headings: Income, Expenditure, Capital Investment.

Income

Total income in the theatre sector between 1997 and 1999 rose by just over a third (35%), 12% of which came from grants.

Total income in the art centres rose by only a fifth (20%) and arts centres continue to rely heavily on public sector funding: 37% from the Arts Council and 18% from FÁS.

Sources of income and degree of reliance on the Arts Council and other public bodies varied greatly:

Theatres

- Non-grant income accounted for as much as 93% to as little as 24%
- Box office income accounted for as much as 61% to as little as 20%
- Bar and merchandising accounted for as much as 43% to less than 2%

Arts centres

- Non-grant income accounted for as much as 72% to as little as 11%
- Primary artistic income accounted for as much as 60% to as little as 4% and averaged 23%
- Bar and merchandising accounted for as much as 23% to less than 1%

Table 4: Analysis of income

<i>Trend over 3 years</i>	<i>Theatres</i>	<i>Arts centres</i>
Increase in total income	35%	20%
The Arts Council's contribution to total income	37% in 1997 to 29% in 1999	37% in 1999
Increase in grant income	12%	23%
Level of grant dependency	20%	77%
Earned income as % of total	51%	13%
Box office as % of total income, excluding National Theatre	60%	23%
Local authority contribution as % of total income	2.5%	4.5%

Expenditure

The increase in income shown in Table 4 appears to have facilitated a significant increase in production, especially among theatre venues where direct expenditure on production rose by 65%. Establishment costs, i.e., the costs of running a building (rent, repairs, light and heat, security, insurance etc.), remained steady in each of the three years 1997-1999. In 1999, 8% was allocated to running costs of a building. However, establishment costs could rise dramatically in the short-term for companies who do not own their buildings as they may face increased rental costs.

Theatres

- Programming costs account for as much as 65% to as low as 37% and average 34% overall
- Wages account for as high as 42% to as low as 11% and average 35% overall

Table 5: Analysis of expenditure

<i>Trend over 3 years</i>	<i>Theatres</i>	<i>Arts centres</i>
Increase in total expenditure	40%	11.3%
Increase in direct production costs	65%	No increase
Staging performance costs as a % of total expenditure	33%	20%
Non-performance arts costs as a % of total	1.5%	7%
Increase in wage costs	31%	1%
Wage costs as a % of total	34%	42%
Establishment costs (excluding wages) as % of total costs	8%	8.5%
Advertising and other selling costs as a % of total	6.3%	6%
Administrative costs as a % of total	8%	9.5%

Staff cost ratios:

The survey and analysis of the finances of seven funded theatres and ten funded arts centres over the years 1997, 1998 and 1999 revealed significant differences in the staffing costs and cost ratios. In the case of theatres, while wage costs increased over the period by 31%, total expenditure rose in the same period by 40%, so wage costs as a proportion of total expenditure decreased from 38% to 34%.

However, wage costs in the arts centres moved from 43% of total expenditure in 1997 to 42% by 1999. In five centres, wages rose to almost half of total expenditure.

Many factors have a bearing on these statistics, not least the very varied approaches to analysing expenditure as between programming/artistic and administration. There are no guidelines for the sector on appropriate categorising of expenditures or on desirable ratios.

Capital investment

The capital investment profile of theatres varies considerably from arts centres, as shown below. The general picture shows that theatres have been upgrading their facilities at a greater rate than the arts centres.

Table 6: Trends in capital investment

<i>Trend over 3 years</i>	<i>Theatres</i>	<i>Arts centres</i>
Net book value increase in 1999 over 1998	18%	4%
Increase in total capital investment 1997-1999	38%	-
Replacement or depreciation policies	2-3 years	3 years

4 PROGRAMMING ANALYSIS

Purpose

The purpose was to assess strengths and identify gaps in the repertoire performed in venues across the country

Process

Tony Ó Dálaigh, former Director of the Dublin Theatre Festival, undertook the study. He analysed the programming of 54 theatres and arts centres with performing arts facilities throughout 1999 and 2000 and drew comparisons with the level of touring back in 1983. Grant-aided organisations and a number of commercial managements and festival organisers provided data.

The venues analysed vary enormously from large commercial venues, such as the Gaiety Theatre, Cork Opera House and The Point, through smaller, quite active theatres in the regions (some opened recently), to very small arts centres with as few as 20 performances annually.

Key Findings

- Market forces are pushing venues towards more commercial productions, whether self- originated or from touring companies;

- An Arts Council policy that puts high quality productions and new work first must use financial and other resources to ensure that creative artists, interpretative artists, mediating and facilitating arts workers, arts administrators, and above all, audiences, are not overwhelmed by market forces;
- Although not insurmountable, there are real challenges in forging alliances between venue managers and production companies.

Level of Arts Council support for touring

The Report analysed the growth in Arts Council support for touring between 1983 and 2000. The Arts Council's 1983 Annual Report noted that '...special attention needs to be devoted to the need to increase audiences for touring productions and to achieve a greater geographical spread of touring productions.'

<i>Table 7: Trends in touring, 1983 – 2000</i>	<i>1983</i>	<i>2000</i>
Drama		
Number of companies who toured	12	32
Number of performances given	58	1,492
Number of venues visited	18	80
Opera		
Number of companies who toured	4	3
Number of performances given	46	58
Number of venues visited	40	25
Music – number of organisations grant-aided		
Orchestras	7	5
Concert promoting organisations	10	11
Choral music organisers	11	4
Festival	1	7
Number of receiving theatres and venues in regional centres outside Dublin and Cork	6	18
Number of production companies based in regional centres outside Dublin and Cork	1	12

The increased numbers of receiving theatres and venues in regional centres outside Dublin and Cork, and the increased number of production companies based in regional centres outside Dublin and Cork, are among the most marked developments in the period 1983-1999. This improvement in the infrastructure can be seen on Appendix 1, which maps the trend in developments and the extent to which the poor geographic spread noted in the Council's 1983 Annual Report has been addressed.

Large-scale works

Dublin: Large-scale commercial productions, whether plays or musicals, have virtually disappeared over the last 20 years, due mainly to the demise of the commercial managements that staged them. Groundwork was the last organisation to mount regular productions geared at fairly long runs in bigger theatres. Occasional productions taking place since then appear to be testing grounds or dress rehearsals for transfers to Broadway or the West End.

The Olympia has, to all intents, decided that it has no future as a playhouse. Apart from an annual pantomime and a rare musical, it sees itself as a concert and late-night venue. This has impacted favourably on the Gaiety, which had to import many short-run British shows prior to 1999. In 1999/2000, the Gaiety had to import only four weeks of product, due to some companies switching from the Olympia, some long-running revivals and two Noel Pearson productions.

Belfast: Belfast shows a different pattern, with the Grand Opera House importing 90% of its productions. It is, in effect, another touring date on the 'No 1' United Kingdom circuit. Apart from one visit each from the Abbey and Gate, no companies from the Republic have been programmed there in 10 years.

Cork: Cork Opera House, a 1,000 seat auditorium, underwent major renovations in 1999/2000. This resulted in a significant reduction in its availability for large-scale productions. Prior to that, however, the venue

had adapted to the relative lack of suitable productions and had developed an effective second venue, using stage and backstage to accommodate performances and audiences. The venue still relies on an appreciable amount of foreign production, with touring shows from Britain and Eastern European opera and ballet being quite prominent. However, the strength of sterling is now a serious constraint on importing productions. This has put large-scale productions out of reach because they can otherwise command big fees from heavily subsidised venues such as Grand Opera House, Belfast. A deal can normally be cut with these companies only if they find difficulty filling a particular week.

The lack of a major professional company in Cork performing reasonably popular work is a major drawback. Cork Opera House has to mount a number of in-house productions to ensure a comprehensive programme.

Touring 1999/2000

Average number of performances: The main players had four performances a week on average. Only one company managed as many as 6.5 per week, although a number achieved an average five per week. A minority of the arts centres were at the other end of the scale, averaging as few as 2.5 per week.

Major production companies: A striking feature of programming in almost all regional venues was the comparative lack of touring by some of the most prominent production companies such as Druid and Rough Magic, as well as Fishamble, Island and, to a lesser extent, Red Kettle.

Venue's own productions: There was a noticeable increase in the number of productions originated by venues themselves. This was a deliberate reaction to what venue managers perceived as the major touring companies' 'take-it-or-leave-it' attitude, the level of guarantees sought and unwillingness to do percentage deals, pay rental or share any kind of risk.

Venues also toured productions to a network of regional venues throughout Ireland. The three main players here were Town Hall Theatre, An Grianán and Civic. Some shows were co-productions, e.g., Grianán/Yew Tree; Civic/Gúna Nua. For example:

- Town Hall Theatre, Galway toured its production of Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' in a version by Frank McGuinness to nine venues, over eight weeks, giving 42 performances in total;
- An Grianán, Letterkenny, toured its production of John B. Keane's 'Big Maggie' to eleven venues, over eight weeks, giving 37 performances in total;
- Other theatres, e.g., Everyman Palace, Cork and Lyric Theatre, Belfast toured productions to a number of other venues;
- Andrews Lane Theatre and the Pavilion Theatre highlight the possibilities that now exist to have a M50 circuit of venues in the Greater Dublin area (Pavilion, Civic, Draíocht) where productions can be toured without giving rise to subsistence and other touring costs. This development is likely to grow considerably, in the light of so many venues coming on-stream and looking for affordable product.

Commercial productions: There was a marked increase in touring by small-scale, largely unsubsidised companies who found many venues more welcoming than previously.

Young companies: While it is encouraging that young companies are willing to tour, many of their shows combined modest production values with a somewhat challenging content for audiences, making it harder to attract local audiences.

Seasonality: Venues find that February/March and October/November are peak months for touring companies. This results in a 'bidding-war' between venues. On the other hand, programmers find it hard to fill the period June to September. Ways to stimulate more summer touring need to be found.

Repertoire: Theatres voiced a strong wish to have some input into the touring programmes. They are striving to obtain a balance between popular 'commercial' events and high quality, innovative material. Many believe that the production companies are not sufficiently mindful of audience demand in designing their repertoire.

Programming

Innovation: There are examples of individual venues adopting innovative approaches, although this is not a persistent trend. Initiatives include running an annual event or festival, which attracts large audiences or extending the scope e.g., supper theatre. One venue, Belltable, established 'Unfringed', an annual event that is now an attractive, high profile and popular part of the programme. Likewise, An Grianán hosts a mini-festival of international work in July. Mullingar Arts Centre found that supper theatre brings new audiences.

Smaller venues: Some smaller venues find they are too small to afford the bigger companies. Even medium-scale companies are reluctant to come to them and only make contact if they cannot fill their tour from the bigger venues. These venues have turned instead to amateur companies from inside and outside their region who are willing to travel 30-40 miles to present a two- or three-night run.

Medium-scale venues: Medium-scale venues can be successful with the right mix of programming policy, management competence and proactive development, according to the research. Andrews Lane Theatre could be seen as the barometer of medium-scale activity in Dublin and as a venue for provincial touring companies that would rarely, if ever, secure an engagement at the Gaiety. It is not experiencing difficulty in filling dates, does not have to chase business and, while not overwhelmed with applicants, has the relative luxury of being able to choose some companies rather than others. However, it identifies a need to produce (and co-produce) in order to have more control of

what is presented in the main house. The arrival of the three County Dublin venues has encouraged Andrews Lane in this direction. It now has outlets (three to four weeks) for successful shows after a run in its own theatre.

Other venues have a different mix. Some have amateur companies who book regularly but their main clientele is small, would-be professional companies, often composed of people straight out of Trinity or the Gaiety School of Acting who aspire to be 'the next Rough Magic'. Some are talented and do well eventually; many are never heard of again.

Amateur: It is impossible, realistically, for all venues to attract sufficient touring to allow 100% professional productions, whether subsidised or not. The amateur sector is an important programming strand, particularly for regional venues. Amateur groups have benefited by having professional, well-equipped venues with box-office facilities instead of the local school, parish or town hall.

Music: Music is an increasingly important element in programming. Music Network has been very effective in growing the number of venues across the country offering musical programmes. Commercial promoters are using most theatres for rock, jazz, and middle-of-the-road while at the same time the number of local traditional groups using local venues has grown.

Management capability

Success: The research shows that the calibre of venue management impacts significantly on the venue's success. In many cases, managers are confident, industrious and adventurous and enjoy considerable freedom and autonomy. They are programming their venues imaginatively, achieving a great range and variety of work, and often sourcing productions outside Ireland.

Inhibiting factors: The research also shows, however, that other venues are poorly programmed because of a number of factors.

The key barriers to further development are unsupportive boards, narrow and restrictive board policies, inexperienced managers, failure to network with other venue managements and inadequate financial and other resources.

Alliances and co-operation: Live theatre operates in an environment that is very far from what economists call a 'perfect market.' Economic laws of supply and demand impact on managements and it is impossible for them to be totally insulated or protected from those forces.

In addition, venues and production companies differ in agendas and priorities. Venue managers are focused on putting together an artistic programme that appeals to and helps to grow their audience base. Production companies tend to have an artistic policy formulated by those who founded the company, supported by a repertoire of their own interest, possibly with a target audience in mind, but above all in response to the compulsion to make the work. Very few production companies have their own venues and there are no real repertory companies in Ireland. This makes the task of linking these parties into an alliance so as to achieve common objectives, shared targets, mutual benefits, significantly more difficult than might be imagined at first sight.

5 NORTHERN IRELAND

Summary

The Auditoria study shows that the current position of the built infrastructure for Northern Ireland's performing arts is very satisfactory, despite the difficulties Northern Ireland has had to overcome. The success is due in large measure to effective planning by such agencies as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, District Councils, Government Departments, as well as to the endeavours and energies of local and voluntary groups and committees.

Planning over the past decade in particular has been well researched, comprehensive, coherent and commensurate, and it has been implemented by having objectives identified clearly, strategies formulated soundly and resources provided realistically.

Key strategies

Clive Priestley's report 'Structures and Arrangements for Funding the Arts in Northern Ireland' (1992) recommended a series of strategies in relation to the infrastructure for the arts in Northern Ireland, based upon a three-strand framework of consolidation, development and specific projects.

This framework proved to be a valuable context for programmes of investment and refurbishment, because it gave planners and funding agencies a set of criteria on which to evaluate progress and review or modify projects.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland built on the progress and on new opportunities presented by the National Lottery in its 1995 Strategy for the Arts document, 'To The Millennium' (TTM).

In the Objectives and Priorities Section of that paper (TTM, p14) dealing with the aim of promoting creative and performing arts of quality, ACNI set itself the objective of '...providing by 2001, a dedicated arts facility within a radius of 20 miles of every person in Northern Ireland' (TTM, p120)

Further, the document describes as a priority

'...to use the National Lottery Arts Fund to promote the establishment of new theatres, galleries and other facilities, and the conservation of existing arts buildings' (TTM, p14).

It is clear that the close linkages between the ACNI and the National Lottery Committee integrated ACNI policies and strategies with Lottery expenditure decisions. By 2001, the aims and objectives in relation to arts building and the use of National Lottery Arts Funds described in Chapters 24 and 26 of 'To The Millennium' were largely achieved.

This is particularly the case for the performing arts, as is shown elsewhere in this report.

Recognising the contribution that district councils can make to the development of arts provision, and noting that total local government expenditure on the arts had risen to the point where it was close to that of the ACNI itself, 'To The Millennium' invited all districts to prepare and submit a plan for the development of the arts in their area over a five-year period. The aims were to increase opportunities for people to enjoy the arts, to raise standards of service generally, and to address gaps in provision. (TTM, chapter 20)

It is impressive to note that the Auditoria survey found that 22 district councils have since made five-year plans for the arts in their areas, many incorporating permanent dedicated arts facilities, and upgrading of existing buildings.

As in the Republic, the creation of networks of new and/or refurbished buildings of varying scale for the performing arts stimulated further needs arising in audience development, programming, staffing/ training, management skills, and maintenance. These challenge personnel responsible for operating these venues, at both executive and board levels.

Theatre Exchange Meeting

Participants at the Theatre Exchange Meeting in Armagh stressed many of the same issues highlighted by practitioners at the focus groups

in Dublin. They arose in the context of the complex, inter-related areas of theatre production, venue programming, and touring.

However, it is important to highlight the very considerable progress Northern Ireland is making to address them. This arises chiefly because of the existence of the Theatre Producers' Group and the Association of Regional Theatres (ART). The two groups make enormously valuable contributions to long-term strategic exchange of ideas with each other, to collation and distribution of policies, to programming plans (including on the Theatre Producers Web-site), and to dialogue with the ACNI.

The following agreed action points are among the positive outcomes of the June 2001 Theatre Exchange in Armagh:

- Venues and companies agreed to re-schedule programming time-tables to improve spread of local theatre performances throughout the year across Northern Ireland;
- Companies, through the Theatre Producers Groups in association with the ACNI, agreed to develop advance planning for productions to fit into venue plans;
- Venues agreed to structure programming so all venues are programmed at the same time;
- The exact points at which venues and companies are involved in audience development work will be clarified on submission of the promotional material and literature packs;
- Incentives will be planned at point of contact that increase the existing audience base;
- The ACNI, in partnerships with venues and companies, will set-up an audience development scheme that actively targets potential theatregoers across Northern Ireland.

These action plans rely on initiatives currently being formulated by the ACNI, in particular the introduction of multi-annual funding structures and a concentration of resources on audience development.

Progress in Northern Ireland to date suggests that the initiatives are likely to achieve successful outcomes. While the Theatre Shop and Theatre Forum make important contributions to the exchange of ideas and experience, and to the analysis and exploration of many issues affecting production companies and venue managements in the Republic, the emergence of groupings similar to the Theatre Producers Group and to ART should also be encouraged. Such new groups could advance agendas that are not necessarily those of either The Theatre Shop or the Theatre Forum.

Multi-annual funding

Participants at the Theatre Exchange in Armagh reached consensus that MAF (multi-annual funding) agreements would solve most planning problems, as the Arts Council 1995/6 Theatre Review had also identified. Although the MAF model has the potential to eliminate many frustrations and obstacles to good planning inherent in the year-on-year model, it is not in itself a panacea for all ills.

The Arts Council's application of MAF agreements showed that while they can lead to better planning, better scheduling of activities, more productive use of limited resources and improved production values, they create parallel obligations and requirements on funded organisations. Such obligations include the imperatives to set specific targets and detailed forward planning and programming, to undertake self-assessment and evaluation and to provide regular financial and artistic progress reports and up-dates to the Council.

Audience development

Positive signs emerge in ACNI's proposal to dedicate substantial funds to audience development under its new Arts Strategy Programme. The programme will encompass a broad range of approaches including outreach, education and touring, so as to engage with the public at large, to generate new audiences and to improve the delivery process. In the context of this strategy, ACNI places a high value on research and on the acquisition of statistical data as significant tools towards

achieving their objectives.

The Auditoria study has highlighted the need for comprehensive statistical data gathering in the area of audience development. Comments and recommendations made about this need in the Republic apply equally to the situation in Northern Ireland.

Repertoire

The problem of sourcing consistently good quality work on a regular basis while balancing new and established repertoires is a major challenge for venue directors, as in the Republic.

The choice to create new work or revisit established repertoire is stimulated by creativity and/or artistic policy rather than by venues' need for 'product'.

However, the tension between the two increases exponentially with the development of extensive networks of new/refurbished venues throughout Ireland. Initiatives such as emerged from the Theatre Exchange meetings and the ART Consortium should begin to address these difficulties.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose

This section sets out the Auditoria Project's recommendations arising from its research findings. They are structured to address the original terms of reference and objectives. The recommendations have significant implications for local authorities and parent departments as well as the two Arts Councils. The following headings are used throughout this section to ensure the original objectives of the project are addressed:

- Policy proposals;
- Project proposals.

Recommendations arise under the following six sub-sections and conclude with a summary:

- Spatial strategy;
- Arts Council funding – capital and revenue;
- Local authority funding;
- Capacity building – management;
- Repertoire;
- Audience development;
- Northern Ireland.

Spatial strategy

Policy proposals

Arts Spatial Development Plan: The Arts Council should develop its own spatial development plan, in consultation with the sector, local authorities and its parent Department to ensure remaining gaps are addressed and that there is an appropriate spread of venues suitable for different artforms. This should comprise:

- a) Recommendations on the desired number and location of venues, which are capable of hosting specific artform productions, e.g., ballet and opera.
- b) Recommendations on minimum design specifications, which are developed and reviewed regularly in consultation with the sector; these recommendations should be built into funding commitments for all new venues and major refurbishments.
- c) Recommendations on the level of local authority funding for new and existing venues.

- d) Policy proposals on funding future maintenance and refurbishment costs.

Funding criteria for capital investment should aim to ensure suitable venues for the performing arts within 40 km of everyone's home. This policy of triangulation should be balanced with the need for evidence of strong local support and structures to manage new venues.

Project proposals

National Lyric Theatre: The Arts Council should conduct a feasibility study into establishing a National Lyric Theatre in Dublin with all appropriate facilities, including a main auditorium of 2,500–3,000 and smaller rehearsal/workshops/studio spaces of varying capacities upwards of 500 seats. Such a building should be a signature building for the city and be designed to house also a number of relevant artistic companies.

Future Capital Developments: The Arts Council should seek agreement with its parent Department and local authorities that future decisions on capital grants for new buildings and major refurbishments be made only by a partnership of all those to be involved in their on-going funding. The Arts Council should seek a major advisory role in identifying, prioritising and specifying all arts-related new buildings and major refurbishments.

Provision for 'unserved' areas: The Arts Council should conduct a feasibility study aimed at assessing the needs of the areas that will remain unserved, after the ACCESS funding decisions come into effect. The study should take account of levels of active local support, involvement and expertise, as well as the profile of nearest existing facilities.

Panel of specialists: The Arts Council should create a panel of specialist architectural and design advisors with expertise on the architectural considerations, artform requirements, access requirements, cost and operating implications of new or extended buildings. Professional and technical experts

would have to meet certain agreed criteria before being placed on such a panel and the Council ought ensure it had no liability for their advice or work.

National surveys: The Arts Council, in partnership with the Department and local authorities, should conduct five-yearly surveys to assess performing venues across Ireland in terms of availability, geographical spread, facilities and quality. The database created by this project would be used as the baseline data with which to begin. Participation in the survey should be made a condition of funding. The survey should be done electronically, for economic and communications efficiency.

Arts Council funding – capital and revenue

Policy proposals

Funding criteria and conditions: The Arts Council should make funding criteria and conditions more explicit in all its financial supports to performing arts venues and production companies. This is especially necessary where multi-annual funding is offered. Criteria for funding should be aimed at addressing the Council's own strategic priorities and the major deficits identified by this project. In particular, the criteria and conditions should foster increased touring to regional and remote areas, greater levels of co-operation and more joint ventures. The timing of funding decisions should be agreed in consultation with the sector to ensure it meets their own planning requirements.

Conditions for funding should include, as relevant:

- Specific performance commitments; levels of regional touring;
- Circumstances in which guarantees may or may not be sought;
- Level of advance planning for production schedules; marketing and promotion plans, etc.;
- Implementation of good practice controls and systems such as asset registers, independently audited accounts, regular management accounts;

- Reporting to the Arts Council on results against agreed key performance indicators and targets. These should include ratios of earned income to grant-aid, as well as ratios within the totality of grant-aid between the Arts Council grants, local authority grants, or other grants;
- Requirements to engage qualified architects where alterations or extensions are proposed, so as to ensure that developments will be of high architectural quality and sensitive to their overall environments. The Arts Council should be kept fully informed and provided with copies of all drawings and plans for such developments.

Loss-making initiatives: The Arts Council should review performing arts venues' audited and management accounts to identify loss-making programming/artistic activities (such as outreach programmes) and non-programming ventures (such as bars, restaurants, merchandising). It should recommend that venue managers:

- Postpone some elements of their programming, even if valuable on a number of levels, until financial and human resources are available to undertake such programmes effectively and within budgets;
- Widen their sources of income to the maximum possible extent, with such efforts involving every stakeholder from board member to individual worker;
- Tighten their controls;
- Seek to franchise out loss-making facilities such as bars and restaurants.

Project proposals

The Arts Council Capital Programme: The Council should develop and implement an agreed Capital Programme setting out the new build, refurbishment and 'minor' capital grants required by each funded building-based organisation over a 10-year period. Key elements of the programme should include measures to:

- Rationalise its 'major' capital grants by establishing firm cut-off dates for projects that fail to commence work, for whatever reasons. A maximum of 18 months should

- be the limit allowed for commencements;
- Structure the budget for 2002-2006 so as to have at least 50% available each year to respond to minor capital applications, with the percentage moving upwards to 65% over the five-year time-scale, as and when some 'major' capital developments fail to commence by the cut-off date. This target should be reviewed regularly and take account of any further capital programmes the Department may initiate over the same period or from the implementation of the National Development Plan.

Accounting guidelines: The Arts Council should prepare guidelines for venues and production companies. Adoption of the guidelines should be a condition of funding. The guidelines should clarify what constitutes artistic/programming costs, administration costs including salaries, and distinguish between current and capital expenditure.

The guidelines should follow standard accountancy practice and facilitate performance comparison and evaluation across companies. The practice should be aimed at strengthening management capabilities and decision-making in venues and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy or measurements.

The guidelines should cover:

- Allocation of programming related costs, including salaries to programme headings;
- Analysis of various sources of earned and non-earned income;
- Preferred methodologies for assigning and gradually writing off pre-production costs;
- Gross/net profits on ancillary sales and activities.

Local authority funding

Policy proposals

Local authority funding: The Arts Council funding should be targeted at specific artistic developments that further its strategic priorities. The Council should seek agreements with local authorities that make individual local authority's responsibilities explicit. Local authorities must be encouraged to understand that they are

responsible for funding the building costs of new/extended venues, whether or not private sponsorship is also involved. Authorities should also subvent some annual running costs, the amount to vary depending on the venue's own 'earned income' policy.

Project proposals

Review of local authority support: The Arts Council should conduct a major review of progress to date in advancing policy and strategies for local arts development, taking account probable levels of local authorities funding in the period 2002-2006. The Review should contain specific recommendations for future action and in that context should address the need to:

- Use Fingal and Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown's model of providing revenue grants to Draíocht and the Pavilion respectively in 2001 as the template for venues and local authorities elsewhere;
- Sustain and build funding partnerships with local authorities that have demonstrated a strong commitment to the arts in their areas and, in particular, to establishing and maintaining the built infrastructure for the arts locally;
- Encourage local authorities with a track record in addressing the deficit in their arts infrastructure to show leadership to their communities, to learn from colleagues and peers in the local government arena who have initiated and supported developments successfully, and to explore potentially productive partnerships with the Council;
- Challenge and exhort local authorities whose areas continue to have gaps in the built environment for the arts, as identified in this report, to undertake feasibility studies focused on how, where and when their communities may enhance their access to and participation in the arts.

The Arts Council should undertake a further four-year survey of local authority expenditure on the arts, paying particular attention to investment in local performing arts venues, and annual operating grants.

Capacity building

Policy proposals

Capacity building: The Arts Council should develop expertise in reviewing the organisational and development needs of performing arts venues and should integrate such a review with the general funding review process.

Project proposals

Governance: The Arts Council should implement the 'Better Governance' initiative and provide related supports/services to participating organisations.

Services should include:

- Training programmes to help boards review their own effectiveness on a regular basis; to change and modify their structures and composition where necessary; to ensure greater efficiency and better decision making; to keep boards up-to-date on legislation that affects their legal responsibilities.
- Widespread circulation of 'Guidelines for Board Members' to each board member of funded organisations.
- Provisions to ensure board members are fully informed about the Arts Council policies and objectives; to give them a clear understanding of the reasons why the Council provides financial support to their organisation; to encourage them to give maximum possible flexibility and support to their artistic Director and staff within the overall context of the organisation's policy priorities and finances.
- Methods for encouraging board members to lobby and network more effectively so as to raise funds. The US slogan 'give, get or go' puts it succinctly. The Council could identify experienced experts to offer such guidance and direction to individual boards.

Training and development: Design and implement a training and development programme for venue managers and administrators. The Arts Council should contract a qualified provider of such services to develop

a customised training programme and should offer financial supports to venues to attend it.

The Arts Council should also explore with third-level institutions, including technical colleges, the provision of accredited, specialist technical training and skills enhancement for people interested in making or furthering a career in this aspect of the performing arts, and in venue management.

Specialists: The Arts Council should establish a panel of experts with specific skills in marketing, information systems, financial management, legal and statutory matters, planning and organisation development. A proven experience/appreciation for the arts as a specialist sector should be among the criteria used to appoint panel members. The panel would service venue and production managers, with targeted support from the Arts Council where necessary. The Arts Council should insure itself against being liable for the advice or work provided by panel members.

A joint forum: Establish a joint forum to enable venues and production companies explore longer-term strategic issues; develop and agree a 'sub-sector' input into the Arts Council strategic plans; plan logistical and cost effective touring runs; gain a better understanding of mutual requirements and constraints. The forum could be based on the existing Theatre Forum, if acceptable to all stakeholders, or the Council could support a new initiative.

Co-productions and alliances: Introduce incentive funding for organisations that form longer-term alliances with a number of venues, with one or more production companies and/or with local promoters.

Sector specific pay and conditions guidelines: The Arts Council should design and implement a system for providing annual updates on pay levels across the sector. The system should include different pay levels and give guidelines on relevant developments in employment legislation. The Arts Council's own funding criteria should be amended to ensure funded

companies are meeting pay guidelines and adhering to relevant legislation. The Arts Council should develop the guidelines in consultation with venue managers, production companies and Actors' Equity.

Strategy development and implementation:

Every venue in receipt of public monies should be required to develop Strategy Statements that set out clearly:

- Vision as a picture of future success/ Statement of Strategic Intent;
- Mission as a Statement of Purpose addressing questions about what the organisation does and how it meets its clients' needs;
- Objectives and priorities;
- Strategies for achieving objectives and realising vision;
- Key projects;
- Budgets.

Repertoire

Policy proposals

Funding criteria: The Arts Council's funding criteria should be amended to include incentives to:

- Stimulate a significant increase to the supply side of professional high-quality drama, dance and opera productions in order to address the expanded venue circuits' needs for longer and more frequent tours, to improve the availability of high quality work, to foster a better 'spread' over the year, and to develop clear commitments by all parties to audience development;
- Encourage touring production companies to extend the duration of tours in order to reach a wider audience and to make their work available to as many venue managements as possible.

Project proposals

Classification: The Arts Council should research and implement a system of venue classification that would encourage the development of a number of circuits for small-scale, middle-scale and large-scale work.

Touring unit: The Arts Council should examine

the cost/benefit implications of establishing a touring unit within its own organisation. Such a unit could achieve many positive outcomes, as did the National Touring Agency in the early 1980s. The scale of infrastructure now in place suggests the measure would yield a range of benefits and efficiencies not achievable 20 years ago, as does the infrastructure's potential to serve a greater proportion of the population.

Audience development

Policy proposals

Venue surveys: Require each funded venue (especially those with multi-annual funding) to conduct its own audience surveys on a regular basis, using the national poll questions as guidelines so that their results can be compared accurately with national data.

Project proposals

National survey: Conduct an annual national public survey to track changes in public awareness of and appreciation for the performing arts; attendance patterns at different art form events; adoption of alternative leisure pursuits. Explore the possibility of using Paula Clancy's 1995 research as base-line data.

Best practice dissemination: Secure specialist expertise in marketing, publicity, promotions, merchandising, public relations, retail and customer care, with a view to formulating best practice guidelines and norms for venue managements and production companies.

Northern Ireland

Policy proposals

While continuing to develop policies and projects that take account of the needs of the arts sector and audiences in Northern Ireland, the ACNI should also continue to work in partnership with the Arts Council. The two Councils should support organisations committed to achieving the widest possible audience bases for their work by exploring opportunities for greater cross-border touring and exchanges. The Councils should consider

practical ways of removing or moderating various anomalies that deter managements from taking such initiatives, where those anomalies fall within the two Councils' remits.

Project proposals

Irish theatre is enjoying deserved success overseas at present, and work generated by managements in either part of the island is now seen positively as part of an exciting manifestation of originality, creativity and excellence in the performing arts. Initiatives taken by individual managements to bring their work overseas should be supported by 'branding' Irish theatre.

The two Arts Councils should facilitate discussion between production companies in the Republic and venue managements in Northern Ireland with a view to identifying obstacles to more frequent and regular touring to Northern Ireland venues and resolving the difficulties.

The North/South Touring Scheme, jointly operated by both Councils since 1998, should be developed. It is a proven, practical mechanism to balance differences in grant regulations, currency differentials and other anomalies that arise in the context of cross-border touring.

Northern Ireland's venue managements, particularly those situated near the border, need to give serious consideration to creating packages that will encourage patrons in the Republic to attend performances regularly in their venues, e.g., season packages or incentives that factor in currency differentials.

Both Councils should initiate discussion with the relevant Actors' Equity unions to establish an all-Ireland protocol in terms of licences, membership, subsistence rates, touring staffing levels and other contractual matters that currently exhibit significant differences and create difficulties for cross-border touring.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people gave generously of their time and ideas to Auditoria. On behalf of the team, Phelim Donlon would like to thank:

Auditoria Steering Committee Chairperson Siobhán Ní Éanaigh and members

Ciarán Burke

Anne Connolly

Siân Cunningham

Eimear Gallagher

Richard Guiney

Tony Ó Dálaigh

Maurice Power

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Medb Ruane

Ciaran Tracey

Jennifer Traynor

Focus group participants

Venue staff

Production company staff

Staff of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands

Staff of the Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

....everyone who helped or contributed in any way to the Auditoria project.

APPENDIX 1

Growth in number of performing arts venues (theatres & arts centres) directly funded by the Arts Councils in Ireland, 1983 – 2001

	1983	1993	1999	2001
Theatres				
Abbey Theatre, Dublin	*	*	*	*
An Grianán, Letterkenny				*
Andrews Lane Theatre, Dublin			*	*
Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen		*	*	*
Backstage Theatre, Longford			*	*
Burnavon Theatre, Cookstown, Tyrone				*
Castleward Opera, Down				*
Civic Arts Theatre, Belfast	*	*	*	
Civic Theatre, Tallaght				*
Cork Opera House	*	*	*	*
Everyman Playhouse, Cork	*	*	*	*
Focus Theatre, Dublin	*	*	*	*
Friars Gate Theatre, Kilmallock				*
Garage Theatre, Monaghan			*	*
Gate Theatre, Dublin	*	*	*	*
Grand Opera House, Belfast				*
Hawk's Well, Sligo	*	*	*	*
Lyric Theatre, Belfast	*	*	*	*
Oscar Theatre, Dublin	*			
Market Place Theatre, Armagh				*
Millennium Forum, Derry				*
Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire				*
Peacock Theatre, Dublin	*	*	*	*
Playhouse, Derry				*
Riverside Theatre, Coleraine	*	*	*	*
St Michael's Theatre, New Ross				*
Town Hall Theatre, Galway			*	*
Waterford Theatre Royal, Waterford				*
Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny		*	*	*
Wexford Theatre Royal				*
Arts centres				
Ards Arts Centre, Newtownards, Down				*
Ballymun Arts Centre, Ballymun				*
Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick	*	*	*	*
Briery Gap Cultural Centre, Macroom				*
City Arts Centre, Dublin			*	*
Clotworthy Arts Centre, Randalstown				*
Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast	*	*	*	*
Culturlann Mac Adam Ó Fiaich, Belfast				*
Draíocht Arts Centre, Blanchardstown				*
Droichead Arts Centre, Drogheda		*	*	*
Dunamais Theatre & Arts Centre, Portlaoise				*
Flowerfield Arts Centre, Portstewart				*
Garter Lane, Waterford	*	*	*	*
Grapevine, Dublin	*	*		
Institute for Choreography and Dance, Cork			*	*
Áras Éanna, Inis Oirr				*
Island Arts Centre, Lisburn				*
Linenhall Arts Centre, Castlebar		*	*	*
Mullingar Integrated Arts Centre, Mullingar			*	*
Old Museum Arts Centre, Belfast		*	*	*
Project Arts Centre, Dublin	*	*	*	*
Riverbank Arts Centre, Naas				*
Siamsa Tíre, Tralee	*	*	*	*
St John's Arts Centre, Listowel			*	*
The Courthouse Arts Centre, Tinahely			*	*
The Glens Centre, Manorhamilton				*
Triskel Arts Centre, Cork	*	*	*	*
Wexford Arts Centre	*	*	*	*

1983



1993



1999



2001



● theatres ■ arts centres

ACCESS GRANTS TO PERFORMING ARTS VENUES IN 2001

Abbeyfeale Riveroak Theatre Complex, Co Limerick
Ballyfermot Arts Renaissance, Dublin
Ballykeefe Quarry Amphitheatre, Kilkenny
Bray Arts Centre, Co Wicklow
Carnegie Arts Centre, Kenmare, Co Kerry
Daghdha Dance Company, Limerick
Damhsa na Bóinne, Rathcairn, Co Meath
Dean Crowe Theatre Re-development, Athlone, Co Westmeath
Dundalk Town Hall Theatre & Basement Gallery Re-development, Co Louth
Dundrum Town Centre Theatre, Dublin
Garter Lane Arts Centre, Co Waterford
International Folk Music Centre, Ennis, Co Clare
Ionad Ealaíona Béal an Mhuirthead Teo, Co Mayo
KCAT – Art & Study Centre, Kilkenny
Liberty Corner Project, Dublin
Little Theatre, Gorey, Co Wexford
Millbank Theatre Re-development, Rush, Co Dublin
Navan Arts Centre, Co Meath
Newbury House, Mayfield, Cork – Performance Art Facility
St John's Theatre & Arts Centre, Listowel, Co Kerry
The Courthouse Arts Centre, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
The Gate Theatre, Dublin
The Mall Arts Centre, Youghal, Co Cork
Thurles Civic Centre, Thurles, Co Tipperary



APPENDIX 2

Organisations analysed in the financial review

The organisations studied were:

Theatres

An Grianán, Letterkenny
Andrew's Lane, Dublin
Civic Theatre, Tallaght
Cork Opera House, Cork
Dunamais Theatre and Arts Centre, Portlaoise
Everyman Palace, Cork
Focus Theatre, Dublin
Garage Theatre, Monaghan
Gate Theatre, Dublin
Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo
National Theatre Society, Dublin
Town Hall Theatre, Galway
Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny

Arts centres

Ark, Cultural Children's Centre, Dublin
Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick
Droichead Arts Centre, Drogheda
Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford
Linenhall Arts Centre, Castlebar
Mullingar Arts Centre
Project Arts Centre, Dublin
Siamsa Tíre, Tralee
St John's Arts Centre, Listowel
St Michael's Arts Centre, New Ross
Triskel Arts Centre, Cork
Wexford Arts Centre

APPENDIX 3

Focus Group Participants

Venue managers

Andrews Lane Theatre, Dublin – Laura Condon
An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny – Patricia McBride
Backstage Theatre, Longford – Mona Considine
Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick – Liz Culloty
Briery Gap Cultural Centre – Ann Dunne
Civic Theatre, Tallaght – Brid Dukes
Cork Opera House, Cork – Gerry Barnes
Draíocht Arts Centre, Blanchardstown – Terrth Chung
Dunamais Theatre & Arts Centre, Portlaoise – Louise Donlon
Everyman Palace, Cork – Geoff Gould
Garner Lane Arts Centre, Waterford – Caroline Senior
Institute for Choreography and Dance, Cork – Ger O’Riordan
Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire – Karen Hebden
Project Arts Centre, Dublin – Jennifer Traynor
Siamsa Tíre, Tralee – Martin Whelan
St. John’s Theatre & Arts Centre, Listowel – Joe Murphy
Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny – Ger Cody

Production companies

Abbey Theatre, Dublin – Martin Fahy
Ballet Ireland, Dublin – Anne Maher
Barabbas...the company, Dublin – Audrey Behan, Raymond Keane
Blue Raincoat, Sligo – Macolm Hamilton, Jo Hunt
Coiscéim Dance Theatre, Dublin – Bridget Webster
Fishamble Theatre Company, Dublin – Jo Mangan
Galloglass Theatre Company, Clonmel – Cliona Maher
Music Network, Dublin – Aoife Carlin, John O’Kane
Opera Theatre Company, Dublin – James Conway
Red Kettle, Waterford – Ben Hennessy
Storytellers Production Company, Dublin – Annaleese McNamara
Upstate Theatre Company, Drogheda – Declan Gorman
Yew Tree Productions, Ballina – John Breen

Arts sector

An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny – Patricia McBride
Backstage Theatre, Longford – Mona Considine
Barabbas ... the company, Dublin – Raymond Keane
Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick – Liz Culloty
Civic Theatre, Tallaght – Brid Dukes
Clare County Council – Siobhán Mulcahy
Coiscéim Dance Theatre, Dublin – Bridget Webster
Fishamble Theatre Company, Dublin – Jo Mangan
Galloglass Theatre Company, Clonmel – Theresia Guschlbauer
Institute for Choreography and Dance, Cork – Ger O’Riordan
St John’s Theatre and Arts Centre, Listowel – Joe Murphy
Tipperary NR County Council – Melanie Scott
Music Network, Dublin – Sinead Collins, Stella Kelly
Opera Theatre Company, Dublin – Gemma Murray
Project Arts Centre, Dublin – Jennifer Traynor

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Dept. of the Environment – Ciaran Tracey
Dept. of Tourism – Mary Costello
Strategic Planning Guidelines for the greater Dublin Area – Mary Darley
Leitrim County Council – Terre Duffy