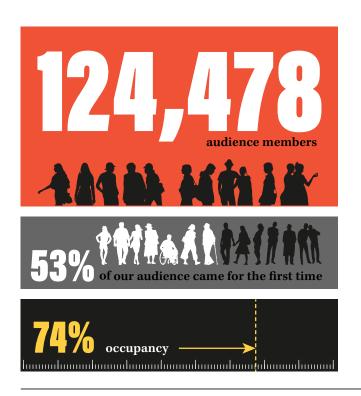
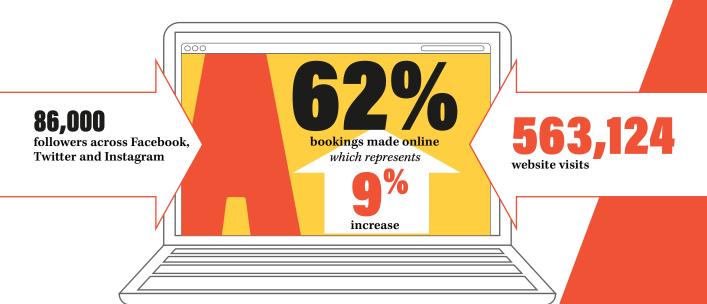


2017 IN REVIEW







2017 WAS AN EXCITING YEAR FOR THE ABBEY

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

ON MAY 22, I WAS APPOINTED CHAIR OF THE ABBEY Theatre by Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys TD. It is a great honour and comes with the delivery of responsibilities to which I am totally committed. I would like to acknowledge the work of my predecessor, Dr. Bryan McMahon, who served as Chair for the previous 11 years, and who completed his term on 29 January 2017. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks for the welcome and support I have received from the existing Board members, as well as the work they did in the interregnum to ensure that the Board met its governance requirements and supported the Theatre. An early duty involved the appointment of three further Board Members, and I was delighted that Pádraig Cusack, Jane Daly and Michael Wall were able to join the Board in the latter half of 2017.

The new Co-Directors, Graham McLaren and Neil Murray took over the helm of the Abbey Theatre in late 2016. Under their leadership, the Theatre has seen an increase in the volume and variety of its activities, with many new co-productions and presentations in addition to the Abbey Theatre's own productions on both the Abbey and Peacock stages. The full activation of the Peacock Stage, from March of 2017, has been a long held ambition of the theatre and the community and is to be welcomed.

As well as inviting leading Irish theatre companies to present their work on the Abbey stages, Abbey Theatre productions toured to unique locations across the country, providing an opportunity for people to see their national theatre in a local setting. This ambition was set against a challenging financial backdrop, and one where increased support from the Arts Council, The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, our sponsors and our supporters has been crucial. On behalf of the Board, I want to express our thanks for this continued and increased support.

Abbey Theatre audiences have responded very positively to the diverse 2017 programme, and this was reflected

in the numbers of attendees and in their composition. Especially important was the increase in the numbers of young people attending – something that is vital to the future of theatre in Ireland. My two personal highlights were Emma O'Donoghue's *Room* on the Abbey stage and the adaptation of Paul Laverty and Ken Loach's *Jimmy's Hall*, opening first, close to its spiritual home, in Carrick On Shannon and then on the Abbey stage. I was also delighted to see Edward Albee's *The Play about the Baby* on the Peacock Stage, reflecting the Abbey's continuing connection with the Irish Amateur Drama Festival.

There were two headline items on the Board's agenda in the latter part of 2017. The first was the preparation of a Business Case for a substantial redevelopment of the Abbey Theatre, extending beyond its present footprint towards the River Liffey. Following a public procurement process, we commissioned expert theatre consultants and, based on their work, a Report was submitted to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in June 2018.

The second was the preparation of a five-year strategic plan – commencing in November 2017, the Board worked with the Executive to develop a framework that will support the Theatre in achieving its mission to engage with Irish society through the production of ambitious and courageous theatre in all its forms.

These two documents will be key elements in setting the agenda for the Board and the Theatre over the coming years, as we work on the development of a new centre for theatre in the heart of Dublin and a programme of productions and activities that reaches out across the country and beyond.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the great work done by the Directors and staff of the Theatre during 2017. Their commitment to the creative artists who work with us and to the audiences, who attend, is exceptional. It reflects the Theatre's drive to engage with the wider theatre community in Ireland. We are all aware that what we do would be impossible without the significant public funds which come from Irish taxpayers, and the support we get from our Irish and international donors, both individual and corporate, and from our sponsors. Our thanks to all of you.

Dr. Frances Ruane, *Chair*

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DIRECTORS' REPORT

In Many ways 2017 was a Revolutionary year for the Abbey Theatre, representing its first year with a new programming model. Our first year as Co-Directors saw a record number of 48 unique and wide-ranging presentations across the Abbey and Peacock stages - more than twice the number staged in 2016. The total audience figure of 124,478 was the highest since 2010.

In addition to work on the Abbey and Peacock stages, the company toured Roddy Doyle's *Two Pints* to 25 pubs throughout the island of Ireland, and opened a major new production of *Jimmy's Hall* in Leitrim, before bringing it to Dublin. From March to December, the Peacock Stage was fully animated with Abbey productions, presentations from visiting companies and support of artistic development that will lead to new theatre shows.

The beginning of 2017 saw the first manifestation of our stated aim - to open up the Abbey Theatre to artists and companies who had not appeared on their national theatre, or had not previously felt it was the right stage to present their work. From February to June, the work of Enda Walsh (Landmark Productions and Galway International Arts Festival), Corn Exchange, Druid, Rough Magic and Lisa Dwan rapidly changed the way people had been seeing and engaging with the Theatre. The range of work, and volume of projects, captured the imagination of audiences, many of them younger, or first-time attendees.

Furthermore, in order to deliver our bold producing plans for new work, touring and international productions, we were delighted to welcome leading Irish producers, Jen Coppinger and Sarah Lynch, to the Abbey Theatre's team.

June 2017 saw the introduction of First Free Previews (commencing with the Theatre Royal Stratford East coproduction of Emma Donoghue's *Room*), which provides free tickets to audiences on the first preview of a show. The concept aligns closely with our view that the Abbey Theatre should be a national theatre that is accessible to all, and we were delighted that this initiative was recognised with a Judges' Special Award at the Irish Times Theatre Awards (2018).

The second half of 2017 saw the Abbey Theatre self-producing or co-producing on the Abbey stage. Co-producing partners included The National Theatre of Scotland and Theatre Royal Stratford East. New Abbey Theatre productions of *Katie Roche* and *Ulysses* featured alongside a world premiere of *Jimmy's Hall* adapted from Paul Laverty's film script for Ken Loach's film. The production opened to great acclaim in Leitrim, in the Sports Hall of Carrick-on-Shannon's Community School – close to James Gralton's home in Effrinagh.

A crucial aspect of the Abbey Theatre's ongoing plans is its funding streams, in particular, its State investment. In 2017, Arts Council funding increased from £5.8M to £6.17M, with a planned increase to £7m

in 2018 to include €0.2M specifically for touring. These commitments are enormously welcome, as are positive ongoing discussions with the Arts Council in relation to funding for 2019 and 2020.

We are particularly grateful to the individuals, companies and foundations who invested in the Abbey Theatre in 2017 - of specific note, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to: Irish Life, Dublin Airport, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Diageo, Friends First, Avantcard, the Vintners' Federation of Ireland, the Abbey Theatre Foundation, NUI Galway, The Ireland Funds, the Ireland-US Council, RTÉ Supporting the Arts, members of the Director's Circle, and our Patrons, Corporate Guardians and Ambassadors.

We owe an enormous debt to our audiences who have fully embraced and encouraged the change in the theatre's programming model, reflected in the increased attendance figures. Lastly, but by no means least, we owe a great deal of gratitude to our fantastic staff, whose commitment and hard work made it possible to deliver 2017's ambitious programme.

Graham McLaren and Neil Murray

"(IT IS) OUR VIEW THAT THE ABBEY THEATRE SHOULD BE A NATIONAL THEATRE THAT IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL, AND WE WERE DELIGHTED FOR THIS INITIATIVE TO BE RECOGNISED WITH A JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD AT THE IRISH TIMES THEATRE AWARDS"

PRODUCTION HIGHLIGHTS



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS THIS...

Graham McLaren and Neil Murray were joined at the launch of their 'What happens next is this...' inaugural programme by artists and collaborators, Olwen Fouéré (Ballyturk), Annie Ryan and Michael West (Corn Exchange), Sarah Lynch (Druid), Anne Clarke (Landmark Productions), Lisa Dwan (No's Knife), Clare Barrett (The Train), Paul Fahy (Galway International Arts Festival), Lynn Parker (Rough Magic), Hugh O'Conor (Arlington), Dermot Bolger (Ulysses), Arthur Riordan (The Train), Paul Gralton (cousin of Jimmy Gralton), and Benjamin Perchet (Dublin Dance Festival).

6 MAJOR PRODUCTIONS

2017 started with six major visiting productions on the Abbey stage including *Arlington*, *Ballyturk*, *Dublin by Lamplight*, *The Train*, *Waiting for Godot* and *No's Knife*. From February to June, the work of Landmark Productions, Corn Exchange, Rough Magic, Druid and The Old Vic / Lisa Dwan rapidly changed the way people had been seeing and engaging with the Theatre.





NEW PRODUCTIONS AND WORLD PREMIERES

The second half of 2017 saw the Abbey Theatre self-producing or co-producing on the Abbey Stage. Co-production partners included The National Theatre of Scotland and Theatre Royal Stratford East.

New Abbey productions of *Katie Roche* and *Ulysses* featured alongside a world premiere of *Jimmy's Hall* adapted from Paul Laverty's film script.





Performances in partnership and greater collaboration with Dublin Dance Festival, Dublin Fringe Festival and Dublin Theatre Festival broadened the range of events offered to our audiences.

THE PEACOCK

2017 was the year that the Peacock Stage sprang back to life, with the space in full use from March to December. A packed programme saw six Abbey Theatre plays on the Peacock stage, including co-productions with Dead Centre and The Lyric, Belfast. These were accompanied by 16 plays by independent theatre companies, including productions from Canada, US and Scotland and further collaborations with Ireland's leading festivals.





DEVELOPING NEW WORK

Through our 'What's Happening Now' series and Work-In-Progress presentations, we supported the development of 10 new pieces of theatre. These included Tara Flynn's Not a Funny Word, Dead Centre's Hamnet and Oona Doherty's Hard to be Soft – all of which would go on to have full productions. In 2017, we appointed two leading Irish producers, Jen Coppinger and Sarah Lynch, to lead the creation of a New Work Department.

The New Work Department, led by our Heads of Producing Jen Coppinger and Sarah Lynch, will continue, and build on, the role of the previous Literary Department through maintaining existing relationships with established writers and forging new relationships with writers and theatre makers who have yet to be commissioned by the Abbey Theatre. In addition to commissioning plays from writers, the New Work Department works on the development of ideas, scripts and projects from artists across the theatrical spectrum.



COLLABORATION AND CO-PRODUCTION

IN 2017, WE COLLABORATED WITH 10 IRISH THEATRE Companies and 4 International Theatre Companies on 18 different co-productions. Our partners were Landmark Productions and Galway International Arts Festival, The Corn Exchange, Rough Magic, Druid, Lyric Theatre, Fishamble, Dead Centre, Theatre Lovett, Thisispopbaby, Noelle Browne, The Old Vic, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Dael Orlandersmith and the National Theatre of Scotland.



THE TRAIN

'We hit a powerful political moment with a mighty audience. That it happened on the stage of the National Theatre was crucial'

Lynne Parker, Director of *The Train* by Rough Magic.



'The Peacock Stage was a heartfelt platform to further adopted people's rights in Ireland.'

Noelle Browne, Writer and Performer of Postscript.





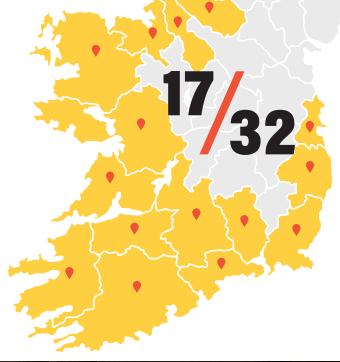
DUBLIN BY LAMPLIGHT

'It was a homecoming an honour and a privilege!'

Annie Ryan (Director) and Michael West (Writer) of *Dublin by Lamplight* by The Corn Exchange.

OUT OF THE ABBEY

In 2017, we got 'Out of the Abbey' in new and innovative ways, bringing the Abbey Theatre into the heart of Ireland's communities. We visited 17 counties throughout the country with performances in halls, classrooms and pubs.





JIMMY'S HALL

Jimmy's Hall opened to acclaim in Leitrim, in the Sports Hall at Carrick-on-Shannon Community School; this school is in the heart of James Gralton country, the man whose story inspired the creation of the film and play. The production played to sold-out houses for a full week before transferring to Dublin.



TWO PINTS

Roddy Doyle's play, *Two Pints*, was toured across the country. Playing 27 sold-out dates across 16 counties throughout Ireland, the show presented the Abbey Theatre in a new light for audiences unused to having access to their national theatre in their own backyard (or pub). These were the perfect venues in which to show this new piece from one of Ireland's key writers.

ME, SARA

The Abbey Theatre's Community and Education team presented *Me, Sara* by Amy Conroy, as part of the *Priming the Canon* series. Based on a character from Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, the show toured all over Ireland including dates at the Baboró Children's Festival, in Galway.





ROOM

Our partnerships and co-productions took us internationally with *Room* by Emma Donohue premiering at Theatre Royal Stratford East in London; *Hamnet* by Dead Centre premiering at the Schaubühne in Berlin; and *Ballyturk* by Enda Walsh transferring to St. Ann's Warehouse in New York.



124,7476
people attended

90%

of our audience lives in Ireland

10%

were international visitors

53%

of our audience were booking with the Abbey Theatre for the **first time**

people attended our Free First Preview series

13,000

Our **highest attended production** was Dermot Bolger's adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which was seen by almost **13,000** people We provided 10 Irish Sign Language Interpreted performances and 7 audio-described or captioned performances



FREE FIRST PREVIEWS

In June of 2017 the Theatre Directors introduced the initiative of Free First Previews (for the co-production with Theatre Royal Stratford East, of Emma Donoghue's *Room*). The idea of Free First Previews is now seen as synonymous with the Abbey Theatre, and some 2,000 people saw a free performance at their national theatre in 2017. This programme went on to win a Judges' Special Award at the 2018 Irish Times Theatre Awards.

Room - 23 June 2017

Jimmy's Hall - 28 July 2017

Katie Roche - 30 August 2017

Ulysses - 2 October 2017

Let the Right One In - 18 November 2017



GENDER EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

OUR COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY AND Diversity remains a core focus of the Abbey Theatre's activities. This was further enhanced in 2017 with the implementation of a *Culture Audit* which set out key priorities in terms of Gender Equality and Diversity in both the internal and external ecosystems of the Theatre.

Staff will attend Unconscious Bias training in 2018, and it is planned that the Theatre's commitment to Gender Equality and Diversity will be enshrined in its planned five-year strategy, which will be compiled and published in 2018. As set out in the Abbey Theatre's 8 Guiding Principles on Gender Equality, the Theatre's programme will be analysed in terms of gender

balance on an annual basis. The 2017 statistics are set out below. This should be seen in the context of a stated aim to achieve 50/50 gender parity over the five year period from 2017-2022 inclusive.

These figures should be seen in the context of a stated aim to achieve 50/50 gender parity over the five year period from 2017-2022 inclusive.

The figure above represents our full 2017 programme including presentations and coproductions. When we only look at the Abbey Theatre's programme of self-produced plays in 2017 the figures are more gender balanced.

FULL PROGRAMME

Directors
Writers
Cast
Stage Management
Set Design
Lighting Design
Sound Design
Costume Design
Overall

ROLES	FEMALE
28	50%
29	30%
148	43%
24	58%
24	59%
24	34%
26	15%
26	81%
329	42%

ABBEY THEATRE SELF-PRODUCED

ROLES	FEMALE
8	50%
8	50%
56	45%
7	36%
7	64%
6	50%
6	0%
7	86%
105	47%

ABOUT THE ABBEY

BOARD

Dr. Bryan McMahon (Chair - Retired 24th January 2017)

Dr. Frances Ruane (Chair - Appointed 22nd May 2017)

Jane Brennan (Retired 13th February 2017)

Sarah Durcan

Deirdre Kinahan (Retired 18th July 2017)

James McNally

Mark Ryan

Niamh Lunny (Retired 20th January 2017)

Sheelagh O'Neill

Loretta Dignam

Kevin McFadden (Appointed 24th January 2017)

Dónall Curtin

Michael Wall (Appointed 31st July 2017)

Jane Daly (Appointed 31st July 2017)

Pádraig Cusack (Appointed 1st December 2017)

EXECUTIVE & STAFF

Executive

Graham McLaren and Neil Murray, Co-Directors

Declan Cantwell, Director of Finance & Administration

Oonagh Desire, Director of Public Affairs & Advancement

Aisling Mooney, Technical Director

Sarah Lynch, Head Of Producing - Programme Development

Jen Coppinger, Head of Producing - New Work Development



STAFF

Andrea Ainsworth Eimear Farrell Michael Kyle Bryan O'Connell Gina Arkins Lisa Farrelly Marie Lawlor Adam O'Connell **Donal Ayton** John Finnegan Sarah Ling Donna Marie O'Donovan Diarmuid O'Quigley Cliff Barragry **David Fleming** Michael Loughnane Ciaran Bonner Barry Flynn Tara O'Reilly Niamh Lunny Aoife Brady Sarah Foley Sarah Lynch Feidhlim O'Shea Niamh Buckley Tara Furlong Bridget Lynskey Faust Aoife O'Sullivan Orla Burke Orla Gallagher Darren Magnier Laura Pulling Eoin Byrne Donna Geraghty Heather Maher Martin Reid Maura Campbell Claire Maher Sandra Gibney Dean Reidy Declan Cantwell Nuria Gomez Navarro Patricia Malpas Fiona Reynolds Colm Carney **David Groves** Elaine Mannion Ed Rourke **David Carpenter** Myra McAuliffe Mick Russell Emma Hanley Luke Casserly Fergus Hannigan Davy McChrystal Pat Russell Connall Coleman **Dermot Hicks** Dan McDermott Joe Sanders Eileen Collins James Hickson Kevin McFadden John Stapleton Derek Conaghy Steven Ho Roisin McGann **Eoin Stapleton** Jen Coppinger Dara Hogan Ciaran McGlynn Helena Tobin Ailbhe Cowley Jenny Holland Graham McLaren Sean Treacy Diane Crotty Brian Horgan Shauna McNally Karen Lee Walpole Mairead Delaney John Houston Paul Meagher Jesse Weaver Victoria Miller Caitlin White Ben Delaney Narges Jahani Diarmuid Woods Sean Dennehy Larry Jones Stephen Molloy Oonagh Desire Maeve Keane Aisling Mooney Pat Dillon **Brian Kelly** Kerri Morris Debbie Doak Wesley Kelly Donna Murphy Con Doyle Ailbhe Kelly-Miller Eimer Murphy Patrick Doyle Tom Kennedy Neil Murray Ciara Dunbar Shane Kenny Agnieszka Myszka Ken Dunne Andy Keogh Amanda Nevin Tom Elliott Emily Ni Bhroin Phil Kingston Helen Fahey Anne Kyle Siofra Ni Chiardha

SUPPORTING THE ABBEY THEATRE

THE ABBEY THEATRE IS EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR the ongoing, valuable support of our main funders, The Arts Council and the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Our work is made possible by their continued investment. We would also like to thank our partners, supporters and members. Our work is made possible by your continued investment in the Abbey Theatre.

In 2017, we were delighted to launch a partnership with Dublin Airport, commencing during *Dublin by Lamplight*. This new partnership will help the Abbey Theatre to

reach new audiences visiting Ireland from overseas, as well as reminding returning visitors and citizens of our exciting programme. We were also thrilled to work with Bank of America Merrill Lynch to bring *Jimmy's Hall* to James Gralton's home county of Leitrim, opening the show in Carrick-on-Shannon, before transferring to Dublin.

Renewed thanks also to Irish Life, who have been a partner for a number of years and were the season sponsors for the 2017 programme.

THANKS TO

Abbey Theatre Supporters

Irish Life, Dublin Airport and NUI Galway

Corporate Guardians

Accenture, Allianz, Arthur Cox, Bank of Ireland, Behaviour & Attitudes, Brown Thomas, The Doyle Collection, ESB, Irish Life, KPMG, McCann FitzGerald, Northern Trust, Ulster Bank, Westbury Hotel

Programme Supporters

Avantcard, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, The Cielinski Family, Diageo Ireland, Friends First, The Ireland Funds of Great Britain, The O'Neill Family, RTÉ Supporting the Arts, Vitners' Federation of Ireland

Gold Ambassadors

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101 Talbot Restaurant, Church Bar & Restaurant, Clarion Consulting Ltd, FCm Travel Solutions, Irish Poster Advertising, John Sisk & Sons, Manor House Hotels of Ireland, Merrion Hotel, National Radio Cabs, Paddy Power, Sims IVF, Sisk Steconfer Joint Venture Utilities Ltd, Spector Information Security, Trocadero, Webfactory, Wynn's Hotel, Zero-G

Directors' Circle

Tony Ahearne, Honorable Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, Richard & Sherril Burrows, Pat Butler, The Cielinski Family, Dónall Curtin, Roma Downey, John P. Drew, Deirdre Finan, Janice Flynn, Emer & Basil Geoghegan, James Healy, Marjorie & Simon Hewett, Declan Kelly, Bernard & Muriel Lauren Foundation, John & Ann Leahy, Pat Lonergan, Dwayne & Eimear Lysaght, Mick & Claire McCormack, James McNally, Peter Merrigan, Donal Moore, Larry Moulter & Pamela Frechette, William O'Connor, Moira & Cormac O'Malley, Sheelagh O'Neill, Thomas F & Carol O'Neill, Tom & Shelly O'Neill, Sarah & Sean Reynolds, Mark Ryan, Mike Sheehan, Susan & Denis Tinsley, Steve & Mitra Van, Mark Walsh, Michael Walsh & Therese Quinn, Zachary Webb, Lloyd Weinreb

Silver Patrons

James Adrian, Majella Altschuler, Robert D Bickford Jr, Frances Britton, Catherine Byrne, Tommy Gibbons, Liam & Eibhlin Howard, Bogdan & Holly Kaczmarczyk, Dr John Keane, Andrew Mackey, Eugenie Mackey, Eugene Magee, John & Irene McGrane, Gerard & Liv McNaughton, Pat Moylan, Alan O'Sullivan, Marie Rogan & Paul Moore, Jan Velund

LOOKING FORWARD

2018 WILL BE A YEAR FOR THE ABBEY THEATRE TO build on the success of our inaugural programme. We plan to do this by developing a five-year Strategy for the Theatre, setting out priorities for the coming years in terms of art and audience, internationalisation and investment, and people and processes. We plan to publish the Strategy by the end of 2018, for commencement in 2019.

The Theatre will continue its commitment to new work and work-in-progress through its Peacock programme, with enhanced support for work by underrepresented communities. We will also increase our national and international presence through a series of tours, including popular 2017 shows, such as *Jimmy's Hall* and *Two Pints*, and remounts including *Cyprus Avenue*. Furthermore, we will continue to interrogate Irish and international canonical works through productions including *The Unmanageable Sisters* (adapted by Deirdre Kinahan from Michel Tremblay's *Les Belle Soeurs*) and Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*.

We look forward to continuing to drive change at the Abbey Theatre in 2018 and beyond.

Graham McLaren and Neil Murray

"WE LOOK FORWARD
TO CONTINUING TO
DRIVE CHANGE AT THE
ABBEY THEATRE IN
2018 AND BEYOND"

THE ABBEY THEATRE 2017 IN FIGURES 124,478 people attended Performances in 17 counties 53% of our audience were first time attendees 13,000 people saw Ulysses 35 shows, 10 in progress 552 performances 500,000+ websites visits ABBEY THEATRE AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH