



ABBAY THEATRE  
AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH

# 2021 ANNUAL REVIEW

abbeytheatre.ie  
#Abbey2021

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# STANLEY MEET THE CO

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# INTRO-DUCTIONS







Caitríona McLaughlin, Dr Frances Ruane and Mark O'Brien.  
Image: Mark Stedman

# A WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

As we learnt to live with Covid-19 throughout 2021, we saw theatres begin to reopen and artists pivot yet again, this time from outdoor and digital performances back to live performances, albeit with heavily reduced capacity. It was inspiring to see the Abbey Theatre, along with other theatres in Ireland, strive to engage continuously with their audiences and to generate work for those in the theatre sector whose lives were profoundly affected by Covid-19. None of this would have been possible without the commitment of artists and all of those whose work makes theatre happen.

July 2021 saw Caitríona McLaughlin and Mark O'Brien take up their roles as Artistic and Executive Directors respectively. They were appointed following a very successful and robust international recruitment process undertaken by the board, with external professional support. The new Co-Directors introduced their exciting 'transitions programme' and implemented the remaining elements of the 2021 programme designed by Graham McLaren and Neil Murray. They added Marina Carr's exceptional *iGirl* for the Dublin Theatre Festival when Covid-19 and other constraints led to the delay until December 2021 of Brian Friel's extraordinary play, *Faith Healer*.

The 2021 artistic programme depended very heavily (86%) on public funds provided through the Arts Council. In the first part of the year these funds were used to produce digital work, such as *Home: Part One*, which presented the authentic voices of survivors of the Mother and Baby Institutions. As the year progressed, we saw the production of blended work – for live and digital performances – and as the year came to an end, the focus moved towards persuading audiences to return to live theatre in larger numbers. President Higgins lead the return by attending performances of *iGirl* and of *Faith Healer*, which was also attended by An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, in January 2022.

In 2021, the Theatre also received financial and organisational support from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and additional funds from the Arts Council and from the Government's Wage Subsidy Scheme. These, together with the continued support of our Irish and international donors and corporate sponsors, and most especially Bank of America, allowed art to be created and audiences nurtured in the most demanding of circumstances.

Work on the detailed studies for the new Abbey Theatre building continued throughout 2021 and the preliminary business case will go to Government in mid-2022. The board wishes to acknowledge the support of Dublin City Council in assisting in the acquisition of the properties needed to enable this exceptional national theatre development.

A new Memorandum and Articles of Association was signed off by Minister Catherine Martin in September 2021. This made it possible for the board to recruit, following a rigorous selection process, four new members who were announced in December 2021: Noelle Brown, Múirne Laffan, Owen Travers and Michael Wall. These new members bring to the board a wealth of expertise and experience which will serve the theatre well in the coming years.

Four members left the board in 2021. Loretta Dignam completed two terms, during which she served on the Audit and Risk Committee and chaired the Development Committee. Bosco Hogan completed his term as an actor on the board, during which he served on the Site Redevelopment and Development Committees, as did Peter Lowry who served on, and later chaired the Audit and Risk Committee. And Breda O'Keeffe left the board to take up new employment opportunities, having chaired the Audit and Risk Committee throughout her term. The theatre is very grateful for their commitment and contributions to the work of the board.

Covid-19 meant that 2021 was another challenging year for the theatre. On behalf of the board, I would like to acknowledge the commitment of the theatre staff and the artists employed in 2021, and the support and assistance of officials in the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Arts Council. The board also wishes to register its appreciation of the leadership role of Minister Catherine Martin in drawing public attention to the precarious position of members of the theatre community, especially during the pandemic.

## Dr. Frances Ruane

Chair of the Abbey Theatre  
(End of term: 22.05.2022)

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS / CEOs

We were deeply honoured and excited to take on the leadership of the Abbey Theatre, and fully embrace both the responsibility and opportunity ahead. Ireland and the world are in a time of profound change; we understand the challenge in that, but we also see potential for renewal.

It is our hope that the years of lockdown have not just isolated us, but have incubated a new generation of dramatists whose innovative forms allow them to create work on their own terms, and, in so doing, enrich our already vast literary and dramatic canon. This is a thrilling thought.

As Co-Directors, we are working together to create an environment within which great art and people can flourish. Listening is important in leadership and we have, and will continue to, actively listen to all of the Abbey's stakeholders, with an aim to promote real collaboration, inclusiveness, diversity and equality.

Ireland has a rich history of theatre and playwriting and extraordinary actors, designers and directors. Our artists are at the heart of this organisation. For this reason, we have appointed Marina Carr and Conor McPherson as Senior Associate Playwrights and Caroline Byrne as Associate Director. We also want to support younger artists to develop their careers and are delighted to be working with four Resident Directors – Gea Gojak, Claire O'Reilly, Laura Sheeran and Colm Summers.

As we find and champion new voices and new ways of seeing, we are identifying combinations of characters we are yet to meet on our stages, having conversations we are yet to hear. We are also engaging in an interrogation of our classical canon with an urgency and curiosity about what makes it speak to this moment. Our stories teach us what it is to belong, and what it is to be excluded and exclude. Artistically our programme is built on these twin impulses, and around two questions: "who were we, and who are we now?"

As we emerge from the current worldwide crisis, we have an opportunity to take stock, listen and recalibrate, allowing us to develop processes, structures and spaces where people are supported to flourish and to create great work in a trusted creative environment.

The ambition to develop a new theatre complex as a major civic and national resource, must become a reality in the decade ahead. By exploring, collaborating and leading on new models of artistic and civic engagement, we hope to create a blueprint for a national theatre, designed with ambition, built for artists and inhabited by everyone. Success for the Abbey means both reflecting society and helping to shape it, a place where, by gathering artists and public together, our collective imaginings for a diverse, inclusive and forward-thinking Ireland can manifest.

We don't promise to be all things to all people, but we do make a commitment that when we do engage with an artist or audience member, we will endeavour to make that connection meaningful and we will listen. Our first year of work embraced this moment of transition and opened up an honest discourse around change, reinforcing the Abbey Theatre's historic position as a place where ambitious and courageous stories can be told.

**Caitríona McLaughlin and Mark O'Brien**

Artistic Director and Executive Director  
Abbey Theatre





Caitriona McLaughlin and Mark O'Brien.  
Image: Rich Gilligan





Valerie O'Connor in *The Long Christmas Dinner* by Thornton Wilder.  
Image: Ros Kavanagh





# THE NUM -BERS

# 29

PRODUCTIONS, CO-PRODUCTIONS, ONLINE  
PREMIERES, SUPPORTED PRODUCTIONS AND  
PRESENTATIONS (14 LIVE, 25 DIGITAL)\*\*

# 300,059

VISITS TO ABBEYTHEATRE.IE

# 53+

HOURS OF ONLINE CONTENT PRODUCED

# €573,848

TOTAL BOX OFFICE REVENUE

# 148,000

APPROX. VIEWS AND LISTENS  
OF ONLINE CONTENT

# 3,854

TICKETS SOLD FOR DIGITAL PRODUCTIONS

# 8,491

INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE VIEWED  
OUR DIGITAL CONTENT ONLINE\*

# 19

DIGITAL PREMIERES

# 18,066

PEOPLE ATTENDED PHYSICAL EVENTS

# €7.5m

IN FUNDING FROM THE  
ARTS COUNCIL

\*YouTube data only. Social media views not recorded.

\*\*Some productions were both in-person and online



# 11

RELAXED PERFORMANCES

# 6

AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES  
(4 LIVE, 2 DIGITAL)

# 12

IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETED  
PERFORMANCES (5 LIVE, 7 DIGITAL)

# 75

COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION  
WORKSHOPS DELIVERED

# 1

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETED  
PERFORMANCE (DIGITAL)

# 57

ACTORS MAKING THEIR  
ABBAY DEBUTS

# 1

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETED  
PERFORMANCE (DIGITAL)

# 1

OPERA ON THE ABBAY STAGE

# 23

CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES  
(12 LIVE, 11 DIGITAL)

# 383

ARTISTS EMPLOYED



# 2021 PROGRAMME









Brid Ní Neachtain in *Laethanta Sona (Happy Days)* by Samuel Beckett.  
Image: Cormac Coyne



With a few exceptions, the artistic projects in 2021 were part of Graham McLaren and Neil Murray's final programme. Much like 2020, the Abbey Theatre was closed for long portions of the year due to Covid restrictions. This provided further opportunities to be bold with form and to continue to innovate with digital theatre. The drive was to keep the connection between some of Ireland's most exciting artists and audiences at home and abroad, ahead of the gradual re-opening of the two auditoria.

2021 saw 50 testimonies of survivors of the Mother and Baby Institutions presented to the world on St Patrick's day, a Brian Friel classic at Christmas, three new plays premiere on the Abbey stage and nine plays from the Irish canon recorded as audio plays, alongside co-productions, partnerships, opera and dance. After much uncertainty for the theatre sector over the last two years, the second half of the year brought a joyous return to live in-person theatre. It was uplifting to see the steady stream of audiences through the foyers showing their unwavering support and commitment to the artists of Ireland.







Aoibhéann McCann in *One Good Turn* by Una McKeivitt.  
Image: Ros Kavanagh



# ABBeY *on*LiVE

The Abbey Theatre used the limitations of Covid as an opportunity to innovate and experiment with form. This approach required the development of new technologies and digital practices, which allowed Ireland's national theatre to continue to engage audiences in 2021 and provide greater access to audiences.

The year saw a wide variety of projects online, beginning with *Home: Part One* where a company of 46 women, including artists, survivors, and public figures, voiced excerpts from the direct testimonies of survivors of the Mother and Baby Institutions on St Patrick's Day. The summer saw two new plays presented in a new format for the Abbey – while *One Good Turn* and *Walls and Windows* were performed for audiences in the building, they also streamed live from the Abbey auditorium to audiences at home. Engaging with the Irish canon and curated by Professor Christopher Morash, *Unseen Plays* saw podcasts of nine unheralded plays from the Irish canon recorded and then released on a weekly basis via Spotify, Apple Podcasts and SoundCloud.

Other online programming included Liz Roche Company and Crash Ensemble's *Dēmos* at Dublin Dance Festival; documentary *Dear Ireland: Reflections on a Pandemic* at Culture Ireland's Seoda Festival; a digital version of Ali White's *Me, Mollser / Mise, Mollser* for schools to use in classrooms; *Windows 21* – a Fighting Words and Abbey Theatre presentation of new writing from eight young playwrights; National Youth Theatre's *Aftertaste* by Ciara Elizabeth Smyth; a trio of audio theatre *Speak Softly, Go Far* by Hannah Mamalis, Oisín McKenna and Maïa Nunes, co-commissioned by the Abbey and Dublin Fringe Festival; the release of a new audio recording of Dermot Bolger's *Last Orders at the Docksides* for Culture Night; Gare St. Lazare's *HOW IT IS* streamed from The Everyman in Cork; the sixth annual *T. S. Eliot Lecture*, delivered by world-renowned designer Es Devlin; and *What I (Don't) Know About Autism*, which was available to watch as a captioned live-stream, with Irish Sign Language, British Sign Language, American Sign Language, captioned and audio-described performances available on-demand.





# 23

NEW DIGITAL PROJECTS

# 148,040

ONLINE AUDIENCE

# 89%

OF TOTAL 2021 AUDIENCE WAS ONLINE

# DIGITAL PRODUCTIONS



*Home: Part One*



*Dēmos*



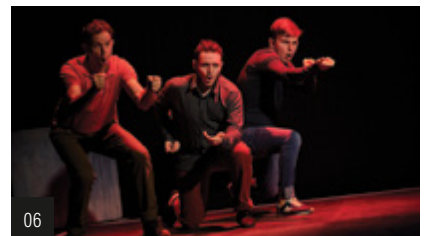
*Windows 21*



*Aftertaste*



*HOW IT IS*



*What I (Don't) Know About Autism*

- 01 Brenda Fricker as part of *Home: Part One*. Image: Ste Murray
- 02 Katie McCann, Matthew Malone, Esther Ayo James, Clinton Liberty, Holly Hannaway and Juliette Crosbie for *Windows 21* by Michael Lavery. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 03 Conor Lovett in *HOW IT IS*. Image: Grant Gee
- 04 Luke Murphy and Emily Terndrup in *Dēmos*. Image: Steve O'Connor
- 05 Abbi Breen, Tristan Spellman Molphy, Abhainn Harrington, Aileen Briody, Adam Henry, Caoimhe O'Farrell, Samuel Ferrie, Cara Mooney, Daisy Hartigan, Odhran Exton, Ella O'Callaghan, Max Mufwasoni, Seán Loughrey, Julia Szarota, Sadhbh McDonough, Matthew Eglinton in *Aftertaste* by Ciara Elizabeth Smyth. Image: Alastair Keady
- 06 Matthew Ralli, Jayson Dockrell-Murray and Shay Croke in *What I (Don't) Know About Autism* by Jody O'Neill. Image: Ros Kavanagh



07 *Dear Ireland:*  
*Reflections on a Pandemic*



10 *Me, Mollser / Mise, Mollser*



13 *One Good Turn*



08 *Walls and Windows*



11 *Speak Softly, Go Far*



14 *Last Orders at the Dockside*



09 *The T. S. Eliot Lecture*



12 *Declan O'Rourke*



15 *Unseen Plays*

- 07 *Dear Ireland*. Image: Commissioned artwork by Maser
- 08 Hazel Clifford and Hilda Fay in *Walls and Windows* by Rosaleen McDonagh. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 09 Es Devlin speaking at *The T. S. Eliot Lecture* Image: Screenshot
- 10 Hilary Bowen-Walsh in *Me, Mollser / Mise, Mollser* by Ali Joy White - with additional material by Sarah FitzGibbon. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 11 *Speak Softly, Go Far* by Oisín McKenna for Dublin Fringe Festival Image: Susan Kennelly
- 12 Declan O'Rourke. Image: Ruth Medjber
- 13 Aoibhéann McCann, Catherine Byrne, Shane O'Reilly, Liz FitzGibbon and Bosco Hogan in *One Good Turn* by Una McKeivitt. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 14 Bríd Ní Neachtain, Lisa Lambe, Aidan Kelly, Anthony Brophy, Stephen Jones and Mike Brookfield in *Last Orders at the Dockside* by Dermot Bolger. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 15 The cast of *Liffey Lane* by Maura Laverty, directed by Lelia Doolan as part of *Unseen Plays*. Image: Jack O'Dea

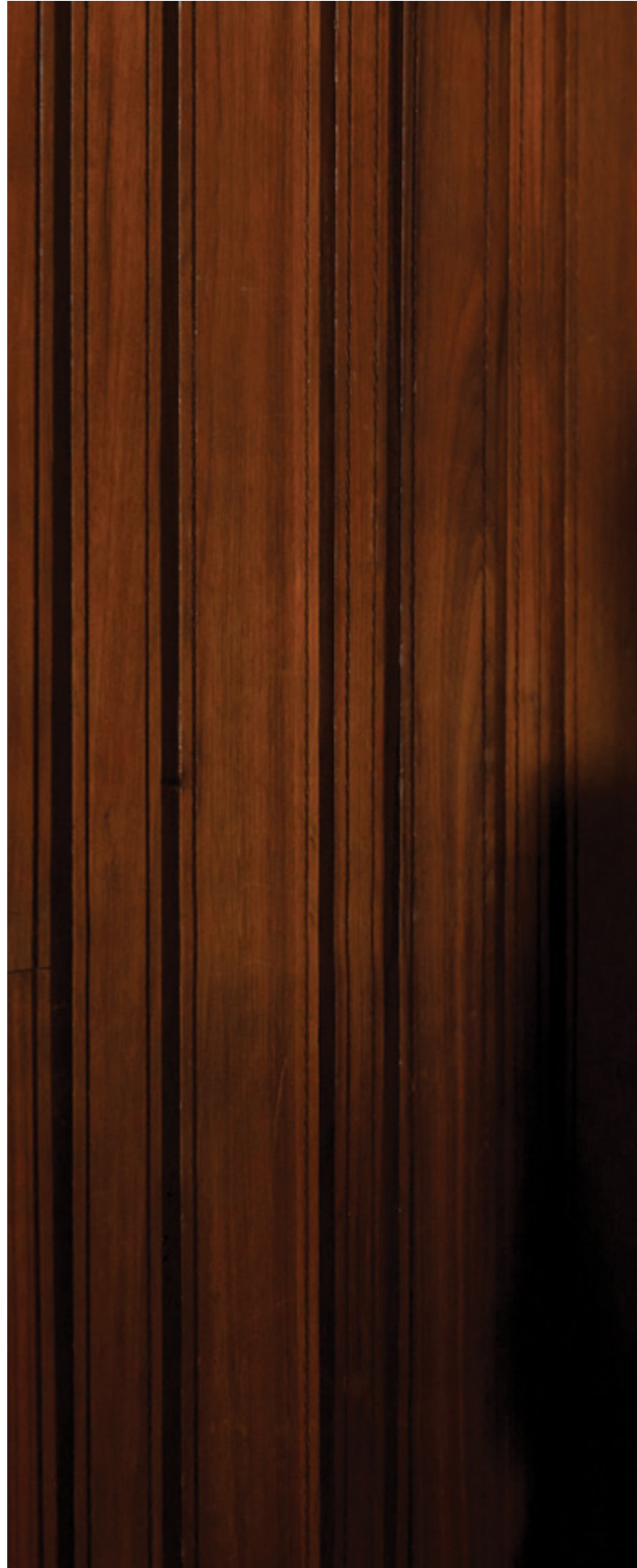


ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## NOELLE BROWNE

Lead Artist, Curator and Actor, *Home: Part One*

*Home: Part One* was filmed in the Abbey and broadcast on YouTube on St Patrick's Day 2021. It came as a response to the deeply flawed Commission of Investigation Report into Mother and Baby Homes. The offensive findings of the report and the careless treatment of their testimonies, profoundly upset survivors. This project sought to counter the distress caused, by giving voice to survivors' testimonies on the stage of our national theatre. I was Lead Artist, Curator and an Actor on the project, working with the team at the Abbey and a panel of six people. Without the financial, artistic, administrative, production and technical support of the Abbey, this project would never have happened. As an artist and activist, it was a profoundly moving project to lead. Survivors felt heard and to have their stories told on that stage marked a significant event in Irish theatre and Irish history.





Noelle Browne.  
Image : Ste Murray





Prof. Christopher Morash, Roger Doyle, Olwen Fouéré and David Heap pictured outside Windmill Lane Studios where they recorded *The Pentagonal Dream Under Snow* by Sebastian Barry as part of *Unseen Plays*



#### ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## PROF. CHRISTOPHER MORASH

Co-Curator, *Unseen Plays*

The *Unseen Plays* series, which I curated for the Abbey in 2021, seemed to me to go to the heart of the Abbey's complex mission as Ireland's national theatre. The Abbey has always been about creating new work; at the same time, it has a legacy going back to 1899, of which the current theatre is the custodian. The challenge is to see that legacy not as one thing, but as legacies – multiple and always in need of renewal. When a legacy becomes a living thing, it speaks to new work. The brave decision to record as audio plays nine scripts from the archives (many unperformed for decades), was an epic undertaking. It involved eight directors, more than 80 actors, and all of the support – technical, dramaturgical, logistical, promotional – that only a national theatre can provide. As such, the project exemplified to me what is meant by a national theatre.





Sarah Hanly in *Purple Snowflakes and Titty Wanks* by Sarah Hanly.  
Image: Luca Truffarelli





**ABBeY**  
**Live**

**2021 SAW A LONG-AWAITED AND TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO LIVE THEATRE. THE BUILDING REOPENED AND THERE WERE 10 PRODUCTIONS ON THE STAGES AND FOUR LIVE PRODUCTIONS OUT OF THE ABBEY. BEGINNING WITH A CAPACITY OF 50 PATRONS IN THE AUDIENCE FOR TWO PRODUCTIONS IN THE SUMMER, RESTRICTIONS WERE LIFTED TO ALLOW HOUSES OF 50% JUST IN TIME FOR DUBLIN THEATRE FESTIVAL AND WE CLOSED THE YEAR SAFELY WELCOMING CAPACITIES OF 70% TO SHOWS ON BOTH THE ABBEY AND PEACOCK STAGES.**



The Abbey Theatre self-produced the world premieres of three new plays on the Abbey stage in 2021 – Una McKevitt's *One Good Turn* was a wry and life-affirming exploration into the ups and downs of family bonds; Rosaleen McDonagh's *Walls and Windows* was a tender, complex and beautiful love story; and Marina Carr's *iGirl* is both a warning about our darkest inclinations and a celebration of human beings' capacity for love and creativity. Our audiences also finally got to see the Covid-postponed productions of Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* and Sarah Hanly's *Purple Snowflakes and Titty Wanks*. Out of the Abbey was Company SJ's production of *Laethanta Sona (Happy Days)* which opened on Inis Oirr, ahead of a run at the Samuel Beckett Centre. Dublin Fringe brought *Rescue Annie* and *You're Still Here* to the Peacock and then *What I (Don't) Know About Autism* returned with a week of relaxed performances. We partnered with Dublin Dance Festival on their winter offering of *Floating on a Dead Sea* in Longford and *Dēmos* and *The Misunderstanding of Myrrah* at the O'Reilly Theatre. Michael Gallen's new opera *Elsewhere* opened on the Abbey stage in November and Thornton Wilder's seasonal gem *The Long Christmas Dinner* was the perfect festive treat to see us through to the end of the year.

# 11%

OF TOTAL 2021 AUDIENCE WAS IN-PERSON

# 14

LIVE PRODUCTIONS, CO-PRODUCTIONS  
AND PRESENTATIONS

# 18,066

IN-PERSON AUDIENCES

Olwen Fouéré in *iGirl* by Marina Carr.  
Image: Ros Kavanagh

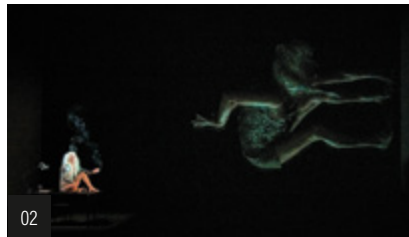
# LIVE PRODUCTIONS



01 *One Good Turn*



04 *Laethanta Sona (Happy Days)*



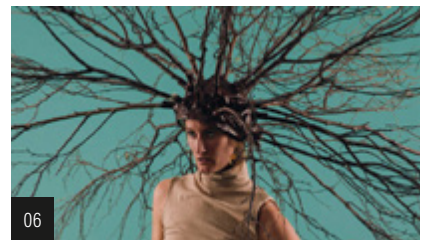
02 *iGirl*



05 *Purple Snowflakes and Titty Wanks*



03 *Floating on A Dead Sea*



06 *The Misunderstanding of Myrrha*

- 01 Bosco Hogan in *One Good Turn* by Una McKeivitt. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 02 Olwen Fouéré in *iGirl* by Marina Carr. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 03 *Floating on a Dead Sea*. Image: Alaa Aliabdallah
- 04 Bríd Ní Neachtain in *Laethanta Sona (Happy Days)* by Samuel Beckett. Image: Cormac Coyne
- 05 Sarah Hanly in *Purple Snowflakes and Titty Wanks* by Sarah Hanley. Image: Luca Truffarelli
- 06 *The Misunderstanding of Myrrha*. Image: Fionn McCann
- 07 Hazel Clifford and Hilda Fay in *Walls and Windows* by Rosaleen McDonagh. Image: Ros Kavanagh





*Walls and Windows*



*Rescue Annie*



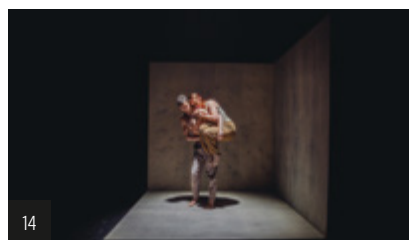
*You're Still Here*



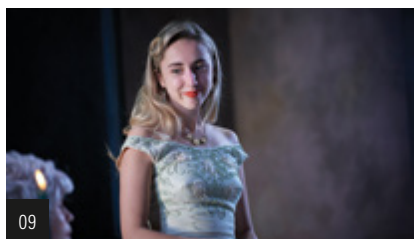
*What I (Don't) Know About Autism*



*Elsewhere*



*Dēmos*



*The Long Christmas Dinner*



*Faith Healer*

- 08 Eleanor Walsh, Paula McGlinchey, Matthew Ralli, Shay Croke, Jody O'Neill and Jayson Dockrell-Murray in *What I (Don't) Know About Autism* by Jody O'Neill. Image: Ros Kavanagh.
- 09 Aisling Kearns in *The Long Christmas Dinner* by Thornton Wilder. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 10 *Rescue Annie*. Image: Algorithm
- 11 The cast of *Elsewhere* by Michael Gallen. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 12 Nigel Lindsay in *Faith Healer* by Brian Friel. Image: Ros Kavanagh
- 13 Hazel Clifford in *You're Still Here* by Finbarr Doyle and John King with the company. Image: Simon Lazewski
- 14 Luke Murphy and Emily Terndrup in *Dēmos*. Image: Steve O'Connor

## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## DR. ROSALEEN MCDONAGH

Playwright, *Walls and Windows*

The *Dear Ireland* call run by the Abbey Theatre during the spring of 2020 was definitely one of the first real engagements I had with the Abbey Theatre.

Previously, my relationship was always shadowed by an experience of about 15 years ago. This experience was when I was turned away from the door. I didn't even get to the box office.

Previous to *Dear Ireland* being on the panel of the 5X5 was a positive experience. It was ensuring diverse, marginalised and under-represented groups had an opportunity to apply and showcase some of their work on the Abbey and Peacock stages. This experience made me feel proactive, working alongside Abbey staff and management.

It's important to say one of the great changes in my life is being able to go into the Abbey to see a play and not be in fear of being asked to leave. This experience can't be stated enough. To have front of house staff and box office staff to welcome you and open doors, it's wonderful. Pieces with a strong female lead are my favourites. Also, when the Abbey give warnings about themes of violence and sexual violence, this is really appreciated as an audience member.

During the spring of 2020, my body got Covid. When the Abbey called, I was only out of the hospital a week. My piece *Walls and Windows* was a short monologue about a Traveller woman living in a hotel room. My first worry and only worry was, due to my impairment Cerebral Palsy coupled with my recent illness, would I be able to do the editing or typing. Also, during the Covid period, I had only skeleton support staff. This meant writing or editing was not a priority.

Luckily my monologue was written and needed very little editing. It was important for me to be able to explain my situation to the Abbey without feeling ashamed of having an impairment.

The Abbey staff were wonderful to me. Unfortunately, I did not get to see my monologue when it was streamed. The following day, people in the Abbey wrote to me and told me about the positive reactions my work received.

Many weeks later an email came from the dramaturg. It was amazing. They wanted me to develop my monologue into a full play. As a Traveller, the Abbey wanted a play about our lives written by a Traveller woman with an impairment was and is the moment in my life where I knew why I had come off the respirator in the hospital. Nothing can ever match this experience.

Now I have a relationship with the Abbey. An equal, respectful relationship. This is significant not only for me as a writer, but for other members of the Traveller community. As a disabled woman having the national theatre take a chance on my work, recognising the value and importance of diversity not just in front of house but throughout all its apparatus is progress. The relationship gave me pride and dignity. My access requirements were dealt with in a respectful, discreet manner without ever feeling compromised.







Rosaleen McDonagh in discussion with Jason Byrne in rehearsals for *Walls and Windows*  
Image: Mark Stedman



Olwen Fouéré as part of *iGirl* by Marina Carr.  
Image: Barry McCall





#### ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## OLWEN FOUÉRE

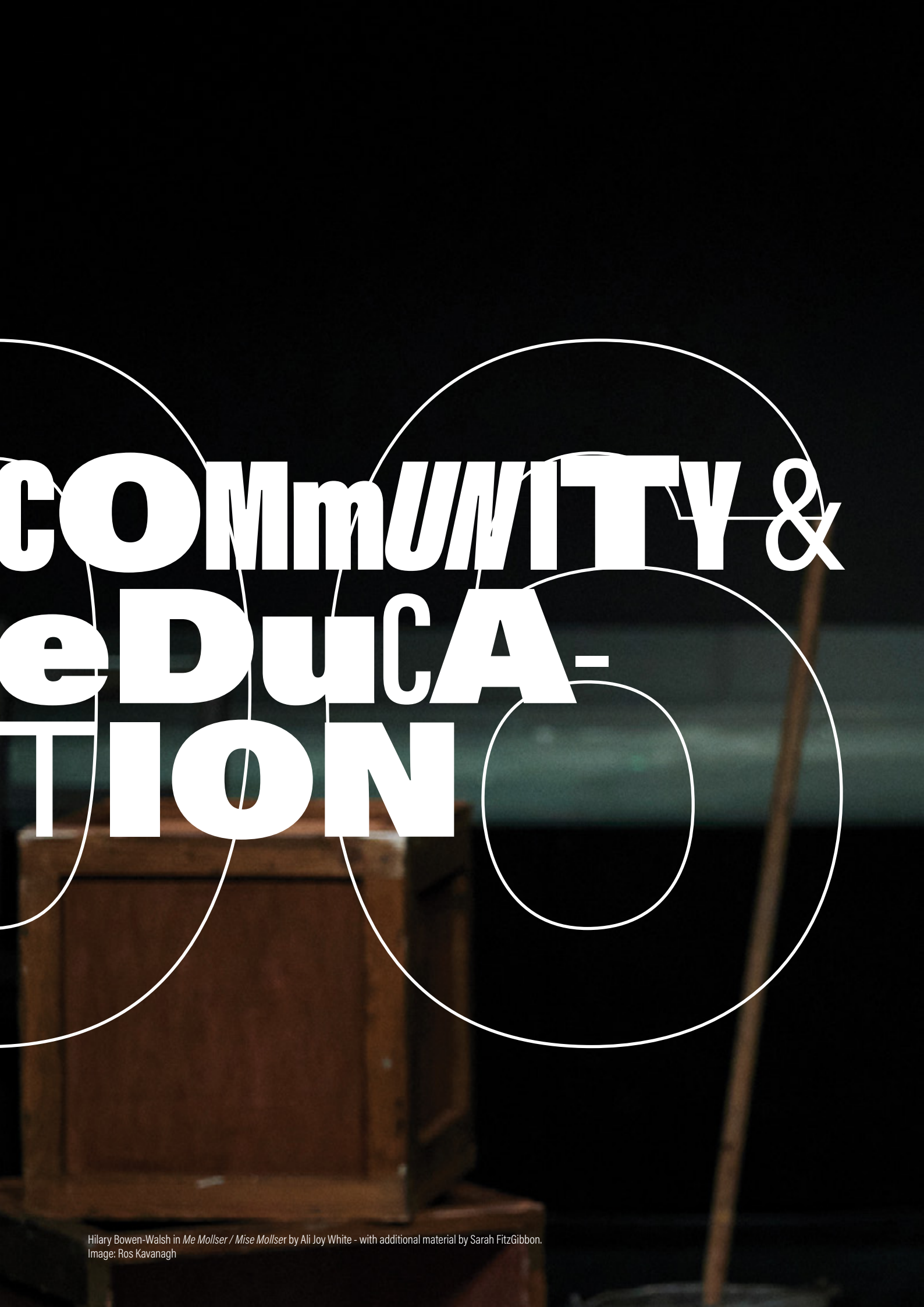
Performer, *iGirl*

The last time I worked with the Abbey was on *iGirl* by Marina Carr, directed by Caitríona McLaughlin. Marina and I had been discussing working on a new project together, possibly a solo, and eventually Marina sent me the initial script of *iGirl* (part of which Roger Doyle was making into an opera). As soon as I read the script, I felt that it was a perfect piece for performance. Marina suggested sending it into Caitríona who we hoped would be interested in directing it for the Abbey. Caitríona's response was hugely positive, and we expected the work might be programmed a year or two later. However, due to various circumstances, Caitríona got in touch with me two weeks later to ask if I would be available to rehearse and perform it in time for the 2021 Dublin Theatre Festival. With no hesitation, I instructed my agent to drop everything that could be dropped in order to make myself available. Caitríona, Marina and I grabbed every spare moment we could to meet and work in advance of rehearsals. The entire production was ultimately the result of a deep collaboration between the three of us. Our rehearsals, when they officially started, were intense and joyous. We were joined by our brilliant stage management team (z, Kevin and Orla) and production manager (Sal), our movement and voice facilitators (Andrea and Sue) and the ongoing artistic collaboration of costume designer Catherine Fay, sound designer Carl Kennedy and occasionally by set designer Joanna Parker (who I strongly felt needed to be in the room rather than on zoom for this particular work which was fundamentally actor centred). The rest is history and one that I am very proud of.

*iGirl* is a singular journey of creation through key historical and mythological figures such as Joan of Arc, Oedipus, Jocasta, Persephone, Antigone or a Neanderthal prince. These figures are mirrored by the figure of their writer navigating her own history, her loves and griefs, her obsessions and losses. In this case, part of the actor's deep history (mine) also found its way into the text.

There were enormous advantages to the Abbey being the lead producer as regards the profile of the work, access to collaborating artists and technical resources, particularly in the superb costume department and in the sound department. Unfortunately, and unusually, *iGirl* was not reviewed by any international critics and this could be a difficulty for future recognition of the work as it is a creation absolutely unique to the people involved.

Nevertheless, the Abbey choosing to stage the world premiere of *iGirl* was the kind of endorsement that the work deserves. Above all, it was a strong and exciting statement of artistic intent from the new Artistic Director. I feel eternally blessed to have been a part of it.



# COMMUNITY & EDUCATION

Hilary Bowen-Walsh in *Me Mollser / Mise Mollser* by Ali Joy White - with additional material by Sarah FitzGibbon.  
Image: Ros Kavanagh





2021 saw the department building on its use of online work but also returning to in-person events where appropriate for major projects. The first filmed version of our Priming the Canon series, *Me Mollser*, went out to 273 schools (and delivered 233 blended learning packs). This was closely followed by *Windows 21*, a celebration of the Abbey's 10-year partnership with Fighting Words, which saw eight young writers from across the country debuting short plays on the national stage. The Abbey's work in schools included an in-depth response from Larkin Community College to *Home: Part One* where the students imagined the lives of those in the Mother and Baby Institutions and shared some stories from their own pasts. The Abbey Theatre revived our Women in Technical Theatre project which introduced jobs in the production side of theatre to 316 young women in 12 venues around Ireland. The Community and Education team continued to support young people by collaborating with The Everyman Theatre, Graffiti Theatre Company and the YMCA in Cork adapting our Theatre-Making and Citizenship programme for people outside formal education. A major project led by new department member Grace McKiernan was providing the largest multiple access opportunities to date for online, live and in-person for *What I (Don't) Know About Autism*. The team continued to deliver Coping and Caring workshops as part of the Royal College of Physicians' doctor training programme and were invited to share this work with applied drama students in New York and London.







# 11

RELAXED PERFORMANCES

# 12

IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETED  
PERFORMANCES (5 LIVE, 7 DIGITAL)

# 23

CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES  
(12 LIVE, 11 DIGITAL)

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## JENNY MACDONALD

Theatre maker and Facilitator

I am a facilitator on a collaboration between the Abbey and the Royal College of Physicians. Using applied theatre methodologies, Phil Kingston (Abbey Community and Education manager) and I have created a day-long workshop. The workshop allows trainee obstetricians to imagine and perform the world of their patients, and to explore and perform the work of a physician. We share a range of vocal, physical and imaginative theatre making tools. By the day's end, they have created small plays set in the world of medical practice. Their work is very moving – a testament to the power of theatre to distil, honour and help us to better understand our lives. Our approach is very different to traditional medical training. Knowing that we work with the national theatre helps the physicians to trust us and to take a leap of faith into the unknown. They consistently reflect that the work is hugely beneficial.







Jenny Macdonald (second from left), with the team from RCSI along with Community and Education Manager of the Abbey Theatre, Phil Kingston (first from right)



Bronagh Doherty, Hilary Bowen-Walsh, Phil Kingston, Sarah FitzGibbon, Victoria Miller, Caitríona Ní Mhurchú, Tara Furlong, Jeanne Nicole Ní Áinle and Val Sherlock after the production of *Me Mollser / Mise Mollser*. Image: Ros Kavanagh





#### ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## SARAH FITZGIBBON

*Director, Me, Moller / Mise, Mollser*

Starting in 2011, my collaboration with the Abbey focused on the creation of theatre for younger audiences, starting with *Me, Mollser* by Ali Joy White which enjoyed multiple revivals. The last was in June 2020, but was obliterated by Covid. As an artist, I felt supported during this uncertain period. When we made the decision to film it in the Tenement Museum and present it as a digital piece of theatre, I was enabled. The Abbey Theatre's great invisible asset is the calibre of artists working within its structure. Their wealth of creative experience made what could have been a daunting experience, enjoyable, stimulating, fulfilling and very safe for me and my cast. The Abbey comes with an implied Q mark for audiences which is a challenge and a joy. As a guest artist, you are supported to aim for and deliver that standard. Digital will never replace the live act, but when we needed to connect with our child audiences, the Abbey was present as their national theatre.



Niamh Cusack, Aidan Gillen and Nigel Lindsay in *Faith Healer* by Brian Friel.  
Image: Ros Kavanagh





**IN A YEAR OF EXTREME  
CHANGE, WE CONTINUED  
TO KEEP ACTORS IN  
EMPLOYMENT THROUGH OUR  
INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING.**



**191** ACTORS & **39** MUSICIANS  
AT THE ABBEY IN 2021

**57**  
ACTOR DEBUTS

**140**  
ACTORS PERFORMING IN ABBEY PRODUCTIONS

**42** ACTORS & **9** MUSICIANS  
PERFORMING IN ABBEY CO-PRODUCTIONS

**560**  
ACTOR WEEKS FOR ABBEY PRODUCTIONS &  
CO-PRODUCTIONS

**74**  
PERFORMERS AUDITIONED FOR ROLES ACROSS  
5 PRODUCTIONS

**32**  
ACTORS HAD ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS WITH  
CASTING DIRECTOR



# GENDER EQUALITY



Will O'Connell, Valerie O'Connor, Bryan Burroughs, Rachael Dowling, Emmet Byrne, Máire Ní Ghráinne, Rachel O'Byrne, Fionnuala Gyga, Liam Bixby, Aisling Kearns, Eoin Fullston and Fiona Lucia McGarry in *The Long Christmas Dinner* by Thornton Wilder. Image: Ros Kavanagh



THE ABBEY THEATRE'S MISSION PROMOTES INCLUSIVENESS, DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IN THEATRE. WE ARE COMMITTED TO MEETING OUR GOALS IN GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS ALL ASPECTS OF OUR PROGRAMME.



WRITERS

44 ROLES	26 WOMEN (59%)
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DIRECTORS

32 ROLES	20 WOMEN (63%)
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SET DESIGNERS

13 ROLES	8 WOMEN (62%)
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COSTUME DESIGNERS

14 ROLES	13 WOMEN (93%)
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LIGHTING DESIGNERS

14 ROLES	7 WOMEN (50%)
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SOUND DESIGNERS

24 ROLES	9 WOMEN (38%)
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STAGE MANAGEMENT

21 ROLES	17 WOMEN (81%)
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ACTORS\*\*

198 ROLES	109 WOMEN (55%)
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TOTALS

192 ROLES	129 WOMEN (67%)
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\*These figures are calculated using methodologies published by #WakingTheFeminists in 2017, available at [wakingthefeminists.org](http://wakingthefeminists.org).



The Abbey Theatre during *Home: Part One*.  
Image: Ros Kavanagh



A nighttime photograph of a city street corner. On the left is a brick building with a modern glass-fronted entrance. A tram is visible on the tracks in the foreground. The street is wet and reflects the city lights. Overlaid on the image are two large, white, thin-lined circles that frame the text. The text 'SUPPORTING THE ABBEY' is written in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font, with 'SUPPORTING' on the top line and 'THE ABBEY' on the bottom line.

# SUPPORTING THE ABBEY



**THE SUPPORT OF OUR  
PARTNERS AND PATRONS  
CONTINUES TO PLAY  
A PIVOTAL ROLE IN  
EMPOWERING THE ABBEY  
THEATRE TO CREATE  
GROUND-BREAKING  
AND INNOVATIVE WORK  
WHICH ENRICHES THE  
CULTURAL LIVES OF  
OUR AUDIENCES.**

Throughout 2021, as we moved from a digital format to finally welcoming in-person audiences back through our doors, our donors support has enabled us to adapt quickly, ensuring our work continues to inspire and entertain our audiences throughout Ireland and beyond.

This support has also facilitated continued work at community level which is an important element of our strategy as a national theatre. Through a series of outreach and education projects, the Abbey Theatre engaged with a wide network of community groups and schools throughout Ireland.

We would like to thank all our partners, corporate supporters and individual patrons for their continued generosity and commitment.





# 2021 SUPPORTERS



## Principal Partner

**BANK OF AMERICA** 

## Programme Partners



## Corporate Guardians



**ARTHUR COX**

**Bloomberg**

**BROWN THOMAS**

**THE DOYLE COLLECTION**  
LONDON • DUBLIN • NEW YORK • LOS ANGELES • CHICAGO • BOSTON



**Ulster Bank**

## Gold Ambassadors



## Silver Ambassadors

Trocadero  
The Merrion Hotel

## Directors Circle

Tony Ahearne  
Richard and Sherril Burrows  
Pat Butler  
The Cielinski Family  
Deirdre and Irial Finan  
Donal Moore R.I.P.  
The Kathleen Murphy Foundation  
Sheelagh O'Neill  
Dr. Frances Ruane  
Susan and Denis Tinsley  
Professor Lloyd Weinreb R.I.P.

## Silver Patrons

Frances Britton  
Catherine Byrne  
Thomas Gibbons  
Dr. John Keane  
Andrew Mackey  
Eugenie Mackey  
Eugene Magee  
Gerard and Liv McNaughton

And others who prefer to remain anonymous.

# 10 Staff



Roxzan Bowes and Tara Furlong, Staff of the Abbey Theatre behind the scenes.  
Image: Ste Murray









# 2021 STAFF

## Administration

Catherine Griffin  
Fiona Reynolds

## Directors

Graham McLaren  
Neil Murray  
Caitríona McLaughlin  
Mark O'Brien

## Voice Director

Andrea Ainsworth

## Archivist

Mairead Delaney

## Head of Production

Jen Coppinger

## Communications and Marketing

Maura Campbell  
Fergus Hannigan  
Muireann Kane  
Maeve Keane  
Heather Maher  
Roísín McGann  
Christine Monk  
Jack O'Dea  
Sharon Sorohan

## Community and Education

Phil Kingston  
Lisa Farrelly  
Grace McKiernan

## Costume

Maeve Brennan  
Susan Bryan  
Nicola Burke  
Breege Fahy  
Eimear Farrell  
Neasa Flannery  
Ellen Fleming  
Donna Geraghty  
Sandra Gibney  
Brenda Herbert  
Izzy Jones- McAuley  
Yvonne Kelly  
Ailbhe Kelly-Miller  
Julia MacConville  
Victoria Miller  
Tara Mulvihill  
Kathyann Murphy  
Síofra Ní Chiarda

Emily Ní Bhroin  
Esther O'Connor  
Barbara Ryan  
Leanne Vaughey

## Development

Marie Lawlor

## Facilities

Jeff Conway  
Colin O'Connor  
Simon O'Reilly

## Finance

Debra Doak  
Derek Garland  
Gus McNamara  
Orlagh Murphy  
Tara O'Reilly  
Monika Wlodarczyk

## Furniture and Props

Dylan Farrell  
Eimer Murphy  
Adam O'Connell

## HR

Ciara Lynch  
Agnieszka Myszk

## Lighting and Sound

Maeubh Brennan  
Simon Burke  
Eoin Byrne  
David Carpenter  
Daire Cavanagh  
Owen Vincent Clarke  
Connall Coleman  
Derek Conaghy  
Kate Crook  
Karima Dillon  
Colin Doran  
Morgan Dunne  
Robert Flynn  
Veronica Foo  
John Gunning  
Laura Honan  
Patrick Lehane  
Scott Maguire  
Kevin McFadden  
Adrian Moylan  
Laura Rainsford  
Josh Roxby  
Aidah Sama  
Sean Treacy  
Bill Woodland

## New Work

Craig Flaherty  
Sarah Jones  
Aoife McCollum  
Selina O'Reilly  
Clara Purcell  
Rian Smith  
Jesse Weaver

## Production

Cliff Barragry  
Andy Keogh  
Sarah Smith  
Sally Withnell

## Sales and Customer Services

Johanna Bear  
Lily Conlon  
Karl Corr  
Clarissa Delap  
Con Doyle  
Laura Doyle  
Sophie Furlong Tighe  
Grace Healy  
Daniel Hickey  
William Hickey  
Dermot Hicks  
James Hickson  
Dara Hogan  
Narges Jahani  
Vlatka Jeh  
Luke Lamont  
Tim Leech-Cleary  
Bridget Lynskey Faust  
Stephen Maguire  
Claire Maher  
Elaine Mannion  
Nadine Mary Moore  
Éadaoin McCarrick  
Ciaran McGlynn  
Donna Murphy  
Maureen O'Connell  
Valentina Quiroga  
Dean Reidy  
Seán Roper Nolan  
Fergal Styles

## Stage Management

Roxzan Bowes  
Orla Burke  
Shannon Cowan  
Bronagh Doherty  
Emma Doyle  
Danny Erskine  
Tara Furlong  
Brendan Galvin  
Zoë Reynolds  
Audrey Rooney

## Stage Technicians

Donal Ayton  
Evan Connolly  
Fiona Cradock  
Richard Curwood  
Pat Dillon  
Ken Dunne  
Kate Finn  
John Finnegan  
Philip Hughes  
Larry Jones  
Fergus Kelly  
Conor Kelly  
Tom Kennedy  
Shane Kenny  
Michael Kyle  
Adrian Leake  
Darren Magnier  
Davy McChrystal  
Dan McDermott  
Aidan McGillon  
Terence McGoff  
Conor Mullan  
Aoife Murphy  
Marykerin Naughton  
Pawel Nieworaj  
Eimear O'Meara  
Emma-Kate O'Reilly  
Martin Reid  
Pat Russell  
Joseph Sanders  
Andrew Smith  
Seán Walsh  
Sarah-Jane Williams  
Damien Woods  
Diarmuid Woods

## 2021 BOARD

Dr. Frances Ruane  
(Chair)

Mairéad Delaney  
(appointed 01/02/2021)

Loretta Dignam  
(retired 15/07/2021)

Bosco Hogan  
(retired 14/07/2021)

Peter Lowry  
(retired 31/10/2021)

Kevin McFadden  
(retired 23/01/2021)


Breda O'Keeffe  
(resigned 20/07/2021)

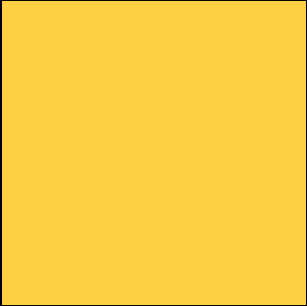
Máire O'Higgins

Michael Owens  
(Deputy Chair)

Michael West

\*Indicative list of staff in 2021

 PRO-

GRAMME & 

ELEMENTS 2021



<b>THE T. S. ELIOT LECTURE WITH EDNA O'BRIEN</b> , ONLINE Presented by The T. S. Eliot Estate	15 DEC 2020 – 15 JAN 2021
<b>DEAR IRELAND III</b> , ONLINE An Abbey Theatre production	17 DEC – 14 MAY 2021
<b>DRACULA*</b> , ABBEY STAGE An Abbey Theatre production	15 FEB – 28 MAR
<b>HOME: PART ONE</b> , ONLINE An Abbey Theatre production	17 MAR – 17 JUL
<b>DEAR IRELAND: REFLECTIONS ON A PANDEMIC</b> , ONLINE Abbey Theatre in partnership with Culture Ireland	20 MAR – 17 APR
<b>ME, MOLLSER / MISE, MOLLSER</b> , ONLINE An Abbey Theatre production	12 APR – 30 JUN
<b>DECLAN O'ROURKE AND SPECIAL GUESTS</b> , ONLINE Declan O'Rourke	14 APR
<b>DÉMOS</b> Co-commissioned by Dublin Dance Festival and the Abbey Theatre ONLINE (SCENES FROM THE PIECE) DUBLIN, ABBEY STAGE	18 – 29 MAY 11 – 13 NOV
<b>ONE GOOD TURN</b> , ABBEY STAGE AND ONLINE An Abbey Theatre production	21 JUN – 10 JUL
<b>WINDOWS 21</b> , ONLINE Presented by Fighting Words and the Abbey Theatre	20 – 27 JUL
<b>AFTERTASTE</b> , ONLINE Youth Theatre Ireland presents the National Youth Theatre	8 – 15 AUG
<b>WALLS AND WINDOWS</b> , ABBEY STAGE AND ONLINE An Abbey Theatre production	23 AUG – 11 SEP
<b>LAETHANTA SONA (HAPPY DAYS)</b> Company SJ and the Abbey Theatre in association with Dublin Theatre Festival and Galway International Arts Festival GALWAY, INIS OÍRR DUBLIN, SAMUEL BECKETT THEATRE	30 AUG – 5 SEP 14 – 17 OCT
<b>SPEAK SOFTLY, GO FAR</b> , VARIOUS LOCATIONS** A Dublin Fringe Festival and the Abbey Theatre co-commission	11 – 26 SEP
<b>RESCUE ANNIE</b> , PEACOCK STAGE A Dublin Fringe Festival presentation	11 – 18 SEP

\*Production was cancelled before rehearsals began due to COVID-19

\*\* Specific to audience member

\*\*\*Eight performances cancelled from 20 Nov due to COVID-19

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**CULTURE NIGHT:  
LAST ORDERS AT THE DOCKSIDE AUDIO PLAY,**  
ONLINE (PODCAST)  
An Abbey Theatre production

17 SEP – 1 FEB

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**YOU'RE STILL HERE,**  
DUBLIN CASTLE OUTSIDE THE PRINTWORKS  
A Dublin Fringe Festival Commission, co-presented by  
Dublin Fringe Festival and the Abbey Theatre

22 – 26 SEP

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**PURPLE SNOWFLAKES  
AND TITTY WANKS,** PEACOCK STAGE  
An Abbey Theatre and Royal Court co-production

30 SEP – 16 OCT

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**HOW IT IS,** ONLINE  
Gare St Lazare Ireland, in association with The Everyman Cork and The  
Coronet London and supported by Dublin Theatre Festival, the Abbey Theatre,  
The Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny and Le Centre Cultural Irlandais, Paris

1 – 7 OCT

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**iGIRL, ABBEY STAGE**  
An Abbey Theatre production

9 – 30 OCT

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**WHAT I (DON'T) KNOW ABOUT AUTISM,**  
PEACOCK STAGE & ONLINE  
A Jody O'Neill and Abbey Theatre co-production

26 OCT – 20 NOV

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**UNSEEN PLAYS,** ONLINE (PODCAST)  
An Abbey Theatre production

1 NOV – 1 FEB 2022

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**THE MISUNDERSTANDING  
OF MYRRHA, O'REILLY THEATRE,** DUBLIN  
A Dublin Dance Festival commission presented in partnership with the Abbey Theatre

2 – 3 NOV

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**ELSEWHERE,** ABBEY STAGE  
Straymaker and the Abbey Theatre in association with  
Miroirs Étendus and Once Off Productions

15 – 20 NOV

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**FLOATING ON A DEAD SEA,** BACKSTAGE THEATRE, LONGFORD  
Co-commissioned by Dance Festival in association with Backstage Theatre,  
and presented in partnership with the Abbey Theatre

26 – 27 NOV

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**THE LONG CHRISTMAS DINNER, PEACOCK STAGE**  
An Abbey Theatre production

30 NOV – 31 DEC

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**FAITH HEALER,** ABBEY STAGE  
An Abbey Theatre production

3 DEC – 22 JAN 2022

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**THE T. S. ELIOT LECTURE WITH ES DEVLIN,** ONLINE  
Presented by The T. S. Eliot Estate

19 DEC – 19 JAN 2022

