

2023-10

Perspectives on Practice: Building a better environment for all – an interview with Jane Daly and Siobhán Bourke

Tanya Dean

Technological University Dublin, tanya.dean@tudublin.ie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/diraaart>



Part of the [Other Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Dean, Tanya. (2023). Perspectives on Practice: Building a better environment for all – an interview with Jane Daly and Siobhán Bourke, *Irish Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy*, 10(1), 102-115. DOI: 10.21427/2ZEF-1D71

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Directorate of Academic Affairs at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

Perspectives on Practice: Building a better environment for all – an interview with Jane Daly and Siobhán Bourke

Tanya Dean

To cite this article:

Dean, Tanya. (2023). Perspectives on Practice: Building a better environment for all – an interview with Jane Daly and Siobhán Bourke, *Irish Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy*, 10(1), 102-115.

Published online:

October 2023

Corresponding author(s):

Tanya Dean	<i>Technological University Dublin</i>	tanya.dean@TUDublin.ie
------------	--	--

Abstract

In this Perspectives on Practice interview, Tanya Dean speaks to Siobhán Bourke and Jane Daly about their work with Irish Theatre Institute in supporting Irish theatre and fostering positive change in the industry. The discussion explores how the purpose of Irish Theatre Institute has evolved, and how it has adapted to and reflected the changes and challenges facing Irish theatre over the decades.

Biographical Statement

Dr Tanya Dean is a Lecturer and Programme Coordinator for the B.A. (Hons) in Drama (Performance) in the Technological University Dublin Conservatoire. She completed her Doctor of Fine Arts with Yale School of Drama in 2016, where she also received her Master of Fine Arts in Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism in 2011. Tanya has worked extensively as a freelance dramaturg on numerous scripts, workshops and productions in Ireland, the UK, the USA, and Iceland. Tanya is a board member for Rough Magic Theatre Company and is also Associate Dramaturg of Then This Theatre Company in Dublin. From 2015 to 2017, Tanya served as a committee member for #WakingTheFeminists, and was a Research Associate on the report, *Gender Counts: An Analysis Of Gender In Irish Theatre 2006-15*. From 2020 to 2021, Tanya served as one of the judges for the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards. She is currently the Script Associate for the Abbey Theatre, Ireland's national theatre.

Keywords: : Irish Theatre Institute; producing; artist-led supports; dignity in the arts workspace

Perspectives on Practice: Building a better environment for all – an interview with Jane Daly and Siobhán Bourke

Tanya Dean

Introduction

In this Perspectives on Practice interview, Tanya Dean talks to Jane Daly and Siobhán Bourke, former co-directors of Irish Theatre Instituteⁱ (ITI). Irish Theatre Institute was first founded as Theatre Shop in 1994, with a focus on building opportunities and networks for Irish theatremakers to tour their work to international venues and festivals. This dimension of the organisation's work now includes International Theatre eXchange (ITX)ⁱⁱ and Information Toolboxⁱⁱⁱ. Theatre Shop went on to expand its remit to focus on more supports and resources for the professional Irish theatre

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

industry, including publications, databases and research such as multiple editions of the publication *Irish Theatre Handbook*^{iv} (later reimagined as an online resource, irishtheatre.ie^v) and PLAYOGRAPHY Ireland^{vi} (a catalogue of new playwriting produced on the island of Ireland). Theatre Shop re-constituted, re-branded and launched as Irish Theatre Institute in 2006. It continues to be dedicated to promoting and supporting Irish theatre makers and companies through international networking and showcasing, artist mentoring, conferencing and publications. In the last several years, Irish Theatre Institute has been at the forefront of the movement advocating for improved workplace dignity and respect practices in the Irish arts post-#MeToo; firstly with the Speak Up^{vii} movement within the Irish theatre industry and latterly with the Safe to Create^{viii} programme for the professional arts and creative sectors across Ireland.

Prior to setting up Theatre Shop, Bourke was a founding member of Rough Magic Theatre Company^{ix} in 1984, where she worked as Executive Producer until 1998 producing 50 shows during that time, many of which toured around Ireland and internationally. In 1999, Bourke edited the *Rough Magic: First Plays* anthology (Bourke, 1999), and in 2015 she co-edited *Stage & Screen Design Ireland 2007- 2014* for Irish Design (ID) (Bourke and Senger, 2015). As well as serving on several boards (including the National Theatre Society or Abbey Theatre, the Dublin Theatre Festival, Project Arts Centre and Dublin City Council Culture Company) and teaching as an occasional lecturer on several arts and culture-related courses (including the Drama and Theatre Studies MPhil in Trinity College Dublin and the MA in Cultural Policy and Arts Management at University College Dublin), Bourke was also on the cultural relations committee of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Parallel to her theatre work, Bourke has also been a successful film and television producer with her company Saffron Pictures^x, co-owned with Kathryn Lennon (with projects including the award-winning and critically-acclaimed dramas *Whistleblower* and *Love is the Drug*, and most recently, a major six-part TV drama, *Hidden Assets*).

Born in Dublin and living in Galway, Jane Daly has worked in the professional arts sector since 1984. She worked for Dublin Theatre Festival^{xi} and MayFest^{xii} (Glasgow's International Arts Festival) before becoming General Manager/Producer of Druid Theatre Company^{xiii}, where, over eight years, she produced 30 shows, many of which toured both nationally and internationally. On leaving Druid in 1996, she set up Jane Daly Arts Management which provides project management, strategic planning and facilitation services to arts organisations, local authorities and third level theatre programmes. Daly was acting Drama Officer at the Arts Council Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon^{xiv} in the late 90s and, more recently, was Programme Manager for Galway's successful 2015 bid to become the 2020 European Capital of Culture. She served on the Board of the National Theatre Society (Abbey Theatre) and was a member of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2020) set up in response to COVID19.

In 2017, Siobhán Bourke and Jane Daly were jointly awarded the Special Tribute Award at the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards in recognition of their essential work with Irish Theatre Institute and their individual long-standing commitment to Irish theatre (Mackin, 2017). In 2021, they both announced that they would retire as co-directors of Irish Theatre Institute after almost 20 years. Since leaving Irish Theatre Institute, Bourke now works primarily as a film and TV producer with her company Saffron Pictures and Daly now operates primarily as Jane Daly Arts Management. Both continue to serve as advisors to Safe to Create.

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

In this interview, they discuss the foundation and evolution of Irish Theatre Institute, and what they see as the key issues for the Irish theatre sector. This interview was conducted informally and has been edited to draw out the dominant themes of the discussion.

The interview took place over Zoom on Thursday 6th April 2023.

Foundations for Change: From Theatre Shop to Irish Theatre Institute

Dean:

What first brought the two of you together, and how did your experience both as individuals and as a partnership inform your work with Irish Theatre Institute?

Daly:

Siobhán and I have known each other since 1984. I was working on a one-off festival that happened in the year that the Dublin Theatre Festival didn't happen, and Siobhán just knocked on the door with fliers for a couple of shows that Rough Magic Theatre Company were doing in Players Theatre in Trinity College Dublin. Our careers were going in parallel for maybe 15 years. Siobhán was with Rough Magic throughout that time (as well as doing other things) and I was moving to different things: I worked in the Dublin Theatre Festival for a couple of years, I went to Glasgow and worked on a festival there for a couple of years, and then I came back to Druid Theatre Company in Galway.

We were both working in the area of being producers, except we didn't know we were producers at that time. I was a general manager (a very rare breed nowadays). But we were learning the same things: touring the highways and byways of Ireland, international touring, working with actors; we were financial managers, we were marketing managers, we were HR people—we were all of these things, and we were learning on the job a lot of the time. We had very similar skills, but we approached things differently, which I think made the combination work really well later on.

I think that the working relationship grew all the time we were working together over the past 20 years. We were kind of sharing the one job, but we also both retained freelance roles; that meant that we were never disconnected from the practice. Siobhán was working in TV producing and always working with new writing. And I was doing a lot of work with arts organisations around the country on strategic planning and organisational development, and so on. And I think that strategy was really important, because almost unknown to ourselves we became policymakers and strategists, and we learned how to see things coming down the tracks. It's hard sometimes to define what you do in the role of arts manager/administrator/producer, because you have to be on the move all the time, you have to be open and receptive all the time, because things change so quickly.

Dean:

Tell me about how Theatre Shop (which would later become Irish Theatre Institute) first began.

Bourke:

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Seven years into my work with Rough Magic [as founder member and executive producer], I had managed a certain amount of touring and had started to take new plays to London. And what had become apparent by the early 1990s was that a lot of programmers and producers were showing up at festival time in Dublin to see shows. And it dawned on me that we should really organise this in some way so that there would be a programme of work that visiting programmers could see and do some networking. I felt very strongly that it's a very big world outside of Ireland; the only way any of us is going to survive is if we can get work seen out of Ireland and we weren't in competition with one another. There were a huge number of shows and companies who were on these circuits touring all across the UK, America, and Australia. There was no reason why we couldn't all benefit from it, and that was my pitch to Dublin Theatre Festival: that we should do an event where we can promote our shows and sell our shows abroad. So I brought the idea to the festival management—then [Artistic Director] Tony O'Dálaigh and [General Manager] Fergus Linehan—and they said that it was great idea but they weren't in the position themselves to take it on and would I consider doing it myself?

I approached the Arts Council and said, 'this is what I want to do. We're going to call it Theatre Shop. It's meant to be information provision or information exchange, it's meant to be an opportunity'. The first Theatre Shop was put together on very small money, and had some of the components that it still has [as International Theatre eXchange/ITX]: one-to-one meetings with programmers, tickets to shows, opportunities to socialise, opportunities to have formal meetings, pitching sessions, etc. Theatre Shop was set up in that format, and it ran like that for a long number of years, and a lot of programmers came. As a result of that initiative, we saw a lot more tours coming out of Ireland. Within a few years, we started to do a brochure, capturing the work. And then later we ended up publishing the first *Irish Theatre Handbook* (Deegan, 2008); that was another big moment because you're putting between covers, 'This is who we are. This is our sector'.

Daly:

In 1999, there was an introduction of a multiannual funding opportunity from the Arts Council [Ireland]. People nowadays think multiannual funding is impossible, but in fact in 1999, a number of companies were invited to participate in a pilot multiannual funding arrangement. And one of the organisations selected by the Arts Council [Ireland] —it wasn't even an organisation at that point, it was an event—was Theatre Shop. And I was on the Arts Council [Ireland] side at that time [as acting Drama Officer], talking with the theatre clients around multiannual funding, and Theatre Shop (which then was Siobhán and Maura O'Keeffe) successfully put in a three-year plan to expand a one-off event into a three-year programme. At the beginning of 2000, I had left Druid and had been working freelance and had just finished a one-year contract in the Arts Council [Ireland], and Siobhán had left Rough Magic at the end of 1998. Siobhán and I had a conversation about Theatre Shop and I went in as independent producer on that year's edition, and something clicked because I was already familiar with the company and the ambitions for Theatre Shop.

So it was one of those things where the stars were aligned; the Arts Council [Ireland] had a multiannual funding pilot and a director who was really interested in the idea of new technology and web-based information provision. Sometimes it's just the right place at the right time; then it's about capitalising on your luck and making sure that the carpet can't be pulled from under you. I

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

think the fact that there was committed funding for three years is actually what allowed Theatre Shop to develop and flourish. The hardest thing is not necessarily setting something up; the hardest thing is sustaining it.

Dean:

Tell me about the change from Theatre Shop into Irish Theatre Institute. In many ways, the trajectory of Irish Theatre Institute also serves as a figurative map of the evolution of Irish theatre in the twenty-first century. What do you see as the key moments?

Bourke:

The seven-year cycles are there; you can look back and see a big push forward, and then consolidation, and then another big push forward. For the first seven years (c. 1994-2003), Theatre Shop was very much an event. And then the second seven years (2004-2011), we became ITI. By the time we got to the mid-noughties, the emphasis had gone from providing information to the sector and instead had become way more artist-focussed. Then post-financial crash, we were really getting into enabling artists to make work; working with people on developing their practice, 'what you want to do? How you want to do it? What would be possible? What would you need to put in place?'. Essentially, it was about the skills of producing, but we weren't producing any of the work. We were enabling artists to think creatively and to either originate the projects/ideas, or to help them to get it made and to put in place the supports they needed through schemes and artist programmes such as Six in the Attic^{xv}, prime^{xvi}, Accelerate.^{xvii}

The financial crash in 2008 was pretty grim in terms of what it did to the sector. We knew we'd have to ride it out for a number of years. It took a long time to come back. Everybody had funding cuts and all the salaries were cut. But it took a few years, didn't it, to come out the other side of that.

Daly:

It did, and it was a changed environment as well. And it wasn't just the recession, it was Arts Council [Ireland] policy as well. If you look at the Irish Theatre Handbook published in 2008, I think there were 27 funded theatre production companies, including the Abbey and the Gate. And when we came out the other side around 2012, I think there were 9 full-time funded production companies. Lots and lots of companies fell away: some because funding was cut, some because people just didn't survive the recession and moved into other areas. And that's then when you see the introduction of once-off production grants, and you see this structure where people are working in a project-based way.

But there used to be all these companies—Red Kettle, Storytellers, Meridian, Bedrock, Tall Tales, Calypso, Bedrock, Barabbas, Loose Canon—and that meant there was an infrastructure. People had opportunities to go in and train as arts administrators either on placements or on a part-time basis because there was this whole infrastructure of independent theatre companies. And that isn't there now; it's so project-based. So that recession was a key moment in terms of the influence it brought to bear on how the sector is structured, and also that is reflected in the repertoire in Playography Ireland. I think one of the things that I really prize around the Playography is how it

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

charts the plays, the social evolution of the country and the people writing about events that happened.

When we came out the other side of the recession—did we ever come out the other side of the recession?—it was a changed environment and that's when in ITI we realised that there were other things we needed to do in order to support artists. What did artists want? More than anything, people wanted to belong somewhere. They wanted to have somewhere to go. And so programmes like *Six in the Attic* were imagined into existence. And we started to unite and build a community of artists. I'd love at some point to really reflect on certain things that happened in ITI over the years and see how it impacted on people's careers. That's on my bucket list: time to reflect on the impact the organisation had on people's careers (rather than it all being anecdotal).

Reaching New Horizons

Dean:

You've talked about how multi-annual funding and a funding body that saw the potential in web-based information provision was key to Theatre Shop / ITI's development. Were there any other organisations or trends who were integral to the development of this work?

Bourke:

The formation of Culture Ireland[/Cultúr Éireann]^{xxviii} was so important to the development of the international networking work of Theatre Shop. In the early days of Culture Ireland [set up in 2006], Jane and I were commissioned to write a paper on showcasing Irish work abroad for them about what could be achieved for the arts in Ireland and Irish artists. We were massive supporters of creating the agency because we felt it could do nothing but good. So from the formation of Culture Ireland, you can see the impact of having this very hospitable agency with key people who were really invested in the arts, in promoting the work, and in the artists. It's gone from strength to strength, and there are lots of companies who are on the road a lot—like *Dead Centre*^{xxix} or *Pan Pan*^{xx}—who really benefit from and enhance it. And not just a cash benefit; there's loads of supports and resources going in as well around it. Once that was set up, then our events—Information Toolbox and International Theatre eXchange (ITX)—were able to develop further because there was now an agency with a full-time commitment to supporting Irish arts abroad. And so that was, I think, a hugely important moment, looking back.

Daly:

I agree, it formalised it. Theatre Shop was the catalyst for so much of that. Not only were there resources to curate a programme for international presenters and festivals and venues to come to Ireland, but we were able to have conversations with companies and say 'well, who are you in touch with? Where do you think your work sits best?' So that you were able to curate the types of people that came in so that they were seeing not just a 'smorgasbord' of work, but you could actually target particular connections. Culture Ireland was interested in breaking into new territories, and the other really important thing about that is that we were facilitated and resourced to go out and do Irish representation at APAP^{xxxi} (Association of Performing Arts Professionals) and Under The Radar^{xxii} in New York, at CINARS^{xxiii} in Montreal, at APAM^{xxiv} (Australian Performing Arts Management & Cultural Policy) 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Arts Market) in Australia, at Edinburgh^{xxv}. I always remember the first time we went to APAP in New York and the people that were in the booths around us said, 'you have to do this seven times before you become established, and then people will start to come to your booth and see the work that you're representing.'

The recession impacted that ability to go abroad as well, because Culture Ireland's resources changed. But we had built an amazing number of connections at those events, which meant that we were no longer trying to go out and lasso people to come to Ireland. We were meeting them in their own territory, and then they would put it in their diaries and people would come back repeatedly, and that starts to build relationships with particular artists. One of the things that we realised, individually and collectively, was the value of being able to plan and develop long-term relationships with programmers for international touring. For example, Brokentalkers^{xxvi} made great connections with a festival in Reykjavik and subsequently Bjarni Jonsson became a dramaturg with Brokentalkers on their work. It's these kinds of connections that you really value because you can see that it's not just about doing the show, going away, coming back; it's actually about the kind of deep-seated relationships that are influencing and enhancing the work in many ways. So Culture Island played a key role in the evolution of so many artists and I like to think that ITI was a key player in that regard from the get-go.

Bourke:

And more recently, the new Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) pilot scheme was a key moment [The Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) pilot scheme (2022-2025) aims to support the arts and creative practice by giving a payment of €325 a week to artists and creative arts workers.]. And early on, the capital investment by the Arts Council [Ireland] in all the regional theatres in Ireland was a really key moment, how that impacted on the independent companies who are playing in those venues. And in terms of the Arts Council [Ireland], certainly the current leadership with Maureen Kennelly has brought great cohesion in terms of what the Arts Council [Ireland] is doing. And the support of the Department [of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media] and the massive increase in funding to the arts in recent years post-COVID feels like a genuine commitment to artists and artwork in a way that I think is really, truly astonishing.

And we could of course, have another conversation about Safe to Create^{xxvii} and Speak Up and Call it Out.^{xxviii}

A Call for Change

Dean:

Yes, Safe to Create and its precursor, Speak Up, have been a major project for the pair of you during your time at ITI and after you both stepped down. And again, this feels like a project where ITI is reflecting the zeitgeist and the changing values of the theatre profession, in addressing the systemic and endemic issues of harassment and bullying in the arts industries highlighted by the global #MeToo movement. Can you tell me a bit about how it came about, and what it hopes to achieve?

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Bourke:

Following the events in the Gate Theatre in 2016 [where, in the wake of a number of allegations of bullying and harassment, a report written by Gaye Cunningham (2018) noted that former Artistic Director Michael Colgan had ‘a case to answer in respect to dignity at work issues, abuse of power and inappropriate behaviours’ and that ‘a culture existed in the Gate whereby too much power was vested in one individual and people felt unable to speak out’ (Falvey, 2018)], a number of theatre organisations were invited by Heather Humphreys [then-minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs] to come in and discuss what was going on in the theatre sector in Ireland. Arts Council [Ireland] were also involved. They decided an independent leader was required to look at workplace culture in Irish Theatre. Jane and I were approached and asked if we would lead on this. We felt that there needed to be some structured public meeting on the issue. We designed a one-day conference in Liberty Hall [‘Speak Up And Call It Out: Establishing a code of conduct for Irish theatre’ on 21st March 2018] where we invited a number of speakers and had some key presentations. For that, we had developed a Code of Behaviour (Irish Theatre Institute, 2018) which we were looking for the sector to adopt. Josepha Madigan [then Minister for Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht] launched it, we went through the Code, and had a number of practitioners give presentations. We also invited Irish Equity^{xxxix} to make a presentation and featured some key speakers like Ita O’Brien [intimacy coordinator and founder of Intimacy on Set^{xxx}]. The theatre sector was fully represented on the day. Following that, there was a six-month period where the Code was piloted by a number of organisations [Rough Magic Theatre Company, My Son My Son Company^{xxxi}, Solstice Arts Centre^{xxxii}, Company SJ^{xxxiii}], who reported back at a second meeting in Project Arts Centre on 31st October 2018. We planned to roll out initiatives around the Code and to encourage more engagement.

In 2021 we developed the research initiative ‘Speak Up and Call It Out’. It was in response to people privately saying to us, ‘I spoke up but nothing happened’ or ‘I spoke up and I felt side-lined’. And we quickly realised that we needed to capture the extent of what was happening in the sector, and that led to the action research piece which became the report, *Speak Up: A Call for Change* (Murphy et al., 2021). That report was really significant, particularly because it was across art-forms. The commitment from the Department [of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media] and the sector following the publication of the report was striking. It was a moment in time where it felt like everyone was on the same page, and everyone wanted to see this addressed.

The next phase was rolling out and implementation. Everyone agreed that it could no longer be called ‘Speak Up’; we had to move it off the emphasis on people coming forward to tell their stories and instead make it about how the sector had to come to the table to put in place structures to enable us all to have a safe place to work. That next stage is being led by Niamh O’Donnell [current director of Irish Theatre Institute]. Jane and I are on an advisory panel now. Safe to Create has had a national roll-out and there’s still so much to do, but bit by bit, things are coming into place. There’s online training, there are key partnerships (Screen Ireland^{xxxiv}, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre^{xxxv}, Fair Plé^{xxxvi}, etc.). Everybody’s being ambitious for it. But there are a lot of basic practical things for organisations to address too. One of the really basic ones is that most arts managers and producers and companies and boards need to do basic HR courses to just understand what their legal responsibilities are in any event. Implementing Dignity in the Workplace policies [the term used in Ireland for workplace behaviour and anti-bullying and

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

harassment policies] is not easy in practice, but I think that there is a massive commitment from people to try to make it work.

We agreed there would be a report in 2023 and another one in 2025. The entire sector wasn't properly involved and engaged for the first report, so the second report will pick up on areas and practitioners whose information wasn't collected in that first report, e.g., artists from disadvantaged communities, artists with disabilities. And then in 2025-26, there'll be another survey and analysis of the entire sector.

Daly:

I talked earlier about the value of long-term ambition and long-term commitment, and I think Safe to Create is part of that. We always knew that changing culture takes time, and once we accepted that at the very beginning of this process, I think it helped us to make the kind of commitment we needed to addressing something that had been hiding in plain sight for such a long time. What's happening is endemic across all of society, and that has really made us even more determined to do everything we possibly can to make Safe To Create an agent for change. It is one of those things where it is not acceptable to do nothing.

The support from the Department [of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media] has been quite extraordinary, and I think people see this as a moment that has to be acted on and that change has to happen. And I would like to see more people in leadership roles throughout the arts sector, across all art forms, acknowledge that this is here to stay, this is not going to go away. And the emphasis was on people speaking up, and it's now called Safe to Create. And it's the responsibility of those in leadership roles to ensure that their organisations and their environments provide a safe workplace for all; for everybody, irrespective of the role that they have within that organisation, be they full-time, part-time, freelance, voluntary, intern, whatever it is.

Led by Niamh O'Donnell, the two of us and ITI have been out there doing the legwork around the country doing a Safe to Create roadshow—Dublin, Sligo, Waterford, Kilkenny, Cavan, Cork, Galway, Limerick. If anything has struck me, it is that there is a real commitment to making change, but it's the people in the room who are the people who want to make change and acknowledge there's a need to make change. We need to see more people in the room and we need to see people who maybe don't realise that it is as big a problem as it is. Collegiality is needed more than ever and across all art forms, because as we know, this is not just an art sector issue, it's everywhere you turn and the arts has an opportunity to really make a difference here to affect change and to show that if the art sector can do it, anybody else can do it too if they put their minds to it.

It's not easy work. We did a workshop training day led by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre on 'Understanding the Impact and Dealing with Disclosures of Sexual Violence in the Arts and Creative Sector'. We have received many disclosures over the past five years. And it's a tough place. But people need to be able to talk about this, and they need to be able to have support. And change needs to happen. So I think we're both very, very committed to that and the strides that have been made in the last year I think are really, really exemplary in terms of the training, the workshops, the website, the new piece of research. The Report to Support^{xxxvii} anonymous reporting facility will be available within about a month. I think for me, top of my bucket list is that

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

this programme brings about the change that is needed for once and for all, and that there is accountability and consequence for people who do not behave appropriately in the arts workspace.

Bourke:

One of the things that has emerged from COVID and is very, very apparent in the Safe to Create and Speak Up work is the need for well-being supports and well-being training. We've worked very closely with Minding Creative Minds^{xxxviii} on Safe to Create and Speak Up. You see huge commitment from Arts Council [Ireland], Screen Ireland, from everybody now towards the mental health supports and really feeling that there's a need for them, for all of us to avail of them and that everybody recognises in the Department [of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media] that these supports are needed. It just reflects general society, particularly post-COVID; there are a lot of tensions, a lot of conflict and it can be quite aggressive out there.

Daly:

In the UK, the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU)^{xxxix} published an Audience Behaviours Summary in March (BECTU, 2023). It is about how people in arts venues around the UK are increasingly subject to abuse and have to deal with all sorts of inappropriate behaviour from audiences, in terms of dealing with difficult customers to people having to call the police because of drunkenness and abusive behaviour. Our Safe to Create work is only one piece of a whole range of programmes and projects that are happening but some are moving quicker than others. And I think that we really need to keep the momentum going on this, and thankfully we have a minister [Catherine Martin, current Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media] who is right behind it and I think that it will be part of her legacy, this key piece of work. We are also really working to make it an all-island programme [Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland] because there is so much exchange between freelance artists and organisations across the entire island. I think in terms of legacy that is something that has become increasingly important to us. We didn't think we'd be five years with this, and I think, you know, we could well be ten years at it. We are now working as key advisors to the programme, which now has a formal framework and partnerships with the Department [of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media], Screen Ireland, Arts Council [Ireland], Irish Theatre Institute, Minding Creative Minds. And I think it is here to stay.

Bourke:

We're all trying to work together to build a better environment for all.

References

BECTU (2023). Audience Behaviours in UK Theatrical Venues: Summary findings of a BECTU survey, February 2023. BECTU, London. Available at: <https://members.bectu.org.uk/advice-resources/library/3104>.

Bourke, Siobhan (1999). *Rough Magic: First Plays*. London: Methuen Drama; Bloomsbury Publishing.

Bourke, Siobhan and Senger, Ewa (2015). *Stage & Screen Design Ireland: Highlights 2007 – 2014*. Dublin: Irish Theatre Institute

Cunningham, Gaye (2018). *Gate Theatre Confidential Independent Review*. Dublin: Gate Theatre, 1 March. Available at: <https://www.gatetheatre.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Independent-Review-Report-into-Gate-Theatre-by-Gaye-Cunningham-1.pdf>.

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (2020). *Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce*. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/e7f78-latest-updates-from-the-arts-and-culture-recovery-taskforce/>.

Deegan, Loughlin (2008). *Irish Theatre Handbook*. Dublin: Irish Theatre Institute.

Falvey, Deirdre (2018). Gate Theatre report: 'I want Michael Colgan to say sorry'. *Irish Times*, 10 March. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/stage/gate-theatre-report-i-want-michael-colgan-to-say-sorry-1.3421039>.

Irish Theatre Institute (2018). *Safe to Create; Dignity in the Workplace: A Code of Behaviour for the Irish Arts and Creative Sectors*. Dublin: Irish Theatre Institute. Available at: <https://www.safetocreate.ie/code-of-behaviour/>.

Murphy, Ciara L., Donohue, B. and Ó Duibhir, C. with support from Campbell, P. and Dawe, O. (2021). *Speak Up: A Call for Change*. Irish Theatre Institute. Available at: https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ITI-Speak-Up-A-Call-for-Change-Report-Oct2021_Final_WEB.pdf.

Endnotes

ⁱ Available at: <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/>.

ⁱⁱ International Theatre eXchange (ITX) is a weekend during Dublin Theatre Festival programmed with a series of events and networking opportunities designed to help Irish theatre companies and artists expand their worldwide networks by connecting with international producers and

programmers. Available at: <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/networking-showcasing/international-networking/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Information Toolbox is designed to create a space within the Dublin Fringe Festival for new and emerging Irish companies and artists to market their performances, propose their work to national and international venues and festivals, and to connect with important funding bodies and support organisations. Available at:

https://www.irishtheatre.ie/resources/international_arts_markets_networks/454/information_toolbox/.

^{iv} Published in 4 editions from 1998-2008, *Irish Theatre Handbook* offered a searchable resource for Irish theatre, dance, and opera companies, festivals, locations and support organisations in both the north and south of Ireland. Available at: <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/resources/irish-theatre-handbook/>.

^v Available at: <https://www.irishtheatre.ie/>.

^{vi} PLAYOGRAPHYIreland consists of Irish Playography (all new professionally produced Irish plays written in English since the formation of the Abbey, Ireland's National Theatre, in 1904) and Playography na Gaeilge (all new plays written and produced in the Irish language since 1901). Available at: <https://www.irishplayography.com/>.

^{vii} In collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht Sport and Media, Irish Theatre Institute invested in a series of research reports and events entitled Speak Up intended to promote positive change in the theatre industry workplace. Available at: <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/resources/speak-up-call-it-out/>.

^{viii} Safe to Create is a collaborative programme of supports aiming to transform workplace culture and practices, and to provide safe and respectful working conditions for those working in the arts and creative sectors in Ireland. Available at: <https://www.safetocreate.ie/>.

^{ix} Available at: <https://www.roughmagic.ie/>.

^x Available at: <http://saffron-pictures.com/>.

^{xi} Available at: <https://dublintheatrefestival.ie/>.

^{xii} Mayfest was an annual city-wide festival of popular theatre and music in Glasgow, operating between 1983-1997. Available at: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/collections/STA/Collections/mayfest/index.html>.

^{xiii} Available at: <https://druid.ie/>.

^{xiv} Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.ie/>.

^{xv} Six in the Attic is Irish Theatre Institute (ITI)'s key artist development programme providing artists with the space and resources to create and develop work. Available at: <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/artist-supports/six-in-the-attic/>.

^{xvi} Prime, in partnership with Age & Opportunity, provides career supports and training opportunities for theatre actors/artists aged 50+. Available at: <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/artist-supports/prime/>.

^{xvii} Irish Theatre Institute's ACCELERATE is a programme comprising of information sessions, workshops, masterclasses, mentoring and training. It is aimed at addressing issues encountered by independent theatre artists and workers and offering professional development opportunities. Available at: <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/artist-supports/accelerate/>.

^{xviii} Available at: <https://www.cultureireland.ie/>.

^{xix} Available at: <https://www.deadcentre.org/>.

^{xx} Available at: <https://www.panpantheatre.com/>.

^{xxi} Available at: <https://apap365.org/>.

^{xxii} Available at: <https://publictheater.org/programs/under-the-radar/>.

^{xxiii} Available at: <https://cinars.org/en/cinars>.

^{xxiv} Available at: <https://apam.org.au/>.

^{xxv} Available at: <https://www.edfringe.com/>.

^{xxvi} Available at: <https://brokentalkers.ie/>.

^{xxvii} Available at: <https://www.safetocreate.ie/>.

^{xxviii} Available at: <https://irishtheatreinstitute.info/event.aspx?contentid=209234>.

^{xxix} Irish Equity is the union representing professionals in the live performance and theatre sector in the Republic of Ireland. Available at: <https://irishequity.ie/>.

^{xxx} Intimacy on Set was set up in 2018 to provide services to TV, film, & theatre when dealing with intimacy, sexual content, and nudity. Available at: <https://www.intimacyonset.com/>.

^{xxxi} The company assembled for a 2018 production of *My Son My Son* by Veronica Dyas. Available at: <https://www.irishplayography.com/play.aspx?playid=60483>.

^{xxxii} Available at: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/>.

^{xxxiii} Available at: <https://www.company-sj.com/>.

^{xxxiv} Available at: <https://www.screenireland.ie/>.

© Irish Journal of Arts Management & Cultural Policy 2023

ISSN: 2009-6208. <https://culturalpolicy.ie/>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

^{xxxv} Available at: <https://www.drcc.ie/>.

^{xxxvi} Available at: <https://www.fairple.com/>.

^{xxxvii} Available at: <https://www.safetocreate.ie/report-to-support/>.

^{xxxviii} Available at: <https://mindingcreativeminds.ie/>.

^{xxxix} Available at: <https://bectu.org.uk/>.