



Building a stronger
performing arts
community in Ireland.

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Chair's Report

Report on January-December 2022 activities

This Report accompanies the 2022 Directors' Report and Financial Statements. Presented at the AGM, 29 September 2023.

This is the company's twentieth AGM and it's my first report as Theatre Forum's Chair. The last year has flown by for us all and our organisations. And while this is traditionally a look back at last year or 2022, it's impossible to resist looking ahead.

Financial highlights

A number of factors contributed to the 2022 year-end position of a deficit of (€44,001). You will see on page 5 of the Financial Statements that for 2022, the company is showing a deficit. Keep in mind that SORP accounting requires us to show income and expenditure in the years in which they occur.

So, €33,965 was brought forward from the 2021 surplus and spent in 2022. This was explained in the 2021 audited accounts:

"Of the €41,472 end of year surplus, €11,394 relates to a conference expenditure that was postponed and spent in April 2022 and as the activity took place in 2022 could not be considered an accrual; the balance of the restricted income awarded to Theatre Forum in the 2021-2022 Arts Council Capacity Building funding round for the Greening Arts Centres project, €5,907 of a total of €15,770, has been carried forward and spent in the first part of 2022; also included in this surplus amount is MAKE income awarded, but not spent, in 2021 (€7,516 of a total of €33,770) which will be spent on the in-person 2022 edition of this programme."

Bearing in mind SORP accounting principles on expenditure, the final position for 2022 is a deficit of €44,001 less €33,965 of income brought forward from 2022. This leaves €10,036 of a deficit in 2022 which is to be funded from the company's accumulated reserves. The main factors that explain this deficit were additional investment in audience research in response to the needs of the Marketing Forum members as well as event ticket income lagging targets.

2022 programme of activities

Looking back over 2022, here are some reminders of that year of re-opening and adjusting to real life again. Through the uncertainty of the initial reopening period, Theatre Forum delivered a programme of member events and training, both in-person and online often via Zoom, while using the website to share resources widely and connect with artists and organisations. Theatre Forum had thousands (47,000) of unique users to the website in 2022 showing just how important this digital platform is to members and the sector.

2022 kicked off with an Open Space meeting produced with UK theatre company and Open Space practitioners, Devoted and Disgruntled, in Smock Alley Theatre. In October, the main event of the year, *Tomorrow. Together*, took place in Cork's Marina Market, a great get together of artists, producers and organisations for two days of keynote speeches, conversations, and a fantastic artistic programme curated by Cork Midsummer Festival. With our **MAKE** project partners, Dublin Fringe Festival, Project Arts Centre, and Cork Midsummer Festival, an in-person residency in the new location of Birr Theatre & Arts Centre happened in November 2022. Theatre Forum also worked with Dublin Theatre Festival to produce an in-person edition of the **Next Stage** development programme during the 2022 festival weeks.

Regular **members' meetings** took place, some examining reopening, production and funding challenges, while others were about developing resources and sharing expertise. Establishing the Marketing Forum led to reinstating the Audience Insights project, aka New Benchmarking, which has since gone from strength to strength. The **Green Arts Initiative** supported arts centres and production companies to take action to



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mitigate climate change and adapt for a more sustainable future. The **Greening Venues** project and the **Greener Touring** projects worked to make their buildings more energy efficient and to identify changes to the production and touring of work to shift from a 'business as usual' approach to something systemically different to make greener touring a reality. Heartfelt thanks from us all to Catriona Fallon for her continued dedication to the cause.

Theatre Forum also worked with Mother Tongues to deliver three EDI workshops in Cork, Galway and Dublin designed to support organisations in the formulation and implementation of their own EDI policies and action plans, followed up on the **Independent Artist Working Group** discussions and CUAN Report in 2021 to identify the systemic changes and supports needed for independent artists to have sustainable careers, and brought the Creative Europe funded **Centre Stage** project to a conclusion at the end of last year.

Looking ahead, it's likely that a coordinated response from our sector will be needed to do some of the following: systematically respond to changing economic conditions such as low pay in our sector further exacerbated by high inflation; make the case for sustainable careers and living conditions for artists and arts workers; stem the loss of technical and production expertise whilst developing new production models; positively change policy, funding and arts provision frameworks as well as delivering on audience development, diversification, access and inclusion responsibilities.

At the start of the strategy review process in 2023, Theatre Forum's roles of making connections, providing services, representing members' interests and issues, as well as enabling and sometimes leading change were acknowledged. So too was Theatre Forum's adaptability and agility in response to the needs of members throughout the Covid period. Along with the board and executive team, I remain convinced Ireland needs a stronger and sustainable performing arts ecosystem if our artists are to work, for all our citizens, residents, and communities to engage with culture and enjoy culturally rich experiences.

For the implementation of **Theatre Forum's 2024-2028 Strategy**, we'll look to evolve Theatre Forum to be Ireland's Performing Arts Forum and continue to be an effective point of connection for the sector, facilitating opportunities for information sharing and collaboration, carrying out research and collecting evidence to effect change where it is needed, promoting effective models of practice, and providing relevant resources for all our member artists, arts workers, and arts organisations.

My first year as Chair along with lots of other new roles has passed all too quickly. Today, I must thank my fellow directors Tom Creed and Paul Johnson who retire at this AGM in accordance with the company's Constitution, but I also thank them for standing for election for another term. Thank you to Aaron Monaghan in mid-Atlantic for serving on the board since 2019 and please join me in thanking and wishing him well. The support of all the directors and team for me as Chair in my first year has been very much appreciated.

Lastly, I'd like to thank our members, our partners, our sponsors, and our principal funder the Arts Council. I want to thank the executive team, Irma, Anna, and Paul as well as Katie who joined Culture Ireland during the year, for all their hard work in the last year. I appreciate their wholehearted support and providing our community with the space for gathering and connecting. I know that this is the spirit that will guide the Performing Arts Forum in the future too.

David Francis Moore
Chair, Theatre Forum.