

## DRUID EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY & ACTION PLAN

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### EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY

This policy formalises an ethos and a practice we have held for many years and identifies a pathway for Druid to further enhance and build upon this work.

Druid aims to create and maintain an environment that values diversity and tolerance, respects human dignity, and in which employees, colleagues, partners and audiences are free from all forms of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Druid's EDI policy is people-focused, and people are central to everything we do. We are aware that creating an inclusive environment is a journey through which we are learning better practice as individuals and as an organisation, and we are pleased to be developing our collective understanding and practice along the way.

Our policy is aligned to our organisational strategy, and our values of: originality (new perspectives in our thinking and our practice); community (working in and for them); respect (for our people and place); and boldness (confidence and courage in the pursuit of excellence).

We aim to employ staff and artists on the basis of their abilities and merits, and without discrimination on grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community. We aim for equality of opportunity:

- To treat everyone with dignity and respect;
- To adhere to the legislative and statutory principles of equality in employment and delivery of services<sup>1</sup>;
- To be free from discrimination or victimisation in our dealings with all our stakeholders and colleagues;
- To look for ways in which to achieve equity for all, including making reasonable accommodation for difference wherever we can.

We acknowledge that diversity and equality are nuanced. Many of the stories we share onstage are those of groups who have faced discrimination or minoritisation, and we aim to be truthful to these stories, as well as to the audiences and artists with and for whom we work. We want to be representative of our communities, to avoid tokenism, and we want everyone who works with or visits us to feel welcome and respected. We want to create a culture of equity that welcomes difference, is mindful of the marginalised, and makes room for unheard voices.

As a small organisation, inclusivity sits with all of us, with every one of us responsibility for keeping it alive in our conversations and decision-making.

This policy is accompanied by an active action plan that will ground the policy in our day-to-day operations. The policy will be reviewed by the Board of directors every year in line with best practice and changing legislation, and discussion of diversity remains an agenda item for all board meetings.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/a-guide-to-the-equal-status-acts/> and <https://www.ihrec.ie/documents/a-guide-the-employment-equality-acts/>

## **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ACTION PLAN**

This policy is structured around different three groups: our audiences; the artists, creative teams and crews work with whom we work; and our staff and Board of directors.

### **A. DRUID AUDIENCES**

**Objective: To provide universal access to our theatre productions**

#### **A1. Accessibility to Productions**

##### **Achievements 2022-24:**

- Our *Shadow* tour '24 reached 30% first time audience members. We worked with venues to deliver performances in the best way for their audiences, including adding schools' performances at the request of two venues.
- In 24 – eight accessible performances:
  - *Endgame*: 1 x ISL, 1 x captioned performance, 1 x audio-described performance, 1 x touch tour
  - *The House*: 1 x ISL, 1 x captioned performance, 1 x audio-described performance, 1 x touch tour
  - *The Shadow of a Gunman*: 2 x ISL performances
- 2024: in collaboration with the Town Hall Theatre, we hosted Sightless Cinema's live audio play *Into the Dark*, presented by a blind cast; this was our first experience working with a large number of visually impaired people in our home venue, enhancing our in-house knowledge around disability and inclusion. And as part of the Galway International Arts Festival, we presented in our theatre *Unspeakable Conversations*, a sell-out production by major Disabled artists Liz Carr and Mat Fraser, with whom we worked closely to create an accessible back-of-house working environment, further developing our own in-house skills for the future.
- Data collection: we added a post-show survey question about how to improve our accessibility.
- Tour venues: working with the venues we evaluate accessibility e.g. availability of elevators, ramps, wide and step-free pathways, space within seating banks for wheelchairs and other access equipment, and ensure that full access information is shared on show webpages.
- Pricing: discounted schemes include early bird, student, pensioner, unwaged, and audiences facing other barriers to engaging such as those living in Direct Provision; for larger venues, we operate dynamic pricing, group discounts, complimentary tickets for targeted community groups. Affordable and Access ticket pricing are part of early-stage venue discussions.

##### **Next Steps:**

- Training: With Arts Council support, 2024 has been a year for extension of our Disabled provision. Training has been delivered by Arts & Disability Ireland to bring skills in-house via the Company Manager, Producer, Marketing Manager, Production Manager, and now embedded knowledge and awareness will continue to improve our practice.
- Accessible performances are now put on sale in time for a production launch so as to maximise sales and impact; they are sold via the venues and Arts & Disability Ireland. Where we encounter venue limitations, the Company Manager and Producer collaborate with the venue on additional support that we can offer, e.g. touch tours, advance large print script.
- Website content: a 2024 website refresh will enhance accessibility, in accordance with W3C accessibility standards.
- Pricing: we continue to benchmark our ticketing policy annually to sustain wide-ranging price points.

## **A2. Audience Reach**

Since 2016, we have toured to over 40 venues in 19 of the 32 Irish counties, 12 US venues, Hong Kong and Scotland. In the last five years, 84% of our audiences of 150,000+ were in Ireland (16% in Galway), and 26% overseas.

### **Achievements 2022-24:**

- Opening doors: in seven weeks of spring '24 regional touring, we reached 14,500 people, 14% in Galway. 307 students attended subsidised school performances (Tralee and Dublin).
- For *The Last Return* '22, 897 students attended in Cork and Galway, with 25 free tickets in Dublin and a backstage tour for Young Adults via the Independent Theatre Workshop, and 20 Munster Technological University School of Music students participating in a workshop led by actor Anna Healy.
- For *The Cavalcaders* '22, 65 students from secondary schools (two Galway, one Limerick) attended free performances at The Mick Lally Theatre, and 18 from Discovering Drama (community drama group) attended an acting workshop with the actors in Wexford.

### **Next Steps:**

- Community & Education (C&E): We aim next to develop deeper and more lasting relationships in the community, starting in Galway but rolling out for future national tours. We are recruiting a new C&E lead to develop and manage an outreach and engagement programme across all our productions and tours. S/he will link the creation of our shows to targeted groups, building new relationships and enhancing established ones. National and tour targets will be set for the year, but in Galway alone we aim to engage no fewer than two community groups and five schools in '25. We will review the programme for future roll-out, using qualitative and quantitative data from participants and group leaders.
- New audiences: in 2024 we set a new audiences' target for national tours of 30%, and for Dublin & Galway runs of 15% – full data pending.
- Data collection: we are refreshing annual audience and stakeholder surveys to improve engagement, identifying opportunities for increased diversity of work, artists and audiences. We ask for age, location, gender, mode of transport, frequency of attendance, production rating. These provide by production and annual data for benchmarking and target setting.

## **A3. Broadening the Audience: Our Digital Offer**

Druid remains the only Irish theatre company to have taken livestreamed performance into national and international cinemas, and while live theatre is absolutely our core activity, we appreciate the power of non-traditional platforms, including our Druid at Home programme during the pandemic.

### **Achievements 2022-24:**

- *Once Upon a Bridge* '22 streamed on demand to 34 countries in a partnership with Culture Ireland.
- Managed by University of Galway, the Druid archive is an academic resource featuring nearly 40 verbatim recordings from artists and key stakeholders, as well as 33 boxes of information; shared digital content will enable Druid to make elements of the archive freely available.
- 2023 featured a special episode of Arena on RTÉ Radio 1 to celebrate the world premiere of *DruidO'Casey* at Galway International Arts Festival.

**Next steps:**

- We are continuing to work with the University on the digitisation of the archive, with additional staff support in '24 towards an enhanced online portfolio and shared content for '25. A new strand of teaching in the Department of Drama & Theatre Studies will link the Druid archive with their creative technologies learning programme.
- Our website refresh will include updated film and archival content.
- We have discussed broadcast models with the UK's National Theatre NTLive programme and further national possibilities with independent film companies and a major national initiative to extend archive recordings into secondary schools.

**B. DRUID ARTISTS, CREATIVE TEAMS, CREW**

**Objective: To ensure that professional opportunities at Druid are available to everyone.**

Artist development is at the heart of our future plans – from exploratory work by emerging artists to established talent in challenging mainstage productions. 2024 has been a year of benchmarking our outputs in order to create a system of annual reporting and comparison.

**Achievements 2022-24:**

- In 2024 we developed a Dignity at Work policy and code of behaviour to form a key part of our induction to all new productions, led by the Company Manager and Producer; this combines Safe to Create objectives (created by the Irish Theatre Institute in partnership with the Arts Council) alongside our own safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures to ensure a culture of openness and respect.
- The Mick Lally Theatre is our space for rehearsals, workshops, artist development activities and residencies, professional and amateur touring performances, local festivals and events and a place for the community and our audience to meet. We host up to 20 local organisations and festivals every year (GIAF, GTF, GDP, GMR, MfG, GEM, AATE, Misleor, Brú, Cúirt, Blue Teapot), along with many independent artists, small touring productions (Abbey Theatre, Once Off Productions, Livin' Dred), and offer heavily discounted hire for amateur tours.
- We provide mentoring in producing, marketing and production, and support around 40 applications a year (funding calls through Agility, Bursary and Project, Arts Council, and Bursary/Grant Awards, Galway City Council).
- Through the Druid-University of Galway Internship programme we meet young theatre professionals and provide training and skills development through placements in all our departments, including the MLT, with around four formal internships annually. Many have resulted in FOH and tech employment and in '24 in this way there are 12 freelancers on our payroll.
- 38 theatre makers have come through the FUEL bursary, which focuses solely on developing theatre artists based in the West of Ireland.
- The women-focused Marie Mullen Bursary is based in Galway and has developed six women artists over the last five years.
- Druid Debuts: our open script call process receives over 500 scripts annually, read by an evolving team of around 12 readers. Application processes are available in text-based, audio or video application. Applications and scripts are assessed anonymously, with demographic monitoring that will now feed into adjustments to the programme in '25.
- In '22, a casting call to Galway African Diaspora Network resulted in three castings, free workshops and discounted tickets.
- Statistics:

- Gender Balance in our creative teams: in '23, 52% female, 48% male; in '24 (Jan-Jul), 44% female, 56% male.
- Ethnic Diversity in casts and creative teams: in '22, 16% (cast), 9% (creative teams). In '23, 10% (cast), 11% (creative teams). In '24, 11% (cast), 3% (creative teams).

**Next steps:**

- In 2024, we are bringing on board a New Work Manager to support our commissioning and future season planning, with ringfenced additional budget for new commissions this year. Through this, we will refresh our Druid Debuts and script initiatives in 2025, and enhance our wider offer to early career artists from a range of disciplines.
- Artist opportunity is at the heart of the '25 onstage programme, and through the all-female Marie Mullen Bursary alumni, and a new Bursary winner in '25, we will create a fully resourced and produced season of work for talented early career women.
- In addition, a return to working in ensemble and repertory in 2025 will feature two discrete ensembles, combining core Druid associates with new talent and less experienced artists, to create an energetic network that feeds the artists and the work onstage.
- For all applications including script submissions, we will now include an EO form to monitor applicant demographics anonymously.

**C. DRUID STAFF & BOARD**

**Objective: Druid recognises the rich creative outcomes that diversity brings to an arts organisation, and aims to reflect this understanding through the way it recruits its staff and board.**

**C1. Employment & Governance Practice**

**Achievements 2022-24:**

- Our Board of Trustees is well balanced in terms of gender and skillset, and as future vacancies arise will be further diversified.
- We recruit and employ without discrimination regarding gender, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the Irish Traveller community, or socio-economic status, as set out in the Arts Council's Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy.
- In 2023, we undertook Safe to Create training which is introduced and promoted to staff as a learning opportunity.
- In 2024, we trained six core staff with a full day of Disability Equality Training led by Arts & Disability Ireland, embedding these cores in administrative and rehearsal room practices.

**Next steps:**

- In 2024 we are benchmarking EO data for staff and Board against national averages; we are reassessing Board skills and gaps to identify future recruitment opportunities to diversify membership and bring new skills.
- We have structured our dignity at work policy into a set of guidelines for rehearsal room culture and protocols, to be shared with the company at the beginning of each new production, and to be developed organically.
- We will engage skilled and relevant external participants in recruitment (shortlisting, interviewing) to ensure rigorous processes and reduce unconscious bias.

- We are refreshing our recruitment framework to ensure clear pathways to non-traditional arts workers for employment and artist development opportunities. As established in our Gender Equality Policy, we continue to maintain gender pay parity.

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