



Strategic Plan

April 2015 - March 2018



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Introduction

This strategic plan sets out the direction for TheatreNI over the next three years 2015 - 2018.

TheatreNI is the representative body to support and develop theatre and the performing arts for all in Northern Ireland including in its widest terms the areas of drama, physical theatre, dance, circus, street theatre, musical theatre and opera. Members include venues, production companies, festivals, youth drama groups and performing arts practitioners, including facilitators, performers, directors, technicians, producers, designers, playwrights, etc.

TheatreNI was established following a merger between the Ulster Association of Youth Drama (UAYD) and Northern Ireland Theatre Association (NITA) in Spring 2015. Both organisations recognised the alignment between their respective services and programmes to individuals and organisations working within the professional theatre and youth drama sectors. Both UAYD and NITA had established strong relationships with their respective members, and gained sound reputations for delivering accessible and high quality development opportunities and providing effective representation to policy makers and funders. (For more information on NITA and UAYD see Appendix 2)

TheatreNI aims to create a vibrant, healthy theatre and performing arts sector by supporting its members and the wider sector to encourage participation in theatre and the performing arts. A key priority is ensuring the accessibility of theatre throughout the human lifecycle: from promoting access to theatre from the very start, through education and opportunities for young people, to training opportunities for those considering a career in theatre, ongoing professional development for those working in the sector, or just enjoying theatre as an audience member.

In 2014, as part of the merger and strategic planning process a thorough review was undertaken of both organisations, reflecting on past performances, current internal and external opportunities and challenges and future vision to formulate a set of challenging strategic goals to guide the organisation's way forward.

Context

The conclusions drawn from the internal and external analyses (see Appendix 3) have identified a number of priority areas of focus for TheatreNI including the following:

- To build capacity within the sector that widens access to theatre for disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded communities
- To provide opportunities for established and emerging theatre practitioners to access relevant training, mentoring and networks that develop high



professional standards, artistic excellence and innovative approaches in the creation of theatre and the performing arts

- To promote the value of the arts to key influencers and decision makers to secure support for continued investment that will maximise access to excellent theatre and performing arts for all who live in Northern Ireland
- To diversify TheatreNI's income streams by maximising earned income potential and exploring additional sources of programme income
- To grow collaborative partnerships for the benefit of TheatreNI's members and the wider theatre and performing arts sector
- To develop effective communication processes and channels - for engagement, interaction and advocacy

This Strategy sets out an exciting vision for the theatre and performing arts sector. Over the next three years we recognise that there will be many challenges to face and opportunities to be realised. Of those that we can foresee at this particularly challenging time in terms of public finances, we believe that the following will be of critical importance to the viability and sustainability of TheatreNI as an organisation:

- Providing a strong unified voice in support of the theatre and performing arts sector
- Developing strong relationships with new and existing members and stakeholders
- Working to form strategic partnerships that enable us to develop the theatre and performing arts sector
- Maintaining and developing the support of funders and new funding sources
- Demonstrating organisational impact
- Increasing professional standards and artistic excellence resulting in creation of innovative and high quality professional theatre experiences for audiences and participants
- Developing capacity to deliver projects that meet gaps and areas of demand for the members
- Delivering increased value to members, the theatre and performing arts sector and the wider public.



Mission, Vision & Values

Mission

TheatreNI is dedicated to supporting and developing theatre and the performing arts as a force for change, enriching people's lives and communities.

Vision

The vision of TheatreNI is one where, theatre and the performing arts are a strong, well-connected and well-supported sector, which is accepted as a key contributor to creating and sustaining a vibrant, healthy society.

Values

TheatreNI will be...	TheatreNI will...
Developmental	Collaborate with partner organisations and stakeholders to enhance the theatre sector, developing creative pathways and improving sustainability
Supportive	Address the needs of the theatre and performing arts sector, including young people and emerging professionals
Representative	Be proactive in providing a collective and inclusive voice for the sector
Excellent	Deliver all aspects of TheatreNI's work to the highest standard

Strategic Goals

TheatreNI has identified three priority areas, and related goals, for work over the next three year period that will support the organisation in working towards the achievement of its strategic vision for the future:

Connect

- Goal 1.1 Lead and support a well-connected theatre and performing arts sector



- Goal 1.2 Support the development of collaborations and partnerships through networking opportunities
- Goal 1.3 Increase connection within and across sectors to benefit the theatre and performing arts sector

Develop

- Goal 2 Develop professional standards by identifying and addressing the needs of the theatre and performing arts sector

Advocate

- Goal 3.1 Be the voice for the membership and wider sector to promote their value and impact
- Goal 3.2 Increase awareness of the benefits of theatre and performing arts to policymakers and funders

Organisational Excellence

- Goal 4.1: Build an excellent organisation which is effectively governed and delivers all aspects of its work to the highest standard.

Strategic Objectives

TheatreNI's strategic objectives define the core areas of work it will focus on over the next three-year period.

Connect

Goal 1.1: Lead and support a well-connected theatre and performing arts sector

- Establish and grow a membership database to build the TheatreNI community
- Create and maintain an effective online presence to extend reach with members and stakeholders
- Deliver quality communications to inform, support and share sector news and opportunities

Goal 1.2: Support the development of collaborations and partnerships through networking opportunities

- Organise regular networking meetings and events



- Deliver the annual All-Ireland Performing Arts Conference, in partnership with Theatre Forum, to connect and share best practice

Goal 1.3: Increase connection within and across sectors to benefit the theatre and performing arts sector

- Facilitate the collation and dissemination of knowledge and research evidence on the value and benefits provided by theatre and the performing arts
- Develop new, and maintain existing, relationships with partners to benefit the sector

Develop

Goal 2.1: Develop professional standards by identifying and addressing the needs of the theatre and performing arts sector

- Identify and monitor the learning needs of the membership
- Deliver opportunities to develop professional practice
- Provide development programmes and workshops that build the capacity of theatre practitioners
- Create a resource hub to share good practice with the membership

Advocate

Goal 3.1: Be the voice for the membership and wider sector to promote their value and impact

- Consult regularly with members to ensure their needs are adequately represented
- Develop a strong consistent public message to raise awareness of the value and impact that the theatre and the performing arts deliver

Goal 3.2: Increase awareness of the benefits of theatre and performing arts to policymakers and funders

- Proactively engage with key policy makers in regional and local government
- Establish relationships with funders to increase resources across the sector
- Develop relationships with the media that secure their support to disseminate positive messages about the sector



Organisational Excellence

To achieve these goals and objectives, TheatreNI will also aim to:

Goal 4.1: Build an excellent organisation which is effectively governed and delivers all aspects of its work to the highest standard.

- Establish a sustainable, appropriately resourced organisation through securing adequate funding, staffing, facilities and support
- Deliver high standards of governance to appropriately manage the organisation
- Ensure all resources are effectively and efficiently managed

Delivering the Strategy

TheatreNI is committed to the delivery of this strategy, and to reviewing it on an ongoing basis. The strategy will be implemented through a series of annual business plans adopted and managed by the board and senior staff of TheatreNI. Performance against the strategic objectives will be monitored on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

Overall, its implementation between April 2015 and March 2018 will deliver new opportunities for members and the wider theatre sector by strengthening relationships with existing members and stakeholders, and maximising opportunities to extend influence and reach with the sector, communities and the wider public.

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Appendix 1: TheatreNI Proposed Staffing structure

TheatreNI's proposed operational staffing structure will include three roles:

- Executive Director
- Development Officer
- Operations Assistant (subject to funding)

Job Title	Executive Director
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Responsible to: Board of Directors

Role: The Executive Director will provide leadership and direction for TheatreNI and be the public representative for the organisation on a regional, national and international level. They will be responsible for internal management of staff and resources as well as the management of external stakeholder relationships, developing the profile of the organisation, securing funding for the organisation and ensuring the provision of an exemplary service for members.

Job Title	Development Officer
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Responsible to: Executive Director

Role: The Development Officer will be responsible for ensuring that TheatreNI's programmes and projects, are planned and coordinated efficiently and smoothly to ensure the highest quality standards of service. The Development Officer will support the Executive Director in identifying potential business and funding opportunities that contribute towards the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals.

Job Title	Operations Assistant (subject to funding)
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Responsible to: Executive Director

Role: The Operations Assistant will be responsible for coordinating and managing TheatreNI's administration function in line with agreed policies, procedures and processes to achieve the efficient running of the organisation.



Appendix 2

UAYD

The Ulster Association of Youth Drama (UAYD) was the lead body working in Northern Ireland to support and promote youth theatre and drama for young people aged 11 -25. Originally set up by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 1998, UAYD worked to ensure that all young people in Northern Ireland could access and participate in quality youth drama.

In its early years, UAYD became known for producing work itself – running a pinnacle summer performance project which involved young people from all over Northern Ireland coming together to create a show. Some of these productions included *A Scene from the Bridge*, commissioned from Damian Gorman and Owen McCafferty in 2001, and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, in 2004, which toured Armagh and Belfast over a five week period.

Over the last 17 years, the organisation delivered hundreds of workshops and training programmes for young people, as well as developed youth-led groups such as a Youth Theatre Forum. For instance, in 2014, UAYD partnered with the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain to provide acting training for young people in Dungannon and Ballymena. UAYD also handled thousands of enquiries from young people, parents and leaders looking for information and advice on theatre and drama opportunities.

As the youth drama scene developed and changed, UAYD reformed with it, moving from producing work to helping others to produce work themselves. In 2012, UAYD established a new training programme called SkillsTap, which proved highly popular. The aim of SkillsTap was to enable youth drama leaders and facilitators to develop their knowledge and skills whilst targeting any gaps in provision.

Through its membership scheme UAYD has served hundreds of individuals and organisations, including young people, facilitators and youth drama groups, helping to improve the level and quality of youth drama provision across Northern Ireland.

NITA

The Northern Ireland Theatre Association (NITA) was the representative body for professional theatre in Northern Ireland. NITA was constituted in April 2004, following its previous incarnation as the Theatre Producers Group (NI).



NITA provided a collective voice for the theatre sector, working as a membership-based organisation with its activities designed to build capacity and strengthen professional theatre infrastructure across Northern Ireland.

It promoted Northern Irish theatre on a local, national and international scale on behalf of its members; delivered tailored training; collected and disseminated sector-specific information; supported and facilitated networking amongst performing arts professionals; offered free use of its captioning equipment to its members to increase access to theatre; and facilitated informed advocacy on behalf of the sector.

NITA addressed skills shortages identified in consultation with the NI theatre sector through professional development opportunities including: practical training sessions for actors; sessions covering topics such as venue touring, and contracts and negotiations; and technical training opportunities such as Working at Height.

It also successfully delivered the NITA Technical Theatre Bursary Scheme since 2012, providing 13 individuals with a paid 6-week placement with a NITA member venue or production company. This scheme was identified by the sector as one of the few key practical training opportunities for those looking to take the next step in their career working in technical theatre in NI.

NITA hosted its fifth annual conference in 2014. A strong partnership with Theatre Forum was forged to increase the size and scale of its annual conference to a 2-day All-Ireland Performing Arts Conference in 2011. By combining partner organisations individual conference budgets, resources and memberships, its members gained benefits in terms of scale and capacity for networking with arts communities; with the conference attracting hundreds of arts professionals each year from across the island of Ireland, the rest of the UK and further afield.

NITA worked hard to strengthen relationships and gain profile with key decision makers, including the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure and the CAL Committee, through written and oral evidence in response to CAL Inquiries and subsequent meetings to discuss evidence and recommendations. NITA was invited to provide oral evidence to the CAL Committee in May 2013, and again in July 2014 in relation to the Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities. The Clerk of the CAL Committee requested a meeting following NITA's oral evidence in 2014 to discuss NITA's response in more depth; highlighting its recognition as a key representative of the sector at an NI Executive level.



Appendix 3

Context

This three year strategy (April 2015 - March 2018) responds to developments within the Northern Ireland arts sector and external changes in regional and local government policy and economic conditions. The main changes and developments include:

Internal Factors	External Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain and grow TheatreNI’s membership • Increase the level of connection between TheatreNI members, especially between established and emerging practitioners • TheatreNI can offer the sector opportunities to build capacity through its training and networking to increase access to and participation in theatre and the performing arts for all • Potential for TheatreNI to increase its profile by engaging with a wider range of stakeholders • TheatreNI can build capacity and raise professional standards by growing the number of networking and development opportunities, and sharing good practice • TheatreNI needs to diversify income and grow revenue to become more sustainable • There is a need to identify and deliver capacity building support to members • TheatreNI needs to ensure high standards of governance and management practice are delivered to secure and attract funding and comply with legislative requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector investment is substantially reducing due to difficult fiscal/economic conditions • Competition for funding from other sources is growing • Opportunities to position and grow support for theatre and the performing arts via forthcoming political elections in 2016 • Reform in devolved and local government presents opportunities to increase access and participation through stronger partnership working • Opportunities for TheatreNI to position itself to support ACNI in the delivery of its Ambitions for the Arts Strategy and its Youth Arts Strategy • DCAL and ACNI have an emphasis on social outcomes • Lack of objective evidence on the impact of theatre – both quantitatively and qualitatively • TheatreNI, along with all NI charities, will have to register with the Charities Commission • An increasing emphasis on partnership working