

FISHAMBLE

Strategy

2022 - 2026



Fishamble was founded in 1988 and, since 1990, has been dedicated to the discovery, development, and production of new plays of national importance with a global reach. It typically employs over 200 artists each year through its programme of work, and has toured its productions to audiences throughout Ireland, and to 19 other countries. Fishamble has received many awards in Ireland and internationally, including an Olivier Award. It champions the role of the playwright, typically supporting over 50% of the writers of all new plays produced on the island of Ireland each year.*

Introduction.



Over the next five years, as this Strategy outlines, Fishamble will continue to enrich the world of Irish theatre. It will work to enhance and grow its relationships with theatre artists, so that its work reflects a diverse range of voices. It will engage meaningfully with audiences, communities, and members of the creative public, in all its productions and activities. It will continue to ensure best practice in the management and employment of all its core and freelance employees, and build on the excellent network of partnerships with arts and non-arts organisations throughout Ireland and internationally, to ensure that all of its work reaches its full potential.

Welcome.

In the world of contemporary Irish theatre, Fishamble: The New Play Company is a beacon. With its unique commitment to developing and producing new plays, it has given birth to a remarkable body of work. Its energetic, talented, resilient and imaginative team is emerging from one of the most challenging periods of the company's existence. The pandemic and associated lockdowns did not dim Fishamble's spirits; on the contrary, it released new energy to allow the company to find ways of staying connected with playwrights, audiences, funders and stakeholders, leaving it well-equipped to face into an exciting, if unpredictable future. We live in a rapidly changing world, and we in Ireland have a responsibility to engage with the major issues of our time both globally and nationally.

Fishamble, already innovative in its approach to making theatre will, over the five years of this new Strategy, be alert to its responsibility to reflect on and participate in a new, diverse Ireland and a new world. It will look to the past to better inform the future, will engage with the present in all its contradictions, and imagine the future with all its possibilities. We thank our loyal audiences, supporters and sponsors and our funders: in particular, the Arts Council, which has responded so positively to our vision of what we can achieve, and the Minister and Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, whose support during the pandemic has been invaluable.

As Chair of Fishamble, I look forward to working with my fellow board members, to whom I am deeply grateful for their supportive engagement, and with our dynamic team to make the ambitions of this Strategy a reality over the next five years.

Doireann Ní Bhriain
Chair



We are at a time of reflection on Ireland's history over the past hundred years, during this Decade of Centenaries. We have also been dealing with the challenges of a global pandemic. Many questions are on our minds, as we contemplate the changing world, and who we will be in the future. As 'the new play company', Fishamble has always explored issues that reflect on, and grapple with, the world in which we live.

Fishamble creates urgent, dynamic work, generating important conversations. Productions of new plays are at the centre of what we do, and there is a virtuous circle created around this work, so that the productions connect with artists who engage in our development and training activity which, in turn, generates new work, which is often supported or commissioned by Fishamble. Similarly, productions connect with audiences, creating debate and discussion, and attracting members of the public from many communities to our workshops and courses, generating further creativity, and so on.

I am so grateful to the wonderful team in Fishamble, our excellent board, and to the Arts Council, Dublin City Council, Culture Ireland, and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, with which we have worked over the past year-and-a-half to pivot and adapt and, with determination and resilience, to ensure that the work of Fishamble, of our wonderful artists, and the plays we produce, continue to thrive. Thanks too to Olwen Dawe who has focussed and guided the staff and board through the process of creating this Strategy, helping us to think strategically about the next five years, and to Publicis for their beautiful design work on it.

Fishamble greatly values its hugely important and rewarding connection to artists, audiences, communities, and partners. I am looking forward to developing all our relationships - in the next five years - to expand and deepen our work, as we continue to create productions of new plays that help us navigate the world in which we live.

Jim Culleton
Artistic Director & CEO

Mission.

As the new play company, Fishamble discovers, develops, and produces new plays that reflect contemporary Ireland – engaging with artists, audiences, and other partners, in this work.



Vision.

Over the next five years - during the life of this Strategy - Fishamble will build on its reputation developed over three decades, in order to ensure that it:

- + collaborates with artists in the most inclusive, productive way, to produce **high-quality**, original work
- deepens its relationship with audiences in the most **meaningful** way
- operates in all areas of its activities with **respect** and best practice
- engages with partners to ensure that the stories it tells reach their **widest possible** audiences

Its productions will enable conversations that matter to take place in Ireland and elsewhere, so that theatre and the production of new work is at the centre of debates on important issues. It will produce work that is urgent, impactful, and reflects the diversity of artists living and working in Ireland today, including artists who have been underrepresented in Irish theatre in the past.

It will continue to support, promote, and enhance the work of playwrights, and production of new plays, beyond the company's own repertoire - increasing its reputation as a premier developer of new work for theatre in Ireland.

Our Values.

Integrity:

Fishamble works collaboratively and with integrity; we are committed to the best possible standards in our engagement with artists, collaborators and partners

Originality:

As the new play company, Fishamble creates work that is original and innovative, constantly supporting and developing new work, and providing transformative experiences for audiences

Inclusivity:

Reflecting Ireland's stories in all their diversity is at the heart of Fishamble's ethos, alongside our ongoing commitment to inclusion in everything we do



Fishamble Artists.

Fishamble is proud of its 30+ year track record of discovering, developing and producing new plays of national importance with a global reach, while championing the role of the playwright.

Fishamble typically employs over 200 theatre artists each year, creating contemporary work of high quality. The company's track record and reputation has forged a powerhouse of new play production, with playwrights at the centre of what Fishamble does, creating plays with an authorial voice. Fishamble works to ensure that each production reaches its potential through production, touring, and publication supports.

Fishamble will continue to produce work of scale and ambition, while also remaining nimble and agile. It will use its status as an independent theatre company without a building, so that site-specific productions commemorating major historical events can exist beside work that tours to over 50 Irish theatres and arts centres, and beyond.

Since its foundation, Fishamble has built, and continues to build, strong relationships with artists, giving voice to new and emerging issues. We are committed to diversifying and expanding our range of artist voices, with stories that reflect our society and its diversity.

The company constantly innovates in the methods it employs - dramaturgically and in production - adapting as required to the needs of each play, to realise the vision of its playwrights and the work it produces. It builds on an indigenous tradition, while engaging with the latest in international theatre developments. It creates a respectful and collaborative environment in which artists work so they can operate at their highest level, and so that live theatre performance of new plays can be vivid, dynamic and transformative.



During the course of this Strategy, Fishamble will:

- + **Produce vital and compelling plays** of various scales, by writers at all stages of their careers
- + Continue to **commission and provide high quality paid employment** to artists and arts workers, maintaining annual employment levels from before – and maintained during – the pandemic
- + Build on the success of our gender equality policy to continue to **diversify the range of voices** that reach the stage, with annual reporting at the AGM based on a rolling five-year period
- + Build on our current dramaturgical methods, to serve artists through a programme of proven, **artist-centred, high-impact initiatives**

Fishamble Audiences.

Fishamble's reach encompasses local, regional, national and international audiences. We do this through extensive and imaginative touring, as well as identifying and exploring new forms of production, including online dissemination, and a programme of discussions that accompany all productions.

Deepening audience engagement, and developing new audiences for Fishamble's productions, are at the heart of this Strategy. Throughout our history, we have sought to ensure that our work is exciting and compelling for audiences. As a result, Fishamble has a loyal audience following in Ireland and increasingly, over the past decade, throughout the world, with 14 productions transferring Off-Broadway between 2010 – 2020, for instance.

Fishamble will work throughout the next five years on its audience development plans, generating further audiences in a sustainable way, and enriching the experience for audiences. Work on developing new audiences, including audiences from underrepresented backgrounds, will expand during the period of this Strategy.

In recent years, Fishamble has increased its engagement with young people and other communities from Dublin's North East Inner City, where the company is based. Its partnerships with Mountjoy prison, Trinity Access Programme, Goethe Institute, Larkin Community College, and others, have ensured that many people who have not had access to theatre, have been given that opportunity through Fishamble's work and community engagement initiatives.

Fishamble will continue to update its living archive with the National Library of Ireland, and work with partner publishers, and with a network of universities and academic institutions worldwide, creating opportunities and subsequent productions for its work.



During the course of this Strategy, Fishamble will:

- + **Tour work to audiences throughout Ireland and internationally, successfully reaching internally agreed box-office targets and maintaining a digital platform as appropriate to increase accessibility**
- + **Deepen audience engagement through a flexible series of initiatives**
- + **Develop new audiences, with strategic audience development initiatives, to build audiences of the future**
- + **Ensure our work is accessible to audiences and communities currently underrepresented**

Fishamble People.



Fishamble has an excellent core team of staff, which remains lean and prolific. The core team has expanded in recent years, to manage the busy schedule and hugely increased demand for its work, from artists, audiences, festivals, and theatres, both in Ireland and internationally. It will continue to grow and develop in a sustainable way.

Fishamble will maintain a focus on ensuring it has adequate resources, hiring people with expertise in their specific areas, for different time periods, as appropriate, to realise the programme of work to its maximum impact. It will adequately resource key roles, and focus its efforts - striking a balance between production activity and strategic thinking. Increased staff will help promote Fishamble's institutional, as well as programmatic, marketing.

In recent years, Fishamble has built and developed its capacity, as it has become a company at the centre of new play production and development in Ireland. It has an active board with the dynamism, skills, and diverse perspectives, to deliver on the Strategy. Fishamble's board has established subcommittees on Governance, Strategy, Fundraising & Development, and Finance & Remuneration to oversee the Company's activity and growth.

Its work on fundraising, sponsorship, and audience development, has expanded with the appointment of new full-time and short-term staff. This work allows Fishamble to diversify its income streams, complementing its existing funding from the Arts Council, Dublin City Council and Culture Ireland. With the guidance of the Fishamble board, Fundraising & Development subcommittee, and partners such as the RAISE programme, this development work will increase during this period, expanding and enriching schemes for friends, sponsors, corporate partners, and supporters, as well as audience members.

During the course of this Strategy, Fishamble will:

- + **Build organisational capacity and grow in a sustainable way**, with guidance and support from the board and our subcommittees, as well as other partners
- + **Ensure best practice in the employment and remuneration of all staff and artists**
- + **Diversify sources of income**, to sustain and expand Fishamble's infrastructure and resources, setting realistic and ambitious targets with the Fundraising Subcommittee
- + **Increase institutional marketing** and the public's awareness of Fishamble's work across our range of activities and platforms

Fishamble Partnerships.

Fishamble has built up a substantial network of like-minded, complementary, and supportive partners over the past three decades. These strategic partnerships are with arts and non-arts organisations, and Fishamble values these relationships very highly indeed.

Key, long term partners include the Arts Council, Dublin City Council, and Culture Ireland, as well as many businesses and other organisations. Fishamble is proud that its arts partners include some of the most prestigious theatres, arts centres, festivals, and resource organisations in Ireland and the world.

It will continue to develop and expand the partners with which it collaborates, while being aware of sustainability in everything it does. This will ensure that the work of Irish artists can continue to engage with audiences, contribute to debates and discussions, develop the artform, and promote Irish theatre internationally. These partnerships enhance the reputation of Fishamble, and create many opportunities for the artists with whom it works.



During the course of this Strategy, Fishamble will:

- + Enhance the experience for artists and audiences through increased opportunities created by **strategic partnerships and networks** grown by Fishamble over three decades, nationally and internationally
- + **Discover new partners** for work as appropriate, particularly in line with our commitment to increasing diversity
- + Commit to a special emphasis on working with partners to create theatre in an **environmentally sustainable** way
- + Partner with publishers, presenters, and academic institutions to **disseminate and increase the impact** of the work

Delivering the Strategy.

Fishamble's Strategy will be delivered by the highly motivated executive team, working with many artists, to make the work happen. The core team meets weekly, with extra meetings between artistic, management, literary, marketing, and development departments, as required.

The delivery of the Strategy will be monitored by an extremely committed board, which meets quarterly, and its subcommittees, which meet monthly or as appropriate. This will be carried out with the aid of an internal Implementation Plan written in conjunction with this document, including measurable goals and targets. The success of the Strategy will be assessed on Fishamble's expanded and enhanced engagement with artists, audiences, and partners, through its programme of productions, development, and other activities.

