

## Panel Discussion

# International Co-Financing/Co-Producing

## Part 2

**Eugene Downes** (Culture Ireland)

**Tim Smith** (Druid)

**Michelle Dickson** (Oxford Playhouse)

Chaired by Fergus Linehan

**Fergus Linehan:** This panel really is a continuation of the last one, with a little bit of show and tell and a bit of an update. We're joined again by three very interesting people. Tim Smith, who is the General Manager of Druid, whom I'm sure you all know, Michelle Dickson, Director of the Oxford Playhouse, and Eugene Downes, Chief Executive of Culture Ireland, who again, I'm sure you all know.

What we wanted to do is just have a little chat, very specifically to do with this idea of co-producing and co-financing and where Culture Ireland sees itself in relation to that. As well as just a little update on some of the things that are coming forward. Then we wanted to get Tim and Michelle just to let the crowd know about a specific initiative that they've had, and relationship that they've had recently which I think is a really interesting model for Irish companies, and quite innovative.

So I might start just by asking Eugene where you see Culture Ireland's role, because obviously a lot of people would see it as being in relation to the presentation of Irish work abroad. This is a slightly different area.

**Eugene Downes:** Thanks Fergus, and good morning. Great to be here as ever. I suppose if we're talking about our role in international co-production or co-financing, it might make more sense if I wheel back for a moment just to say how we normally do business in terms of investing or supporting international presentation. Basically we have a fund for international presentation and touring of work across all artistic disciplines, but we're talking about staged performing arts for the purpose of today; theatre and dance.

We run four rounds per year; spring, summer, autumn and winter. There's an opportunity for the Irish artists and companies to submit a proposal to us, or indeed for international festivals and venues. The proposals to us can come from the presenting side or from the Irish side. Those applications, proposals are worked through and turned around by March, June, September and December. Now – and this reads straight into the kinds of investment that we would make in an international co-production scenario – for international presenting generally, we look first of all to supporting international travel costs for the companies. Again we try to keep it as clear and simple as possible to make it more helpful to the presenters and the companies in terms of what they could reasonably expect or hope for. Flights, sometimes local travel, accommodation, sometimes per diems, sometimes even maybe some support for visa costs, say if it's a tour to the US, particularly if it's a relatively short notice tour where there is an extra cost in terms of securing US visas. We would stretch the furthest we can, obviously depending on the level of artistic excitement that the project generates for us, and also how closely it coheres with our overall strategy and priorities. We have a particular focus on North America. The United States is obviously a long-term focus and particularly, obviously, major hubs within that. Europe has been more challenging over the last few years. There are one or two co-productions we can talk about which have been opening up, say, Germany more so than previously. We also have a longer-term interest in China and India, but again it's just been a relatively small number of projects, so far.

That's how the fund normally works. In terms of co-production, I suppose the first thing to say is that we're not a producing entity, in formal terms, and we wouldn't want to be. Going back to your comment earlier about the project with Juliette Binoche and Akram Khan, I think the other interesting thing about the genesis of that co-production was that it was actually following an intervention by the French government. It was very governmentally driven, where the French had taken over the presidency of the European Union for that particular six-month period, and they decided that they would have co-productions with all of the other 26 member states of the European Union. So it was very politically driven. There was a co-production with Ireland, and in fact the person who produced that is here, Sheila Pratschke from the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris. That project involving Olwen Fouere was artistically really significant and most worthwhile. But also, again, in practical terms had its challenges. But I think that was an example where almost on a political level it seemed like a good idea to bring these two leading artists together. I think the risks and how that can not work would be one of the reasons why we don't try to be too prescriptive in trying to create a project and say we will actually dream up a specific co-production opportunity. Absolutely not. We much prefer the artists and companies and then the international presenters together to develop a project over a period of time and then to approach us and say, look we have this project. It may be another year before it reaches first production. Can you come in at this stage?

Again, just coming back to how we normally work, we would normally be very cautious in investing in unseen work. In terms of, say, an Irish theatre production we much prefer to say, no, produce it, let's all see it onstage and make sure it's ready for international touring. A number of productions over the last few years may have gone out too early, and if they'd had another iteration they could have gone that much further. So, generally we much prefer to say no, let's see it produced in Ireland first, let's see if it's ready and if so, where is the right placing, and then come in for touring.

But in this case, I can think of a couple of opportunities where international co-productions were put together and in both cases we were approached well ahead of time, and because the first production was happening abroad, then it fitted very directly with our remit. We were able to support the costs of that company's spending that time abroad and presenting it, almost as if it was touring. Again, it was about the flights, the accommodation, the per diems and so on. Of course that freed up then the co-producing partner to invest, whereas otherwise they were prepared to pick up some of those costs but then they could move the money sideways into pre-production. We were able to look at the budgets in the round. The two examples I'm thinking of are, funnily enough the two companies that have been mentioned particularly in terms of Irish companies who pioneered this, and that's Pan Pan and Fabulous Beast. In the case of Fabulous Beast, it's the co-production with English National Opera, which is premiering early next month, which is *The Rite of Spring*. Michael Keegan Dolan's new interpretation of the Stravinsky, with I think a company of about 24 dancers. Again he expanded the core ensemble, if you like, of Fabulous Beast to take on the project. A 110-piece band in the pit conducted by the music director, and that's paired with *Bluebeard's Castle*.

So, a highly ambitious project at a scale that could not be realised in Ireland, I think it's fair to say. We don't have a stage to put it on, for a start, although we will have next year when the Daniel Liebiskind-designed Grand Canal Theatre opens. I think it was about a year ago that the approach was made and we committed significant funding, six-figure funding, to that project about a year ahead of time to enable it to happen. Again, we'll look further at that if subsequent international touring opportunities arise.

For Pan Pan, *The Crumb Trail*, which perhaps many of you have seen or are seeing in the next couple of days, again developed as a co-production with Düsseldorf and Berlin. Again, we came in ahead of time, responding to the fact that we do see huge potential in international co-production as a way forward. Artistically in terms of greatly extending the life of a production, in terms of opening all kinds of doors for future collaboration and in terms of financial viability in the world we are now living through. A hugely productive way of going. That's not to say, every company should jump straight in. Clearly not. Again, for both Fabulous Beast and Pan Pan there is this 15 to 20 year period of solid work and it's

coming out of both artistic sensibility and very, very hard consistent work in terms of putting those things together.

So for Pan Pan, again, we came in ahead of time. Then once it was produced and previewed, well, workshop showings in Berlin and in Düsseldorf the first production, then it was picked up for the Under the Radar in New York, and again we came in with further enhancement to bring it to Under the Radar. Then we've come again with a further touring grant to bring it to the Århus Festival in Denmark and then to the Time Based Arts Festival in PICA in Portland. Again, that kind of investment up front for those kind of international co-productions would be very much a down payment, but with the great hope and expectation that there would be much more extensive subsequent life and then we're very much open to coming in and perhaps enhancing or investing in subsequent touring opportunities.

**Fergus Linehan:** Thanks Eugene. I'm going to ask questions at the very end, because people are going to have specific questions for Eugene in relation to that, but right now I'm just going to jump over to Tim and Michelle. In the last panel we mentioned this slightly London-centric view that people might have had about the UK, and the project you have been working on is a very interesting model in terms of breaking that down. In your own time and with whoever would like to kick off, just let us know first of all how it came to be and then what sort of shape it took.

**Michelle Dickson:** I run the Oxford Playhouse, which is a 600-seat theatre in the UK, mainly presenting. We have limited funds to produce, and when I took over about 18 months ago we were really keen to explore ways that we could make more work happen in Oxford. International theatre and dance has always been part of the programme, but it's very difficult to instigate that. We don't have massive funds to enable that to happen, so we had to be creative about how we went about that. I think the first time I saw Druid's work was probably in about 1997-8, so I've been a long-time admirer of the work.

Tim and I worked together in 2002, so we've known each other for a good few years as well. I think that was a brilliant starting point for discussing whether there could be a relationship between the two organisations. I think my rule of thumb is wherever possible to work with talented, nice people, and Druid are certainly that. So I went to Galway to talk to them without really having anything formal to put on the table, but just to explore whether there was mileage in how we might work together really.

**Tim Smith:** Yes, exactly. I'm an English stage manager originally, and I took over as General Manager about two years ago. We wanted very much to tour into the UK market because we were aware that we're built to tour and we want to tour. A lot of the houses in the UK are 500-seater plus, they have a tradition of doing a midweek matinee and a Saturday matinee, so that means the box office guarantee, providing they're able to sell the product, is large enough to support our projects to continue their life beyond Ireland. So we decided to try and get a rock to build that around, so that's why we came in with the Oxford Playhouse.

**Michelle Dickson:** Am I your rock?

**Tim Smith:** Yes.

**Michelle Dickson:** Yes, we sat down around the table at looked at how we might be able to make things work. We are regularly funded by Arts Council England, but not to tour work in the UK, but it is possible to apply for additional funding to support touring work. So our original plan was to start with *Playboy* and try to get together a tour, but we were able to piggyback onto existing plans of yours to tour *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, and managed to bring that to Oxford and on to the Lowry in Salford.

So that was a slightly riskier way of introducing the company to our audiences than we had originally intended with *Playboy* but the show did fantastically. It exceeded our targets both in Oxford and in Salford, which really encouraged us to carry on. I booked the *Playboy* tour in the UK, so that was using my relationships with those UK venues and technical

knowledge of the spaces, but working very much in partnership together. Looking at the kind of venues that they were interested in developing a relationship with. So *Playboy* received about £100,000 from the Arts Council England to enable that tour to happen and took in the Brighton Festival, returned to the Lowery and Oxford and toured to another three venues.

**Tim Smith:** Yes, Liverpool, Cardiff and Richmond.

**Michelle Dickson:** As well as looking after some of the funding and the contractual side in the UK, the Playhouse also took on the role of supporting education work alongside the tour. Arts Council England are very committed and keen for educational participatory opportunities supporting touring work, so we developed a programme of activity alongside the tour, which, I guess it's fair to say, Druid didn't have the resources to do. So that included pre-show talks, post-show talks, workshops and, in Oxford, a symposium in collaboration with the University of Oxford which brought together Irish and English academics, theatre practitioners, audience members, students for a day of fantastic discussion and exploration of Irish culture and identity, which ended with everybody seeing the production. Really, really useful.

**Tim Smith:** I think one of the things I'd like to address is the buy-in of the Oxford Playhouse into Druid's work. Before we arrived to *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, the entire staff sat down and watched the *DruidSyngé* documentary 'Mighty Talk' so they had an understanding of how Gary works. The symposium was one element that we have since worked on together, and we're looking now to the future. We're trying to do, next autumn, a classic and we're trying to work with the Playhouse and Michelle to bring over Heidi Bourne who is the head of learning to Galway to work with Galway schools and – it'll be news to Fergal McGrath who's out there somewhere – and hopefully do a schools matinee with those schools. We're not really able to offer education yet, but it's giving something back. I think one of the things we don't ever want to do with a co-production is simply for it to be a cheque. The companies are working together; I think that's really important.

**Michelle Dickson:** And the reciprocal side of that is hopefully that Thomas [Conway – Literary Manager of Druid] will come over to Oxford. We don't have a literary department at the Playhouse, but we do support local writers. So the hope is that Thomas will be able to come over from Druid to Oxford and spend some time with our writers. Also, we have a resident youth theatre of 16-22 year olds and we're hoping to be able to do some work on Irish drama with them. Both organisations, I think, have really bought in to the relationship, and it's ongoing. It's not just around those individual productions.

We originally thought whether we might be able to bring over three shows over three years to Oxford, and we've done three in ten months. *The Walworth Farce* has just played Oxford and the Lowery, again, before it went off on its world tour. For us, that's really about pushing audiences. For us to do a week of new writing is challenging in a 600-seat theatre, and the only way we were able to do it was financially, by Druid keeping costs to a minimum and making it work for us, but also by telling our audiences who this company is. Why they've appeared on our stage three times in a year, why they're important to us and why we want to share them. It's working. We got higher audiences for *The Walworth Farce* than certainly I think we would have done had it not been a Druid production. And therefore our audiences are seeing something that they probably wouldn't otherwise see. So, onwards and upwards really.

It's based on artistic respect on my side. I'm not sitting in the rehearsal room, or I'm not suggesting titles to Druid. It's about going on that journey and being excited by your plans.

**Tim Smith:** Yes, but it's also about bringing you in as well. It's very important that the rehearsal notes go to the co-producing partner. The production meetings, we involve you in those. The marketing, everything. We sort of try and make it a dual process as much as we can.

**Michelle Dickson:** Yes. It is about saying here we are. We want to be a home for you. We're very lucky technically as well, in that the Playhouse is a very good match for the Town Hall in Galway, so it's a very simple transition. And we've opened two of the shows in Oxford,

which has meant our crews working very closely together. The second time around it was really, really easy because they had that existing relationship. They were able to achieve more than they would in a new venue.

**Tim Smith:** It's not quite ok with the actors, because the actors keep telling us that they want to not be teching in Oxford; they want to be out enjoying it, so we might have to change that next time.

**Fergus Linehan:** Can I just jump in there to ask a slightly dry political question, which is that the thing that is surprising in there is the Arts Council of England committing £100,000 to an Irish company to tour in the UK, and how that tallies up. Obviously there are a lot of UK companies that are looking for money to tour around the UK. Is that a specific international touring allocation?

**Michelle Dickson:** They don't have an international policy at the moment, which has its challenges actually. It takes 12 weeks to get a decision from the Arts Council, and from when we submitted the application for *Playboy* to when we got the money, the change in the value of the pound to the euro meant that there was a £13,000 deficit in our budget which they didn't help us with, so between us we had to absorb that cost.

But it was about the quality of the work, and it's recognising that this is an internationally acclaimed company. It helped that it was a remount of an existing production so they could see the work in its previous incarnation, and that the venues that we were touring to were important venues to them. From the Brighton Festival's point of view, they were getting an international drama, very reasonably priced, which was a key part of their festival programme.

It was tough, to be honest, because it's an international company it's not about investing in an existing UK company. There's an argument that we want to develop audiences, but then they're also nervous that we're going to come back next year and ask for another £100,000. So it's a balancing act really. By showing them we've been able to bring the company over without needing to go to them for additional support makes it better value for money, really, in the long run. But it's based on respect for the work. Tim knows our local Arts Council officer very well. He's nurturing that relationship there too.

**Tim Smith:** Yes, we feel like we've got two Arts Council officers, David [*Parnell*] and Jenny Roberts.

**Fergus Linehan:** Touring is obviously a very hot potato. Certainly it was when I left Ireland and I doubt much has changed. So there's no sense within local companies that perhaps they should be spending this money on a company that is not UK based is, in a way, off message?

**Michelle Dickson:** In the middle scale touring companies, there are five or six that are regularly funded. They're already set up to tour. That's their remit. They're not building-based. On top of that some of the producing theatres in the UK have funds to enable them to tour. So they're funded to create the work in their own venues but then also get additional funds to tour each year. Then beyond that, the grants for the arts pot is open to all. It wouldn't be open to an international company applying for funds, so that's where our role is very important. So we had to make the arguments about why it was important for Oxford and the Playhouse. So they were also investing in us as well as in the project.

It's an ongoing discussion in dance, particularly. The Arts Council now regularly funds the Dance Consortium, which is a large scale network of venues who bring over international dance two or three companies a year, and get hundreds of thousands of pounds each year to do that. Then on our scale, the middle scale, there is Dance Touring Partnership, which applies for project funding to bring in international companies. I think there is resilience from the UK companies that they feel that that's taking dates and money away from them. It is a discussion.

**Fergus Linehan:** Within the relationship then who, without too much detail, who did what? In terms of the specifics of touring the work and where your responsibilities began and ended. How did you work that out?

**Tim Smith:** When we're taking a show that's already on tour in Ireland and we're taking it across, I tend to do the contracts with the venues. With the Playhouse tour of the *Playboy*, Michelle did all of the individual contracts with all of those venues. And did all the applications for the funding.

**Michelle Dickson:** Yes, we paid for freight and booked the freight and the UK travel.

**Tim Smith:** One of the ways we got around it, because the euro did so well against the pound, as we initially had been saying that we would book all the hotels, we would book all the flights, we would book all the transport. What we did was we handed all of those back to the Playhouse so they could be in Sterling and not have to have a fluctuation. So that's the way round that. It ended up, because of the fluctuation of the euro, that you had to do a lot more than we could do.

**Michelle Dickson:** The marketing was done by Druid, but our marketing team were there to support and consult so Sinead lead on it, didn't she, for you, but we shared our marketing pack and campaign with all the other UK venues so they had that English perspective as well as the Irish. We did all the financial settlements.

**Fergus Linehan:** Ok. With all those venues, is that a specific network or is that just a loose base? Is it a formal network?

**Michelle Dickson:** No, it was a discussion between us about the venues that were suitable that I knew would be able to take the work, that would fit in, and then a discussion between us about the priorities of where we wanted to put Druid.

**Tim Smith:** We wanted to attract a good acting company, so we wanted to make sure that they were places they'd want to go to as well. Which became a little controversial.

**Fergus Linehan:** Another model that was completely different was with the Atlantic Theatre. Again, a very interesting one because it was quasi-commercial but at the same time dealing with two not-for-profit entities. Just how that came to be, and what form it took.

**Tim Smith:** Sure. Well, if we're going to do a co-production, Gary's looking for a synergy between the two organisations. The Atlantic obviously have a relationship with us with *Beauty Queen* from 1997/98. They also did Martin's *Lieutenant of Inishmore* about four years ago. So there was a synergy there, so when Gary was talking to Neil Pepe they wanted to come on board from the beginning. So we broke it down in two ways: we took all the expenditure for our side, our expenditure and our income, and they took their expenditure and their income. We kept the two very separate. There were some elements that we could share, but not very many.

It was also a true co-production in terms of the casting because half of the cast had to be American, and half would be Irish. That took an awful lot of organising, because American equity is an awful lot tougher to deal with than Irish Equity. So we made that work. We took an American stage manager for the entire Irish tour because the cast is nine, so you can't divide nine people in half. So we did four Americans and five Irish with an American stage manager for the entire time.

In terms of the funding of it, as I said, they took their half and we took ours, but it meant that the show ran for six months, which was terrific. It did three months in Ireland and three months in New York City.

There are certain elements that you have to be aware of in terms of the future. If we want to tour the show around America there are certain equity things we have to do because we did it with an American cast. We have to – not that we wouldn't anyway, I should say in advance – we have to offer the original actors or we have to buy them out of their contract.

That's not something we would ever have to do in Ireland. It's about awareness of everything you're signing up to as well. There's a number of those examples in this agreement. Also, when you're doing an off-Broadway show, if it's a Martin McDonagh, the likelihood is that someone's going to come in and try to enhance it. There was a Broadway producer who did enhance it, and you have to work out from the beginning how are you going to deal with that funding when you're drawing up the original co-production. So there were actually three elements of an agreement: there was a co-production agreement, there was an enhancement agreement and there was the agreement with Equity. So it was kind of complicated, but it was six months work for everybody, which was terrific.

**Fergus Linehan:** And in terms of the logistics of that, were you over there doing the nuts and bolts?

**Tim Smith:** No, we mainly did it by phone, but we had initial meetings. They built the second set, so Eamonn Fox, our Production Manager went over for the tech to help them through that. They're different to how Gary would like it to work. But it worked very well. They contracted the creative team themselves. We contracted them here, they contracted them there. The deals with the actors were all done. We got them to try to come up to what we pay the actors so the actors had continuity. We did that through a bit of a clever per diem thing where they got slightly more per diem than they would have done, so there was a continuity to the wage as well. Kind of trying to work together.

Gary always says when you go into these that we've got to look after us, but we've got to look after our partners as well. She doesn't ever really want to do a purely financial co-production. She has a phrase that is, if you're just doing it for the finance then it's rather like getting married without going on a date.

**Fergus Linehan:** Just to ask a slightly more esoteric question which is about, obviously for a company like Druid, there is a straight capacity issue in terms of, you operate in a relatively small city, and to do the work you do you need to be outside. Is there something broader than that? Is there something in terms of just the aesthetic practice of the company that really requires it to be international, or is it really something to do with the financial viability of what you're doing?

**Tim Smith:** We want to tour. We're built to tour. That's our organisation. If we can prolong the life of a show, that's what we want to do. If we can do that within Ireland then we'll absolutely do that. That's why we partner with the NASC network. We are this year, and we did last year. But ultimately we really want to get out. If you talk to Gary about when she did the co-production agreement with the Royal Court when she had the McDonaghs, the reason she got the Royal Court in at the beginning was that she knew – Marty came through the open scripts submission policy at Druid – and she knew she had something very special. So she got on to the Royal Court because she wanted to make sure that when it was done, she knew there was going to be a demand for this show. It went immediately. The artistic integrity of the show was kept together, the cast was kept together, it was seen in Ireland and then it was seen in London. That momentum worked because you can argue that it rode into London on that, which made it go on to Broadway and you have nine Tony nominations and four Tony awards later. She got in on the very beginning on that one.

**Fergus Linehan:** In terms of both your relationship and also just generally Druid touring, is there anything that is a kind of frustration at the moment in terms of are there any barriers that you see in the Irish context or the UK context to making these sort of things happen?

**Tim Smith:** Well, we're desperate to hear what the touring policy is. That's our biggest frustration. We want to tour so we're looking forward to hearing what the future is.

**Fergus Linehan:** Ok, I'm just going to throw this back open to the room. Obviously, Eugene was talking about some other things as well. Has anyone got any questions for anyone here?

**Audience 1:** Did Culture Ireland stick with you in terms of financing that UK tour or did you manage to cope without Culture Ireland's support?

**Tim Smith:** No, Culture Ireland did in fact support us. The Arts Council gave, I think, five sixths of the funding and Culture Ireland came in with another sixth to top us up so they could make it happen. Yes, it was also dependent on Culture Ireland.

**Eugene Downes:** It was exceptionally good value.

**Michelle Dickson:** But so too for the UK venues. They were paying the kind of fees that they'd pay for a subsidised UK touring company, so it was very affordable for them, which took some of the pressure away. Richmond is a commercially run theatre, and when we looked at *Playboy* in their brochure it was the only show in the whole season that didn't have a starry name in the show. So, fantastic to be able to get a show without names in there. That's unfair. Aaron [Monaghan] is a name.

**Audience 2 [Willie White]:** I suppose it's an assumption that literary Irish theatre is only really suitable for an English language market. Does anybody have a view or experience of there being an appetite for new Irish playwriting or revivals of recent or classic work playing to non-English audiences? They aren't often considered as markets for that kind of work.

**Fergus Linehan:** I suppose Enda Walsh would spring to mind. I'd also see Martin McDonagh's work around.

**Audience 2 [Willie White]:** But performed in English.

**Tim Smith:** Well, our production of *Playboy* of course went to Tokyo. In that sense it worked very well. Enda's work, every time I've approached overseas venues that aren't English speaking or the audiences are not English speaking, there's not been a great warmth to taking it. They think, for instance that *The Walworth Farce* is just baffling to their audiences. They may be right.

**Fergus Linehan:** There's also an inherent continental European bigotry against English language theatre. The Avignon Festival, in the years I've been going, I think maybe I saw the Wooster Group once do something in English. That's to discount the entire English-speaking world of theatre. I don't think it's as particular to Irish theatre. I think within the UK there are a number of directors, Deborah Warner, Simon McBurney, a handful, but otherwise I think continental Europe treats it with a kind of disdain.

Anything else?

**Audience 3 [Valerie Martino]:** Hello. My name is Valerie Martino. I'm working for a production company based in Ghent in Belgium, Flanders. Willie, it's even more difficult for Flemish language to tour in Europe as you can imagine, more than English. I was wondering if it was a good time to advocate for the European Union. I guess yes.

I just wanted to mention regarding touring, co-financing and also co-producing, and to focus on the visibility of artists in foreign countries, the European Union has been helping a lot through the cultural programmes, especially to create networks of collaboration between venues, festivals, producers. Enabling with a lot of money to fund what is extremely expensive, meaning the mobility of artists, but also the translation when it regards playwrights. It's very important that good translations are made when you are touring for festivals or programmes. I think, Willie, you were also asking why Irish artists are not that visible outside? I think when festivals, venues or producers from Ireland are more maybe involved in those kinds of networks with other colleagues in Europe it would enable a lot more mobility of Irish artists, and more knowledge of the work they are doing. That was just to mention some good aspects of the EU programmes.

**Audience 4 [Jukka Pekka – Tampere Theatre Festival]:** I could continue. I am Jukka Pekka from Finland, representing Tampere Theatre Festival, saying the same thing about Europe. We are isolated in the far north east of Europe. The good point with Ireland is that Ryanair is flying directly to Tampere. That's the cheapest flight we can find in all Europe, and still we don't have any Irish productions in our programme. Now I was happy hear that Culture



Ireland is paying some costs, especially travelling costs, though they are not so huge from Ireland.

About Irish drama in Finland. We play Irish drama in Finland in Finnish, so almost all the Irish plays are immediately translated into Finnish, because our storytelling is a bit the same. We are very realistic in representing our own lives, so Irish and Finnish are very close. I think Iceland is one of the countries which is also in this triangle. Finland, Ireland and Iceland. But to bring Irish productions to Finland, the problem has been that we all know already all the plays in Finnish. So I'm now going to see this *New Electric Ballroom* here in Dublin, and I think next week I'm going to see it in Finland, in Finnish. So that is the main problem with English speaking productions from Ireland in Finland, but I'm hoping that we will find something.

Also to say, we don't need translations from English plays in Finland because we speak this very strange language, so we have to learn English. It's like the second language in Finland nowadays, so we don't have to have any translations in that way. That's just about how the Irish drama is living, but not the theatre.

**Fergus Linehan:** Thank you very much.

**Audience 5 [Siobhan Bourke – Irish Theatre Institute]:** [*unclear*] ... it's not just Friel and it's not just McDonagh, but if you go to Finland, and you go to the Theatre Institute there, and you look at the [*unclear*] they have nearly everybody. They have all the work that we have here, that would tour Ireland, has been translated and available, and in their five regional theatres they're showing it. I was amazed at the level. So there are opportunities. Translation is a huge success, and it's something that we in the Institute would really like to do more of.

**Eugene Downes:** Yes, just to mention that I think ITI has done incredible work, particularly with Riita Seppala [of the Finish Theatre Institute] and the people in Helsinki and so on, over a number of years. I think it's a really interesting test case of how a really successful translation policy can open up a whole other channel. It's only one step and we look forward to working with that.

I just want to mention though that there are interesting examples of shows from Irish companies which have actually toured extensively. In non-English language speaking territories. In terms of slightly larger scale work, Blue Raincoat has toured more than once recently to South Eastern Europe, the Balkans. But two particular examples, and I know that they are one person shows, but still, very extensive touring to non-English language countries, Conor Lovett and Gare St Lazare, and also Pat Kinevane's *Forgotten* from Fishamble. Very, very extensive. You could say that Conor's work is obviously very text-heavy, but there seems to be a very strong response from, for instance, Turkey. A place where the audience, I think it was in Ankara, wouldn't actually have been particularly fluent in English, but there was a quality of performance that came through. And I think *Forgotten* is a very interesting work because it is so visual, and Blue Raincoat have an intensely visual style. So there are more examples if you dig deeper. Particularly in smaller scale work.

**Audience 7 [Tara McGowan – Blue Raincoat]:** Just to add to that, Eugene, we have actually toured exclusively to non-English speaking countries, and it has been a hugely interesting and enriching path to take. Over the past ten years we've been to Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, countries which have a huge tradition of theatre, and there is no problem getting people to come and see the work. Like Eugene says, we have a very visual side to the company's work so that does fit, but again, like you said, Conor has brought Beckett to many of the countries. In fact, we seem to be in the same countries at the same time quite often. It's very beneficial I think, for us as an Irish theatre company to play in those contexts. I don't know, we have never done the co-production or we've never played longer than, say, a week in a different country, but the possibilities and the opportunities are there and it is very, very enriching.

**Audience 8 [Jim Culleton – Fishamble]:** I just wanted to say something very similar to Tara. Our perception previously would have been that we would tour work to the UK and to

America and maybe look at Australia or New Zealand as possibilities. But with *Forgotten*, as Eugene mentioned, he's just back from Iceland. It's been to the Balkans as well. Work that's gone to places like that either can have audiences that don't really mind that they don't understand everything and get all the references, or we've done it with simultaneous translations and surtitles. It's been an eye-opener for us certainly in that past few years that countries that aren't English speaking are much more open and willing to engage with how they might connect with an audience through English language work than we would have previously thought.

**Audience 9 [Gary Keegan – Brokentalkers]:** We've just recently come back from the Noorderzon Festival in the Netherlands where we performed a show translated into Dutch. Again it was performed here twice and very well received there, with the support of Culture Ireland. It is something that we think went very well, and we're looking forward to basically translating it into lots of different languages and continuing to show that work.

**Audience 10 [Tina Rasmussen – Harbourfront Centre]:** I don't know what's in the water here, but obviously the writers is what you get a lot of your bread and butter from, but there is also, like Fabulous Beast I'm thinking. Is there an initiative from Culture Ireland about this underbelly of creation that's happening that's, like you were talking about, Noorderzon or the independent companies, that isn't so heavily text-based, that are more inter-disciplinary, independent companies? Is there a tranche of money – because those works, depending on the contemporary festivals or arts centres that that work, regardless of text, can live?

**Eugene Downes:** Tina, we don't have a ringfenced fund. We considered a couple of years ago, ringfencing funds for a number of different purposes. We could have had an intercultural fund, we could have had a China fund or, as you say, a more non-text based fund, or we could have done more for different art forms. But in fact we decided that the most practical and most effective way was to keep the funds as fluid as possible, as nimble as possible, and they are able to respond in the course of a given year or from year to year, to actually seize the most promising projects. Or indeed to fertilise or encourage projects. But it would be just that little bit too rigid if we ringfenced.

That said, we really want to encourage that broader spectrum of practice and work. I think even the work in the ReViewed season we put together with Loughlin [Deegan – Ulster Bank Dublin Theatre Festival] and the Irish Theatre Institute, *Slat* for example, would be a strong gesture in that direction. Representative of the work, like what Brokentalkers have been making, and a whole range of individual artists and smaller companies. So, in a sense it's also about finding a platform, the right platform to be able to showcase that work, whether it's here or whether it's in Edinburgh or on other key platforms, to make sure that it's seen. We're also conscious, particularly in showcase environments that if you have a range of work, you're making a statement about that spectrum, so that you need to present a broader picture that digs below a conventional expectation of the work that is being made here.

**Fergus Linehan:** Thanks. Just this gentleman over here. I'm afraid this will have to be the last question.

**Audience 11 [Emile Kang – University of North Carolina]:** On a different side of this whole language thing – I'm going back to an earlier conversation – we presented *DruidSynge* last year and I know from some of my colleagues as well that even though America is technically an English language speaking country, I think it's all relative. Many of our audiences had difficulty understanding the brogue, I guess. In some respects, it was easier for our audiences to understand Lev Dodin's company or Ratan Thiyam's company because there were surtitles. For us to ask *Druid* for surtitles would be unthinkable in my mind, even though we had some patrons who left because there weren't any. I think it's interesting. But for me it's always important that we present international work in its native language. I could never think of anything else but that. I hope that Irish companies understand that that's important for most distinctive presenters like Tina over there, at Harbourfront, and other places. That's why we're bringing it in the first place.

**Fergus Linehan:** I'm conscious of time, and I know people are running off to Project, so we're going to have to wrap it up there.

Can I just say a couple of things? Whenever the first conference was, like ten or twelve years ago.

**Siobhan Bourke:** Sixteen years ago.

**Fergus Linehan:** It's interesting because I just remember that the level of discussion was at such a lower level. It's amazing how things have changed in that period. They've changed gradually. At that time we were looking at maybe a handful of companies that had any experience of this. It's extraordinary, the different levels of engagement internationally that people have, and obviously the emergence of Culture Ireland was critical to that. Given what came out of the conference in Farmleigh and this whole new emphasis in terms of the role that culture is going to play in the re-emergence of the Irish economy and the re-emergence of the Irish nation, this would seem to be absolutely at the forefront of priorities that are going to be set over the next couple of years.

I just want to thank Jen and thank Siobhan for today. It's been really interesting for me anyway. And also to congratulate Loughlan and all at Dublin Theatre Festival. It's always a bittersweet experience to come back and see someone doing a job better than you did it. Congratulations to him. Thank you all for coming and thank you to our panel.