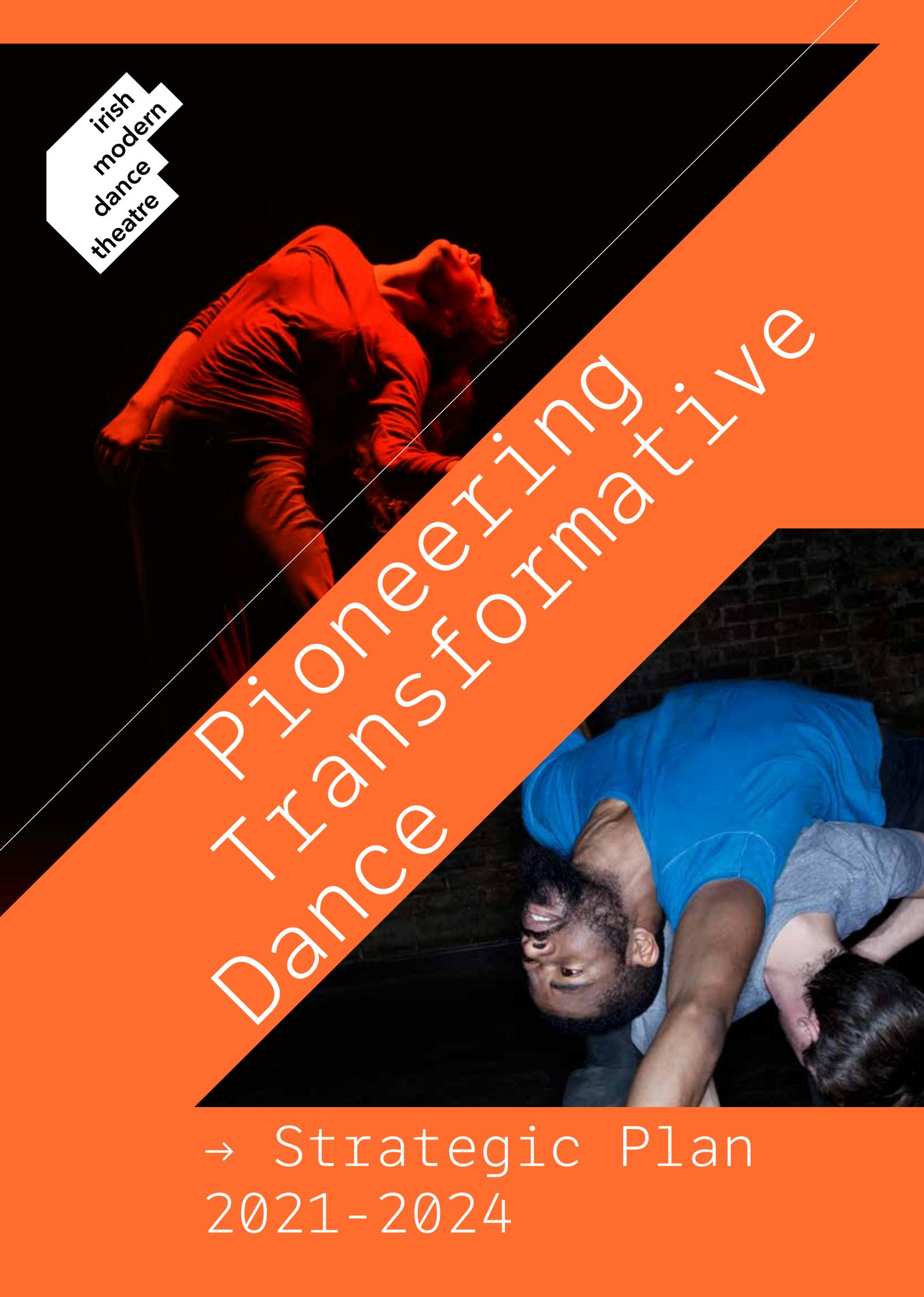


irish
modern
dance
theatre



Pioneering Transformative Dance

→ Strategic Plan
2021-2024

→ Chair's Introduction
→ Anthony Doyle

→ Fall and Recover (2004-2011)
→ Photo: Chris Nash



*We all have
the birthright
to be a dancer*

Anna Halprin, dance iconoclast

→ Cover
→ Sarah Ryan in Dances for inside and Outside (2020)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska

→ Actions (2009-2022)
→ Photo: Julieta Cervantes



→ Precious Magic (2016)
→ Photo: Clare Keogh

I am delighted to introduce Irish Modern Dance Theatre's new strategy, 'Pioneering Transformative Dance'. Though the company has always been strategic in its intent to develop dance and dancers in Ireland, this is the first time we have developed and published a formal strategy. As we celebrate our 30th year, we are excited about the future it shapes for the company and its on-going ambition for dance in Ireland.

The development of this strategy has been an interesting and rewarding journey for us. As we sought to define our purpose, our vision and ambition, to think about our values and consider our priorities, the process made us pause for thought. We were compelled to think about what we have achieved over the years and what we need to strengthen and amplify to ensure we are rightly positioned as leading contributors to the development of dance in Ireland now and into the future.

Through that process of reflection we arrived at a deeper understanding of what makes the company unique, valuable and distinctive. At the heart of it lies a passion for dance, of course. But there is also an inviolable sense of purpose: commitment to the progression of dance and dancers in Ireland and belief in the transformative power

of dance. Above all, perhaps, it is how we work, bringing to life our values of originality, of joy, of well-being and of dialogue that define the company and make it a relevant and powerful force not only within the dance ecology but also within Ireland's increasingly diverse society.

We are excited about the future. With our three clear areas of strategic priority - pioneering dance, transformative participation and organising for impact - we now have a sharpened focus and a clear path forward.

We look forward to making great art work for dance and for all those who make up society in Ireland today.

Anthony Doyle
Chair

→ Statement from Artistic Director → John Scott

Dance, the poetry of the body, is for me the most vital art form. It has the power to bring joy and excitement, to be part of who we are, to flourish unbound by meaning.

I create theatrical, multi-disciplinary, engaging works with exceptional, virtuosic dancers that enable audiences to create their own narrative and that make space for alternative ways of thinking and being.

Dance lives in the present moment. Certainly there is an immediacy to my work and I am deeply engaged with the social changes taking place in Ireland today. Over the last twenty years or so, I have seen the Irish body walk a new confident path, shedding restrictions, opening its senses.



→ Cloud Study, Galway International Dance Festival (2019-2022)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska

My practice is informed and enhanced by my commitment to working equally with professional and non-professional dancers, across genres of dance, artistic disciplines and virtuosities, across age and experience. What unites us - and inspires me - is our common humanity. Together, we create work that may be virtuosic, ecstatic, comic or complex but it is always honest and deeply personal. As I have learned from my work with torture survivors, dance can express what's inside when words are not enough.

Recent inward migration, introducing new physicalities from Africa, Asia, South America has broadened the definition of the Irish body. A new identity is evolving. The shared experience of living on this island is creating a new Irishness. How we effect a nuanced understanding of who we are now fascinates me and impels the development of my practice and how I shape the company.

It has led to our internationally regarded work with refugees and torture survivors. It has driven the diversity and inclusivity of

our professional company. It has pioneered the development of the Dancer from the Dance festival of Irish choreography, whose main theme is the blurring of the definition of the Irish dancing body. It extends and strengthens the originating impetus of IMDT.

Following my own experience dancing in Ireland, Europe and the United States and connection with the likes of Meredith Monk, Ana Sokolow, Robert Wilson and Merce Cunningham.

When I dance, it
means: this is what
I am doing Merce Cunningham

→ Rrrrr KillKillKill (2005-2007)
→ Photo: Chris Nash



I established IMDT as a structure to make my own choreography and to activate links between the Irish and international dance scene: to share the creative processes of the most daring international dance visionaries with Irish dance artists and Irish audiences and to create a space for those choreographers to interact and create work with Irish dancers.

Over the years IMDT has brought Meredith Monk, Sarah Rudner, Sean Curran, John Jasperse, Thomas Lehmen, Adrienne Truscott, Kyle Abraham and William Forsythe's Jone San Martin and Christopher Roman to Ireland and helped to inspire new understandings of dance and new understandings through dance. I am very proud of what we have achieved to date and look forward to continuing to seek out dance pioneers, to bring them to Ireland and to advance both dance practice and engagement with dance here.

IMDT has always worked in an international context. It is in our DNA. Our commitment to forging and sustaining international connections has served us well as company and has been of immeasurable benefit to dance artists and to the profile and perception of dance here in Ireland. Over the next three years we will continue to work internationally and to further our links within the New York dance scene in particular, with performances at New York Live Arts, PS122, Danspace and La Mama already in place.

We will also work to assure our impact in Ireland for artists, audiences and those we engage with through our transformational programmes. Our longevity as a company, our commitment to touring and to professional development, have secured trusted relationships with key dance resource organisations, festivals and venues including Project Arts Centre, our spiritual home. We will continue to work with existing partners as well as to forge new alliances, as our mission states, to create transformative experiences for dancers, audiences and participants, which shift perceptions of dance and of how we see each other.

The creation of this strategy has helped us to see IMDT afresh. It has given shape and expression to our ambition and priorities. I look forward to being nationally and internationally regarded for the quality, originality and humanity of our work changing perceptions and transforming lives. I look forward to bringing our values to life in our work and in how we work. I look forward to pioneering transformative dance.

John Scott

→ Context

Art encourages us to cherish intuition, uncertainty, and creativity and to search constantly for new ideas

Olafur Eliasson, Why art has the power to change the world, World Economic Forum, 2016

→ Dances for Inside and Outside (2020)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska



The context in which this strategy 'Pioneering Transformative Dance' has been conceived may be simply understood. It is first bounded by the ambition and emphasis of The Arts Council's ten-year strategy, Making Great Art Work, and also exists within and responds to a broader societal context that may be defined by change.

As we head further into an automated, digital future we need to ensure that we maximise the opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies in terms of our practice and in how we engage with and extend our audiences.

Who these audiences are is also set to change. The CSO anticipates that Ireland will experience significant population growth by 2026, with migration reported as a key driver. As such, we will become an even more culturally diverse community. We know through our own work that the arts have a significant role to play in creating a sense of belonging, fostering well-being and promoting social cohesion.

We must also consider changing demographics, behaviours and attitudes. A large cohort of our population is aging; another 'born social' cohort is emerging, highly calibrated to global trends. Truth is becoming hard to find. How do we create experiences that speak authentically to each of them? Can art, as artist Olafur Eliasson believes 'help us identify with one another and expand the notion of we - local and global'?

IMDT seeks to work and be relevant, as our purpose states, 'transforming lives and inspiring new understanding' in what is and will be an ever-evolving national and international context.

In the course of conceiving this strategy, we have seen devastating change: an acceleration of the environmental crisis, the United Kingdom leave Europe and, in particular, the sweep of Covid-19 which has shut down many of our ways of being in the world. The implications of the global pandemic are as yet unimaginable, but we may anticipate very challenging times ahead for us as a society and as an economy.

To be effective, to be part of the essential infrastructure of the arts in Ireland, IMDT must root itself in the national policy context of the Arts Council. There is clear natural alignment between the Arts Council's 'resolve to support artists to make excellent work which is enjoyed and valued, while enabling more people to enjoy high-quality arts experiences' and the thrust of our work.

In particular, in the next phase of Making Great Art Work (2020 - 2022), the Arts Council sets out to advance understanding of the role of the artist in a changing society, to further professional development opportunities, to create opportunities nationally and internationally for resource sharing, peer support and learning support among artists, and to support work that is collaborative, cross-disciplinary and open to evolving art practice. We look forward to contributing to the advance of these aims.

Likewise, we are eager and well-placed to support the effective delivery of the Council's recent Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy which seeks to break down the barriers to participation in the arts, once and for all.

→ Who we are

Founded in 1991 by dancer and choreographer John Scott, Irish Modern Dance Theatre is one of the most original and responsive dance companies working in Ireland today.

Under the artistic direction of John Scott, we create distinctive dance works that are recognised for their intelligence, honesty and humanity. Our work crosses disciplines, subverts expectations of dance and dancers and finds new ways to explore contemporary issues.

IMDT has an established national and International reputation. We are proud of our work with contemporary dance icons such as the Merce Cunningham Trust, John Jasperse, Sarah Rudner, Thomas Lehmen, Chris Yon, Sean Curran and Adrienne Truscott. We continue to work with a national and international focus.

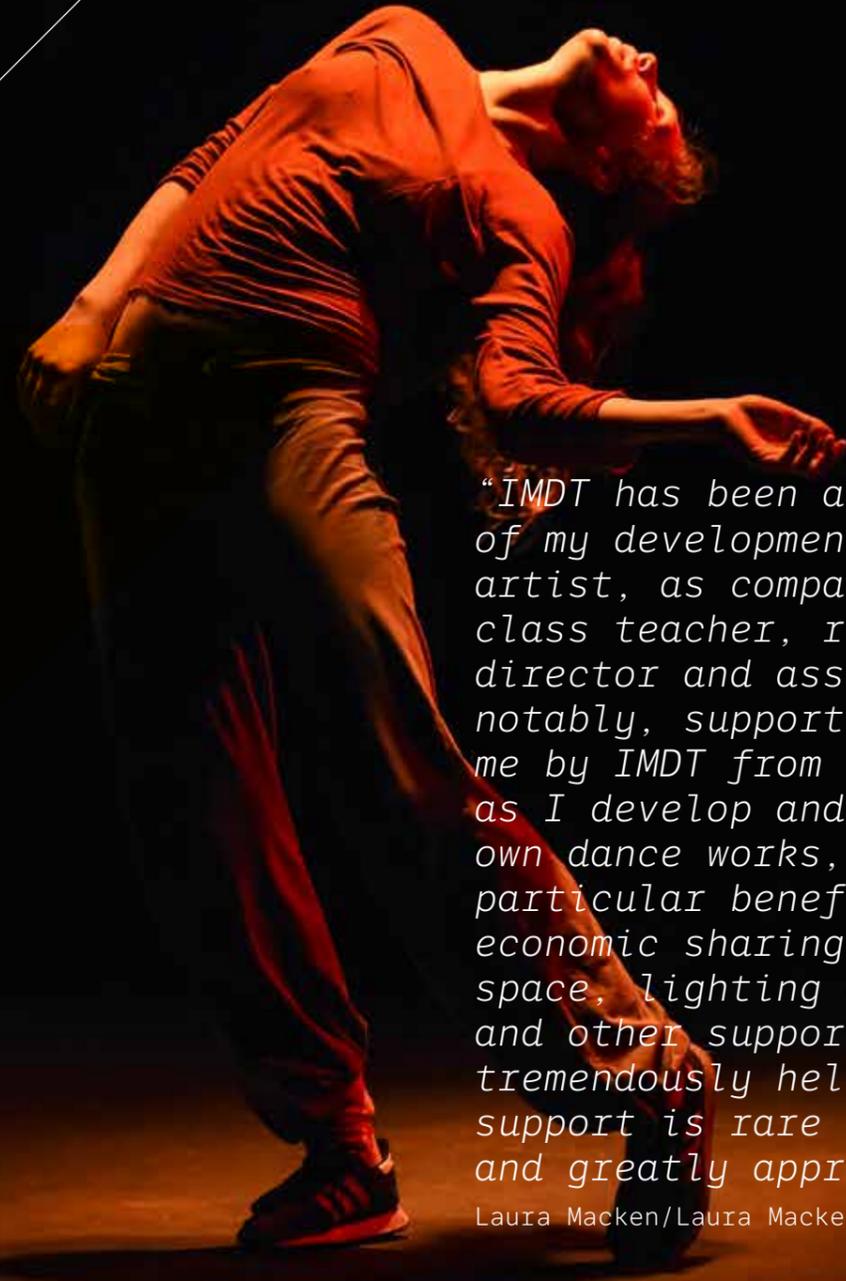
We believe in using our international profile and connections to extend the dialogue about contemporary dance in Ireland and to benefit contemporary dance practice. As such, we regularly create opportunities for professional dance artists to work with or learn from internationally renowned choreographers.

Irish Modern Dance Theatre is governed by a voluntary board of 7 people (including the Chairperson) who are appointed for a term of three years, up to a maximum of nine years. The work of Irish Modern Dance Theatre is led by Artistic Director, John Scott, and supported by General Manager, Greta Bourke. Irish Modern Dance Theatre is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.



→ The White Piece (2005-2013)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska

IMDT has achieved acclaim for its transformative work with ethnic minorities, migrants and torture survivors. We are committed to sustaining and developing this seam of work in the future.



“IMDT has been a major part of my development as a dance artist, as company dancer, class teacher, rehearsal director and assistant. Most notably, supports offered to me by IMDT from 2019 to today as I develop and create my own dance works, have been of particular benefit. Advice, economic sharing of theatre space, lighting designers and other supports have been tremendously helpful. This support is rare in the sector and greatly appreciated”

Laura Macken/Laura Macken Dance

→ Dances for Inside and Outside (2020)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska

→ Purpose, Ambition, Vision and Mission

→ Our Purpose

To transform lives and inspire new understanding through dance



→ Inventions, Kilkenny Arts Festival/Dublin Dance Festival (2018-2019)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska

→ LEFT and right (2002-2004)
→ Photo: Chris Nash



→ Our Vision

We believe in a just world where everyone is valued equally and is inspired and empowered by dance



→ Divine Madness (2019)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska

→ Our Ambition

IMDT will be nationally and internationally regarded for the quality, originality and humanity of its work changing perceptions and transforming lives

→ The White Piece (2005-2013)
→ Photo: Chris Nash



→ Our Mission

We create transformative experiences for dancers, audiences and participants, which shift perceptions of dance and of how we see each other by:

- creating and consolidating a strong repertoire of innovative, virtuosic dance works
- presenting high-quality contemporary dance from Irish and international choreographers, dance innovators and multi-disciplinary artists
- opening up international dance practice and offering deep engagement with leading practitioners to advance the professional development of dance artists based in Ireland
- providing opportunities for a wider public across diverse social and cultural backgrounds to access and engage with dance
- placing a unique ensemble of multi-generational, culturally diverse artists and collaborators at the heart of our work.

→ Our Values

→ Originality

We are inventive, creative and curious. We are always on the look-out for new ideas, people and practices that inspire us. With a pioneering spirit and independence of mind, we are not afraid to be ambitious, to try things out, to be funny, to be honest. Life's like that and we want to respond to what's going on in Ireland and in the world today.

"It's not only John Scott's skill and imagination that I admire. It's that quality of warmth and respect among humans that he cherishes and projects—along with the humour, the mistakes, and the combativeness that are an inevitable part of living in society today."

Deborah Jowitt, Village Voice, New York
Dance critic and author

→ Well-Being

We care about dance in Ireland and about dancers. That's why we started IMDT and why we continue to work to advance dance as an artform and to enable dance artists to be at their best. We attend to the welfare of our ensemble, our community and culture. We also care about the well-being of our society and work to make it more inclusive. By sharing our passion for dance we embrace and empower others. We enjoy being a company that is multi-generational and culturally diverse.



→ Hyperactive (2013-2022)
→ Photo: Leon Farrell

→ Joy

We want to create positive, uplifting experiences for those we work with and for our audiences. It is important to us that our artists and audiences feel emotionally connected to our work. We hope that by exciting, delighting, surprising them, we encourage new ways of seeing and being in the world.

→ Dialogue

We are at our best when we engage and collaborate with others. That's how we learn and how we grow as individuals and as artists. And that's why we always seek to bring people into a conversation about dance and also to be part of the discourse of today. Our works are a dialogue with artists, audiences and society at large.

→ Strategic Priorities

We have identified three areas of strategic priority. These provide a framework for our work and, with clear goals and objectives, focus our efforts over the next few years.

Our Strategic Priorities are as follows:

→ Pioneering Dance

To create virtuosic work and lead connection with international dance practice

→ Divine Madness (2019)
→ Photo: Ewa Figaszewska



→ Cloud Study, Galway International Arts Festival (2018-2022)
→ Photo: Andrew Downes



→ Transformative Participation

To encourage and enable more people to access, enjoy and be transformed through dance

→ Magnetic (2013-2014)
→ Photo: Chris Nash



→ Organising for Impact

To ensure we have the capacity and resources to deliver on our ambitions for dance in Ireland

→ Pioneering Dance

→ Goal

To create virtuosic work and lead connection with international dance practice

Why this goal?

The founding impetus of IMDT – to make work and to provide opportunities for dancers in Ireland to work – sustains today and propels our ambition for the future. Our outlook is considered and generous. Over the next few years, we will continue to pioneer new work by John Scott and to consolidate our repertoire. We will also continue to forge relationships with and commission new work by some of the most innovative choreographers at work in the world today. By doing so, we continue our long-held commitment to the professional dance community – affording them unique opportunities as artists for meaningful engagement with leading international practitioners.



"Irish Modern Dance Theatre provided me with my first-ever international choreographic commission. I am forever grateful for both the experience and for the opportunity to collaborate with artists of their calibre"

Kyle Abraham, American Choreographer and MacArthur Fellow



Objectives

- To create virtuosic, resonant new work by John Scott and consolidate and promote our repertoire, following an established international model
- We will commission and present work that pushes the boundaries of dance from pioneering, experimental choreographers whose principles and practice align with and extend our own
- To continue our unique Artistic Associate relationship with Merce Cunningham Trust, performing and making accessible works from his repertoire and sharing his technique
- To extend our reach and influence in an artistic context by working in partnership with others nationally and internationally
- To advance the profile and practice of Irish choreography by producing an annual festival of Irish choreography, 'Dancer from the Dance', in New York and Dublin, in association with Dance Ireland, Project Arts Centre and Irish Arts Center (New York)
- To provide and contribute to sustained, high-quality professional development opportunities for existing and emerging dance artists in Ireland, connecting them with leading international dance practice
- To ensure the well-being and fair remuneration of those who work with us in line with the Arts Council's Paying the Artist policy

Outcomes

- Our repertoire will be a live resource for the company and we will produce three seminal new works including 'Dances for Inside and Outside', 'Migration Sonata' for Kilkenny Arts Festival and 'Evolutions' in partnership with Project Arts Centre.
- We will have commissioned and presented a new work by the much sought-after avant-garde US choreographer Faye Driscoll
- We will stage further works in collaboration with Merce Cunningham Trust and Irish festivals, ensuring the currency of Merce Cunningham technique in Ireland through masterclasses
- New alliances with national and international partners will have created new opportunities for productions and the development of practice
- 'Dancer from the Dance Festival of Irish Choreography' will be established within the dance calendar in New York and Ireland and have raised interest in and the potentiality of Irish choreography
- Dance artists and others in Ireland will have been inspired and their careers advanced by engagement with world-leading contemporary dance thinkers and practitioners
- IMDT's implementation of the Paying the Artist policy will be regarded as exemplar

→ Transformative Participation

→ Goal

To encourage and enable more people to access, enjoy and be transformed through dance

Why this goal?

We believe dance is for everybody. We believe it has the power to bring joy no matter the age, ability, colour, creed or life experience. We want to create opportunities that will inspire audiences and those who participate in dance as non-professionals with the confidence to explore their own creativity and experience the joy of dance.



"Merce Cunningham Trust and Irish Modern Dance Theatre have a rich and valued relationship dating to 2014, when John Scott first licensed Cunningham's iconic solo Totem Ancestor (1942). In 2016, IMDT licensed and performed the rarely seen duet Night Wandering (1958). These two early works, danced brilliantly and authentically by IMDT, were essential components of the worldwide celebration of Merce Cunningham's centennial in 2019. The Cunningham Trust looks forward to future projects with John Scott and his company."

Patricia Lent,
Trustee and Director of Licensing/Merce
Cunningham Trust

→ Real Pearls (1998)
→ Photo: Chris Nash



→ Next to Skin (2008)
→ Photo: Chris Nash

Objectives

- To deepen our engagement with existing audiences and attract new audiences through the development of 'Show Plus' – bespoke activities complementary to a performance
- To expand the reach and connection of our work using digital technology and social media opportunities
- To work with existing partners and forge new associations to enable work that specifically sets out to access and engage new audiences, place dance in different contexts or in unexpected places
- To expand and amplify our 'Dance to Diversity' programme with Ireland's new communities to enhance social inclusion through dance
- To develop a Touring Repertory to extend and diversify our reach to audiences nationally and internationally

Outcomes

- 'Show Plus' will be a proven and popular means of audience development
- We will be effectively and imaginatively engaging with a significant online community
- We will have created new contexts and new audiences for dance in Ireland through our work with partners such as Kilkenny Arts Festival
- An expanded 'Dance to Diversity' will be engaging disenfranchised communities nationwide
- Our touring repertoire will be securing engagements in Ireland and abroad

→ Organising for Impact

→ Goal

To ensure we have the capacity and resources to deliver on our ambitions for dance in Ireland

Why this goal?

With this strategy, IMDT sets out to make a difference to dance in Ireland for artists, audiences and participants. That ambition can only be enabled by an organisation that is expert, efficient and financially resilient. The objectives below ensure that IMDT has and sustains for the future appropriate capacity, capability and resources.



→ Divine Madness (2019)
→ Photo: Luca Truffarelli

“As a young dancer, to work and perform alongside many of my peers and to be given the opportunity to experience the company’s working creative process was an invaluable time of learning for me. The company’s work itself explored new areas of expression, which subsequently opened many doors in my personal development as a performing artist... this time greatly helped my integration into the Irish dance community by bridging what can sometimes be a difficult transition from ‘student’ to ‘professional’ dancer.”

Liz Roche, Director/Liz Roche Company (Apprentice 1993)



→ Everything Now, Dublin Fringe Festival (2017)
→ Photo: Chris Nash

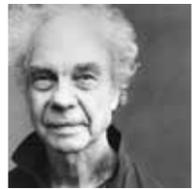
Objectives

- To invest in the development of leadership at board and executive level to enable the company achieve its full potential and deliver this strategy
- To put in place governance protocols and management policies and processes that are informed by best practice
- To develop a robust financial strategy that strengthens and diversifies our income streams
- To develop a cogent brand and communications strategy to support and amplify the company’s work, drive engagement and position the company for success
- To live our values, fully embracing the principles of diversity and inclusion that underpin all that we do

Outcomes

- We will have the expertise, skill and resilience at board and executive level to deliver on our strategic ambitions
- The organisation will be fortified with a strong governance structure and robust management systems in place
- We will have greater financial security with an increased and diversified funding base
- The company will have enhanced its profile and secured its standing as essential to the progression of contemporary dance in Ireland
- Our values will be alive in our work and relationships

→ Associate Artists



Merce Cunningham



Faye Driscoll



Kyle Abraham



Christine Kono



Seán Curran



Morgan Bullock



Oona Doherty



Meredith Monk



Ty Boomershine



Peggy Gould



Sara Rudner



Simone O'Toole



Justine Doswell



Cheryl Therrien



Thomas Lehmen



Jason Akira Somma



Jone San Martin



Luca Truffarelli



Valda Setterfield



Mufutau Yusuf



Ashley Chen



Gearóid Solan



Muirne Bloomer



Laura Macken

Acknowledgements

This strategy was developed through an extensive consultation process with stakeholders, the Board of Trustees and the executive of Irish Modern Dance Theatre, and was facilitated independently.

Irish Modern Dance Theatre would like to thank the artists and funding and programme stakeholders who so generously contributed their time and thinking.

Trustees

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Immaculate Akello
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Maureen McSherry (President)
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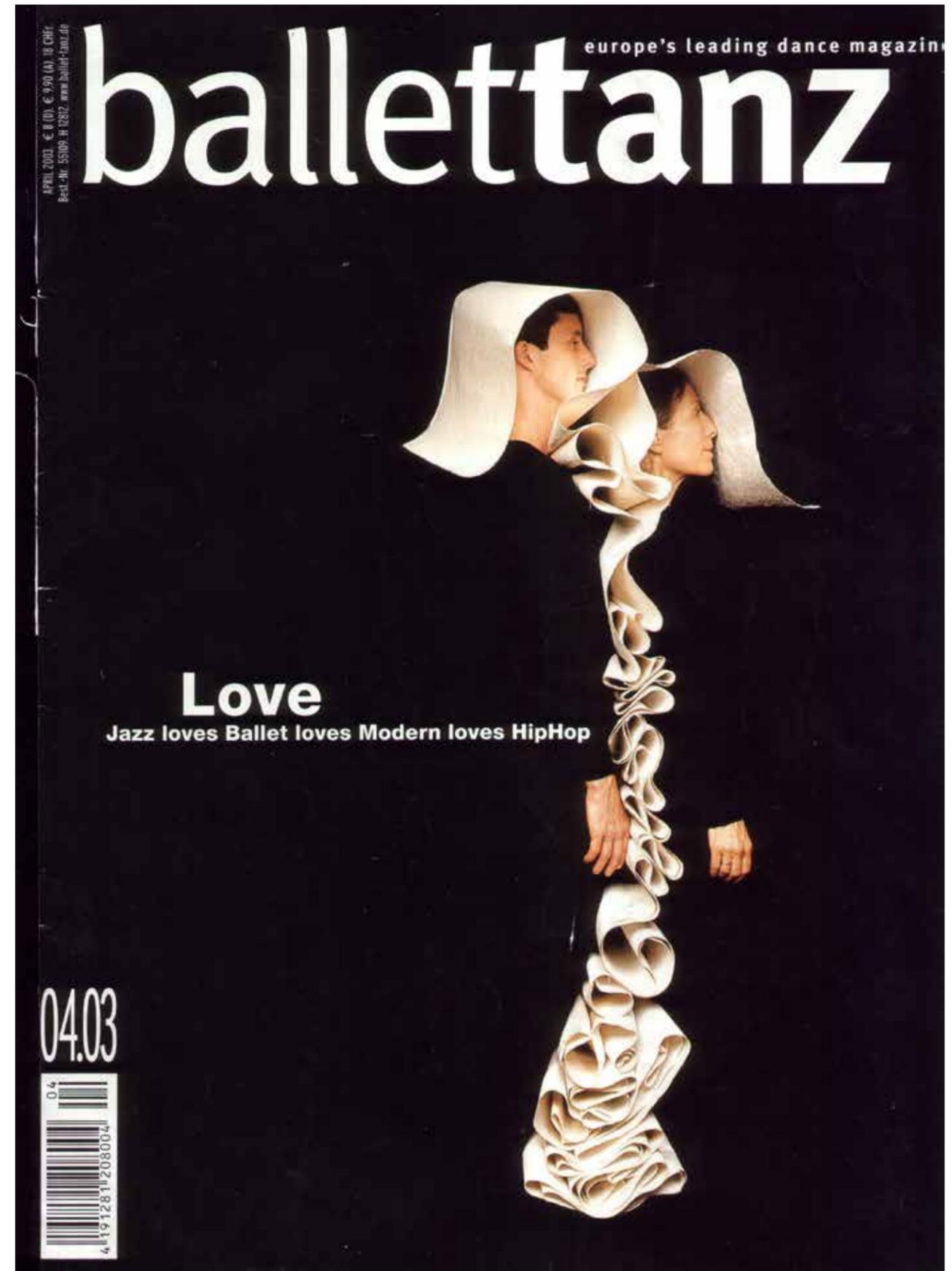
Irish Modern Dance Theatre is the trading name of Rince agus Damhsa CTR, and is a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Artistic Director: John Scott **Company Manager:** Greta Bourke.

CHY: 15296 **Company:** 341446 **RCN:** 20052423

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Design: Mark Shiels



Irish Modern Dance Theatre's 'LEFT and right' featured on the cover of ballettanz
Photo: Chris Nash

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"We don't imagine we are by ourselves. That is how the dance healed us. Your body is the one talking, not you. It allowed us to open ourselves and reach out for help."

Kiribu
Client of Spirasi Centre for
Care for Survivors of Torture



Irish Modern Dance Theatre

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