

# Vacancies on the Board of The Abbey Theatre

The Abbey Theatre, Ireland's National Theatre, owes its origins to the theatre founded by WB Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory in 1904. Since 1925, the Theatre has received an annual subsidy from Government to support its work in producing and staging works of Irish and international theatre. Today this support comes in the form of an annual grant from the Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

The Board of the Abbey Theatre wishes to invite expressions of interest from suitably qualified individuals to fill three vacancies which have arisen on the Board. The Board comprises 11 members; three members (including the Chair) are directly appointed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, one member is elected by the Theatre's staff, and seven members are appointed by the Board itself, based on the nominations of the Selection Committee (see below). The Board currently has three committees: the Audit and Risk Committee, the Development Committee and the Site Redevelopment Committee.

Expressions of interest for these vacancies will be considered by the Theatre's Selection Committee, which is comprised of the Chair of the Abbey Theatre Board, the Chair of the Arts Council and the Minister's Advisor to the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will forward its nominations to the Board, which will make the appointments.

The Selection Committee seeks to ensure that, in its entirety, the Board has the necessary skills to support The Abbey Theatre's mission and purpose effectively. To this end, the Selection Committee works to ensure that the Board has a wide mixture of skills, ideally covering (but not restricted to) the following broad areas:

- Contemporary theatre practice (for example, a playwright, actor, director, designer, producer, theatre technician or other theatre artist or professional)
- Irish language and culture
- Finance / accounting / business / management / risk management
- Human Resources / industrial relations
- Education / community
- Law / Governance
- Marketing, including information and communication technologies / public relations
- Sponsorship / fundraising

An analysis of the current skills sets on the Board suggests that individuals with one or more of the following skills, knowledge and experience would be particularly desirable at this time:

- Playwriting
- Finance and Accounting
- Sponsorship and Fundraising
- Education and Community
- Human Resources

In line with international best practice and government policy, the Board actively welcomes a diversity of voices.

**Board Member Duties:**

Individuals appointed to the Board are appointed to serve a three-year term, with the possibility of renewal with the agreement of the Selection Committee. There is no remuneration payable for the position, but travel and subsistence rates are payable for vouched expenses.

There are four quarterly Board meetings per year, and up to four additional strategy meetings; all meetings are held in Dublin. In addition, Board members may be requested to sit on one of the committees of the Board.

There will be a formal Induction Programme for all new members and an annual schedule of governance training.

Consistent with best corporate governance practice, it is advisable that no member of the theatre should hold appointments to more than two State Boards.

**Expressions of interest:**

Expressions of Interest for Board Membership are invited from suitably qualified individuals who have a proven interest in, and passion for, the work of The Abbey Theatre, theatre and playwriting, coupled with significant experience/expertise in one's chosen professional field, and the ability to devote sufficient time to perform Board duties satisfactorily.

Expressions of interest should take the form of a letter (of no more than two pages) explaining your interest in joining the Board of the Abbey Theatre, and a brief curriculum vitae.

Expressions of interest should be received by the Abbey Theatre no later than **12.00 on Wednesday 8 January 2020**. They should be sent by email to:  
[BoardVacancy@AbbeyTheatre.ie](mailto:BoardVacancy@AbbeyTheatre.ie)

**or**

By post to: **Gus McNamara, Company Secretary, Abbey Theatre, 26/27 Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1, D01 K0F1**

All expressions of interest received will be acknowledged and kept strictly confidential to the Selection Committee and the Board of The Abbey Theatre, as relevant.

Individuals submitting expressions of interest should confirm that they do not have any conflicts of interest or legal impediments that would be likely to interfere with their ability to play a full part on the Board. They should also confirm that they can make themselves available to attend meetings and to carry out the duties of a Board member.

A panel may be formed from this expression-of-interest process, from which future Board positions may be filled.

Further details in relation to the work of the Board of The Abbey Theatre are set out in the attached appendix.

The Financial Statements for 2018 and previous years can be found at:  
<https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/annual-reports>

# Appendix

## 1. Background

In 1925, the Abbey Theatre was given an annual subsidy by the new Free State, thereby becoming the first ever state-subsidised theatre in the English-speaking world. The State continues to support the Abbey Theatre in the form of an annual grant from the Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

The company originally traded as the National Theatre Society Limited. On 31 January 2006 this company was dissolved and all assets and liabilities were transferred to a newly established company, Abbey Theatre Amharclann Na Mainistreach, which now runs the theatre. <https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/about/history/>

The artistic policy of the theatre incorporates the following ambitions:

- To invest in and promote new Irish artists and writers
- To produce an annual programme of diverse, engaging, innovative Irish theatre
- To create a dynamic working environment which delivers world best practice across our business

## 2. Functions of the Board

The Board is responsible for setting the broad strategy and policies for the theatre. It is also responsible for the system of internal financial control and for putting in place processes and procedures for ensuring that the systems are effective.

Matters reserved for the Board include:

1. Significant acquisitions, disposals, and retirements of assets of the company. This applies to assets with values of €125,000 [excluding Value Added Tax (VAT)] or more;
2. Approval of terms of major contracts. Applies to contracts worth €125,000 [excluding VAT] or more;
3. Major investments and capital projects where the value is €125,000 [excluding VAT] or more;
4. Delegated authority levels, treasury policy and risk management;
5. Policy on determination of remuneration of senior management;
6. Approval of annual budgets, corporate and strategic plans;
7. Preparation of the Directors' Report and the Financial Statements;
8. Appointment, remuneration and assessment of the performance of the Chief Executive(s) (Theatre Director(s));
9. Significant amendments to the pension of the Chief Executive(s) and staff;
10. Succession planning for the Chief Executive(s);
11. Approval in advance of engagement in novel or contentious acts or in advance of the commitment of funds to novel or contentious purposes.

Further details are set out in the Abbey Theatre *Memorandum and Articles of Association*.

The Board's policy is to follow the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The Board is assisted in the discharge of its responsibilities by a number of committees which currently include Audit & Risk, Development, and Site Redevelopment. Depending on their areas of expertise, Board members may be requested to sit on one or more of these committees.

### **3. Person Specification**

In addition to relevant experience for particular vacancies, Board Members are expected to possess:

- An understanding of the role of the board in terms of leadership and strategic direction
- Knowledge of the context in which the Abbey Theatre operates;
- Relevant skills based on previous board, management or strategy-making experience in a relevant context;
- The ability to act independently and to arrive at an opinion about important matters and be prepared to use external sources to verify information upon which to rely in coming to an opinion on a matter;
- The ability to assess and hold management accountable for performance – not just financial performance but also for performance on achieving the Abbey Theatre’s strategic objectives;
- The ability to see the long-term consequences of decisions while taking a broad overview and acting in a balanced way in the interests of stakeholders; and
- The ability to communicate effectively, work as part of a team and act as a strong advocate for the Abbey Theatre’s strategic direction, vision and mission.