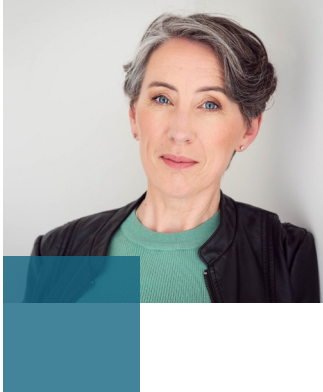




Strategy 2023

# Introduction



I am very pleased to introduce Opera Workshop's inaugural strategy. Though we are a company young in years, we have a strong sense of purpose, a clear vision and bold ambitions for the future: for us, for artists and audiences, and for opera in Limerick and beyond. We developed the strategy to give formal expression to this. We wanted to set out what distinguishes and defines Opera Workshop, where we will focus our efforts and what we want to achieve over the coming years. By doing so we hope we will enthuse our existing partners and supporters and motivate others to join us on our journey over the next few years.

Opera Workshop was founded in 2017, as our purpose states, to surprise and delight audiences and artists with opera forged in Limerick for the world. We work in the anticipation of a future 'where people in Limerick and far beyond have the opportunity to know and love opera'. To achieve this vision, we make opera in unexpected places and in unexpected ways. By inspiring artists and exciting audiences, we stimulate new perceptions of opera and all that it can be.

How we work as a company is as important as what we do. We think and act as an ensemble, firmly believing in collective endeavour. We blend professionalism, pragmatism and irreverence. Though our skills as singers, writers and composers are embedded in historic, revered traditions, to which we are indebted, we are quite happy to discard, adapt and remake these mores as our imaginations and creative instincts demand. Imbued with this spirit of adventure and possibility, we always seek to share joy.

We believe our values have helped to impel our progress over the last few years and to keep us grounded and attractive to both artists and audiences. We are proud of the culture we have created and the reputation we have built.

Over the next three years, we intend to continue to work hard with and for artists creating opportunities for them to perform and to develop their talent. Blending the practical and aspirational, we will make opera for now and for the future. We will also continue to work to inspire a love of opera in others. We look forward to continuing the partnerships we have within our local community and to forging new ones that extend our reach and diversify who engages with opera. To achieve these ambitions, we must also attend to and develop our own capacity and resilience. We have set ourselves up responsibly, with due care and attention to good management and governance. We must now advance our sustainability.

With our path set out, I look forward with optimism and excitement to leading Opera Workshop into the next phase of its development, assuring our place as a creative leader in opera, in Limerick and in the arts in Ireland.

*Shirley Keane*  
Artistic Director







## Foreword

From its inception, Opera Workshop has surprised and delighted audiences with the quality, ingenuity and mischief of its work: playing with audiences' expectations and creating new perceptions of opera. By doing so, Opera Workshop has managed not only to attract the interest of opera lovers and encouraged their embrace of new operas, forms and contexts, but we have also opened opera up to new audiences in Limerick.

I am proud to say that we have also attracted the attention of artists and funders. People of talent and skill want to work to with us. The Arts Council and Limerick City and County Council have funded us. We are hugely grateful for their belief in and support of the company. It sustains us and propels us onwards. Thank you to the artists, board members and friends who contributed to this strategy and a very special thank you to Janice McAdam for her facilitation and guidance of the process. We look forward to continuing to grow the relationships we have with audiences, artists and our local and national funding partners, over the next few years.

Like Limerick, our native city, Opera Workshop is poised at a point of opportunity and potential. Limerick's time has arrived. There's an energy, excitement and an 'edge' to the possibilities that lie ahead for the city and county. Opera Workshop is ready to be part of it. Likewise, appreciating the renaissance of interest and investment in opera in Ireland now, we look forward to Opera Workshop affirming its place in and contribution to the opera ecosystem.

This strategy positions Opera Workshop with confidence and optimism in this context. It embraces local and national policy priorities and makes them real and realisable. The ambitions we set out here serve opera, artists and the public. They also acknowledge the responsibility that comes with receipt of public money and seek to ensure our capacity and accountability in that regard.

In five short years, Opera Workshop has grown from an aspiring start-up to a recognised, versatile and forward-thinking artistic enterprise. Now, guided by this strategy, over the coming years, we will consolidate our early success and ensure Opera Workshop's sustainable future.

*Owen Gilhooly-Miles*  
Chairperson





## About Us

Opera Workshop is Ireland's newest opera company, based in Limerick. We commission new works and re-imagine familiar opera, mounting productions in unexpected places and in unexpected ways. Our unique ensemble approach to making opera inspires artists who want to work with us and excites audiences, many of whom experience opera for the first time. We are proud that our work stimulates new perceptions of opera: what it is and who it is for.

As champions of opera, we engage with other arts organisations, artists and emerging talent. We believe in sharing what we know and deeply value the ideas and learning we gather in return.

Our belief that opera is a vital, ever evolving artform that can and should be for everyone is propelling our exploration of the use of digital and enhanced technology in the creation and presentation of opera and engagement with audiences.

Opera Workshop is a not for profit company, limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. It is governed by a committed voluntary Board of Directors and led by the Artistic Director who has overall responsibility for the company's artistic direction, programming and management.





## Policy Context

Opera Workshop operates within the context of local and national strategies and policies, In particular we attend to Making Great Art Work, the Arts Council's ten-year strategy (2016 – 2025), which has five areas of strategic priority: the artist, public engagement, investment, spatial and demographic planning and capacity development.

A number of Arts Council's policies arise from this overarching strategy and are relevant to and realised in what we do:

Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy which 'strives to respect, support and ensure the inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities, and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions.'

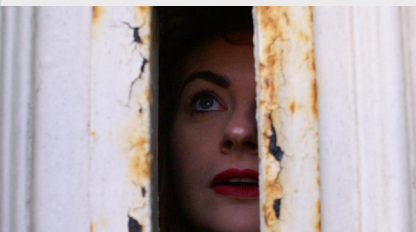
Paying the Artist Policy promoting 'equitable and fair remuneration and contracting within the arts'.

Place, Space and People Policy, a new framework for socio-spatial equity in the arts presenting a vision 'for a country where everyone has the opportunity to create, engage with, participate in and enjoy the arts and culture, regardless of who they are or where they live and work'.

It is understood that an Opera Policy and a Climate Policy are currently being developed.

Opera Workshop also closely monitors and responds to the ambitions of Limerick City and County Council, particularly those of the Arts Office.

Limerick Cultural Strategy: A Framework 2016–2030, developed post Limerick's role as inaugural National City of Culture in 2014, continues to provide a roadmap for arts and cultural development in Limerick. It sits alongside more focused, time-bound plans such that produced for Limerick as part of the Creative Ireland programme.



# Strategy implementation

The goals of the strategy will be realised over the course of the next three years. We will develop an annual implementation plan and institute a process of end of year review to monitor progress. We will also review and refine the strategy, as necessary, mid-term.

We will develop a new strategy for Opera Workshop in 2026, to align with the Arts Council's new strategy that year.

## Purpose

*why Opera Workshop exists and its unique contribution to others*

Opera Workshop exists to surprise and delight audiences and artists with opera forged in Limerick for the world.



## Vision

*the ideal we are working towards*

We look forward to a future where people in Limerick and far beyond have the opportunity to know and love opera.

## Mission

*what we do to achieve our vision*

We make opera, in unexpected places and in unexpected ways, that inspires artists and excites audiences, stimulating new perceptions of opera and all that it can be.





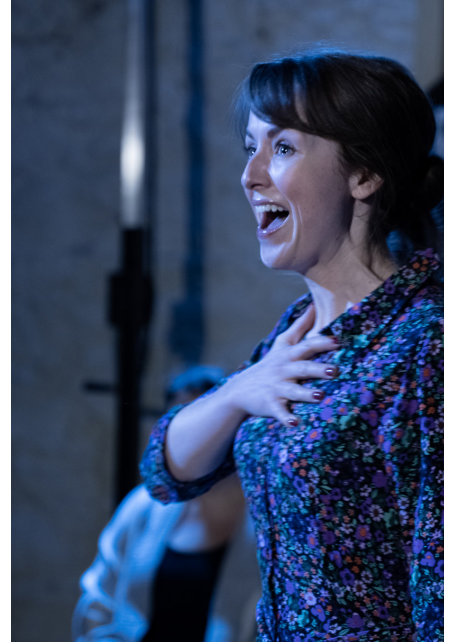
# Ambition

We are excited and inspired by the chance to share the joy of opera with the people of Limerick and beyond. Our ambition is to be recognised as one of the most exciting up-and-coming companies at work in Ireland: a strong, positive, creative force in opera. We want to be renowned for our innovative productions of traditional and new opera created in Limerick, which re-imagines and reinvigorates spaces and places in the city and county.

We want our productions to be anticipated and enjoyed by an ever growing and increasingly diverse audience. We want to contribute to the city and its ambitions for all those who live, work and visit here. We want Limerick to be proud of us.

We look forward to attracting artists of international standing across a range of disciplines to work with us here in Limerick as part of a vital ensemble. We also look forward to pushing the boundaries of opera and to changing perceptions of the artform. We will identify and build the local, national and international partnerships necessary to achieve our ambitions.

We will work to secure the human and financial resources we need as a company, developing our board and acquiring the services of a committed production and administrative team.



# Values

## Open, honest and down to earth

We are true to who we are and where we're from. We blend professionalism and skill with a practical and sometimes irreverent approach. We make it easy for people, whether artists or audiences, to engage with us.

## With a spirit of adventure

We enjoy creating opportunities for people to discover and love opera. We like surprising audiences with opera in unexpected places and imagined in brave, new ways. We are not afraid to break artistic boundaries and believe in encouraging artists to take creative risks

## Believing in collective endeavour

Our work and way of working is defined by a respectful, collaborative ethos. We are at our best when we work with others: artists, peers and partners within our own community and beyond. We look forward to advancing ideas together and to learning from each other.

## Always sharing joy

We love what we do and work with positivity and optimism to achieve our ambitions. We share our enthusiasm for opera with artists and audiences with passion and purpose, seeking to inspire them.



## The goal we are working towards

The creation of a compelling and enduring body of work and assured relationships with emerging and established artists.

## Make opera for now & for the future

### Why this goal?

This is at the core of why we exist and what we do. We want to prioritise and consolidate the creation and presentation of work of excellence.

Essential to that, we must create opportunities for artists and a culture and the conditions where they will thrive.



### Objective

Create one large-scale work annually which has the potential to tour nationally and internationally.

### Outcome

We have garnered international interest in our work and have toured at least one production nationally and internationally.



### Objective

Commission new work annually and sustain a programme of research and development.

### Outcome

We have a body of new work and a proven developmental process that attracts pioneering artists.

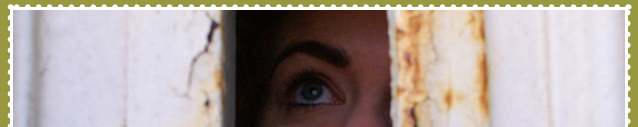


### Objective

Cultivate the professional development of the Opera Workshop ensemble.

### Outcome

We have created the culture and the conditions which allow artists to thrive, advancing their professional skills and generously learning from each other.



### Objective

Establish a masterclass series inviting experienced professional artists to nurture the talents of local and early career artists including those traditionally under-represented in the arts.

### Outcome

New generations of artists are being encouraged and supported to develop their talent.



# Inspire a love of opera

## The goal we are working towards

More people are discovering and delighting in opera.

## Why this goal?

We believe in our work and want to share it. We know that many people might think of opera as a museum piece or not for them. We want to change that perception and to amplify the idea that opera is for now and for everyone.

We look forward to growing and diversifying our existing audience base, bringing people together to discover and enjoy opera in real life and through new media platforms.



### Objective

Sustain and develop local and national partnerships, within and beyond the arts sector, that engage under-represented communities.

### Outcome

We have created powerful participant-led projects in target groups that help re-define what opera is and who it is for.



### Objective

Build our community and extend our reach through consistent, imaginative communications and meaningful engagement.

### Outcome

We have a loyal, dispersed and diverse following of those interested in and supportive of our work and a committed audience-base.



### Objective

Advance opportunities that make our work accessible.

### Outcome

We have identified and removed primary barriers to access.



### Objective

Explore the potential of digital tools and platforms to present our work and to engage and extend our audiences.

### Outcome

We have invested in our digital capacity, as appropriate, to advance our work and relationship with audiences.

# Develop our capacity

## The goal we are working towards

A strong, resilient company assured of its place as a creative leader in opera and in the arts in Ireland.

## Why this goal?

We have significant ambitions for the future. In order to achieve them, we must strengthen our organisational capacity, securing the expertise and competences at both board and team level necessary to govern and manage the company effectively for a sustainable future.

We must also continue to build our reputation and ensure that we have the policies and practices in place that mean that Opera Workshop is a company people respect and with whom they want to work.



### Objective

Strengthen and diversify our funding base, exploring opportunities through corporate sponsorship and individual donation and other statutory sources.

### Outcome

We have increased our financial resilience by establishing a broader funding base and by advancing our funding status with the Arts Council.



### Objective

Secure the administrative capacity necessary for the company to deliver this strategy.

### Outcome

We have a skilled and motivated team of three people committed to advancing our ambitions.





## Objective

Sustain a positive, values-led culture that embraces the principles and practices of equality, diversity and inclusion.

## Outcome

People want to work with us because of what we stand for and how we are in the world.



## Objective

Continue to develop and diversify our board ensuring it has the expertise and influence to guide and govern modelling best practice.

## Outcome

Our active, responsible board have the time, expertise and influence to effect, a sustainable future for the company.

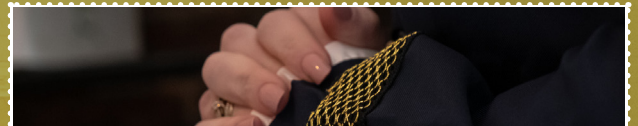


## Objective

Build our brand reputation and affirm our positioning as a thoughtful, innovative company and audience advocate.

## Outcome

Opera Workshop is well-known and highly regarded within and beyond the arts for the integrity of its approach and the quality of its productions.



## Objective

Ensure necessary policies are developed and implemented, effecting best practice.

## Outcome

All requisite policies are in place and have been made manifest.





## Get in touch

t. 085 105 1933

e. [info@operaworkshop.ie](mailto:info@operaworkshop.ie)

w. [operaworkshop.ie](http://operaworkshop.ie)



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick** City  
& County Council