

# AR

annual review

Arts Council of Northern Ireland - 2019-20  
[www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)







# Our Vision

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**Our vision is to ‘place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life’.**

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In **Inspire, Connect, Lead**, our five-year strategic framework for the development of the arts in Northern Ireland, 2019-24, we identify the main themes covering what we believe needs to be done to achieve this vision.

In this Annual Review 2019-20 you will see the progress that has been made in these areas, including the new ‘Embrace the Place’ partnership with Tourism NI, profiling opportunities at international arts festivals, and bringing ‘the greatest literary show on earth’ to Northern Ireland.

[www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

Cover Image: Distinguished granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, opened the two-day literature festival, JLF Belfast 2019, and spoke at the Seamus Heaney HomePlace. Photo: Brian Morrison

c21 theatre company presented Rosemary Jenkinson’s ‘May the Road Rise Up’, featuring Christine Clare, at the Brussels Platform, promoting the culture and creativity of Northern Ireland.

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# Welcome

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## Welcome to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Annual Review 2019-2020.

This calendar-style review of our combined Exchequer and National Lottery-funded activities covers many of the artistic highlights of the last (financial) year, expanding in greater detail on several of the most significant events.

A brief summary of our Accounts for the financial year is included at the end of the report. The complete sets of audited accounts for our Exchequer and National Lottery funds are made available on our [website](#).

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# Bringing great art within the reach of everyone

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# What we do

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The Arts Council is the development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland, providing the main support for artists and arts organisations throughout the region through a range of funding opportunities. We distribute public money and National Lottery funds to organisations and people who develop and deliver arts programmes across all of society.

Our Arts Officers offer specialist guidance on funding and project development to artists and organisations working across the spectrum of arts activities in Northern Ireland.

- Architecture
- Arts and Disability
- Arts and Health
- Arts and Older People
- Circus Arts
- Carnival Arts
- Comedy
- Community Arts
- Crafts
- Creative Industries
- Dance
- Drama
- Intercultural Arts
- International Arts
- Language Arts
- Literature
- Music
- Public Art
- Traditional Arts
- Visual Arts
- Voluntary Arts
- Young People Wellbeing & Arts
- Youth Arts



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# Distinguishing us from other places

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Prime Cut Productions / Oona Doherty; 'Hard to be Soft; A Belfast Prayer'. Edinburgh Festival.  
Photo: Luca Truffarelli

# Overview: 2019-20

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**“The response of the arts and creative sector to the COVID-19 pandemic has been nothing short of inspirational. With theatres and venues closed and a pause in live in-person engagement, artists have shown an astonishing aptitude for adapting to circumstances and finding new ways of reaching audiences. The way they have embraced virtual engagement has lifted everyone’s spirits and, perhaps more than ever before, demonstrated the value of culture and creativity to our lives.”**

## **Coronavirus Pandemic**

In the closing month of the 2019-20 financial year, it was becoming rapidly obvious that the Coronavirus pandemic was about to catastrophically affect life in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere. In March the Arts Council, along with many other government bodies, closed our doors to the public and introduced remote working for staff. We immediately set about reviewing our existing funding programmes to provide the most effective response possible to meet current need under these radically changed circumstances for artists, performers, creative practitioners, freelancers, venues and organisations. We surveyed the sector to learn at first-hand about the full nature of the impact of the Coronavirus on their ability to continue working and we ramped up communications, sharing up-to-the-minute information about government support and other emergency funding sources. For the first time, organisations on our Annually Funded Programme were able to draw down up-to 50 percent of the value of their award, to ease their cash flow issues. The Minister for Communities announced a £5.5m emergency funding package for the sector, to be co-designed and administered by the Arts Council. The first strand of this emergency funding package opened for applications from artists and freelancers in April 2020. The second strand, earmarked for organisations, opened in May. In the months to

follow, to help mitigate the worst impact of the pandemic on the arts and cultural sector, the Department for Communities would allocate further substantial emergency funds for distribution by the Arts Council, from its £29m Culture, Languages, Arts and Heritage Support Programme 2020-21.

The impact of social distancing measures will be particularly hard-felt and long-lasting on services which by their nature involve public gatherings, such as arts venues, concerts and festivals. Public appetite for live arts is enormous, but confidence in returning to indoor events and performances is likely to remain low for some time. The Arts Council’s immediate priority must be to protect the livelihoods of arts workers and creative freelancers and support our organisations and venues so that this vital sector, with all that it delivers, is in as robust shape as possible for when we do finally emerge from this devastating pandemic.

# Overview: 2019-20

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## Five-year Strategic Framework for the Arts, 2019-24

The Arts Council introduced a new framework for the development of the arts over the coming five-year period, 2019-24. The framework provides the strategic overview and is accompanied by Business Plans, produced each year, setting out in detail the actions required to deliver our objectives. The business plan is intricately linked to the current Programme for Government and its associated outcomes, as well as to the related priorities of the Department for Communities. The watchwords for the new arts framework are: Inspire, Connect, Lead. Collectively they define the Arts Council's challenge and its ambition for the arts in Northern Ireland.

One early outcome of the Framework's priorities has been the introduction of a number of new or modified funding programmes targeting areas of newly identified need. These programmes included a Rural Needs Small Grants programme, a Pilot Premium Payments programme, a greatly expanded version of our Musical Instruments scheme to include schools, individual musicians and bands; and a Creative Industries Seed Fund and Commissioning Programme for creative innovation.

When we introduced the framework, we were aware of the need for our strategy to be flexible and responsive to a background of ongoing uncertainty caused by Brexit,

increased pressures on public spending and the absence of a sitting Assembly and Executive in Northern Ireland (reopened in January 2020 after a three-year hiatus). No one foresaw just how profoundly uncertain and challenging the future would become, with the arrival of the Coronavirus pandemic.

## National Lottery turns 25

National Lottery distributors marked a special anniversary this year, as the Lottery celebrated 25 years of supporting good causes across the arts, sport, community and heritage sectors. Since the first draw in 1994, it has invested more than £1.2 billion in 25,000 local good causes, with almost £180 million going directly into the arts in Northern Ireland. Lottery funding has made it possible for the Arts Council to build dedicated arts venues within 20 miles of every citizen, to kick start the creative industries and Northern Ireland's now celebrated film industry, engage with schools and communities as never before, and develop significant work in areas of social need. Most importantly, the Arts Council's National Lottery funding provides a major source of support for local artists, performers and creative practitioners, enabling them to create work of outstanding quality and beauty. In Northern Ireland we celebrated the occasion with a special performance at Culture Night Belfast 2019, with a showcase of Lottery-funded creative talent in Belfast's St. Anne's Cathedral,

featuring pianist, Ruth McGinley and jazz vocalist, Katharine Timoney. This performance, and Culture Night's expansion of its programme into a second day in order to cater for younger audiences, was a welcome reminder that Lottery-funded arts projects enrich and benefit everyone's lives.

## Creative Schools Partnership

The Creative Schools Partnership has been extended for a further three years, following a very successful pilot phase in 2018-19. An independent evaluation of the pilot year concluded that the impact on the participating schools had been exceptional. This programme, funded by the Arts Council, Education Authority and the Urban Villages Initiative, is a practical response to research which indicates that embedding arts within the overall school experience can benefit all aspects of learning, including better student engagement and attendance levels, and improved results in other school subjects. The ambition through the programme is to reduce educational inequalities, improve outcomes for young people from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds, and empower both students and schools to contribute fully to positive change within their wider communities.

# Overview: 2019-20

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## **Man Booker Prize-winner, Anna Burns**

In April 2020, the Arts Council and Faber Members in association with the Lyric Theatre were honoured to host a special reception for Anna Burns, the first Northern Ireland writer to win the Man Booker Prize. This was Ms Burns' first public appearance in Ireland since winning the 2018 prize for her extraordinary novel, *Milkman*, and a full house at the Lyric enjoyed readings and conversation with her and fellow Booker winner, Anne Enright.

## **'The Greatest Literary Show on Earth' comes to Northern Ireland**

The inaugural JLF Belfast annual festival took place in June 2020. Hosted in partnership with the Arts Council, British Council Northern Ireland and producers, Teamwork Arts, JLF Belfast brought a true spirit of the original Jaipur Literature Festival, hailed as one of the greatest literary shows on earth, to Northern Ireland. The international celebration of literature, creativity and music brought together a wealth of distinguished speakers and cultural thinkers from across the globe, with panel discussions and readings packing houses at the Lyric Theatre and Seamus Heaney HomePlace. One undoubted highlight was our very special guest, Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, distinguished granddaughter of India's

founding father, Mahatma Gandhi, who gave an emotional and uplifting speech at Seamus Heaney HomePlace, speaking of her pilgrimage to "the soil of south Derry which nourished Seamus Heaney". Regrettably, JLF Belfast 2020 has been postponed due to the pandemic.

## **New International Opportunities**

In recent years, the Arts Council has supported artists promoting their work at leading international industry events such as WOMEX, South by South West and the Folk Alliance. This year we put our weight behind Northern Ireland's creative profile at the Edinburgh Festivals and the International Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY) showcase in Philadelphia. In partnership with the British Council Northern Ireland, we supported the first showcase reception for Northern Ireland companies at the Edinburgh Festivals, at which Prime Cut Productions and Oona Doherty presented her contemporary dance piece, 'Hard to be Soft; A Belfast Prayer', and Kabosh and the Lyric Theatre/Traverse Theatre presented their productions of, respectively, 'Green and Blue' and 'Crocodile Fever'. At IPAY, five of Northern Ireland's leading theatre and dance companies which create work for children and young people – Young at Art, Prime Cut Productions, Replay Theatre Company, Maiden Voyage Dance and Cahoots NI –

participated in the first all-island Cultural Spotlight event to promote both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland's theatre and dance for young people. This showcase event and the participation was supported by a partnership of Culture Ireland, the Arts Council and British Council Northern Ireland.

## **Obituaries**

We said goodbye this year to a number of significant personages associated with the arts in Northern Ireland, including: actor, Julie Maxwell; visual artist, Micky Donnelly; poet, Ciaran Carson; artist and film-maker, Matt Curry; musician, Arty McGlynn; and music promoter, Lyndon Stephens.

November 2020



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# Telling our stories

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Neil Martin performs during Snow Water's Live at the Folk Park, as part of the 'Embrace The Place' partnership between Tourism NI and the Arts Council, animating key tourism sites across the region. Photo: Bradley Quinn

# A Year in the Arts 2019-20

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A flavour of the year's activities by the hundreds of artists, arts organisations and venues that are supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland through our Exchequer and National Lottery funds.

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# April 2019

- Arts Council awards Annual Funding of £12.8 million to 97 key arts organisations across Northern Ireland, the most significant annual allocation of public funding for the arts in NI.



- Open Arts, one of NI's most dynamic arts and disability organisations, stages 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' at The MAC, showcasing the drama, dance, choral, visual art, creative writing and traditional Javanese Gamelan melodic percussion skills of up to 65 group members.



- The second Hillsborough Festival of Literature & Ideas considers migration from a different perspective, highlighting the experiences of the real people involved, discussing the challenges of migration, emigration and asylum seekers.



- Thornhill College and Ebrington Primary School, Londonderry are named Northern Ireland's top senior and junior school choirs in the live final of BBC Northern Ireland School Choir of the Year.



- Eleven artists with disabilities from Northern Ireland receive the University of Atypical's Individual Disabled Artist (iDA) Awards, which are supported by National Lottery funding through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.



- The Lyric Theatre announces the recipients of the 2019 New Playwrights Programme, a six-month writing development programme aimed at emerging playwrights, which will bring their work to life with professional actors and directors at the Lyric in autumn 2019.





## May 2019

- Dance Resource Base, Dance for Parkinson's Partnership UK and People Dancing present a two-day workshop providing an insight into how to structure dance classes for people living with Parkinson's, as well as focusing on the artistic imperative behind a Parkinson's dance programme.



- BBC NI showcases the current recipients of the Young Musicians' Platform Awards, with Brian McAlea, Katharine Timoney, Martha Guiney, Andrew Douglas and William Curran performing a mix of jazz, folk and classical music in the company of the Ulster Orchestra.



- The Get Creative Festival, the annual celebration of have-a-go creativity, shines a light on all the innovative and inspiring cultural activity taking place across the UK.



- The annual Foyle O-Bon Festival expands from a one-day festival to a whole week of exciting Japanese cultural events and workshops, suitable for all the family.



- Samuel Kane, an exceptional violist from Co. Armagh, is announced as the new Leader of the Ulster Youth Orchestra (UYO), and as a consequence, is presented with the Arts Council's 239 year-old Milton Violin, to be played throughout his tenure as leader.



- Cathedral Quarter arts Festival celebrates its 20th birthday with over 100 events across Belfast city centre, including Rufus Wainwright, Horslips, Bernard MacLaverty and Nina Conti.





## May 2019

- Bringing colour to the streets of Belfast city centre over the Bank Holiday weekend, the annual Festival of Fools presents the best local and international street theatre and circus acts.



- The Arts Council hosts an Arts and Dementia consultation workshop to boost the capacity of artists across NI to use their skills, knowledge and networks to support people with dementia and their carers.



### Man Booker Prize-winner returns to Belfast

Northern Ireland's first Man Booker Prize-winning author, Anna Burns, whose novel *Milkman* claimed the prize in 2018, appeared at the Lyric Theatre in April at a special 'in conversation' event with 2007 Booker Prize-winner, Anne Enright. At the event, which was jointly hosted by the Arts Council and Faber Members, in association with the Lyric Theatre, the author read extracts from the novel and provided an insight into her life growing up in Belfast, her creative inspirations, and her much talked about novel. *Milkman*, which draws on Anna Burns' experience of Northern Ireland during the Troubles, is her third full-length novel, winning the author her first major award.



*Dr Damian Smyth, Arts Council; Anne Enright; Anna Burns; Jimmy Fay, Lyric Theatre*





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## Empowering people through the arts

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Replay Theatre Company, 'TRIBE', for young autistic and/or neurodivergent audiences. Featured as part of Northern Ireland at IPAY. Photo: Neil Harrison



## June 2019

- With over 80 events, the 9th Belfast Book Festival welcomes a host of celebrated international writers, personalities and opinion-formers, including cookery writer turned romantic novelist Prue Leith, influential feminist Naomi Wolf and 'The Commitments' novelist Roddy Doyle.



- Northern Ireland's premier month-long visual arts festival, the Belfast Photo Festival, takes over art galleries and outdoors spaces throughout Belfast with experiential and engaging exhibitions exploring the role of photography in the era of post-truth, alternative facts and fake news.



- More than 300 students from five Northern Ireland primary schools meet the world-renowned children's illustrator and writer Sarah McIntyre and learn the value of reading in interactive book sessions arranged by the UK's largest reading charity, BookTrust.



- Now in its ninth year, the Grand Opera House Summer Youth Production gives young aspiring singers, actors and dancers the opportunity to perform on the iconic Grand Opera House stage, with two large-scale productions – Bugsy Malone, starring 150 local 10-18 year olds, and Miss Saigon School Edition, with a cast of 80 talented young people aged 16-18.



### The 'Greatest Literary Show on Earth' comes to NI

A wealth of distinguished world speakers, artists and cultural thinkers descended on Belfast in June as part of an international celebration of literature, creativity and music. Hosted in partnership with the Arts Council, British Council Northern Ireland and Teamwork Arts, 'JLF Belfast' brought a true spirit of the original Jaipur Literature Festival, hailed as one of the greatest literary shows on earth, to the Lyric Theatre and Seamus Heaney HomePlace. Over the course of the weekend event, audiences heard from some of the most inspiring, trailblazing authors and cultural commentators of our time from the UK, Ireland, India and beyond, discussing themes of Borders, Food, Gender, Peace and Non-violence, Women and Freedom, Mythology and Artificial Intelligence. Contributors included Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, distinguished granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi; celebrity chef Asma Khan; author and mathematician Marcus Du Sautoy; writer and historian William Dalrymple; writers Patrick Gale, Brian Keenan and poet Ruth Padel; and local writing talent including David Park, Shannon Yee, Glenn Patterson, Jan Carson, Garrett Carr, Paul McVeigh, Malachi O'Doherty and Lucy Caldwell.



# July 2019

- Belfast Tradfest brings together the Irish and the Ulster-Scots musical traditions in a shared celebration of culture and heritage.



- Arts Council awards almost £1.2 million National Lottery funding to 47 arts organisations to support the development and creation of events, exhibitions, performances and workshops across all areas of the arts, including community arts, literature, visual arts, music and theatre.



- The annual John Hewitt International Summer School offers a week of readings, talks, lectures, discussions, creative writing, drama & music, including a collaborative exhibition and limited-edition book, 'Blood Horses' by poet Moyra Donaldson and artist Paddy Lennon.



- The Ulster Youth Choir celebrates its 20th anniversary with a spectacular performance by 240 singers at Belfast's Ulster Hall and a tour to the Provençal Festival in France.



## Bringing art to schools

World-renowned sculptor, Brendan Jamison, launched the Art Lending Scheme for Schools, a new visual arts initiative of the Arts Council, with support from the Department for Communities. The scheme offers schools across Northern Ireland the opportunity to exhibit works from the Arts Council's Contemporary Art Collection and aims to increase opportunities for young people to be inspired by and engage with high-quality visual arts. In addition to free access to the collection, the Arts Council offers schools advice on curatorship and facilitates talks by represented artists. The scheme was officially launched in April at Belfast Model School for Girls in north Belfast, one of the first schools to avail of the new scheme.





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# Expanding young people's horizons

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Sixty-two choirs battled it out in the BBC NI School Choir of the Year, produced in association with the Ulster Youth Choir and supported by the Arts Council



## August 2019

- CRAFT NI's August Craft Month 2019, Northern Ireland's Annual Celebration of all things Craft, shines a spotlight on craft and the art of making things by encouraging as many people as possible to make, see, learn about and buy work by local artists, designers and makers.



- Sir Michael Parkinson and BBC Radio 6 Music's poet-in-residence Murray Lachlan Young are among the multitude of artists and performers joining The Specials, Villagers and The Staves at this year's month-long Open House Festival Bangor.



- The annual EastSide Arts Festival transforms places and spaces across east Belfast into hubs of creativity and diversity with inspiring activities which are open for everyone to enjoy.



- Northern Ireland's largest celebration of cultural diversity, Arts Ekta's Belfast Mela returns to Botanic Gardens on for its biggest festival ever, with music, dance, food and culture from around the world.



### NI performers shine at Edinburgh International & Fringe Festivals

The Arts Council and British Council in partnership with TheatreNI placed a spotlight on theatre and dance from Northern Ireland at a special reception event at this year's Edinburgh International Festival. Three companies received additional support: PrimeCut Productions and Oona Doherty performed 'Hard To Be Soft, A Belfast Prayer' at the International Festival; and at the Fringe Festival, Kabosh staged 'Green and Blue', written by local writer Laurence McKeown; and The Lyric Theatre in partnership with the Traverse Theatre Edinburgh staged 'Crocodile Fever', a black comedy written by Meghan Tyler, a former participant on the Lyric's New Playwrights Programme.



Actor James Doran; playwright Meghan Tyler; actor Vincent Higgins; dancer Sam Finnegan

## August 2019

- Award-winning writer Kelly McCaughrain becomes the new Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland at the Seamus Heaney Centre, Queen's University Belfast, where she will be based for two years, working with students and engaged in outreach activities.



- In Your Space Circus's annual Carnival of Colours returns for two jam-packed days of local and international circus, street theatre, arts and music, with family events during the day and an eclectic programme of music, comedy and cabaret at night.



### Celebrating Individual Artists

Each year the Arts Council recognises the special contribution of significant artists to the development of the arts in Northern Ireland, with Major Individual Artist Awards of £15,000 each. The awards enable the artists to produce ambitious and substantial work that will contribute to the development of their careers. This year the awards went to writer Susan McKay, to write a new book about borders; poet Moyra Donaldson to research and develop a new poetry collection based on 'mothers and daughters'; composer Deirdre Gribbin to complete two strands of work, 'Dark Matter Hunting' and 'Kindersang: Outsider Child'; and musician/composer Neil Martin to compose a new violin concerto for violinist Maebh Martin.





## September 2019

### 25 years of National Lottery support for the Arts

The Arts Council presented an evening of music and song at September's Culture Night Belfast to mark 25 years of National Lottery funding for the Arts in Northern Ireland. Following the Ulster Orchestra, two of our most impressive artists, pianist Ruth McGinley and jazz vocalist Katharine Timoney performed, both of whose careers have benefitted from Lottery funding support. Since The National Lottery's first draw took place on 19 November 1994 more than £40 billion has been raised across the UK for good causes in the areas of arts, sport, heritage and community. In Northern Ireland the investment has been transformative, with the Arts Council being able to invest almost £180 million directly into the arts.



- Marking the 145th anniversary of the premiere of Die Fledermaus, NI Opera presents the famously farcical opera at the Grand Opera House, with singers from across the world, a chorus of over 40 singers from Northern Ireland and the Ulster Orchestra.



- Open Arts celebrates the 10th anniversary of its dance group Luminous Soul by hosting the inclusive dance festival MeetShareDance in Belfast.





# September 2019

- Belfast's biggest annual cultural celebration expands its programme to become Culture Night / Culture Day, a two-day extravaganza of hundreds of free, family-friendly events across the city centre and beyond, celebrating and elevating local artists and their vital contribution in the city.



- Glass artist Andrea Spencer, a recent recipient of the Arts Council's Artists' Career Enhancement Scheme, uses her award to learn new skills and create a new body of work in partnership with Queen's University Centre for Medical Education.



- The Chinese Consulate in Belfast celebrates China's links with Northern Ireland through the China Cultural Programme, featuring performances by renowned Chinese artists, including internationally-acclaimed Pipa (Chinese Lute) virtuoso Ms. Zhang Hongyan with her first performance anywhere in the UK.



- Replay Theatre Company, a world leader in inclusive children's theatre, tours TRIBE, a bespoke new play created specifically for young autistic and/or neurodivergent audiences aged 8-18, to special schools across Northern Ireland.



## Artist Career Enhancement Scheme (ACES)

Each year the Arts Council invests in Northern Ireland's most talented emerging professional artists with ACES awards comprising £5,000 bursaries and a range of specific professional development opportunities, including partnering with organisations and mentorship from leading artists, at home and abroad. This year 14 up-and-coming artists (five writers, five musicians, two visual artists and two drama and dance practitioners) benefitted from ACES awards. The awards are an element of the Arts Council's wider Support for the Individual Artist Programme (SIAP), which in 2019-20 awarded £576,000 to 209 artists.



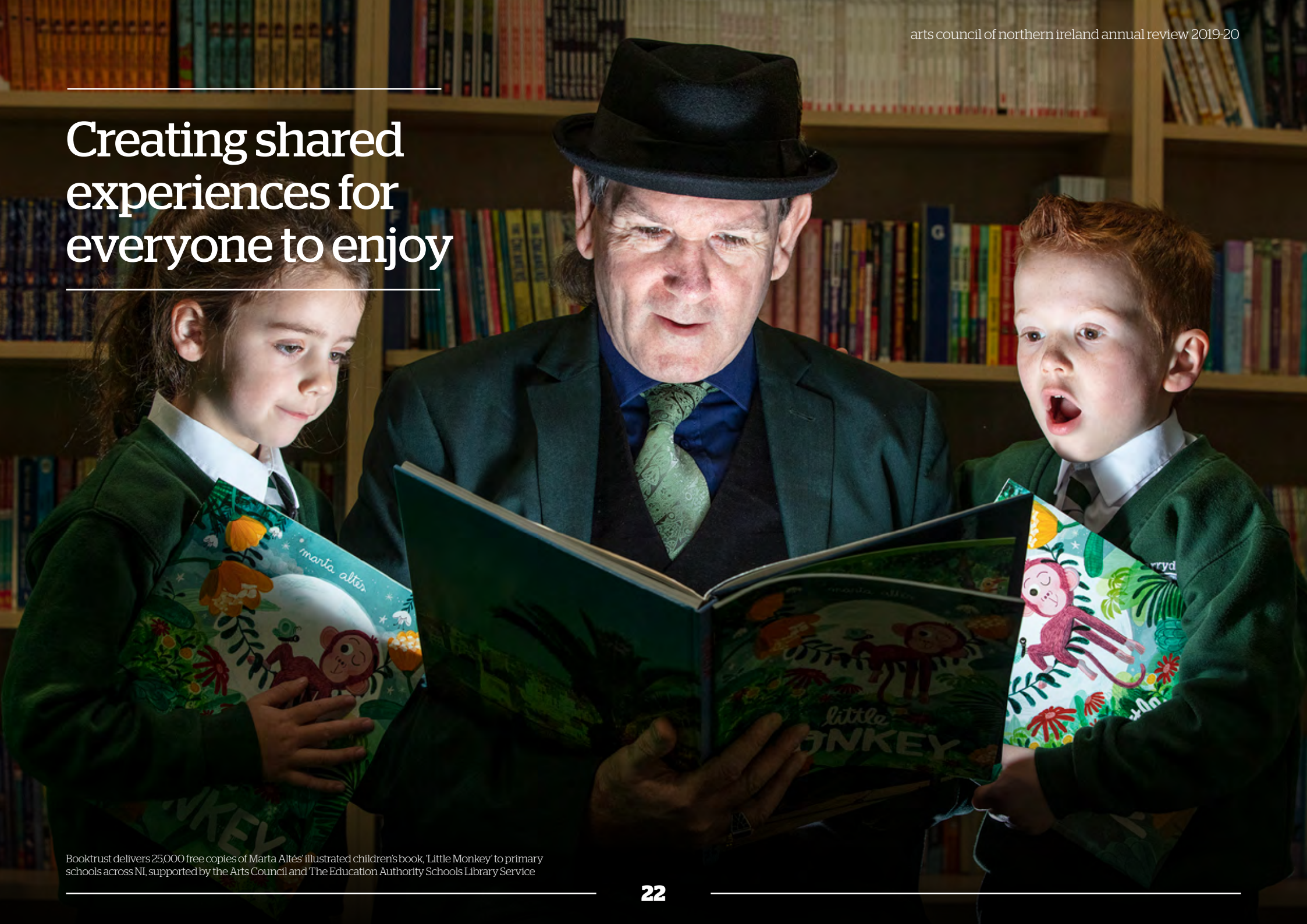
ACES writer Scott McKendry; Dr Damian Smyth, Arts Council; ACES writer Dawn Watson



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# Creating shared experiences for everyone to enjoy

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Booktrust delivers 25,000 free copies of Marta Altés' illustrated children's book, 'Little Monkey' to primary schools across NI, supported by the Arts Council and The Education Authority Schools Library Service



## October 2019

- The 57th Belfast International Arts Festival features over 200 events from the world of music, dance, film, visual arts, literature and theatre, including pioneering French choreographic work from (La) Horde and Chloé Moglia.



- Belfast Music Society, promoter of live classical chamber music, launches 'Chamber Cherubs', a new series of live classical music concerts for pre-school children, aged 1-3 years, in partnership with The Crescent Arts Centre.



- The Duncairn Centre for Culture & Arts welcomes 100 GCSE Art & Design students from schools in north Belfast to view an art exhibition featuring works from the Arts Council Collection, as part of the centre's Creative Industries Week.



- The City of Derry International Choir Festival returns with a full programme of events, including 100 choirs participating in school, national and international competitions, guest artist concerts, a symposium, singing and conducting workshops and community performances in venues across the city.



### Creativity in the classroom

The Arts Council, Education Authority and the Urban Villages Initiative confirmed funding for a new three-year programme to inject more creativity into the classroom, in a bid to reduce educational inequalities for students from disadvantaged areas. This follows a successful pilot scheme rolled out last year in 10 post-primary schools serving communities supported by the Urban Villages Initiative – a good relations headline action of government's Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy. The Creative Schools Partnership programme is based on research indicating that access to quality arts experiences in school can benefit all aspects of learning, including better engagement and attendance levels, improved results in other school subjects, increased confidence and self-motivation, as well as promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. An independent evaluation of the pilot year of the programme concluded that the impact on the schools has been exceptional and has set in motion an organisation-wide and leadership-driven move towards embedding creative learning.



## October 2019

- Artworks created by young people, including some living with mental health and social issues, go on display in Flowerfield Arts Centre in Portstewart, as part of the Young People and Wellbeing Programme, managed by Fresh Minds Education and led by local artist Sydella Gallick.



- A new album, Voices of Belfast, featuring older people from east and west Belfast is released on streaming platforms as part of a project led by musicians' development charity Live Music Now.



- Every primary one child across Northern Ireland receives a free 'Time to Read' pack as BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, commences the latest in its Arts Council school author tour series, this time with Marta Altés, author and illustrator of 'Little Monkey'.



- A group of young people from All Saints Youth Club in Ballymena raise awareness of mental health issues among their peers in their short film, 'Ask, Don't Assume', as part of the Arts Council's ARTiculate programme.



- The FE McWilliam Gallery & Studio in Banbridge opens 'Linen Lab', a new exhibition exploring the story of linen and its connection to the local area, resulting from a year-long collaboration between eight artists and 400 young people from 13 local schools, as part of the Arts Council's Local Government Challenge Fund, taken up by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.



- Belfast hosts its first all-island dance conference, 'Co-Motion', an initiative of Dance Ireland and Dance Resource Base in association with Belfast International Arts Festival.





## November 2019



- Echo Echo Festival of Dance and Movement returns with a major series of performances and events in venues around Derry and beyond, featuring world-class circus theatre from England, contemporary dance from around Ireland, cutting edge physical theatre from Hungary and Austria, and acclaimed step dance from Ireland and the USA.

- International leaders in Queer Arts, the annual Outburst festival, returns for its 13th edition with more cutting-edge local and international work, major new commissions, acclaimed artists from around the world, a celebration of Queer Arts in venues and surprise pop-up spaces across the city.



- Oh Yeah Music Centre's 10-day Sound of Belfast celebration of local music features 45 events, with over 70 performances, including showcases, live gigs, industry talks, panels, workshops, and the NI Music Prize including the Oh Yeah Legend Award.



- A special exhibition of works selected from the Arts Council's contemporary art collection opens at CRAFT NI's new premises on Royal Avenue, Belfast, as part of the Arts Council's new Art Lending Scheme, a free scheme which is open to curators, galleries and organisations interested in putting works from the Collection on public display.







# Nurturing home-grown talent

Five exceptionally talented young musicians from NI take the opportunity to perform with the Ulster Orchestra as part of the Arts Council/BBC NI Young Musicians' Platform Awards



## December 2019

- Writer Susan McKay, poet Moyra Donaldson, composer Deirdre Gribbin and musician/composer Neil Martin are each presented with Major Individual Artist Awards, worth £15,000 each, from Arts Council National Lottery fund, in acknowledgement of their contribution to the arts in Northern Ireland.



- The Arts Council announces a new Creative Industries Seed Fund, worth £240,000, funded by the Department for Communities and Future Screens NI, and supported by Digital Catapult, with the aim of assisting entrepreneurs, creative businesses and arts organisations to undertake projects that contribute to the growth of the creative industries and unlock future income generation.



- The Arts Council and partners PHA and The Baring Foundation provide £199,714 for 28 organisations across the region to deliver community-based arts projects benefitting older people, as part of the Arts and Older People's Programme, a pioneering initiative which aims to tackle loneliness as well as promote positive mental health and well-being among older people through engagement with the arts.



- The McCracken Summer School celebrates 20 years of bringing Irish language and culture to an international audience in north Belfast.



### Tribute evening for Ciaran Carson, Belfast Poet

A special event paying tribute to the life and work of the late Belfast poet Ciaran Carson, who died in October, took place at the Lyric Theatre in December. Hosted by the Arts Council, the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University Belfast and the Irish Secretariat in Belfast, the event was presented by Glenn Patterson, writer and Director of the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's, and featured readings and reflections from a host of artists, including the current Ireland Professor of Poetry, Frank Ormsby, Sinéad Morrissey and Michael Longley, as well as music from harpist Úna Monaghan, traditional Irish singer Len Graham, and a personal reflection by the poet's brother, Liam Carson.



## January 2020

- Marking its 125th anniversary, a £12.2m restoration project begins on the Grand Opera House, restoring the auditorium, repairing 1980 glass extension to the Great Victoria Street façade, and installing an exhibition telling the Grand Opera House's colourful history.



- The 12th annual Origin 1st Irish Theatre Festival in New York welcomes six playwrights and two directors from Northern Ireland to showcase newly commissioned work on an international stage.



- Darren Ferguson, Chief Executive of Beyond Skin, an organisation which uses the arts as a tool for peacebuilding, is the recipient of this year's Anne O'Donoghue Award, a career development opportunity awarded annually by the Arts Council.



- The Allianz Arts & Business Northern Ireland Awards celebrate the best examples of arts and business creative partnerships and the outstanding achievements of these collaborations throughout Northern Ireland.



### Philadelphia Here We Come!

Five of Northern Ireland's leading theatre and dance companies, creating work for children and young people, represented NI at the prestigious International Association of Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY) Showcase 2020 in Philadelphia, USA this January. For the first time at IPAY Showcase there was an all-island focus on Ireland with a 'Cultural Spotlight' presentation on theatre and dance for young audiences across the island of Ireland, supported by Culture Ireland, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and British Council. Young at Art, Prime Cut Productions, Replay Theatre Company, Maiden Voyage Dance and Cahoots NI attended the IPAY Showcase, taking advantage of an immensely valuable opportunity to highlight their productions and network with international touring agents, festival organisers, artists and other theatre professionals, with a view to touring their work outside of Northern Ireland.





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## January 2020

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- c21 Theatre Company with their new black comedy, 'May the Road Rise Up' is the latest local arts organisation to travel to Brussels to promote Northern Ireland's arts and culture in front of an international audience of officials from the EU institutions and the diplomatic community.



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Promoting health and wellbeing through the arts

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- With the Brexit deadline of 31st January, Northern Ireland's leading commissioning dance company, Maiden Voyage Dance, reflects the ongoing climate of insecurity around the issue in their new show, 'Brink', performed on a 1.5 metre high table.



## February 2020



◀ • Following their performances at this year's Panarts Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival, three of Northern Ireland's finest emerging singer-songwriters, Emma Horan, Donal Scullion and Reuben Agnew take up the opportunity to perform in Nashville, Tennessee, supported by Panarts and the Arts Council.

• 107 musical groups, bands and musicians across Northern Ireland, including schools groups, community choirs, marching and brass bands, and individual professional musicians, receive £580,000 from the Arts Council to upgrade worn out instruments and purchase new ones.



• Belfast's only jazz festival, Brilliant Corners! is back with 10 days of the very best local, national and international talent filling the city with music.



• The Gradam Ceoil TG4 returns to Belfast for the third year running to celebrate the cream of Irish Traditional Music, with the gala awards ceremony and a fringe programme of music, workshops and events.





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# Enriching our lives

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Glass artist Andrea Spencer, an Arts Council 'ACES' recipient, partnered with Queen's University's Anatomy Department to create new work.



## March 2020

- The Arts Council affirms its commitment to ensuring fair access to the arts for all with the publication of its Disability Action Plan and its Equality Action Plan, setting out measures the Arts Council will take to encourage increased access and participation in the arts, as well as enhance the role the arts play in creating a fairer and more inclusive society.



- The Arts Council publishes its 2018-19 Annual Funding Survey, showing that annually funded clients generated £52.9m in income and delivered 68,966 events; however, small-scale organisations in particular continued to struggle with average AfP grants falling by 36% in the last four years.



- David Boyd, founder and Director of Beat Carnival, one of Northern Ireland's leading arts organisations, receives an MBE for services to the arts and community.



- As part of this year's Belfast Children's Festival, Young at Art runs a TYANI 2020 Showcase of performance work for young audiences from Northern Ireland's finest indigenous performance companies and artists, including a strand of new and developing work.



### Embrace the Place

The Arts Council and Tourism NI joined forces on a new initiative designed to animate four key tourism sites across the region by using the arts to tell the stories of a particular area, offering visitors something new and inspiring to enjoy. With an investment by Tourism NI of £150,000, the 'Embrace the Place' programme commissioned Dumbworld, Kabosh, The Armagh Pipers and Snow Water to present an original art work to reflect the heritage of, respectively, Belfast's Maritime Mile, Seamus Heaney HomePlace in Bellaghy, Navan Fort in Armagh and The Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh. Dumbworld created 'All The Things We Are', a striking audio-visual art installation using shipping containers at the Titanic Quarter; Kabosh took visitors to the HomePlace on a theatrical walking tour in 'A Bellaghy Tale'; The Armagh Rhymers and Armagh Pipers created 'Macha', a spectacular multi-media performance celebrating the myths of the ancient seat of the rulers of Ulster; and next year Snow Water will be taking visitors on a musical journey charting the stories of the people who departed Ulster over the course of 300 years.





# March 2020

- The Walled City Music Festival 2020 celebrates its 11th festival with chamber recitals, concertos, new commissions and educational workshops taking place in familiar locations across Derry city.



- Sixteen artists with disabilities from Northern Ireland receive University of Atypical Individual Disabled Artist (iDA) Awards, enabling the artists to produce new work as well as receive training and mentoring.



## COVID-19 puts an abrupt halt to all live, in-person arts

On Friday 20th March, the UK Government instructed cafes, bars, restaurants, nightclubs, theatres, venues, cinemas, gyms and leisure centres to close.

The UK Government introduces furloughing and emergency benefits. The Department for Communities NI announces a £1.5 million Emergency Support Package for the arts and creative sector, co-designed and managed by the Arts Council. All funding programmes prioritise flexibility and liquidity. In the months ahead, the Arts Council and Thrive survey the sector to identify where funding is most urgently needed, and further emergency support programmes and measures are introduced.

Artists and arts organisations respond with astonishing ingenuity and aptitude to lockdown and social distancing, developing innovative ways to engage online with audiences, old and new. Their work – from online circus skills lessons and virtual exhibitions to live streaming of performances by musicians from their living rooms and screenings of recorded theatre productions - entertains people, lifts everyone's spirits, and provides a much-needed tonic to the restrictions and privations to be endured in the months that lie ahead.







# Promoting our distinctive cultures

The warmest of welcomes to the JLF Festival at the Lyric Theatre in Belfast. Photo: Brian Morrison



# The Board of the Arts Council

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**The Board of the Arts Council provides leadership for the executive body, in particular in defining and developing its strategic direction. It monitors performance in order to ensure that the Arts Council fully meets its aims, objectives and performance targets, and acts in a way that promotes the highest standards of public finance.**

The Council is made up of the Chairperson plus members, providing a broad cross-section of expertise and including representatives from the arts and culture sector.

Biographies of board members are available at [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

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**All arts organisations funded by the Arts Council are fully engaged in Outreach programmes**

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**Mr John Edmund**  
Chairperson



**Dr Katy Radford MBE**  
Vice Chair



**David Alderdice**  
(to 30 Nov 2019)



**Anna Carragher**  
(to 30 Nov 2019)



**Roisin Erskine**  
(to 24 June 2019)



**Dr Siún Hanrahan**



**Noelle McAlinden**  
(to 30 Nov 2019)



**Dr Leon Litvack**  
(to 30 Nov 2019)



**Katherine McCloskey**  
(to 30 Nov 2019)



**Paul Mullan**  
(to 30 Nov 2019)



**Cian Smyth**

## Board Members of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland 2019-20

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At 30th November 2019, the terms of all Board members expired, with the exception of the Chairman. Three Board members received temporary extensions of appointment to 30th June 2020: Dr Katy Radford, Dr Siún Hanrahan and Mr Cian Smyth.



# The Executive of the Arts Council

## Chief Executive



Roisín McDonough

The Chief Executive sets the direction and oversees the operations of the Arts Council. She is responsible for the development and implementation of the strategic plans and policies established by the Board.

## Arts Development



Noírn McKinney,  
Director of Arts  
Development



Paul Harron,  
Director of Operations

Arts Development is the largest department in the Arts Council. It provides funding support to artists and arts organisations through its Exchequer and National Lottery funds. Funding is available through dedicated funding programmes which are linked to the Arts Council's policies and strategies for the development of the arts in Northern Ireland. The Arts Council's art form officers provide specialist expertise and advice.

This department is also responsible for corporate communications, including press and media relations.

## Finance and Corporate Services



Geoffrey Troughton,  
Director of Finance &  
Corporate Services

Corporate Services provides the core administration for the Arts Council. Its main areas of responsibility are finance, personnel and training, IT support, Reception, Registry and general office services.

## Strategic Development



Nick Livingston,  
Director of Strategic  
Development  
(retired 2019/20)

Strategic Development is responsible for developing the Arts Council's strategic, corporate and business plans. It is in charge of research, policy and advocacy; for ensuring the Arts Council's compliance with statutory requirements such as Equality and Freedom of Information; and for inter-agency co-operation with other government departments and local authorities.

Full staff list is available on [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

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Making  
everyone's lives  
more colourful,  
inspiring and  
meaningful

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Pianist Ruth McGinley featured in the Arts Council's evening of music and song in Belfast Cathedral as part of Culture Night Belfast, marking 25 years of National Lottery.



# Financial Summary 2019-20

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The Arts Council provides the main support for artists and arts organisations working in Northern Ireland, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through our Exchequer and National Lottery funds. Our funding programmes reflect the aims and objectives of our five-year strategic plan, Ambitions for the Arts, as well as our series of art form funding policies.

The complete sets of audited accounts for our Exchequer and National Lottery funds are made available on the Arts Council's website, [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

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**The Arts Council invested £19m to support the full range of creative activities across Northern Ireland in 2019-20\***

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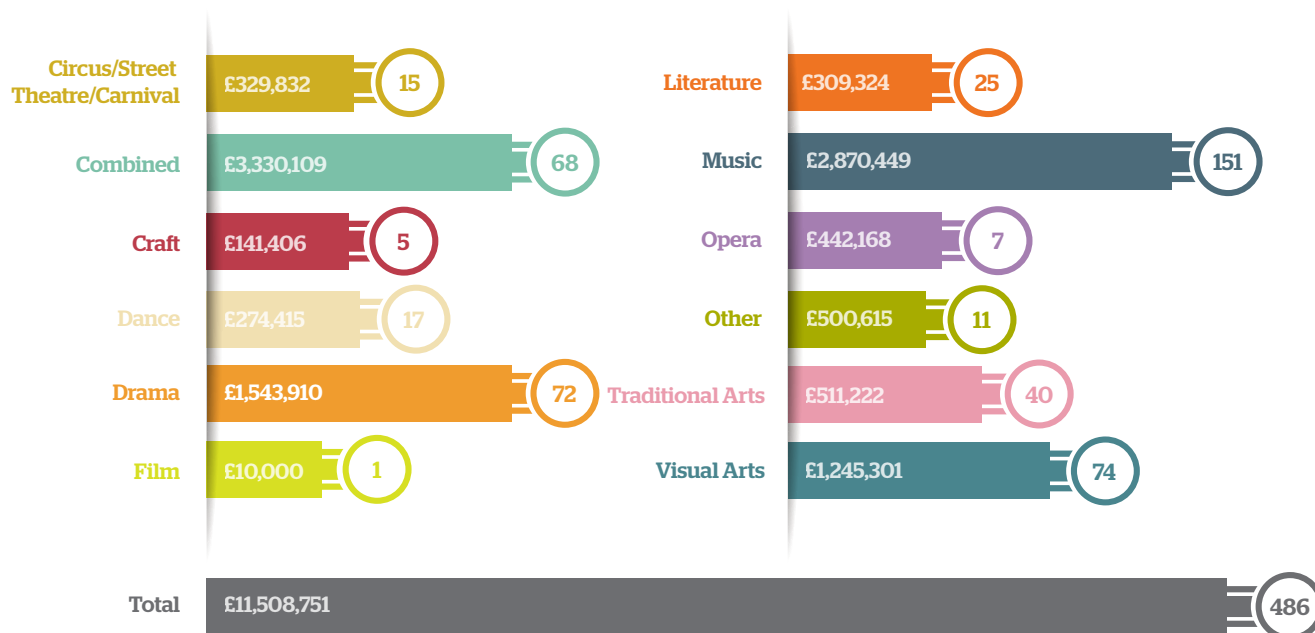
\*Based on the Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts for 2018-19

# Arts Council Exchequer funding 2019-20<sup>†</sup>

The Arts Council awarded funding of £11.5 million through its Exchequer fund. These funds were awarded through a set of programmes developed to support the full range of activities of artists and arts organisations across Northern Ireland, including:

- Annual Funding Programme
- Commissioning Programme
- Creative Industries Programme
- Equipment
- Musical Instruments
- NI Tourism Heritage Programme
- Rural Needs Small Grants
- Support for Individual Artists

## Exchequer Awards



Local Authority Area	Number of Awards	Value of Awards
Antrim and Newtownabbey	9	£39,912
Ards and North Down	20	£211,961
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	29	£261,358
Belfast	260	£8,583,275
Causeway Coast and Glens	17	£195,194
Derry and Strabane	59	£1,283,671
Fermanagh and Omagh	17	£124,362
Lisburn and Castlereagh	10	£56,401
Mid and East Antrim	4	£20,952
Mid Ulster	14	£99,278
Newry, Mourne and Down	32	£317,574
Other	15	£314,813
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>£11,508,751</b>

<sup>†</sup>The figures on pages 40 & 41 represent grants awarded directly to artists and arts organisations. The complete investment picture is available in the Exchequer and National Lottery Accounts, published to the website [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

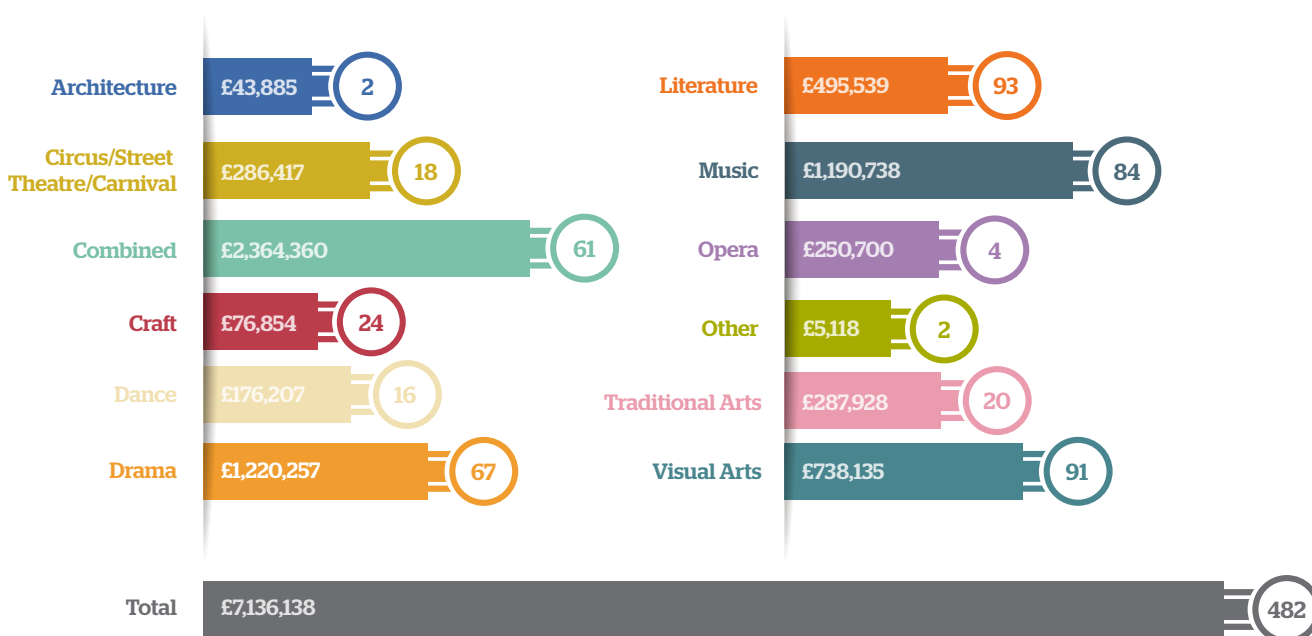


# Arts Council Lottery funding 2019-20<sup>†</sup>

The Arts Council awarded funding of £7.13 million through its National Lottery fund. Lottery funds supported arts projects throughout Northern Ireland. Funding programmes included:

- AFP Programming
- Arts & Older People
- Creative Schools Programme
- Lottery Project Funding
- Resilience Programme
- Small Grants Programme
- Support for Individual Artists

## Lottery Awards



Local Authority Area	Number of Awards	Value of Awards
Antrim and Newtownabbey	12	£51,220
Ards and North Down	27	£141,667
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	27	£237,419
Belfast	252	£4,983,339
Causeway Coast and Glens	18	£108,935
Derry and Strabane	60	£894,689
Fermanagh and Omagh	14	£96,841
Lisburn and Castlereagh	16	£87,214
Mid and East Antrim	3	£8,332
Mid Ulster	7	£94,525
Newry, Mourne and Down	23	£190,164
Other	23	£241,793
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>£7,136,138</b>

### Note on funding patterns:

Funding patterns in Belfast and Derry/Strabane reflect the high concentrations of artists and arts organisations living and working in these areas, as well as the location of several major 'umbrella' arts organisations whose services extend to Northern Ireland as a whole.

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# Building new audiences for the arts

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The Duncairn Centre for Culture & Arts welcomed 100 GCSE Art & Design students from schools in north Belfast to view an exhibition of works from the Arts Council Collection, as part of the centre's Creative Industries Week.



# Frequently Asked Questions

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## How do I apply for funding?

The Arts Council offers a range of grant programmes that you can apply to for funding. Some programmes are specifically for organisations and others are for individual artists. For full information on all the programmes that we offer, the criteria for each programme, application deadlines and how to apply, visit the Funding pages of our website, [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

## When can I apply?

Most grant programmes take place in funding rounds with specific dates when we will accept applications. Some programmes are open all year round. For information on funding deadlines, visit the Funding pages of our website.

## How long will it take to reach a decision?

This may vary with each programme, although we would generally aim to make a decision on applications from individuals and organisations within three months.

## Where can I get help with my application?

The guidance notes for each programme provide information on the assessment criteria, eligibility and application process. Our Arts Development Officers can also offer advice and assistance before you submit an application. Contact details are available in the **About Us** section of our website, or you can contact the switchboard and you will be directed to the most appropriate person.

## How do I complain to the Arts Council?

The Arts Council has a **Service Charter** which outlines the standard of service our clients should expect from us. We operate a **Service Complaints Procedure** to handle general complaints about our service. In addition, we operate a **Funding Review Procedure** for those who want to appeal a decision about a grant application. These documents are available on the website.

## Useful Contacts at the Arts Council:

### Arts Development Officers:

- Damian Smyth, Drama and Literature
- Suzanne Lyle, Visual Arts
- Ciaran Scullion, Music & Opera
- Gilly Campbell, Participatory Arts
- Grainne McCann, Communications
- Lizzie Devlin, Community Arts
- Patricia Lavery, Visual Arts
- Joanna Johnston, Visual Arts
- Gavin O'Connor, Youth Arts
- Maria McAlister, Music, Traditional Arts
- Joanne Wright, Music, Traditional Arts
- Caoileann Curry-Thompson, Drama & Dance
- Lorraine Calderwood, Arts & Older People/ Young People & Wellbeing
- Sonya Whitefield, Development
- Angela Warren, Press Officer

### Arts Council

E: [info@artscouncil-ni.org](mailto:info@artscouncil-ni.org)

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# Bringing people and communities closer together

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Streetwise Community Circus Stilt walkers entertaining the crowds at Culture Day Belfast 2020.  
Photo: Brian Morrison





For further information please contact:

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

**E: [info@artscouncil-ni.org](mailto:info@artscouncil-ni.org)**

**W: [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)**

 **@ArtsCouncilNI**

 **ArtsCouncilNI**

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For further information,  
Email: [mhendry@artscouncil-ni.org](mailto:mhendry@artscouncil-ni.org)



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