



COMMITMENT TO ARTISTS

Inspired and informed by The Arts Council of Ireland's Paying The Artist Policy
[https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Main_Site/Content/About_Us/Paying%20the%20Artist%20\(Single%20Page%20-%20EN\).pdf](https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Main_Site/Content/About_Us/Paying%20the%20Artist%20(Single%20Page%20-%20EN).pdf)

All performers and creatives are budgeted to be paid well above the minimum recommended by their relevant unions and professional bodies. That this happens has been a key tenet of my practice for several years and one that can be evidenced by previous Arts Council of Ireland funded projects. We have a structure of repeat fees and additional re-work fees built into our approach to the artists who collaborate on this work with me.

My main co-producers, and myself are constantly reviewing artists' pay & conditions. My Line Producer collaborates closely with myself in order to ensure that we maintain this high level of care and we engage with regular and detailed consultation with artists and performers during projects to create and sustain this in line with the vision of the Arts Council of Ireland's #PayTheArtist statements.

It is a crucial tenet of any artist development project that artists are paid a stipend and expenses for their participation..

In addition to creating a situation where artists are valued for their contribution, I want to particularly recognise the extremely unusual and hard-to-find combination of skills, aptitudes and commitment that this work and these audiences require. This is even more important to me politically in a context where, even within the arts sector, work for young audiences and these audiences in particular can be seen in some way to be 'lesser' in terms of artistic excellence than mainstream theatre for adults, as opposed to the cutting-edge artform that I believe it is, requiring extraordinary skillsets to create the marriage of accessibility and excellence that I strive to always have as my hallmark. Often work for younger audiences pays its creatives and its performers less than work for adult audiences, budgets are presumed to not need to be equivalent (particularly because of the small capacity of the work). In this context my long-standing and ongoing commitment to financially recognising my performers

and creatives for their skills and commitment is an overtly political statement particularly in the context of my strategic vision to actively contribute to the growth of this sector and its profile, both in the wider arts community and in the context of non-arts organisations who work with our audiences. This level of payscale also recognises the team model in place on tour where the full company on tour executes get-ins and get-outs under the leadership of the Production Manager and will sometimes be allocated additional on-tour responsibilities, particularly should (as is sometimes the case with a more compact show) there be no Production Manager on tour. These additional roles and responsibilities will be agreed in consultation with the company members.

We believe that pastoral care is crucial and so rather than the usual practice of paying minimum subsistence and asking company members to find their own accommodation, we source away-from-home accommodation ourselves either in single hotel rooms or in self-contained airbnb properties which are only shared with other company members. In addition, we pay per diems for company members when they are away from home. We do our very best to ensure that this accommodation is of as high a quality as possible with appropriate facilities and run a system of accommodation reporting to ensure that we don't return to any problematic accommodation and to develop a growing list of accommodation which suits our artists' needs.

We are always looking for ways to improve the working conditions of our artists and to respond to their individual needs in order to create a welcoming, diverse, accessible and creative working environment and engage in informal discussion prior to and throughout rehearsals and touring to that end.

Responsiveness, connection and inclusion is at the heart of the work and this of course extends to the artists with whom we work.

Rather than being a static Strategy, this is about a dynamic and iterative process that aims to be open, to engage and to respond.

For example, at the suggestion of Julie Kelleher (one of the Network for Extraordinary Audiences venue directors), for littletinySPACE (Arts Grant Funded programme 2022), artists applying for the programme were invited to submit a CV and a letter or a video talking about why they were applying. Offering a video option, it turned out, not only opened up the process to those who might be less confident writing, but actually turned out from our end to be the better option.

Similarly, because of pandemic restrictions in 2021, when auditioning for new cast members for babyGROOVE, rather than in-person auditions, we invited potential cast members to learn a piece of music that we sent out to them and then to do a self-tape of this. This is now our standard methodology: as well as avoiding travel costs for potential cast members, it created a much more level playing field so that people could embrace their own learning styles and timescales rather than the previous situation which disadvantaged those who were less confident in the high pressure situation of an audition room.

Conversations with cast members for both of the 2023 tours have also discussions around how we will facilitate situations where cast members who are parents can have their families join them on tour on occasion.

For littletinySPACE, all participants were in receipt of a €1000 stipend for the residency (two sets of three days). All of our training or development opportunities for artists within our formal programme will recognise that, without that kind of financial support, there are artists who would not be able to attend. The two out of 8 artists who were parents indicated that the structure of the residency (two short sets of days) made participation more possible for them.

This residency was vital to me being able to reconnect with my artistic practice after a challenging lockdown as an artist-parent. It was educational, artistically inspirational, and personally and professionally reaffirming. I feel reinvigorated artistically from this experience and that I can fathom engaging with the theatre sector again.

littletinySPACE participant

For littletinySPACE 2023, it has been indicated to artists that childcare is a valid budget-line as they plan how they spend their allocated mini-R&D-project budget.

Through the 3 years of Arts Grant Funding so far, artists working on projects have included those that are, variously, parents, pregnant, neurodivergent, diverse of heritage, disabled and dyslexic – and our work has been the richer for it.

We are in the process of signing up to Safe2Create and are in active communication with them. In the meantime, we are setting up the habit of sending pre-rehearsal documents outlining our rehearsal methodology in this context.

Anna Newell
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