



IN Y B

Irish National Youth Ballet

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2027



INTRODUCTION

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Our origins date back to 1995. While we have broadened the scope of our activities since then, our founding principles and core values remain unchanged.

Informed by our commitment to youth ballet; we proudly embrace our story as we confidently look forward to growing and consolidating our work, to reflect our desire to push creative boundaries in all that we do.

We embrace and value the classical ballet tradition. We exist to strengthen its importance within the Irish cultural landscape, to celebrate its history, and work to embody how youth ballet enriches all our lives.

This strategy reaffirms the purpose of Irish National Youth Ballet - INYB, and sets out our vision, mission, values, ethos, and priorities for the next five years.

We communicate our passion through high-calibre teaching, professional development opportunities and performance seasons. We have ambition to develop our work through strategic partnerships and creative collaborations that showcase our talented young dancers.

At our heart, we work to enable all those who share our love of youth ballet and our passion for dance, from the advocate to the dance student, including pre-professional dancers and professional dancers to enthusiasts, to achieve their creative potential.

Over the lifetime of this strategy, we aim to develop our reach and impact by adopting a multi-faceted curated approach to our work.

We will continue to work closely with our young dancers to help them excel and realise their creative potential, by generously sharing with them the best learning experiences, performing opportunities, and creative collaborations possible, while actively engaging with new and established audiences.

With the implementation of Irish National Youth Ballet Strategy: 2023-2027, we strengthen our voice to tell our story with pride and purpose, as we champion youth ballet practice, and continue to make our contribution to the dance sector.

By bringing our values to life, we will ensure that INYB is a vibrant, dynamic, and highly regarded youth ballet company.

Catherine O' Donovan, Chairperson

Lindsay Ashe-Browne, Artistic Director



STRATEGIC PLAN IN CONTEXT

During our strategy development process, the world changed. As we implement our strategy, it is anticipated that further social, economic and political change will occur. Ireland's population will continue to grow and to diversify. Brexit will take further effect. The environmental crisis will continue to be urgent and important. Our digital reliance will increase. And the many on-going challenges associated with the cost of living will continue to affect us all.

We understand the need to situate ourselves within this evolving context. The other context within which we operate is defined by cultural policy.

Over many years we have developed a strategic partnership with the Arts Council, our major funder. In the Council's 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work (2016 -2025)*, there are strong connections between their resolve to enable more people to 'enjoy high-quality arts experiences' and our strategic priorities. This is further informed by their *Advancing Dance (2022-2025)* policy which prioritises strengthening and developing pathways to professional dance. INYB has an important role to play here, and we are committed to realising that leadership role fully for the benefit of youth ballet practice.

Other national policies which informed our thinking, included *Culture 2025 - Éire Ildánach, A Policy Framework*, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (2016); *Clár Éire Ildánach/Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022* and *Culture Ireland Strategy 2022 - 2025*. Many of our priorities align with the objectives informing the work of Creative Ireland and the Creative Schools programme, which prioritises increasing opportunities for all young people to access high-quality arts experiences.

Our goals also echo values central to Culture Ireland, including strengthening our international reach through engagement and co-operation.

Our priorities also align with the ambitions embedded in local authority arts policies, including those of Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council and Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, who are engaged in supporting creative opportunities for young people. We see this as an area of growth for us.

Over the lifetime of this strategy, we will seek to actively strengthen these working relationships and explore how best we can work with local authority arts offices nationally to develop mutually beneficial opportunities, aligned with our priorities and bringing their goals alive through our work.

We look forward to realising our strategy alert to the evolving context and aligned with local, regional, and national policy frameworks and developments in the years to come.



WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

Irish National Youth Ballet (INyb) is a performance company for young dancers. Entry to the company is by annual audition, which attracts over 140 ballet enthusiasts from all over Ireland. These young dancers are supported and encouraged by their ballet teacher to audition, and continue their classes and ballet grade examinations in parallel to working with INyb.

Dancers work with the company weekly from September to December (winter season) and January to May (spring season), and during mid-term and Easter holiday breaks.

INyb, working with dancers aged 10 to 20 years (for Associate Boys Programme 8-years plus), provides an opportunity to perform and to experience 'company life'. INyb exists to enhance and complement the on-going training (ballet grades examination syllabus) company members undertake with their teachers, by providing a bespoke performance company experience which showcases the young dancers talents.

Former company members have gone on to pursue successful professional careers in dance and elsewhere, including within academia, healthcare, and the corporate world, as well as those including Sarah Reynolds, Gearóid Solan, Zoe Ashe-Browne, Cian Hughes, Kate Haughton and Meagan Hoare, among many others working within the classical ballet, contemporary dance and musical theatre worlds in Ireland and internationally. Regardless, of their eventual career choice, the young dancers greatly benefit from their time with INyb and come to value the friendships, fun, love of ballet and performing instilled during their time with the company.

Established as Irish Junior Ballet in 1995, by co-directors Anne Campbell-Crawford and Dr. Jean Wallis, the company quickly grew to undertaking international exchanges, and incorporating a junior strand, renaming itself Irish National Youth Ballet in 1999, to better reflect its national reach.

Under the artistic leadership of Katherine Lewis (2006 to 2019), INyb broadened its repertoire with commissioned works from Irish and international choreographers. Among many highlights from this period was the world premiere of *The Princess Iolanthe* (choreographer Stephen Brennan) with a commissioned score from composer Alla Pavlova played live by a youth orchestra. Katherine also expanded the performance schedule, introduced professional development opportunities, including international guest workshops.

Lindsay Ashe-Browne was appointed Artistic Director in August 2019 and is assisted by a skilled artistic staff, all of whom come from a performing arts background. Building on the work of previous directors, Lindsay is leading the company, with a refreshed focus on the future as INyb enters its 28th year.

With ambitions to grow its administrative team from part-time to full-time, and enrich its artistic staff, INyb embarks on an ambitious creative journey with the support of a dedicated Board of Directors, confidently led by Chairperson Catherine O'Donovan, with Hannah Coleman (Company Secretary), Aidan Byrne, Declan Smyth, Diarmaid O'Meara, Lee Christie and Sally Wilson.

Irish National Youth Ballet is strategically-funded by the Arts Council. An incorporated not-for-profit CLG, INyb is a registered charity and generates income through a Friends' Scheme, membership fees and ticket sales.

OUR VISION

To develop our capacity, resources, and diversity to become one of the leading youth ballet companies in Ireland, with an international reach.



OUR MISSION

INyb is Ireland's **flagship youth ballet company.**

We bring together talented young dancers from across the island of Ireland to work with leading national and international teachers, choreographers, and collaborators to create world-class performance opportunities, which highlight our commitment to the classical ballet tradition and new choreographic works that captivate and inspire all. We support young dancers to realise their artistic potential and gain an insight into the dance profession.

OUR VALUES



OUR VALUES

Excellence

We value excellence in all that we do. We champion the highest pedagogical standards, by working with expert and trained professional personnel in creating high-calibre experiences in the studio and on stage.

Care

At the heart of INYB are our dancers. We prioritise a holistic pastoral care approach to ensuring their physical needs and mental well-being is supported in the development of well-rounded, confident young dancers.

Connection & Community

We value working collaboratively and in partnership. We welcome the learning this brings as a means towards strengthening our relationships, our community, our work and our connections locally, nationally and internationally.

Inspiration

We inspire our dancers and engage our audiences through presenting creative interpretations of the classical ballet repertoire and a commitment to new choreography. Whether in the studio, on stage or on screen, we value and explore new ways of working that stimulates, engages, and inspires us all.

OUR ETHOS

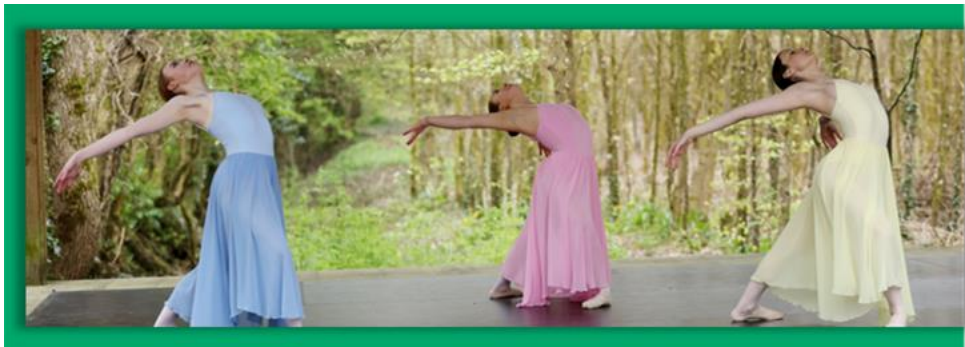
Irish National Youth Ballet is fully committed to the principles and practices of accessibility, equality, diversity, and inclusion. We are actively working towards developing our own EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) Policy which embody these values.

We work with the support and collegiality of private ballet schools, independent dance teachers, and others to encourage all those who share our love of ballet and passion for dance in a supportive, nurturing and inspiring environment.

We are also committed to advancing knowledge and best practices that support a sustainable environment, including a commitment to biodiversity.

This ethos informs everything we do under each of our strategic priorities.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



01

Maintain excellence

We value excellence in all that we do. We work to champion the highest pedagogical standards, by working with expert and trained professional personnel in creating high-calibre experiences in the studio and on stage.

02

Present original & ambitious work

INyB is a performance-based company, showcasing the breadth of classical ballet practice, ranging from full-length ballets (for example The Nutcracker, Cinderella, Snow White) to repertoire pieces and new commissioned works.

03

Increase participation & engagement

Over the lifetime of this strategy, we aim to increase the number and expand the range of youth ballet activities and opportunities available to young people.

04

Partner & collaborate

We are committed to strengthening our network of youth ballet partners in Ireland and internationally through partnerships and creative collaborations.

05

Sustainability

To ensure our future as a well-managed, well-resourced, and well-governed company. We are committed to the sustainable growth of our work, by balancing our ambitions with the responsible management of our resources

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

01

Maintain excellence

OBJECTIVES

We value excellence in all that we do. We work to champion the highest pedagogical standards, by working with expert and trained professional personnel in creating high-calibre experiences in the studio and on stage.

We draw upon traditions from different schools of ballet, retaining the best that was created by our predecessors while embracing the demands of classical dance technique as is required to perform the repertoire.

Our emphasis is placed on developing and maintaining a strong ballet technique, instilling musicality, nurturing the joy of dance, flow of movement and ensuring the artistic development of the young dancer.

TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, WE WILL

- Programme weekly classical ballet classes, workshops and masterclasses. All classes are taught by experienced and trained teachers, designed to suit the appropriate age and ability of the young dancer and the rehearsal work that follows. Classes also incorporate Progressive Ballet Technique principles.
- Pointe Work; for those who have the technical ability and required strength. Pointe work classes are targeted at senior dancers, and complement the ballet grade syllabus and examinations undertaken by seniors.
- Pas de deux; duet work and partnering techniques are taught by experienced male and female teachers.
- Workshops & Masterclasses with visiting international touring companies. We will avail of opportunities to introduce our dancers to international best practice and new trends in ballet.
- We will develop our 'Healthier Dancer' programme to support our dancers physical and mental well-being, embedding best practice and including:
 - *Strength and Conditioning sessions, which incorporate best practice principles of 'warming-up' and 'cooling-down';*
 - *Introductory Pilates, Yoga and somatic techniques sessions;*
 - *Nutrition support and advice;*
 - *Mentoring and professional development guidance.*

OUTCOMES

We are a robust and responsible company of healthy and resilient young dancers, who are technically strong, well informed, well-trained, well-supported and artistically engaged.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Present original & ambitious work

02

OBJECTIVES

INyb is a performance-based company, offering young dancers the experience of performing in a range of contexts and platforms.

Our performance programme, showcased through seasons includes works from the classical ballet canon, ranging from adapted full-length story ballets, to repertoire pieces from INyb and Irish National Ballet.

Our aim is to expand our repertoire, and performance opportunities, to include new commissioned works, dance on film and site-specific works, by presenting a vibrant, audience friendly and engaging programmes of work, that challenges and inspires our young dancers, excites audiences and highlights the best of youth ballet performance today.

TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, WE WILL

Consolidate and further resource our performance seasons:

- Annual Gala presentation of fully costumed, musically vibrant and technically strong full-length works adapted from the classical repertoire and also newly commissioned all company large-scale pieces.
- Present mixed bill programmes, showcasing pieces from INyb and Irish National Ballet repertoire, suitable for small-scale venues and touring.
- Commission new works from national and international guest choreographers that demonstrate the range, ability and artistry of our dancers.
- We will progress our performance ambitions through further collaborations, including online, short dance film and site-specific possibilities as they arise.

OUTCOMES

We will have a multi-faceted and ambitious programme of youth ballet works, made to showcase the dancers diversity and talents, ranging from full-length all company pieces to mixed bill works, including adapted extracts, featuring solo, duet and ensemble pieces, short-dance film and site-specific opportunities.

This curated approach and scalable pieces will provide us opportunities to perform in many contexts, and at the same time provide occasions for our young dancers to experience a wide variety of engagement opportunities.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

03

Increase participation & engagement

OBJECTIVES

Over the lifetime of this strategy, we aim to increase the number & expand the range of youth ballet activities & opportunities available to the youth.

INyb nurtures young, talented students between the ages of 10 & 20 in pursuit of excellence, offering a bespoke pre-vocational classical ballet training experience, framed around performing opportunities and an introduction to a dance company life. For those who wish to pursue a professional career, we provide a valuable introduction to vocational training. For others participation is about pleasure, friendship, and the love of ballet.

TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, WE WILL

- Develop and strengthen three company levels, comprising juniors, intermediates, and seniors. Each cohort actively contributes to our development, and we will create opportunities for dancers' voice to be heard.
- We will grow and develop our Associate Boys Programme (from age 8yrs upwards), with the aim of increasing access and engagement for boys and young men interested in exploring the performing arts.
- We will pilot an Associate Members Programme, offering insight, experiences, and workshop opportunities, for those dancers wishing to experience the INyb company life.
- Outreach and Open Days, on a phased basis we will undertake Introductory INyb Open Days, and outreach opportunities in partnership with local arts offices, regional dance schools, independent teachers, and youth dance ensembles, showcasing & sharing our work.
- We will avail of opportunities to network, engage and share our work, as they arise, including participation at international dance events, including Perform Festival, local and national festivals and through exchanges with other youth ballet ensembles internationally.

OUTCOMES

We will have a strong and dynamic operation model that accommodates and supports a company comprising of juniors, intermediates, and seniors. Central to this ethos is the young dancers' voice, which will be loud and central to all that we do.

We will have grown our intake of boys and young men into our company.

We will have an active and engaged cohort of Associate Members, who are part of the INyb family.

We will regularly share our work locally, nationally, and internationally through open days, outreach engagements, touring and work-in-progress studio encounters.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

04

Partner & collaborate

OBJECTIVES

We are committed to strengthening our network of youth ballet partners in Ireland and internationally through strategic partnerships and creative collaborations, that strengthen ourselves, our work and our reach.

By availing of opportunities and creating partnerships with key providers in youth arts, education, and local arts, we aim to realise our artistic potential and creative possibilities.

We aim to deepen our engagement and consolidate our position within the dance sector through sharing of skills, resources and joint ventures.

TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, WE WILL

- Partner, collaborate and engage through local, national and international opportunities that align with our programme, priorities and values, including Culture Night, Cruinniú na nÓg, Irish Youth Dance Festival and explore opportunities to network and share with other youth dance companies nationally, including a bespoke residency at LD Dance Shawbrook in 2023.
- In the coming months, we will embark on a collaboration with Queen's University Belfast and UCD on a HEA North South Youth Dance Matters Project, led by Dr Aoife McGrath.
- We will strengthen our collaboration with the RIAM by partnering on live music initiatives, and develop other collaboration possibilities with third-level institutes, including NCAD, TU Dublin and Irish World Academy of Music & Dance, UL.
- We will explore and engage with opportunities offered by local authority arts offices, Creative Ireland, and Creative Schools programme and internationally by Culture Ireland.
- We will work in partnership with Dance Ireland to consolidate our working relationship in DanceHouse, building on our rental arrangements to include residencies, workshops & masterclasses and public sharings. At the same time, we will continue to strengthen our existing partnership with Liffey Trust Studios.
- Building on our track record working with professional companies, including Ballet Ireland & Cork City Ballet, we will further consolidate these & other partnerships, through sharing of resources, skills & dancers.

OUTCOMES

We will have consolidated our position within the cultural landscape and embedded our work within the dance sector.

We will be valued for our openness, professionalism, and willingness to collaborate and partner.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Sustainability

05

OBJECTIVES

To ensure our future as a well-managed, well-resourced, and well-governed company.

We are committed to the sustainable growth of our work, by balancing our ambitions with the responsible management of our resources.

In that endeavour, we will continue to ensure our financial resilience, create an exemplary administration structure, activate governance practices, and initiate policies in ways that are right for us and make a meaningful difference.

TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, WE WILL

- Build the capacity and confidence of the administrative team, artistic staff and the organisational culture to deliver on this strategy, including piloting opportunities for our dancers to contribute to the decision-making process.
- Continue to diversify the profile and competencies of the board to ensure strong leadership.
- Increase and diversify our funding and income streams. We are open to pursuing corporate business supports, including partnership links, and working with a named sponsor. We will also work to ensure our Friends Scheme is an attractive proposition for our donors, friends and supporters.
- Invigorate our brand and increase the visibility and impact of our marketing and communications strategies. Including developing an appropriate audience marketing and engagement plan.
- Pursue the development and implementation of progressive policies and practices.

OUTCOMES

We have a highly-skilled, motivated and effective administrative team and artistic staff who are resourced, supported and happy in their work.

We are a stronger, more effective and inclusive company because of our committed and experienced board.

We have a broader funding base and have increased our financial resilience.

We are recognised and valued as the leading youth ballet company across the island of Ireland.

Ethical, sustainable governance practices are alive and at work in INYB.



OUR SUCCESS

OUR SUCCESS

MONITORING & EVALUATING



We are committed to evaluation as part of our strategy process; to review its progress, to evaluate its impact on our work and most importantly to ensure we keep the best interests of our young dancers to the forefront.

We have identified key objectives under each of our strategic priorities and will create annual plans that sets out how we will achieve these priorities. These implementation plans will identify a range of measures that we will monitor, to track delivery against our stated objectives, and to help us understand how we are actively contributing to our sustainability and the cultural life of our community.

We will use quantitative and qualitative analysis tools, supported by periodic (board and executive) self-review to inform our monitoring, and evaluate our progress.

Quantitative tracking of activity and participant engagement, which includes audience, dancer, collaborator, and stakeholder feedback is an essential core value.

Key to this approach is our commitment to ensuring we remain open and responsive, by actively encouraging dialogue among company members. Central to this approach, we prioritise our dancers' voices here and will pilot formal and informal activities to ensure we all benefit from collective learning, including sharing of thoughts and ideas.

To this we will incorporate analysis of existing data, bespoke focus groups, qualitative research and other evidence gathering to specifically track the success and impact of achieving our strategic priorities, and ensure we remain focused on delivering our strategy plan in the coming years.



OUR STRATEGIC PROCESS

Our strategy development process was made possible by a Capacity Building Support Scheme Award from the Arts Council. Working over a nine-month period, led by consultant Paul Johnson and guided by our Strategy Development Committee, our process comprised online and in-person team & board workshops, desk research and consultation meetings.

Strategy Development Committee:

Lindsay Ashe-Browne, Declan Smyth, Lee Christie, Diarmuid O'Meara and Chris Furlong.

Consultation meetings conducted with:

Dr. Lisa McLoughlin, Head of Dance, The Arts Council
Seona Ni Bhriain, Head of YPCE, The Arts Council
Sheila Creevey, CEO, Dance Ireland
Anne Maher, Artistic Director, Ballet Ireland
Dr. Grant McLay, Course Director, BA Contemporary Dance, UL
Grainne McArdle, Celbridge School of Ballet
Debbie Allen, Debbie Allen Dance School
Cynthia O'Dunlaing F.R.A.D.
Meagan Hoare
Gearóid Solan
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