



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

THE LIR ACADEMY STRATEGY 2022 – 2026



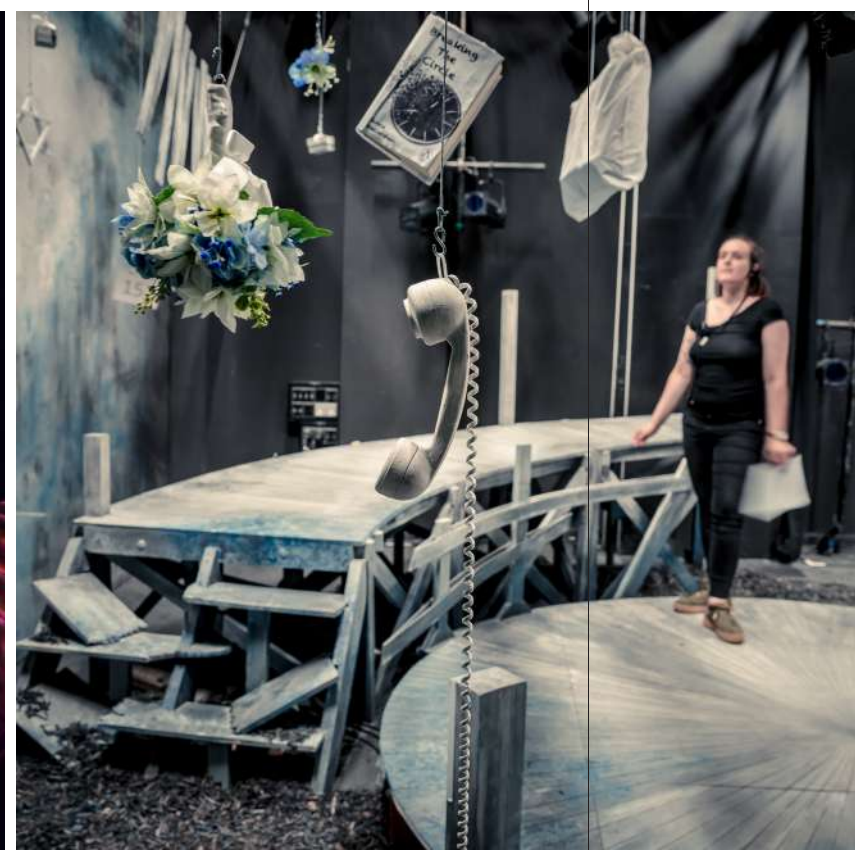
Welcome

The Lir Academy is Ireland's National Academy of Dramatic Art at Trinity College Dublin.

When The Lir Academy was founded ten years ago, we could not have envisaged all that we have achieved to date. In this short period, we have produced extraordinary and award-winning talent who are forging careers in their chosen fields. Our many successes have emboldened us to be even more ambitious as we look to the future with hope and optimism. We will achieve these goals in partnership with Trinity College Dublin and the wider theatre, film and TV community.

This strategy document sets out our plans and ambitions, to achieve more than ever before with the support of our network of friends, supporters and alumni.

We welcome you to be part of it.



Our Mission

The Lir Academy is a centre of excellence, a hub for germinating talent and a training ground for brilliance. We provide our students with the highest level of conservatoire training on the island of Ireland for careers in the theatre, TV, film and wider entertainment sectors.

Our Vision

To develop our capacity, resources, facilities and diversity to become one of the leading drama academies in the world.

We Value

Community
Equality
Creativity
Excellence

Chairperson's Introduction

Over ten years ago, I sat down with Danielle Ryan and the Cathal Ryan Trust to discuss their plans for an academy for the dramatic arts on the island of Ireland. Within a few months, we were talking with Trinity College Dublin and they helped us to quickly finalise our plans. The custom-built Lir Academy was completed and we opened our doors in September 2011. This support throughout has been steadfast and it has been a privilege to be part of The Lir Academy from the outset.

Today: 124 actors; 99 stage technicians; 127 directors, playwrights and stage designers; as well as 94 foundation students have all graduated from The Lir Academy. Their talent has been seen by audiences on stages and screens across the island of Ireland, as well as to international acclaim in films and TV series in recent times. Behind that success lies the hard work and skills of our superb staff led by Director, Loughlin Deegan, with whom I have enjoyed working closely over the last ten years.

Now, the next decade beckons. We've established the academy, it has solid foundations, and it's time for a new approach, new ideas, and new people to help us grow and develop further. We're once again in conversation with Trinity College Dublin as to how we can create a stronger cultural presence and contribute to the life of the community as part of the planned development of the Trinity

East campus. More teaching and workshop spaces, staff facilities, and a new public-facing theatre and multi-event space forms part of our thinking, coupled with academic and practical collaboration with others in the arts and sciences.

Succession planning is an essential part of this new strategy, and as I write this, I am preparing to step down as Chair of The Lir Board at the end of 2021 and look forward to supporting the new chair for the remainder of my term as a director.

We have lots to do and hope that your support, in whatever guise it takes, will help us to continue to deliver on our ambition to be a world-class arts conservatoire and continue to give talent across the island of Ireland an opportunity to grow and flourish.

Thank you.

Dermot McCrum
Chair

Director's Introduction

The Lir Academy was founded with the grand ambition of building a world-leading drama conservatoire on the island of Ireland that would allow all the remarkably talented young people coming to train with us achieve their full potential. The extraordinary success of our graduates, across all disciplines, best demonstrates how we have responded to that vision. But despite all we have achieved in our first decade, The Lir Academy has yet to realise its own full potential and this plan outlines how we intend doing just that over the next five years.

One of the greatest achievements since our founding is the community we have built together. Brilliant people – students and staff alike – with a shared vision working together in common purpose. This plan acknowledges that effort and commits The Lir Academy to investing in its people to make it an even better place to study and work in the future. We will also strive hard over the course of this plan to diversify our community even further by placing access, outreach and equality at the heart of everything we do.

At our inception, we published a book entitled *The Lir is Forever* – a phrase that has since become our jocular rallying call. But we know that forever is built slowly, incrementally, carefully. The Lir Academy still has a long road to travel and this plan outlines the building blocks – both literal and metaphorical – that we will put in place over the next five years to ensure that we have the facilities and resources we need to continue to thrive on the next stage of what has already been a remarkable journey.

Loughlin Deegan
Director

Strategy Introduction

On the occasion of our tenth anniversary, The Lir National Academy of Dramatic Art presents our strategic plan 2022–2026 to lead us into our second decade.

Since our opening in 2011, we have exceeded our founding ambition to deliver international standard conservatoire training on the island of Ireland for the first time.

We train actors, technicians, designers, directors, playwrights, stage managers and creatives to exemplary standards so they are ready to embark on a professional career from the moment they leave our campus. Empowering the best emerging creative talent will always remain at the heart of what we do. Central to this is supporting our outstanding staff and students and doing so in facilities that are world-class, in an environment that is welcoming, respectful and accessible to all.

Annually, we now deliver: a Foundation Diploma in Acting and Theatre; Honours degree programmes in Acting and Stage Management & Technical Theatre; and MFA programmes in Directing, Playwriting and Stage Design. In addition to this, we annually offer over 60 short courses and junior training programmes, alongside our community, outreach and access initiatives. Our reach, as part of the cultural and creative sector, is increasingly influential both at home and internationally.

Being part of Trinity has been a vital aspect of our journey so far. This strategy aligns itself with Trinity's own plan 'Connection and Community' for 2020–2025, This is particularly relevant to Trinity's CORE mission, reflecting our intention for organisational growth.



Our plan reflects many of the nine 'cross-cutting goals' outlined in Trinity's strategy. These goals work across the priorities and include:

- being part of the Trinity community
- fostering an ever more diverse and inclusive community
- supporting a transformative student experience
- practicing next generation teaching and learning
- shaping our organisation around the challenge of achieving a sustainable and healthy planet
- developing and inhabiting our space responsibly
- and securing the financial basis for our future development

We will continue to work closely with Trinity to ensure the successful delivery of this strategy, including being a partner in realising the ambitions for the new Trinity East campus.

This strategic document sets out our principles for the future. Over the course of this strategic plan, we intend to affirm The Lir Academy as one of the leading creative arts academies in the world.

During the lifetime of this strategy, we will achieve these objectives by focusing on three key pillars:

Our Potential, Our Place and Our People



Our Potential

As we enter our second decade, our ambitions continue to grow as we build on all that we have learned and achieved so far. Our aims over the life of this strategy include building the capacity of the academy so that we can offer an even richer training to our students. We will also focus on increasing our reach and impact so that even more people, partners and organisations can benefit from the work that we do.



Broadening our reach and impact

The Lir Academy's impact on the individuals we have trained, our partner organisations and stakeholders, and the industry we were designed to serve has far exceeded our founding expectations. This plan aims to broaden and deepen this impact further by:

- Harnessing our Lir Alumni Network to better engage and support our graduates by launching The Lir Creative Network initiative in 2022 with an ongoing programme of activities supported by a new sustainable giving scheme.
- Increasing our existing capacity in film and TV production and offering more relevant skills development for the sector. We will do this by reviewing our current undergraduate course curricula with a view to enhancing film and TV training, developing our own film production capacity, appointing a new Head of Film & AV productions, and fostering additional partnerships with professional film bodies
- Continuing to expand short courses, corporate training programmes and other areas where The Lir Academy can deliver value for individuals, organisations, and communities.
- Prioritising additional programmes for young people and children. We will do this by launching a new series of drama programmes for children aged 4–15-years-old and completing a feasibility study for new Speech and Drama Examinations curriculum.
- Delivering additional full-time courses, including a new MFA programme in Theatre Producing (to be launched in 2023) and detailed proposals for at least one other MFA programme in response to feedback from our industry partners.

Strengthening our capacity

To underpin and support our ambitions over the next five years, we will need to build our capacity across a range of areas – encompassing financial stability, visibility and sustainability by:

- Developing our relationship with Trinity College Dublin even further, particularly regarding enhanced academic governance structures. We will do this by completing our first Quality Review in spring 2022 and implementing the findings of this review by spring 2023.
- Maximising our communications to increase visibility across the island of Ireland and internationally. We will do this by developing and implementing a detailed Communications Plan in support of our strategic ambitions, which will foreground the quality of work at The Lir Academy across our activities.
- Making a number of key appointments which are essential to delivery of this strategy. These new positions will include a Director of Teaching & Learning, a Director of Outreach, Access & Equality, two new Technical HOD positions, an additional venue technician, and key appointments to our administration team to better serve staff and students.
- Prioritising the financial stability of The Lir Academy by continuing to grow earned income across all our activities. We will do this by growing Development Income by 57%, Commercial Income by 65% and earned income from other activities by 22% over the course of this plan.
- Increasing financial reserves to protect us against further financial shocks. We will do this by agreeing a formal Reserves Policy which will commit the academy to build up reserves over the course of the plan with a view to achieving an ongoing 10% of turnover over a ten-year period for our reserves fund.
- Devise an ambitious sustainability policy for The Lir Academy to reduce our carbon footprint and work towards a carbon neutral position. We will achieve this in partnership with Trinity by establishing a working group of staff and students who will review current practices and agree measurable sustainability targets to be achieved over the course of the policy.





Our Place

The Lir Academy was built through the wonderful generosity of our benefactors The Cathal Ryan Trust and we have honoured this gift by exceeding our founding aspirations.

This state-of-the-art facility, ideal for our original needs, now needs to be upgraded and expanded to achieve the ambitions outlined in this plan and to prepare for the further development of the academy in the future.

We will provide for the ambitions outlined in this plan by continuing to invest in our original facility, acquiring new spaces, upgrading our specialist equipment and increasing accessibility for all. We will prepare the ground for the future development of The Lir Academy by launching a significant Capital Investment Programme to accommodate growing ambition for decades to come. In imagining the future facilities for The Lir Academy, we will work in close partnership with Trinity College Dublin to deliver their visionary plans for the new Trinity East Campus.



Enhancing existing facilities

Ten years after our founding, evolutions in teaching and technology demand that we invest in our existing facility to maintain the educational standards we have achieved as well as delivering on the increased ambition outlined in this strategic plan.

We will continue to expand the capacity of our existing facilities by:

- Creating a renewals and replacement fund for investment in replacement equipment. By 2026, we will have achieved, and will maintain, a reinvestment and renewal fund of 0.75–1% of our annual turnover.

- Upgrading equipment, technologies and facilities throughout The Lir Academy so that students continue to work with the highest quality tools, reflective of their future workplace environments. We will achieve this by maintaining and expanding our successful Production Support partnerships, investing in our original facility so that it continues to serve the needs of an ever-evolving performing arts academy and by prioritising specific investments including enhanced library systems, scheduling software and an enhanced IT capacity.
- Expanding our current footprint to deliver additional teaching, production and administrative spaces. We will achieve this by working in partnership with Trinity College to raise the funding necessary for our expansion into Units 31 and 32 of the Trinity East Campus.

Preparing the ground for future growth

This strategy sets The Lir Academy on an ambitious trajectory for the future by committing to researching and developing a Capital Development Programme designed to deliver a major new facility as a centerpiece of the new Trinity East Campus. This landmark development will anchor Trinity's cultural, placemaking and civic engagement objectives for the new campus.

We recognise that this is a long-term project and will use this strategy's five-year-long timeline to undertake the substantial initial planning initiatives required by:

- Working with Trinity to help shape a new vision for the Trinity East Campus as part of the master planning process.
- Completing a feasibility study for a major capital development programme including a detailed brief, new business plan and fundraising campaign.
- Working with other schools and departments in Trinity to create shared cultural facilities, including a state-of-the-art multi-purpose performance space.
- Advocating across state bodies, local government, and major cultural organisations to harness support for the national significance of this transformative project.

Our People



Our strength lies in our people. Our staff's dedication and commitment is borne out in the success of our students. Our board and its subcommittees, including our Development Council, provide the necessary oversight to ensure that we achieve our overall strategic ambitions. We can grow stronger together by welcoming people from as many backgrounds as possible, with all kinds of life experiences.

Over the course of this plan, we want to ensure that an increasingly diverse student body, staff and board are supported appropriately so that they can achieve their full potential at The Lir Academy. It is this investment in our people that will ensure we continue to deliver excellence in all that we do.



Belonging, Equality and Diversity

The Lir Academy must reflect the Ireland of today. We believe that everyone should have equality of opportunity to access the highest level of training in the dramatic arts and to do so in a supportive environment.

While we acknowledge that currently this is not possible for everyone, we are working towards a more inclusive academy that is accessible to applicants irrespective of race and ethnicity, ability, gender, sexuality, social class or the financial means to afford college.

The Lir Academy will become more welcoming, diverse and supportive by:

- Creating an Outreach Department which will be positioned at the core of our operations. We will achieve this through the appointment of a Director of Access, Outreach & Equality in 2022 and by prioritising funds for the work of this department in all of our fundraising activities.
- Delivering a broad range of outreach projects, partnerships and activities across the island of Ireland with a particular focus on DEIS schools, schools with diverse student populations and communities of place or interest.

- Developing and implementing robust Diversity Policies to deliver broader representation across our students, staff and board. This includes an updated Gender Equality Policy (to be launched in 2023), an Anti-Racism Policy (to be completed in 2022) and a Disability Policy (to be completed in 2023 following the appointment of a working group in 2022).
- Broadening the reach of The Lir Academy by delivering courses and outreach programmes throughout the island of Ireland over the course of this plan, including extending our outreach activities to Northern Ireland by 2025.
- Completing the work of decolonising our curricula with ongoing input from our Black Lives Matter Forum comprising graduates, current students and staff. Following the publication of our Anti-Racism Policy, we will instigate a formal review of all courses before the start of the 2023/2024 academic year.

- Fundraising increased financial supports for students through an enhanced bursaries and scholarship scheme. We will do this by significantly increasing the average student bursary by 2023 with the aim of doubling it by 2026, as well as introducing a second scholarship for our Foundation Diploma in 2024, and introducing new scholarships for the MFAs in Theatre Directing and Stage Design by 2025.



Investment in People

The wellbeing of our staff and students is a key priority for The Lir Academy to ensure that everyone feels supported, valued and respected.

This strategy provides us with an opportunity to assess, update and enhance staff and student resources and support structures by:

- Providing dedicated resources onsite for staff and students to include pastoral care and additional mental health supports in partnership with Trinity's Student Counselling Service. Accepting the impact of the pandemic on student mental health, we will prioritise the appointment of an on-site Student Counsellor at the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year.
- Embedding empowerment and resilience training in all our curricula. We will achieve this by working with an experienced performance psychologist to introduce new workshops on all undergraduate courses before the start of the 2022/23 academic year.
- Increasing our investment in staff training and development so that all staff feel more positive about their personal and professional development whilst working at The Lir Academy. We will achieve this by increasing our staff training budget by 50% in 2023.
- Completing a detailed HR audit which will review all HR structures at The Lir Academy including current rates of pay, staff supports and pension entitlements. This review will be commissioned and completed in 2022.
- Ensuring the appropriate resourcing of all departments so that they have the necessary staffing and resources required to deliver on the ambitions of this plan. These resources will be included in a detailed five-year financial schedule in support of this plan which will be approved by the Board in early 2022.
- Creating a succession plan for all our staff, tutors and board. This plan will be completed in 2022 as part of the HR audit.

Production Photographs Credits

Our sincere thanks to everyone at The Lir Academy and our supporters for their ongoing assistance to realise our ambitions.

Image Credits

All photographs by Keith Dixon, apart from the images crossing pages 12/13 and 15/16 by Camilla Cerea.

Creative Credits

Cover
Serious Money by Caryl Churchill, songs by Ian Drury, Micky Gallagher and Chaz Jankel. Director - Oonagh Murphy, Set & Costume Designer – Molly O’Cathain, Lighting Designer – Paul Keogan, Sound Designer & Sound Design Co-ordinator – Sinead Diskin, Hair & Make-Up - Val Sherlock, Assistant Director – Cyle Conley, Assistant Set Designer – Fenna Von Hirschheydt, Audio Visual Designer – Gary Maguire.

Pages 1/2
My Romantic History by DC Jackson. Director – Erin Blackmore, Set & Costume Designer – LaurA Fajardo Castro, Lighting Designer – Colin Doran, Sound Designer – Fiona Shiel, Hair & Make-Up – Val Sherlock.
Into the Woods, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, book by James Lapine. Director – Tom Creed, Musical Direction – Cathal Synnott, Set & Costume Design – Joe Vanek, Lighting Designer – Paul Keogan, Sound Designer – Ivan Birthistle.
The Last Five Years written and composed by Jason Robert Brown. Director – Cyle Conley, Set & Costume Designer – Florentina Burcea, Lighting Designer – Dara Hoban, Sound Designer & Musical Director – Benedict Esdale.

Page 8
MEAT by Gillian Greer. Director – Franziska Detrez, Set Designer – Brian Mitchell, Costume Designer – Louise Dunne, Sound Designer – Iain Faulkner, Hair & Make-Up – Sarah O’Rourke, Food Stylist – Orfhlaith Noone.

Pages 11
The Skriker by Caryl Churchill. Director – Tom Creed, Set & Lighting Designer – Ciaran O’Melia, Costume Designer – Catherine Fay, Sound Designer – Ivan Birthistle, Hair & Make-Up – Val Sherlock.

Page 12
Midwinter by Zinnie Harris. Director – Eftychia Spyridaki, Set & Costume Designer – Florentina Burcea, Lighting Designer – Michael Rathburn, Sound Designer – Chris Merton, Prop Maker – Shauna O’Neill, Hair & Make-Up – Sarah O’Rourke.

Page 13
All’s Well That Ends Well by William Shakespeare. Director – Ronan Phelan, Set & Costume Designer – Katie Davenport, Lighting Designer – Sarah Jane Shiels, Sound Designer – Ivan Birthistle, Hair & Make-Up – Val Sherlock.

Page 14
Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. Director – Davey Kelleher, Set Designer – Pai Rathaya, Costume Designer – Sarah Foley, Lighting Designer – Paul Keogan, Sound Designer – Denis Clohessy.

Pages 21/22
Blood Wedding by Federico García Lorca, translated by James Graham Lujan and Richard O’Connell. Director – Caitríona McLaughlin, Set & Lighting Designer – John Comisky, Costume Designer – Catherine Fay, Music & Sound Designer – Philip Stewart, Hair & Make-Up – Val Sherlock, Assistant Director – Kevin Michael Reed, Draftsperson – Pai Rathaya, Assistant Lighting Designer – Blue Hanly.
O Go My Man by Stella Feehily. Director – Tom Creed, Set and Lighting Designer – Ciaran O’Melia, Costume Designer – Catherine Fay, Sound Designer – Ivan Birthistle, Video Designer – Kilian Waters.
The Unreturning by Anna Jordan. Director – Jack Reardon, Set & Costume Designer – Jack Scullion, Lighting Designer – Eoin Lennon, Sound Designer – Michael Stapleton, Hair & Make-Up – Sarah McCann.

Page 23
Our Town by Thornton Wilder. Director – Wayne Jordan, Set Designer – Pai Rathaya, Lighting Design – Eoin Winning, Costume Design – Sarah Foley, Sound Design – Ivan Birthistle, Movement Director – Eddie Kay, Assistant Directors – Franziska Detrez and Holly Griffith.
The Events by David Greig with music by John Brown. Director – Nicola Murphy, Set & Costume Design – Karlotta Matthies, Musical Director – Cathal Synnott, Associate Musical Director – Morgan Cooke, Lighting Designer – Cillian McNamara, Sound Designer – Michael Stapleton, Hair & Make-Up – Val Sherlock.

Back Cover
Living Quarters by Brian Friel. Director – Conall Morrison, Set & Costume Designer – Monica Frawley, Lighting Designer – Nick McCall, Sound Design – Ivan Birthistle, Hair & Make-Up – Lorraine Brennan, Assistant Director – Anushka Senanayake.



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