

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

Permanent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/158745>

Copyright and reuse:

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it.

Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

‘A Door into the Dark’
Small Spaces for Theatre in Belfast, 1950–2020

Volume I of II

by

John Riddell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Warwick, Theatre and Performance Studies,
School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures

September 2020

Table of Contents

Volume I

List of Illustrations, Tables and Interviews	4
Acknowledgements	9
Declaration	11
Abstract	12
Abbreviations	13
Introduction: Research Aims and Methodology	17
Part One: Background	46
Chapter 1: History, Geography and Politics	48
Chapter 2: Culture and Identity	65
Chapter 3: Architecture Space and Place	95
Part Two: Context	125
Chapter 4: Theatre in Belfast	127
Chapter 5: Influences and influencers	138
Chapter 6: New Theatres for Ulster	148
Chapter 7: Arts strategy and buildings for the new millennium	161
Part Three: Space	184
Chapter 8: The Lyric Theatres	187
Chapter 9: The Old Museum arts centre and the MAC	249
Chapter 10: Non-formal Theatres	304
Conclusion	336
Where to now for small theatres in Belfast?	337
Bibliography	352

Volume II

Appendix: A Resource

Curating this Resource	3
List of Illustrations: Figures and Tables	4
Part One: Figures	10
Introduction to the Timeline of Significant Events	14
Part Two: Figures and Tables	24
Chapter 4	25
Chapter 6	26
Chapter 7	27
Table 1 Capital Build Programme venues and capacities	27
Table 2 All venues with capacities	27
An Introduction to Jan Branch	33
Part Three: Figures, Tables and supporting material	34
Chapter 8	35
Bob Forster recalls the second Lyric’s technical installation	53
An introduction to O’Donnell + Tuomey Architects	56
An introduction to Richard Wakely	57
Table 3 Northern Ireland Audit Office Project Costs	58
Chapter 9	73
An introduction to Anne McReynolds	79
An introduction to Hall McKnight Architects	80
Chapter 10	103
An introduction to Zoë Seaton and Big Telly	103
An introduction to Paul Bosco McEaney and Cahoots NI	108
Introduction to Interviews	113
Ethical Research information and signed consent forms	114
Digital Resource: Interviews	
Bibliography of sources in Volume II	131

List of Illustrations in Volume II:

Figures, Tables and Interviews

Figure no.	Illustration	Page
Figure 1	Map of Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland	11
Figure 2	Map of the four provinces of Ireland	12
Figure 3	Map of the nine counties of the province of Ulster. Those in Orange are part of Northern Ireland	13
Figure 4	Timeline of significant events	15
Figure 5	Locations of relevant Belfast venues	25
Figure 6	Relevant towns and cities in Northern Ireland	26
Figure 7	Riverside Theatre Coleraine 1:200 @ A4	28
Figure 8	Ardhowen Theatre Enniskillen 1:200 @ A4	29
Figure 9	Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre Armagh 1:200 @ A4	30
Figure 10	Millennium Forum Derry Plan 1:200 @ A4	31
Figure 11	Millennium Forum Derry Section 1:200 @ A4	32
Figure 12	Young Mary and Pearse O'Malley	35
Figure 13	The First Lyric Theatre at Derryvolgie Avenue 1:200 @ A4	36
Figure 14	First Lyric stage from auditorium	37
Figure 15	First Lyric auditorium from stage	37
Figure 16	Planning application for rear extension to first Lyric	38
Figure 17	Planning application map	39
Figure 18	Rear of first Lyric viewed from garden, with completed extension, taken after the final performance	40
Figure 19	Downes' 1959 1:200 @ A4	41
Figure 20	Model of Downes' 1959 scheme	42
Figure 21	Page from the Architects Journal showing a markup on the Yvonne Arnaud auditorium plan	43
Figure 22	Downes 1964 1:200 @ A4	44
Figure 23	Downes 1965 1:200 @ A4	45
Figure 24	Second Lyric Theatre 1:200 @ A4	46
Figure 25	The steel frame of the second Lyric in construction	47
Figure 26	Austin Clarke at the foundation stone ceremony	48
Figure 27	Cover of the foundation stone ceremony programme	48
Figure 28	The audience at the opening night	49
Figure 29	Mary O'Malley outside the second Lyric Theatre	50
Figure 30	The second lyric viewed from Stranmillis Embankment	50
Figure 31	The lower foyer	51
Figure 32	The upper foyer	51
Figure 33	The stage from rear auditorium right	52
Figure 34	Plan of third Lyric main house 1:200 @ A4	59
Figure 35	Centreline section of third Lyric main house	60

Figure 36	Naughton Studio at third Lyric Theatre 1:200 @ A4	61
Figure 37	Aerial view of Lyric looking south west	62
Figure 38	View from bottom of Ridgeway Street	62
Figure 39	View from Stranmillis Embankment looking east	63
Figure 40	View of foyer and coffee bar from junction of Stranmillis Embankment and Ridgeway Street	59
Figure 41	View from Stranmillis Embankment looking north towards Ridgeway Street	64
Figure 42	The landscaped amphitheatre	64
Figure 43	The main view on entry	64
Figure 44	Box office and main stair	65
Figure 45	Main stair from foyer level	65
Figure 46	View towards main stair and café bar beyond	65
Figure 47	View from top of stair to toilets looking towards café bar, with threshold stone from second Lyric set into the brickwork	66
Figure 48	View of foyer from top of main stair	66
Figure 49	View back along foyer towards main stair	67
Figure 50	View from foyer looking south west towards River Lagan	67
Figure 51	View up atrium towards rehearsal and upper levels	67
Figure 52	View from top of stairs to toilets	68
Figure 53	View from bottom of stairs to toilets	68
Figure 54	The gents' toilets	68
Figure 55	View from bottom of stairs to board room	69
Figure 56	View from café bar towards foyer and Naughton Studio	69
Figure 57	Café bar	69
Figure 58	View from café bar looking towards Ridgeway Street	70
Figure 59	Main house from auditorium right	70
Figure 60	Stage from auditorium left	71
Figure 61	Naughton Studio looking onto Ridgeway Street	71
Figure 62	Rehearsal Room	72
Figure 63	View down Sandhurst Drive towards get-in	72
Figure 64	Line drawing of the Old Museum façade	73
Figure 65	James Drummond President of BNHPS	74
Figure 66	The mummy Takabuti in the Ulster Museum, 2008.	75
Figure 67	Photograph of the front of OMac 2011	75
Figure 68	The view from the half-landing between ground and first floor	76
Figure 69	The doors into the theatre	76
Figure 70	The theatre in end-on format	77
Figure 71	The gallery on the second floor	77
Figure 72	Kulvinder Ghir in <i>Who Shall be Happy...?</i>	77
Figure 73	OMac Theatre 1:200 @ A4	78
Figure 74	The MAC Theatre Downstairs 1:200 @ A4	82

Figure 75	The MAC Theatre Upstairs 1:200 @ A4	83
Figure 76	The MAC main entrance and campanile from Saint Anne's Square	84
Figure 77	The outside of Saint Anne's Square viewed from Hill Street	84
Figure 78	Looking west from Saint Anne's Square towards the cathedral	85
Figure 79	The view looking east from Writer's Square towards St Anne's Cathedral, the campanile of the MAC evident in the distance	85
Figure 80	The view southwest along Edward Street towards the get-in	86
Figure 81	Views along the remaining part of Hector Street	87
Figure 82	Views of the Exchange Street entrance, the University building seen in the background of the second photograph	88
Figure 83	The external face of the large blank wall that forms the north wall of the foyer, viewed from Academy Street	89
Figure 84	The box office and welcome point with the main entrance from Saint Anne's Square beyond	90
Figure 85	The bar counter and cafe bar viewed from the Exchange Street entrance	91
Figure 86	The importance of daylight in the foyer is evident in these photographs	92
Figure 87	The scale of the foyer is clear in these photographs	93
Figure 88	The wire sculpture installation, 'The Permanent Present'	94
Figure 89	St Anne's Cathedral, one of several framed views provided in different parts of the building	95
Figure 90	Light wells above the foyer	96
Figure 91	Snug seating along the north wall of the foyer at ground and first floor. Power sockets for laptops and chargers can be seen under the table in the first photograph	97
Figure 92	The balustrade and drinks shelf at first floor	98
Figure 93	Opportunities for breakout space have been exploited throughout the building	99
Figure 94	Display cabinets and leaflet holders	94
Figure 95	Downstairs Theatre	101
Figure 96	A conference in the Downstairs Theatre	101
Figure 97	The Upstairs Theatre	102
Figure 98	Portstewart Promenade view looking south from Harbour Hill. The Box is visible to the left of the picture behind the blue bus	104
Figure 99	Big Telly – The Box, Portstewart	104
Figure 100	Poster advertising, <i>I Spy Portstewart</i>	105
Figure 101	Performance outside the Strabane Creative Shop	106

Figure 102	Creative Shop window performance in Enniskillen	106
Figure 103	Poster advertising <i>The Garvagh Wedding</i> , which was cancelled because of lockdown	107
Figure 104	A screenshot from <i>Operation Elsewhere</i> , Big Telly's interactive show on Zoom	107
Figure 105	Danske Bank Donegall Square North	109
Figure 106	Cahoots NI, A Spell of Cold Weather in the window of the bank 2013	109
Figure 107	Performance in the bank window 2014	110
Figure 108	Visit Belfast's Welcome Centre now occupies the ground floor of the bank	110
Figure 109	Paul Bosco McEneaney of Cahoots NI (centre) and David McClure of Osborne King (far left) at Arts & Business Awards 2013	111
Figure 110	The Cahoots Units at Castle Court Shopping Centre	112
Figure 111	Production shot from <i>The Gift</i> at Castle Court	112

List of Tables

Table no.	Table	Page
Table 1	Capital Build Programme venues and capacities	27
Table 2	All venues with capacities	27
Table 3	Northern Ireland Audit Office Project Costs	58

List of Interviews

All interviews conducted by John Riddell

Interviewee	Date
Brendan Carson	30 January 2014 and 21 May 2014
Zoë Seaton	20 August 2014
Bob Forster	4 February 2015
Richard Mills	4 February 2015
Marianne Crosslé	3 February 2015
Houston Marshall	4 February 2015
Paul Bosco McEaney	3 February 2015
Paula McFetridge	3 February 2015
David McClure	3 February 2015
Alastair Hall	27 November 2018
Ian McKnight	27 November 2018
Jan Branch	14 March 2019
Richard Wakely	14 March 2019
Anne McReynolds	15 March 2019
John Tuomey	11 June 2019

They are available for listening at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/004ipix4siyaygp/AADX9Py2Of4IFpUPPLkLh-TNa?dl=0>

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following individuals and organisations for their assistance and support in the writing of this thesis.

The University of Warwick Postgraduate Collaborative Research Scholarship for funding 50 per cent of the fees. The Board of Directors of Theatre Projects Consultants Ltd for funding 50 per cent of the fees and supporting me with study leave. Architect and theatre designer Ruofan Yao, of Theatre Projects, Beijing, for preparing the 1:200 comparative scale drawings. The Society of Theatre Research for a research award of £250 from the Edward Gordon Craig Fund, 2014.

The University of Warwick Library, with special thanks to Richard Perkins Academic Support Librarian for Film, Theatre, Cultural Policy, German, CIM, Liberal Arts, GSD and IATL. The National University of Ireland, Galway, James Hardiman Library for access to the O'Malley/Lyric Theatre Archive, with special thanks to archivist Barry Houlihan. The Linen Hall Library, Belfast, for access to the Theatre and Performing Arts Archive, and the archive of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society. The British Library. The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. The Riverside Theatre, Coleraine for access to the archive. The library services of Enfield, East Renfrewshire, and South Lanarkshire. Architects O'Donnell + Tuomey and Hall McKnight for providing general arrangement drawings of the third Lyric theatre and the MAC.

Dr Clive Gray, Dr Wallace McDowell, Professor Nicholas Whybrow and Professor Nadine Holdsworth, University of Warwick, for upgrade and progress review. Dr Michael Holden of the Institute of Theatre Consultants. Mr David Grant, Senior Lecturer in Drama, School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast. Thanks are also due to the late Emeritus Professor J. R. (Ronnie) Mulryne, 1937–2019, University of Warwick.

The interviewees who generously gave their time and shared resources and information: Jan Branch, Brendan Carson, Marianne Crosslé, Bob Forster, Houston Marshall, Alastair Hall, Richard Mills, David McClure, Paul Bosco McEaney, Paula McFetridge, Ian McKnight, Anne McReynolds, Zoë Seaton, John Tuomey, Richard Wakely.

I should also like to thank my supervisor, Dr Margaret Shewring, Emeritus Reader, formerly Associate Professor (Reader) in Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Warwick.

Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and does not include material previously submitted for other qualifications or as part of any collaborative research. It has not been published in whole or in part. All references cited are fully acknowledged in the notes and bibliography. Interviews conducted during the research process have been conducted in full compliance with the University of Warwick's Ethical Research requirements.



John Riddell

28 September 2020

Abstract

This thesis focuses on small spaces for theatre in Belfast accommodating an audience of less than 500, and seeks to understand how each has evolved in relation to its community and the wider city, interrogating the drivers which provoked that evolution. Belfast in 2020 is the culmination of a century of changes in Northern Ireland, and this thesis is aware of the subtly distinctive and nuanced character of culture and identity in the Province, and the tensions this creates. The thesis asks how and to what extent the unique situation of Belfast has led to the current performance spaces and their relationship with their communities, and how this has changed since partition.

The thesis is presented in three parts: part one establishes the historical, political and social context in Northern Ireland; part two sets out the theatrical context in Northern Ireland considering the cultural influences and arts strategies that preceded the inception of the modern Belfast venues, referencing theatres in towns around the Province; part three studies the history and development of two Belfast venues, the Lyric Theatre and the Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC), contrasting them against work in non-formal spaces. It asks what drove their creation, how their design and construction were funded and procured, and who were the individuals and groups involved in the process, offering a quantitative and qualitative assessment.

The thesis is the practice-led work of a Belfast-born theatre consultant, combining methodologies from architecture, placemaking and theatre studies, with history, politics and cultural studies. It is supported by a second volume – an original curated resource of maps, architectural drawings and photographs, and a digital audio resource of original interviews with practitioners and architects. The thesis concludes by asking what the future holds for these buildings, the people who work in and use them, and their prospects for economic and cultural sustainability, including how it has needed to be rethought urgently in the midst of a global pandemic and the implications of Brexit.

John Riddell

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Name
A&B NI	Arts and Business Northern Ireland
ABTT	Association of British Theatre Technicians
ACE	Arts Council England
ACGB	Arts Council of Great Britain
ACNI	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
ADCI	Amateur Drama Council of Ireland
ADEC	Arts and Disability Equality Charter
ADF	Arts Disability Forum
AJ	Architects Journal
AUDF	Association of Ulster Drama Festivals
AVS	Additional Visitor Spend
BCC	Belfast City Council
BCIS	Building Cost Information Service
BIFHE	Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
BNHPS	Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society
BRC	Belfast Repertory Company
BRCD	Belfast Region City Deal
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
BVM	Best Value for Money
CAF	Community Arts Forum
CDM	Construction Design Management (see also PD) Health and Safety processes in the design and construction of buildings. CDM may refer to an individual employed to manage the H&S processes on a project
CEMA	Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CPA	Capital Programme for the Arts
CPD	Central Procurement Directorate
CTG	Cultural Traditions Group
DCA	Delivery Confidence Assessment
DCAL	Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
DCMS	UK Government Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
DNRC	Defence National Rehabilitation Centre
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
DSIR	Department of Scientific and Industrial Research
EEC	European Economic Community
EFA	Economic Footprint Analysis
EIA	Economic Impact Assessment
EMU	Education for Mutual Understanding
ERs	Employers Requirements
FDC	Fermanagh District Council
FM	First Minister

FF&E	Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment
GB	Great Britain
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GIS	Government Indemnity Scheme
GOH	Grand Opera House
GP	General Practitioner (medical)
GVA	Gross Value Added
HHMK	Hackett Hall McKnight Architects
H&S	Health and Safety
HR	Human Resources
IFTR	International Federation of Theatre Research
ILT	Irish Literary Theatre
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
ISPA	International Society for the Performing Arts
ITEAC	International Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conference
JCT	Joint Contracts Tribunal
LPS	Land and Property Services
MAC	Metropolitan Arts Centre
M&E	Mechanical and Electrical services (see also MEP)
MBW	Making Belfast Work
MEP	Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (see also M&E)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NEC3	New Engineering Contract 3
NI	Northern Ireland
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NILTS	Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
NOW	Neighbourhood Open Workshops
NPF	National Policy Framework
NT	National Theatre (London)
NTS	National Theatre of Scotland
NTW	National Theatre of Wales
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
OBG	Ormeau Baths Gallery
OGC	Office of Government Commerce
OK	Osborne King
OMac	Old Museum arts centre
PCSA	Pre-Contract Services Agreement
PD	Principal Designer (see also CDM)
PLACE	Planning Landscape Architecture Community Environment
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PM	Project Manager
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
QR	Quick Response
QS	Quantity Surveyor (also known as Cost Consultant)

QUB	Queen's University Belfast
R&D	Research and Development
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
RFA	Raison Foster Associates
RHWL	Renton Howard Wood Levin (architects)
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RICS	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
RLB	Rider Levitt Bucknall
RSUA	Royal Society of Ulster Architects
RTÉ	<i>Raidió Teilifís Éireann</i>
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
RVH	Royal Victoria Hospital
S106	Section 106
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SRO	Senior Responsible Owner
SROI	Social Return on Investment
SSE	Scottish and Southern Energy
TP	Theatre Projects
TWG	Tension Wire Grid
UAH	Ulster Architectural Heritage Society
ULT	Ulster Literary Theatre
UTV	Ulster Television
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
V&A	Victoria & Albert Museum
VE	Value Engineering
WELL	Whole Earth 'Electronic Link
WWII	World War II

Dedication

For: Angela, Toby, and Sherwood, with love and thanks;
and Pat and Colin, such tireless supporters.
In memory of Sylvia.

Introduction: Research Aims and Methodology

The Forge

All I know is a door into the dark,
Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting;
Inside, the hammered anvil's short-pitched ring,
The unpredictable fantail of sparks
Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water.
The anvil must be somewhere in the centre,
Horned as a unicorn, at one end square,
Set there immoveable: an altar
Where he expends himself in shape and music.
Sometimes, leather aproned, hairs in his nose,
He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter
Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows;
Then grunts and goes in, with a slam and a flick
To beat real iron out, to work the bellows.¹

Seamus Heaney

Heaney's evocation of Barney Devlin's smithy near his childhood home in Bellaghy County Londonderry is, in part, a commemoration of a dying rural craft, but also explores the spiritual nature of the creative process. The anvil is cast as both an altar and a unicorn, a religious, and mystical, pagan symbol, but the smith sets to his work as a performer; 'expends himself in shape and music' in a visceral and violent creative process. The drama of the creative act is not the only element of theatre as Heaney, the spectator, looks curiously upon the scene. This 'door into the dark' is part of the audience's journey into most theatre experiences and it can be seen in each iteration of the first two theatre space studies that form Part Three of this thesis, the Lyric and the Metropolitan

¹ Seamus Heaney, *Door into the dark* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 10.

Arts Centre (MAC). This is contrasted with a very different entrance into the spaces covered in the third space study into non-formal spaces. Crossing a threshold seals the contract between audience and performer – a commitment on the part of the spectator and a demonstration of how attending theatre is not passive, but active participation in a shared experience. That the literary magazine established by the Lyric Theatre in the 1950s was called *Threshold*, is resonant. The action of crossing a threshold is performative in the sense that is discussed in Chapter 3. Passing through that ‘door into the dark’ promotes change in the visitor and the room itself, producing a new space and a new experience. There is a lack of robust academic writing about performance spaces in the six counties of Northern Ireland; there are numerous contemporary and historical accounts of theatre in the Province, many of which have supported this work, but these focus on dramaturgy and performance practice, or are non-academic, composed of colourful anecdote or memoir. Recent works have commented authoritatively on theatres in their geographical context, notably Morash and Richards *Mapping Irish Theatre*,² however, there remains a paucity of detailed information on, and assessment of theatre spaces.

Overall Research Aim

This thesis aims to develop a deep understanding of small spaces for performance in Belfast. There is less writing about theatre space than performance practice and dramaturgy, and within that limited pool there is little about spaces in Northern Ireland. While many works make observations on the architectural nature of theatres, few take a position on their quality and how that impacts on the performer, spectator and staff; fewer still offer an opinion on public spaces, including toilet facilities and catering, which are important to the overall experience of the theatre-goer and deserve to be understood to inform better spaces in the future.

Northern Ireland celebrates its centenary in 2021 and, as the Province pauses to consider the legacy and lessons of its first century, the timing is right

² Chris Morash and Shaun Richards, *Mapping Irish theatre: theories of space and place* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

for a deep review of the small theatres that have emerged during that time. The thesis seeks to understand if Belfast has evolved in a unique way as the capital city of a new, young state, examines how this may have influenced the current performance spaces and their relationship with their communities, and how this may have changed since partition.

The thesis examines how each space evolved in relation to its community and the wider city, asking how the word community is understood differently in each situation and if it evolves in response to changes in society and if this influences the prioritising of changes to the building. The thesis questions how community is understood alongside identity and place in Northern Ireland in the individual's sense of self.

This thesis was made possible by the unique collaboration, through a doctoral funding award, between the University of Warwick and Theatre Projects and, as a result, is an academic work deeply rooted in commercial theatre consultancy practice. The thesis is my practice-led research as a Belfast-born theatre consultant and former theatre production professional who worked in several of the spaces studied, including the second Lyric Theatre and the Old Museum arts centre discussed in Chapters 8 and 9, below. When considered alongside my MA in Theatre Consultancy, subsequent publication, conference papers and professional memberships, this unique combination of skills makes me well-placed to comment with authority on the venues studied. This not only aims to produce a credible commentary on theatre space in Belfast but also to offer a model for the future detailed examination and assessment of other theatres. There is further detailed exploration of this research approach in the methodology section below.

Positioning the research

Small spaces attract less critical attention than larger theatres, yet they are among the most interesting and are frequently where significant playwrights, performers and practitioners hone their craft. As such, the spaces themselves can influence future dramaturgy and performance practice. Many are found spaces adapted and redeveloped over several years, or in use for a short time before moving to another found space, so if it is not recorded and preserved,

information about form and dimensions of these spaces can be lost. This thesis draws together and records, in detail, as much information as possible about the formal spaces studied and discusses at length the physical nature of these spaces, particularly the Lyric theatres in Chapter 8 and the MAC in Chapter 9, below. The aim is to encourage the reader to take a wholistic view of theatre buildings and think seriously about the impact architectural form, adjacency and finishes have on how users experience the building. There is also little written to ask how smaller theatres are built – where the funding comes from, how the brief is prepared, and how and from whom the building design and building construction are procured. This is explored in detail to understand if the different methods employed are effective.

A significant strand of work in this thesis interrogates the circumstances which served as catalysts to provoke the evolution of the spaces. This is important in providing a greater understanding of how theatre companies and theatre buildings came into being in Belfast, how this process changed over time, and how these narratives inform our understanding of emergent small theatres in other territories. The thesis asks if the key impetus at inception is a need for space to create and present work, or a political or social desire to establish a performance space. The drivers that provoke change during the life of the theatre are also questioned to see how societal changes may alter perspectives and perception of what a theatre needs to be. It also asks about the individuals or groups that lead and propel the process of change, and if this is exclusive to Belfast theatres or a narrative shared by many venues, knowledge which may prove a useful resource for those in other towns and cities.

The thesis has been constructed in three parts to aid the reader and guide them through what is complex and nuanced terrain. Part One – Background establishes the historical, political, and social context in Northern Ireland which the reader needs to understand in some detail as a frame of reference for what follows. Part Two – Context sets out the theatrical context in Northern Ireland considering the cultural influences and arts strategies that preceded the inception of the modern Belfast venues, referencing theatres in towns around the Province, and links back to Part One – Background, by asking if biases and cultural norms have influenced political and artistic decisions. It also looks

forward to Part Three – Space, by setting out the context for the performance space studies that follow.

Part Three – Space is the core of the thesis and studies the history and development of two Belfast venues, the Lyric Theatre and the Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC), contrasting them against work in non-formal spaces, notably former commercial premises on the high street. This is where this thesis aims to bring a substantial body of new work to the study and understanding of theatre space. The archival research hopes to expose information that has not previously been interrogated from a theatre space perspective, the work on earlier spaces informing the drivers for the later buildings. The study of the new buildings is broad and deep in its scope, assisted by in-depth interviews with architects and client representatives for the Lyric and the MAC, and asks how good the buildings and theatres within them are.

It seeks to understand what impact the changes in legislation and public attitudes and expectations have had over the decades of the period studied. In 2021, equality is enshrined in law and access, in all its meanings, is promoted for all, in buildings and organisations that aspire to total inclusion, diversity and non- or anti-sectarianism. Theatres are no longer considered as performance spaces supported by ancillary facilities but, like many public buildings, as permeable resources with an active relationship with community and a threshold that invites, not excludes, all visitors and promotes wellbeing. The thesis considers how theatres in Belfast responded to this and discusses the array of practical considerations to be accommodated in their design including security, fire safety, terrorism, and, post-Covid, bio-security.

The greatest factor facing theatre buildings, which has grown into a pressing crisis, is the climate emergency – to justify the building of a new theatre building in a world which increasingly demands a carbon-neutral or even carbon-positive approach, it must deliver much more than a suitable place for performance. Developing from the understanding derived from the research, this thesis aims to show how a culturally sustainable approach to the design and operation of a theatre draws together the strands of environmental, economic and social sustainability making the venue a meaningful and useful

amenity. It aims to highlight how the repurposing of existing buildings for a range of theatre uses is a culturally sustainable approach with low-carbon impact but also a potentially significant benefit for revitalising ailing commercial areas.

This thesis draws on a wide range of sources, collating and presenting them in an innovative way designed to assist the reader. Volume II curates the resources that support the work in Volume I and is intended to be read alongside Volume I. It assumes that each reader will have different strengths; for example, some may be conversant with reading architectural drawings in plan and section, others fully aware of the physical and political geography of Northern Ireland. To inform the reader's understanding and provide greater context to the text, maps, diagrams, tables and photographs have been produced with clarity and simplicity. The theatre drawings have been presented in a consistent style and at the same scale to permit immediate comparison. Volume II also provides information on the background of the interviewees quoted in Volume I, which contextualises their comments and demonstrates where bias may exist. The audio files of the interviews accompany this thesis and include several interviewees whose testimony is not included in Volume I, but which represents a rich seam of information for further study.

The thesis concludes by asking what the future holds for these buildings, the people who work in and use them, and their prospects for economic and cultural sustainability, including how these have needed to be rethought urgently during a global pandemic and the onset of Brexit. The aim is not to predict where these theatres may find themselves in the future, but to derive from the study trends that indicate a direction of travel and the priorities likely to emerge. It also aims to consider how theatres can go beyond sustaining provision, which implies maintaining existing levels, but to permit progress and expansion, and how the digital sphere may facilitate this.

Methodology

This work is practice-led, context-led research focusing on theatre space and how people engage with that space. A hybrid methodology has been

established which borrows elements from other disciplines, chiefly theatre studies and architecture.

Literature review underpins every aspect of this doctoral research – it has been necessary to return to the literature regularly as the relevance of different disciplines emerged. A thorough grounding in Irish history, to establish the context within which the post-partition theatre spaces exist, is essential, from which a strong sense emerged that place and space in Northern Ireland are crucial and fiercely defended. Throughout the history of Ulster, lands have periodically been confiscated and given to others through clan warfare in the times of the Ulster chieftains, government edict during the Plantation period and the time of Cromwell, or attempts at peacekeeping by moving entire households from an area if they are not of the majority religion.

The understanding of space has included established writings on theatre space from practitioners such as Peter Brook,³ theatre historians and theatre space researchers including Glynne Wickham,⁴ Richard Leacroft⁵ and Gay McAuley.⁶ Architectural research brings understanding of space in the three-dimensional Cartesian context and how geometry and proportionality affect the visitor's experience of spaces. This includes the macro approach of urban planning as theorised by Jane Jacobs⁷ and others, and the contemporary academic strand of performative urbanism as explored by Wolfrum and Brandis.⁸

³ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin, 2008).

⁴ Glynne Wickham, *A History of the Theatre* (London: Phaidon, 1992).

⁵ Richard Leacroft, *The Development of the English Playhouse* (London: Methuen, 1988).

⁶ Gay McAuley, *Space in performance: making meaning in the theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

⁷ Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Jonathan Cape, 1972).

⁸ Sophie Wolfrum and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015).

The part of this study into space and place which most clearly relates to people as individuals and communities, is in its social use. This has included study of Ray Oldenburg's idea of the Third Place; not home, not the workplace, but the informal public spaces that have consistently been important to civilisation,⁹ and by way of counterpoint to Oldenburg's pragmatic approach, Edward Soja's esoteric theory of thirdspace which suggests all things come together in an experience of space; the concrete, the abstract, the real and the imagined, always open to a new interpretation.¹⁰ This follows the work by Henri Lefèbvre and his notion of the social production of space and the non-exclusive right to the public domain in a city.¹¹ This is relevant to all theatre space as the act of theatrical production produces marked changes in the experience of space for practitioner and audience, but it is of particular relevance to found space, especially those spaces covered in Chapter 10. The Box and the Creative Shops Project, established by Big Telly Theatre Company, and the spaces in Belfast used by Cahoots NI, are examples of spaces newly produced by the activity within.¹² That the two principal spaces

⁹ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community* (New York: Marlowe, 1997).

¹⁰ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (Cambridge, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

¹¹ Henri Lefèbvre, *The production of space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

¹² Since the completion of Chapter 10 more former bank buildings have come into arts use in Belfast. Seedhead Arts work from a former Ulster Bank in Ballyhackamore in East Belfast, promoting events under the banner of Culture Night NI, offering walking tours arts training and arts consultancy. Two very different theatre companies have come together in another former bank at Shaftesbury Square to the south of Belfast city centre. Amadan present physical theatre developed from clown and *bouffon* styles and offer workshops and training for other performers. Macha productions work develop highly politicised community theatre work aimed at breaking down barriers in access to the participation and experience of performing arts.

studied are former bank premises is notable and, regardless of whether this change of use is seen as irony or coincidence, it is certainly a political act. The presence of teenage poets, storytelling pensioners or circus performers is resonant with the Occupy movement. Although the objectives differ, both are inclusive, open to all, especially to those not typically afforded the opportunity. The character of the space produced by these activities is, in a Lefebvrian sense, radically different from the historical use, and has been claimed or reclaimed. At the root of this thinking is Marx's idea of Species Essence, that what differentiates humans from other species is the ability and need to create. Marx expressed this in terms of the workers placed in repetitive tasks in the factories and mills where they had no agency over their position, however it serves, in part, to explain the success of work in non-formal spaces in attracting both participation and audience.¹³ It is no coincidence that human interaction and consumption of media and arts is on the one hand practiced via a video screen and a headset, but on the other hand, prior to Covid-19, the take up of participation in culture in non-formal contexts was increasing, as the means of consuming culture is becoming more diverse. The future of the traditional model of theatre in a venue built for the purpose may be in doubt.

This line of thinking led me to the study of anthropology to further my understanding of culture, a key outcome of which was derived from the work of Clifford Geertz¹⁴ who suggests that symbolic forms provide indirect means of expression for the values that people find important but are unable to articulate, and that symbols permit interpretation. People of one cultural grouping and geographic area tend to be fixed, sharing similarities and differences from their neighbours which are distinct from race. This is particularly relevant to Northern Ireland where the focus is not on race but religion as the basis of a cultural experience fostered in a post-partition climate

¹³ Paul Santilli, 'Marx on Species-Being and Social Essence', *Studies in Soviet Thought*, 13 (1973), 76-88, available at <www.jstor.org/stable/20098547> [accessed on 2020/05/07/] (76).

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: selected essays* (London: Fontana, 1973).

of cultural separatism. Geertz asserts, that if people's interests are broken down into smaller packets of cultural practice, they can be readily compared across perceived divides – opposing groups use similar symbolic methods to declare their identity. In Northern Ireland, flags, murals, parades, and marching bands are typical expressions of cultural identity used similarly by Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist and Catholic-Nationalist-Republican peoples. As such, a semiotic approach to the search for meaning is well adapted to this context.

Language in a cultural context is particularly important in Northern Ireland and the work of Raymond Williams¹⁵ has been instructive in developing this perspective. Raised not as a Welsh speaker but in an area with a strong sense of Welshness, Williams appreciated the variety of understanding applicable to words, notably culture, and discussed the range of definitions available. He understood that language has cultural and political nuance, hard for the outsider to interpret; words and names have many meanings depending on the context and by whom they are delivered.¹⁶

Architectural Research

Approaches to architectural research have provided established methodologies for research into architectural histories which reflect upon four headlines, 'Manifesto: Agenda: Position: Method'.¹⁷ Although often used when examining architectural schools of thought, the components inform the study of buildings, offering a framework for interrogating the design, particularly the façade and the placement of the building in the local context. 'Manifesto'

¹⁵ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana, 1976).

¹⁶ The subject of sociolinguistics is explored in greater detail in Part Two, along with examination of 2011 Census information and data from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, both of which inform attitudes to cultural identity – the questions asked of contributors are themselves equally instructive.

¹⁷ Raymond Lucas, *Research methods for architecture* (London: Laurence King, 2016), p. 135.

relates to any statement the architect is making that can be clearly understood by an observer, frequently demonstrated by the façade and exterior of the building or its engagement with the local built environment.¹⁸ ‘Agenda’, which may be explicit or implied, expresses any broader message the manifesto conveys, political, social or aesthetic, and to which the architect subscribes. This might be promoting a Communist ideal or a Modernist design approach. ‘Position’ is a statement on building’s place in the world and argues the importance of the building politically or artistically. ‘Method’ considers the way these have been delivered, be it through choice of materials, economic approach, social inclusion, or relationship to external spaces.¹⁹

A complementary approach is the philosophical study of space and experience, informed by the work of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the understanding of phenomenology. This is pertinent to the study of public buildings and spaces including theatres, as it permits consideration of the variety of individual experience and the changing nature of experience, notably in a theatre where the programme can alter the nature of the experience for the audience member from one show to the next. Heidegger questions what it means to be, and to be in space, drawing distinctions between the being of a building and human being, and the difference between inhabiting a space and dwelling in a space. Merleau-Ponty uses sensation as the basis of perception arguing that what we all see in an object is the same in its essence, its facticity; the sensations experienced are unique and active, changing as the individual

¹⁸ Spatial Agency, *Constant Nieuwenhuys, Individual – Amsterdam, Netherlands 1920-2005* (2020)

<<https://www.spatialagency.net/database/the.situationists>> [accessed on 9 June 2020]. Examples of this are Le Corbusier's *Modulor* and the concept a New Babylon founded in collective ownership, personal creativity, and leisure, as expressed by Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys and Situationalist International.

¹⁹ Lucas, *Research methods for architecture*, pp. 40-47.

moves through a building or around an object.²⁰ Techniques of noting the architecture according to sensory perception may be employed by the researcher to record the response to a space by scoring the response to sensory stimuli; sights, sounds, smell, temperature, movement, etc.²¹

Venturi, Brown and Izenour examined the contrasting semiology of the traditional models of architecture to the commercial building of the Las Vegas strip,²² proposing two approaches: Duck, or building as sign, where the function of space is subverted by the symbolic form of the structure;²³ and Decorated Shed, or big sign/little building, where the design is determined by the functionality of the space and decoration is applied independently, the casinos of the Las Vegas strip providing the inspiration. With theatre space we might assume that all are decorated sheds, but the truth is more complex as architects may strive to convey meaning in a new building – however the semiotics of a theatre in a found space are less easily moderated by the designer. For example, as is seen in Chapter 10, performing in former bank premises is a matter of expediency to the companies studied, who did not set out to subvert any perceived norm. Nevertheless, the subversion is there for the audience and performer to experience and explore. These approaches are useful to the study of theatre spaces as they offer a means to make qualitative judgements about spaces validating subjective statements based on how a space makes people feel.

This thesis includes qualitative assessment of the venues in the space studies in Part Three. This is facilitated by the work of respected authors in the field of theatre planning and auditorium design, their work emerging from practice in theatre consultancy and architecture. Iain Mackintosh, whose work

²⁰ M. Merleau Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²² Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA. and London: M.I.T. Press, 1972).

²³ The term being derived from a duck shaped store in Long Island selling, unsurprisingly, duck.

as a consultant included the modern reinterpretation of the courtyard theatre as typified by the Cottesloe at the National Theatre, London, has written insightfully on the relationship between audience and actor, and offers simple metrics that help when assessing auditoria.²⁴ The Cottesloe is the subject of one of the few academic works in the field, *The Cottesloe at the National*, to which Mackintosh contributed.²⁵ The works of the ABTT notably *Theatre Planning*²⁶ by theatre architect and former head of the ABTT planning committee Roderick Ham and subsequent revision *Theatre Buildings: a design guide*,²⁷ edited by Judith Strong, are thorough reference works offering detailed advice to architects and clients. Although writing chiefly about US theatres, George Izenour's *Theatre Design*²⁸ and *Theatre Technology*²⁹ provide a similar level of detail and, as with Ham and Strong, cite numerous supporting case studies.³⁰

²⁴ Iain Mackintosh, *Architecture, actor and audience* (London: Routledge, 1993).

²⁵ Ronnie Mulryne, Margaret Shewring and technical editor Jason Barnes (eds), *The Cottesloe at the National 'Infinite Riches in a Little Room'* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Mulryne and Shewring, 1999). The Cottesloe has since been reinvented in the same space as the Dorfman Theatre but serving a similar function. Mulryne and Shewring also published *This Golden Round*, which looks at the Swan Theatre at the RSC, featuring contribution from the building's architect Michael Reardon.

²⁶ Roderick Ham, *Theatres - Planning Guidance for Design and Participation* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1987).

²⁷ Judith Strong (ed.), *Theatre buildings: a design guide* (London: Routledge, 2010).

²⁸ George C. Izenour, Vern O. Knudsen and Robert B. Newman, *Theater design* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1977).

²⁹ George C. Izenour, *Theater technology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).

³⁰ The proceedings of the International Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conference (ITEAC), a quadrennial gathering of those involved in the design

While these publications and guidelines are instructive as they emerge from within the theatre design community, they lack the rigour associated with peer-reviewed academic writing, which is rich in works considering theatre space from the theoretical perspective, performance practice and dramaturgy, but is lacking in works considering the architecture, design and building process. There are notable exceptions including the works of Mulryne and Shewring who recorded the reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe³¹ and brought some of the aforementioned theatre designers into writing for the academic sphere in *Making Space for Theatre*.³² More recently Alistair Fair has added to the discourse with a collection of essays which again include work from theatre designers in *Setting the Scene*,³³ detailed historical accounts of the design and architecture of British theatres in *Modern Playhouses*³⁴ and an examination of contemporary theatre architecture in *Play On*.³⁵ These works have less technical detail than the work of theatre designers, and the two types of commentary – theatre design-led and academic-led – suggest the value of an academic analysis that combines the two with robust and authoritative, technical and qualitative assessment.

and equipping of venues, provide detailed and often highly technical accounts of installations which serve to demonstrate how approaches to theatre design evolve over time.

³¹ J. R. Mulryne, Margaret Shewring and advisory editor Andrew Gurr (eds), *Shakespeare's Globe rebuilt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with Mulryne & Shewring, 1997).

³² Ronnie Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (eds), *Making space for theatre: British Architecture and theatre since 1958* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Mulryne and Shewring, 1995).

³³ Alistair Fair (ed.), *Setting the scene: perspectives on twentieth-century theatre architecture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

³⁴ Alistair Fair, *Modern Playhouses: an architectural history of Britain's new theatres, 1945-1985* (Oxford: Oxford, 2020).

³⁵ Alistair Fair, *Play On: Contemporary theatre architecture in Britain* (London: Lund Humphries, 2019).

This thesis, Part Three in particular, offers commentary of this type from within an academic framework, informed by my own practice as a theatre consultant, theatre practitioner, and from working closely with architects and acousticians.³⁶ It provides a strong, confident voice, the authority of which is supported by evidence of professional practice and understanding of context as demonstrated in the first two parts of this thesis. The commentary considers the sightlines and volume of the space, which affect audiences' visual and auditory experience, but also notes the look and feel of the space. Assessment is made from the twenty-first-century perspective, so commentary on public areas and the quantum of facilities implies no criticism of earlier decisions, but rather shows how design ideas have shifted in response to audience and performer expectations, planning requirements and societal shifts. However, earlier works such as those by Richard Southern, Leacroft and Norman Marshall give added context for the design decisions. These authors are known chiefly as theatre historians, but each published early works advising on theatre design, notably Leacroft's *Civic Theatre Design*³⁷ which contextualises the assessment of preliminary designs for the second Lyric Theatre. Southern's *Proscenium and*

³⁶ Assessment of acoustic conditions is based chiefly on learnings from Rob Harris, now retired from consultancy, who founded the acoustics and theatre engineering consultancy at Arup and spent five years as an associate with Theatre Projects until late 2019. While at Theatre Projects, Rob issued a series of internal briefing papers on acoustics for performance venues under the title *Five Minutes a Week Acoustics*, which have proved invaluable. Rob is now Visiting Professor in Auditorium and Building Acoustics, Institute of Sound and Vibration Research at the University of Southampton.

³⁷ Richard Leacroft, *Civic Theatre Design. With illustrations by the author* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949).

*Sightlines*³⁸ and *Stage-Setting for Amateurs and Professionals*³⁹ examine the relationship between audience, performers and scenery, and he collaborated with Marshall on *Essentials of Stage Planning*.⁴⁰ P. Corry's *Stage Planning and Equipment* offers practical suggestions for the installation of lighting, sound and stage machinery.⁴¹ The assessment of quality is also experiential, as seen in John Keyes' commentary on the early Arts Theatre spaces in Chapter 4,⁴² so the space studies include recollections from practitioners.

Practice-led Research

Practice as a theatre consultant informs this research throughout; every aspect of my working life relates to the design, planning, equipping, and building of performing arts venues. The scope and timeframe of my work varies from project to project; sometimes I am with the client as they explore their initial

³⁸Richard Southern, *Proscenium and Sight-Lines: a complete system of scenery planning and a guide to the Laying Out of Stage for Scene-designers, Stage-Managers, Theatre Architects and Engineers, Theatrical History and Research Workers and those concerned with the planning of stages for small halls* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

³⁹ Richard Southern, *Stage-Setting for Amateurs and Professionals* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).

⁴⁰ Stanley Bell, Norman Marshall and Richard Southern, *Essentials of Stage-Planning. By Stanley Bell, Norman Marshall & Richard Southern, etc. [With illustrations.]* (London: Frederick Muller, 1949).

⁴¹ P. Corry, *Stage Planning and Equipment* (London: Strand Electric and Engineering Company, 1949). These works responded to the post-war growth in civic venues for performance and there is a naivety to the works which presume a traditional, end-on, proscenium relationship with a raised platform stage. The clients were typically local authorities fostered by the Committee for Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) after World War II. These works are an important historiographical source that help understand the reasons behind the design decisions made in the design and planning of the theatre performance-space studies, notably the Lyric Theatre.

⁴² John Keyes, *Going dark: two Ulster theatres* (Belfast: Lagan, 2001).

thoughts about building or redeveloping a theatre, but I also work on projects which have been largely designed before a theatre consultant is appointed, meaning that there is limited scope to change the shape and structure of the building. These are extremes between which there are many variations which stretch the theatre consultant's creativity, but the aim is always to find the most appropriate design for the space balancing the often-conflicting demands of user, costs and contemporary theatre design practice. The design of theatres, planning of facilities and installation of equipment are a constant part of the work, considering any new project in the context within which it will operate and how it may have operated in the recent past. The approach to theatre research is no different, although it requires more effort to establish a clear context for the building design and its practices. This demands an understanding of local context – physically, socially, and culturally – which can be gleaned from the literature and the archives, but also an understanding of contemporary theatre design.

My development as a consultant has occurred alongside academic work; growth in both fields is intertwined. I am more than 12 years at Theatre Projects, having started as a Project Assistant and progressed to Principal and Partner becoming one of the company's senior consultants. I have responsibility for developing the UK work, preparing fee proposals, staffing schedules, and building our team of consultants and designers. In 2009 I joined the first cohort of students on the University of Warwick's MA in Theatre Consultancy, graduating with distinction in 2013. One piece of work for the degree, which examined a studio space attached to the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre in the 1960s, was subsequently published in a peer reviewed journal.⁴³ In addition, I am a member of the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA), attending congress twice yearly, where I hear from established and emerging practitioners from all over the world. The congresses foster dialogue

⁴³ John Riddell, 'Up the Close: The Close Theatre at the Citizens', Glasgow', *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, 5 (2012), 79-116, available at <<https://ijosts.ubiquitypress.com/articles/abstract/159/>> [accessed on 12 August 2020].

on matters of theatre administration, management, and programming, and share varieties of experience from members on issues of identity, conflict, censorship, and freedom of expression. This helps me set my own work in context and to frame the venues I study. I am also a contributor to a group of architects and consultants revising *Theatre Buildings: a design guide*⁴⁴ working as section editor on preliminary planning, and I have contributed to the International Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conferences (ITEAC) in 2014 and 2018, with increased involvement planned for the 2022 conference.

The thesis has been produced through part-time research, which has allowed the time and space for ideas to develop; the work has always been with me, changing the focus of the output over time. Having periods away from the work allows time for reflection, permitting new ideas to emerge. Stepping back from the detail allowed me to see how the development of the Lyric, Group and Arts Theatres resulted in a broad drama offer for the city, similar to a contemporary national theatre, with a mix of classical, modern European and international texts, and Irish plays, verse drama and new writing from Ulster.

Methods of autoethnography and ethnography have been applied to the work, not in the sense of longitudinal, immersive observation, but as a theatre practitioner with extensive experience of working and living in Northern Ireland and as a theatre consultant with years of experience in practice. This provides me with a perspective that at times casts me in the etic role of the observer, but at others affords me the emic voice of the cultural insider. Thus, returning to Geertz, this helps me find an active voice in expressing opinion with confidence and authority.

This is practice-led research, but the methodology is informed by performance as research, an established theatre studies methodology, and practice as research, a tool used by practitioners in non-performing disciplines such as design and directing. Architectural research is an area where there has been new developments in approach. The Royal Institute of British Architects

⁴⁴ Publication (with Routledge) due in 2022, edited by Margaret Shewring.

(RIBA) produced a position paper *What is Architectural Research?*⁴⁵ to encourage architects to conduct more research. Three stages of interaction are identified: architectural process – which examines the theoretical approach to design, planning and modelling; architectural products – which considers completed buildings as objects and the materials, construction techniques and aesthetics of the result; and architectural performance – which looks at the building in use, with attention to the way it is occupied, its social and cultural assimilation into the local built environment and, increasingly, issues of environmental performance. RIBA argues that this method is free from the polarising influences that drive architectural study towards either the academic or practical camps and avoids forcing splits such as science versus art or quantitative versus qualitative. The aim is to ensure a continuing and expanding body of research that feeds back into practice through publication and symposia, thus informing and improving design and architectural practice. This model is a useful guide to interrogating the buildings under study. The applicability of each stage is dependent on the level of information available; some buildings no longer exist or there is scant information in the record. In assessing the spaces studied this thesis draws on this approach combining it with experience as a theatre practitioner and consultant to make meaningful and considered judgements.

Inscriptive practices such as sketching, drawing, and mapping are techniques used by architects to develop the design and to understand the details that make architecture buildable; connecting materials, routing pipes and wires, ensuring compliance with standards and regulations. In architectural research this tool is widely used, with three strands within: copying – this, until the recent growth in digital reproduction, was done by hand and gave the person copying an opportunity to interrogate the drawing in detail and understand how the building is composed and proportioned; collaborative drawing – may indicate a dialogue between individual researchers, it also includes the use of historical precedent or well-known examples of building

⁴⁵ Jeremy Till, *What is architectural research?* (London: RIBA, 2014), p. 6.

type as a means of understanding the subject; and drawing attention – by using a drawing to focus on an area of a building the researcher can guide the reader towards the key aspects they wish to discuss.

These three elements have been used to produce standardised drawn information for inclusion in the thesis. Copying is initially done by photocopying or photographing auditorium and stage plan and section drawings from archives which are then imported into AutoCAD and the building outline traced over as new layers.⁴⁶ The plan drawings provide a composite view looking down on the auditorium and stage using simple lines and colours to indicate the balcony lines, aisles, stage, including a highlighted area of typical acting area where sightlines correspond to defined sightline criteria. The section is on the centreline of the auditorium and stage, showing sufficient detail on the walls to show galleries, slips and boxes and onstage galleries and grids. For most venues, plan and section can be shown together at 1:200 on a single A4 sheet.⁴⁷

The deliverable product of architectural effort, and of all design disciplines, is not the building but the information prepared for the building contractors and used as the basis for construction. This information is expressed in multiple forms, and complete understanding of the building is achieved by reading and cross-referencing: drawings – site maps, scale plans,

⁴⁶ The drawings' line-styles, line-weights and colours of lines, fills and hatching follow a standard style developed at Theatre Projects by theatre designers Iain Mackintosh and Mark Stroomer, a variation of which is widely used by theatre consultants and theatre architects to convey the key relationship between auditorium and stage without extraneous or distracting detail, thus this process is both copying and drawing attention. These appear in Volume II in a sequence that allows the reader to refer to them while reading Volume I. The drawings were created by Ruofan Yao of Theatre Projects, Beijing, to whom I am indebted.

⁴⁷ The style is consistent with a library of existing and historical theatre comparative drawings held at Theatre Projects, where the drawings can be viewed beside exemplars to highlight similarities and differences.

sections, elevations, details and equipment drawings; specifications – written descriptions of the work defining the parameters of all elements including materials, paint colours or other finishes, equipment types, tolerances; and schedules – in spreadsheet form. Schedules include: the bill of quantities, listing the number of each item to be priced and procured by the contractor; room data sheets showing the number and type of installed items in each space including power outlets, telephone and data outlets, switches and control panels; and wiring schedules, detailing each cable type and size, indicating a starting and finishing point and unique ID.

Different disciplines and individuals rely more heavily on one media above another. An architect will tend to produce a hand sketch or CAD drawing to describe a problem, whereas mechanical and electrical engineers, and cost consultants are more inclined to use a schedule and some, including the principal designer⁴⁸ are likely to use a narrative description. While conscious of the need to use these different methods to convey the findings of research and support an argument, this work relies on narrative description but is supported by the drawings and photographs in Volume II.

Archival Research

Much of the research for this thesis has been conducted in archives and the variation in quantity and quality of material available is considerable. The Linen Hall Library Irish Theatre Archive is uncatalogued and disappointingly chaotic, requiring the researcher to trawl through boxes for relevant information. The O'Malley Lyric Theatre Archive at the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) is extremely well organised with the catalogue listing available online. Similarly, the Public Record Office of NI has a fully catalogued archive with excellent online search functions based on well considered keyword metadata. Archives are selective, and the collections clearly show the fingerprints of the curators responsible for assembling them, demonstrating the choices made by those offering the work in the first place. This highlighted the lack of consistency across different archive sources –

⁴⁸ Principal designer was formerly known as health and safety consultant.

searches require a creative approach to the use of keywords as archivists group metadata based on their own priorities. Searching for a venue may not yield a result, however, searching for a playwright, performer, designer, or theatre company associated with the venue can lead to a new and rich seam of information. The lack of good information on buildings and architecture, in particular the lack of drawn plans, was the subject of my conference paper given at NUIG in 2015.⁴⁹ This is the biggest challenge in researching older venues that no longer exist and is the reason that the Arts Theatre Belfast is considered in Chapter 5 rather than as a space study in Part Three; there is insufficient information to provide a thorough commentary on the spaces occupied by the venue during its lifetime.

Text based ephemera such as letters, reports, minutes, manuscripts, programmes, and handbills are well identified and catalogued, as are photographs, and set and costume drawings. Building plans, and related technical information, if present at all, are usually poorly catalogued and may be inaccurately recorded. The O'Malley Lyric Theatre Archive contains numerous building plans, but all are gathered in a few folders in one large archive box. It is unsurprising as this is specialist information in which few archivists are experienced; plans may be at large scale and inconvenient to archive. Drawings may be missing from the material when it arrives with the archivist as the venue did not think it important to keep them, a common issue faced by consultants and architects when refurbishing buildings.

There are exceptions. The Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) is home to an extensive theatre archive which includes many drawings of historic theatres.⁵⁰ More modern buildings including the National Theatre retain an

⁴⁹ John Riddell, 'The archive and the lost spaces of Belfast's Arts Theatre' (unpublished, 2015).

⁵⁰ Frank Matcham, along with C. J. Phipps and W. G. R. Sprague, typify theatre architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Most cities and many towns in the UK had a theatre designed by one of them, many still in use today. For more information see David Wilmore, *Frank Matcham & Co* (Dacre: Theatresearch with Theatreshire Books, 2008).

archive of the building drawings and some are held by architects and engineers.⁵¹ Smaller venues and those outside the major urban centres are less likely to appear in archives – the Theatres Trust keeps a small archive of building information which includes many smaller theatres, but the information available is hugely variable. RIBA also maintains a substantial archive.

Oral History

I have conducted interviews with selected Northern Irish theatre practitioners leading to 24 hours of audio recordings, mostly with older practitioners, whose recollections are instructive and provide colour and context. These interviews have not added substantial new information, but they reveal something of the atmosphere, environment, and the key personalities. The interviews with those developing the contemporary non-formal theatre spaces have been essential to establishing a record of the work, the drivers for creating it and the way it has developed. I have not transcribed the entire content of these interviews but include relevant excerpts in the text where appropriate. I have taken care to be aware of the inherent bias in these accounts, some of which comes, understandably, from the interviewees' passion for their own projects. However, Northern Ireland is a minefield of hidden bias and the most balanced of participants is prone to cultural memory-bias informed by their upbringing and education. This is demonstrated in Chapter 2, where the complexities of identity, politics and language are considered in detail.⁵²

Structure of the thesis

⁵¹ The Barbican Estate's original 'As Built' drawings, which include the Arts Centre and Guildhall School of Music & Drama, are held by architects and engineers Arup, but the practice charges a search fee of almost £1,000 to retrieve information.

⁵² All interviews adhered to the university guidelines on ethical research and were recorded with the participants' full consent. The full interviews are available in .mp4 format.

Part One is formed of three chapters, each acting as a literature review of a distinct discipline relevant to the understanding of the context in which Parts Two and Three are presented. Part One does not bring any new information to the study of history, culture, or architecture, space and place, but, as described in Aims and Methodology, above, draws together existing ideas that help frame the information that follows, particularly the performance-space studies in Chapters 8-10, below.

Chapter 1 is a selective history of Ireland – selective in that the events described are chosen because they would have impacted decisions made when setting-up and running a performance venue. Amongst other sources, Roy Foster’s *Modern Ireland* and J. C. Beckett’s *The Making of Modern Ireland* were used to develop a timeline of significant events from 1485–2020, which appears in Volume II, Figure 4, for reference. This is displayed in two columns – one for National Events and one for Cultural Events. In Chapter 1, threads of understanding are drawn from A. T. Q. Stewart, whose historical analyses resonate throughout.

Chapter 2 examines culture and identity in Northern Ireland. Melvyn Bragg’s BBC Radio 4 series *The Value of Culture*, helped me to filter the literature in this complex area, and has allowed me to home in on authors that deserve further exploration in the context of Northern Ireland – notably Clifford Geertz, Robert Hewison and Stuart Hall. In addition, use is made of the 2011 Northern Ireland Census and the 2018 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, not in order to make statistical analysis, but to demonstrate the complexity and nuance surrounding culture and identity in the Province.

Chapter 3 looks at architecture, space and place, and draws on a range of sources, using the work of Wolfrum and Brandis, and Ray Oldenburg to explore ways that theatres can use architecture and public space – both interior and exterior space – to promote audience and community engagement. Questions of perception of space are also considered, which links with similar themes in Chapter 2. Geopolitics is addressed to demonstrate the complexity of the relationship with place in Ireland.

Part Two forms a bridge between the generalities of Part One and the performance-space studies of Part Three, providing detail of the cultural context of Northern Ireland with a particular focus on theatres in Belfast. The development of these theatres should be understood in the context of Part One, while the spaces that form the basis of study in Part Three, are referred to but not studied in detail in Part Two.

Chapter 4 examines the history of theatre buildings in Belfast from the eighteenth century to the early 2000s, including detailed examination of the Group and Arts Theatres, small theatres not included in Part Three. Chapter 5 considers what was presented in these buildings in the twentieth century, and the cultural influences and influencers that shaped theatre in Ulster. Chapter 6 looks at the new theatres built in the Province in the last 50 years, in the context of modern European playhouse design, with a section looking at alternative interpretations of theatre space, notably fun palaces, which are relevant to the spaces discussed in Chapter 10, below. Chapter 7 examines arts strategy in Northern Ireland from the 1980s, considering the public procurement of new venues and an assessment of the value of these spaces. The background information in Part Two informs the reader on how the conditions were established from which emerged the venues studied in Part Three emerged.

Part Three forms the bulk of this thesis and includes three performance-space studies. They were chosen because they capture the essence of Northern Ireland and its artistic scene at their inception, and track the changing society over subsequent decades. They were, or became, professionally run, and are spread across most of the period of study. Each emerged from a desire to create entertainment for a community and demonstrate differing understandings of, and attitude towards, that community. Since the first of these venues was founded, Northern Ireland has transformed from a society founded on a Protestant/Unionist hegemony underpinned by institutionalised sectarianism, through an extended period of conflict, to an uneasy peace. The shifting emphasis around community is evidence of the nuanced way that political and

cultural changes acutely affect a theatre's sense of its place in the world and how it signifies that place through its activities.

The Lyric Theatre started in the 1950s at a time when there was little distinction between amateur and professional theatre, and its three iterations saw it grow from a private club-theatre focusing on verse drama, to the Province's only purpose-built repertory theatre operating continuously throughout the Troubles, and eventually to a fine modern building. The Lyric witnessed the creation of ACNI, growth in and later decline of public funding.

OMac began in the late 1980s, 20 years after the Troubles started, born of a desire from a new generation of practitioners to find space to create and present work. Where the Lyric was conceived as a vehicle for the interests of a group of middle-class intellectuals, OMac developed from a community of young professional artists seeking to engage with a wider audience.

The non-formal spaces are from the last decade. They demonstrate how the confluence of need for space and the availability of found space, creates suitable conditions for producing new work. In these spaces, notably Big Telly's Creative Shops, the meaning of community is inclusive, the audience afforded agency through participation, curation, and a sense of ownership of the space. In these spaces the threshold is less intimidating.

These small spaces feature a highly-driven and focused individual with a clear vision for the venue and its programme; perhaps a prerequisite for their creation.⁵³ What emerges, as with the Wilmots at the Arts, is what can happen when they cling to authority, the organization out-growing the skills of the individual. In Chapter 8, below, Mary O'Malley is seen struggling to come to terms with the professional leadership of the second Lyric.

What sets this thesis apart from other records of theatre buildings is that it is not just an historical account, but an attempt to interrogate the details of the theatre space. This is: to ensure the necessary information is collated in a

⁵³ As is seen in the following three chapters, many, but not all, are women – including Mary O'Malley at the Lyric, Jan Branch and Úna McCarthy at OMac, Anne McReynolds at the MAC, and Zoë Seaton at Big Telly.

place where it may be found by others; and to make qualitative judgements on the space and its suitability for drama. For the theatre consultant this information is how the practice of designing and planning theatres is refined.

The records of the space, as seen in Part Two, are in some cases based on previous written accounts from the archives – which are generally missing building plans – focusing on more easily stored material: programmes, minutes, and correspondence. The Lyric archive is fuller and includes building plans, planning applications and concept ideas. This demonstrates the changes in approach over the decades as the design and construction of theatres has become more controlled. That the third Lyric and the MAC were procured contemporaneously, permits relevant comparison, informed by personal interviews, reviews and published accounts.

The changing role of theatres in their communities is seen in the importance of their public spaces. The first Lyric acknowledged this by adding a new foyer and terrace area, the second also adding public space, but while the box office would be open in daytime for ticket sales, the bar and coffee bar opened only for shows. It was not until the development of the MAC and the third Lyric, that public spaces were staffed outside performance times, acknowledging both the desire to increase revenue and to promote relevance beyond the artistic community, demonstrating the venues' understanding that providing a third place is a component in their cultural sustainability.

The non-formal spaces in Chapter 10, below, have a less rigid definition of space. The lines between front of house, back of house and performance space are blurred, spaces doubling-up in use, with performances taking place outside or viewed through shop windows. Big Telly's Creative Shops explores the informal ways passers-by engage with those creating the work. Cahoots NI's work in Belfast city centre, most notably in Castle Court shopping centre, highlights how social and political tensions affect an audience's choice to engage with culture. A geopolitically neutral city centre location, largely without perceived sectarian bias, is socially accessible and Cahoots found attendance by a wide-ranging audience many of whom identified as first-time attendees at theatre. The perception of threshold as a barrier to new audiences is a perennial problem of formal theatre, and the case

studies show that entering a shop front on the high street is less daunting, stepping into a unit in a shopping mall even easier. Chapter 10 concludes with a section considering the relevance of non-formal spaces in a wider context by examining the state of the UK High Street and how projects like these contribute to the reinvention of the urban realm.

The inventive and creative spirit

In 1987 Rod Ham observed that:

A very different society, with increasing leisure time and a range of staple entertainment on tap in almost every home, needs something of special interest to attract it away from its fireside, or rather teleside, armchairs. Fortunately electronic gadgets are still no substitute for the immediacy of being physically present at the moment of creation, nor can they provide social contacts with other people.⁵⁴

Ham's words needed updating even before Covid-19 affected every aspect of life for everyone around the globe. Traditional theatre presentation stopped, but the inventive and creative spirit of theatre emerged in new ways. The same spirit that inspired the new work in shopfronts examined in Chapter 10, below, has forced theatre-makers to go online and find new ways of using digital platforms to monetise their material.⁵⁵ This raises questions about the relevance and sustainability of the traditional theatre model and the formal theatre building, but coronavirus reframes them and brings new information to the debate.

The show and the performance-space are inextricably linked – the one influences the other. What the performance-space studies illustrate, is how the imaginative space inhabited by the show affects the design of a new venue, and how the built venue influences the choice and style of the work presented in the

⁵⁴ Roderick Ham, *Theatres - Planning Guidance for Design and Participation* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1987), p. 160.

⁵⁵ Zoë Seaton's comments in Chapter 10, below, about the consumption of culture presage a turn in cultural engagement but have never been more relevant than during lockdown.

imaginative space. The performance-space studies are linked by found space, the Lyric and the MAC moving into their own buildings. It is clear from both, that with the security that comes with having a space of their own, comes a loss of artistic agility – not only does the space influence the programming, but it becomes more cautious as the need to justify and maintain an operating venue necessarily dilutes a bold artistic vision. This thesis acknowledges that there is value in the shared experience of live theatre, and the studies explore the broader value of theatre buildings, including the daytime use of public spaces, and acknowledges that the architecture of a new building adds to the public realm, contributes to placemaking, and is a living, functioning contemporary artwork in its own right. The various routes chosen to achieve this is explored in detail in the performance-space studies.

Part One

Background

Chapter 1: History, Geography and Politics

Chapter 2: Culture

Chapter 3: Architecture, Space and Place

Part One Introduction

Part One – Background will equip the reader with the information needed to get the most out of the subsequent parts by providing a firm grounding in Irish history, geography and politics, the meaning and interpretation of culture, and discourses surrounding architecture, space and place. As the methodology of this thesis has a broad and interdisciplinary scope, it is anticipated that a reader may approach it from within one of these disciplines, and the content of the associated chapter will not be new to them, however, few are likely to be well-versed in all areas.

Part One does not bring any new information to the study of these subjects but brings to the fore the ideas that provide insight into how these subjects inform the understanding of small theatre spaces in Northern Ireland. The centuries of events that led to the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921 and the related geography, supported by the maps and timeline of significant events in Volume II, when combined with cultural study, shows the nuanced interpretation of culture and identity in the Province, demonstrated by census responses and other surveys. It also examines architecture, space and place, considering how buildings contribute to the public realm and serve their communities, and how the value of culture and cultural buildings is measured. A strong link between the history, culture and architecture is established in examining how space and place are contested in Ireland and the extent to which place attachment exists, and establishes the geopolitical position of Northern Ireland in relation to Ireland, Great Britain and the world. Chapter 3 also looks at spatial theory, notably Lefèbvre, and the role of perspective and perception in inhabiting space,

Chapter 1

Geography, History and Politics

A. T. Q. Stewart made three discoveries about Irish history. The first two were that Irish history has a unique and recognisable architecture, and it is an architecture that has parts missing, rendering the façade incomplete. The third ‘was that Irish history was too important to be left to historians’.¹ Stewart acknowledged a natural tendency to dismiss the contributions of other disciplines, but recognised that such prejudice closed the door on potential discoveries that might shed a different light on history. An interdisciplinary approach is relevant considering that the teaching of history, like everything in Northern Ireland, was until recently determined by sectarianism. The state schools, where most students came from Protestant, possibly unionist or loyalist families, taught the history of the hegemony, focusing on relations with Britain. The maintained schools, largely Catholic and nationalist or republican in character, taught a Dublin-centric history that celebrated rebellion and, from the late 1960s, the civil rights movement. It was not until 1997 that a combined history textbook was approved for teaching in state and maintained schools.² Alan McCully observed that ‘the misuse of history had played some part in what had broken out from ’68 onwards. If history had made some contribution to conflict, then could it make some sort of contribution to alleviating that conflict?’³

This chapter is written in the light of Stewart’s thoughts. My first degree was in history but I approach this not as an historian, but as a theatre consultant seeking to understand more deeply how the context within which a

¹ A. T. Q. Stewart, *The shape of Irish history* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2001), p. 8.

² Sandra Gillespie and Gerry Jones, *Northern Ireland and its neighbours since 1920* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

³ Alan McCully to Priya Atwal (presenter), Mark Burman (producer) ‘Northern Ireland - Healing History?’, in *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (BBC Radio 4), 31 January 2020.

theatre is located informs its work and its relevance as a building to the communities it serves. This chapter sets the stage for an exploration of Ulster culture in Part Two, and the performance-space studies in Part Three. The study of spaces, the stories behind how they came into being and the people involved, bring further enlightenment to questions of identity and the meaning of culture and society in Ulster.

Geography

Ireland consists of 32 counties in four provinces – Ulster, Leinster, Munster, and Connacht. Ulster, the northern province, is made up of nine counties;⁴ Northern Ireland consists of six of these – Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone. The remaining three – Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan are part of the Republic of Ireland.⁵ Northern Ireland is British, part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, referred to as the North, the six-counties and commonly Ulster. The Republic of Ireland is a sovereign state, a full member of the European Union and the United Nations, and a member of the Eurozone since 1999, using the Euro since 2002.⁶ It is known as Ireland, the Republic, the South, the 26 counties, occasionally Éire⁷ and the Free State.⁸

The population of the Republic of Ireland in 2016 was 4,762,000, most living around Dublin. The population of Northern Ireland in mid-2018 was

⁴ See Volume II, Figures 1 and 2.

⁵ See Volume II, Figure 3.

⁶ Cliff Taylor, 'The Euro 20 years on: Ireland's long journey to currency union', *The Irish Times*, 2 January 2019, available at <<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/the-euro-20-years-on-ireland-s-long-journey-to-currency-union-1.3745399>> [accessed on 22 July 2019].

⁷ The Gaelic name.

⁸ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 1-5. The name it held between 1921 and 1949.

estimated at 1.88 million.⁹ Belfast is the main city with a population of 340,000 in the city and over one million in the metropolitan area. The combined population of the island of Ireland is around 6.6 million, less than London.¹⁰

Ireland – History and Politics

In the autumn of 2019, as Boris Johnson realised that optimism and bluster might not be enough to deliver Brexit, he stood on the steps of Government Buildings in Dublin alongside Leo Varadkar, suddenly aware that he was reliant on the Taoiseach's help. Fintan O'Toole, wryly observed that 'for the first time since Henry II invaded in 1171, Ireland has more power than England'.¹¹ Ireland has always been the weaker; deliberately hampered by England and Britain. Brexiteers have been irritated by Ireland's persistence in maintaining the alliance with their 27 EU colleagues, seeing this as ungrateful Anglophobia, however, as O'Toole acknowledges, it makes sense. Ireland is part of a grouping that is bigger and more powerful than Britain – 'It's really just rational politics: why would you walk away from a position of strength and return to the unhappily familiar role of the junior partner?'.¹² The old behaviours of haughty patronage and belligerent protectionism have been subverted and, when viewed in the light of 800-years of Anglo-Irish history, come as no surprise.

During the two centuries from the start of the Tudor dynasty in 1485 until the end of the seventeenth century, events took place in Ireland that set the tone for the relationship with England, later Great Britain, until the twentieth century. England enacted Poynings' Law, legislation to enforce a veto over Irish laws, and policies were introduced to restrict farming, the

⁹ Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *2018 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland* Nisra Statistical Bulletin (2019), p. 2.

¹⁰ World Population Review, *Cities in Europe by Population 2019* (2019) <<http://worldpopulationreview.com/continents/cities-in-europe/>> [accessed on 29 July 2019].

¹¹ Fintan O'Toole, 'Letter from Dublin', *The Spectator*, 14 September 2019.

¹² O'Toole, *Letter from Dublin*.

production of certain goods and to restrict Ireland's ability to trade with England and Europe. Following the Reformation, land became the focus, being confiscated from the largely Roman Catholic native Irish and gifted to Protestant incomers.¹³ Increasingly severe restrictions were placed on the civil and religious liberties of Catholics.¹⁴ Three aspirations – self-determination, land tenure and freedom of expression remain at the root of the Irish problem.

By the early-twentieth century, with land reforms and Home Rule occupying the Irish nationalists, new brands of sectarianism and unionism took shape in Ulster. The Orange Order allied with the Conservatives, and unionists began to organise politically.¹⁵ Two new forms of political expression appeared – cultural-nationalism embodied in Yeats and the Abbey,¹⁶ and a labour movement.¹⁷ Belfast, in addition to linen, had a thriving industrial base

¹³ Planters, known as undertakers, during the Plantation of Elizabeth and James, and later the adventurers who gave practical support to Cromwell and the Commonwealth.

¹⁴ J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603–1923* (London: Faber, 1981), pp. 11-60.

¹⁵ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 420-21.

¹⁶ Considered, together with its northern counterpart in a later chapter on culture.

¹⁷ Histpop - Online Historical Population Reports, *Census of Ireland, 1901. Preliminary report, with abstracts of the enumerators, summaries, etc.* (1901) <[http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census%20\(by%20geography\)/Ireland/1901&active=yes&mno=444&tocstate=expandnew&tocseq=500&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&pageseq=first-nonblank](http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census%20(by%20geography)/Ireland/1901&active=yes&mno=444&tocstate=expandnew&tocseq=500&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&pageseq=first-nonblank)> [accessed on 25 July 2019], p. 5. Ireland had undergone considerable urbanisation in the nineteenth century. The figures for Dublin County suggests it was larger than Belfast with 448,000, however Belfast was split across Counties Antrim and Down so the figures are not comparable. Belfast was, in fact, the largest city by 1901, with 348,000 inhabitants having grown by more than 25% since 1891. Dublin had 286,000 inhabitants in the urban area.

serving the British market. Harland & Wolff was one of the largest and most advanced shipyards in the world and the city's most significant employer.¹⁸ Belfast was the natural place for labour to organise and it did so under James Larkin.¹⁹ In Ulster, industrial employers were mostly Protestant and adopted a policy of employing only Protestants as skilled and unskilled labour, fostering resentment among Catholics hoping for better employment. Larkin had little success in mobilising labour according to class.²⁰

As part of an Irish nationalist aspiration, ideas had developed in the late nineteenth century surrounding the de-Anglicisation of Ireland and the rediscovery of a Gaelic heritage. Radical cultural-nationalist organisations formed, and a political strand emerged in 1908 as *Sinn Féin* with an unequivocal manifesto based on independence.²¹ By 1910–1912, John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power at Westminster, bolstering Lloyd George, who tabled a Home Rule Bill in 1912. The response from the Tories was vehement and swift, leaping to the defence of unionism. The Unionist leader, Sir Edward Carson,²² a dynamic and effective orator, roused the loyal masses into action.²³ The idea of partition had already been considered but, in September 1912, Carson mobilised 250,000 people to sign a Solemn League and Covenant swearing to defend Ulster's

¹⁸ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 388. The East Belfast Division of the city, in which the yard resides, increased in population by 42% between 1891 and 1901.

¹⁹ Larkin later expanded to Dublin where, although not primarily a nationalist, he found an ally in radical republican and Marxist James Connolly.

²⁰ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 440-41. Connolly blamed this on atavism and the ruling classes, but the problem persists; social issues that might unite working people from each tradition lead to retrenchment along tribal lines.

²¹ Reimagined from Gaelic organisation *Cumman na nGaedheal*.

²² The Dublin-born barrister who had prosecuted Oscar Wilde.

²³ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 457-67. With the help of steady, reliable Ulsterman James Craig.

place in the Union.²⁴ Home Rule was passed in May 1914,²⁵ but with the outbreak of war it was shelved indefinitely. In the south a radical element, the Irish Volunteers under Eoin MacNeill,²⁶ saw opportunity for rebellion.²⁷ The Easter Rising of 1916, the result of cultural-nationalism, was a disorganised affair hampered by poor communication, secrecy and no clear line of command. It was confined to Dublin with fewer than 2,000 poorly equipped and trained men and with no coordinated strategy.²⁸ With a war on, the British had been taken by surprise, but quickly took decisive action against rebel strongholds. Four hundred and fifty died and more than 2,600 were wounded; a bloody enough sacrifice, but what followed signalled the beginning of the end of the Union.²⁹

The court martials of the leaders was swift, and 14 were executed by firing squad.³⁰ The effect of the almost daily ritual of execution, was to build momentum for their martyr status and ensure that every child in the south of Ireland would know them, many named in their honour.³¹ Political and military efforts were renewed with new leaders emerging.³² In the Anglo-Irish War

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 468-70. Riots, nothing new in Belfast, were frequent, but the mood was capitalised in the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), an ordered and well-trained army, quietly importing huge quantities of arms and drilling new recruits.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 470-71. Carson had already made detailed plans for a provisional government in Ulster.

²⁶ Influenced by the remnants of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB).

²⁷ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 472-77.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 478-82.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 483-84.

³⁰ Between 3 May and 12 May 1916.

³¹ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 485-90.

³² Notably Michael Collins, keen to organise a more effective fighting force and avoid the mistakes of 1916, and Eamon de Valera, who by the end of 1917 was President of an alternative parliament of Ireland, *Dáil Éireann*.

1919–1921,³³ the Volunteers were rebranded as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) continuing guerrilla style attacks on police and army.³⁴ The guerrilla fighting style of the Irish Republicans was nothing new to Irish rebels. While the Provisional IRA of the 1970s may have adopted techniques from the Viet Cong and Angolans, this was a natural style of fighting rooted in history:

The primary pattern which emerges from the background of Irish violence is that of the secret army, the shadowy banditti “on its keeping” in the mountains and the bogs, whose lineage is traceable from the woodkernes of the sixteenth century to the provisional I.R.A. [...] English observers remarked on the difficulty of coming to grips with them. After a raid on a planter’s dwellings they simply melted away into the wood, or were metamorphosed into contented peasantry tilling the land or herding cattle.³⁵

Northern Ireland

The unionist north watched anxiously as the Irish parliament claimed Ulster for a united Irish Republic, and relations between Protestants and Catholics in Ulster grew increasingly suspicious.³⁶ A swift resolution came in a revised Home Rule Bill in September 1920, excluding the six-counties, and the Northern Ireland Parliament was opened by George V in June the following year.³⁷ The terms from Britain offered the Irish Free State autonomy over domestic and financial affairs and the right to an army, but requiring an oath of allegiance to the British crown, which was eventually changed to an oath of

³³ Or War of Independence, depending on one’s perspective,

³⁴ Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603–1923*, p. 447.

³⁵ A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Narrow Ground: Aspects of Ulster, 1609–1969* (London: Faber, 1977), p. 115.

³⁶ Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603–1923*, p. 450.

³⁷ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 503.

allegiance to the Free State and fidelity to the crown. A split was inevitable and in due course a bloody and vindictive civil war began in the South.³⁸

In 1932, de Valera's *Fianna Fáil* won the general election, after which he commenced to strip away remaining connections to the United Kingdom. He rewrote the constitution of the Free State asserting a claim over all 32 counties. Article Two of the constitution stated the right of all born on the island to Irish citizenship, and Article Three demonstrated the 'firm will' of the nation for reunification.³⁹ Since the Free State and Northern Ireland were born of the same instrument from Westminster, it was conceived as temporary; mechanisms existed to dismantle the border. However, in 1949 Taoiseach John Costello's declaration of a republic made an end to partition more remote than ever.⁴⁰

Young Northern Ireland

The new government at Stormont had a substantial unionist majority and barely changed in structure and character for the next 40 years, its functioning largely to implement policy from Westminster. The big industries of the Lagan Valley were in decline and new ones, apart from aerospace, did not come to Belfast. Social conditions in Belfast were appalling and Catholics fared worse; disproportionately represented in the workforce, especially in professional and public services, they struggled to organise politically, not helped by persistent gerrymandering which established districts guaranteed to return unionist representatives.⁴¹ The Catholic minority did not conceive of themselves as such, they were part of a majority on the island, part of a foreign state that claimed them as their own; there was no incentive to assimilate.⁴²

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 505-26. Lasting a year, it saw many local atrocities committed on each other by former neighbours, and the death of both Michael Collins and fellow treaty negotiator Arthur Griffiths.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 543-50.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 562-66.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 555-58.

⁴² Stewart, *Narrow Ground*, p. 175.

In World War II, Northern Ireland eagerly stepped-up; had it not been for the war, the economic and social conditions in Ulster would not have improved so quickly. The Province's ports and airbases were important strategic locations for the North Atlantic. The workforce in shipbuilding, engineering and the aircraft industry grew, and essential agricultural output was boosted. Belfast suffered from German bombing with an horrendous period of blitz in the spring of 1941, however, loyalty to Britain in the face of adversity was rewarded in the post-war period with financial support from Westminster with funding from British budgets. By the Festival of Britain, Ulster living standards had risen to nearly 75 per cent above the Republic.⁴³

There had been ongoing republican violence in Northern Ireland since partition, mostly targeted against members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and later the B-Specials, an armed special constabulary formed in 1933 to 'contain the endemic sectarian violence and impose order on mixed areas',⁴⁴ the membership of which included ex-UVF and members of 'unsavoury murder gangs'.⁴⁵ This, combined with the discrimination in employment and representation, led to increasing alienation among Catholics.⁴⁶ In 1963, Captain Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister and adopted a more open approach attracting scorn from cynical nationalists and fury from unionists, embodied in 'the fundamentalist cleric Ian Paisley'.⁴⁷ O'Neill dismissed Paisley as a fanatic, misreading the huge swell of popular support rising around him.⁴⁸ On the

⁴³ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 558-59.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 529. The B-Specials were disbanded in 1970 and replaced by the Ulster Defence Regiment, a part-time force that retained the same Protestant protectionist character.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 580-84.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 586.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 585-87. Paisleyite supporters represented a largely working-class Protestant group disenchanted with the policies of the middle-class unionist hierarchy, which would eventually lead to a split in unionism and the founding of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

Catholic side, tension and frustration found an outlet in the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association founded in 1967.⁴⁹ Taking its cue from student revolts, People's Democracy used civil disobedience as its chosen tool, and the tactics brought the leaders, notably Bernadette Devlin, to attention worldwide.⁵⁰ Initial action was around matters of housing provision, and marches, squats and sit-ins attracted stern often violent intervention from the RUC and B-Specials in collusion with Paisleyite mobs.⁵¹

This highlights the distinction between sectarianism and terrorism. Stewart suggests that 'terrorist violence consists of a deliberately planned campaign of outrages intended to achieve a political purpose, and is directly aimed at coercing governments. Sectarian violence, on the other hand, is the continuing consequence of environmental and historical circumstance.'⁵²

The Troubles

The events of 1968 and early 1969 led to increased tension and violence culminating in the marching season of the summer of 1969. In August, after three days of rioting, in the 'Battle of the Bogside', Stormont asked the British Government to deploy troops on the streets of Northern Ireland.⁵³ The Troubles that followed, altered the character of life in Northern Ireland for three decades and the period is peppered with events that continue to resonate in the Province today.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 585-87.

⁵⁰ Paul Arthur, *The People's Democracy 1968-1973* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1974), pp. 1-10.

⁵¹ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 588-91.

⁵² Stewart, *The shape of Irish history*, p. 81.

⁵³ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Services, *The Deployment of British Troops – Summary of Main Events* (2019)

<<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/troops/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]

Internment, the arrest and detention without trial of suspected paramilitaries, operated between August 1971 and December 1975.⁵⁴ On the afternoon of Sunday 30 January 1972, a civil rights march ended when the Parachute Regiment shot and killed 13 men injuring a further 13 people. The event caused outrage worldwide and fuelled the IRA campaign.⁵⁵ 1972 was the worst year of the troubles with almost 500 deaths, dissatisfied with the NI government's ability to manage the situation, Edward Heath took over and, on 28 March, Stormont adjourned for the final time.⁵⁶

The Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) strike in May 1974 was a protest by the loyalist workforce to the Sunningdale Agreement which proposed that the Republic should have input into the running of Northern Ireland.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Services, *Internment – Summary of Main Events* (2019) <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/intern/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]. The security benefits were minimal, and the chief beneficiary was the Provisional IRA as 95 per cent of the nearly 2,000 people interned were Catholic, boosting support.

⁵⁵ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Services, *'Bloody Sunday', 30 January 1972 – Summary of Main Events* (2019) <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/bsunday/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019].

⁵⁶ David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2000), pp. 76-97.

⁵⁷ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Services, *Ulster Workers' Council Strike – Summary of Main Events* (2019) <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/uwc/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]. The strike was successful due to the broad base of active support from an increasingly alienated Protestant community working in key industries; the effects were immediate and affected the whole population.

In 1981 ten IRA hunger strikers died in the Maze Prison,⁵⁸ turning *Sinn Féin* into a political force in parliamentary and local elections and leading to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985.⁵⁹ It aimed to promote peace and reconciliation between the two communities and to encourage unionists to accept power-sharing of devolved matters. It contained two key points: that there would be no change in the status of the Province without majority assent; and that the Republic of Ireland would become a consultee in all future discussions about the administration of the Northern Ireland.⁶⁰

Meetings between Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) leader John Hume and *Sinn Féin* president Gerry Adams from 1988 to 1993, laid the foundations for later accords. The IRA ceasefire of August 1994 was well-received, but it was broken in 1996 and, after two years of talks, the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement was reached on 10 April 1988. Devolution of powers to a power-sharing executive at Stormont was completed in December 1999, but unionists remained unhappy about decommissioning of weapons and threatened to resign. The Executive sat only intermittently for years until May

⁵⁸ Hunger striking was an established tool. Terence MacSwiney's death in Brixton prison in 1920 had been shown to have a huge effect on Irish nationalists.

⁵⁹ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Services, *The Hunger Strike of 1981 – Summary* (2019) <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/hstrike/summary.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]. The most significant development in relations between Britain and Ireland since the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

⁶⁰ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Services, *Anglo-Irish Agreement - Summary of Events* (2019) <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/aia/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]. It was not successful in bringing the two sides together within Ulster, but it substantially improved British-Irish relations and paved the way for the future peace process.

2007 when Ian Paisley of the DUP was elected First Minister (FM) and Martin McGuinness of *Sinn Féin* Deputy FM.⁶¹

The Northern Ireland Assembly and its Executive exercises powers transferred to it from the Northern Ireland Office at Westminster, with responsibility for culture and the arts residing with the Department for Communities.⁶² Suspended in January 2017 due to disagreements between the DUP and *Sinn Féin*, it did not sit again until early 2020.⁶³

Legacy of History

Stewart points out that ‘the Irish, Catholic and Protestant alike, are not prone to understate a grievance. This is one of the marked differences between the Irish and the English’.⁶⁴ Irish history is beset with false assumptions and half-truths which have grown to take on a life of their own, but the three themes of self-determination, land, and freedom of expression persist. The idea of invasion is deeply ingrained in the Irish psyche. Shaw claimed to be ‘a genuine typical Irishman of the Danish, Norman, Cromwellian, and (of course) Scottish invasions’.⁶⁵ One of the earliest texts of medieval Ireland, *Leabhar Gabhála / The Book of the Invasions*, is an origin story in poetry and prose which remains

⁶¹ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Services, *The Irish Peace Process – Summary* (2019) <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019].

⁶² NI Direct, *Changes to government departments* (2019) <<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/changes-government-departments>> [accessed on 29 July 2019].

⁶³ Ben Kelly, ‘Why is there no government in Northern Ireland and how did power-sharing collapse?’, *Independent*, 30 April 2019, available at <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/northern-ireland-talks-latest-power-sharing-deal-stormont-sinn-fein-dup-a8893096.html>> [accessed on 29 July 2019].

⁶⁴ Stewart, *Narrow Ground*, p. 178.

⁶⁵ Dan H. Laurence and Daniel J. Leary (eds), *Bernard Shaw The complete prefaces* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), p. 32.

important in Irish cultural identity.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, until the sixteenth century, Ireland was as far west as migrants or invaders could travel.⁶⁷ The personal origin story is important to the Irish; the sense of a home place is strong, and remains so even for those whose families emigrated generations before, as is explored in Chapter 2 on culture.

Invasion was the big issue in the Tudor and Stuart period, plantation was not responsible for partition,⁶⁸ as Ulster had a long tradition of migration to and from the southwest of Scotland.⁶⁹ Plantation, however, contributes to the sense of loss surrounding place in Ireland. The displacement of families from lands was significant during and after Oliver Cromwell. The brilliant savagery and single-mindedness of his campaigns won him a special level of hatred among the Irish, and the brutal sacking of Drogheda ‘set a deadly trap for the British soldier in Ireland. Wherever he goes in that country, Cromwell walks

⁶⁶ Royal Irish Academy, *Leabhar Gabhála / The Book of the Invasions* (2019) <<https://www.ria.ie/leabhar-gabhala-book-invasions>> [accessed on 31 July 2019]. The tales, part of a strong oral tradition, were recorded in Irish by scholars in manuscripts several of which survive and are now conserved in special collections.

⁶⁷ Ciara Kenny, ‘New Irish ‘DNA atlas’ maps genes of the people of Ireland’, *The Irish Times*, 18 December 2017, available at <<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/new-irish-dna-atlas-maps-genes-of-the-people-of-ireland-1.3331369>> [accessed on 31 July 2019]. The recent developments in the study of DNA have found evidence of ancestors from all over the British Isles, Celts from northwest France and Norse Vikings. However, it also showed ten distinct genetic groups that demonstrated little movement beyond local areas.

⁶⁸ It was a sporadic affair, not universally successful and spread out across the island including substantial schemes in Munster.

⁶⁹ Lloyd Robert Laing, *The Archaeology of Celtic Britain and Ireland c. AD 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2006). The colonisation of Antrim and Down, now the most Protestant and unionist areas of Northern Ireland, was due to this long-established link.

by his side'.⁷⁰ From the eighteenth century, ownership, tenancy, rents, and inheritance became the issue, a backdrop to Home Rule for an Ireland now in a union with Britain. In Northern Ireland the obsession with land and place continues, with polarised communities marking their territory with emblems and symbols that signify the identity of the residents. In 1969 in Derry City, the slogan 'You are now entering free Derry', was painted on a gable-end at the northern end of the nationalist Bogside, a bold statement of identity and ownership, and a warning to those who might enter. Free Derry Corner was the scene of the Battle of the Bogside in August 1969 which precipitated the deployment of British Troops, but the rules of engagement were established centuries before. It is one of many such areas in Ulster, a 'zone where the hurling of a brick or the firing of a pistol can start an earthquake'.⁷¹

The Irish problem is considered by many a religious one, however after the Reformation there was not a clean divide between Protestant and Roman Catholic, but a struggle among denominations to become the established church,⁷² but by the end of the seventeenth century the two ideas were conflated; the dissenting faiths subject to ongoing discrimination under the Penal Laws, almost as harshly as the Catholics. Although there remained plenty of radical thinking Protestants, notably in the north, up until the 1798 Rebellion, by then, the Orange Order had been formed and the battle lines between Protestant and Catholic more clearly drawn. Unrest among those identifying as Irish began to swing between the issues of land, freedom of expression – religious, political and social – and self-determination. In the

⁷⁰ Stewart, *The shape of Irish history*, p. 87.

⁷¹ Stewart, *Narrow Ground*, p. 75. Free Derry Corner was born of the same sense of place that drove the Protestant Apprentice Boys to bar the gates of the city in 1689. The original mural still stands, a lone wall in the central-reservation of a dual-carriageway; a nearby obelisk commemorates the 13 dead of Bloody Sunday.

⁷² Eventually won by the Anglican Church of Ireland which subverted other denominations, especially Presbyterians, as much Catholics.

nineteenth century it was at first freedom of expression,⁷³ but by the end of the century, other expressions of Irishness were sought and there was a resurgence in the Irish language and Gaelic myth with the rise of cultural nationalism and its anti-British rhetoric. In the early-twentieth century, unionism began to demonstrate similar behaviour in Ulster; a fierce claim to territory and an equally determined demand for the freedom to live as they chose. Having succeeded, these rights were once again denied the other side. Chapter 2 examines these behaviours from the perspective of social anthropology.

Conclusion

Protestants held the view that the Catholics had brought about their own destruction; Catholics blamed the Protestants, and/or the British, for everything. Centuries have been characterised by frequent rebellion and massacre of settlers by the Irish, and an entrenched, protectionist attitude from Protestants, a siege mentality born out of fear; much of the symbolism of Protestant, unionist, loyalist identity, the bonfires and the beating drums comes from warnings and calls to arms, summoning men to defend castles and walled towns. Similarly, Catholic, nationalist and republican identity is rooted in a memory of loss of land, religious freedom and civil rights. Stewart sees both traditions as interlocked and wrote of the deep impact of this shared history on the psyche of the north:

At an early stage of the Ulster troubles, it became apparent that attitudes, words and actions which were familiar and recognisable to any student of Irish history, but which seemed hardly relevant to politics in the twentieth century, were coming back into fashion. This was not to be explained by the deliberate imitation of the past; it could be accounted for only by some mysterious form of transmission from generation to generation. In many ways it was a frightening revelation, a nightmarish illustration of the folk-memory of Jungian psychology.

⁷³ With O'Connell's crusade for Catholic emancipation, and then self-determination and Parnell's fight for Home Rule.

Men and women who had grown to maturity in a Northern Ireland at peace now saw for the first time the monsters which inhabited the depths of the community's unconscious mind.⁷⁴

A solution to the Irish question has been a British aspiration for centuries. It is one of several international situations arising from the acquisitive foreign policies of the imperial age and the well-intentioned meddling of later governments. The Balkans and the Middle East are examples to which Ireland may be added.⁷⁵ Given the intractability of the Irish border question as applied to Brexit, Westminster would surely respond very differently to the division bill if the Acts of 1801 and 1920 were voted upon today. The state fails to appreciate nuances in the tension between communities – the relationship with the other side defines their identity every bit as much as they do themselves. Stewart, again, has the measure of it:

There is no misunderstanding between Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland, none whatsoever. Nor do they need to get to know each other better. They know each other only too well, having lived alongside each other for four centuries, part of the same society yet divided by politics and history. This is not just a clash of cultures; it is a culture in itself.⁷⁶

Perhaps the solution to the Irish problem is that there is no solution or, perhaps there is no problem.

⁷⁴ Stewart, *Narrow Ground*, p. 58.

⁷⁵ Examined in detail in Chapter 3 with the framework of geopolitics.

⁷⁶ Stewart, *The shape of Irish history*, p. 185.

Chapter 2

Culture and Identity

Bridget I accept and understand that being Irish you haven't been exposed to multiculturalism to the same degree that someone in –

Eric Excuse me, can I just stop you there? I think you must have misheard me. I come from East Belfast. I've lived there all my life.

Bridget And?

Eric The last thing I am is Irish. My grandfather was killed in the Battle of the Somme. My father died at Dunkirk. And I too would die for my right to be British. My British identity, my culture, my, our way of life, *ours*, our heritage and being, our very, our *being*. Every summer I parade with the Orange. I fly the flag of the Union from the rooftop of our house. I worked for Her Majesty's Government to combat the relentless campaign of genocide conducted by the IRA against the Protestant people of Ulster over the course of three decades. I am anything but Irish. I am British. I am exclusively and non-negotiably British. I am not nor never have been nor never will be Irish.¹

Culture

Culture and identity are tightly-bound in Northern Ireland. In *Cyprus Avenue*, Eric Miller lists many things that confirm his identity as British, the most significant being the affirmation of what he is not – Irish. This chapter considers the meaning of the word culture, how it is understood in Northern Ireland and how it relates to theatre spaces in Belfast. Sociolinguistics, cultural studies, the value of culture and questions of identity are also considered.

¹ David Ireland, *Cyprus Avenue* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), pp. 8-9.

Culture, Melvyn Bragg observes, ‘means entirely different things to different people’.² Matthew Arnold suggested, ‘a study of perfection, the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere’.³ Ruskin had a broader notion and encouraged the exposure of ‘lively young minds [...] to things as well as words’ such as the study of science and natural history. Ruskin’s understanding of culture included art and architecture but also ‘fairy-stories’.⁴ Arguments surrounding high-culture versus low-culture, argues John Carey,⁵ have been ongoing since reading began,⁶ but Hewison⁷ stresses that, after Arnold, most commentators followed his notion of culture.⁸ A divide soon occurred between those who saw culture as the arts, and those who sought a broader anthropological definition.

Edward Tylor⁹ gave this classic definition – ‘Culture or civilisation [...] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, laws,

² Melvyn Bragg (presenter), Thomas Morris (producer), ‘Culture and Anarchy’, in *The Value of Culture* (BBC Radio 4), 31 December 2012.

³ Lawrence Goldman, in Bragg, ‘Culture and Anarchy’. Arnold was in favour of high-culture but ignored the increasing popularity of Music Hall, and popular literature among an increasingly literate populace.

⁴ Dinah Birch, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Cultural Engagement and Professor of English Literature at the University of Liverpool, in Bragg, ‘Culture and Anarchy’.

⁵ John Carey is Emeritus Merton Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford.

⁶ Stefan Collini, Professor of Intellectual History and English Literature at Clare Hall, Cambridge in Bragg, ‘Culture and Anarchy’.

⁷ Robert Hewison is visiting professor at the University of Lancaster and has written extensively on John Ruskin.

⁸ Robert Hewison, in Bragg, ‘Culture and Anarchy’. Hewison demonstrates how Ruskin suggested that creativity was stolen from the people, robbing them of the opportunity to express their true nature.

⁹ Melvyn Bragg (presenter), Thomas Morris (producer) ‘Culture of the Anthropologists’, in *The Value of Culture* (BBC Radio 4), 1 January 2013.

customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'.¹⁰ Tylor's *Primitive Culture*¹¹ appeared around the same time as Darwin's *The Descent of Man*¹² both seeking to answer the same question; what makes man different? Tylor suggested that culture is everything we get from community, not biology, making it separate from race, inheritance and genes. Franz Boas¹³ used culture to oppose the idea, common in the US, that race explains differences. He conceived of culture as plural, a community might come upon a new idea by inventing it independently or borrowing it from another. Simple comparisons between communities were not valid; each must be understood in its own context – important in the understanding of opposing communities in Ulster. This form of cultural anthropology argues that what matters is the shared ideas of 'the collective cast of mind'; the values communicated in symbols as opposed to social anthropology which states that the most instructive route to understanding people and their differences is social organization, political system and economy.¹⁴ Perception is key to the debate 'because humans make meaning of the world'.¹⁵ During the twentieth-century Boas' ideas popularised the notion of cultural pluralism, opposing Tylor's assertion of a single destination for the development of all cultures, suggesting a broader range of outcomes.

¹⁰ Robert H. Winthrop, *Dictionary of concepts in cultural anthropology* (New York and London: Greenwood, 1991), p. 34.

¹¹ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom* (London: J. Murray, 1871).

¹² Charles Darwin, *The descent of man, and selection in relation to sex. In two volumes with illustrations* (London: John Murray, 1871).

¹³ Franz Uri Boas was a German-born American anthropologist and a pioneer of modern anthropology.

¹⁴ Adam Kuper, *Culture: the anthropologists' account* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 227.

¹⁵ Christina Toren, Professor of Social Anthropology at St Andrews, in Bragg, 'Culture of the Anthropologists'. This theme of perception comes up again in Chapter 3, below, in relation to the individual experience of space.

The work of Clifford Geertz is among the most instructive when considering the apparently polarised communities of Northern Ireland. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*,¹⁶ he argued that anthropology is not a science searching for a law, but an interpretive form providing tools with which to seek meaning. Culture, as Geertz sees it, is a series of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms, which people use to make sense of the world. People in cultural groupings share deep values and ideas about the world which they may not be able to articulate directly, but symbolic forms provide indirect means of expression for these values and permit interpretation – Eric Miller’s list; flags, parades, institutions, does just this. People of one cultural grouping and geographic area tend to be fixed, sharing similarities and differences from their neighbours which are distinct from race, but if people’s interests are broken down into smaller packets including religion, arts, sport etc., it becomes possible to look at groups based on shared interest rather than perceived cultural background. Within cultural groups there is rarely consensus, therefore one of the great values of culture is that it provides a shared basis for disagreement. Following established groupings based on class, religion or beliefs does not help find meaning, it is more instructive, Kuper argues, to compare social organisation, power distribution and intellectual activity as engaged in by groups and individuals.¹⁷

Free elementary education came to Ireland in the late-nineteenth century, creating a mass reading public within a generation. Access to culture was enlarged by innovations including photography and cinema as people could see real images of other peoples and cultures. Cinema was silent, initially, and language was no barrier to global accessibility.¹⁸ This created a

¹⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Fontana, 1973).

¹⁷ Adam Kuper, in Bragg, ‘Culture of the Anthropologists’.

¹⁸ Melvyn Bragg (presenter), Thomas Morris (producer), ‘Mass Culture’, in *The Value of Culture* (BBC Radio 4), 3 January 2013. Authors including H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and G. B. Shaw began to cater for the new audience with works serialised in newspapers, often abridged, addressing issues of

tension between art and entertainment, and critics including Leavis saw minority high-culture as a bastion against the influx of popular entertainment.¹⁹ A parallel question, posed by philosopher Roger Scruton, asked if low and high-culture were merely different types or if there was a difference in quality. Scruton argued that there is good and bad culture and consequently good and bad taste, but that people could be taught good taste.²⁰

In the 1960s, Richard Hoggart's Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies began to examine how books, newspapers and magazines changed the intellectual landscape. He determined that working-class culture was organized in movements and societies, expressing itself through poetry, art, and music as a whole way of life. Raymond Williams built on this work with a method that straddles sociology and English literature, envisioning culture as a means of production and a way of making meaning.²¹ When Stuart Hall took over from Hoggart, the interrogation of culture and national identity widened, calling into question notions of Britishness and the role of immigrant populations in reshaping contemporary British culture:²² one of the most significant markers in cultural identity being language.

interest. There was resistance from the intellectual establishment, with a modernist literary canon that sought to rise above the reach of the semi-educated mass with works by Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot.

¹⁹ The BBC's initial radio output – Third Programme, Home Service and Light Programme – was high, middle and low-brow

²⁰ Roger Scruton, 'The Great Swindle', *Aeon*, 17 December 2012, available at <<https://aeon.co/essays/a-cult-of-fakery-has-taken-over-what-s-left-of-high-culture>> [accessed on 2 August 2019].

²¹ Robert Hewison, in Bragg, 'Mass Culture'.

²² This work, which like Williams's was influenced by Marxian theory, saw that culture could be a means to revolution, arguing that culture can be used to effect political, social and economic change within society.

Language and Sociolinguistics

Words and names have many meanings depending on the specific context and by whom they are delivered.²³ In Northern Ireland, language is symbolic of freedom of expression and is contested and protected as jealously as space. The growth of English as a unitary language with a written component, and the spread of English-speaking residents, strengthened the English language in Ireland against the oral Gaelic tradition. English was considered a pure tongue and Irish, a lesser language; a dangerous tool for subversion. Irish remains at the centre of nationalist's cultural opposition to British rule. Its use as a political tool in Ulster is due, in part, to its place in definitions of identity; 'the *cúpla focal* (few words) can be used as a badge of Irishness'.²⁴ The contemporary Gaelic revival is centred in Ulster, with a growth in use during the Troubles, notably amongst Republican prisoners in what became known as the gaoltacht.²⁵ *Sinn Féin* has appropriated the language distancing many interested Protestants; 'every time [Gerry Adams] opens his mouth he puts a nail in the coffin of the language for the Prods'.²⁶

Ulster-Scots vies for recognition as a minority language in the Province.²⁷ If those identifying as Irish have Gaelic, then surely those

²³ The word Fenian, for example, which historically refers to a member of the IRB, the pre-cursor to the IRA, may be a derogatory term when used by a loyalist, or a matter of pride for a republican; a proud Fenian.

²⁴ Iarfhlaith Watson, 'The Irish Language and the Media', in R. Hickey (ed.), *Sociolinguistics in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), pp. 60-80, p. 78.

²⁵ Sean Cahill, 'The Politics of the Irish Language Under the English and British Governments', *The Proceedings of the Barra Ó Donnabhain Symposium*, (2007), 111-26 (112). A pun on *Gaeltacht*, the Irish name for a zone of native speakers.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁷ This supports Geertz's notion that separate cultural groupings sharing the same territory assert their differences through similar practices of marginally differing content, thus language joins Miller's list.

identifying as British have English, however, English is so widespread it is not sufficiently rooted in a region as to be distinct. Contemporary Irish-English and Ulster-English are characterised by accent and syntax rather than dialect and are certainly not a language.²⁸ Ulster-Scots offered those who identified as British, a distinct phonology the roots of which came from the Scottish heritage that many claimed as their own; Adamson established Ulster-Scots as an essential component of unionist identity, proposing a common history to the vocabulary used in the contested area of Ulster and Scotland with a linguistic root that predated Gaelic.²⁹ He referred to Ulster-Scots as a dialect which, along with Ulster-English, is a variant of English.³⁰ The position of Scots as a language is similarly contested in Scotland where the language or dialect debate is influenced by ‘the political opinion and linguistic knowledge of the discussants’.³¹ The Belfast Agreement was careful to ensure ambiguity in many things, language included, and Wes neither confirms nor denies the status of Ulster-Scots.³² An Irish Language Act to protect and promote the

²⁸ Raymond Hickey, ‘Preface’, in R. Hickey (ed.), *Sociolinguistics in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), pp. i-xxii, p. xxii.

²⁹ Ian Adamson, *The Identity of Ulster: The Land, the Language and the People* (Belfast: Pretani Press, 1982), p. 108.

³⁰ Adamson, *The Identity of Ulster*, p. 1. If Ulster-Scots did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it. In 1992 the Ulster-Scots Language Society was formed and began to publish the journal *Ullans* to encourage use in education, speech and writing, and to establish an agreed orthography for a largely spoken and unwritten form.

³¹ Barbara Loester, “‘A significant part of an insignificant identity’: Tradition, globalisation and the re-articulation of north-east Scots”, *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 21 (2017), 335-47 (335-36).

³² Tony Crowley, ‘The Political Production of a Language: The Case of Ulster-Scots’, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 16 (2006), 23-35 (33-35). It does, however, promote tolerance and diversity with regard to all minority languages including, specifically, Gaelic and Ulster-Scots, which accords with the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages of 2001.

language, as is the case for Welsh and Scots-Gaelic, has been a recurring proposal from *Sinn Féin* and when it is raised, unionists are quick to demand parity for Ulster-Scots. The 2011 Census suggests that there are 140,000 people who have some ability in Ulster-Scots and 185,000 in Irish,³³ based on one question; ‘Can you understand, speak, read or write Irish or Ulster-Scots?’³⁴ – not on any considered research. In practice, the written forms of both languages appear in street names and government publications. Omagh’s arts centre, opened in 2007, is known as Strule Arts Centre, *Ionad Ealaíne na Sruthaile* and *Strule Hoose o Airts* and all internal signage is trilingual.³⁵

Cultural Studies

Marxist theory is influential in the way Western culture is interrogated. The Marxian approach appears in spatial theory particularly in the work of Lefèbvre who remains the major influence in that field, who in turn, was greatly influenced by Michel Foucault.³⁶ Marx and Engels referred to culture as perpetuating the dominance of the ruling class through the promotion of an ideology. Gramsci develops this idea suggesting the establishment of a hegemony between state (police, military, state bodies) and ‘civil society’ (church, school, media) – the state establishes dominance and civil society induces compliance.³⁷ The cultural forms that promote consent remain in the control of the state and stability is maintained when these are broadly

³³ Ulster-Scots Agency/Boord o Ulster-Scotch, *An Introduction to the Ulster-Scots Language* <<http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com/what-is-ulster-scots/language/>> [accessed on 11 June 2017].

³⁴ Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency, *Northern Ireland census 2011: key statistics summary report* (2014), p. 8.

³⁵ The Strule’s commitment to access and inclusion is broader than the political, as all signage is provided in high contrast colours and in Braille.

³⁶ Lefèbvre’s work is considered in Chapter 3, below.

³⁷ This is highly relevant to the young state of Northern Ireland in the 1920s and subsequent decades.

accepted.³⁸ However, Gramsci suggests that resistance may emerge in the form of counter-hegemonic groups and ideas that challenge stability, and so it was with the rise of the civil-rights movement in the 1960s.³⁹ For Gramsci, ideology is the seat of power for the state, and whosoever controls the ideology wields this power; for Foucault ideology is a distraction,⁴⁰ born of his theory of discourse in which every exchange is conceived to maintain or acquire dominance. Therefore, culture becomes a ‘power-game [...] between oppressed and oppressing groups’.⁴¹ This can be observed in practice throughout the Troubles, as public figures on both sides, notably Paisley and Adams, became adept and skilful players. The Birmingham Centre provided helpful research into the hegemonies of Reaganism and Thatcherism and was closed in 2002, in the era of the Neoliberal hegemony of Blairism.⁴² The work was prescient. In 1991, when Ulster was moving slowly in the direction of an uneasy peace, the world looked hopefully to Germany, South Africa and the former Soviet Union for a new global opening to the margins and an acceptance of a pluralist approach of culture. Hall, however, urged caution:

the assault, direct and indirect, on multicultural; the return to grand narratives of history, language, and literature (the three great supporting

³⁸ Which was the case for most of the first half-century of Northern Ireland.

³⁹ Douglas Kellner, *Cultural Marxism and Cultural Studies* (Los Angeles: UCLA, 2018), pp. 3-4. As discussed in Chapter 1, above, People’s Democracy and Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, were active and influential, with good deal of international support.

⁴⁰ Asli Daldal, ‘Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A Comparative Analysis’, *Review of History and Political Science*, 2 (2014), 149-68 (167), available at http://rhpsnet.com/journals/rhps/Vol_2_No_2_June_2014/8.pdf [accessed on 2 August 2019].

⁴¹ Scruton, ‘The Great Swindle’.

⁴² University of Birmingham 2019, *CCCS archive* (2019) <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/history/research/projects/cccs/archive.aspx> [accessed on 2 August 2019].

pillars of national identity and national culture); the defence of ethnic absolutism, of a cultural racism that has marked the Thatcher and the Reagan eras; and the new xenophobias that are about to overwhelm fortress Europe.⁴³

As Northern Ireland approaches its centenary, it is a quarter of a century since the first IRA ceasefire and more than 20 years since the optimism of Blair on Good Friday 1998. There has certainly been change in Northern Ireland, but Hall's words are as applicable on the local scale as they are on the world stage. Both communities in Ulster hoard their culture and identity as possessively as ever.

Cultural Nationalism: Ireland

The upheavals of the early-twentieth century in Ireland saw the rise of cultural-nationalism, typified by the Irish Literary Theatre (ILT) and the foundation of the National Theatre Society of Ireland at the Abbey Theatre under W. B. Yeats, who Foster describes as 'a marginalised Irish Protestant'⁴⁴ who overcompensated in his work. Ireland followed other parts of Europe in 'the reversion to "little theatres"' as Wickham puts it. The Abbey opened in December 1904, 'as a home for Irish plays by Irish writers performed by Irish actors'.⁴⁵ This smaller scale venue served to 'help the poets since nuances of vocal delivery and facial gesture were made possible by the intimate actor-audience relationship in these buildings that were unthinkable in the larger commercial theatres.'⁴⁶ The productions of Synge in 1907 was the cause of

⁴³ Stuart Hall, 'What Is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture?', *Social Justice*, 20 (1993), 104-114 (114).

⁴⁴ Maurina Crozier (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1989), p. 7.

⁴⁵ Glynne Wickham, *A History of the Theatre* (London: Phaidon, 1992), pp. 222.

⁴⁶ Wickham, *A History of the Theatre*, pp. 221-22.

disturbances between the Abbey's European modernists and 'outraged "Irish Irelanders"'⁴⁷ of the Gaelic League, appalled at the indecency and moral collapse of the work, but audiences were small compared to the thousands attending operetta and farce. This tension between urban intellectual and pious Fenian-Irish also occurred in literature with writer D. P. Moran identifying astutely that Ireland was essentially Catholic and that the Protestant Ascendancy, 'no matter how much they learnt, spoke and wrote Irish [...] would be considered fundamentally un-Irish' – echoes again of Eric Miller.⁴⁸ The chief end of cultural-nationalism for Moran, was not political independence but cultural autonomy, however it was this literary movement that provided the nationalists with the inspiring rhetoric of 1916.⁴⁹

Watching with interest from the north were Bulmer Hobson and David Parkhill, Protestants who, inspired by the ILT, wrote to Yeats proposing they establish an Ulster Branch and stage *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. Yeats was dismissive. 'Damn Yeats! We'll write our own!' was the response, and Ulster Literary Theatre (ULT) was founded along with a literary magazine *Ulad*, both 'a self-conscious attempt to create a regionalist identity in the north of Ireland'.⁵⁰ The opening sentence of the first editorial in *Ulad* demonstrated the ideal; 'This Ulster has its own way of things'.⁵¹ Audiences at the first performance of *The Enthusiast* by Lewis Purcell, pen name of Parkhill, were astounded at hearing their own dialects, what poet Tom Paulin calls 'the

⁴⁷ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600–1972* (London: Penguin, 1989), p. 452.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 455-56.

⁵⁰ Culture Northern Ireland, *The 'Little Magazines' A range of publications that have helped to keep literature alive in the city* (2016)

<<https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/features/literature/little-magazines>> [accessed on 6 August 2019].

⁵¹ Bulmer Hobson, 'Editorial Notes', *Ulad A literary & critical magazine*, 1 (1904), 1-3 (1), available at <<http://digital-library.qub.ac.uk/digital/collection/p15979coll13/id/19>> [accessed on 11 June 2020].

scutching vernacular'.⁵² Subsequently St. John Ervine, typically described as a unionist playwright and the founding father of modern Northern Irish drama, began his writing career with *Mixed Marriage* (1911), an Ulster tragedy.⁵³ Ervine was a distinctively Ulster-orientated writer, focusing on a naturalistic portrayal of rural and urban life. His most popular work was *Boyd's Shop* (1936), which became one of the Ulster Group Theatre's stalwart productions. Ervine created in *Boyd's Shop* a template for Ulster theatre that was to dominate until Thompson's *Over the Bridge*.⁵⁴

The Value of Culture

'Yet culture is important. Without it we remain emotionally uneducated.'⁵⁵ The question of the value of culture often emerges when plans are being made for a new performing arts building. The value may be economic, political or social and can be perceived as of value to individuals, groups or wider society. Hewison assessed state support of British culture since the advent of New Labour:

The collapse of communism after 1989 had led to talk in the West of the end of history and the end of ideology, but ideology had not

⁵² Mark Phelan, 'Introduction to *The Enthusiast*', in Hugh Odling-Smee (ed.) *Its own way of things: a celebration of the Ulster Literary Theatre* (Belfast: Lagan Press, 2004), 11-16, p. 14.

⁵³ Robert Sullivan, *Ervin, St. John G. (St. John Greer) (1883-1971)* (2019) <http://modjourn.org/render.php?view=mjp_object&id=mjp.2005.01.015> [accessed on 11 June 2020]. After a meeting with Yeats in London, Ervine became the director of the Abbey, however, it was not a happy appointment as Ervine's personality and politics clashed with the management of the theatre. He became a vehement detractor of the south, describing it in a letter to George Bernard Shaw as brimming with 'bleating Celtic Twilighters, sex-starved Daughters of the Gael, gangsters and gombeen [shady wheeler-dealer] men'.

⁵⁴ Part Two reflects upon this influence in greater detail.

⁵⁵ Scruton, 'The Great Swindle'.

disappeared. It was merely that a triumphant neoliberalism had become so all-pervasive all-encompassing that other ideologies were silenced.⁵⁶ The British Treasury began to require that ‘even those factors that could not be expressed in monetary terms had to be treated as if they *had* monetary value, by finding price proxies for them’.⁵⁷ This accelerated a process of commodification of culture and that, in turn, has engendered a new language; Creative Industries and Creative Workers focused not on the individual’s right to express and develop their creativity, but their entrepreneurial ability to monetise that creativity.

In the collective consciousness of government, culture became the means for generation and regeneration. Through the National Lottery, it was cultural projects, not manufacturing, that became the centrepiece of new initiatives to revitalise urban areas.⁵⁸ The culmination of this was the 2012 London Olympics, a success in sporting and cultural terms that provoked temporary euphoria and hopes of a new British Utopia.⁵⁹ This political use of culture to derive direct social and economic benefit has long been the aim of local authorities. Where the Arts Council would fund the arts on grounds of artistic value, local government, and since Blair, national government wanted

⁵⁶ Robert Hewison, *Cultural capital: the rise and fall of creative Britain* (London: Verso Books, 2014), p. 3. Neoliberalism, Hewison argues, attests that the market will provide the best and most efficient route to providing for society, and that it does so most effectively when left to its own devices. Consequently, it became necessary to assess all things on the same terms, typically a cost-benefit basis.

⁵⁷ Hewison, *Cultural capital*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-20. Salford Quays has been transformed since The Lowry opened in 2000; similarly, the Gateshead Quays and Baltic Wharf has developed substantially following the opening of Sage in 2004.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174. Development on the site continues with Sadler’s Wells East and Madison Square Garden’s massive domed arena.

something in return.⁶⁰ The expectations of the state changed this relationship completely and the ensuing commercial cultural model has made it more difficult for emerging work to be funded, as the focus goes on established bodies providing an official culture, or on the arts that pay.⁶¹ There has been a corresponding rise in what Hewison calls, homemade culture, with a good deal of it being created and distributed online.⁶² The increase in videogaming and online shared experiences is part of this, but the presence of new cultural forums on the high street is another as is discussed in detail in the final performance-space study in Chapter 10.

Economic Impact Assessments (EIA) have been increasingly demanded by public funders to justify investment. Shellard published his economic impact study of UK theatre for the Arts Council England (ACE) in 2004. His Shellard Method has since been the most widely used tool, but it has been criticised for its approach to additionality;⁶³ is the spending really additional, or has it been displaced from another local attraction like a cinema? Does the ripple effect of spending leak out of the area because staff live in an adjacent

⁶⁰ The Arts Councils and the BBC had always operated on the arm's-length principle that freed them from interference; the councils were formed of 'the Great and the Good', trusted to fund the right sort of thing.

⁶¹ This will be seen in Chapter 7 with an examination of capital projects that have been funded in Northern Ireland in the last 30 years, and in Chapter 9 in the study of the MAC.

⁶² Hewison, *Cultural capital*, p. 221. True when this book was published in 2014, it is of even greater significance in the Covid-19 era.

⁶³ Simon Dancer, Steve Carr, Claire O'Shaughnessy and Graham Russell, *Additionality Guide - A standard approach to assessing the additional impact of interventions* (English Partnerships The National Regeneration Agency, 2008), available at

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378177/additionality_guide_2014_full.pdf> [accessed on 13 December 2019]. Guides to additionality, such as this one, are provided to assist in defining and assessing additionality.

district? How much ‘deadweight’ is there, spending which would happen irrespective of the presence of this venue?⁶⁴ Other tools include Economic Footprint Analysis (EFA) which considers the venue’s employment contribution, and Gross Value Added (GVA), ‘an estimate of the value generated for the UK economy as a whole by the organisation’s activities’.⁶⁵ This measure has become more common in the creative industries and is adopted by the UK Government Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).⁶⁶ GVA examines the direct value added from the venues revenue and sales, but also the indirect impact on the GVA from the supply chain and the induced impact from the spending of employees and suppliers employees, which for theatre would include visiting artists and crew, with multipliers used to estimate these effects.⁶⁷

Contingent Valuation or Stated Preference Model applies monetary value to the wider benefits people experience from arts and culture. Three tiers of value are considered: use value – the value people derive from their direct use of a product or service; option value – the value they derive from the service being available for them to use at some point in the future; and existence value – the value people derive from the service’s existence, even if they do not actually use the service themselves.⁶⁸ This is well-used in the economic study of environmental projects and transport infrastructure and is recommended in the Green Book,⁶⁹ however it is a highly technical approach

⁶⁴ BOP Consulting, *Measuring the economic benefits of arts and culture* (2012), pp. 7-8. This Additional Visitor Spend (AVS) model is an imperfect measure, but it is well understood and straightforward to apply. Multipliers and standardised benchmarks are available from the Office of National Statistics, so it is possible to build a robust case for the work.

⁶⁵ BOP, *Measuring the economic benefits of arts and culture*, p. 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Dave O’Brien, *Measuring the value of culture: a report to the Department for Culture Media and Sport* (DCMS, 2010), available at

and requires a skilled team conducting extensive research, making it expensive and time-consuming to implement.⁷⁰

Social Return on Investment (SROI), draws on cost-benefit analysis roots but ensures ‘social accounting’ values the social, cultural and environmental non-economic costs and benefits. SROI can be: ‘evaluative’ – reviewing and assessing outcomes that have passed; or ‘forecast’ – which predicts the social value of a proposed scheme.⁷¹ SROI has been widely employed in the voluntary and community sector where social change and community benefit is an inherent aim. It would make a useful tool for venues that have a participatory-arts focus but is less well-suited to theatre.⁷² Political value varies from project to project and is not easily predicted, but can be observed, and generally leads to a decision to adopt the most economically and politically advantageous project not the project offering greatest social benefit.⁷³ The Warwick Commission report *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* on the future of cultural value, which includes recommendations for ‘joined-up policy making’⁷⁴ from government, is

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/77933/measuring-the-value-culture-report.pdf> [accessed on 9 July 2019]. HM Treasury’s Green Book gives guidance on how to appraise and evaluate policies, projects and programmes.

⁷⁰ BOP, *Measuring the economic benefits of arts and culture*, p. 23.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷³ Two major rounds of public funding in Belfast saw the development of the Waterfront Hall and the Odyssey Arena. At each funding round there were multiple projects presented which arguably offered greater social benefit than a concert hall or a sports arena. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. In a contrasting approach, Chapter 10 looks at the MAC, the pivotal building in Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter, the driver for which was social development.

⁷⁴ Jonathan Neelands *et al*, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (University of Warwick, 2015), available at

examined in the Conclusion when considering the role of cultural sustainability in theatre buildings.

Cultural Traditions

The Cultural Traditions Group (CTG) in Northern Ireland was formed to 'explore ways of promoting a better understanding of, and a more constructive debate about, our different cultural traditions in Northern Ireland'.⁷⁵ In the inaugural lecture in 1989 Roy Foster, quoting Lyons, observed that diversity sprang from 'ways of life which are deeply embedded in the past and of which the much advertised political differences are but the outward and visible sign'.⁷⁶ This forbade not just unity of territories, but also 'unity of being'.⁷⁷ Lyons saw a 'battle of two civilisations' the largely secular Anglo-Irish versus the Gaelic-Catholic separatists.⁷⁸

There has been a tendency to align Irishness with every culture other than British and English: Scottish, Welsh, French, American; in a way that 'might support the idea of intellectual independence from a powerful and culturally aggressive neighbour'.⁷⁹ While this supports Eric Miller's notion of identity, Lyons suggests that by patronising Ireland, the emphasis was placed on the physical difference and postponed 'any serious consideration of the

<https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_report_2015.pdf> [accessed on 11 June 2020], p. 26.

⁷⁵ James Hawthorne, 'Introduction', in Maurna Crozier (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1989), pp. i-viii, p. vii.

⁷⁶ Francis Steward Leland Lyons, *Culture and anarchy in Ireland, 1890–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 177.

⁷⁷ Roy Foster, 'Varieties of Irishness', in Maurna Crozier (ed.) *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1989), pp. 1-20, p. 5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

cultural differences that underlay the partition of the country'.⁸⁰ Foster speculated that the time had come to find 'definitions of nationalism that could be inclusive rather than exclusive [...] cultural self-confidence can exist without being yoked to a determinist and ideologically redundant notion of unilaterally-declared nation-statehood; political and cultural credentials have for too long been identified together.'⁸¹

Darby addressed the 1997 conference with thoughts drawn from the study of ethnic minorities within larger communities. Simpson and Yinger,⁸² he observed listed five possible policies by which a stronger ethnic group could deal with its opponents: assimilation, forced or voluntary; pluralism; population transfer, forced or voluntary; continued subjugation; and extermination.⁸³ Continued subjugation is a policy, whether explicit or not, which has characterised the government of Northern Ireland since its inception, although the years since the first beginnings of the peace process in the mid-1980s have seen pluralism as the preferred route, the Opshal report of 1993 suggesting that 'each of the main components of the community will need to be

⁸⁰ Lyons, *Culture and anarchy in Ireland, 1890–1939*, p. 168.

⁸¹ Foster, 'Varieties of Irishness', p. 20. Foster, in 1989, may be forgiven for his optimistic outlook, however, Hall's prescient remarks proved more accurate, the first two decades of the twenty-first century having seen polarisation and a retreat into national silos.

⁸² George Eaton Simpson and J. Milton Yinger, *Racial and cultural minorities: an analysis of prejudice and discrimination* (New York and London: Plenum, 1985).

⁸³ John Darby 'Varieties of Scottishness' in Maurna Crozier (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queens University of Belfast, 1997), pp. 3-20, p. 3. Northern Ireland has practised several of these as state policies of the unionist hegemony, or the general behaviour of the majority unionist community. Extermination of the Catholic nationalist minority has never been a policy, although it has no doubt been the private wish of some, driven like Eric Miller by fear of genocide being committed against them.

given recognition by the other, and in any settlement each must be accorded parity of esteem, the validity of its tradition receiving unqualified recognition'.⁸⁴ The report urged that parity of esteem be enshrined in the constitution.⁸⁵ While the concept is admirable, the practice invites ambiguity – there is no method of measuring what parity looks like, so the term has become 'a partisan ideological battering ram between two increasingly segregated and polarised communities'.⁸⁶ The focus on redress of past wrongs rather than hope for a shared future, is problematic; opposing communities remain entrenched, arguing for parity in terms of cultural relativism. It suggests that the two sides are symmetrical, however, the Irish nationalist position is essentially one of national identity whereas the unionist position is about loyalty to the structures and institutions of the British state. The difficulty is finding a non-threatening common ground where both sides can coexist.

Shirlow argued for the position of culture in promoting parity of esteem and mutual respect, suggesting that the government of Northern Ireland must accept that:

Culture has an instrumental value; it drives creative economies, has health and emotional benefits, provides disadvantaged communities with a sense of purpose, and creates inter-generational benefit; Culture has an institutional value; it brings benefits for the public, promotes the ethos of public service, and it is vital for trust between citizens and the state via the promotion of mutual respect and parity of esteem.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Torkel Opsahl and Andy Pollak, *A citizens' inquiry: the Opsahl report on Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Lilliput Press for Initiative '92, 1993), p. 113.

⁸⁵ Opsahl and Pollak, *A citizens' inquiry: the Opsahl report on Northern Ireland*, pp. 133-35.

⁸⁶ Robin Wilson and Tom Hennessey, *With all due respect: pluralism and parity of esteem* (Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, 1997), p. 14.

⁸⁷ Allan Leonard, *Sluggie O'Toole for Northern Ireland: Parity of esteem and reconciliation* (2019), available at <<https://sluggerotoole.com/2019/08/04/for-northern-ireland-parity-of-esteem-and-reconciliation/>> [accessed on 6 August 2019]. Peter Shirlow is Senior Lecturer in the School of Environmental Studies

A generation of Northern Irish citizens has grown up since the Belfast Agreement, living in a Province without terrorism, for the most part, but where sectarianism persists. The hope for the future is for a fluid approach to cultural traditions where staunch rigidity has previously persisted, and this hope lies with the young people. Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU), an initiative from the 1980s, was a:

cross-curricular theme having four very abstract and broad objectives. These are to enable pupils: to respect and value themselves and others; to begin to appreciate the interdependence of people within our society and farther afield; to explore something of their own and other cultural traditions; [and] to gain some practical experience of how to understand and cope with conflict, whether in their personal, social or political lives.⁸⁸

Gallagher questions the general assumption that EMU had ‘failed to make any significant impact’.⁸⁹ Too much was expected of EMU as it was based on the premise that applying EMU in schools would change attitudes and remove the problem of sectarianism at source, but it was applied as a government patch to the problem, which combined with incomplete methods of assessment, resulted in little meaningful evidence being recorded. Gallagher insists, however, that much was learnt over the years of implementation and what became clear:

was the importance of a whole-school focus in this work: attempts to teach a positive approach to diversity and reconciliation cannot be compartmentalised into a discrete slot as if it is purely a technical

at the University of Ulster. He has written widely on the political economy of Ireland.

⁸⁸ Crozier (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference*, p. 82.

⁸⁹ Tony Gallagher, ‘Education for Diversity and Mutual Understanding: the Experience of Northern Ireland’, *Termtalk*, 20 (2011), 6-26 (6), available at <<https://gtcni.org.uk/>> [accessed on 11 June 2020].

exercise, but rather it has to be embedded with an ethos of practice that infuses an entire institution.⁹⁰

CTG was unique in the UK, but was criticised on the one hand of undermining Irish nationalist viewpoints and on the other of ‘foisting Irishness on Protestants’.⁹¹ Despite the breadth of Foster’s inaugural lecture, the group adopted a reductive two-communities approach; Maurice Hayes⁹² commented ‘to see the two main cultural groupings as monoliths is to erect stereotypes’.⁹³ A more troublesome concern was that the CTG was predicated on a British government ‘belief that the problem in Northern Ireland is simply caused by people with deformed world views’.⁹⁴ This returns to the assumption that there is a problem in Northern Ireland rather than an acceptance that two broad and diverse communities, each with polarised extremities, are living together in an uncomfortable but mostly tolerant coexistence. Finlayson contends that CTG was guilty of liberal cosmopolitanism, presuming that respect, tolerance and mutual understanding would cause everyone to relax and be open to the other’s cultural traditions. Place-attachment and the idea of *Dúchas* and *dindsenchas*, as discussed in the Chapter 3, is deeply engrained in the people of the island of Ireland, north and south. Fostering tolerance and acceptance is not so simple; peoples are born into a state which is then core to their personal and group identity from which individuals cannot easily adopt an open and liberal

⁹⁰ Gallagher, ‘Education for Diversity and Mutual Understanding’, p.8.

⁹¹ Alan Finlayson, ‘The Problem of “Culture” in Northern Ireland: A Critique of the Cultural Traditions Group’, *The Irish Review*, 20 (1997), 76-88 (76), available at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/29735837>> [accessed on 11 June 2020].

⁹² Maurice Hayes was an academic, civil servant and politician and author or contributor to several policy reports including recommending reforms into the RUC and PSNI.

⁹³ Finlayson, ‘The Problem of “Culture” in Northern Ireland: A Critique of the Cultural Traditions Group’, 76-88 (77).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

position. All are free to do so, through travel and education, but CTG is guilty of judging those who do not, from the middle-class liberal position of those who do.

Identity and the problem of Question 18

The institution and mechanisms of state in Northern Ireland reinforce identification with community.⁹⁵ The Northern Ireland 2011 Census contained eight pages of questions on residency, employment, education, disability, and other factors of interest to statistical research. In question 17 it asked:

17. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?

- Roman Catholic
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Church of Ireland
- Methodist Church in Ireland
- Other, write in
- None

Only those who check the box ‘None’, are required to answer question 18:

18. What religion, religious denomination or body were you brought up in?

- Roman Catholic
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Church of Ireland

⁹⁵ Rebecca Black, ‘Integrated schools ‘roadmap to end division’ in Northern Ireland’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 April 2018, available at <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/integrated-schools-roadmap-to-end-division-in-northern-ireland-36813844.html>> [accessed on 6 August 2019]. The school system is based on Protestant controlled schools and Roman Catholic maintained schools, with a few independent, voluntary grammar and Irish language medium schools. There are Integrated Education Schools, but only 7 per cent of school-aged children were attending these in 2018. The universal themes of gender, race, disability, and sexuality may also be reinforced, but the general backdrop to life in Northern Ireland requires the individual to self-identify to one of the two communities.

- Methodist Church in Ireland
- Other, write in
- None ⁹⁶

The question seems like a reasonable attempt to ensure equitability and balance that will help statisticians to see trends. However, it reinforces identification, even for those who have moved away from a singular ethno-nationalist position. It confers on the respondent an identity based on origin and upbringing, effectively an institutional denial of personal expression of identity.⁹⁷ The polarising effects of the Troubles promoted extremes, ignoring the middle-ground. ‘Fifty years ago, the door closed on the non-aligned’,⁹⁸ suggests Anthony Kennedy, chair of the John Hewitt Society.⁹⁹ Recently, those

⁹⁶ Northern Ireland, Statistics & Research Agency, *Individual Questionnaire* (2011), p. 5. This question is not asked in the England and Wales or Scotland forms, nor in the corresponding Republic of Ireland census.

⁹⁷ The language of culture and identity in Northern Ireland focuses on the binary nature of two cultures – Protestant-unionist-loyalist and Catholic-nationalist-republican. The truth, of course, is nuanced and experienced and expressed at a personal level.

⁹⁸ Rory Carroll, ‘How the ‘neithers’ could decide Northern Ireland’s political fate’, *The Guardian*, 15 August 2019, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/aug/15/how-the-neithers-could-decide-northern-irelands-political-fate>> [accessed on 20 August 2019].

⁹⁹ The John Hewitt Society provides opportunities for individuals across Northern Ireland to explore issues of difference and identity through literature and creative writing. Inspired by the ideals and ideas of the poet and political writer John Hewitt, The Society was established in 1987 to promote Hewitt’s ethos of utilising literature and the arts as a medium for tackling prejudice, exclusive concepts of identity, and sectarian hostility. For 30 years The John Hewitt Society has developed a range of literary and cultural activities to break down parochialism, narrow, exclusive concepts of identity, and hostility towards the ‘other’. The effectiveness of their activities has been recognised by the Community Relations Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

who inhabit this territory have become more visible, acquiring the name ‘neithers’. In the 2018 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILTS),¹⁰⁰ 50 per cent of respondents identified as neithers.¹⁰¹

When asked ‘do you think of yourself as a unionist, a nationalist or neither?’, 28 per cent identified as unionist, 20 per cent as nationalist and 50 per cent saw themselves as neither.¹⁰² Only 3 per cent identified as Other or Don’t know, Neither emerging as a clear preference, not an opt-out. This surety of self-identification is more evident when asked ‘Which of these best describes the way you think of yourself? – British, Irish, Ulster, Northern Irish, Other and Don’t Know’. None of the respondents were Don’t Knows, 38 per cent identified as British, 27 per cent as Irish and 25 per cent as Northern Irish with only 2 per cent identifying as Ulster.¹⁰³ Clearly Northern Irish is a more acceptable concept than Ulster for the respondents, but the data does not offer any explanation. It may be that Ulster is associated with strong unionist and loyalist rhetoric as it is widely used in historical and contemporary idiom from

¹⁰⁰ NILTS has been collecting data annually since 1998 to ‘monitor the attitudes and behaviour of people in Northern Ireland’. The sample group comes from a broad mix of backgrounds and income brackets designed to be representative of the population as understood from the 2011 census, including location of residence – big city, town, suburban, rural etc. and home-ownership status. Any serious interrogation of the data should be weighted according to criteria offered by ARK to allow for disproportionate household size. The figures given here are from the raw data or ARK’s summary results and are unweighted. They are nonetheless instructive. ARK is Northern Ireland’s social policy hub. Established in 2000 by researchers at Queen’s University Belfast and Ulster University, its primary goal is to increase the accessibility and use of academic data and research.

¹⁰¹ Carroll, ‘How the ‘neithers’ could decide Northern Ireland’s political fate’.

¹⁰² ARK, *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, 2018* (2019), available at <www.ark.ac.uk/nilt> [accessed on 20 August 2019].

¹⁰³ 9 per cent were Other, although their precise answers are not recorded in the dataset.

‘Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right’¹⁰⁴ attributed, probably apocryphally to Randolph Churchill; Paisley’s anti-Anglo-Irish Agreement rallying cry of ‘Ulster Says No’; and the politicisation of Ulster-Scots as a language. Northern Irish, on the other hand, may be viewed more as a geographical indicator than an ideological one. Edna Longley suggested a ‘fear among Unionists, Protestants, of the very term “Irish”, although, contradictorily, they are not worried about the term “Northern Irish”’.¹⁰⁵

Those identifying as neither must be prepared to consider themselves as at least British, Irish or Northern Irish, and one of the most interesting questions probes this asking ‘Some people think of themselves first as British. Others may think of themselves first as Irish. Which, if any, of the following best describes how you see yourself?’. There are 2 per cent Don’t Knows,¹⁰⁶ but a staunch group at each end – 22 per cent Irish not British and 31 per cent British not Irish. 37 per cent of the sample is spread across More Irish than British, Equally Irish and British and More British than Irish, again showing that a non-binary approach to identity in Northern Ireland is the experience of between one third and half of the adult population, however, Eric Miller’s assertion ‘The last thing I am is Irish’,¹⁰⁷ is acknowledged here as a valid route to establishing one’s identity.

Neithers are not confined by religious boundaries, when asked ‘Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?’, 40 per cent identified as Protestant,¹⁰⁸ 39 per cent as Catholic. 17 per cent as No Religion, but only 6

¹⁰⁴ Winston Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1906), vol. 2, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰⁵ Crozier (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁶ And the consistent 9 per cent Others.

¹⁰⁷ Ireland, *Cyprus Avenue*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Protestant includes the combined responses for Church of Ireland (Anglican), Presbyterian, Methodist, Free Presbyterian, and a few other denominations. The only major world religion other than Christianity to be represented is Islam, with 1 per cent of respondents identifying as such.

per cent said they were brought up in no religion, demonstrating a trend away from formal religious identification. When voting habits are questioned, the results are unclear, conflicting at times. Asked who they would vote for if an election were held tomorrow, 15 per cent nominated the DUP, 11 per cent *Sinn Féin*, 9 per cent UUP, 10 per cent SDLP and 9 per cent Alliance, the remaining 46 per cent identifying with none of these or other parties such as the Green Party.¹⁰⁹ In the European Parliamentary Election of 2019 which was conducted using the Single Transferable Vote system, the final votes allocated to the three elected MEPs were 27 per cent *Sinn Féin*, 25 per cent DUP and 30 per cent Alliance. A further 16 per cent of the vote went to the Traditional Unionist Voice candidate and were non-transferable first preference only ballots.¹¹⁰ This demonstrates the problematic nature of a question on voting preference as it does not account for turnout, which for the Euro 2019 elections was 45 per cent.¹¹¹

Judaism does not present within the results, which is interesting as there has been a small but strong Jewish community in Belfast for more than a century. The Jewish Players were part of an early incarnation of the Group Theatre, and Harold Goldblatt, Harry Towb and Helen Lewis were significant figures in drama for decades from the mid-twentieth century.

¹⁰⁹ ARK, *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, 2018*.

¹¹⁰ Electoral Office of Northern Ireland, *European Parliamentary Election Electoral Region of Northern Ireland 2019* (2019)

<<http://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/2d393c0e-ba88-48da-af69-fec342d34be0/European-Election-2019-Result-Sheet>> [accessed on 21 August 2019].

¹¹¹ *European Parliamentary Election 2019*. The local council elections did better with a turnout of 53 per cent. The question does not account for the effects of proportional representation systems which may lead to tactical voting on first and second preferences. A question asked in an interview such as the NILTS does not reflect the environment of the polling station, but there is a clear indication from both the EU results and the survey, that a substantial

Two sets of questions relate to matters of cultural celebration which have consistently been divisive: the flying of flags on lampposts; and the lighting of bonfires. Interestingly there is no question about another, perhaps more divisive form of cultural expression, parades with marching bands. When asked if they ‘support the flying of flags on lampposts throughout Northern Ireland on special dates for particular celebrations’, 38 per cent agreed¹¹² and 38 per cent disagreed¹¹³ with a further 24 per cent undecided.¹¹⁴ Asked if ‘Bonfires are a legitimate form of cultural celebration?’, 41 per cent agreed,¹¹⁵ 36 per cent disagreed,¹¹⁶ and 21 per cent were undecided. In Geertzian terms of cultural interpretation, flags, bonfires and murals are cultural expressions used in similar ways by the two main groups, what he called Webs of Significance, ‘a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life’.¹¹⁷

Poet John Hewitt was an astute commentator on identity in Northern Ireland. Born to a Belfast Protestant family, he was inexhaustibly curious about Ireland, the north in particular, and was fascinated by historical figures of ‘Planter stock’. Overlooked for the directorship of the Belfast museum in the mid-1950s for being ‘communist and pro-Catholic’, Hewitt took a job as

potential vote exists in the middle ground away from the two main nationalist and unionist parties.

¹¹² 9 per cent strongly agree, 19 per cent agree.

¹¹³ 19 per cent each strongly disagree and disagree.

¹¹⁴ Curiously, when asked the supplementary question, ‘If flags appear on lampposts I would like them all taken down straightaway, even if this causes trouble?’, 58 per cent agreed and only 23 per cent disagreed, which demonstrates why this is, along with gable-end murals and kerb-stones painted in tribal colours, a complex, confused and emotive issue.

¹¹⁵ 10 per cent strongly agreed, 31 per cent agreed.

¹¹⁶ 14 per cent strongly disagreed, 22 per cent disagreed.

¹¹⁷ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 89.

founding director of the Herbert Gallery in Coventry. Challenged, but freed by the cultural mix in the city, the role opened Hewitt up to new perspectives, while he continued to question the identity of his origin.¹¹⁸ In *An Irishman in Coventry*, the poem concludes with a plaintive yearning for home that typifies the strong place-attachment evident in Irish literature:

Yet like Lir's children banished to the waters
our hearts still listen for the landward bells.¹¹⁹

Retiring to Belfast, his work on identity continued with *Rhyming Weavers*,¹²⁰ a collection of peasant verse by farm-workers of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Antrim and Down, written in a lively Ulster-Scots vernacular.¹²¹

Edward Said observed that the task for the cultural intellectual is 'not to accept the politics of identity as given, but to show how all representations are constructed, for what purpose, by whom and with what components'.¹²² Hewitt exemplifies how art grapples with such questions, demonstrating a pluralist approach to identity in a 'hierarchy of values':

I'm an Ulsterman, of planter stock. I was born in the island of Ireland,
so secondarily I'm an Irishman. I was born in the British archipelago

¹¹⁸ Michael Longley and Frank Ormsby (eds), *John Hewitt: selected poems* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2007), pp. xii-xiv.

¹¹⁹ Longley and Ormsby (eds), *John Hewitt: selected poems*, from *An Irishman in Coventry*, p. 54. The *Children of Lir* in post-Christian Irish mythology, tells of four children turned into swans by a jealous stepmother and banished to roam loughs and sea for nine-hundred years.

¹²⁰ John Hewitt and Tom Paulin (eds), *Rhyming weavers: & other country poets of Antrim and Down* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2004). Unsurprisingly Burns was a significant influence, with many of the verses noting a tune or air to which it might be sung. No great artist is to be found, but these poets were many and prolific and remnants of their idiom is still to be found in the work of Heaney, Longley, Paulin and other contemporary, literary poets.

¹²¹ Hewitt and Paulin (eds), *Rhyming weavers: & other country poets of Antrim and Down*, pp. 44-50.

¹²² Edward W. Said, *Culture and imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 380.

and English is my native tongue, so I'm British. The British archipelago consists of offshore islands to the continent of Europe, so I'm European.¹²³

The ideal Ulsterman, Hewitt asserted, 'must carry within himself elements of both Scots and English with a strong charge of basic Irish'.¹²⁴ While avowedly an Ulsterman, he was no unionist and critical of the political hegemony describing Northern Ireland as 'the state by rebels won from a torn nation, rigged to guard their gain',¹²⁵ chastising unionists for the 'bigot pantomime',¹²⁶ and being 'caught in the crossfire of their false campaign'.¹²⁷ Hewitt's words resonate, capturing the complex and nuanced nature of identity in the six counties.

Hewitt shows the difficulty of establishing an ongoing and meaningful culture of identities in Northern Ireland. Ulster is not alone, and recent decades have seen the growth of an interdisciplinary approach which promotes the importance of culture within the sustainable development of a society. John Hawkes describes culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability, 'both the medium and the message [...] culture is not the decoration added after a society has dealt with its basic needs. Culture is the basic need – it is the bedrock of society'.¹²⁸ Sustainability is comprised of three overlapping, mutually dependent goals: (a) to live in a way that is environmentally sustainable or viable over the long term; (b) to live in a way that is economically sustainable, maintaining living standards over the long-term; and

¹²³ Longley and Ormsby (eds), *John Hewitt: selected poems*, pp. xx-xxi.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

¹²⁵ From *The Dilemma*, in *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹²⁶ From *A Happy Boy*, in *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹²⁷ From *The Dilemma*, in *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹²⁸ John Hawkes, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability* (Victoria: Common Ground Publishing, 2001), p. 3.

(c) to live in a way that is socially sustainable now and in the future.¹²⁹ Social sustainability is at the core of much government policy aspiring to providing a quality of life for the people – the success of social sustainability is contingent upon successful financial and environmental sustainability.¹³⁰ Cultural sustainability allows the peoples of a complex society such as Northern Ireland to express their identities and to develop a greater awareness of similarities and differences in experience and viewpoint. Cultural sustainability in practice can only be enacted in society and in interactions between its people. Chapter 3 reveals examples of how buildings and locations actively contribute to the enactment of cultural sustainability in practice, informing and being informed by the identity of the people who occupy them. The Conclusion considers what a working definition of cultural sustainability looks like as it might be applied to performance spaces in the real world.

¹²⁹ Jesse Dillard and Mary C. King, *Understanding the Social Dimension of Sustainability* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 2.

¹³⁰ Hawkes, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, p. 9. A socially sustainable society is reliant on a stable and manageable environment and having sufficient income to foster good health and wellbeing, allowing each member to contribute effectively for the benefit of the whole. Key ideas like wellbeing, fairness and agency appear frequently in the discourse, and recognises that, while society ‘as a whole is more materially prosperous than ever before, many of its members feel excluded, powerless and unhappy. What is good for the economy is not necessarily good for society’.

Chapter 3

Architecture, Space and Place

This chapter considers the role of architecture, space and place in theatre buildings. Sally Mackey urges decoupling site and space from the *idea* of space. Site she considers a geolocation; space a physically defined area, an abstract idea or an example of type without specific location. Place, however, she describes distinctly as:

space (or site) animated through operations and actions and made personal. Place is geographically located [...] inhabited briefly or over a longer period, constructed through a range of operations, actions and behaviours and, through these, a psychological relationship is developed with place. This latter may not necessarily be a positive relationship although frequently place is associated with ‘attachment’.¹

This chapter explores these ideas of space and place in Northern Ireland, to provide context for meaningful understanding of the buildings and organisations in the performance-space studies in Part Three. Architecture is considered in how it interacts with place and creates place and space. Social space, and space and community is examined to see how theatres offer informal gathering places that increase their relevance and viability. Place-attachment is discussed to understand the ways in which place contributes to identity when space and place are contested. Broader political implications are contextualized within the framework of geopolitics.

¹ Sally Mackey, ‘Performing location: place and applied theatre’, in Jenny Hughes and Helen Nicholson (eds), *Critical perspectives on applied theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 107-126 (108).

Public Art and Place

‘As Northern Ireland repositions itself as an attractive “destination” on the international tourist circuit, officials have looked to the built environment to tell new stories about the province to a global audience as well as to alter spatial perceptions’.² Bree Hocking tries to understand if public art has succeeded in this goal, encouraging a new engagement with the local space. Public space is where conflict in Northern Ireland has been played out – the car-bombings, the randomly-timed clearing of town-centres by bomb-scare, and targeting of individuals in pubs by hooded gunmen.

Civic places and spaces in Northern Ireland have always been exclusive of one or another part of the population, and quite deliberately so. A civic life, inclusive of all, has to be constructed. And we do not mean in the sense beloved of discourse theory, but in the solid form of concrete, steel and bricks, stone and glass.³

The vernacular public art of the gable-end mural served as ethno-national ‘boundary shapers’,⁴ even when these may have no direct correlation to the local context. In the early years of the Troubles the nationalist community identified with Che Guevara, his iconic bereted image appearing on T-shirts and walls. Recently, republicans identified with the Palestinian struggle while loyalists declared support for the Israelis. The fact that public space has been the arena for conflict between loyalist and republican groups led to interventions to control access to contested areas. The walls of the City of Derry are the most notorious zone, where strict security controls were put in place by the RUC during the Troubles, but with the ceasefires of the mid-1990s

² Bree T. Hocking, *The Great Reimagining: public art, urban space, and the symbolic landscapes of a ‘new’ Northern Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), p. 2.

³ Alan Jones and David Brett, *Toward an architecture: Ulster: building our own authenticity: an enquiry* (Belfast: Black Square Books, 2007), pp. 22-24.

⁴ Hocking, *The Great Reimagining*, p. 27.

came a relaxing of restrictions and an increase in contestation of the space, amid dismay at a display of loyalist symbols and paraphernalia. Similarly, the Garvaghy Road in Portadown, a primarily Catholic and nationalist area, became the focus of dispute over Orange Order parades each July, both sides taking offense at the other for invading their territory or attempting to interrupt progress down what was considered a ‘traditional route’.⁵

The Good Friday Agreement appeared to herald a new vision of a shared future. The language of the agreement is peppered with phrases that have since entered everyday discourse in the Province; ‘mutual respect’, parity of esteem’, ‘cohesion, sharing and integration’.⁶ A vision of shared space was an essential component, and in Belfast it immediately sought to build on development of the River Lagan waterfront area of the city as a regeneration project. This area had been part of cultural development proposals for the city since the late 1980s and in 1997 the Waterfront Hall was the first significant cultural building to open. The Odyssey, now SSE⁷ Arena, opened in 2000 and the award-winning Titanic Belfast in 2012.⁸ These buildings contribute to shared experience, but are not part of the public realm. The open spaces that are created around these buildings, however, are evidence of placemaking, creating informal public gathering spaces – but making these areas work as shared space for those of differing political, social, religious and cultural identities is problematic. To create a neutral space in a city where space is contested and protected as a matter of course, is the placemaking challenge to architects.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷ Scottish and Southern Energy.

⁸ This is further investigated in Chapter 7, below, when reviewing arts strategy, government funding and procurement of public buildings.

Performative Urbanism

Performative urbanism, the study of the critical role architecture plays in forming and defining the urban realm, seeks to interpret architecture in its political and social context, physical location and how it is interacted with by people.⁹ Performative conveys the power of architecture to establish a new reality by its very presence.¹⁰ This is relevant to the study of theatre buildings, as much of the debate surrounding this topic exists in the field of cultural studies and most notably theatre studies.¹¹ Marxist and Situationist Guy Debord established the notion of *la dérive*, ‘aimless rambling, movement as a perception and as a shaper of space’.¹² As Bloom’s meanderings through Dublin establish a perception of the city for the character and the reader,¹³ in the Lefèvbrian sense, the space is produced by inhabiting it. Consequently, city space is constantly changing, produced anew with each visitor. The city is not merely an agglomeration of built containers, but a scenic space in which new realities are continually produced.¹⁴

Performative space is seen in theatre architecture, where the stage and auditorium are renewed in each production. The spectator’s experience may vary greatly from one show to the next; the study of performative urbanism takes this approach into the city where the drama of life is played out. The ability to use the tools of theatre studies to appreciate architecture can be expanded to consider the similarities between: designing a building and writing a play; constructing a building and mounting and rehearsing a production; and

⁹ Sophie Wolfrum, ‘Performative Urbanism’, in Wolfrum and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 5-6, p. 5.

¹⁰ Wolfrum, ‘Performative Urbanism’, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹² Sophie Wolfrum, ‘Generating and Designing Urban Space’, in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism*, (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 11-16, p. 11.

¹³ In *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, first published in 1922, set in Dublin on 16 June 1904.

¹⁴ Wolfrum, ‘Generating and Designing Urban Space’, pp. 12-13.

putting a building into use and opening a show.¹⁵ However, in the architectural context there is no clear definition between performer and spectator. The power of architecture to activate, mediate and remediate the perception of city space, engenders a range of strategies making buildings a powerful tool in town planning.¹⁶

Different from ‘performance’, ‘performativity refers to the transformative power of an act’,¹⁷ consequently it can be used in multiple contexts from personal growth, where repetition of simple acts builds change, as in evolution. J. L. Austin introduced the term ‘performative’ in the 1950s as a linguistic tool to understand language that promotes change; subsequently this has been extended to other forms of expression.¹⁸ In the context of architecture and town planning, Fischer-Lichte offers four characteristics of the performative: Unpredictability; Ambivalence; Perception as a performative process; and Transformative power.

A building’s use may be highly defined at creation, but architecture is unpredictable, the designer has no control over the use of the relational space contained within the building.¹⁹ In a performative process there is tension between that which is intended at the outset and that which emerges from the process; the two may remain in agreement, or be subject to change.²⁰ In theatre this occurs on a grand scale: the use of spaces for site-specific arts events where the space use is radically different but transiently so; or as minor

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁷ Wolfrum, ‘Performativity – State of Affairs’, in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism*, (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 27-30, p. 27.

¹⁸ Erika Fischer-Lichte, ‘Performativity and Space’, in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism*, (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 31-38, p. 31.

¹⁹ Wolfrum, ‘Performativity – State of Affairs’, p. 28. The produced space is consequently changing – the Champs Elysees in a traffic jam or the Anglican church converted to an arts centre.

²⁰ Fischer-Lichte, ‘Performativity and Space’, p. 31.

changes of use, the once necessary box office counter may now be an occasionally staffed information desk.²¹

Unpredictability extends into changes of space from moment to moment, generating ambivalence. The theatre foyer, processing and circulating spectators prior to performance, but at other times a gathering place. Ambivalence means that the planner, although designing for specific processes, cannot confidently prescribe a particular use.²² In a playhouse, audiences take their cue from the architecture to remain seated in the auditorium and not to step into the domain of the performer, the stage. Neither the notorious *Playboy* riots at the Abbey Theatre nor the opening of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, resulted in spectators taking to the stage.²³ However, when in 2009 Richard Bean's play *England People Very Nice* was interrupted by protesters, the National Theatre experienced its first stage invasion – the ambivalence of the space dramatically demonstrated.²⁴

The space produced differs for each individual and shifts over time, each perceives it in their own way. Perception is dependent upon previous experience, education, companions, expectations, and mood. The presence of

²¹ Fischer-Lichte, 'Performativity and Space', p. 31.

²² Wolfrum, 'Performativity – State of Affairs', p. 29.

²³ J. M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, first performed at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin in 1907, caused riots as the story of patricide and seduction was seen as an affront to Ireland, and an outrage to public morality. Similarly, Diaghilev's ballet, *The Rite of Spring*, with a score by Igor Stravinsky, saw disruption in the audience at its premiere in 1913.

²⁴ Kate Dorney and Frances Gray, *Played in Britain: Modern Theatre in 100 Plays* (London: Methuen, 2014), p. 186. The open nature of the Olivier stage made this intervention easier to achieve; less daunting, than if it were in the proscenium environment of the Lyttleton. The fact that audiences may, at any moment, determine to join the actors onstage, creates a tension in the space that is part of the bargain between spectator and performer and contributes to the sense of shared experience.

others produces a different space than that with no others present.²⁵

Architecture is sensitive to being populated; most architecture has a function for human use and as such is designed with human-scale in mind. The proportions may work effectively at a human-scale – homes accommodate the needs of the individuals or families which occupy them.²⁶ Public buildings, on the other hand, have a function, but are more likely to be designed to convey meaning.²⁷ How people engage with the public realm around architecture is an area where transformation occurs. The built environment is changed and changing due to the presence and movement of people – the people themselves may be transformed by the experience of moving in and around the architecture.

In the city, the location of a building is rarely a matter of accident. Planning considerations are challenging for any new build, and at the early stage of choosing a site, the conditions imposed by the local authority are key.²⁸ Therefore, the location of a theatre is contemplated in detail before any design takes place, but the location informs how people perceive the building. When the National Theatre was opened in 1976, London's Southbank was not the thriving riverside thoroughfare it is today, and the building was first experienced from a distance on the northern embankment of the Thames. Whether or not Lasdun's brutalist aesthetic was appreciated by them, it will

²⁵ Wolfrum, 'Performativity – State of Affairs', pp. 28-29.

²⁶ Few people are fortunate enough to build houses of greater grandeur, intended to carry a message about the wealth and status of the occupant, most of us dwell in buildings of a comfortable size for our needs.

²⁷ Cathedrals are built at a scale that inspires awe and wonder in the visitor, an echo of the glory of God.

²⁸ The choice of site is also governed by physical constraints including: natural factors such as geology, topography and flood-risk; and cultural factors like existing land use, buildings, accessibility and archaeology. For all buildings, economic and environmental sustainability will be high on the agenda, but for performing arts buildings, these factors will be considered in the light of economic feasibility and a business case.

have made a visual impact. The Barbican Centre, on the other hand, which opened six years later and is of a similar aesthetic root, is largely hidden from view, with few opportunities to experience it from a distance.²⁹

A building's proportions has its own impact, starting to act on the visitor as they approach, more so when they enter it. A colossal building, such as a cathedral or town hall, makes visitors feel small inside a gigantic yet secluded space. Conversely, entering a tiny hut might trigger a sense of claustrophobia. The building's materiality, be it wood, marble, glass, or concrete trigger different experiences, evoking a specific physical response in the people entering the building, not the same for everybody.³⁰

The ambience of the space, no matter the materials used or specific proportions, creates a first impression – the feeling the visitor gets upon entering. The visitor is acknowledged as having a unique experience of the space, but the space is credited with having a pervasive quality that affects the visitor with its atmosphere. All the senses are at work in this process, with smell, its partner taste, touch and sound joining with the visual triggers of proportion and materiality to inform the emotional response.³¹

Primavesi, echoing Jane Jacobs, observes that 'the city is more than the sum of its premises, sites, and buildings; it is also the flexible ways in which people use, share, and change these spaces'.³² Placemaking has emerged in recent decades, and with it the desire among town planners to accommodate an

²⁹ The *flâneur* meandering the streets is afforded occasional views of the building along thoroughfares including Silk Street or from the Highwalks, the elevated pedestrian walkways and footbridges.

³⁰ Fischer-Lichte, 'Performativity and Space', p. 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. The effects of the visitor upon the space and the space upon the visitor are linked in the transformative power generated together. The space produced by the visitor engaging with and acting upon it, in turn acts upon the visitor transforming them by the experience.

³² Patrick Primavesi, 'Audio Moves as Urban Performance (Part I)', in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 49-56, p. 49.

increasing demand for spaces where people can congregate and participate. Participation takes many forms, but cultural and political participation in public places is common. Events may have a political motivation, raising funds or awareness of a cause, or as a commemoration.³³ However, cultural events have become an expected part of the modern lifestyle. In the UK, the summer months in any city are punctuated with open-air public events – some paying, some free – where bands and orchestras play to large audiences of all ages.³⁴

Lefèbvre offers a set of tools to understand the urban environment. By conceiving of space as socially produced by those visiting, experiencing and enacting space, the urban can be thought of as an environment that exists only as it relates to those inhabiting it. Lefèbvre's ideas offer three views of spaces: the perceived, experienced space; the conceived, representations of space; and the lived space, created by practice. Christopher Dell conflates Lefèbvre's triad with the architectural notions of form, function and structure and conveys movement with a fourth, vector.³⁵ The constantly shifting perception of the viewer and the myriad frames of social reference of each, means that a unified sense of spatial experience is unachievable.³⁶ Dell, building on Lefèbvre and Soja, declares that 'we can no longer conceptualise urban space as a container, as a fixed object of form'.³⁷ He suggests that it is a shifting organism that is produced through performativity and, referencing Foucault's notion of

³³ On 22 May 2018, a year after the Manchester Arena bombing, St Ann's Square in the city hosted crowds gathered to remember the victims. In 2011, Tahrir Square in Cairo, was the focal point for much larger and less organised gatherings as the Arab Spring took hold.

³⁴ Clearly, however, not the case in the summer of 2020.

³⁵ Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis, 'Perception and Analysis', in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 67-72, p. 68.

³⁶ The walking tour is an example of participation and perception in the context of performative urbanism, and can now be facilitated with ease, visitors using their own smart phones to access audio and interactive content.

³⁷ Christopher Dell, 'Producing Space', in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 147-52, p. 149.

Heterotopia,³⁸ that the experience of this is heterogeneous, framed by the perception of the individual practitioner in the constantly moving landscape they are engaged in producing. City space, therefore, cannot be generalised – individual experience of space occurs at different speeds based on the individual’s personal relationship with the past and present.³⁹

The act of designing a building is a performative action. By designing a complex building like an arts venue, the architect engages in a performative act creating a new reality, conceived in partnership with those who intend to use it.⁴⁰ This is a political action as well as a social one, as the architect is operating in a regulated field of town and city planning within a legal framework.⁴¹ The local authority, with which planning decision rests, may be driven by target aspirations – the neoliberal approach to local government led many to sell off land previously under common ownership to bolster dwindling funds. This can lead to objections, so councils may seek a ‘developer

³⁸ Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22-27 (24).

Available at <www.jstor.org/stable/464648> [accessed on 2020/05/28/].

³⁹ Patrick Primavesi, ‘Audio Moves as Urban Performance (Part II)’, in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 153-162, p. 162.

⁴⁰ Max Ott, ‘Designing Performatively - Participation and Appropriation’, in Wolfrum and Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 107-110, p. 108.

⁴¹ Graham Winter, Louise Smith, Suzie Cave and Alan Rehfish, House of Commons Library, Northern Ireland Assembly, National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Parliament Information Centre, *Comparison of the planning systems in the four UK countries - Research Paper 713-2015* (2016), p. 6. In Northern Ireland, the Programme for Government, and the supplementary Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), like the National Policy Framework (NPF) in England, ‘offers a strategic and long-term perspective’ on development in the Province.

contribution' as a planning condition.⁴² In England, this is well-established with contributions being delivered as a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), or as a Section 106 (S106) agreement, sometimes called 'planning gain',⁴³ which may be a financial contribution or an agreement to build additional facilities such as affordable housing, leisure or cultural facilities. In Northern Ireland, Section 76 requires the developer to offer facilities which provide a benefit to the local community in return for planning consent, but this is not a material consideration in the planning process and consequently less enforceable than the legally binding S106 in England.⁴⁴ Therefore, although hard to quantify, there are practical gains available from the performative actions of design that reach beyond the physical impact of the building itself.

The Third Place: Social and Community Contexts

Georg Simmel was one of the first to study the human desire to be sociable, accepting that people gathered together in family groups or for security and economic reasons,⁴⁵ but that they also sought each other's company for 'nothing but the satisfaction of the impulse to sociability'⁴⁶ which 'in its pure form has no ulterior end, no content, and no result outside itself, it is oriented completely about personalities'.⁴⁷ A century later Ray Oldenburg⁴⁸ explored the third place – somewhere that is neither home, the first place, nor the second place, work; a public place where people can gather informally. 'A two-stop model of daily routine is becoming fixed in our habits as the urban

⁴² Winter *et al*, *Comparison of the planning systems*, p. 35.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁵ Georg Simmel and Everett C. Hughes, 'The Sociology of Sociability', *American Journal of Sociology*, 55 (1949), 254-261 (254).

⁴⁶ Simmel and Hughes, 'The Sociology of Sociability', 255.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 255. Simmel's words resound in the time of coronavirus.

⁴⁸ Ray Oldenburg, *Project for Public Spaces* (2014), available at <<http://www.pps.org/reference/roldenburg/>> [accessed on 1 January 2014].

environment affords less opportunity for public relaxation.’⁴⁹ Oldenburg suggests that work and family ‘relationships are pressed to supply all that is wanting and much that is missing in the constricted lifestyles of those without community’. This, he believes contributes to declining wellbeing and increasing rates of divorce and depression. Suburban and city communities, he asserts, are built like a ‘pressure cooker without its essential safety valve’.⁵⁰ The two-legged stool of home and work is unstable; the third place of sociability and informal engagement with others provides a third leg adding stability.⁵¹ ‘All great cultures have had a vital informal public life and, necessarily, they evolved their own popular versions of those places that played host to it.’⁵² Third places were prominent in Greek and Roman society with grand public buildings to which the public were admitted for free. Subsequent public spaces including churches, winter-gardens and palm-houses made large architectural statements, but some are simpler; the ‘profusion of sidewalk cafes’ gives an inescapable sense of Paris, the piazza evokes Florence and the pub is decidedly English.⁵³ Oldenburg suggests that modern life has become ‘hostile to an informal public life’ as society has failed to provide spaces for it. He states that third places have a number of local functions, uniting a neighbourhood allowing for assimilation and creating points of entry for incomers.⁵⁴ ‘When the good citizens of a community find places to spend

⁴⁹ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community* (New York: Marlowe, 1997), p. 9.

⁵⁰ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, p. 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21. Third places allow people to sort themselves into groups of preferred association and allow us to escape from the stresses and strains of life at home, but they also provide an opportunity to socialise in a way not available elsewhere.

pleasurable hours with one another for no specific or obvious purpose, there *is* purpose to such association'.⁵⁵

Oldenburg proposes eight distinct characteristics: neutral ground; levelling; conversation; accessibility; attracting regulars; low profile; playful and fun; and a home from home. In this neutral space the participants are socially levelled and without the usual barriers that come from rank or privilege.⁵⁶ Relationships are not reliant on the promise of furtherment or gain; there is no currency other than conversation. This echoes Simmel – 'In sociability talking is an end in itself'.⁵⁷ We enter alone or in a group at almost any time convenient for us; they are local and easy to get to, giving one a 'reason to get out of the house'.⁵⁸ Oldenburg suggests that 'these places serve community best to the extent that they are *inclusive* and *local*'.⁵⁹ The same faces are often seen, but 'every regular was once a newcomer, and the acceptance of newcomers is essential to the sustained vitality of the third place'.⁶⁰ They tend to be unimpressive and not well advertised – 'as a physical structure the third place is typically plain',⁶¹ generally not having been built for the purpose but rather 'commandeered by those seeking a place where they can linger in good company'.⁶² An environment that lacks ostentation promotes a

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-25.

⁵⁷ Simmel and Hughes, 'The Sociology of Sociability', 258.

⁵⁸ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, p. xxiii.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

lack of pretentiousness – third places are fun.⁶³ The third place presents a congenial environment where the visitor can feel at home.⁶⁴

For individuals, third places offer a sense of novelty in contrast to work, and a chance to gain a better perspective on who and where we are in the world, by adding to and withdrawing from the ‘collective wisdom of its members’.⁶⁵ The mix in third places is unregulated, people of all walks of life may meet and become socially intimate, although this may not be a friendship that would extend to home.⁶⁶ Unlike a formal club, anyone in a third place exists as the equal alongside others although they may have very different lifestyles, politics, professions and finances.⁶⁷ Third places can be political fora and it was from such spaces that civil rights and labour movements emerged, resulting in coffeehouses coming under attack from the establishment. Likewise, they are intellectual fora for discussion, debate, and the development of new ideas.⁶⁸

Oldenburg cites many examples of third places, recalling for example, a time when the US post office in each community stayed open for 24-hours and, as everyone had to visit to collect mail, it became the kind of informal hang-out and mixer-joint he describes.⁶⁹ Other spaces include barbershops,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. xxii. They may be in places of entertainment, but it is the self-generated entertainment, typically conversation and laughter, in Ireland ‘the craic’, which characterises them in a playful mood where wit and humour count for more than the serious. See the definition in Chapter 10 footnote 12, below.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39. They are increasingly also temporary offices for a generation constantly moving and working on the go.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv. For those who are not well-off, this engaging informal public life ensures there is less ‘deprivation of experience’, and for the well-off, it provides what money cannot buy.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p xviii.

garden centres, coffeehouses and bookstores; most in busy areas with high footfall.⁷⁰ The third places Oldenburg describes are theoretically gender neutral and open to all, but most are masculine in character, pubs and taverns in particular, and not necessarily suitable for children.⁷¹ Oldenburg suggests that, rather than visiting third places, women make greater use of the telephone for informal socialising,⁷² a simplistic gender stereotype, but behind it lies a truth that personal communication has changed rapidly over recent decades allowing all to inhabit the same virtual spaces no matter where we are. Sociologists have long speculated on what this means. In 1993, considering the WELL,⁷³ The Whole Earth 'Electronic Link, one of the earliest virtual communities, sociologist Howard Rheingold posed a conundrum that still divides people:

Perhaps cyberspace is one of the informal public places where people can rebuild the aspects of community that were lost when the malt shop became a mall. Or perhaps cyberspace is precisely the wrong place to look for the rebirth of community, offering not a tool for conviviality but a lifedenying simulacrum of real passion and true commitment to one another.⁷⁴

Prior to the first months of 2020, this was an interesting point for debate, but Covid-19 has shifted the focus of the discourse. The enforced lockdown has provided researchers with an unplanned trial on a massive scale, the results of which will take many years to materialise. However, everyone has their own experience to report and share with fellows. Many report missing social contact with others, but the experience of connecting with friends, family and

⁷⁰ Ray Oldenburg, *Celebrating the Third Place: inspiring stories about the "great good places" at the heart of our communities* (New York: Marlowe & Co., 2001), p. 9.

⁷¹ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, p. 230.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁷³ Well, *What is the WELL?* <<http://www.well.com/>> [accessed on 1 December 2014].

⁷⁴ Howard Rheingold, *The virtual community: homesteading on the electronic frontier* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1993), p. 10.

colleagues by video in real-time has become universal, at least in affluent society, and there appears to be a widespread sense of gratitude for the virtual third place. Coming together in public groups again will have a different quality, enforced perhaps by legislation, and many may be reticent to congregate freely.

The third place can form an active part of an organization's business model. Starbucks, for example, has third place at the core of its marketing strategy. 'A place for conversation and a sense of community. A third place between work and home.'⁷⁵ The busiest theatres present performances for only a few hours each day and can use the idea of the third place to offer something other than live performance, to bring life and revenue to the building, and many venues have something of the third place about them. The central concourse at Warwick Arts Centre is used as a thoroughfare on campus making it a convenient place to meet. The MAC in Birmingham can be a destination at the end of a walk in Cannon Hill Park, or the route to the park, its varied programme of participatory arts, film and gallery spaces ensures the attendance of regulars. The Barbican has a large foyer, busy with everyday foot-traffic, but individuals and small groups can find a corner for a meeting over coffee or to eat lunch. Mothers and toddlers groups gather in the lower-foyer, the orange-sashed assistants welcoming and helpful. These venues offer food and drink which, although not specifically mentioned by Oldenburg, is a feature of the third place. The MAC, Big Telly's The Box and Creative Shops Project have third place qualities and will be explored in detail in the performance-space studies in Part Three.

⁷⁵ Starbucks, *Heritage*, available at <<http://www.starbucks.co.uk/about-us/our-heritage>> [accessed on 28 November 2014].

Place-attachment and cultural sustainability

A study published in 2013 examined the place-attachment of people to two *mahalles*⁷⁶ in Istanbul. The results suggest that place-attachment brings environmental consciousness: people who feel they belong to a place want to conserve and sustain the components of its features. The built environment affects this behaviour – the weaker the place-attachment, the more awareness of the environment is seen.⁷⁷ Place-attachment, or a ‘sense of community’ or ‘sense of place’, is defined as a positive emotional bond which provides clarity of personal identity and promotes stability.⁷⁸ In a world where international travel is easy and where traditional lines between home, work and other spaces have become blurred, as explored in the work of Doreen Massey, place attachment may be less important, but the paper concludes that place remains significant and that cultural sustainability is contingent upon its transference between generations.⁷⁹

Scannell and Gifford proposed a theory of place-attachment which organized the phenomenon according to three strands – Person, Process and

⁷⁶ *Mahalle* is a Turkish word of Arabic origin which appears in similar forms in other neighbouring territories such as Greece and Bulgaria and Romania. It has a meaning loosely equivalent to district or quarter, but the *Mahalle* has an important function as an informal gathering place; a form of third place.

⁷⁷ İmre Özbek Eren, ‘Can place-attachment provide cultural sustainability? Empirical research on Turkish neighborhoods “mahalle”’, *ITU A|Z Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 10 (2013), 138-59 (138), available at <<http://www.azitujournal.com/jvi.aspx?pdire=itujfa&plng=eng&volume=10&issue=1>> [accessed on 5 August 2019]. The work follows Heidegger’s assertion that humans desire to belong somewhere, developing through Lefèbvre’s notion of the production of space, to argue that social interaction with space defines it; space cannot be understood as an entity on its own.

⁷⁸ Eren, ‘Can place-attachment provide cultural sustainability?’, 139.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

Place.⁸⁰ Person – relates to the individual or group in which place-attachment occurs. Places become meaningful to individuals through experiences, typically positive, and memories associated with the place. At a group level shared experiences and symbolic meaning associated with the place are affective. Culture, as expressed through religious or spiritual associations and history, has a significant role and is transmitted down the generations.⁸¹ Process – occurs psychologically and is framed in terms of concepts including bias, through affect, cognition and behaviour. Affect – displays emotional bonding expressed as pride in a place and can be seen among inhabitants, and displaced peoples where pride may be replaced by grief or longing. Cognition – references how individuals construe meaningful bonds with a place through memory and may conflate these with physical features of a place into a personal identity or self-definition. Behaviour – attachment is displayed by the action of wanting to stay close to or return to a place, as in homesickness, by choosing new locations reminiscent of a former place, or personalising a new place in the manner of an old one.⁸²

Place is the object of place-attachment and has physical attributes and is the location for the social interactions that occur therein, place-attachment being linked to social bonds within community and family.⁸³ Hidalgo and Hernández found that social attachment factors were stronger than physical, and that home and city acquired greater bonds than neighbourhood.⁸⁴ However,

⁸⁰ Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, 'Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30 (2009), 1-10 (1), available at <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272494409000620>> [accessed on 5 August 2019].

⁸¹ Scannell and Gifford, 'Defining place attachment', 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁸³ It is worth noting that a sense of place-attachment can be demonstrated in online communities.

⁸⁴ M. C. Hidalgo and B. Hernández, 'Place attachment: conceptual and empirical questions', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21 (2001), 273-82,

and of particular relevance in Northern Ireland, group place-attachments have been shown in communities that share ethnicity, social class or religion; ‘one is attached to the place because it facilitates “distinctiveness” from other places, or affirms the specialness of one’s group’.⁸⁵

The physical aspects of place-attachment are less well understood, but indicate that people with a place-attachment to a particular environment – lakes, mountains, coast – show attachment to their specific place as opposed to a class of place, although they may choose a similar environment if they relocate.⁸⁶ Place-attachment provides different functions for those attached, including security and goal support through association, offering stability and stress relief, a sense of belonging, and enhanced personal identity and self-esteem.⁸⁷ The Gaelic word *Dúchas* defies direct translation but has elements of heredity, heritage, instinct, nature, origin, race and predisposition.⁸⁸ The existence of the word *Dúchas* indicates the importance of place in the context of birth and home-place, and a connectedness to cultural heritage, an idea deeply embedded in the Irish psyche. The absence of a similar word in English might suggest that place-attachment is stronger in Ireland.

available at

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S027249440190221X>> [accessed on 5 August 2019].

⁸⁵ Scannell and Gifford, ‘Defining place attachment’, 5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 5. Culture supports this, with art, literature, poetry and song providing strong evidence for place-attachment. Ireland has numerous examples, from the homesickness of Percy French’s *Mountains of Mourne*, Bloom’s perambulations through Dublin in *Ulysses*, and Owen McCafferty’s evocation of the entries (the narrow alleyway between the backs of two streets of terraced houses) of the Ormeau Road in 1970s Belfast in *Mojo Mickybo*.

⁸⁷ Scannell and Gifford, ‘Defining place attachment’, 6-7.

⁸⁸ Niall Ó Dónaill and Tomás De Bhaldraithe, ‘Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla’ (Baile Átha Cliath: An Gúm: An Roinn Oideachais, 1992). An Irish-English Dictionary.

Geopolitics

When Halford Mackinder, observing the lack of physical territory left to discover, argued that the study of geography ‘must be diverted to the purpose of intensive survey and philosophic synthesis’,⁸⁹ the study of geopolitics emerged. Geopolitics, in the Lefèvbrian sense, is the production of space, as it brings space into being, framing the record of the physical space and contextualising it for the reader. As Klaus Dodds observes, geopolitics ‘is slippery’,⁹⁰ which makes any attempt at defining it difficult, but John Agnew states that “‘geopolitics’ has long been used to refer to the study of the geographical representations, rhetoric and practices that underpin world politics’,⁹¹ it provides a way of looking at and describing the world.⁹² Geopolitics provides a framework with which to question what is meant by such terms, our understanding of place, and how communities express their identity within them.⁹³

Agnew and Corbridge suggest ‘geopolitics refers to a fixed and objective geography constraining and directing the activities of states’.⁹⁴ They identify three ages of geopolitical order: the end of the Napoleonic Wars to 1875, when Europe held the balance of world power and Britain was the dominant authority; from then until the end of World War II, a period when the political and economic powers in Europe ‘divided into economic blocs’ in

⁸⁹ Gearoid Ó Tuathail, *Critical geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 26.

Mackinder’s observation is known as ‘The Geographical Pivot’.

⁹⁰ Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 4.

⁹¹ John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: re-visioning world politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 5.

⁹² Dodds, *Geopolitics*, p. 4. Terms such as ‘Iron Curtain’, ‘Third World’, ‘First World’, and in Belfast ‘Peace Wall’, are geographical descriptions that offer a shorthand label for complex problems which are geopolitical in character.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹⁴ John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering space: hegemony, territory and international political economy* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 3.

discrete nation states; and the third order 1945-90, characterised by the Cold War.⁹⁵ In the 1970s, geopolitics was evident in three contexts: popular, in the news and media; practical, in government domestic policy and foreign policy; and formal, in academic and strategic thinking.⁹⁶ It also became clear that geopolitics was bound up in the understanding of complex issues of identity such as class, race and gender.⁹⁷

The world view of politics, which throughout the Cold War had fixed notions based on an established sense of national identity, changed following the break-up of the former Soviet Union and again, more violently after 9/11. There was an increase in regionalist movements, many of which were built on ideas of religious and ethnic identity. As Agnew observes:

The world is actively spatialised, divided up, labelled, sorted out into a hierarchy of places of greater or lesser 'importance' by political geographers, other academics and political leaders. This process provided the geographical framing within which political elites and mass publics act in the world in pursuit of their own identities and interests.⁹⁸

This process is constantly changing, is arbitrary, but informed by the perceived expressions of identity at local, regional, and national levels. With the fragmentation of European empires that began in the second half of the twentieth century, came a culture of questioning those empires. Protests against state involvement began in Europe and the US against the perceived injustices in the Vietnam War and interventions in North Africa, and at the same time, a rise in demands for Civil Rights citizens at home, including for Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland.⁹⁹ The break-up of the former Yugoslavia was

⁹⁵ Agnew and Corbridge, *Mastering space*, pp, 19-20.

⁹⁶ Dodds, *Geopolitics*, p. 46.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹⁸ Agnew, *Geopolitics*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Ó Tuathail, *Critical geopolitics*, p. 58. The history of the twentieth century is peppered with demonstrations of one group's perceived supremacy over another, of which Northern Ireland is just one example. The most extreme is

approached differently by major international states, the West Germans encouraging independence while the US maintained that the state was a buffer between Europe and the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰ Both, however, encouraged political changes that might bring Yugoslavia into the West; perceived as a clear improvement and emerging from societal backwardness. Neither made provision for the minority populations, in this case the Serbs, and their treatment by the emergent states, notably the better-off countries Slovenia and Croatia. The tensions around these conditions presume the superiority of one group and the inferiority of another on racial grounds. Agnew suggests that this emerged formally in the late-nineteenth century by misusing Darwinian principles as the justification for racial pedigree.¹⁰¹ In Britain and Ireland this was characterised by the view, expressed by Lord Acton, that the Irish could be presumed inferior; ‘they are a negative element in the world [...] and waited for a foreign influence to set in action the rich treasure which in their own hands could be of no avail’.¹⁰² From this mindset the fledgling state of Northern Ireland emerged, predicated on the absolute right of the unionist hegemony to be superior to the nationalist minority.

Popular geopolitics has an influence on people’s perception of the world, shaped by access to the media in the form of newspapers, radio, television and the internet. Today, the internet is the most important of these as it can be used to access content from the other three almost instantly and from just about anywhere on the planet, and to self-publish content that can quickly acquire a huge readership. Such content is not subject to the rigorous verification expected of a professional journalist, however, it can convey an unfiltered version of experiences. The live video of those living in areas of

the aggressive policies of Nazi Germany, initially tolerated by other states, who eventually came to stand in defiance against them.

¹⁰⁰ Agnew, *Geopolitics*, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95. This runs counter to the position adopted by Boas, as discussed in Chapter 2, above, but illustrates the ease with which research can be hijacked for a particular end.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

active conflict have become a regular source for news editors when compiling reports from warzones.

Geopolitical architecture describes how governments and large organizations negotiate and manage the interfaces between territories, notably by border control arrangements.¹⁰³ Variants on these ideas have rarely been out of the news in the UK since June 2016. A keyword in the Brexit conversations, both pre- and post-referendum, is sovereignty, which suggests an element of self-determination, but recognises that some interdependence exists with other states. Another frequently used term is globalization; the great corporations that wield power across the globe also influence the perceived sovereignty of any state.¹⁰⁴

On 13 September 2001 the two strands came together in an editorial in *Le Monde* entitled ‘Nous sommes tous Américains’.¹⁰⁵ Such moments of trans-national identification are rare, as the typical situation is ‘replete with practices and symbols indicative of national identities and territories such as flags, currency, “national news”, and references to territory as either the “fatherland” or in the case of the United States the “homeland”’.¹⁰⁶ Islands have often been the focus of territorial dispute between nations; the Falklands for Britain and Argentina, and Taiwan for China.¹⁰⁷ Much debate around national and pan-national identity has centred on religion. In recent decades, as predicted by Hall, right-wing European political figures have been determined to see Europe

¹⁰³ Dodds, *Geopolitics*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Marie Colombani, ‘Nous sommes tous Américains’, *Le Monde*, 13 September 2001, p. 3, available at <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/09/09/nous-sommes-tous-americaains_1569503_3232.html> [accessed on 29 September 2020]. This global gesture has been echoed many times since, when people strive to show support for others by symbolically subjugating their identity in solidarity; the echo of Kennedy’s *Ich bin ein Berliner* is clear in this, as is *Je suis Charlie*.

¹⁰⁶ Dodds, *Geopolitics*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

defined as a Christian space in response to concerns around the growth in Islamic communities and the increasing presence of Turkey on the fringes of the European Union.¹⁰⁸ However, Northern Ireland is not the only region with subnational groupings seeking to express their identity in a way which shows that such territorial distinctions are unhelpful;¹⁰⁹ Walloons, Catalans, Basques and Scots have all sought to express their identity and authority over their territorial determination.

To be considered a state in its own right, a country needs a central government and a clearly demarked territory to govern.¹¹⁰ A map is a representational space that no more articulates the reality of a landscape than a stage set does a drawing room or a kitchen, nonetheless, it is a powerful medium through which the cartographer conveys meaning in ‘the creation of a new fiction’.¹¹¹

Maps are conceived as instruments of power and states have long recognised the importance of mapping, indeed it has been common for many countries, especially those with disputed boundaries and territories, to retain a tight control over the production and circulation of maps.¹¹²

This was the central theme in *Translations* where Brian Friel explores the mapping of Donegal,¹¹³ the recording and anglicisation of Irish place-

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹¹⁰ Agnew and Corbridge, *Mastering space*, p. 78.

¹¹¹ Mary Hamer, ‘Putting Ireland on the Map’, *Textual Practice*, 3 (1989), 184-202 (184), available at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502368908582058>> [accessed on 28 August 2019].

¹¹² Dodds, *Geopolitics*, p. 143.

¹¹³ Friel’s play, which as with many of his works is set in the fictional Donegal village of Baile Beag, deals with the relationship between the locals and the British soldiers engaged in mapping the area. Friel addresses issues

names traditionally spoken and not written. The Ordnance Survey project in Ireland in the nineteenth century created a new, official Ireland, at a time when Gaelic was suffering following the introduction of English only National Schools. Unlike North America, where place-names were often given anew in honour of the crown, Irish place-names were co-opted into English. Mary Hamer suggests that the mapping of Ireland was a ‘hegemonic enterprise rather than one of crude domination’.¹¹⁴ Said observes that a function of one nation’s domination of another ‘is that colonial space must be transformed sufficiently so as to no longer appear foreign to the imperial eye’.¹¹⁵ It was symbolic of the union of Britain and Ireland, but represented the Ascendancy, not the Gaelic speaking Catholic population or the poorer Protestant dissenters, however, the mapping was influenced by the Victorian interest in ethnic study, so details of ancient monuments and local legends were recorded along with the topography. The process relied on Irish labour for the fieldwork and for the interpretation of antiquities, Britain, however, was in control, ensuring Ireland was shown to be appropriately subservient – ‘In this marriage, Ireland was clearly the wife’,¹¹⁶ an uncomfortable image.

Geography is about power. Although often assumed to be innocent, the geography of the works is not a product of nature but a product of histories of struggle between competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space.¹¹⁷

In the reign of Elizabeth I, the mapping of Ireland was an essential weapon in the armoury of subjugating forces; ‘the woods, bogs, lakes, and mountains of Ireland concealed and sustained resistance to the jurisdictional ambitions of the

surrounding language and education, giving an insight into the functioning of the small, informal hedge schools that taught children Irish, English and classical languages.

¹¹⁴ Hamer, ‘Putting Ireland on the Map’, 187.

¹¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Culture and imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 273.

¹¹⁶ Hamer, ‘Putting Ireland on the Map’, 190. The accompanying summary on Irish life drew the natives as underdeveloped, backward and incompetent.

¹¹⁷ Ó Tuathail, *Critical geopolitics*, p. 1.

English Crown’,¹¹⁸ to effectively navigate them became a military imperative. Beyond the recoding of the physical terrain for strategic purposes, the mapping of this period facilitated the economic and political survey of the territories in order to better plan the future of the island and further the plantations; ‘Ireland was a wild famine land awaiting cultivation, a virgin territory in need of husbandry’.¹¹⁹

The mapping of Ireland developed new techniques; knowledge was acquired amidst a power imbalance, as also occurred in the New World. ‘Centralization and imperialist expansionism required new aggressive forms of geographical power/knowledge to supervise the seizure and disciplining of space’.¹²⁰ When the crown tasked Richard Bartlett with the mapping of Ireland in the early-seventeenth century, he brought English order to an apparently chaotic Irish landscape, but Bartlett was killed by the men of Tirconnell in Ulster, the very edge of the known colonial world, not out of some sense of Irish nationalism, but that they ‘would not have their country discovered’.¹²¹ They had *dindsenchas*, their own bardic tradition of understanding the landscape, mapping the area not with lines and symbols, but with legends and stories which captured the nuances of topography and human interaction with the land. In anglicisation, subtlety is lost, place-names become labels without inherent meaning, not only true for those with Irish roots, but for the Norse and Ulster-Scots place-names that populate the east of the island.¹²²

Ó Tuathail asserts that the central difficulty with geopolitics is the ‘scripting of global space by state-society intellectuals and institutions’.¹²³

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Ó Tuathail parallels Stewart’s comments on Irish warfare techniques in Chapter 1, above.

¹¹⁹ Ó Tuathail, *Critical geopolitics*, p. 5.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 67. A problem which extends beyond the geopolitical, as the acquisition of ideas by an intellectual elite is contested in education, government, industry, the arts and beyond.

Mackinder suggested that Englishmen could not come to terms with the idea of a United Kingdom, thinking only of the separate component states of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.¹²⁴ Geopolitics as ‘a component of human geography’,¹²⁵ has an ‘apparent ability to explain in simple terms a complex and, for some, threatening and uncertain world’,¹²⁶ and as such is viewed through the filters that geographers use when studying people; feminism, Marxism, economic theory, post-modernism. Colin Flint observes that above all else, geopolitics embodies two main ideas: that space is contested, often violently, through the politics of inclusion and exclusion; and that the geopolitical events that happen in space occur in a context which defines the possible outcomes.¹²⁷

The greatest geopolitical episode in the short history of Northern Ireland is the Troubles, a period of conflict, Flint argues, belonging to one of four waves of terrorism since the last years of the nineteenth century.¹²⁸ The Troubles belongs to the third wave, where nationalist groups, not satisfied with the speed or extent of decolonisation and self-determination, took to violence to further their goals. What distinguished this from the preceding period of nationalist, state-based terrorism, was internationalization with action taken outside of the contested area. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) hijacked international flights and notoriously, killed eleven Israelis in the athlete’s village at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. The IRA also acted outside of Northern Ireland with bombing campaigns in England and 258 deaths attributed to the conflict in the Republic of Ireland, England and

¹²⁴ The tendency of English people to unconsciously assume the privilege of their state above others, is part of the same problem, and is seen in modern attitudes to many things from sport to economics.

¹²⁵ Colin Flint, *An introduction to geopolitics* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 2.

¹²⁶ Flint, *An introduction to geopolitics*, p. 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

Europe.¹²⁹ The IRA received funding from Irish Americans in the US, but also relied on collaboration with others including the PLO.¹³⁰ Religious motivation was part of this third wave – unlike the Jews, the unionists and loyalists of Northern Ireland may not see the Province as gifted by God, but certainly by a Protestant, British Crown; the Defender of that Faith.¹³¹ Agnew defines terrorism as ‘the targeting of civilians and military personnel for death and dismemberment by militant non-state groups’.¹³²

The power imbalance between Ireland and England persists beyond the marshalling of territory. Massey argues that major population centres or ‘world cities’¹³³ including London, are the centre of the financial and business universe and as such are part of the glamorous world of boom, but also the fulcrum of crisis and crash. This affects the international economy and creates an imbalance in national markets leading to the inequalities typified in Britain by that between north and south.¹³⁴ Northern Ireland is ultimately ruled from London, the money and authority passes from Westminster to the Northern Ireland Office through the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. This places the Province on the fringes of the United Kingdom geographically, and in political, economic and social importance. The global significance of the smaller cities in the UK was once much greater; Glasgow and Liverpool, were among the most important in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Europe

¹²⁹ Martin Meluagh, *Deaths outside Northern Ireland* (2012)

<<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/victims/gis/maps/gismaps-22.html>> [accessed on 12 November 2018].

¹³⁰ John A. Agnew, *Making political geography* (London: Arnold, 2002), p. 204.

¹³¹ Flint, *An introduction to geopolitics*, p. 183.

¹³² Agnew, *Making political geography*, p. 204. A reminder, echoing A. T. Q. Stewart, that terrorism and sectarianism are different, a point that news reports often fail to convey, as the effects of the two appear similar.

¹³³ Doreen Massey, *World City* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. xi.

¹³⁴ Massey, *World City*, pp. xii-xiii.

– Glasgow was the Second City of Empire.¹³⁵ By comparison to the relative power of London within the global economy, neither Glasgow nor Belfast wield much power in the early-twenty-first century, rendering them without agency in their own situation.¹³⁶ By comparison with London and the South-East where around 15 per cent of the population hold no educational qualifications, in Northern Ireland and other regions such as Central Scotland, North of England and South Wales, the figure is up to one third.¹³⁷ This is one symptom of a broad approach where corporate decisions are taken at company headquarters in London, thus geographical situations dictate economic inequality.¹³⁸

Agnew and Corbridge have observed how spatial terms are used in everyday language in an imprecise way which, while useful as descriptors in conversation, lack the ontological specificity typical in academic discourse.¹³⁹ The differences between Protestant, unionist, loyalist and Catholic, nationalist, republican identities cannot be seen as affected purely by the perceived cultural, religious and political differences, but as deeply rooted in space and place and, by connection, those identities are mediated by the spatial context. The relevant spatial and geographical terms such as local, regional, territory, location are used only to mark a place as ‘particular’ and distinct from ‘global’ which suggests generality and universality.¹⁴⁰ Space, place and cultural identity are so linked in Northern Ireland that geography is essential to the

¹³⁵ Irene Maver, *Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 19.

¹³⁶ Massey, *World City*, pp. 170-71. Post-Brexit, Belfast has achieved greater agency in the decision making around the Province’s future. However, in 2020, unlike Redmond in 1912, Arlene Foster’s DUP does not hold the balance of power at Westminster.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-29.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹³⁹ Agnew and Corbridge, *Mastering space*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

understanding of the conditions. Violence and riots occur in Belfast on the boundaries between areas identifying as Catholic Irish nationalist and Protestant British loyalist, also the areas of the poorest populations. More affluent Protestants have moved from these contested areas to the suburbs and their places have been taken by ‘socially mobile Catholics, usually with larger families’.¹⁴¹ The remaining Protestant population has found itself being reduced and increasingly on the edge, facing what many perceive as the loss of political, social and cultural identity.¹⁴²

Part One Conclusion

Part One has demonstrated the complexity of Irish history, how its legacy resonates down the centuries and is expressed in deeply-embedded ideas surrounding culture and identity. The review of 2011 Census information and the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, have demonstrated how individual identity is questioned in terms of religious affiliation, voting behaviour, perception of flags, emblems and symbols, and label. The responses are interesting in their inconsistency, but a strength of feeling is shown in how people choose to label their national identity. The strength of place as a component of individual identity in Northern Ireland informs decisions about the placement of theatres within towns and cities. The inherent biases among individuals in the Province may have an impact on decisions regarding the funding and operation of theatres, and the strength of place attachment may result in site choices governed more by the subjective view of a few individuals, than by considered and objective study. Theoretical frameworks, including those derived from Lefèbvre and the recent and highly relevant work around performative urbanism and cultural sustainability, have provided threads of investigation which will be drawn out in Parts Two and Three, where they can be seen at work in the local cultural context.

¹⁴¹ Agnew, *Making political geography*, p. 9.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9. Eric Miller in *Cyprus Avenue*, as noted in Chapter 2, personifies this.

Part Two

Context

Chapter 4: Culture in Belfast

Chapter 5: Influences and Influencers

Chapter 6: New Theatres for Ulster

Chapter 7: Arts Strategy and buildings for the new millennium

Part Two Introduction

Part Two takes an in-depth look at the cultural context and influences that affect the small spaces for theatre examined in the performance space studies in Part Three, by examining four key aspects: historic theatre spaces; people and organisations of influence; recent and contemporary theatre spaces; and arts and cultural strategy. Establishing the history of theatre spaces in Belfast and discussion of early-twentieth-century theatres as well as some that are still in operation or closed relatively recently, contextualises the backdrop against which the spaces in Part Three emerged. Key individuals, organisations and recurrent themes which would have influenced the funding, design, operation and programming of theatres, particularly in the period of professionalization of theatre in the mid- to late-twentieth century are considered, as are the links with theatre in Dublin, Britain and Europe. These influences and the biases they display are more clearly understood in the light of the background established in Part One. Looking at some of the new theatres built in the Province at the end of the twentieth century, informs and contextualises the new build venues in Part Three, and the discussion of arts strategy and procurement of theatre buildings in Northern Ireland in the last 30 years, builds on the previous chapters and the political and cultural legacy established in Part One. Related strategies surrounding capital building initiatives are reviewed, including forms of procurement and the sustainability of buildings in terms of economic and environmental sustainability as related to maintenance, and social sustainability regarding access and inclusivity in all their meanings. These matters influence the design and operation of theatre buildings and consequently the artistic programme and will be explored in detail in the performance space studies in Part Three. Part Two introduces the recurring strand within the chapters of professionalization, which is another factor that influences the approach to performance space design during the period studied.

Chapter 4

Theatre in Belfast

The first recorded performances in Ulster were in 1736 in Newry and Belfast, featuring the Smock Alley Theatre Company from Dublin. Belfast had five venues by the late-eighteenth century, most in found spaces such as wine-cellars; none of them lasting long.¹ By the 1840s, theatre declined due to unrest; disturbances arose at the theatres for the playing of *God Save the King*, a perennial issue in Ulster. However, with the growth of industry in the city, the population rose swiftly and by the end of the nineteenth century Belfast had several theatres and variety houses seating 2,000 or more.² The only building that remains extant is a significant cultural symbol for the city – the Frank Matcham³ designed Grand Opera House (GOH)⁴ which opened in 1895. It is a fine, ornate building, ‘in all its Hindu-Baroque splendour’,⁵ with a plush auditorium which when opened accommodated 2,500. The GOH and sister-venue the Theatre Royal presented work for the more discerning Ulster audience, but Belfast had become a backwater for quality touring drama from Dublin and London, a problem which was to haunt these larger venues

¹ Ophelia Byrne, *The stage in Ulster from the eighteenth-century: selected from the theatre archive of the Linen Hall Library* (Belfast: Linen Hall Library, 1997), pp. 4-6.

² Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 12-27.

³ David Wilmore, *Frank Matcham & Co* (Dacre: Theatresearch in association with Theatreshire Books Ltd., 2008). Frank Matcham was the most significant of the British theatre architects of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

⁴ Volume II, Figure 5, is a map showing the locations of relevant venues in Belfast.

⁵ Christopher Fitz-Simon, *Players and Painted Stage: aspects of the twentieth-century theatre in Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2004), p. 3.

throughout the twentieth century.⁶ During WWII, the GOH formed a resident company to fill the gap left by travel restrictions, presenting twice-nightly shows in rep until touring restarted after the war, but in the 1950s added moving-pictures to the programme and in 1960 it was sold to Rank Odeon.⁷ The rise of television, civil rights disturbances and the Troubles made it unsuccessful and it closed in 1972. An Ulster Architectural Heritage Society campaign resulted in it becoming the first building in Northern Ireland to be listed for architectural merit in 1974 and two years later the GOH was bought by ACNI who refurbished it, reopening the theatre on 15 September 1980 to great acclaim, with a mixed programme. Bombed by the IRA in December 1991 and again in May 1993 it was repaired each time and reopened to continuing success.⁸ A further redevelopment in 2006 added backstage space and a new studio venue, the Baby Grand, and café bars and restaurant facilities on the site next door, once the Hippodrome Theatre.⁹ The latest redevelopment started in January 2020, with a view to improving the auditorium seating and air-handling system.

Opened in December 1894, the Empire Theatre of Varieties¹⁰ was conceived as a better class of venue, modern, affordable, and respectable enough for women to attend. In 1929 the Empire Players was formed from Belfast Repertory Company (BRC),¹¹ presenting working-class theatre to ordinary people. In 1960 it played a pivotal role in the greatest controversy in NI theatre history, Sam Thompson's *Over the Bridge*.¹² However, despite the

⁶ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 20-22.

⁷ A cinema owner and operator.

⁸ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 32-33.

⁹ Grand Opera House, *Laughter, tears and applause since 1895..*, available at <<https://www.goh.co.uk/about-us/history-heritage/>> [accessed on 28 August 2019].

¹⁰ Findlaters, *Our Dublin Theatre – the Star, later the Empire Palace*, available at <<http://www.findlaters.com/chapter7.html>> [accessed on 7 August 2019].

¹¹ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 28-30.

¹² This is discussed in Chapter 5, below.

positive effects on the theatre and the declaration by the owners that they would turn the venue into the National Theatre of Northern Ireland, it closed in June 1961 to become a Littlewoods store.¹³

The Group Theatre

The Group Theatre, in recent memory, is associated with amateur theatre. The first notable use of the Minor Hall of the Ulster Hall – the name Group originally referred to the company, not the venue – was for drama between 1904 and 1906 by Ulster Literary Theatre (ULT).¹⁴ ‘In the winter of 1939–1940 three [...] companies went to the making of the Ulster Group Theatre: The Ulster Theatre [...], the Jewish Institute Dramatic Society [...], and the Northern Irish Players’.¹⁵ They rented the hall for a season, with established and prolific Ulster playwright George Shiels as one of the leading lights, declaring that ‘plays which deal with contemporary life in this region are the only sure foundations on which to build an Ulster Theatre’.¹⁶ Shiels’ most famous play *The Passing Day*, had been a success at the Abbey in 1936 and his profile was high,¹⁷ consequently Ulster writers featured prominently at the Group including Joseph Tomelty, St. John Ervine and later, Brian Friel.¹⁸ The

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁵ Sam Hanna Bell, *The theatre in Ulster: a survey of the dramatic movement in Ulster from 1902 until the present day* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), pp. 60-61.

¹⁶ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, p. 45.

¹⁷ Irish Theatre Institute, *The Passing Day* (1936), available at <<http://www.irishplayography.com/play.aspx?playid=31988>> [accessed on 28 August 2019]. Set design for the Abbey production was by Tyrone Guthrie’s long-time collaborator Tanya Moiseiwitsch.

¹⁸ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 46-48. In 1958, several members of the board stood down, making way for the young James Ellis and leading soon after to the *Over the Bridge* controversy, more in Chapter 5, below.

1960s was a successful period under James Young¹⁹ with comedies commissioned for the theatre, many starring Young. In 1971, the Group closed for a refit but remained dark through the early years of the Troubles, reopening in 1976 as the home to amateur theatre in Northern Ireland, proving successful, and signalling a change in attitude after seven years of violence, as audiences refused to be intimidated out of the city centre at night.²⁰

Belvoir Players regularly performed in the Group – ‘it was a great asset to amateurs to get into a commercial theatre in the centre of town [...] it was, not cheap theatre, but theatre on the cheap [...] in the dark days of the Troubles we won a nightlife award from Belfast City Council in the Theatre and Cinema category’.²¹ From 1972, the central Belfast security segment banned most vehicles, and introduced police and army bag and body-searches for shoppers. Steel security gates were locked once the shops closed, leaving the area protected, but inaccessible, until the following morning.²² The Group was outside the segment, but with the threat of bombings and little else to attract them, audiences were small – indeed during the Hunger Strike of 1981, Mills recalls audiences being smaller than the cast. In 2005 Belfast City Council (BCC) decided to close the Group Theatre to amateur companies.²³

As a found space, the Minor Hall made for a simple conversion to a playhouse. The hall was on the first floor of the building with an entrance from Bedford Street. The proportions were good, approximately 19.25m (63' 2") long by 9.5m (31' 2") wide with 6m (19' 8") from floor to ceiling. Seating was

¹⁹ James Young was a Northern Irish comedian, actor and director. Following the withdrawal of *Over The Bridge* from Group, Young was commissioned to develop a comedy for the theatre. Following its success, Young and his partner Jack Hudson were invited to become joint managing directors.

²⁰ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 49-50.

²¹ John Riddell, *Interview* with Richard Mills (4 March 2015).

²² Stephen Brown, ‘Central Belfast’s Security Segment: An Urban Phenomenon’, *Area*, 17 (1985), 1-10 (1-9), available at <www.jstor.org/stable/20002110> [accessed on 2 September 2019].

²³ Riddell-Mills, *Interview*.

12 rows of upholstered cinema chairs, flat-floor, with three rows on a balcony to the rear. The seat farthest from the stage was on the balcony at 12m (39' 4") from the proscenium. The maximum seatcount, was 154 in the stalls and 67 at balcony.²⁴ The walls and ceiling of the auditorium were finished in a flat plaster render, which made it loud and prone to flutter-echo between parallel wall surfaces, interfering with the intelligibility of speech, however the room was small, and the detrimental effects minimal. The acoustic isolation from the adjacent Ulster Hall was poor, leading to problems when plays coincided with concerts or sporting events.

The raised stage at 0.9m (3') above stalls floor had a 6.25m (21') wide proscenium, 3.6m (11' 10") high, with just 4.75m (14') stage depth. An apron of 1.05m (3' 5"), helped draw the action forward improving engagement with the audience. A flytower with a 7.5m (24' 7") grid held 11 hemp-flying bars and five 250kg hand winch bars for lighting and heavier items. A house pelmet, just upstage of the proscenium, was set at 2.9m (9' 6") allowing cloths and scenery of a maximum of 3m (9' 10") to be flown out. Wing-space was minimal, manageable for individual entrances, but with no room for larger groups to congregate. The small room created an intimate atmosphere – the relationship between actor and audience was fair, but with 154 on the flat floor 70 per cent of the audience was below the actors eyeline; Iain Mackintosh advises that, for drama, the audience be 'divided with half below the eyeline of the standing actor (horizontal plus 5°) [...] and half above that line'.²⁵ The seating was not staggered so sightlines were compromised. The platform stage constructed by Knight and Richmond in the 1930s was the traditional and typical solution, however, a lower stage and shallow rake to the stalls would have improved relationships. Nevertheless, the Group provided an intimate space for drama, the auditorium volume, approximately 684m³ or 3m³ per

²⁴ When surveyed for Auditoria in March 2001.

²⁵ Iain Mackintosh, *Architecture, Actor and Audience* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 135.

person,²⁶ would certainly have added to the intensity of the experience for both performer and audience.

The Arts

The Arts originated in 1940 as an amateur venue, the Mask Theatre Guild, on Linenhall Street, offering a counterpoint to the Group by presenting new European and international work. It was frequented by locals and servicemen and gained a reputation for the *avant-garde* with Sartre, Cocteau and others in fortnightly rep. Hubert ‘Hibby’ Wilmot and wife Dorothy ran the Mask from the start and remained at the helm of the Arts for 35 years. Hibby drove the artistic vision while Dorothy, ‘the real power at the Arts’,²⁷ managed the business with a rod of iron. There is little detail in any archive about the venue, but in an interview in the 1970s Hibby recalled:

the earlier and happier days of the company in Belfast. The Little Mask Theatre in Linenhall Street managed to keep the doors open right through the war – blackout and all [...]. The 150 seats in the Mask were filled each night.²⁸

In 1944 Micheál MacLiammóir gave ‘a public lecture on Acting and subjects of interest to Amateur Dramatic Societies’.²⁹ Hibby met MacLiammóir to discuss his own hope of establishing a venue similar to the Gate to bring the best international drama to Belfast. In 1947 the operation moved to Upper North Street as Belfast Arts Theatre Studio which the

²⁶ 3-5m³ per person is regarded as the rule of thumb for the auditorium volume in a playhouse designed for drama.

²⁷ John Keyes, *Going dark: two Ulster theatres* (Belfast: Lagan, 2001), p. 22.

²⁸ Gerald Rafferty, *Over to you, Arts Council*, in the Linen Hall Library Belfast, Irish Theatre Archive, Belfast/Civic Arts Theatre Press Files # 1 & 2.

²⁹ Allan McLelland, *Arts Theatre Movement*, in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, BCT/6/14/4. Born Alfred Willmore in London in 1899, confirmed Hibernophile Micheál MacLiammóir emigrated to Ireland as a young man, and with partner Hilton Edwards, ran Dublin’s Gate Theatre which they co-founded in 1928.

Wilmot's declared to be a people's theatre.³⁰ The Northern Whig wrote the 'Smallest Theatre in Ireland Announced the formation of "an experimental Theatre in Belfast along the lines of "Theatre Workshop" in England"'.³¹ With a seating capacity of 85, it ran as a club theatre five nights a week in three-weekly rep, Ireland's Saturday Night referring to it as 'the only theatre club of its kind in the Province'.³² Hibby declared that 'the choice of plays will be governed by artistic merit rather than commercial value and it is hoped, therefore, to put on plays which normally would have little chance of production in the city'.³³ However, the Wilmots believed the venue too small to be economically viable so in October 1950 it opened as the Arts Theatre in a 200-seat venue at Fountain Street Mews. Keyes recalls the venue fondly in the only decent description of any of the four spaces writing that it:

was delightful and approached by a coconut matted stairway, its walls lined with photographs of the actors. At the bend in the staircase was a single alcove from which a likeness of James Ellis smiled radiantly.[...] The auditorium was small and steeply raked.[...] at the Arts the rows of seats ascended from ground level to quite high up into a dim space and no one's head ever got in the way of the magic.³⁴

This arrangement aligns with Hibby's deep admiration for MacLiammóir and the Gate; although the Arts had a steeper rake, crucially the audience was seated in the same space with no upper gallery or boxes. In 1954 the Arts moved again to a converted auction room at Little Donegall Street, another 200-seat venue.³⁵ Keyes remarks that it was 'not nearly so attractive as the Fountain Lane theatre. No raked seats and it was all much more cramped'.³⁶

³⁰ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 52-53.

³¹ *Northern Whig 11 February 1947*, in the Irish Theatre Archive, Belfast/Civic Arts Theatre Press Files # 1 & 2.

³² *Ireland's Saturday Night 4 September 1948*, in *Ibid.*.

³³ *Northern Whig Arts Theatre Press Files*, in *Ibid.*.

³⁴ Keyes, *Going dark*, p. 37.

³⁵ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 52-53.

³⁶ Keyes, *Going dark*, p. 46.

Throughout this period the Arts presented a varied programme of classic and contemporary plays, many of the latter produced within a year or so of their premiers. The Arts did not present the work of Ulster playwrights leaving that to the Group, and they also avoided Yeats and O'Casey whose work became the preserve of the Lyric. There were, however, several productions of plays by Irish playwright Donagh MacDonagh, the son of Thomas MacDonagh poet, playwright and Irish Nationalist and one of the martyrs of the Easter Rising.³⁷ Donagh MacDonagh's *God's Gentry*³⁸ was 'quite a coup for the theatre. And not without a certain irony',³⁹ as it been offered to and declined by The Abbey. There is no record of any protest about MacDonagh's work appearing at the Arts, despite his father's role in the most significant event in Irish revolutionary history.

The Arts continued to pursue a higher seatcount, a hunt that would eventually contribute to its demise.⁴⁰ More seats do not necessarily mean more income as an increase in seatcount leads to a greater volume, a larger stage, more front and back of house accommodation, the facilities required for both and the additional circulation space needed for corridors and stairs, all of which need to be paid for in construction, upkeep and staffing. The Wilmots were adamant and in 1959 Hibby wrote to the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) laying out reasons why the Arts should be rehoused to 'new better, and more central premises' citing amongst other things, seating capacity – the 'present Arts Theatre seating is 186' he wrote – also seeking improved technical facilities and stage, FoH facilities for patrons,

³⁷ Christopher Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre, 1601–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 152.

³⁸ Irish Theatre Institute, *God's Gentry by Donagh MacDonagh*, available at <<http://www.irishplayography.com/play.aspx?playid=1578>> [accessed on 6 April 2015].

³⁹ Keyes, *Going dark*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, pp. 52-53.

drama school and ability for Ulster Television to televise plays.⁴¹ The proposal failed, but in April 1961 the Arts opened a 450-seat venue on Botanic Avenue,⁴² constructed within a space above a row of shops originally intended for a dance-hall. At the opening Hibby thanked the audience and reminded them gently ‘that it was the regular filling of the 450 seats in the new theatre which would ensure the survival of the theatre in Ulster’,⁴³ words that came back to haunt him in subsequent decades as the Arts struggled during the Troubles, closing for extended periods and experienced several changes of management. By the 1990s it was reliant on local musical dramatic societies to hire the space. The Pratley Report details the many shortcomings of the venue – ‘the front elevation is hardly suggestive of a vibrant entertainment venue and presents, at upper levels, an entirely blank façade behind which the presence of an audience and the excitement inherent in theatrical activity cannot be anticipated by passers-by in the street’.⁴⁴ The report concludes that ‘it is difficult to quarrel with the assessment of one of our interviewees: “The location and seating capacity of the Theatre is right, but just about everything else is wrong”’. The report lists regular complaints from visitors including seat comfort, limited foyer space and seating areas, poor theatre sound, uneven temperatures in the theatre and inaccessibility for disabled patrons.⁴⁵ Technical assessment undertaken by theatre consultant Martin Carr is damning and, since

⁴¹ Hubert Wilmot, *Arts Theatre press release 1959*, in Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D22435/4.

⁴² Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, p. 51.

⁴³ News Letter archive, *New Arts Theatre proves that Ulster is not a cultural Sahara* (1961), available at <<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/retro/the-way-we-were-new-arts-theatre-proves-that-ulster-is-not-a-cultural-sahara-1-6169754>> [accessed on 10 July 2014].

⁴⁴ David Pratley Associates with Price Waterhouse Coppers, *The future of middle-scale theatre in Belfast for Belfast City Council*, 1999, in the Irish Theatre Archive, Belfast/Civic Arts Theatre Green Folder in Press Files #1 & 2, p. 32.

⁴⁵ *Pratley Report*, in *Ibid.*, p. 35.

no drawings were found in the archive, it provides the only credible description and assessment of the venue, including stage dimensions:

The stage is built over the original concrete floor slab at about 900mm [2' 11"] height, so the use of traps is only barely possible and then with considerable difficulty. The stage itself is idiosyncratic in nature, having a "double" proscenium arch structure, each about 4m [13' 1"] high and 5.5m [18' 1"] apart, and with a sloping roof soffit at an average of 4.6m [15' 1"] height between. The structure of the down-stage proscenium is almost 1m thick. Behind the second proscenium (300mm [1'] thick) there is approximately 3m [9' 10"] of further stage depth, but with only 5.2[m] [17' 1"] height above. With a 1.2m [3' 11"] deep permanent forestage, the total depth of the stage is 8.2m [26' 11"]. There is no formal provision for overstage suspensions and bars are rigged using the up-down stage roof support steels.⁴⁶

Carr goes on to note the limited wing-space, poor get-in which was through a standard set of double doors and up a narrow staircore. For 'anything particularly heavy or bulky, a window in the side wall of the auditorium street frontage can be removed and, to the general interest of passers-by, fork-lift trucks or other lifting devices are used'.⁴⁷ It had expanded to 557 seats on a single tier with the front 15 rows raking gently back to six steep rows to the rear, each row with a spacing of 780mm (2' 7") which is tight by modern theatre standards which are typically 900mm (2' 11").⁴⁸

The City Council concluded that 'the Belfast Civic Arts Theatre had failed in most areas of its current performance, that the Theatre lacked strategic direction and that its poor performance had resulted in an unhealthy and unstable financial position'.⁴⁹ In the light of the report, the theatre's application

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁹ Belfast City Council *Development Committee Wednesday 20th January 1999* (1999), p. 1377, available at

for £200,000 funding for 1999–2000 was refused and the theatre closed later that year.

<[https://minutes3.belfastcity.gov.uk/Data/Pre%20April-2015%20Development%20Committee/19990120/Minutes/\\$Minutes.doc.pdf](https://minutes3.belfastcity.gov.uk/Data/Pre%20April-2015%20Development%20Committee/19990120/Minutes/$Minutes.doc.pdf)>
[accessed on 7 September 2020].

Chapter 5

Influences and influencers

When it comes to theatre, ‘this Ulster has its own way of things’.¹ Founded in 1902 by Bulmer Hobson and David Parkhill, the ULT, mentioned in the examination of cultural nationalism in Chapter 2, above, had originally sought to align itself with Yeats whose reply was dismissive, ‘haughty and aloof’,² giving ULT the impetus to develop its own style, an Ulster dramaturgy of the people; close to the land, close to industry with Ulster actors performing in the vernacular in plays that ‘invited their audience to enter into debate on the progressive issues of the day’.³ The work of Thomas Carnduff, ‘The Shipyard Poet’,⁴ was an early success for BRC at the Empire; *Workers*, first performed by the company at the Abbey in 1932, is set in and around the shipyard and written in the working-class idiom, a departure from the more rural vernacular of ULT’s work.⁵ ‘Carnduff’s poetry and drama is unsophisticated, energetic

¹ Bulmer Hobson, ‘Editorial Notes’, *Ulad A literary & critical magazine*, 1 (1904), 1-3 (1), available at <<http://digital-library.qub.ac.uk/digital/collection/p15979coll13/id/19>> [accessed on 11 June 2020].

² Sam Hanna Bell, *The theatre in Ulster: a survey of the dramatic movement in Ulster from 1902 until the present day* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), p. 2.

³ Fitz-Simon, *Players and Painted Stage*, pp. 77-79.

⁴ Patrick Devlin, Ulster History Circle, *Thomas Carnduff (1886 - 1956): Poet and playwright – ‘The Shipyard Poet’* (2019), available at <<http://www.newulsterbiography.co.uk/index.php/home/viewPerson/224>> [accessed on 7 August 2019].

⁵ Irish Theatre Institute, *Workers - Thomas Carnduff* (2019), available at <<http://www.irishplayography.com/play.aspx?playid=31187>> [accessed on 7 August 2019].

and, for a man of his background, unconventional.’⁶ Similar work by Carnduff and others was the regular output of Belfast writers, drawing parallels in Glasgow – with *No Mean City*⁷ and later *Men Should Weep*⁸ – and presaging the popular Belfast work of Sam Thompson, Martin Lynch and Marie Jones⁹ in the decades to come. Despite its great success, BRC was short-lived, folding in 1937.¹⁰

This social realism dealing with sectarianism brought about a heated controversy in the late 1950s. Chairman of the Group, J. Ritchie McKee’s brother, Cecil, was appointed Ulster Unionist Lord Mayor of Belfast and advised him that ‘plays with sectarian themes make it difficult for Lord Mayors who are anxious to give money to the arts’.¹¹ *The Bonfire* by Gerard McLarnon¹² had already attracted criticism from Cecil McKee, due to ugly

⁶ Culture Northern Ireland, *Thomas Carnduff - Working class poet and playwright* (2019), available at <<https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/features/literature/thomas-carnduff>> [accessed on 7 August 2019].

⁷ H. Kingsley Long’s 1935 novel about life in the razor gangs of the Gorbals.

⁸ Ena Lamont Stewart’s 1947 play set in the poverty of 1930s Glasgow.

⁹ Martin Lynch is a writer and director from nationalist West Belfast, who has written work for Charabanc Theatre Company, the Arts, the Lyric and the Abbey, Dublin. Marie Jones is from loyalist East Belfast and began her career as an actor with Charabanc. Like Lynch, her work has been produced in Belfast and Dublin, but also in the West End and on Broadway, most notably with *Stones in His Pockets*.

¹⁰ Byrne, *The stage in Ulster*, p. 30.

¹¹ Christopher Morash, *A history of Irish theatre, 1601–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 220.

¹² Gerard McLarnon was an actor and playwright, born in Lancashire and raised in Ulster. Later in life he had a long association with the Royal Exchange, Manchester, which produced several of his works including adaptations of Dostoevsky. *The Bonfire* was an early play, set on the eve of the Twelfth of July which traditionally features a bonfire in loyalist areas. The

scenes in the treatment of Catholics by Protestants, so when Thompson's *Over the Bridge* was programmed, J. Ritchie McKee withdrew the play two weeks before opening, describing it as:

full of grossly vicious phrases and situations which would undoubtedly offend and affront every section of the public [...] It is the policy of the directors of the Ulster Group Theatre to keep political and religious controversies off our stage.¹³

Thompson, like Carnduff, was a raw, working class writer; *Over the Bridge*, his first play, was eventually staged at the Empire to great acclaim, by a company led by Jimmy Ellis.¹⁴ Far from offending audiences, Hanna Bell thought 'it was possible to detect a quite extraordinary feeling of relief that at last the unclean spirit of sectarianism had been dragged before the footlights'.¹⁵ The Empire was much bigger than the Group; during a six-week run *Over the Bridge* was seen by 42,000 people – the Group would have managed, at most, 10,000. *Over the Bridge* followed ULT's ethos but aligned with the new wave of social comment exemplified by Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*,¹⁶ and is 'regarded as an important turning point in the history of Northern Ireland's

1958 production was produced by the Ulster Group Theatre and presented in the Grand Opera House. It was directed by Tyrone Guthrie who was not prepared to take J. Ritchie McKee's suggestions on cuts to the text.

¹³ Joan FitzPatrick Dean, *Riot and Great Anger: Stage censorship in twentieth-century Ireland* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 172-73.

¹⁴ Morash, *Irish theatre*, p. 220.

¹⁵ Ophelia Byrne, *Culture Northern Ireland, Sam Thompson Self-taught playwright and trade union activist* (2006), available at <<https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/article/748/sam-thompson>> [accessed on 8 August 2019].

¹⁶ Glynne Wickham, *A History of the Theatre* (London: Phaidon, 1992), p. 248.

cultural modernisation'.¹⁷ Through Thompson's efforts, theatre in Northern Ireland would never be the same again.¹⁸

Influencers

The arts in Ulster between the end of WWII and the start of the Troubles was significantly influenced by two figures: Dame Dehra Parker and Sir Tyrone Guthrie. Dehra Parker was one of the first women to be elected to the Northern Irish parliament when in 1933 she became Ulster Unionist member for South Londonderry.¹⁹ She was the only woman to serve in the cabinet of the NI government as Minister of Health and Local Government from 1949 and one of the many women who have shaped culture in the Province.²⁰ Parker left few personal papers and no memoir, so details of her life and work is pieced together from official documents and third-party accounts.²¹ She was a staunch unionist, in her parliamentary career never once voting against the government, and as MP for a constituency west of the Bann where Protestants were in the minority, was in favour of the Gerrymandering that returned unionist councils in Catholic areas.²² However she was not anti-Irish. Her relationship with culture and national identity was complex, admitting that, as a girl, she had been 'very ardently interested in Irish politics, in Irish poetry, in Irish literature and Irish history'.²³ She saw her Northern Irish identity as adding a unique flavour to her Britishness; similarly her Ulster identity gave a distinctive

¹⁷ Lionel Pilkington, *Theatre and the state in twentieth century Ireland: cultivating the people* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 180.

¹⁸ Byrne, *Sam Thompson Self-taught playwright*.

¹⁹ R. A. Wilford, 'Dame Dehra Parker', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Paul Ward, *Unionism in the United Kingdom, 1918-1974* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 163.

²¹ Ward, *Unionism in the UK*, p. 163.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

character to a sense of Irishness.²⁴ In a letter to Ervine about a biography of James Craig,²⁵ Parker chided him for portraying Craig as vehemently anti-Irish; saying he ‘was an Irishman, as well as an Ulsterman, and that he would not have cared to have his Biography intermingled with such scathing criticism of Ireland and the Irish, past and present’.²⁶

The other ever-present figure was Tyrone Guthrie, whose mother was heiress to one of Ireland’s leading families of the Protestant Ascendancy, the Powers.²⁷ He grew up in Kent attended by Irish nannies who were ‘one of the joys of his young life, and a lasting influence too’.²⁸ The Scottish influence from his father’s side was also strong, perhaps explaining his later affinity for Belfast and its Ulster-Scots tone. Holidays were spent at the ancestral home, Annaghmakerrig, County Monaghan.²⁹ ‘Ireland even then, [...] had a powerful influence on him’.³⁰ He recalled later how he would lie in bed in his rooms at Oxford and conjure up the memory of the place:

With a very little effort I can feel the feel in the air and the smell of the grass and the feeling of brushing against spruce and fir branches after rain – and the smell of a turf fire – and the silence and the little, birdy noises down by the lake when it’s nearly dark. Oh! if only we could be there!³¹

In 1921 he joined the BBC and was posted to Belfast where he became interested in folk arts, and was inspired by the people and the relationship between industrial city and countryside.³² He experienced two contemporary

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁵ The first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁷ James Forsyth, *Tyrone Guthrie: a biography* (London: Hamilton, 1976), p. 1.

²⁸ Forsyth, *Tyrone Guthrie*, p. 5.

²⁹ Note that Co. Monaghan is a county of Ulster but since 1921 part of the Free State and subsequently the Republic of Ireland.

³⁰ Forsyth, *Tyrone Guthrie*, p. 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

presentations of the folk-art culture; the verse drama of Yeats which sat well with his romantic ideals of Annaghmakerrig, and the parades season, notably the Twelfth of July about which he produced a radio documentary. ‘Few districts in the civilised world have any annual festival to compare with Ulster’s Twelfth of July’.³³ Guthrie enjoyed Belfast and recounted a sense of belonging to a community, but he soon left for professional theatre in Glasgow.³⁴

Guthrie continued to spend time in Annaghmakerrig and regularly worked in Belfast; for the Festival of Britain, he produced three new plays by Ulster playwrights,³⁵ raising the profile of Northern Irish writers and performers and starting a talent drain from the Province. Guthrie believed Dublin thought too much of its theatrical output:

In the last twenty years the standard of local theatrical production has been higher in the north than in the south [...] the Arts Theatre has a respectable record of productions of significant plays in the international field, while the Group Theatre has specialised in the production of plays in Ulster dialect.³⁶

Like Parker, Guthrie had a pluralist approach to identity; ‘a public figure, very, very English in manner; a rather shy, boyish, private, Irishman, of great wit’.³⁷

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67. There followed work in Cambridge, Canada, and London at Lillian Baylis’s Old Vic, leading to the hasty arrangement of chairs in a Danish hotel ballroom during a tour of *Hamlet*, which began Guthrie’s experiments with the thrust stage form that bears his name.

³⁵ *The Passing Day* by George Sheils, which Guthrie directed, was designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch, playing at the Lyric, Hammersmith. Also presented were *Danger Men At Work* by John D. Stewart and *The Sham Prince*, Jack Loudan’s adaptation of a play by eighteenth century English playwright Charles Shadwell.

³⁶ Sir Tyrone Guthrie, *A Life in the Theatre* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960), p. 262.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

Both acquired a personal identity that included a sense of Irishness and Ulsterness, and for Parker a complementary strand of Northern Irishness.

One of the positive outcomes of WWII was the Committee for Encouragement of Music and the Arts. Guthrie was delighted to welcome CEMA:

For the first time since the Tudors, the British Treasury, has made manifest a belief that Art in general, and the art of theatre in particular, is not merely a graceful amenity but a necessity to a great nation which considers itself, and wishes to be considered, civilised.³⁸

Following pressure from arts groups, CEMA formed in Northern Ireland in 1943 and quickly grew across the Province.³⁹ The aim from the outset was to provide for the Province as a whole, including the smaller towns, work of the highest standard by professional and semi-professional artists.⁴⁰ It urged local involvement: 'Wherever a suitable hall is available and a local person ready to undertake to make arrangements for an art exhibition, a play or a concert, the Council is anxious to send something'.⁴¹ Limitations on travel during the war meant that few companies could be brought from Great Britain,⁴² so CEMA did well with very little,⁴³ but dependence on public funds created a problem which was to plague CEMA for years; the playing of the British national anthem at all events became a matter of policy that some disagreed with.⁴⁴ Jack Loudan raised concerns that it made CEMA impotent in some areas; district committees in Armagh, Omagh and Newry refused to play it and were duly

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

³⁹ Gillian McIntosh, 'CEMA and the National Anthem: The Arts and the State in Postwar Northern Ireland', *New Hibernia Review*, 5 (2001), 22-32 (22).

⁴⁰ Northern Ireland CEMA, *First Annual Report 1 Feb 1943 - 31 Mar 1944*, p. 2.

⁴¹ Northern Ireland CEMA, *Second Annual Report 1944-1945*, flyleaf.

⁴² *First Annual Report 1 Feb 1943 - 31 Mar 1944*, p. 5.

⁴³ McIntosh, 'CEMA and the National Anthem' 23.

⁴⁴ Dehra Parker was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister at the time.

reprimanded and funding withheld, and in 1945, the Newry committee resigned *en masse* in protest.⁴⁵ The matter spread wider when the Executive Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council voted for its playing at ‘functions held on Government property or sponsored by the Government’.⁴⁶ On this matter the Attorney General was cautious – ‘while all things may be lawful all things are not expedient’.⁴⁷ The national anthem was not commonly played in Britain, except on special occasions, and in the south, The Soldier’s Song⁴⁸ was only played at larger events, so to play at all events in NI was excessive. Many CEMA events took place in churches – Protestant churches accepting the policy, the Roman Catholic chapels, not, consequently, the Catholic Church took no part in the Festival of Britain in Ulster. Despite describing the matter as ‘political dynamite’⁴⁹ Parker, as CEMA president, dictated that it would be played at all CEMA events, reinforcing the awkward relationship between CEMA, the Catholic Church and local arts committees.⁵⁰ The matter was to come to prominence again at the Lyric, as discussed in Chapter 8, below.

CEMA and a National Theatre

Although she never spoke openly in Stormont on the arts, Dehra Parker was behind arts strategy in the Province at almost every turn, only stepping down from CEMA when she was promoted to Cabinet.⁵¹ She appointed Tyrone Guthrie to deliver the NI contribution for the Festival of Britain⁵² and was a constant presence in a series of attempts to create a National Theatre for the

⁴⁵ McIntosh, ‘CEMA and the National Anthem’ 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁷ William Lowry in McIntosh, ‘CEMA and the National Anthem’, p. 28.

⁴⁸ The Soldier’s Song, *Amhrán na bhFiann* in Gaelic, is Ireland’s national anthem.

⁴⁹ McIntosh, ‘CEMA and the National Anthem’ 29.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵¹ *Second Annual Report 1944-1945*.

⁵² *Festival of Britain NI Theatre Sub-Committee Minutes 14 July 1949*, in Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, COM/4D/2.

Province. Northern Ireland, Belfast in particular has always had one eye to the east and the major urban centres of Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester with which it shares much in industry and culture, and the other to the south and Dublin, where the idea of a national theatre was fully realised. In October 1948 CEMA issued a memorandum for cabinet consideration:

two years ago the Government were prepared to make a grant of £15,000 towards a scheme for the acquisition of the Gaiety Theatre, Upper North Street, Belfast and the formation of an Ulster company of players under the direction of Mr Tyrone Guthrie.⁵³

It never materialised, but the memo considers how and why a theatre might be a benefit and to suggest that an actors' company might be created. The memo includes a budget based on a company of 12 players presenting productions for 48 weeks of the year. A meeting at Stormont generated some interest, but no funding was forthcoming, and it was felt that CEMA was straying beyond encouragement and into promotion.⁵⁴ The idea persisted for more than 30 years, appearing periodically and always with Guthrie involved.⁵⁵ During her time at Belfast Festival, Jan Branch was instructed to raise funds for a new theatre based on a proposal developed with Guthrie and a Buy-a-Brick scheme. 'In our spare time the five of us on the staff were promoting this Buy-a-Brick scheme to anyone who attend Festival '73.'⁵⁶ Plans of the proposed theatre on Elmwood Avenue were used to encourage brick sales and 'there was a pot of

⁵³ W. H. N. Downer, *Draft memorandum on Ulster Theatre Company to Sir Basil Brooke, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland*, in Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, CAB 9D/81/1.

⁵⁴ Cabinet Secretariat, *Cabinet Conclusions 19 November 1948*, in Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, CAB 9D/81/1.

⁵⁵ This is a fascinating story which can be pieced together from the NI Cabinet minutes and secret memoranda held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

⁵⁶ John Riddell, *Interview with Jan Branch* (14 March 2019). This interview with Jan Branch is used extensively in Chapters 6 and 7, below. An introduction to Jan can be found in Volume II., p. 33.

money which was invested' and eventually, it seems, was subsumed into the university's funds.⁵⁷

The idea of a national theatre recurs still. Nóirín McKinney, Director of Arts Development at Arts Council of Northern Ireland, reflected that Northern Ireland is the only one of the home nations without a national theatre, acknowledging that this has complex challenges related to identity. Since 2008, she states, ACNI's policy has been to 'make major provision in the Lyric [...] that for more than 60 years has in effect performed the function of a national theatre'.⁵⁸ McKinney argues that the impediments to this are economic and not sectarian, citing Parr's⁵⁹ work regarding Protestant engagement in theatre to counter suggestions that theatre is the preserve of nationalists. In the year ending March 2019 the Lyric received just over £1M from ACNI.⁶⁰ In the same period the National Theatre of Wales (NTW), received £1.6M as 'Core funding' from the Arts Council of Wales.⁶¹ Given that the NTW operates without the major cost of a venue, the funding supports the programming and staff. To fully meet ACNI's aspiration of a national theatre offer, the Lyric would require considerable additional support.

⁵⁷ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

⁵⁸ Nóirín McKinney, in John Wilson (presenter) and Ekene Akalawu (producer), 'Useful Art, Embodying Ruskin, National Theatre for Northern Ireland? Unicorn Store', in *Front Row* (BBC Radio 4), 9 April 2019.

⁵⁹ Connal Parr, *Inventing the Myth: Political Passions and the Ulster Protestant Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford, 2017).

⁶⁰ *Lyric Theatre (NI) Financial Statements 2019*, p. 23, available at <https://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/ccni_ar_attachments/0000100173_20190331_CA.pdf> [accessed on 16 June 2020].

⁶¹ *National Theatre of Wales (NI) Financial Statements 2019*, p. 30, available at <http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends52/0001127952_AC_20190331_E_C.PDF> [accessed on 16 June 2020].

Chapter 6

New Theatres for Ulster

As Fair observes, ‘few twentieth-century architects designed theatres alone and thus these buildings were embedded in a wider architectural discourse’.¹ The modern playhouses of Ireland are typically smaller than their British and European counterparts most, including the Abbey, have fewer than 500 seats, even Keith Williams’ exquisite O’Reilly Theatre in Wexford accommodates only 855,² small by opera standards.³ Many emerged from found-spaces, except for the more recent constructions driven by Arts Council initiatives. At this small-scale they are rarely true proscenium arch theatres, being either open end-stage or with an informal frame to the stage, saving architects from the pitfalls of larger spaces. As noted in the description of the Group in Chapter 4, Mackintosh advocates splitting the audience 50:50 above and below the actor’s eyeline or spaces become excessively wide or tall ‘towering above the actor, who has to act at the bottom of a well’.⁴ He suggests the answer can be to ‘paper the walls with people’,⁵ scaling up the side balconies of his trademark courtyard theatre design to populate the auditorium and ensure the audience is aware of a shared experience. Small-scale offers acoustic advantages – ‘The rule of thumb for audiences at modern densities is that there should be 3-5m³ of

¹ Alistair Fair, in Alistair Fair (ed.), *Setting the scene: perspectives on twentieth-century theatre architecture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 5.

² National Opera House of Ireland, *O’Reilly Theatre* (2019), available at <<https://www.nationaloperahouse.ie/venue-hire/venue/oreilly-theatre>> [accessed on 16 September 2019].

³ Oslo Opera House opened in 2007 and seats 1,400, still relatively small. Glyndebourne, 1,200 seats.

⁴ Iain Mackintosh, ‘Fifty Years of Theatre-making: Anecdotes and Aperçus’, in Fair (ed.), *Setting the scene* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 19-34, p. 21.

⁵ Mackintosh, ‘Fifty Years of Theatre-making’, p. 21.

auditorium volume per person in a playhouse’,⁶ which promotes audibility. The modern venues in Northern Ireland need to offer a broad programme in order to be viable, but as Aronson points out, ‘a theatre designed for all possibilities is ultimately a theatre designed for none’.⁷ Theatre consultants and acousticians advise that the brief carefully denotes the primary function of the room and that secondary functionality is only accommodated without compromising it. Conflicting extremes such as symphony orchestras and unamplified drama cannot be accommodated together, but amplified music, conferencing and some chamber music can be managed in playhouses without great impact on the primary use. Significant changes in configuration, such as converting from seated to flat-floor, are costly and limit the theatre designer’s freedom to mould the room, as will be seen in the MAC in Chapter 9, below.

When the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) launched ‘Housing the Arts’ in 1965,⁸ ACNI was just three years old and concentrating on the provision originally promoted by CEMA.⁹ Britain saw considerable capital development with new venues planned and delivered all over the country and with this, came the growth of an industry to inform and support the specialist design.¹⁰ The role of theatre consultant was formally established with the emergence of multi-disciplinary practices of stage lighting and sound specialists, stage engineers and theatre designers and planners including Theatre Projects Consultants and Carr and Angier.¹¹ The ABTT Theatre Planning Committee was established, to ‘provide impartial advice at planning stage to improve the design and technical standards to new or refurbished

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷ Arnold Aronson, ‘Ideal Theatres: One Roof or Two?’, in Fair (ed.), *Setting the scene* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 179-200, p. 188.

⁸ Alistair Fair, *Modern Playhouses: an architectural history of Britain’s new theatres, 1945-1985* (Oxford: Oxford 2020), p. 27.

⁹ ACNI, *History* (2019), available at <<http://artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/history-of-the-arts-council>> [accessed on 19 September 2019].

¹⁰ Fair, *Modern Playhouses*, p. 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

performing arts buildings of any size'.¹² While many sought to develop formal theatres for drama, others envisaged a future where the possibility of increased leisure time promised a growth in attendances.

Cedric Price's bold vision of a technologically-driven and continually-changing environment that interacted with its users, was a ground-breaking idea that changed the shape of architecture in the late-twentieth century. Inspired by iconoclastic, firebrand director Joan Littlewood's dream of a Fun Palace, a transformative theatre experience for a generation with time to learn and be entertained as 'active participants in a drama of self-discovery'.¹³ Described as both a 'university of the streets' and 'a laboratory of pleasure',¹⁴ hyper-adaptability was core to her concept – 'there will be no permanent structures [...] no legacy of noble contemporary architecture, quickly dating [...] With informality goes flexibility. [...] The whole plan is open, but on many levels'.¹⁵ Littlewood sensed that culture could play a part in post-war, post-industrial Britain to give people joy and meaning in their lives, grasping the means of production, and becoming a mechanism of societal change. Her vision could not compete with Britain's deeply-embedded capitalism, any remnants swept away by Thatcher and the emergence of neoliberalism. Price's radical design of moving escalators and sliding panels was never built, and there is irony in the fact that the most advanced plans were for a site that was eventually occupied by Zaha Hadid Architects' Aquatic

¹² Association of British Theatre Technicians, *Theatre Planning Committee* (2019), available at <<http://www.abtt.org.uk/about-us/theatre-design-committee/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]. Northern Ireland saw no such growth; it would be the 1990s and the era of Lottery funding before the Province saw an Arts Council commitment to venue building.

¹³ Stanley Mathews, 'The Fun Palace: Cedric Price's experiment in architecture and technology', *Technoetic Arts*, 3 (2005), 73-92 (76).

¹⁴ Nadine Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 33

¹⁵ Joan Littlewood, 'A Laboratory of Fun', *New Scientist*, 14 May 1964.

Centre for the 2012 Olympics.¹⁶ His influence was far-reaching with many architects, notably Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano adopting elements of the Fun Palace concept, and some ideas have persisted in performing arts venue design: for example Will Alsop's ill-fated 2008 The Public, West Bromwich, now a sixth-form college.¹⁷ However Littlewood's Fun Palace influence has persisted at a smaller-scale. In 2013 Stella Duffy implemented a project to facilitate the creation of Fun Palaces across the UK in 'an ongoing campaign for cultural democracy, with an annual weekend of action every October'.¹⁸ The ideas are akin to those of Littlewood; anything goes, as long as it subverts the conventional. Big Telly's Creative Shops Project, dealt with in detail in Chapter 10, allows participants the time, space and opportunity to curate their own work and collaborate with others.

¹⁶ Mathews, 'The Fun Palace', 85. Price did get to realise some of his concept at the InterAction Centre in Kentish Town, a modular building of pre-fabricated parts with an exposed structure, that could be expanded as required. InterAction closed in the 1990s and Price, in a contrary move, opposed its listing by English Heritage arguing that it should be replaced by something better, not an approach that would be considered sustainable today. It was demolished in 2003, the year Price died.

¹⁷ 'The Public art gallery in West Bromwich opens as a college', *BBC News*, 10 September 2014, available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-birmingham-29144730/the-public-art-gallery-in-west-bromwich-opens-as-a-college>> [accessed on 1 July 2020]. More recent projects include Diller Scofidio + Renfro's The McCourt at The Shed, New York, with a movable shell that covers an outdoor plaza; and the flagship of George Osbourne's Northern Powerhouse, architect Office for Metropolitan Architecture, OMA's The Factory, for Manchester International Festival.

¹⁸ Fun Palaces, The Albany Deptford, *About* (2019), available at <<http://funpalaces.co.uk/about/>> [accessed on 16 September 2019].

Riverside Theatre Coleraine

Of architect Peter Moro, Fair notes that, when asked about his Nottingham Playhouse design, ‘his questioners “wanted me to theorise, but I can’t because [design] came naturally”’.¹⁹ This effortless quality comes across in Moro’s design of the Riverside, a building recognisable to those familiar with his Gulbenkian, Hull. The theatre was commissioned for the New University of Ulster, with funding from the university, £30,000 from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation,²⁰ public donation and ACNI with published costs of around £385,000.²¹ It was the first new theatre to open in Northern Ireland since the Lyric in 1968, examined in Chapter 8.²² It is a simple, economical design for a 300-seat large studio capable of proscenium, thrust and flat-floor configurations developed with consultants Carr & Angier.²³ The auditorium is

¹⁹ Alastair Fair, “‘A London Architect Who Has Specialised’: Peter Moro and Festivity in Theatre Design, c. 1955-82’, in Fair (ed.), *Setting the scene* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 133-162, p. 134.

²⁰ *Riverside Theatre Brochure*, in (Riverside Theatre Coleraine Archive). See Volume II, Figure 7, for a drawing of the space.

²¹ Riverside Theatre *The history of Riverside Theatre* (2019), available at <<https://www.riversidetheatre.org.uk/your-visit/history>> [accessed on 17 September 2019]. When the theatre opened, the university was growing rapidly and the theatre was a significant resource, especially for the drama courses. In 1984, the university amalgamated with three other campuses to become Ulster University and in the late 1990s the drama courses relocated to Derry. Since then, the theatre has operated as a receiving venue but, as it is located three miles outside Coleraine, struggles to bring in audiences, with most events limited to weekend nights only.

²² Volume II, Figure 6, is a map showing relevant towns and cities in Northern Ireland.

²³ The proscenium layout is actually open-end stage with the opening framed by curtains; flat-floor removes five rows at the front of the auditorium leaving seven rows behind, although alternative layouts are rarely used and are awkward and labour-intensive to install.

unexceptional, devoid of decoration to the point of austerity, with brick walls – originally in a natural finish but painted purple in recent years – exposed lighting bridges underhanging the roof and a faceted rake of a dozen rows. Moro’s team noted that ‘finishes are inexpensive and there is no plaster on walls or ceilings. There are no false ceilings and all services are exposed’.²⁴ This is typical of Moro’s unadorned style, initiated at Nottingham Playhouse, ‘relying on pure geometry and the honest expression of materials’,²⁵ an approach which kept costs down, although the architect’s report from 1972 indicates an estimate of £173,000, including professional fees,²⁶ well short of the final figure. There is no flying, rather perimeter catwalks below soffit level and a large scene-dock and workshop to rear with convenient get-in access at ground-level.

Where Moro excels is in theatre planning – the layout of rooms and arrangement on the site. He had the benefit of Carr’s assistance, but the general arrangement is intuitive with the single polygonal volume nestling into the hillside.²⁷ The exterior is undeniably Moro with echoes of Hull and Plymouth Theatre Royal, brick-built in grey with a dark band of concrete at the top. Moro exploits the topography to accommodate the rake of the auditorium, the audience entering at the top of the hill, the stage and get-in at the bottom. Audience accommodation wraps round the theatre to the south at auditorium left, the foyer floor overhanging the level below to create bay windows, fully-glazed from floor to ceiling, offering exceptional views over the River Bann and the hills of Donegal. Administration offices and wardrobe are located on the north side at this upper level, with a greenroom at the western end generously offering the cast and crew the same views afforded to the public.

²⁴ Peter Moro and Partners, *Report - Proposed Theatre for the New University of Ulster*, in Riverside Theatre Coleraine Archive, p. 15.

²⁵ Fair, *Modern Playhouses*, p. 67.

²⁶ *Moro Report - Proposed Theatre*, in Riverside Theatre Archive, p. 16.

²⁷ Multi-sided venues were a theme of the period, not only from Moro, but also at Renton Howard Wood’s *Crucible*, Sheffield and Norman Downie’s hexagonal designs for the *Mercury*, Colchester and *Salisbury Playhouse*.

Four dressing rooms are located on the lower floor to the north, and a rehearsal room to the south. It is an uncomplicated arrangement, Moro making the most of the topography, although few architects have a clear, unimpeded site to work with.²⁸ Nonetheless, there are lessons in Moro's approach; the simple geometry of the auditorium allows for efficient and effective circulation. Moro sets this out in an early stage report from 1972, 'in this way external walls as well as internal connections are kept to a minimum',²⁹ most ancillary spaces being acoustically separated from the auditorium by the corridor.

The Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen

The Ardhowen Theatre sits in an exceptionally scenic location on a bend in the River Erne, a mile from the centre of the historic market town of Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh.³⁰ Construction commenced in September 1984, with costs of £1.5 million financed by the European Economic Community (EEC), Fermanagh District Council (FDC) and the NI Departments of Education, Economic Development and Agriculture. When the theatre was opened in person by Brian Friel in May 1986, it was the first theatre opened since the Riverside nearly ten years before.³¹ The theatre connects directly to the

²⁸ John Tuomey, reflecting on the design of the third Lyric, points out the challenges of arranging a theatre on a sloping site whilst trying to accommodate the height of a flytower, this is examined in Chapter 8, below.

²⁹ *Moro Report - Proposed Theatre*, in (Riverside Theatre Archive), p. 4.

³⁰ Fermanagh District Council, *The Ardhowen celebrates 30 years* (2016), available at <<https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/article/ardhowen-celebrates-30-years/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]. It was designed for Fermanagh District Council (FDC) by the Enniskillen born architect, Tom Mullarkey for McCormick Tracey Mullarkey Architects in Derry, a practice with experience in ecclesiastical architecture, not cultural projects. It is one of several Northern Irish theatres for which John Wyckham Associates provided theatre consultancy. See Volume II, Figure 8, for a drawing of the space.

³¹ FDC, *Ardhowen 30 years*.

Edwardian ‘Ardhowen House’,³² which contains much of the ancillary accommodation – consequently, all production accommodation is to the east of the building, making the journey to stage longer than if they had been suited around the theatre like the Riverside, however it makes good use of existing space.³³ The 290-seat auditorium is reminiscent of the Riverside and first impressions make it seem like another example of an open-end stage with lighting bridges underhanging the roof. However, there is a 4.25m (13’11”) deep forestage downstage of an 8.6m (28’2”) wide notional proscenium arch, a downstage entrance on each side masked by another wall at an 11m (36’1”) opening.³⁴ The forestage covers an orchestra pit into which another 50 seats

³² *Ibid.*. Charles McDonagh, originally from County Sligo, and his brother ran a drapery business, McDonagh & Co., on High Street Enniskillen. Charles built the impressive house, in part no doubt for the stunning views south over the River Erne and lived there with his family until his death in 1958.

³³ Arts Council of Ireland, *Auditoria Survey - Ardhowen Theatre* (2001), principal contributor John Riddell, available at <<http://auditoria.artscouncil.ie/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]. The green room is part of the new construction and forms the first-floor link between the old building and the new theatre. It is glazed on the southern elevation and like the Riverside offers the performers and crew a view of the river. The public spaces are in the same fully-glazed construction, with an outdoor terrace and a path leading to the pontoons of a small marina.

³⁴ The combination of forestage and proscenium have the effect of disconnecting the auditorium from the stage, thus placing a set on stage is problematic. If scenery is placed to a traditional stage setting-line, just upstage of the proscenium, the performer and audience are distanced from each other. If, on the other hand, the production is set further down onto the forestage, the rigging of lighting and scenic elements becomes difficult due to the transition from flown bars onstage to lighting bridges in the auditorium.

can be placed, taking the seatcount to 340. With this in place, the forestage is still 1.5m (5') deep.³⁵

The Ardhowen highlights the question of whether or not to have a proscenium arch. Fair recounts that, when newly opened, 'a member of the theatre profession was reported as saying that the Yvonne Arnaud "is out of date before it is started. Theatres are now being built with the open stage"'.³⁶ The attitude persists. In raising objections to a proposed new 1,200-seat receiving theatre in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, several objectors pointed to the Bridge Theatre, London as a new paradigm of adaptability and that the Tunbridge Wells theatre lacked flexibility of this type and was thus outdated.³⁷ This approach in both cases is simplistic, fails to acknowledge the brief for the project and is limited in the view of how a theatre and a production can be adaptive. In Tunbridge Wells the new theatre was to service the touring circuit receiving national tours, and as such, needed to be as like other theatres as possible to facilitate get-in and fit-up. This reduces costs for the venue and the touring company and maximises producer interest in returning with a new show, which positively affects the theatre's sustainability. The Bridge Theatre, Hytner and Starr's ambitious pre-fabricated venture at Southwark, is a producing house which 'focuses on the commissioning and production of new

³⁵ This arrangement pushes the seating farther back into the auditorium than is desirable, in addition to which the rake of the seating is shallow and, with only nine rows, excessively wide. The theatre would have benefited from a shallower forestage, and a steeper auditorium rake with more rows, ensuring the energy between audience and performer, which is currently dissipated too readily, could be retained.

³⁶ Fair, *Modern Playhouses*, p. 204.

³⁷ John Riddell, Persona Associates, *AA/JR/7-1 CPO 2018 Statement of Evidence* (2019), pp. 14-15, available at <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/calverley/proofs-rebuttals/aa/7-AA_JR/AA_JR_7-1%20Statement%20of%20Evidence%20%28John%20Riddell%29.pdf> [accessed on 19 September 2019].

shows'.³⁸ The adaptability designed into the venue allows each creative team the freedom to explore the staging solutions they feel best suits the show. Shows may transfer or tour, in which case the production may need to adapt to a proscenium stage.³⁹ When it was built in the 1960s, the Yvonne Arnaud was conceived as a producing house for a repertory theatre but, like many other venues of the type, it has been forced to move to a mixed commercial programme.⁴⁰ A proscenium arrangement is more accommodating of these concessions to economics – co-productions and in-house productions are likely to tour and cinema presentation requires an end-on layout with little tolerance for viewing angles away from the perpendicular.

Amateur Theatre in Northern Ireland

A notable factor of the development of theatre venues and productions in the Province after WWII was professionalization. In the small playhouses, including the Arts, Lyric and Group theatres, there was no clear distinction between professional and amateur performers, creative team or crew, but the 1950s saw professional organisation, particularly evident once a company established its own, new venue. By the 1970s, a clearer line between

³⁸ Bridge Theatre, *About the Bridge* (2019), available at <<https://bridgetheatre.co.uk/about-the-bridge/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019].

³⁹ This has been successfully achieved by many productions originally produced in other formats, notably *War Horse*, first produced at the Olivier in 2007 and has subsequently toured to proscenium roadhouses all over the UK and worldwide. Similarly, the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) production of *Matilda*, was first presented in thrust at the Courtyard Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon, in 2010, opening at the Cambridge Theatre, London, a West End proscenium house, a year later and going on to tour extensively in proscenium venues.

⁴⁰ Yvonne Arnaud, *What's On* (2019), available at <<https://www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk/whats-on/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019].

professional and amateur theatre was evident but, without a formal theatre training provision, crossover continued.

Amateur drama in the Province began to formalise with the creation in 1949 of the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals (AUDF).⁴¹ The AUDF was largely Protestant and unionist in its membership with many groups associated with churches with a hall and stage which did not attract membership by Catholics. The problem persists and in his account of the 2004 loyalist production of *The Beaux Stratagem* in Derry, McDowell discovered ‘that a factor in attendance by [loyalist] Fountain Estate residents was, in part, due to ‘a greater sense of ease because the building belongs to the Church of Ireland’, contrasting this with the Playhouse which was perceived as ‘a Nationalist venue’.⁴² The Amateur Drama Council of Ireland (ADCI) was founded in 1952 as a ‘federation of amateur drama festivals for the whole of Ireland – North and South’.⁴³

⁴¹ Association of Ulster Drama Festivals, *History* (2019), available at <<http://www.audf.org.uk/history1.htm>> [accessed on 2 September 2019]. With the aim ‘to foster and encourage amateur drama through the holding of Festivals of Drama, the fostering of relations and co-operation between Ulster Drama Festivals, and the fostering of relations with similar organisations in Northern Ireland and other regions’.

⁴² Wallace McDowell, ‘Within These Walls *The Beaux Stratagem*, the City of Derry and “The Only Loyalist Theatre Producer in Ireland”’, in Nadine Holdsworth (ed.), *Theatre and National Identity: Re-Imagining Conceptions of Nation* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 58-74, p. 68.

⁴³ ADCI, *About the Amateur Drama Council of Ireland* (2019), available at <<http://adci.ie/about.html>> [accessed on 2 September]. Largely Catholic and nationalist in character, this is a demonstration of Geertz’s assertion of differing groups in the same region using similar methods of cultural expression. It is also an example of how articles two and three of the Irish constitution affects strands of everyday life. Although separate, the AUDF and ADCI collaborate, with many drama groups competing in festivals in both sectors.

The Belvoir Studio

In 1967 Richard Mills, began to build a company of performers, technicians and creatives from within the community in the recently built Belvoir Estate. The Belvoir Players outgrew the church hall they first occupied and in the mid-1980s moved into a farm building three miles away which they converted for rehearsal and storage.⁴⁴ Mills continued to develop training opportunities for young performers and crew and in the late 1990s, made a National Lottery application seeking funding for a new facility.⁴⁵ The Belvoir Studio opened in 2000, expanding the training programme and opening up to children from five to 18 years old to train in acting, singing, dancing and production arts.

With the closure of the Group in 2005, Belvoir Players converted the main space, with support from ACNI, adding a retractable seating system. ‘We became a replacement for the Group Theatre. Other amateur companies were coming here to do their work and that generated income’.⁴⁶ Additional revenue is derived from tours to the performance venues around Northern Ireland which opened in the late 1990s and 2000s, and from hires to commercial companies, community groups and the amateur drama circuit. The training provision at Belvoir has grown to include up to 300 young people and is entirely cross-community. ‘We don’t turn anybody away for any reason, everybody is

⁴⁴ John Riddell, *Interview* with Richard Mills (4 March 2015).

⁴⁵ With 75 per cent of the £700,000 estimated cost provided from the Lottery fund, Ferguson McIlveen Architects was appointed to provide a rehearsal studio and ancillary spaces. Mills’ functional brief was simple, asking for a room with minimum 5m (16’ 5”) height, not rectilinear in form; ‘they came up with this ellipse-shaped auditorium with lean-to buildings beside for workshop, minor hall and ancillary rooms [...] a terrific design and we’re very happy with it’.

⁴⁶ Riddell-Mills, *Interview*. The absence of public funding is, Mills believes, an advantage, as the bureaucracy and accountability required by funders is a distraction, with funders often dictating how the money is spent, ‘and that’s not always in the best interest of the activity that’s going on’.

welcome; we don't have rejection, we have selection obviously for [casting] parts, but everybody that wants to be involved can be involved.'⁴⁷ Many have gone on to further training and to practice professionally as performers, stage managers and technicians and return to Belvoir to run the summer school, highlighting that, although distinct from professional and community theatre, the links are strong.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Chapter 7

Arts Strategy and buildings for the new millennium

In the late 1980s, Jan Branch assisted Basil Deane¹ on the Deane Report, ‘an inquiry into the potential and feasibility for a performing arts school in Northern Ireland, the assumption being in Belfast’.² Secretary of State Tom King asked the Civil Service to explore options for a flagship project for the

¹ John Turner, ‘Building a new musical heritage’, *The Guardian*, 8 November 2006, available at

<<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/nov/08/guardianobituaries.obituaries>> [accessed on 19 March 2019]. Born in Bangor in 1928, Basil Deane was a musicologist and academic, who left his mark on seven universities and music colleges in the UK and abroad and was director of music for the Arts Council of Great Britain from 1980, on whose music panel he had served since 1977. The council was in a period of austerity, having withdrawn funding from the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. He was able to help establish Opera North and give increased support to the Contemporary Music Network. A move in 1983 as first principal of the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts gave him the challenge of building a new conservatoire in purpose-built premises. Afterwards, he became the Peyton and Barber professor of music at Birmingham University. Following the death of his wife Norma, he retired to Northern Ireland in 1991, where he undertook the government report into the provision of musical education in the province, which bears his name. He died in 2006.

² Riddell-Branch, Interview. The recollections and personal archive of retired arts administrator and consultant Jan Branch were instrumental in helping compile this chapter. While I remain mindful of bias, her insightful perspective helped shape research as she pointed out studies and reports that together paint a picture of well-intentioned interventions some of which were actioned, several not, often for politically motivated reasons.

Province, there being a sense in government that a ceasefire might be imminent;³ ‘this was part of the confidence building, let’s look at the future and let’s get Belfast looking like other cities’.⁴ Deane’s international contacts and experience, combined with his knowledge of Northern Ireland were put to good use:

We concluded that dance [...] was not an option. We looked at music because at that stage we were heading towards the full-sized Ulster Orchestra but having a tutor for every instrument in a symphony orchestra wasn’t feasible. [...] We came up with a recommendation for a third level performing arts school specifically for theatre and drama that would combine training, education, working with the professional theatres; connecting, so that people coming from school to training at all levels; full-time, part-time whatever, would have an opportunity to train and build their careers.⁵

Jan recalls that the structure of youth drama in the Province meant that there was a stream of young people of ‘high-quality’ coming through every year and ‘it seemed almost a duty to provide them with a mechanism to train here’.⁶

³ Martin Melaugh, CAIN Web Service, *The Irish Peace Process – Chronology of Key Events (April 1993 – April 1998)* (1993–1998), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/pp9398.htm>> [accessed on 19 March 2019]. In fact, it was still some years away, a series of republican and loyalist ceasefires between 1993 and 1997 eventually leading to the signing of the Belfast Agreement on Good Friday 1998.

⁴ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

⁵ *Ibid.*.

⁶ *Ibid.*. Despite the nature of the Deane Report and its conclusions, the scheme which eventually got approval from the Northern Ireland Office was to build the Waterfront Hall. A few years later, the Landmark Millennium Project for Northern Ireland sought proposals to mark the year 2000. Jan fronted Common Ground, a proposal to develop five acres (20,000m²) of the disused Belfast gasworks to relocate Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (BIFHE) and provide spaces for theatre companies, film-makers and artists.

While ACNI was engaging actively with arts development, there was very little interest from the local authorities:

Belfast City Council didn't really have an arts policy [...] it wasn't until 1997, when they conducted a review of performing arts spaces, that they stepped forward with the Arts Council and started to engage with the public provision of arts spaces and culture.⁷

In the early 1990s Belfast was still in the midst of the Troubles with no clear sign that the ceasefires and subsequent agreements would take place before the turn of the millennium; 'we were still in the "let's tackle the immediate problems" period'.⁸

Within Reach

In 1988 UK government established the development programme known as Making Belfast Work (MBW).⁹ Unique in its time, MBW targeted funding to support and nurture individuals within deprived communities with training and opportunities to help them seek funding and finance from other quarters. It was part of the drive to build confidence and self-esteem within communities as a route towards ending the Troubles and developing Belfast as a European city for the future.¹⁰ ACNI and MBW commissioned Francois Matarasso to undertake a review and develop a strategy for community-based arts activities

Common Ground got to the final stage of the process, which was won by The Odyssey Arena, this emerges again later in this chapter.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Susan Hodgett and David Johnson, 'Troubles, partnerships and possibilities: a study of the Making Belfast Work development initiative in Northern Ireland', *Public Administration and Development*, 21 (2001), 321-332 (326). Initially conceived as a short-term project with a budget of £10 million to address economic, educational, social, health and environmental problems for the most disadvantaged people of the city, it was upgraded to a five-year mission with a budget of £92.5 million and was still operating in the early 2000s.

¹⁰ Hodgett and Johnson, 'Making Belfast Work', 327.

in Belfast. *Within Reach*¹¹ was published in 1995 and presented an audit of activity, identified basic principles to be adhered to and a framework for putting the strategy into action which included areas of investment into built infrastructure as well as funding practitioners. The study draws an important distinction between community-based arts and other work such as amateur arts and arts in education, doing so not because they are unimportant, ‘but because, in terms of urban and social regeneration, they are contributors rather than agents’.¹² Matarasso acknowledged that involvement in community arts in Belfast was high compared to other cities in Britain and Ireland, and had a focus in disadvantaged areas and produced a large number of events of high-quality ‘capable of shining in an international context’.¹³ The city’s two arts centres, the Crescent and the Old Museum arts centre (OMac), were identified for support. The Crescent described as ‘exceptional in community arts’¹⁴ due in part to the large number of different sized rooms in the rambling Victorian structure and the commitment to contemporary dance and visual arts.¹⁵ He also observed that OMac’s ‘original aim – to establish a type of community arts centre – has changed’, noting that it had shifted towards a successful performance programme of ‘quality, range and internationalism’.¹⁶ He argued

¹¹ Francois Matarasso, *Within Reach – A Strategy for Community-Based Arts Activities in Belfast* (London: Comedia, 1995).

¹² *Matarasso - Within Reach*, Foreword.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1. Despite the formation in 1993 of Community Arts Forum (CAF), an umbrella networking group, he identified that under-funding, lack of good management structures and an overarching policy, limited the effectiveness of the work and should be improved, CAF being identified to implement this. Matarasso singled-out disability theatre as an exception, urging the community arts to develop links with British disability arts groups and encourage a practice of its own.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87. Matarasso recommended that a study be undertaken ‘with a view to recommending a viable reconstruction programme for urgent consideration’.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

that OMac could be used more for community arts but acknowledged the ‘need to improve public access – into and throughout the building’.¹⁷

Matarasso observed that there were many different proposals for cultural developments submitted to the Millennium Commission, the largest being the £100 Million scheme that would eventually become the Odyssey Arena and its adjacent cinema, leisure facilities and science museum. One of the most viable in his estimation was Jan Branch’s Common Ground proposal to create a ‘Centre for training and education, arts, media and leisure activities, principally for children and young people’.¹⁸ Matarasso saw Common Ground as having ‘the capacity to contribute significantly to the development of opportunities for young people in Belfast’.¹⁹ The Waterfront Hall was nearing completion by this time and arts consultant Bonnar Keenlyside noted that the introduction of nearly 3,000 new seats could ‘create threats that are at present unforeseen’.²⁰ While true, this added nothing useful to the debate and failed to acknowledge that all performance practices are not suitable for all venues. Matarasso considered many possible areas of investment but clearly supported the existence of two arts centres,²¹ celebrating the different focus of each and ‘reported that the two central community arts buildings are working well’.²²

In 1990 an ACNI paper *Objectives and Strategies*, began to develop the idea of broadening access to the arts across the Province, including ‘to encourage the provision of adequately equipped facilities’.²³ A number of strategies were identified which included ‘schedules and plans for major

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87. This change in approach, and the drivers behind it, is examined in Chapter 9, below.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²³ ACNI, *Objectives and Strategies* (Belfast: Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 1990), p. 20.

community and arts centres – e.g. Old Museum and Crescent in Belfast, Foyle and Pilot’s Row in Derry’.²⁴ ACNI established a further objective ‘To encourage and assist District Councils in the provision of physical facilities for the arts’,²⁵ which identified the Capital Programme for the Arts (CPA) as a potential source of funding. The Priestley²⁶ review formed the basis of a new structure for ACNI and ‘the formal remit to promote architecture and design quality simultaneously with the opportunity to distribute the first Lottery awards to arts-focused capital projects’.²⁷ In the five-year plan published in 1995, Jan recalls that ACNI promised that ‘everyone would have an arts centre within 20 miles of their own home’,²⁸ a particular wish of the new chair, Donnell Denny QC,²⁹ and led to a complete change in the facilities for the arts in Northern Ireland with a circuit of arts centres with Belfast to be the last part actioned.³⁰ One suggestion was that the Lyric and a new arts centre should be

²⁴ ACNI, *Objectives and Strategies* (1990), p. 20

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁶ Clive Priestley’s 1992 report established new working methods for ACNI. Clive Priestly, *Structures and Arrangements for Funding the Arts in Northern Ireland: Report to Jeremy Hanley MP, Minister with Responsibility for the Arts* (Belfast: Department of Education NI, 1992).

²⁷ ACNI, *Building for the Arts - Celebrating 10 years of Lottery Funding* (Belfast: Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2004).

p. 5. Note, ACNI’s whole governance structure changed, becoming a Limited Company as noted by Matarasso.

²⁸ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

²⁹ Later The Rt Hon Lord Justice Deeny, a High Court justice and a member of the Court of Appeal of Northern Ireland. Donnell Deeny served on the ACNI board from 1991 and as chairman from 1994–1998.

³⁰ Jan asserts that ACNI issued ‘misinformation about the European laws on disabled access’ stating ‘we cannot fund any venue which does not have complete disabled access’. It took several years of discussion to have the requirement properly understood – that every effort must be made to provide access, but older buildings, particularly those with a heritage quality, might be

located at Cathedral Quarter, the new arts centre to be a combination of the Crescent and OMac, as part of which the Crescent was expected to sell their building on University Road to part-fund the new build.³¹ The directors of both Belfast arts centres had established a good working relationship during the 1990s which ensured there was no confusion about roles and programme, so the amalgamation was not an attractive proposition for either. ‘The Old Museum was bursting at the seams with things that could have attracted larger audiences and it was convenient to everybody, at the time, to say this building is too small, [...] we have to have a new arts centre for Belfast’.³² The decision, ultimately, was that the Crescent would remain and it was redeveloped after its third National Lottery funding submission was approved.³³

In 1996 the Southwood Review³⁴ concluded that Belfast needed a clear arts strategy or ‘the City’s venues in the sector would see; seating over-capacity; unproductive competition; [and] insufficient resources leading to

incompatible with this. Further discussion on accessibility as a component of a sustainable building design appears later in this chapter.

³¹ Riddell-Branch, Interview. Jan was working on the redevelopment of the Crescent, the first Lottery funding proposal for which had been turned down. BCC were eager to see the redevelopment of this prime south Belfast site into high-end apartments, however the board of the Crescent objected strongly to any such move.

³² Riddell-Branch, Interview.

³³ Gilbert Ash, *Crescent Arts Centre* (2010), available at <<https://gilbert-ash.com/projects/crescent-arts-centre>> [accessed on 1 July 2019]. The redevelopment of the 1870s Grade B1 listed building by Hamilton Architects, provided multi-purpose spaces for visual, performance and creative arts, as well as experimental theatre space, galleries, workshops, studios, offices and café. With Gilbert Ash as main contractors, it opened in March 2010 at a project cost of £5.4M.

³⁴ Russell Southwood, *Review of Performing Arts Venues and Spaces in Belfast* (Belfast: Belfast City Council and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 1997).

increasing financial instability'.³⁵ It recommended a strategic framework be developed by the 'arts constituency' together with BCC and ACNI, identifying that the city was missing a space 'correct for contemporary dance',³⁶ asking if it were not time to build a dance centre. The drama review provides an astute assessment of the venues and their suitability for professional drama. The Group and Crescent were not considered suitably equipped for professional theatre.³⁷ OMac was found to be the venue 'most frequently used by the independent sector',³⁸ noting that despite the low seatcount, the venue offered good financial terms often including a performance guarantee, but Southwood questioned OMac's ability to consistently attract audiences for professional theatre.³⁹ Southwood also referred to a study by BDO Stoy Hayward for the Lyric which examined different options for the theatre,⁴⁰ including redevelopment on the existing site, relocating to a new purpose-built theatre on the gasworks site, and various Cathedral Quarter locations.⁴¹ He recommends 'that a major, city centre, arts centre for Belfast is developed, either through the

³⁵ *Southwood Review*, p. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9. The Arts is noted as not popular with professional companies due to poor facilities and larger auditorium and Southwood alludes to a feeling that the theatre 'has lost its "house-style" in recent years by catering for so many different audiences', catering as it did in its final years, mostly for amateur musical theatre companies. To complicate matters further, the building was not owned by the Arts and the lease was due to expire in 1999 and plans to buy and redevelop the site were estimated at £4.1M. The BT Studio at the Waterfront Hall was found to have deterred professional companies because of 'technical and acoustic difficulties', in addition, the Waterfront's preferred use for the space was for commercial conferences.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45. Options tabled included relocation, suggested again the amalgamation with the Crescent, and the change of use to a literary centre.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

amalgamation of the Crescent Arts Centre and the Old Museum arts centre, or by another route'.⁴² The reasons for proposing amalgamation were sound – OMac had a restricted building but good resources and a strong identity, especially in programming – the Crescent was low on resources but big on space offering 'considerable potential for development as a major arts venue'.⁴³ The report identifies the need for a '100-200 capacity performance space',⁴⁴ and:

a middle-scale performance space to accommodate touring productions, offering challenge and opportunity for the local professional companies (in a space with a capacity between the Old Museum arts centre and the Grand Opera House), accommodating musical theatre and as an occasional venue for dance productions.⁴⁵

The report is not precise about the seatcount, but with OMac seating 91 and the GOH 1,000, this suggests a seatcount of 450. It is not clear how the need for this space was identified, other than by consultation and anecdotal response from the performing arts community. There is no market analysis, audience figures, or business plan to demonstrate how such a theatre would be funded and operate. However, this notion of a 450-500 seat middle-scale theatre has been absorbed into the collective consciousness of theatre professionals in the city and is still referenced today, despite the fact that the city now has two 350-400 seat venues in the MAC and the Lyric. Jan Branch recalls that the arts community 'came together quite strongly and said we need a 500-seater'.⁴⁶ It was never built, but she speculated on how different the programming profile might have looked.

It's very rare that those 300-350 seaters are full. If you have a 500-seater you have a show that doesn't run as long as you need it for filling 350 seats so you have a more compressed programme [...] and a 500-

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

seater with a pit would allow middle-sized musicals and dance and chamber opera. None of the opera companies in the South will come because there is no suitable venue, so we have lost our touring chamber operas that we had in good quality for years.⁴⁷

These productions toured into the Arts, which was suitable, despite its many technical flaws. ‘There are specific things that we’ve lost out on by not having that, but we might have had a different mix of programming if we’d had 1,000, 500, 250.’⁴⁸ There is no evidence of a sound basis for the assertion that a 450-500 seat venue is necessary or viable, but the venue offer in the city still lacks a contemporary dance space.⁴⁹ The other element missing from the offer is vocational training. Thirty years after the Deane report, Northern Ireland still has no formal training centre for performers and technicians. The Belfast Met, the city’s further and higher education college, offers no courses in performing arts for performers or technicians.⁵⁰ Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) offers a

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ The two types could be successfully combined with a well-considered auditorium and stage design; the forms have slightly different needs, but these are not mutually exclusive. Dance benefits from elevating the audience to ensure that more than 50 per cent are above the dancer’s eyeline and to provide good sightlines to the floor at the front edge of the stage; drama spaces typically benefit from having 50 per cent audience below the actor’s eyeline. However, both need wing space, especially dance where run-off width is necessary, and require overhead flying. The most significant difference between the forms is in the stage floor construction, where theatre needs a hardwearing semi-sprung floor, but dance requires a fully-sprung floor across the performance area with a harder surface in the wings. A workable solution is to fit the theatre stage floor and keep a modular sprung dance floor which can be laid on top as required.

⁵⁰ Belfast Met, *Home Page* (2019), available at <<https://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/>> [accessed on 5 July 2019]. It does offer a hair

course in Film and Theatre Making which promises the opportunity to ‘study the intricacies of production practice in both film and theatre’⁵¹ and a BA in Drama and English,⁵² and the University of Ulster offers several BA courses in Drama,⁵³ but, valuable as they are, none of these are vocational training of the disciplined and focused conservatoire model.

The Ring of White Elephants – new venues outside Belfast

By 2004 the new build of regional civic arts centres in the Province had been completed; what Jan uncharitably refers to as ‘The Ring of White Elephants’. The most successful in her opinion is the Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre in Armagh. ‘It’s a good building and it’s a nice building to work in, a comfortable place [...] a very professional place to work in.’⁵⁴ The Market Place has developed a mixed programme well-suited to the local market with a strong focus on comedy which capitalises on students returning home for the weekend, with a programme of small-scale ballet, drama and opera. ‘It’s a great mix and it seems to be viable in every way; it’s done very well’.⁵⁵ The Market Place opened in 2001 in a design where Glenn Howells architects

and makeup course for media. The college’s predecessor, Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education, offered a broad-based introductory course in performance and technical arts.

⁵¹ Queen's University Belfast, *BA in Film and Theatre Making* (2019), available at <<https://www.qub.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/film-theatre-making-ba-ww65/>> [accessed on 5 July 2019].

⁵² Queen's University Belfast, *BA Drama and English* (2019), available at <<https://www.qub.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/drama-english-ba-wq43/>> [accessed on 5 July 2019].

⁵³ University of Ulster, *Courses in theatre* (2019), available at <<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/courses?query=theatre&f.Level%7CY=>>> [accessed on 5 July 2019].

⁵⁴ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*.

‘provided a building where gravitas is tempered with suavity and aplomb’.⁵⁶ The venue houses a flexible, unremarkable 150-seat studio and a 400-seat courtyard theatre in a design by John Wyckham Associates, the only true courtyard theatre in the Province.⁵⁷

The other venues, Jan asserts, are struggling partly because fewer theatre companies tour due to a lack of funding, and because ACNI no longer provides 50 per cent programming funding. ‘The regional venues are at the mercy of their local council’s budget and there is no requirement on any council to fund them at all.’⁵⁸ Some do commit to funding their venues, for

⁵⁶ ACNI, *Building for the Arts* (2004), p. 9. It is in the middle of the old town in the shadow of St Patrick’s Church of Ireland Cathedral. The topography is complex, being on the side of a hill, surrounded by ancient and medieval sites and listed buildings. Far from a mediocre attempt to blend unnoticed into the site, Glenn Howells created a bright, modern building made up of a series of terraces that respond to the steeply sloping site, and creating external and internal steps in a way that reflects the medieval character of the surroundings. The façade and internal finishes of the public spaces uses a creamy white precast polished limestone which, combined with extensive glazing, provides a sense of continuity to the approach and brings light and air to the internal areas. Volume II, Figure 9, shows a drawing of the Market Place theatre in plan and section.

⁵⁷ The auditorium is lined in light American oak, and features stalls, parterre, side-balconies and two further balconies and side-balconies above. It is a pleasant auditorium but at 400, feels a little pinched, the side balconies being shallow with eight to ten single, swivel chairs on each. The rear balconies are shallow and do not overhang the stalls, in a manner reminiscent of the Georgian Theatre, Richmond. However, this serves to make the balconies feel isolated despite being no more than 12m (39’4”) from the stage. The auditorium would have benefited from greater width, however the size and density of seating promotes intimacy and the limited volume ensures an excellent room acoustic for drama.

⁵⁸ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

example Mid Ulster District Council committed to ongoing funding of £500,000 per annum for the Seamus Heaney HomePlace, a purpose-built arts and literary centre in the poet's home town of Bellaghy, describing it as 'the jewel in our crown'.⁵⁹ 'Some of the others put in next to nothing and so the venues are unused'.⁶⁰

The Alley Theatre and Conference Centre, Strabane, 'a busy little place',⁶¹ is another design by Glenn Howells Architects in association with Ulster-based Alan Jones Architects. Completed in 2006, the theatre seats 265 in a courtyard form with retractable seating and a fixed balcony and side-balcony.⁶² The public spaces at the Alley present many of the same features found in the Market Place, although the site does not permit the same generous approach, being bright, maximising the use of glazing to the southwest, with the café opening onto a small piazza to the northwest.

Flowerfield Art Centre, Portstewart – 'a difficult combination of professional artists and craftsmen in very good accommodation but trying to get the mix of being viable as an arts centre, but not totally balanced'.⁶³ Big

⁵⁹ Robbie Meredith, BBC Northern Ireland, *Seamus Heaney HomePlace 'jewel in our crown'* (2019), available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-47476475>> [accessed on 1 July 2019].

⁶⁰ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

⁶¹ Riddell-Branch, Interview. On the far west of the Province, Strabane is on the border between Tyrone in the North and Donegal in the Republic of Ireland.

⁶² An innovative retractable system features six rows retracting under the balcony and four under the auditorium floor. When deployed the seating gives the illusion of a raised stage, but the stage and stalls are at the same level allowing the space to be fully opened up for flat-floor events such as banquets and exhibitions, by placing infill panels into this area of the floor. This dilutes the effectiveness of the venue for drama but offers good adaptability. The venue has a flytower but does not have full-height flying.

⁶³ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

Telly Theatre Company are resident in the building where the company had started their journey in the 1980s.⁶⁴

Capital Build Programme

In 2011 Deloitte carried out an assessment of the built assets created in the Province during the National Lottery funded capital build programme. The programme began in 1994 and developed 39 capital projects, some new-builds and some refurbishments, in the years to 2008.⁶⁵ The capital build programme used several criteria to determine if a project would be eligible for funding: it must be for the public good, demonstrate ‘community benefit’ and a clear demand for its presence; partnership funding must be available; and the financial viability demonstrated for ‘ACNI to be reasonably assured that funds would be available to meet running costs’.⁶⁶ High standards of architecture were expected in each design with access for disabled people central to the design. ACNI also considered the quality of likely arts activity in the building,

⁶⁴ One of the subjects of Chapter 10, below, an introduction to Big Telly and co-founder Zoë Seaton is in Volume II.

⁶⁵ ACNI, *Standing Ovation – A Strategic Evaluation of the Capital Build Programme* (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2012), available at <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/acni_capital_build_programme.pdf> [accessed on 8 July 2019], p. 1. The projects included museums and literature and learning centres, but Table 1 in Volume II lists the venues with a performance focus or a performing arts component in their programme. Of these, Belvoir Studio, as noted in Chapter 6, above, is provision for amateur companies, chiefly the Belvoir Players, although it is occasionally used by professional companies for rehearsal. Flowerfield has a participatory-arts focus and Island Arts Centre presents a limited number of professional performances.

⁶⁶ *Standing Ovation*, p. 6. Concerns raised by consultant Annabel Jackson and Jan Branch about lack of funding for maintenance of venues are discussed later in this chapter, which suggests that the proposals may have been less robust than they should have been.

its connection to the wider strategic arts context and any education and outreach proposed.⁶⁷ The report examined the economic and social impacts of the new buildings, citing case studies in Cookstown, Omagh, and Derry as a mix of urban and rural-town contexts and considered the capital costs and economic impact of the construction on jobs and the local area, but it is the information on the first six years of operation which is most instructive in displaying trends across the venues. The economic impact methodology is sound, taking income and expenditure data and audience figures as the base.⁶⁸ Economic impact is defined as ‘the total economic activity generated by a venue within the local economy’,⁶⁹ meaning the local authority area, although it acknowledges that this method is problematic as a venue’s catchment may cross authority boundaries.⁷⁰ Using the Shellard Method discussed in Chapter 2, above, it derives the ‘economic activity that would be lost if the venue did not exist’,⁷¹ by considering the ripple effect of the venue’s outgoings contributing to the local economy. A multiplier of 1.2⁷² is applied to estimate the spend on goods and services in the area. Additional Visitor Spend (AVS) is also estimated, Deloitte using Shellard’s 2004 figure of £7.77⁷³ acknowledging that 2011 figures would likely be higher, but reducing this by a third to £5.13 to reflect ‘an underdeveloped evening economy’.⁷⁴ An exception is The Millennium Forum in Derry, the largest of the new venues in the largest urban

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁰ In 2014 elections were held for 11 new super councils which were formed by combining the 26 district, borough and city councils.

⁷¹ *Standing Ovation*, p. 14.

⁷² It is interesting to note that Shellard used a factor of x1.5 in 2004. 1.2 is conservative and was based on an Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) of Victoria Square in Belfast when this figure was used.

⁷³ Dominic Shellard, *Economic impact study of UK theatre* (London: Arts Council England, 2004), p. 6.

⁷⁴ *Standing Ovation*, p. 14.

area outside Belfast, where an AVS of £11.70 was employed.⁷⁵ The report suggests that higher AVS figures will be attainable in towns where a ‘coordinated programme to create an evening economy and the town centre as “destination” in the evenings, is undertaken’,⁷⁶ however, the AVS quoted in the study could have been higher – £5.13 is overly cautious. Following from this, Deloitte arrived at an average yearly net economic impact,⁷⁷ the revenue then compared with local authority subsidy to give an estimation of value for money. The contribution of subsidy for the performance focused venues is no lower than 62 per cent, excepting the Millennium Forum which was operating at just 14 per cent.⁷⁸ The Market Place Theatre, Armagh, received 62 per cent of its income as subsidy, but the study points out that it offers a high net economic impact.⁷⁹

That the Millennium Forum performed so well, is a function of its location and design; a 1,000-seat auditorium in the Province’s second city. UK Theatre Sales Data indicates that ‘The vast majority of the cumulative increased income (£35.0 million) was achieved by Principally Presenting Theatres with a capacity of over 1,000 (89 per cent of overall growth in income)’ – only theatres in this bracket saw a real term increase in ticket revenue. The Millennium Forum is not a member of UK Theatre; in Derry, membership of an Irish organisation is more likely, however, the GOH and Lyric in Belfast are both members. The figures are compelling and compounded by the data for 200-500 and 500-1,000 seat auditoria where ‘average yield grew less than inflation’.⁸⁰ Combine this under-capacity with

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15. This figure was drawn from a 2010 report by John Edmund, a marketing and strategic planner and chair of ACNI since 2016. See Volume II, Figures 10-11, for drawings of the space.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸⁰ UK Theatre and TRG Arts, *Sales Data Headlines 2018* (London: UK Theatre, 2019), p. 4.

the average ticket price charged and the problem is amplified. While the big venues record an average ticket price of £32 and an achieved capacity of 62 per cent,⁸¹ the 500-1,000 capacity venues attracted 56 per cent capacity at £21 per ticket,⁸² the 200-500 auditoria 48 per cent at £14.⁸³

Despite these difficulties, the Deloitte report identified a positive economic impact from the venues in the capital programme, but a greater benefit was demonstrated by the social and other impacts of the venues. The report is short on robust methodology to assess social, cultural and environmental impact, the comments are anecdotal and subjective, however it suggests an educational benefit at every level, especially for young people, a benefit in community integration, and a contribution to raising self-esteem and confidence.⁸⁴ Other methods of study would provide tools to monetise these values meaningfully, however, the most encouraging finding was that the report concludes that ‘the venues are financially sustainable (assuming continued public subsidy support)’.⁸⁵

Procuring and maintaining venues

If these venues are to remain sustainable, they rely on the brief being appropriate and the procurement of the building being suitable to deliver this. Cost constraints may lead to appointing an inexperienced team, choosing an inappropriate procurement method, or selecting a main contractor on price alone. ‘There have been a lot of issues around procurement and the Central Procurement Directorate’s (CPD) role and efficiency [...] which has been the

⁸¹ *Sales Data Headlines 2018*, p. 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 11. Given that almost all the venues in the Deloitte report are in the group with the lowest price and achieved capacity, it is clear why subsidy is necessary. Other regional venues in Northern Ireland that pre-date the study or were completed after it, also fall into this bracket. Table 2 in Volume II lists all venues with capacities.

⁸⁴ *Standing Ovation*, p. 14.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

case with both the Lyric and the MAC. Which leads to the question of CPD's role.'⁸⁶ Jan suggests that oversight during the procurement of the design and building contracts for the Lyric was not as diligent as it should have been; 'not everybody's eye was on the ball at all times'.⁸⁷ There is debate about the circumstances of the appointment of Gilbert Ash as main contractor, and in a 2013 report the Public Accounts Committee of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) criticised the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure's management of major capital projects.⁸⁸ The report examined seven capital projects with a combined total of over £100 million, against time and costs targets.⁸⁹ The report concluded that satisfactory evidence could not be found to confirm that: 'the contract for the rebuild of the Lyric Theatre was awarded in line with best practice; and perceived conflicts of interest around donations made to the Lyric Theatre capital project were managed correctly'.⁹⁰ The report notes several pricing anomalies – the prices returned by the five bidding contractors showed prices for scaffolding ranging from £85,000 to £413,000, the latter being from Gilbert Ash NI, the eventual winners. To level the playing field, scaffolding costs were excluded from the tender evaluation. Unfortunately, CPD did not have a representative attending the evaluation and records were not retained beyond appointment of the main contractor.⁹¹ At a meeting of the Lyric Board in March 2008, Gilbert Ash NI Ltd was awarded stage one of the main contract, however, at the same meeting the fundraising team announced a project donation from them of £150,000.⁹² These two events look suspicious, but the NIAO does not suggest any wrongdoing but criticises

⁸⁶ Riddell-Branch, Interview. CPD is responsible for public procurement policy in Northern Ireland.

⁸⁷ Riddell-Branch, Interview.

⁸⁸ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2013).

⁸⁹ DCAL, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (2013), p. 3.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

CPD for not providing effective oversight and suggests that better efforts be made to manage conflicts of interest.⁹³

The report also raised concerns about the MAC's level of engagement with the procurement process, noting that the post of Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) which is 'usually held by the chair of the client organisation',⁹⁴ was vacant for a long time until attempts were made to delegate the role to Anne McReynolds, MAC CEO, however as she already held the post of Project Director, the role was filled by a civil servant. The MAC competition resulted in the appointment of Hackett and Hall Architects, but CPD proposed that construction was carried out by a contractor-led design team under a New Engineering Contract 3 (NEC3)⁹⁵ Design and Build contract. The MAC was eager to ensure that the chosen architect and design team were retained to complete the design through to construction and that a Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT)⁹⁶ contract be used.⁹⁷ A well-considered and administered NEC3 contract is no bar to success, permitting more scope to split the design between design team and contractor. However, to change the procurement of a complex building like an arts centre to a contractor-led design team introduces risks to quality and functionality as the emphasis is placed on lowest cost and shortest time, tending to result in a simplified scheme and reduced specification of the design.⁹⁸

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹⁵ The New Engineering Contract was launched in 1993 with NEC3 appearing in 2005. It is a contract type that can be used internationally and is built on plain language, mutual trust and cooperation and being easy to use. NEC4 is now in operation.

⁹⁶ The Joint Contracts Tribunal has been devising and updating construction contracts since 1931. The standard contract has been widely used in the UK at all levels of procurement from works for a homeowner to government schemes.

⁹⁷ DCAL, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (2013), p. 19.

⁹⁸ This is attractive to funders and, for a simple design such as an office block or commercial development, value engineering may not have a detrimental

Sustainability: Maintenance

The Jackson Review of ACNI's five year plan for 2019-2024 highlighted that 'building maintenance seems low across the whole portfolio, which might be storing up problems for the future'.⁹⁹ Jackson recommended that 'venues deliver a programme of sustained building maintenance'.¹⁰⁰ This was particularly problematic when there was no sitting Assembly or Executive in the Province and no mechanism for distributing public funds.¹⁰¹ Jan observes that funds have been diverted from Northern Ireland capital funding into everyday running:

to make next year's bills add up. [...] The maintenance of what we've got isn't guaranteed because it hasn't been built-in. We're all hanging on by our fingernails to keep open. [...] Where we are heading at the moment is towards starvation point. Those new buildings will soon not be new buildings and the equipment in them is several years old already.¹⁰²

Not keeping up with technology has a negative impact on a venue's programme:

we determine our programming by what we are not doing with them now [...] For the last 30 years, there has not been consistent clarity of

effect on the building's operational effectiveness, however, for a performing arts building, changes can have a major impact on the ability to operate appropriately. Technical functionality and acoustic experience are the most likely to be compromised.

⁹⁹ Annabel Jackson, *Desk Review of ACNI's Five Year Strategic Plan Final Report* (Bath: Annabel Jackson Associates, 2018), p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ *Jackson Review*, p.40.

¹⁰¹ The following statement appeared on the website of the Northern Ireland Assembly until it eventually resumed in early 2020: 'The Northern Ireland Assembly and its committees were dissolved on 26 January 2017 in preparation for the Northern Ireland Assembly elections on 2 March 2017.'

¹⁰² Riddell-Branch, Interview.

the long-term plan of what we want, what we need, what we can afford and what we can sustain.¹⁰³

Sustainability: Access and Inclusivity

Another aspect of sustainability relates to building access, not just physical access, but how it welcomes audience and practitioners, and supports staff. Access for disabled patrons has been a major consideration in theatres for decades. Britain has introduced several anti-discrimination instruments to enshrine the equal rights of individuals in law around race relations, equal pay, sex discrimination and disability. In 2010 the Equality Act drew these threads together in legislation of wide-ranging scope which aimed ‘to harmonise discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality’.¹⁰⁴ The act does not fully apply in Northern Ireland as ‘Equal opportunities and discrimination are “transferred matters” under the Northern Ireland Act 1998’,¹⁰⁵ consequently Northern Ireland operates under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. However, this is not necessarily negative; the approach to equality and discrimination in arts buildings is reported on under the Arts and Disability Equality Charter (ADEC), an initiative of Arts Disability Forum and Open Arts in Belfast, funded by ACNI. ADEC provides a workbook enabling venues to audit their building and organisation to ensure best practice in inclusion. The workbook guides the user through five different areas of review – accessibility, employment, policy, participation, and audience development. The users score themselves from one to four for each of the sections and the charter assumes a high-level of achievement as a minimum standard. Organisations scoring three to four are leading the way in equality and inclusion in every area. This is more productive than is seen in Britain where auditing is generally left to external consultants; ADEC helps venues

¹⁰³ Riddell-Branch, Interview. This funding shortfall for maintenance is examined in more detail in Chapter 9, below, in relation to the MAC.

¹⁰⁴ *Equality Act 2010* (London: HMSO, 2010).

¹⁰⁵ *Equality Act 2010: Explanatory Notes Northern Ireland* (London: HMSO, 2010).

proactively address their issues and move to be exemplars and champions of inclusion, in all its forms.¹⁰⁶

The information in Part Two has thoroughly paved the way for the performance-space studies that follow in Part Three. The background information and context described in Chapters 4-7 will assist the reader to get a fuller picture of the spaces studied. The Group and Arts theatres are essential to an understanding of the Lyric, and their legacy, and the history of arts strategy in the Province, contextualizes the development of OMac, the MAC, in Chapter 9, and the third Lyric theatre, in Chapter 8, below.

Part Two Conclusion

Part Two has brought new perspectives to the understanding of small spaces for theatre in Belfast. By drawing together information from a range of existing sources and collating and interpreting it, Part Two has given the reader a firm understanding of the context from which the small theatres examined in the performance space studies in Part Three emerged. The spaces which influenced the early iterations of the Lyric and those which framed the emergence of OMac, have been described in detail, both physically and in terms of policy and programme. To fully understand the development of the Lyric it is essential to understand how it compares with the Group and the Arts, and OMac must be understood in relation to the Crescent Arts Centre and in light of the new playwrights, theatre companies and community groups that emerged in the 1980s. The arts policy and associated political influences across the period studied, link back to the political and cultural biases uncovered in Part One, as seen starkly in the *Over the Bridge* controversy at the Group. The professionalization of theatres has emerged as an important theme, not only in the way theatres are run, but also in the rise of non-government arts bodies

¹⁰⁶ Brenda Kent, *ADECharter Workbook* (Arts and Disability Equality Charter: 2015), available at

<<https://sites.google.com/site/artsdisabilityequalitycharter/the-paper-work>>

[accessed on 5 May 2015].

including CEMA and ACNI, and in the formal organisation of a distinct amateur-theatre sector.

Part Three

Space

Chapter 8: The Lyric Theatres

Chapter 9: The Old Museum arts centre and the MAC

Chapter 10: Non-formal Theatres

Part Three Introduction

Part Three is the core of this thesis and is where most of the new work is brought to the study of theatre space. Chapter 8 aims to give the reader a complete understanding of the spaces occupied by the three iterations of the Lyric Theatre, Belfast, showing how these spaces responded to the forces that drove their creation, and how the spaces facilitated the anticipated programme and served the audiences, performers and staff that used them. Chapter 8 also give a critical examination of designs for the second Lyric that never made it off the drawing board. Chapter 9 takes a similar approach to the study of the Old Museum arts centre and the subsequent development of the MAC. The final section of Chapter 8 gives a detailed account of the process of designing and building the third Lyric theatre, which can be compared and contrasted with the MAC, as both projects took place in the same city at the same time. Interviews form a significant part of the research material for these venues, with the architects and client representatives being interviewed providing a deep insight into the processes and decisions that determined the outcome of the projects. Both chapters consider the relationship these venues have with their respective communities, including reflecting on their changing understanding of what community is. The theme of professionalization will be explored both in terms of theatre operation, and how this has led to an increasingly professional approach to performance space design.

Chapter 10, by contrast, looks at non-formal small spaces for theatre in Belfast and the wider Province. This chapter examines the types of spaces used, and how and why they came into being, and considers their role in their communities and how they relate to the public realm. The question of threshold is discussed and contrasted with formal spaces in how it relates to access and inclusivity for all users, and where a softening of threshold may improve access to work both as a presenter and consumer. Linked to threshold, professionalization is addressed again, considering where the boundaries between, professional, amateur and community may be less distinct than in the formal spaces. The final section of Chapter 10 considers how non-formal spaces might contribute to the life of Northern Ireland's ailing and failing town

centres and High Streets, and where the use of such spaces affords agency to a new range of users.

Chapter 8

The Lyric Theatres

The First Lyric Theatre

The Lyric Players Theatre was founded in 1951 ‘to create “a poets’ theatre” very much along the lines which Yeats had hoped to establish in Dublin’. Fitz-Simon goes on to suggest that ‘a conventional regional theatre emerged with local dramatists sharing the stage with international classics, and, in fair measure plays taken from the Abbey’s repertoire’.¹ The Lyric, together with the Group Theatre,² was part of the mixed economy of the arts in Northern Ireland where the lines between professional and amateur practitioners were blurred. Both carried forward the vision of Hobson and Parkhill.³ As with the Arts, the Lyric was formed by a husband-and-wife team, Mary O’Malley leading the artistic direction with husband Pearse taking a supporting role. Like Hibby,⁴ Mary was not from Northern Ireland but born in County Cork. Living in Dublin in the early 1940s, she attended the Abbey, Peacock and Gate theatres.⁵ She was active in Dublin’s New Theatre Group ‘founded in 1937 for the purpose of producing plays of social significance and artistic merit’⁶ and became involved in the Irish Labour Party joining the Central Branch ‘the most exclusive, left-wing section of the Party’.⁷

¹ Christopher Fitz-Simon, *Players and Painted Stage: aspects of the twentieth-century theatre in Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2004), pp. 2-3.

² As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, above.

³ Fitz-Simon, *Players and Painted Stage*, p. 80. Bulmer Hobson and David Parkhill of ULT as outlined in Chapter 5, above.

⁴ Hubert ‘Hibby’ Wilmot of the Arts Theatre.

⁵ Mary O’Malley, *Never shake hands with the Devil* (Dublin: Elo publications, 1990), pp. 28-29.

⁶ O’Malley, *Never shake hands*, p. 34.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

In 1943 she met Ulsterman Pearse, a neurologist,⁸ who in 1946 was invited to lead the department at a Belfast teaching hospital,⁹ the couple moving north in October 1947,¹⁰ Pearse setting-up practice in Ulsterville House.¹¹ Homesick at first, Mary threw a house-warming party inviting local people among whom were Joe Tomelty, then manager of the Ulster Group Theatre, and John and Elizabeth Boyle of the Irish Labour Party.¹² By 1950 she had enough theatre people around her to start presenting one-act plays in the consulting room at Ulsterville. Mary describes the scene: ‘the audience, numbering about 25, had room to be seated comfortably and after the performance there was coffee in our little breakfast room’.¹³ In the same season they ran *At The Hawk’s Well* by Yeats and *The Kiss* by Austin Clarke, and the name Lyric Players Theatre was chosen ‘to associate with, but be distinct from Austin Clarke’s Lyric Theatre in Dublin which had a similar policy’.¹⁴

In November 1952 the O’Malleys moved from Ulsterville House to Beechbank at 11 Derryvolgie Avenue, half a mile to the south,¹⁵ a large house with four reception and five bedrooms:

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46. A large private property on the corner of Ulsterville Avenue at 117 Lisburn Road in south Belfast.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 57. The archive contains no photographs or drawings of this space.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57. With the addition of a cyclorama made from white painted linoleum and the arrival of Sammy Armstrong and his lighting equipment, the productions began to increase in aspiration. Austin Clarke (1896–1974) was an Irish poet and novelist, one of a number that appeared a generation after Yeats. The Lyric Theatre, Dublin emerged from Dublin Verse-Speaking Society and operated in the downstairs studio of the Abbey Theatre. Clarke was a major influence on Mary, and her fondness for Yeats and verse drama comes primarily from him.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Over the garage, which had in the past served as stables, were two rooms, devised by the previous owner as a hayloft. This long room, the whole breadth of the house, was divided by folding doors into two sections, a one-third and two-thirds. There was a fireplace at either end, two doors from the landing and two bay windows looking onto the garden. A very pleasant place indeed. I appreciated its possibilities, and even though I didn't immediately give voice to my thoughts – in my heart I was scheming.¹⁶

In the first play, *Icaro* by Lauro de Bosis:

there was a cast of 22 on a stage (or rather a floor space, with levels) of approximately ten feet by 14 feet. Much ingenuity was needed to manoeuvre the cast, but this was only the first of many such feats.¹⁷

Clearly proud of this, it shows Mary's deficiencies; what Roy Connolly suggests are 'the limitations of her skills and vision as a director',¹⁸ that ultimately undermined her objectives – 'seeking to deliver a professional producing company for Belfast, and a commitment to articulating Yeats'[s] vision for an Irish theatre'.¹⁹ Nevertheless the Lyric grew steadily during the 1950s setting itself as a serious artistic endeavour with the establishment in 1956 of a literary magazine *Threshold*, the name taken from Yeats's *The*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70. Lauro de Bosis (1901–1931) was an Italian poet and avowed anti-fascist. His verse-drama *Icaro* was awarded a silver medal in the arts competition of the 1928 Olympic Games, and is an anti-fascist allegory disguised as a retelling of a Greek myth. In this work, Mary's passion for socialism was blended with her love of verse-drama. The dimensions quoted are interrogated later in this chapter.

¹⁸ Roy Connolly, *The evolution of the Lyric Players Theatre, Belfast: fighting the waves* (Lewiston, N.Y. and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), p. xiii.

¹⁹ Connolly, *The evolution of the Lyric*, p. xiii.

King's Threshold.²⁰ The same year the O'Malleys decided to develop the theatre further:

There was just one snag with our new theatre. The audience would have to enter by a side door, proceed through the front hall, up the stairs, along the corridor, downstairs again and into the "return"; hard on the "faint hearted", and on our carpets.²¹

Realising that 'theatres were not supposed to exist in private dwellings',²² they had plans drawn up for an extension to 'provide foyer and dressing room accommodation, and underneath a large supper room and coffee making area'.²³ A planning application was submitted and duly accepted.²⁴ The theatre was at the back of the house aligned roughly east to west with the stage at the west end. The plans show the stage to be 10' (3.05m) wide x 11' (3.4m) deep and the auditorium 30' (9.14m) long x 10' (3.05m) wide, wider at the bay window. A ground-floor extension of two rooms supported the flat-roofed first-floor extension to the theatre with an external staircase for audience entry leading from the garden on the east side to a small covered terrace. The terrace permitted access to the small foyer area and to backstage. A bay window at the stage end was removed and the wall opened-up to provide access to a backstage area which could be screened off with curtains. A similar screen separated the backstage area from the foyer area allowing the two areas to be

²⁰ O'Malley, *Never shake hands*, p. 89. Ireland had long had a reputation for such periodicals but with the demise of *The Bell* in 1954, there were few remaining. In *The King's Threshold*, poet Seanchan goes on hunger-strike against King Guaire, Yeats allegorically exploring arts and culture in a society where it is not valued politically.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²⁴ Volume II, Figure 13, shows the completed work in plan, redrawn from the available plans in the archive, and Figures 14-18, show photographs and other related material.

combined if needed. The extension was opened in September 1957 with Mary's friend and mentor Austin Clarke in attendance.²⁵

Theatre technician Bob Forster worked in the Lyric towards the end of its life at Derryvolgie Avenue. When he lit his first play at the Lyric in 1963, Brian Friel's *The Enemy Within*,²⁶ he recalls that 'we had eight or ten 250w float-spots and dip-bulb battens and slider dimmers'.²⁷ There was little space and few technical resources. Lighting productions in low studio spaces is a challenge due to the short-throw available as it is difficult to achieve an even coverage of lighting at short distances; the lighting can appear excessively bright when performers are close to the source, the level of brightness falling off rapidly as they move away.²⁸ The heat from the lights built up under the low ceiling, quickly becoming uncomfortable for performers. Two photographs from the archive support Bob's description, one from the stage clearly shows a row of lamps on a batten on the proscenium header, with several other unidentified luminaires and seating for 44.²⁹ The architrave of a door into the house can be seen at the left of the shot. The second photograph shows the stage from the back of the auditorium, light from the bay-window at the south-

²⁵ Volume II, Figure 18, shows a photograph from the garden, shows the completed extension.

²⁶ Friel's 1962 play tells the story of Columba, the sixth-century saint from Donegal, during his self-imposed 34-year exile on the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland. With a cast of ten men, *The Enemy Within* explores themes of exile and identity that Friel would return to in 1964 in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* For Frielfest 2019, Kabosh Theatre Company presented an all-women version of the play directed by Paula McFetridge.

²⁷ John Riddell, *Interview* with Bob Forster (4 February 2015).

²⁸ Inverse Square Law states that the intensity of an effect such as illumination or gravitational force changes in inverse proportion to the square of the distance from the source.

²⁹ *Lyric Theatre photographs*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, National University of Ireland Galway: James Hardiman Library, T4/617. See Volume II, Figures 14-15.

east end flooding the room. The new door to the foyer can be seen to the left with the original door to the rest of the house on the right. The wall and ceiling construction appears to be in painted or stained 4" tongue and groove timber panelling, with a carpeted floor. The walls were a white or off-white shade, the ceiling darker. A pair of flats on the auditorium floor sit at right-angles to the proscenium between the stage and the doors – they feature a design of bare branches the character of which is hard to gauge in monochrome. This was probably for a production for which the stage appears to have been raised in places beyond the 1' (0.3m) suggested in the accounts.

This would have been an intimate space for drama. The seating was staggered to maximise the sightlines but only those in the front two rows were likely to see the performers' feet. With 100 per cent of the audience below the actor's eyeline, the actor to audience relationship is poor, but the height of the room dictated that the stage could not have been higher and it would not have been possible to build a seating bank higher than 0.7m (2' 4"). However, the experience of audience and actor in this room would have been intense; the volume per person is just over 1m³, taking little effort to deliver the lyrical verse of Yeats with clarity. The acoustic would have been dry, but with good audibility and intelligibility of speech. It is fortunate that Mary O'Malley's preference was for staging verse drama, as this tiny room was best suited to forms focusing on spoken text rather than elaborate staging. The hard, parallel wall-surfaces may have caused echoes, but the 4" panelling may have added sufficient diffusion to soften the effect. The domestic construction of the room is unlikely to have afforded much acoustic isolation from the outside world, but as the theatre was at the rear of the house and located in a quiet suburb, break-in noise is unlikely to have been an issue. The theatre's neighbours, on the other hand, may have been disturbed by louder performances.

Following a growing trend for garden theatre and opera, the company began to present productions in the back garden. In June 1959 it was *Romeo and Juliet*, the audience facing up the garden towards the theatre, Juliet playing her famous scene from the real balcony, her soon-to-be tomb in the space

below.³⁰ In the audience was J. Neil Downes, ‘an architect, from Dublin working temporarily in the North’. Downes began to sketch ideas for a 200-seat auditorium, but commercial fears emerged:

Small is beautiful, but is it economic? Continuous theatre, six nights a week, 52 weeks a year would demand even greater commitment from the company than we had at present. Obviously, a seating capacity of 200 would not be viable. The argument was endless.³¹

A Charitable Trust was established to oversee the development of the new building.³²

Neil Downes and the plans for a new Lyric

Downes first offering was a set of concept drawings from October 1959³³ produced with no specific site, brief or budget in mind, however, one drawing³⁴ indicates a site of 180’ (54.9m) x 164’ (50m) in a riverside context, including car parking and riverside terrace. The plans, sections and elevations are instructive, but the best appreciation for the design and massing is shown in the views of the modelbox seen in a 1963 interview for *Raidió Teilifís Éireann* (RTÉ),³⁵ which shows a collection of volumes of varying heights.³⁶ The volumes are mostly rectilinear and there are, perhaps, too many of them

³⁰ O’Malley, *Never shake hands*, p. 109.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118. Neil Downes later taught at University College Dublin (UCD) and Dublin Institute of Technology.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³³ J. Neil Downes, *Small Theatre for Belfast for Mrs Mary O’Malley*, in the Lyric Theatre/O’Malley Archive, T4/595. See Volume II, Figure 19.

³⁴ Drawing No. 5, *Lyric 1959*, in the Lyric Theatre/O’Malley Archive.

³⁵ Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) is Ireland’s national broadcaster.

³⁶ John O’Donoghue (presenter), ‘A Belfast Centre for Theatre and Art’, in *Broadsheet* (RTÉ), 2 October 1963, available at

<<https://www.rte.ie/archives/2018/1001/999152-lyric-theatre-belfast/>>

[accessed on 19 July 2019]. Volume II, Figure 20, is a screenshot of the modelbox taken from the RTÉ footage.

making the building look overly busy. The model gives no indication of finish, but Mary mentions a donation of bricks so it is likely that the elevations would be in a mix of brick and glazing. The stage is flanked by two circular volumes, 6m (19'8") in diameter and 5m (16'5") high, half of which are allocated to public toilets and half to a prop store at stage-right, wardrobe at stage-left, neither function well-suited to rooms with curved walls and neither large enough to accommodate the needs of a producing venue.³⁷

The result is a charming, engaging design for a 210-seat, single-tier, raked auditorium with a traditional end-on relationship to a proscenium stage. The proscenium is neat and slender, not unduly interrupting the flow of the auditorium to the stage and includes a small slot each side for entrances and side lighting. The feel of the auditorium-stage relationship would be more open-end stage than formal, enclosed proscenium. The seating has a pleasing radius, focused a little beyond the back wall.³⁸ There are ten rows of increasing length entered from side-aisles, as is most efficient for sightlines. Three doors each side provide access to the auditorium from a glazed foyer promenade – excessive for a small auditorium but a pleasant architectural layout. The entrances have no sound-light lock lobbies, but the space above the doors would make for useful technical positions, especially for lighting, if access to them could be resolved. The sightlines are acceptable in plan; a little compromised at the extreme end seats but all patrons can see a good portion of the back wall on their own side of centreline.

The front of the stage shows an orchestra pit which, although not explicitly drawn, could become a forestage extension or allow for an additional row of 13 seats. In section, the auditorium is too low in relation to the stage, 4' (1.2m) below stage level. This makes the sightlines poor in section, with those in the front row struggling to see beyond the stage edge and shorter patrons

³⁷ Apart from the round towers, the agglomeration of volumes presages O'Donnell + Tuomey's third Lyric theatre, as seen in the aerial photograph in Volume II, Figure 37.

³⁸ Downes' partially used *ad quadratum* geometry to layout the space, as the plans in the archive include reference lines of a circle and square on the stage.

having no view of the floor. The audience/actor relationship suffers as a result with all audience members below the eyeline of the actor. These problems could be resolved by raising the seating in section so that the rows in the middle of the seating rake are at the same height as the stage, and by slightly increasing the seating rake, if a sightline check deems it necessary. The stage has a 30' (9.14m) proscenium opening, narrowing to 28'3" (8.6m) upstage of the downstage slot. The proscenium opening is 13'9" (4.2m) high, which is low, but would promote intimacy and has the effect of drawing the ceiling down above the auditorium, thus, if the finishes are appropriately reflective, providing strong sound reflections from performers to audience aiding clarity and audibility. The ceiling steps down and the walls step in towards the proscenium zone. The stage is 32' 9" (10m) deep with a height to underside of grid of 33' 9" (10.3m), which is close to the preferred ratio for full double-height flying. There is no substage space, other than the small orchestra pit accessible only from the auditorium.³⁹

Wing space is 10' (3.05m) each side, with an additional 6' (1.82m) of circulation space providing access to a rear-stage crossover corridor and pass-doors to front of house. Two small dressing rooms are shown upstage, each of 21m² (226ft²) with WC and shower *en suite*, comfortably accommodating five performers, more if necessary. What Downes fails to provide is adequate access for scenery and equipment. One stage entrance is provided with a door width of 6' 10" (2.1m), in a section of the building with what appears to be standard head height of 8' 2" (2.5m).⁴⁰ A dimmer room, projection room and rewind room are shown; the latter indicating either a desire to present film or a misunderstanding on the part of Downes as to what is required in a theatre.

³⁹ A trap room is a benefit for a producing house, offering directors and designers creative opportunities in production, however, excavating and building below ground is expensive compared to above ground and digging down in a riverside location is inherently problematic. Substage space is suitable for technical rooms, band rooms and larger dressing rooms.

⁴⁰ A larger door, separate from any artists' entrance, is essential, ideally leading to a double-height scene-dock adjacent to the stage.

These rooms have adequate depth, but the windows are too small for control room use, however, Downes would likely assume that lighting operation would be from a perch position onstage as was common at this time.

The Front of House (FoH) areas are well-considered, with a large lounge, restaurant and bar with views onto the river and opening onto the riverside terrace, and an upper lounge of approximately 120m² (1,292ft²) above. The total area of FoH is approximately 380m² (4,090ft²), about 1.8m² (19.4ft²) per person. This is generous; current guidance suggests 1m² (10.7ft²) per person as an ideal target.⁴¹

It is not known if Downes produced this design with reference to any theatre design concepts or if he worked intuitively, however, the design follows several principles established by Leacroft in 1949, who, like Mackintosh, displayed his admiration for the ‘smaller provincial theatres of the Georgian, late-Georgian and Regency periods which manage to strike exactly the right note in intimacy and theatrical feeling’.⁴² What is most striking is the similarity of Downes’ design to the following passage in Leacroft:

The overall width of the seating should not be greater than 30’, the width of the average proscenium opening, and, ideally, this width should be maintained to the rear of the auditorium. [...] The provision of parallel side walls [...] is likely to prove a decided disadvantage [...] and the slight fan-shape will therefore prove advantageous, [...] the

⁴¹ Judith Strong (ed.), *Theatre buildings: a design guide* (London: Routledge, 2010). FoH toilets are located in the front part of the round towers and are underprovided with two WCs for ladies and one WC and two urinals for gents, which is about 25 per cent of current British Standard requirements.

⁴² Richard Leacroft, *Civic Theatre Design. With illustrations by the author* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949), p. 76. While Downes design is decidedly modern, there is something of the density and focus of the classic designs at Bury St Edmunds and Bristol.

seating should be arranged on a slight curve, and this would help to provide good sight-lines.⁴³

Downes' proscenium opening is exactly 30' (9.14m) wide, the seating following this width at the front and adopting Leacroft's compromise by fanning out to a comfortable 47½' (14.5m) at the rear, in the gentle radius already described. Downes follows another recommendation in seating layout:

In the design of the seating it would be as well to apportion the least useful part of the auditorium to the gangways, and these are obviously the areas down the side walls. [...] A central gangway, however, tends to give an impression of emptiness to the actor, and so the front rows of seating should be arranged to carry across the auditorium in an unbroken curve.⁴⁴

Downes' 1959 design, had it been built, would have been charming; given the input of a theatre designer it could have been improved considerably. The stage and FoH could have been reduced permitting larger scene dock and wardrobe. Substage space, while expensive is useful, and a trap room would have been a considerable artistic benefit. A further opportunity would have been adding a second storey of accommodation above the dressing rooms at upstage. Simplifying the number and scale of separate volumes would have led to a calmer and more elegant presence on the site.

Downes' 1959 design is a promising effort that could have been developed into a workable little theatre. In 1963, interviewed for RTÉ, Mary described the Lyric as catering 'primarily for the Irish poet and writer and it is interested in plays of international significance'.⁴⁵ She suggested that the Lyric had 'introduced a certain amount of Irish theatre; a knowledge of things to people here that they mightn't otherwise have had'.⁴⁶ The interview discusses Downes' 1959 design, and when pressed on finance, Mary pointed out that she had introduced a seat sponsorship scheme '200 seats which we sell at £100

⁴³ Leacroft, *Civic Theatre Design*, p. 79.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁵ O'Donoghue, 'A Belfast Centre for Theatre and Art'.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

each'.⁴⁷ She was not hopeful of government grants, but acknowledged income from the public and an unnamed benefactor who had bought all the unsold bricks in the theatre's 'buy-a-brick for a shilling' scheme. Mary noted that the Lyric had not yet secured a site and that the estimated cost was in the region of £45,000. At the end of the interview something of Mary O'Malley's personal style comes across – 'theatre is primarily a method of dealing with people; you have to coax them and flatter them and play with them and get them to do what you want them to do'.⁴⁸

Downes produced multiple design iterations, each becoming increasingly elaborate and losing the simple focus of the 1959 scheme. By 1964 the scheme is firmly located on Ridgeway Street,⁴⁹ the main entrance to the east of the site at the bottom of Ridgeway Street which requires the audience to climb a staircase to access the limited public space,⁵⁰ a refreshment area of a little over 20m² (215ft²) which is on the opposite side of the auditorium to the entrance, with no clear circulation route to get to it other than through the auditorium. The 1964 designs owe something to the Guthrie thrust. Brian Friel had spent time in Minneapolis in 1963 and it is possible that Friel carried his enthusiasm for this form to Downes and O'Malley.⁵¹ Guthrie and Moiseiwitsch were active in the Irish theatre and their work in Stratford Ontario would have been well known.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁴⁹ J. Neil Downes, *New Theatre at Ridgeway Street for the Lyric Players Theatre Belfast*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/597. See Volume II, Figure 22.

⁵⁰ Something the scheme shares with the third Lyric which will be examined later in this chapter.

⁵¹ Chris Morash, 'Places of Performance', in Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash (eds), *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 437-39. Guthrie's significant presence in Ulster theatre is examined in Chapter 5, above.

The seating for 300 is laid out in three sets of seven rows, one on centre and one on each side angled towards centrestage, with two more rows on centre behind a cross-aisle to the rear of the auditorium. The design is open end-stage in form, with a tentative thrust. The side walls of the auditorium finish short of the front rows of seating, with wing-space beyond and curtains to mask off the area. In a similar way Renton Howard Wood Levin's (RHWL) 1974 theatre at Warwick Arts Centre, which is similar in form but more committed to the relationship between auditorium and stage, employed a series of tracked flats to create a proscenium when required. Dressing room accommodation and storage is beneath the auditorium, with circulation via the stage wings. The stage is 8.5m (28') deep from the front of the forestage thrust to the centre of the curved cyclorama wall, 11.3m (37') wide to the auditorium walls, and 6.4m (21') from stage to curtain tracks and lighting bars overhead. As with the 1959 design, there is no provision for the get-in of scenery. This is a poor scheme, the layout is ill-conceived, and the area provided is insufficient particularly in the public spaces where circulation is almost non-existent. The stage and auditorium arrangement lacks clarity and focus, the curved cyclorama of the rear wall being of little benefit to designers, possibly a hindrance. The width of the auditorium and the curve of the back wall and wings would require a commitment to an open stage design with no visible clutter offstage, or an elaborate masking scheme.

The 1965 scheme was a development of the 1964 design but with nothing more to recommend it.⁵² The seating tiers, accommodating 326, or 365 with seating in the pit, are disconnected from each other and canted at 45° to the stage centreline, severely limiting sightlines. A small seating unit to auditorium right is situated next to a peninsular stage extension, with an actor's entrance via an auditorium vomitory. There is a balcony level, three rows deep, connected to the auditorium right seating. The design appears to be an attempt to create a vineyard style auditorium. Downes may have seen Hans Scharoun's 1963 Berliner Philharmonie; the short balcony rows indicate a design more

⁵² J Neil Downes, *Lyric Theatre drawing 22*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/598. See Volume II, Figure 23.

influenced by a concert hall than theatre which typically have deeper balconies. There is no indication of FoH space, save for a small lounge with views of the river. There is a car park under the theatre.⁵³

The archive holds a clue to the design process in a cutting from the *Architects Journal* (AJ) of June 1965 featuring the newly completed Yvonne Arnaud, Guildford, which had many similarities with the Lyric; it was in a riverside location, the venue replacing an older repertory theatre destroyed by fire in 1963. It was also commissioned by a charitable trust and built mostly from private funds, although the site and £20,000 were donated by the local council. The venue had a capacity almost twice that of the Lyric at around 580.⁵⁴ Someone, possibly Downes himself, sketched the unmistakable footprint of the 1965 design on top of the auditorium plans in the article.⁵⁵

The October 1966 drawings by Downes shows little improvement on the previous iteration, the underground car park is retained also housing plant, but greater space is provided for FoH, with a substantial public foyer at high-level in the south-eastern elevation, overlooking the river through seven bay

⁵³ Car parks under theatres are not common, but do exist, the Barbican Centre and the National Theatre in London being two significant examples. They are problematic, in part due to cost of excavation but also the potential for terrorist use. Given the Irish Republican terrorists use of the car-bomb as a preferred method of disruption and destruction, it is fortunate that this scheme was not pursued.

⁵⁴ Theatre at Guildford, *Architects Journal*, in Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/661.

⁵⁵ Theatre at Guildford, *Architects Journal*, 1965, in Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, p. 14. See Volume II, Figure 21. As noted in the Introduction, this is a tool long-favoured by architects. Sketching and overmarking drawings often uses tracing paper so results do not damage the original. Theatre consultants make specific use of this for auditoria and stage and it is typical to hold a library of comparative drawings at small-scale, often 1:200 or 1:500, and to overlay outlines of one venue onto another to contextualise and inform the design.

windows with almost full-height glazing. A perspective view from King's Bridge shows a striking, modern façade.⁵⁶ Downes persists in an unsettled auditorium, seating 346 on stalls, parterre and balcony, with an asymmetric vineyard feel, retaining the odd, disjointed auditorium right seating bank and the associated stage peninsula. The theatre is forced into the triangular geometry of the site, squeezing sound and light control rooms into the north-west corner of the site, which is not on centreline, the optimum position for a control room. The balcony remains, is slightly deeper than the 1965 scheme, but is skewed towards auditorium left with a single run of slip-seats to auditorium right only.⁵⁷ The asymmetry does not extend into the ceiling, where Downes proposes a series of flat plane reflectors with gaps for lighting bridges. The centre sections of the two lighting bridges are, helpfully, parallel to the front of the stage, but the lighting angles, at approximately 53°, are shallower than preferred.⁵⁸

Downes' final scheme omits the car park in favour of a lounge bar under the auditorium. Unfortunately, this level is not drawn in plan, so it is not possible to see the extent of lounge, but it is indicated in section and appears to take up most of the area occupied by the stalls and parterre above, approximately 150m² (1,615ft²) which when combined with the entrance foyer of around 70m² (753ft²) provides 220m² (2,368ft²) or equivalent of to 0.7m² (7.53ft²) per person at the approximate capacity of 325.⁵⁹

Downes later designs did not deliver on the promise of the thoughtful design of 1959. He had gleaned no further knowledge about theatre, if anything, his work moved away from the well-considered ideas of the first

⁵⁶ Drawing 39 in J. Neil Downes, *Lyric Theatre drawing no. 36-39*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/611.

⁵⁷ Tracing paper markups in *Lyric 1966*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.

⁵⁸ Drawing 39 in *Lyric 1966*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.

⁵⁹ J. Neil Downes, *Lyric Theatre drawings 42 - 43*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive), T4/614.

scheme towards an increasingly idiosyncratic, even hubristic design. This may be due to the influence of others, possibly Mary O'Malley. John Tuomey, designer of the third Lyric, knew nothing of the Neil Downes designs, but some of the ideas explored by Downes appear in the third Lyric, notably the layered auditorium ceiling and asymmetric seating layout.⁶⁰

The Second Lyric Theatre

Fundraising for the new theatre began in earnest in 1964, approaching corporate and individual sponsors and a 'special drive for subscribers for each of the 200 seats – £100 outright or £15 yearly for 7 years'.⁶¹ In 1965 fundraising moved onto a more professional footing with charitable status⁶² and the appointment of a fundraising consultancy,⁶³ fired the following July having only raised £5,000 of their £40,000 target.⁶⁴ The Board's fundraising activities included personal appeals and formal dinners.⁶⁵ Some success is recorded in the minutes with a £1,000 grant from ACNI for actors' salaries, and support from Ulster Television (UTV), Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and tobacco company Gallaher's totalling £850.⁶⁶ Black-tie events were held in Belfast and Dublin in March 1966 with various high-profile

⁶⁰ John Riddell, *Interview* with John Tuomey (11 June 2019). An introduction to John Tuomey and O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects appears in Volume II, pp. 56-57.

⁶¹ Minutes, 4 September 1964, in the Lyric Theatre Belfast Board, *Board Minutes May 1960 – Jan 1969*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/502.

⁶² Letter, 29 January 1965, in *Ibid.*.

⁶³ Minutes, 1 October 1965 and 1 February 1966, in *Ibid.*.

⁶⁴ Minutes 4 July 1966, in *Ibid.*.

⁶⁵ Lyric Theatre Fundraising, *Various documents on the development proposals for the new Lyric to raise £130,000*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/601–607.

⁶⁶ Minutes, 2 April 1965, *Minutes 1960–1969*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/502.

figures invited.⁶⁷ There was also sponsorship-in-kind with the theatre design team offering reduced fees – structural engineers Dorans offered ‘engineering services without cost’, and quantity surveyor Sean Tynan gave a 50 per cent reduction.⁶⁸

The Board minutes offer an insight into the process, although little is recorded until 1964 when the Board considered a report from Downes on suitability of potential sites for the venue. One is deemed more suitable and ‘a tentative offer of £1,800’ is made and declined;⁶⁹ a subsequent offer of £2,000 accepted and a £500 deposit paid for the Ridgeway Street site.⁷⁰ In September, having failed to secure finance from the Bank of Ireland, Pearse arranged a loan of £1,000 from the Munster and Leinster Bank and provided £500 from personal funds to make up the shortfall. By the following April, Downes, now chair of the Board, reported that the site would be cleared over the Easter holidays and that the foundation stone laying ceremony would take place on ‘Saturday, 12th June [1965], to mark the centenary of the birth of W. B. Yeats (Sunday 13th unsuitable)’.⁷¹ This was engineered to generate publicity and raise funds, Mary persuading Austin Clarke to lay the stone. Also in attendance, having written poems especially for the programme were, John Hewitt, a trustee, and Seamus Heaney, who had briefly edited *Threshold*.

⁶⁷ Lyric Fundraising, *Lists of guests invited to fundraising dinners*, in the Lyric Theatre O’Malley Archive, T4/609. Eamonn Andrews declined to attend the Dublin event.

⁶⁸ Minutes, 5 July 1965, *Minutes 1960–1969*, in Lyric Theatre/O’Malley Archive.

⁶⁹ Minutes, 1 May 1964, in *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Minutes, 5 June 1964, in *Ibid.* According to the Belfast Street Directory for 1960, the site was occupied by White’s Home Bakery. See Lennon Wylie, *Belfast Street Directory Q-R* (1960) <<https://www.lennonwylie.co.uk/qrcodecomplete1960.htm>> [accessed on 6 September 2019].

⁷¹ Minutes, 2 April 1965, *Minutes 1960–1969*, in the Lyric Theatre/O’Malley Archive.

Heaney's poem, *Peter Street at Bankside*, recounts the disassembly in 1598/99 of the Theatre at Shoreditch and its subsequent erection at Bankside as the Globe.

Peter Street at Bankside

Upon soft ground I found a mortal church.
These twelve who sink the piles are laying down
My one defence against the seeping water :
Even the Thames that undermines the town
Must never undermine my theatre.
My theatre will tower from the marsh.

My twelve, you see, are armed. These knives and swords
Guard the quick transfer from old ground to new
Of players' rites, the liturgy of mirth
And sorrow. And though an ignorant crew,
Their crude traffic with plaster, lath and earth
Provides an altar for your sacred words.

I dedicate to speech, to pomp and show,
This house that I erect for poets, actors.
I set my saw and chisel in the wood
To joint and panel solid metaphors :
The walls a circle, the stage under a hood.
I fit the players thus with cowl and halo.⁷²

⁷² Lyric Theatre, *Programme for the laying of the Foundation Stone of the New Theatre*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/599. See Volume, II Figure 27. The poem also appeared in; Seamus Heaney, *Eleven Poems* (Belfast: Queen's University, 1965). It was the only poem in the pamphlet not to appear in Heaney's debut collection *Death of a Naturalist*, the following year.

Writing in the voice of the builder, Peter Street, Heaney deftly draws parallels between the two riverside venues, addressing both Shakespeare and Yeats without mentioning either. Using the metaphor of the church, he conveys the significance of a theatre building as a vessel for the work presented therein. In a beautiful symmetry, Heaney reprised his role by reading the same work at the laying of the threshold stone of the third Lyric Theatre in 2009.⁷³ The 1965 event was well attended, with photographs showing an elegant, well-dressed crowd seated in the open-air at the northwest corner of the part-cleared site. Clarke is photographed with mallet and chisel in hand, as if adding finishing touches to the foundation stone carved by Michael Biggs from Mourne Mountains granite.⁷⁴ The ceremony was effective in raising the profile of the project, helped further by Peter Montgomery, who took over at ACNI after Ritchie McKee's death, who announced an award of £20,000 to the project.⁷⁵

The minutes of July 1965 record the intention to appoint building contractor P. & F. McDonnell who 'should be engaged and that the first stage should be commenced as soon as possible',⁷⁶ however the contractor is never mentioned again. In July 1966, the Lyric secured an additional parcel of land; 'Belfast Corporation had agreed to sell a triangular portion of ground adjoining the site in Ridgeway Street for £200'.⁷⁷ In October, Martin Carr was appointed

⁷³ Maureen Coleman, 'Heaney's words help Lyric build for the future', *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 September 2009, available at <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/heaneys-words-help-lyric-build-for-the-future-28494390.html>> [accessed on 4 September 2019].

⁷⁴ *Foundation Stone programme*, in in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.

⁷⁵ Connolly, *The evolution of the Lyric*, p. 89.

⁷⁶ Minutes, 5 July 1965, *Minutes 1960–1969*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.

⁷⁷ Minutes, 4 July 1966, in *Ibid.*

as ‘Technical Consultant’,⁷⁸ and the brief and budget were becoming more refined with the capital development target set at ‘£85,000 with seating for not less than 300 people’.⁷⁹ However, all was not well; Downes’ design of October 1966 was not approved by the engineer Doran;⁸⁰ the revised design, featuring a basement level with lounge, bar and dressing rooms, was adopted by the Board,⁸¹ with site investigation and borehole works to commence immediately and a proposed site start date of 1 October.⁸² The issues brewing behind the scenes came out in June 1967 with Pearse O’Malley proposing and the Board unanimously accepting:

the transference of the complete Theatre organisation to Trustees nominated by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, on the understanding that the building programme will proceed as arranged on the basis of the approved design, and that the obligations of the present Trustees to contributors and Theatre Company are accepted.⁸³

In August, the Board was informed that ACNI had set up a sub-committee to consider the proposal⁸⁴ and the next few months were a muddle of attempts to move the project forward. Concerned about the delay and:

In order to ensure survival of the Theatre and as a stepping-stone towards the New Building, Dr O’Malley proposed the purchase of the

⁷⁸ Minutes, 18 October 1966, in *Ibid.*. Carr was a significant figure in early theatre consultancy and an early member (No. 40) of the ABTT. He wrote extensively for the Strand Lighting magazine *Tabs*, recording information and critical assessment of the many UK venues he visited. In 1974 he founded theatre consultancy Carr & Angier with Peter Angier, theatre consultant on the Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC).

⁷⁹ Minutes, 6 December 1966, in *Ibid.*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*.

⁸¹ Minutes, 4 April 1967, in *Ibid.*.

⁸² Minutes, 2 May 1967, in *Ibid.*.

⁸³ Minutes, 6 June 1967, in *Ibid.*.

⁸⁴ Minutes, 22 August 1967, in *Ibid.*.

Premises in Frederick Street with an offer of £17,500.0.0. This proposal was seconded by Mr Downes and unanimously approved.⁸⁵

The premises in question was a Quaker Meeting House, north of the city centre a few minutes' walk from where the MAC stands today. This suggests an air of desperation and would have been a major financial burden and distraction at the wrong time in the development; the site was withdrawn from sale a few weeks later. At the same time, the Board requested a new design for Ridgeway Street at a cost of £35,000 'so that building could proceed if necessary without Arts Council approval (the qualification for the Donation of £20,000)'.⁸⁶ A week later 'it was agreed that a Building Committee should be set up',⁸⁷ the makeup of the committee and their deliberations are not recorded in the archive, but there was clearly significant progress, as by January 1968 negotiations were underway with contractor Alfred McAlpine & Co.⁸⁸ and in February, the ACNI grant having been approved, the Board moved to proceed 'in consultation with the Capital Development Trustees⁸⁹ and the Arts Council so that the Contract could be signed with Messrs. McAlpine & Co. at the earliest possible date'.⁹⁰ McAlpine's own architects took over from Downes, the resulting theatre bearing little resemblance to his designs, omitting the flytower, restaurant and car park.⁹¹ On 10 March 1968, Downes wrote to

⁸⁵ Minutes, 6 September 1967, in *Ibid.*.

⁸⁶ Minutes, 3 October 1967, in *Ibid.*.

⁸⁷ Minutes, 10 October 1967, in *Ibid.*.

⁸⁸ Minutes, 23 January 1968, in *Ibid.*.

⁸⁹ *Programme – Four Plays of the Cuchulain Cycle*, in the Digital Theatre Archive/Lyric Collection, Linen Hall Library, LY-0257/1725. No further details of the Capital Development Trustees are given in the archive, but the cover of the programme for the opening production lists the following names: Cyril Lord, Chairman, Norman Bass, Dawson Moreland, E. M. R. O'Driscoll, J. Baird Handyside, David Wylie and Kenneth Darwin.

⁹⁰ Minutes, 1 February 1968, *Minutes 1960–1969*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.

⁹¹ Connolly, *The evolution of the Lyric*, p. 66.

Pearse resigning from the team and stating that ‘he would be unhappy to be associated with this building’.⁴¹

The target budget had reduced from £130,000 in 1964, to £85,000 in 1966 and now £44,500. Downes’ designs were unachievable and perhaps he got too close to the project to be able to make the difficult decisions required. McAlpine’s team simplified the layout, reducing internal area and finishes to meet the budget. With funding in place and a hefty overdraft of £25,000 approved by the Munster and Leinster Bank, the Lyric could proceed.⁹² McAlpine started on site in March and the building was completed and handed over in October, a fast programme even for a relatively small building of simple construction. Bob Forster was present for the later part of the build and fit-out, recalling that McAlpine ‘couldn’t have been more generous or helpful’,⁹³ providing items at no additional cost including the suspended ceiling in the auditorium and tarmacking the access lane. Bob arrived on the day that the electrical sub-contractor, Rotary Electric, started on site; ‘like the builders they were very cooperative’,⁹⁴ and Bob worked closely with Rotary to agree a setting-out for mechanical and electrical systems that would work for theatrical operations.⁹⁵ The theatre opened with four of Yeats’s *Cuchulain Cycle*⁹⁶ and Bob recalls ‘a big trucked set with textured walls and a chorus of three actors more or less built-into this wall’.⁹⁷ The archive contains

⁴¹ J. Neil Downes, *Letter to Pearse O’Malley*, in the Lyric Theatre/O’Malley Archive, T4/817.

⁹² Minutes, 22 March 1968, *Minutes 1960–1969*.

⁹³ Riddell-Forster, *Interview*. Bob was appointed as Lighting Director in July at a salary of £850 per annum.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*. See Volume II, pp. 53-55, for a more detailed description of the technical installation as recalled by Bob.

⁹⁶ *Programme – Four Plays of the Cuchulain Cycle*, in Digital Theatre Archive Lyric Collection: *At the Hawk’s Well, On Bailie’s Strand, The Only Jealousy of Emer and The Death of Cuchulain*.

⁹⁷ Riddell-Forster, *Interview*.

photographs of the opening night, a black-tie event, with leading Irish literati present.⁹⁸

The O'Malleys and the National Anthem

The Lyric was the site of one of the most significant scenes in modern British-Irish diplomacy when, at the opening of the third Lyric building in June 2012, the Queen was photographed shaking hands with Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, Martin McGuinness: 'Such a gesture between the former IRA commander and Her Majesty would once have been unimaginable.'⁹⁹ In the semiotics of post-Troubles relations, this moment ranks high, along with the Queen's speech at Dublin Castle the year before when she opened in Irish with '*A hUachtarain agus a chairde*' – 'President and friends'.¹⁰⁰ As discussed in Chapter 4, CEMA's insistence that the national anthem be played alienated many Catholic nationalist communities. Although the Lyric Theatre itself was not nationalist, the O'Malleys were, and Mary sought to ensure that *God save the Queen* was never played, in 1960 seconding a proposal 'that an attitude of neutrality with no anthem be adopted',¹⁰¹ later softening to say anthems 'may be played at the discretion of the Trustees, at any outside function'.¹⁰² In practice, there was little likelihood of any anthem other than the British one being played, so the intent was clear. Ritchie McKee, then President of CEMA

⁹⁸ See Volume II, Figure 28.

⁹⁹ Deborah McAleese, 'Historic moment Martin McGuinness shook hands with Queen Elizabeth', *The Irish News*, 21 March 2017, available at <<http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2017/03/21/news/historic-moment-martin-mcguinness-shook-hands-with-queen-elizabeth-971302/>> [accessed on 5 July 2019].

¹⁰⁰ 'The Queen in Ireland: Dublin Castle speech in full', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 May 2011, available at <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/queen-elizabeth-II/8522318/The-Queen-in-Ireland-Dublin-Castle-speech-in-full.html>> [accessed on 5 July 2019].

¹⁰¹ Minutes, 13 October 1960, *Minutes 1960–1969*.

¹⁰² Minutes, 29 November 1960, in *Ibid.*.

refused a Lyric funding application – ‘why should we support the Lyric, or Mary O’Malley who is a subversive element in the community?’.¹⁰³ The anthem issue surfaced again when the new building was about to open and ‘it was suggested that the procedure at Covent Garden (first and last public performance each season) should be adopted, but no vote was taken’.¹⁰⁴

The British national anthem was played at the opening ceremony of the second Lyric, and the O’Malleys resigned arguing that ‘the new policy [...] would affect artistic independence and vision’.¹⁰⁵ ACNI steered clear of any policy advice stating that it was a matter for the individual theatre boards.¹⁰⁶ In November, Pearse withdrew his resignation, Mary also advising the Board that she would stay out of management but advise on artistic matters,¹⁰⁷ but this was to bring to a head conflict between the O’Malleys, the Board, and the Director of Productions Christopher Fitz-Simon¹⁰⁸ and Administrator Archibald Johnson. The Board sought to prove impartiality but the O’Malleys were uncooperative and continued to exert influence on management and artistic policy. Pearse opposed the casting of John Keyes in John Whiting’s *A Penny for a Song*, on grounds of ‘(1) professional unsuitability for the role (2) psychological’,¹⁰⁹ suggesting Fitz-Simon had abused his position. There followed mass resignations from the Board and controversy spiralled. In January 1969, both Fitz-Simon and Johnson left; Johnson claimed they were sacked, the O’Malleys that they walked out. Fitz-Simon and Johnson were professionals and would have assumed that the Lyric, a member of the

¹⁰³ Connolly, *The evolution of the Lyric*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁴ Minutes, 8 October 1968, *Minutes 1960-69*.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes, 29 October 1968 in *Ibid.*.

¹⁰⁶ Connolly, *The evolution of the Lyric*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes, 12 November 1968 in *Board Mins 1960-69*.

¹⁰⁸ Christopher Fitz-Simon has since become a prominent Irish author and cultural commentator. His many works include, *Players and Painted Stage*.

¹⁰⁹ Minutes, 5 December 1968, *Minutes 1960-69*. John Keyes was an actor, producer and director whose recollections of the early Arts Theatre space appear in Chapter 4, above.

Theatrical Management Association (TMA), was too.¹¹⁰ It would have been natural for them to assume that they were accountable to the Board but free to make their own decisions on operational and artistic policy. Bob Forster recalls the time:

major rows developed at levels that we didn't even know about [...] everybody got the sack, Chris [Fitz-Simon], I think, managed to resign before he was pushed.¹¹¹

On 8 February 1969, the theatre closed temporarily, opening again on 25 February with a new Board, including Mary and Pearse, but many of the same staff.¹¹² If part of Mary's vision was to provide a professional producing house in Belfast, she was both the prime driver and greatest impediment to its implementation, struggling to let go of control. She remained as an artistic adviser and trustee, taking an active role in artistic policy until retirement in 1976.¹¹³

Construction

McAlpine's construction drawings, dated 4 March 1968, provide excellent and accurate detail of the building, construction methods and materials.¹¹⁴ The theatre was a simple rectilinear room of single tier auditorium and stage in open end-stage format, with minimal front of house, office and circulation space, and two small dressing rooms behind the stage, to which an additional storey was added in 1976. The foyer was double-height with a mezzanine over, offering views to the River Lagan. It was constructed as a steel frame on a

¹¹⁰ Minutes, 4 April 1967, *Minutes 1960-69*.

¹¹¹ Riddell-Forster, *Interview*.

¹¹² Connolly, *The evolution of the Lyric*, pp. 140-145.

¹¹³ Lyric Theatre Belfast, *Programme – Over the Bridge* (1970)

<<https://history.lyrictheatre.co.uk/cms-admin/resources/skmbtc284e181027162101-copy-compressed.pdf>> [accessed on 6 September 2019].

¹¹⁴ Sir Alfred McAlpine, *Construction Drawings of Lyric Theatre*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/619. Volume II, Figure 24.

reinforced concrete slab set on piles into the steeply sloping hill. The external façades were finished in textured concrete, silver-grey facing-brick, and timber. The roof and some of the walls were in proprietary metal deck and Galbestos cladding, a corrosion resistant material typical in commercial buildings.¹¹⁵ The external design was simple and functional; neither distinctly duck nor decorated shed. However, it did sit in contrast to the red brick of the adjacent terraced houses in Ridgeway Street, the brick echoing the texture and pattern of the houses.¹¹⁶

The design orientated the theatre at right-angles to the slope rather than using the run of the hill to form the basis of the auditorium seating rake. This may have been to maximise views onto the river from the foyers, and to ensure the stagehouse was not predominant on the eastern elevation. However, the theatre did not have full double-height flying so the stagehouse would have presented a lower profile to the river than the built design. This would have permitted audience entrances at the rear of the auditorium with the possibility of further entrances on each side at a lower level towards the stage, like the Riverside, Coleraine, thus improving circulation and flow. It would, however, have been less easy to provide foyers with river views.¹¹⁷

The seating was on a stepped rake made at the back of the auditorium from precast steps on steel raking beams, and at the lower half from stepped

¹¹⁵ Galbestos is a trade name for a metal cladding lined with asbestos and bitumen. Completely banned from use in new buildings since 1999, asbestos requires specialist removal during demolition and the discovery and removal of the material is one of the highest risks to any refurbishment project due to the expense and delay removal can cause. A wonder material in its day, asbestos was lightweight, adaptable, cheap and afforded both thermal and acoustic insulation and fire protection.

¹¹⁶ The current and third Lyric Theatre, designed by O'Donnell + Tuomey and opened in 2011, uses red brick extensively in the external elevations. It is striking, but on certain views rather dominant, almost overpowering.

¹¹⁷ John Tuomey wrestled with this dilemma when arranging the third Lyric on the site as is discussed later in this chapter.

concrete. The auditorium's 304 seats were aligned with long central sections parallel to the stage, terminating in aisles, with shorter rows at each end, inclined towards centrestage. Placing the aisles at the walls would have made for a more efficient layout and better sightlines for the end seats, as Leacroft advises and as Downes did in his 1959 design, although the arrangement was dictated by the auditorium entrance from double doors, not lobbied, in the middle of auditorium left leading to a cross-aisle. This allowed for a denser footprint, but the auditorium could have been more densely designed if there were entrances to both sides at the rear or front of the auditorium, eliminating the need for a cross-aisle.¹¹⁸

The ceiling was low with no lighting bridges above and was fitted with a suspended board, with house lighting and three full width lighting bars as advised by theatre consultant Martin Carr. The walls were constructed in the same fair-faced silver-grey brick with black panels at high level. The walls were parallel, but the texture of the brick diffused sound sufficiently to reduce echoing reflections and the ceiling and wall boarding had acoustic benefit as absorbers. The construction would not have provided much isolation from the outside world. The north and west walls of the theatre were external and the drawings indicate two elevations of brick with a modest cavity between and the steel columns in the wall structure directly connected to the theatre, which would allow airborne and structure borne noise to enter the auditorium. Passing traffic and other external noises would have been noticeable. Likewise, the proprietary metal deck roof was a mediocre sound insulator transmitting noise, particularly rainfall, to the auditorium. Nevertheless, the compact construction and low ceiling gave the auditorium a low volume of 900m³, about 3m³ per person and the audience were split perfectly 50/50 above and below the eyeline of the performer on stage. The auditorium flowed naturally onto the open-end stage so, the audience's attention was directed towards the stage. The

¹¹⁸ Cross-aisles are often used to ease circulation in the stalls of larger theatres, however in this small theatre it interrupts the flow of the design and impedes the sightlines for the row immediately above the cross-aisle. This means the stepped rise of the row behind the cross-aisle is shallower than all other rows.

simplicity of the finishes in the auditorium would not have distracted the audience from the action on stage – although this was driven by costs rather than any intent to pursue Wagnerian ideals of *Gesamtkunswerk*, by eschewing ornamentation.

This room design was common at this time in Britain and Ireland and continued to into the 1970s when the courtyard theatre style of the Cottesloe gained popularity. The design was far removed from the ideas O'Malley and Downes had been developing since 1959 and would have been influenced by recent theatre designs. The Abbey Theatre had reopened in 1966 in a similar format designed although with a steeper auditorium rake and a higher seatcount.¹¹⁹ Although there is no mention of this in the minutes, it must have been known to both client and designers. A more remarkable similarity is that between the second Lyric and the second Mermaid Theatre at Puddle Dock, London. Opened in 1959 in a design by Ove Arup, it replaced the venue at Bernard Miles' home in St John's Wood. The Mermaid and Lyric are strikingly similar in auditorium layout and both share the same feature to the extreme ends of their 0.6m (2') high stages, the edge turning back towards the stage in a manner reminiscent of the Elizabethan playhouse, The Rose.¹²⁰ The stage of the second Lyric was 7.5m (24' 7") wide x 6.5m (21' 4") deep x 6m (19' 8") high to the overhead lighting bars in a simple arrangement clamped to girders. This limitation, combined with the almost non-existent wing and dock space, required designers to be especially inventive in their approach to scenery. They could not rely on flown scenery, cloths or trucks to quickly change the setting, so composite sets and the occasional revolve were employed. This ensured that the technical staging never overshadowed or interrupted the performance with grandeur and trickery.

The second Lyric was a good, small playhouse. Poorly planned and equipped in its original build and with a rather angular, boxy construction, it nonetheless provided a simple, uncluttered space for audience and performer to

¹¹⁹ Morash, 'Places of Performance', p. 437-39.

¹²⁰ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage: 1574–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 156.

inhabit. The contained volume of the auditorium, the proximity of seating to the stage and the way the auditorium flowed unhindered onto the stage, made for an intimacy where the energy between actor and audience could pass each way with ease. It was built to basic standards on a meagre budget and at the absolute minimum of built area. The public spaces were inadequate for an audience of 300 with approximately 80m² (861ft²) at entrance level. A note on McAlpine's plans indicates that structure was arranged to allow a 'future mezzanine over', which when completed, added a further 55m² (592ft²) to the foyer space, but the area provided was less than 50 per cent of the 1m² (10.8ft²) per person current recommendation. This pressure resulted in the addition of a steel and glass structure of unknown date, to the eastern elevation facing the River Lagan. This structure added an additional 30-40m² (323-431ft²) at each level, however, some of this was taken up with offices for administration and finance staff. Pressure on space caused the Board to seek additional accommodation, and in 1974 the purchase of 28 Ridgeway Street, opposite the theatre, was concluded for £4,000.¹²¹ This semi-detached house provided office space for stage management and administrative staff. The theatre later acquired another smaller terraced property on the south side of Ridgeway Street as a prop store, and in the 1990s, took over the vacant premises at 51-55, immediately adjacent to the theatre to the west.

The FoH toilets provided women with just two WCs and men with one WC and three urinals. Using a typical formula for a modern theatre ten WCs for ladies and four WCs and four urinals for gents would be expected.¹²² An

¹²¹ Robert Alan Moore, *Deed of sale of 28 Ridgeway Street*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/613.

¹²² David Adams (ed.), *Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment* (London: Association of British Theatre Technicians, 2013). Usually referred to as the Yellow Book. This is based on BS 6465-1 Table 7 – for venues where toilet use is concentrated during an interval. The ABTT follows this guidance in the recommendations given in the Yellow Book, advising also that an audience split of 60 per cent women to 40 per cent men is assumed in most cases.

allocation of 10m² (108ft²) is given to cloakroom space, which is lower than the 16m² (172ft²) desirable.¹²³ Dressing room accommodation was confined to two rooms to the rear of the stage, opening, via a small lobby, onto upstage centre. A curious arrangement which to access would have required stealth and discretion on the part of the performer. It also limited designers as it was essential to ensure the masking of this area. It also reduced the available depth of stage by 0.9m (3'). Each dressing room was about 12m² (129ft²) and, due to being built into a corner to the south of the building were irregular shapes. Each had a WC and handbasin, but no shower, and would have comfortably accommodated only three or four actors, although it would have been required to accommodate many more at times.¹²⁴

Consequently, the Board began to explore additions to the building to improve accommodation and in late 1975 ISER Architects¹²⁵ was appointed and builders Corbett and Cleland commenced a £58,600 contract on 24 April,

¹²³ Strong (ed.), *Theatre buildings: a design guide*, p. 50. This suggests 0.1m² per person assuming a 60 per cent take up among audience members. In practice, use of cloakrooms is declining, although it persists in concert halls and opera houses, probably due to audience age, expectations, and standard of dress. Other considerations are becoming more common nowadays such as buggy parks for children's shows.

¹²⁴ As one dressing room would be assigned to the ladies in the company and the other to the gentlemen, large shows with uneven male and female casting would have struggled; Thompson's *Over the Bridge*, for example, has a cast of 14 only two of whom are women.

¹²⁵ 'An Appreciation - Ernest Gerald Isherwood', *The Irish Times*, 18 July 2011, available at <<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/letters/an-appreciation-1.603553>> [accessed on 6 September 2019]. Initially operating as Isherwood and Ellis from 1965, Gerry Isherwood and George Ellis were joined by Adair Roche and Paddy Semple to form ISER which practiced for several years in the mid-1970s. The practice contributed to the design of the new Belfast City Hospital before fragmenting, Isherwood and Ellis continuing in partnership until 1992.

the theatre closing for two months.¹²⁶ During the work the company toured Patrick Galvin's *We do it for love*, featuring Liam Neeson, on an impressive British and Irish tour including dates at the Citizens', Glasgow, Theatr Clwyd, the Library Theatre, Manchester and the Young Vic, finishing at the Abbey on 19 June.¹²⁷ The source of funding for the project is not recorded but the Gulbenkian Foundation offered '£5,000 towards the extension if the Trustees were able to proceed'.¹²⁸

Two drawings from ISER appear in the archive with plans and elevations for two new dressing rooms, replacing the existing ones, each approximately 25m² (269ft), with a WC and shower. Each featured a method of curtaining off sections to create private areas within, although, as it is impractical and wastes space, this does not appear to have been used.¹²⁹ The minutes show dissatisfaction with the work with which was still ongoing in 1978 with ISER's final payment still withheld pending correction of defects.¹³⁰ The Board's biggest concern was with numbers – 'The previous dressing-rooms accommodated, with some discomfort, 17 people. The Lyric had been given initially, despite assurances, dressing-rooms which accommodated fewer people.'¹³¹ This is strange as the new dressing rooms provided twice the floor area of the old ones, and if the old rooms could accommodate seventeen people, each person would have only 1.4m² (15ft²), equivalent to the average spacing in an orchestra pit. In the new rooms, each person in a cast of 17 would

¹²⁶ Minutes, 2 February 1976, *Minutes February 1969 – September 1978*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/503.

¹²⁷ Lyric Theatre, *Programme – We do it for love by Patrick Galvin*, in Digital Theatre Archive Lyric Theatre Collection: LY-0078/1577, available at <<http://www.digitaltheatrearchive.com/archives/1577>> [accessed on 6 September 2019].

¹²⁸ Minutes, 10 November 1976, *Minutes 1969–1978*.

¹²⁹ ISER Architects, *Lyric Players Theatre Phase II Dressing Room Revisions*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/623.

¹³⁰ Minutes, 13 March 1976, *Minutes 1969–1978*.

¹³¹ Minutes, 8 November 1976, in *Ibid.*

have approximately 3m² (32.3ft²) which is acceptable, even by modern standards where 4m² (43ft²) per person is considered comfortable.

The drawings only show these spaces, but the minutes refer to snags with other works including no ‘proper window in Green Room’.¹³² The Green Room, a small triangular room at ground floor upstage of the back wall of the stage, and a scene dock area to stage right appear to have been added at the same time, and the budget figure would support this, as it suggests more than just the dressing room works. Further works were proposed to relocate the lighting control, from a gallery position above the stage left wing, to an enclosed box at the rear of the auditorium and to provide an additional 20 ways of dimming taking the circuit count to 60. This was a trend in theatre lighting at the time as control equipment and luminaires began to give directors and lighting designers the opportunity for greater artistic expression. Estimates for those works of £7,752 were approved by the Board.¹³³

The Third Lyric

By the early part of the twenty-first century the idea of a new building for the Lyric had gathered momentum. Chapter 7 notes the relocation options considered in the late 1990s.¹³⁴ ‘We’d reached the stage where Lottery money for Belfast had to be spent and the decision had to be made; what will Belfast have as the last of the Lottery developed venues?’¹³⁵ Jan Branch recalls that attitudes had changed regarding Belfast’s needs. The chief question for the Lyric was whether to move or stay on the Ridgeway Street site it had occupied for over 30 years. Lack of car parking was a major concern identified in the Southwood review; the theatre had attempted to purchase nearby space from Belfast City Council, but this had been rejected. ‘There was a public belief that

¹³² Minutes, 14 February 1977, in *Ibid.*.

¹³³ Minutes, 28 June 1976, in *Ibid.*.

¹³⁴ Russell Southwood, *Review of Performing Arts Venues and Spaces in Belfast* (Belfast City Council and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 1997).

¹³⁵ John Riddell, *Interview with Jan Branch* (14 March 2019).

when the Lyric was rebuilt it would be a much bigger theatre. Maybe that was part of the lingering effects of the 500-seater idea.’¹³⁶

The Lyric design procurement began in 2001 as an open-competition run by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) with input from RIBA in the form of Glenn Howells whose advice would certainly have shaped the jury’s decision-making.¹³⁷ Winning architect O’Donnell + Tuomey was shortlisted from more than 80 entrants to six, at which point the competition escalated.¹³⁸ ‘The jury made a very peculiar decision to choose two winners – absolutely useless to the client’.¹³⁹ The joint-winners were Hackett and Hall; ‘I think I rang Alastair [Hall] and said “let’s not just tear each other apart over this, one of us is going to win this, but let’s try and win it without making mincemeat of each other”’.¹⁴⁰

For the competition, O’Donnell + Tuomey brought on engineers Horgan Lynch and services consultant IN2 both of which remained on the project throughout, but there was no theatre consultant and little relevant theatre design experience:

we won the Lyric [...] mostly with the idea of the public space, the social space and a kind of notional idea about how the performance space would operate, very little idea about how the practicalities of the

¹³⁶ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

¹³⁷ Glenn Howells Architects’ Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre in Armagh, and the Alley Theatre and Conference Centre, Strabane are considered in Chapter 7.

¹³⁸ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*. O’Donnell + Tuomey did not initially enter the competition on the grounds that the chances of appointment were slim, however, a Belfast-born architect in the practice, Susie Carson, now with Hall McKnight ‘had childhood memories of going to the Lyric, she loved the site and she persuaded us to enter’.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*.

get-in would work. We were new to the game and [...] we learnt a lot.¹⁴¹

John and his team spent time getting to know the Lyric team on study visits. The Lyric ‘were being put under a certain amount of pressure to move into the city centre [...] the Lyric saying, we belong where we are’.¹⁴² John and Sheila had visited theatres recommended by Garry Hynes at Druid, but when Richard Wakely came onto the project, he drew up a list of theatres in London, including Richard’s former venue, the Hampstead theatre. Visits took place with members of the Board, including chair at the time David Johnston¹⁴³ and fellow Queen’s University lecturer and former Lyric artistic director, David Grant.¹⁴⁴ John recalls that a significant shift took place when Mark Carruthers¹⁴⁵ took over as chair of the Board – ‘Mark was very motivated to

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*.

¹⁴³ David Johnston, Queen’s University Belfast, *David Johnston - Professor - Profile* (2019) <[https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-johnston\(31ef7ce2-a5ec-488d-8691-38c949aba005\).html](https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-johnston(31ef7ce2-a5ec-488d-8691-38c949aba005).html)> [accessed on 18 July]. David Johnston is a Professor in the School of Arts, English and Languages at QUB. His research centres around theatre, translation and performance.

¹⁴⁴ David Grant, Queen’s University Belfast, *David Grant - Senior Lecturer - Profile* (2019) <[https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-grant\(dabf8a8b-f8b8-4819-820d-2c18a906c67e\).html](https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-grant(dabf8a8b-f8b8-4819-820d-2c18a906c67e).html)> [accessed on 18 July]. David Grant has worked in the School of Creative Arts at Queen’s University, Belfast, since 2000. A former Managing Editor of *Theatre Ireland* magazine, Programme Director of the Dublin Theatre Festival, and Artistic Director of the Lyric Theatre, Belfast, he continues work as a theatre director alongside his academic work.

¹⁴⁵ Joanne Sweeney, ‘Mark Carruthers: Confessions of a political anorak’, *The Irish News*, 17 September 2016, available at <<https://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2016/09/17/news/mark-carruthers-confessions-of-a-political-anorak-696772/>> [accessed on 18 July 2010]. Mark

get this building going [...] he wanted an outcome; he wanted to get a building done [...] he was an important leader for the project, and I also think that Richard [Wakely], because he had come from building a building, wanted to get on and do it'.¹⁴⁶

Richard had written the Lyric's strategic business plan, and carried out a strategic review, after which his involvement was made full-time. He encouraged the Board and the architect to review the proposed design team and urged them not to compromise on the quality of the expertise on the team. His biggest concern was the current Quantity Surveyor (QS); 'no benchmarking for a start [...] it was not enough [money], not even close to enough which set alarm-bells ringing'.¹⁴⁷ He knew that there would be 'very serious financial challenges with the project throughout its entire life, so we needed a really good expert QS'.¹⁴⁸ Rider Levitt Bucknall (RLB) was appointed on the basis of

Carruthers has spent most of his working life at BBC Northern Ireland, which he joined in 1989, two years after graduating with a masters in Irish Politics. He has presented political shows on TV and radio including *Sunday Politics*, *Stormont Today*, the weekly programme *The View*, *Good Morning Ulster*, *Let's Talk*, *Spotlight* and *BBC Newslines*. As a supporter of the theatre in Northern Ireland, he was chairman of the Lyric Theatre, in which capacity he was instrumental in raising the £18.5 million required for its rebuild, and one of the founders of the Belfast-based Tinderbox Theatre Company. He was awarded an OBE for his services to drama in 2011. He published a collection of interviews with leading writers, actors, journalists and politicians in Mark Carruthers, *Alternative Ulsters: Conversations on Identity* (Belfast: Liberties North, 2014); he is also the co-editor of Mark Carruthers and Stephen Douds (eds), *Stepping Stones: the Arts in Ulster 1971–2001* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁶ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

¹⁴⁷ John Riddell, *Interview* with Richard Wakely (14 March 2019). An introduction to Richard Wakely appears in Volume II, p. 57.

¹⁴⁸ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

theatre experience.¹⁴⁹ By this time a decision had been made to redevelop on the Ridgeway Street site, the Lyric's 'spiritual home'.¹⁵⁰

Unlike most of the design team, theatre consultant Theatreplan was appointed directly by the Lyric; 'the Board felt they needed a direct-line to the expertise of the theatre designers'.¹⁵¹ Across the team 'there was a deficit of experience, one of the things that Theatreplan did was to provide a bulwark against that'.¹⁵² John developed a collaborative working relationship with Theatreplan, 'sometimes disagreeing and having robust debates [...] but the Board were more confident in their decisions because the theatre designer answered to them'.¹⁵³ Richard worked with Theatreplan founder Richard Brett,¹⁵⁴ and expanded Theatreplan's scope to include 'an oversight brief on the Mechanical and Electrical [M&E] side'.¹⁵⁵ The Lyric appointed an experienced acoustic consultant in Bob Essert of Sound Space Vision, 'people still to this day talk about the very high acoustic performance of the main house'.¹⁵⁶ John Tuomey observes:

he's got a very good set of ears. [...] going around with Bob visiting other buildings he'd say "come over here and listen to this"; he lets his ears guide him, he's not so much doing analytical diagrams as he is using his sense. I found that very helpful and the acoustics in the room

¹⁴⁹ The company would later be criticised in the NI Audit Office investigation into irregularities with the procurement of the main contract for destroying the tender evaluation documents.

¹⁵⁰ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*. Theatreplan is a London based consultancy.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Coveney, 'Richard Brett obituary', *The Guardian*, 24 January 2014, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/jan/24/richard-brett>> [accessed on 16 July 2019].

¹⁵⁵ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*.

are very good, I think. Actors have said they can turn their back on the audience and still be heard.¹⁵⁷

John was grateful for the security offered by a strong theatre consultant and acoustician:

and that expanded our expertise. I had always wanted, because the site was sort of skewy, that the auditorium would have a kind of unsettled geometry, so a lot of the early conversations were about how do you solve this problem of an asymmetrical theatre into a functioning theatre.¹⁵⁸

This approach was in place before Theatreplan designer Neil Morton came onboard, ‘his activity was to try and make it work [...] it wasn’t let’s start on this together, it was them coming in and saying “ok, if this is it, we better see that it works better”’.¹⁵⁹ Neil made the stage bigger and John acknowledges that he learnt a lot about ‘lighting angles versus voice deflection’.¹⁶⁰

The guidance and governance of the Lyric development project came from a small, ‘but talented steering group’¹⁶¹ – Richard Wakely, Colm Lavery (the client’s project manager from EC Harris), Sid McDowell,¹⁶² (a senior

¹⁵⁷ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*.

¹⁶¹ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

¹⁶² Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, *Sid McDowell - Chair* (2016) <<https://www.niacro.co.uk/executive-committee/sid-mcdowell>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]. A graduate of Ruskin College, Oxford, Sid McDowell was a senior trade union official for almost thirty years before serving as Chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive from 1995 until 2004. He has been Chair of the Public Service Commission and Chairman of the National House building Council (NI). In July 2011, he completed two terms as a Non-Executive Director of the Northern Ireland Prison Service and also served for 8 years as a Civil Service Commissioner. In the voluntary and private sector, Sid is President of the

figure in NI public life), and major building contractor Philip Cheevers.¹⁶³ ‘I wasn’t going to spend my life answering to the Board [...] and the Board suggested or perhaps volunteered Sid and Phil’.¹⁶⁴ This Capital Working Group had a blend of skills that could respond to the many contractual difficulties during the process. ‘It was a gift to have someone like Phil Cheevers who was a really expert contractor in his own right [...] everything he said and suggested was like gold dust. Sid in terms of politics was just brilliant.’¹⁶⁵ The relationship with the Board was good and they were supportive of the steering group, empowering them to make decisions. Richard admires the strength they demonstrated.

People don’t understand what the poor Board went through [...]. He [Mark Carruthers] completely got that the usual Northern Ireland thing about cutting right back to the bone and going for the lowest economic result wasn’t going to work and I insisted on that and I’m very proud that they agreed to that.¹⁶⁶

Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, President of the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (NI), and Patron of the Council for the Homeless (NI). He has also chaired the Housing Rights Service Preventing Possession initiative. As a Board Member Sid had oversight of the construction of the Lyric and was later Board Vice-Chairman.

¹⁶³ McLaughlin & Harvey, *Our People - Philip Cheevers - Group Chief Executive* (2019) <<https://www.mclh.co.uk/who-we-are/our-people/>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]. Philip Cheevers is a Chartered Engineer and a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Structural Engineers. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh with experience of large retail developments, leisure complexes, health and education projects. He has experience in remodelling older buildings as well as new-build schemes, different forms of contract, procurement routes and construction methods.

¹⁶⁴ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*.

John acknowledges that the needs of a theatre differ from other buildings he had worked on:

foyers, halls, staircases, entrances which is what we know all about, then inside that building is a whole other machine which we had a lot to learn about. Sometimes determined naivety is an advantage; we know it's not supposed to work this way, but we want it work this way and I think that helped us make something quite distinctive.¹⁶⁷ Somebody, I think it was Richard Croxford,¹⁶⁸ said to us that the amazing thing about theatre is that everyone who works in theatre says about themselves "I work in theatre", whether they're in box office, publicity or in the accounts department. So, the idea that it was a sort of family [...] and we got to know those people very well, including proposing things to them that they didn't like the sound of.¹⁶⁹

Richard Wakely completely rewrote the project brief, involving the theatre's staff, Board and practitioners. Discussions involved 'how the different spaces related to each other, talked to each other, worked with the public [...]

¹⁶⁷ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

¹⁶⁸ Lyric Theatre, *Lyric Artistic director bows out after five years in post* (2013) <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/lyric-artistic-director-bows-out-after-five-years-in-post/>> [accessed on 18 July 2019]. Actor and director Richard Croxford was artistic director of the Lyric from 2008 until the end of 2013. When he started, the old Lyric had been demolished and construction was underway. He curated the Lyric's off-site programme and opened the new theatre with a production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and a season including Matthew Hurt's *The Man Jesus* with Simon Callow, and *The Painkiller* by Sean Foley, starring Sir Kenneth Branagh and Rob Brydon. Richard was also responsible for programming *Brendan at the Chelsea* by Behan's niece Janet Behan, directed by and starring Adrian Dunbar, the theatre's first transatlantic tour since Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* in 1996.

¹⁶⁹ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

and that led to a much more robust brief'.¹⁷⁰ The brief included a specific schedule of areas¹⁷¹ featuring the critical dimensions and features of each room, but also considered the role of each space and the:

ambience, the feeling and how the history of the place should be felt. [...] I felt I couldn't look future actors, directors, stage managers in the face without being able to justify everything that we had put in place and them being able to say to me 'it's absolutely better than what we had'.¹⁷²

A second space, the Naughton Studio, was a key element that would distinguish this building from the previous Lyric, but there continued to be much discussion on 'what is the role of a second space in a repertory theatre in the twenty-first century'.¹⁷³

To arrange the volumes on site, O'Donnell + Tuomey undertook a massing process, taking the brief and grouping together blocks of accommodation. These were made in card to show how the units sat together on site, however they did not do it alone, it was one of 'two things Theatreplan did very importantly in the beginning – they did a much more extensive

¹⁷⁰ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

¹⁷¹ A Schedule of Areas is a list of the rooms and their sizes that the client needs to make the building work. The schedule may also brief the architect on other requirements such as required occupancy, ceiling heights, glazing or specific lighting and acoustic conditions. Vertical and horizontal circulation in the form of staircases and corridors, and plant rooms are not typically included. Rooms are listed with their internal area in square metres and a grossing factor is applied to account for the spaces not included and to allow for the space added by structures, services and wall build-ups. The grossing factor for theatres is higher than most buildings due to the number of high and unusually shaped rooms that add complexity. A grossing factor of between 1.4 and 1.6 is typical.

¹⁷² Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*.

appraisal of the site and how the different blocks might work together'.¹⁷⁴ The client team was not experienced at reading architectural drawings, so John's team had to lead them through the design space by space. They took models to the Lyric with parts that could move around to show how they might be arranged on the site. John recalls taking 'large plans, maybe at 1:100, which we mounted on card and cut out the voids from so they could build a house of cards and see through the floors'.¹⁷⁵ This helped convey the design to the client and gave the architects a better understanding of their own design.

The third Lyric sits easily on the site with plenty of space around it, however, this is largely due to the late acquisition from Belfast City Council of an adjacent strip of land between the theatre and the river. At competition stage, the site was confined to the outline of the plot of the existing theatre; 'Some architects have said to me "why's the building so cramped up when the site is so extensive?" but our building builds exactly to the jagged line of the premises [...] the shape came about on an extremely constricted site'.¹⁷⁶ The site is on a steep slope running from +11m (36'1") at the west down to +8m (26'3") above datum at the east near the river.¹⁷⁷ Initially John considered placing the stage at the lower part of the site and using the slope to form the bowl of the auditorium:

but if you did that, it would be hard to get the public to a point where they could overlook the river, so we flipped it [...] and you effectively get almost 6m of space beneath the auditorium at the entrance level.¹⁷⁸

Two schemes were prepared to test the assumptions; one with the get-in at the top of the slope to the west, and one at the bottom. The former, which was

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*.

¹⁷⁵ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*.

¹⁷⁷ NI Direct, *Ordnance Survey history* (2019)

<<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/ordnance-survey-history>> [accessed on 18 July 2019]. In Northern Ireland, the Ordnance Datum is the mean sea level as measured at Clarendon Dock Belfast between 1951 and 1956.

¹⁷⁸ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

built, places the stage and get-in at the top of the slope and allows truck access from Ridgeway Street.¹⁷⁹

The Lyric's identity has always been as a producing house, and it needed a main-house, studio and rehearsal room on the same site, and O'Donnell + Tuomey was keen to express these three volumes independently on the site. 'Each house has its own crown [...] and by coming down low, we could lift the rehearsal room up and get bar space underneath'.¹⁸⁰ John wanted the casual observer to be aware of the three volumes of the Lyric:

If you look at them from three different angles you see these three different outlines, different hats [...] and the public space flowing between them. [...] Our first concept design we called A House for Lyric, meaning that we wanted to embody the very ethos of the producing theatre in the design.¹⁸¹

These views of the building vary depending on the approach.¹⁸² There are few strong views of the site from a distance, the building emerging from the trees if approached from north or south along the embankment or east along Sunnyside Street. From Ridgeway Street, the façade and roofline begin to appear from the similar brick finish of the terraced houses when halfway down. The most impressive view is from Sandhurst Drive, which runs down to Ridgeway Street from the north, where the creased roof of the main auditorium is seen in the background, the stepping slate roofs of the terraced houses in the foreground. The building shares the materiality of the neighbouring houses but declares itself as different. Part of this is in the clearly distinct volumes and their

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*. The loading bay is opposite Sandhurst Drive, which joins Ridgeway Street at a slight angle offering larger vehicles an opportunity to manoeuvre by turning in and reversing back into the bay.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*. This gives a sense of John's Manifesto and Agenda as discussed in the Introduction and Methodology.

¹⁸² Volume II, Figures 37-63, show photographs of the site and the interiors.

crowns, but John also believes that the sizing and placement of windows sets it apart as another type of building:

You choose your moments when to reveal it and when to disguise it because the building itself needs very few windows [...] In the studio there is a big rolling timber window that allows the studio to open up to the street, to make the street a backdrop in the studio itself and to reveal some of the activities in the studio when you're out in the street. [...] We also introduced a room into the functional programme that wasn't in there, [...] we knew it was a great place to have a room, because it would look back up the beautiful streetscape of Ridgeway Street, all the roofs and the chimneys that are so characteristic and we kept drawing that room even when the budget was tight. Now they use that room for everything, for parties, receptions [...] it's now the multipurpose Ridgeway Room.

This room, 9m (29'6") x 6m (19'8") with a small terraced balcony on Ridgeway Street, sits to the northwest corner of the site on the top floor above wardrobe.

The Lyric is a major statement in brick, a material which O'Donnell + Tuomey have worked with on other buildings.¹⁸³ The practice was:

inspired by the brickiness of Belfast, [...] almost before we designed the building we said Belfast brick, like the warehouses in Belfast, like the institutional buildings in Belfast, like the history of the housing grids in the streets in Belfast, but not just brick, Belfast brick; hard, angular brick, we weren't looking for a soft, crumbly look, we wanted a hard look. [...] Some feeling that Belfast was a sort of pointy kind of place – people come straight at you in Belfast, so we felt we're going to build it as if it's built out of Belfast, as if it built itself in Belfast. That

¹⁸³ O'Donnell + Tuomey, *Sadler's Wells East, London, UK* (2019)

<<http://odonnell-tuomey.ie/sadlers-wells-dance-theatre>> [accessed on 19 July 2019]. Brick features in the design of Sadler's Wells East, due to open in 2022 as part of the Olympic legacy works.

image carries right through the building [...] the brick runs inside to outside, it's the same on the inside as the outside.¹⁸⁴

This reflects the mood John took from Florian Beigel's Half Moon theatre London.¹⁸⁵ Although the public spaces are fully enclosed, the feeling of being in an inside space alters when entering the main volumes or internal rooms, where the materiality changes. John used an analogy of 'rocks in the stream', the public circulation is formed of stone stair and 'brick carpets'.¹⁸⁶ This is an aesthetic choice, but benefits the acoustic segregation of the spaces 'which is greatly assisted by having two layers of construction'.¹⁸⁷ Each roof is a two-layer concrete construction to ensure acoustic isolation from the aircraft that pass overhead on approach to Belfast City Airport.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

¹⁸⁵ Florian Beigel, who died in 2018, was a German born architect and Professor of Architecture at London Metropolitan University. In 1979 the Half Moon Theatre commissioned Beigel to design a new venue on a site adjacent to the disused Methodist chapel it occupied on London's Mile End Road. Beigel incorporated the chapel in a design without fixed seating, permitting a variety of staging opportunities with an occupancy of up to around 200. It closed in 1990 and is now a J. D. Wetherspoon pub.

¹⁸⁶ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*. Each built volume is acoustically isolated from its neighbours, standing on its own foundations without hard, physical connection to the adjacent structure.

¹⁸⁸ National Air Traffic Services Ltd, *Noise* (2019)

<<https://www.nats.aero/environment/aircraft-noise/>> [accessed on 19 July 2019]. National Air Traffic Services quotes the measured noise at ground from a descending Dash-8 400 twin turbo-prop aircraft, typical of those serving Belfast City, at 66.8dbA at 1,400ft (427m), which is in the same range as normal conversation, enough to be intrusive if not mitigated. The second Lyric theatre would have benefited from this acoustic isolation during the 1970s and 1980s when the noise of hovering army helicopters was persistent above Belfast.

Finding the right brick was a challenge as there is little brick industry left in Ireland.¹⁸⁹ The final brick, from Ibstock Brick in Leicestershire, is a standard 75mm size with specials to resolve issues with the precisely designed geometry. All bricks are complete, with none cut on site, ensuring the building retains a smooth, crisp finish. All dimensions relate to this 75mm brick course depth, with the stone stairs set at 150mm per step, to ensure that the floorplates are resolved neatly to the same template.

The choice of stone is also rooted in the industrial heritage of Belfast, where the stone sills and thresholds are typically of York stone, which was chosen for the stone staircase with permanence and longevity assured, as each step is produced from a complete block rather than being clad in stone slips. This design approach makes for a striking contrast between public spaces and auditoria; however, the hard, flat surfaces make for acoustic problems especially when the foyer is busy.

Auditorium design

A striking feature of the main auditorium is the off-centre gangway:

We didn't want to have a central divide, from years of going to the Abbey. [...] We were determined to have wall-to-wall people, close to the stage. There's 16 rows in the Lyric, and somehow that scale seems right for that sort of space'.¹⁹⁰

From the first iterations of the design, John conceived an auditorium with a folded ceiling:

a pramhood, come-over-your-head kind of bonnet, with the idea that when you went into the acoustic space of the auditorium you should be in a nest, you should be protected, [...] the audience needs to be in its

¹⁸⁹ Much of the brick which built Belfast was brought in as ballast on ships that would return laden with locally produced linen. Samples were obtained from British suppliers and the team walked around Belfast and put them up against existing buildings until they were happy with the choice.

¹⁹⁰ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

own shell, needs to be held so they feel together, we wanted a strong feeling of gathering.¹⁹¹

The team achieved this by using the acoustic surfaces Bob Essert required for reflections, achieving a volume of 5m³ per person, good for drama. In plan John introduced ‘a crank’¹⁹² to ensure that, when seated, the audience are aware of each other. The main entrance to the auditorium is on centreline and, while the plan is skewed, the ceiling remains symmetrical, as required by the technical function of the lighting bridges. As the ceilings drop towards the sides of the room, the feeling of asymmetry is reinforced by a single level balcony at auditorium left and a three-stage ‘pop-out stepping balcony’¹⁹³ on auditorium right. Both balconies terminate at the same floor height and location in plan which ensures symmetry when used as equipment positions. ‘It’s not as asymmetrical as it looks; it’s 100 per cent symmetrical at the points you need symmetry’.¹⁹⁴ Jan Branch is of the opinion that ‘the main space works well, but I personally dislike that division in the auditorium with one side block’.¹⁹⁵

Another striking feature is the timber walls and ceiling, a rich, satin-finished surface of slim planks, displaying a variation in colour from chocolate-brown to honey-yellow. The surfaces are creased in places at odd angles to provide acoustic reflection where needed, and disrupt and diffuse elsewhere. The timber is Iroko,¹⁹⁶ chosen as it was already being used for all the windows on the project. The work was carried out not by a specialist joinery contractor, but the formwork subcontractor Masterwork Construction, employed to

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

¹⁹⁶ The Wood Database, *Iroko* (2019) <<https://www.wood-database.com/iroko/>> [accessed on 19 July 2019]. Iroko is an African tropical hardwood which is highly durable and easy to work. It is often used as low-cost alternative to teak to which it bears a resemblance. It is not endangered but is vulnerable as use has increased.

prepare the shuttering to receive the concrete that formed the structure of the main auditorium and many other parts of the building, including the concrete bar counter. The company had theatre experience from work on the Waterfront Hall, Market Place Theatre, Grand Opera House and Strule Arts Centre.¹⁹⁷ Tuomey was so impressed with the formwork that Mastercraft were asked to take on the specialist linings. ‘It’s done with boat-building accuracy. In those spaces there’s tolerances of 1mm (1/32”) and it’s beautifully made. It was a fluke; we just had such great craftsmen on site’.¹⁹⁸

Locating the stage at the uphill end of the site, limited the maximum height of the flytower. A double-height flytower requires the grid floor to be 2.5 times the height of the proscenium arch which for the Lyric would be +20m (65’7”). The top of the flytower goes from 15m (49’2”) above stage floor, rising to 17.5m (57’5”) at the back. This was a well-considered decision on the part of the Lyric as the theatre had no history of flying in its previous venues. The counterweight installation adds the much-needed flexibility to rig and suspend scenery and equipment at any location above the stage, but the lack of full double-height provision imposes limitations on the designer, although these need not be negative. The inability to fully fly has always been part of the Lyric’s production aesthetic, forcing designers to make creative choices they might not make if flying a cloth or a flat were possible. What was more important to the Lyric was space below stage – ‘that was a breakthrough for the Lyric that they could have traps’.¹⁹⁹ The possibilities of a substage space became clear to John on a study visit to the Hampstead Theatre, another Theatreplan design with an extensive demountable stage floor and as a 325-

¹⁹⁷ Mastercraft Construction UK, *The Lyric Theatre Belfast* (2019)

<<https://mastercraftconstruction.co.uk/projects/the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 19 July 2019].

¹⁹⁸ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*.

seat producing house was a good benchmark for the Lyric.²⁰⁰ ‘There was a play on²⁰¹ and we saw how they used below stage [...] it had a nun on a trampoline, she was outside the window and you saw this nun flying up and down, which you could only do if you had a substage.’²⁰²

Rehearsal Room

The rehearsal room is a large volume 15m (49’2”) x 12m (39’4”) with a minimum height of 3.6m (11’10”) in the middle rising to around 5m (16’5”) at the east and west. It is designed with acoustic diffusion to the upper parts of the walls, and the ability to blackout with wool serge curtains, which results in a room acoustic which is neither excessively dry nor too reverberant. It is also used for small performances, poetry and readings; ‘it has a beautiful intimacy about it’.²⁰³ The team’s competition design included views into the rehearsal space. Garry Hynes²⁰⁴ and Martin Drury²⁰⁵ had commented on O’Donnell + Tuomey’s scheme:

Garry was really interested in revealing the rehearsal process at Druid [...] so she thought it would be amazing to have a translucent or transparent rehearsal space [...] when the Lyric team saw this they thought, no, you understand nothing, you don’t understand the first thing about introverted actors who don’t want people to see them.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Theatreplan, *Hampstead Theatre* (2019)

<<https://theatreplan.com/projects/hampstead-theatre>> [accessed on 18 July 2019].

²⁰¹ Philip Fisher, *Clever Dick - Crispin Whittell - Hampstead Theatre* (2006)

<<https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/cleverdick-rev>> [accessed on 18 July 2019].

²⁰² Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*.

²⁰⁴ Garry Hynes is co-founder and artistic director of Druid Theatre in Galway.

²⁰⁵ Martin Drury was artistic director of Team Educational Theatre Company in the 1980s and founding director of Dublin’s Ark Children’s Theatre.

²⁰⁶ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

This resistance was largely due to years of rehearsing in a portacabin at the back of the theatre overlooked by staff and visitors using the adjacent car park. The brief was to have no windows in the rehearsal room, but John believed this was a mistake, so the final design has three types of windows:

one that overlooks the treetops, one little one that overlooks the foyer and a rooflight to bring light and air in from the top. Each kind of window had to be separately negotiated with the family of the Lyric; they wanted none of them and now, of course, they love all of them.²⁰⁷

Public Spaces

John recalls that the public spaces were not highly defined in the brief:

The old theatre did not enjoy its site because you had to climb up that awkward staircase and when you were up, it was tending to look back on itself, [...] it was our own architectural predisposition to open it out.²⁰⁸

Some over-eager members of the Board wanted to cut down all the trees in order to expose the new building to views from every angle, ‘we had to go out and tie ribbons around the trees that we should keep to explain the idea of thinning’.²⁰⁹

The visitor’s first experience of the theatre, when entering from Ridgeway Street, is a small box office counter, to the right of which stands a stone staircase which rises 3.6m (11’10”) in twenty-four steps:

Once you’ve made the decision to come in at the tailgate of the truck [...] it raises the whole datum of the building [...] as the floor level of the studio has to be the same as the floor level of the stage [...] so without doing anything else you’ve a climb to make before you start. Our thought was to keep a transparency from the street up through and

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

out to the treetops. We moved the entrance to the side so that the stair hall would be visually open.²¹⁰

The stair is in three sections across its width and is deliberately not square to its surroundings, squeezed as it is between the studio to the west and the block containing education suite, bar and rehearsal room to the east. ‘One part of it is faster than the other’;²¹¹ in plan, the two left-hand routes have two landings at halfway and again halfway from there to the top. The right-hand route has one landing at halfway only:

We tried to turn the stairs into a kind of landscape in a way and it’s dramatic, but when you get to the top [...] you see all around in two and a half directions and most people feel they’ve earned it by the time they get there. [...] The problem of the site became its solution – the vertical separation allowed the education suite and the boardroom to work below the bar, then the bar and the rehearsal room. There’s a three-storey sandwich there, whereas on the auditorium side it’s just one volume.²¹²

Jan Branch recalls that when it first opened the Lyric felt ‘a bit unsafe’ to older people and those less secure on their feet. The main staircase with two handrails ‘appears to be nip-waisted in the middle and your eyes and your feet are telling you different things. The curved staircase down to the toilets is scary’, indeed she recounts witnessing a woman losing her footing and falling down the stairs.²¹³ ‘It’s not an easy building for the old, disabled or young children to get around, it’s also a very noisy building in that there is nothing in the public areas to absorb sound’,²¹⁴ consequently when busy, it is hard to maintain a conversation.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ In large areas, such as theatre foyers, the hardness of ceilings and floors contribute most to the experience of loudness as bodies absorb and diffuse the

Other Spaces

The Boardroom is located at the bottom of the building on the east, with full width glazing overlooking the Lagan, and a small private balcony. John decided that the practice should design everything that went into the Boardroom, including the furniture.

They told us at one point that sometimes they would have a Board meeting of 14 or 15 people, but more often they'd have a meeting of five or six people, like a sub-committee [...] so we designed a table that comes in two parts, so they can breakout into two meetings and then swing the tables together. [...] They asked me "why do we have two tables?" and I said, this is Belfast, you need to be ready for the split.²¹⁶

This makes the room flexible and attractive to private hirers. Both the adjacent education room and Boardroom are accessible directly from the lower foyer and box office without having to go via the bar.

The difficult site and the way this necessitated asymmetrical configuration of the main volumes, generated small areas of potentially dead space which John capitalised on. 'There's always something just around the corner [...] making little pockets.' The bust of founder, Mary O'Malley, now sits in one such pocket at second floor just outside the main entrance to the auditorium. John reports that actors in rehearsal enjoy using these breakout spaces to run lines, 'they more often come into the bar than they go the Green Room, they live in the building'.²¹⁷

lateral sounds, but hard ceiling and floor surfaces reflect the energy back to other parts of the area. It is common practice to add absorptive finishes to ceilings to mitigate this problem and there are many types available which permit a hard look to the finish such as sound absorbing plaster.

²¹⁶ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*.

Procuring the new building

Richard states ‘that it was not a level playing-field in terms of capital clients. They [the Lyric] had to raise more money, private money, proportionately, than anyone else and that was deeply unfair’²¹⁸ – a comment on the funding given to the MAC. The published building cost for the Lyric is £18.1 million for 5,062m² (54,487ft²) of floor area²¹⁹ and for the MAC £13.3 million for 5,600m² (60,278ft²).²²⁰ Hall McKnight, however, quote the gross internal area of the MAC at 6,266m² (67,447ft²)²²¹ and O’Donnell + Tuomey suggest the Lyric is 8,000m² (86,111ft²).²²² Build cost should include the construction contract only, with project cost including design team fees and other expenses such as planning costs and licensing.²²³ The MAC relied more heavily on public funds than the Lyric, although Richard Wakely’s assertion that this was unfair is harsh. The Lyric exercised a clear choice in staying at Stranmillis, when the focus of capital funding was on Cathedral Quarter and an arts centre for Belfast. The government and ACNI proposal to include a major contemporary art gallery within the MAC, demonstrated the level of commitment to the regeneration of this part of the city and the importance of the MAC to its success, rather than a snub to the Lyric.²²⁴

²¹⁸ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

²¹⁹ EMAP Publishing Ltd, *Lyric Theatre* (2012)

<<https://www.ajbuildingslibrary.co.uk/projects/display/id/4504>> [accessed on 16 July 2019].

²²⁰ EMAP Publishing Ltd, *Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC)* (2012)

<<https://www.ajbuildingslibrary.co.uk/projects/display/id/5233>> [accessed on 16 July 2019].

²²¹ John Riddell, *Interview* with Alastair Hall and Ian McKnight (27 November 2018).

²²² O’Donnell + Tuomey, *The Lyric Theatre, Belfast Northern Ireland* (2019)

<<http://odonnell-tuomey.ie/the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 16 July 2019].

²²³ Volume II, Table 3, shows the project costs as listed in the NIAO 2013 report.

²²⁴ Chapter 9, below, delves into the procurement of the MAC in greater detail.

John was acutely aware that the project was under considerable scrutiny due to the public money involved. The practice was anxious about the choice of Design and Build as a procurement route – ‘our culture was craftsmanship and we wanted to be sure that the builder would bring craftsmanship to the project [...] we wanted Traditional’.²²⁵ However, Gilbert Ash had access to a supply chain of excellent craftspeople; ‘sometimes you get the convergences in life that allow something to work well and we all came out of it happy and the client came out of it with value they wouldn’t have got elsewhere’.²²⁶ The difference between the original costs estimates for the MAC and the final costs are explained, in part, by the addition of the 900m² (9,688ft²) of visual arts space which added £3.56 million to the construction cost.²²⁷ With this removed, the difference between estimated and final cost is 65 per cent.

The elevated costs owe a good deal to optimism in the original cost plan which, when reviewed and mitigated according to government guidelines on optimism bias, resulted in an increase of £332,000 for the Lyric and £1.5 million for the MAC.²²⁸ According to HM Treasury’s *Green Book*:

Optimism bias is the demonstrated systematic tendency for appraisers to be over-optimistic about key project parameters, including capital costs, operating costs, project duration and benefits delivery. The Green

²²⁵ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*. Procurement in architecture and construction is a complex business with a variety of different solutions available to the client for the purchase of design services, and tendering and contracting the builder. Traditional and Design and Build are among the most common. Traditional, sometimes called Design-Bid-Build, places all design responsibility with the architect and design team. Design and Build (D&B) contracts handover design responsibility from design team to the contractor. For buildings as complex as arts venues, Traditional is considered to ensure quality, however, the single-point of contact afforded by D&B is attractive to clients.

²²⁶ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

²²⁷ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (2013), p. 52.

²²⁸ DCAL, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (2013), p. 51.

Book recommends applying specific adjustments for this at the outset of an appraisal.²²⁹

Optimism bias adjustment adds a percentage to works duration and cost estimates based on benchmark information from relevant completed projects. Performing arts buildings are classed as ‘non-standard building projects’ due to the specialist nature of the design, and attract a time adjustment of between 2 per cent and 39 per cent and a capital expenditure adjustment of 4 per cent to 51 per cent. Typically, the higher figure is applied, with work done to mitigate the risks and reduce to a lower figure.²³⁰ In the case of the MAC, the final optimism bias figure for costs was 17 per cent; for the Lyric, just 6.53 per cent.²³¹

The build process

The building was procured using a D&B contract with the design completed to a level Richard described as ‘E+’.²³² This refers to the RIBA Plan of Work 2007 which defines Stage E Technical Design as ‘Preparation of technical design(s) and specifications, sufficient to co-ordinate components and elements of the project and information for statutory standards and construction safety’.²³³ Stage E+ can be considered to incorporate some or all of the

²²⁹ *The Green Book – Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation* (London: HM Treasury, 2018), p. 89.

²³⁰ *The Green Book*, pp. 90-91.

²³¹ DCAL, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (2013), p. 31. While optimism bias is a useful tool, it is no substitute for better benchmarking in the preparation of cost and programme data. Established methods of measuring building costs such as the use of Spon’s Architects’ and Builders’ Price Books are of little use in a complex and unique building. Quantity Surveyors regularly share data with other practices in the hope of reciprocation.

²³² Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

²³³ Royal Institute of British Architects, *RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2007* (2008) <<https://www.architecture.com/-/media/gathercontent/riba-plan-of->

elements of Stage F1 ‘Preparation of production information in sufficient detail to enable a tender or tenders to be obtained’, which is typically associated with single-stage tendering.²³⁴ Under D&B, the contract with the main contractor is based upon Employer’s Requirements (ERs) on which the contractor bases a fixed price, but which are open to interpretation, therefore, the more detailed and specific the ERs, the fewer opportunities the contractor has to cut corners. At the Lyric, a two-stage tender approach was applied, with Gilbert Ash being appointed after the first bid and working with the design team to give advice on buildability as the design progressed and allowing the production information to be as good as possible.²³⁵ Successful D&B contracts rely upon a main contractor who not only subscribes to the letter of the ERs, but also the spirit; especially important for performing arts buildings where quality is measured by look, feel and atmosphere as much as by price.

Richard Wakely chaired both Design Team and Project Meetings, most of which happened in Belfast. EC Harris was engaged as project managers to cover contract administration and monitor the build programme, allowing Richard to concentrate on the strategic issues. By the time the theatre closed in January 2008, the design was substantially complete, and Gilbert Ash was fully appointed as main contractor. ‘It was so important that he [John Tuomey] was 120 per cent behind the contractor, and he was.’²³⁶ The architect was in the room as part of the main contractor selection process and Richard dismisses any allegations of impropriety around the process as discussed below; ‘CPD approved it [...] government were happy enough with it’.²³⁷ However, he had concerns about the CPD:

[work/additional-documents/ribaoutlineplanofwork2007revised2008pdf.pdf](#)> [accessed on 16 July 2019], p. 1.

²³⁴ Royal Institute of British Architects, *RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2007*, p. 1.

²³⁵ The controversy surrounding the appointment of Gilbert Ash is examined in Chapter 7, above.

²³⁶ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*.

I have major questions over the role of the Central Procurement Directorate [...] I do not think they necessarily have the expertise or the experience to bring to the table and generally I think they are extraordinarily negative and Northern Ireland government has to have a very, very hard look at this. It does not serve the interests of architecture, of cultural, social building projects like this. They held us back. I think they caused more problems than good, and I was very unhappy with their role.²³⁸

As a publicly funded construction projects, the Lyric and the MAC were subject to a Gateway Review process, ‘a series of independent peer reviews at key stages of a programme or project lifecycle, aimed at ensuring its successful delivery’.²³⁹ The review is conducted by independent parties and a report is delivered in confidence to the Senior Responsible Owner of the project, with a Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA), using a traffic light coding system to assess the level of risk threatening the successful delivery of the project.²⁴⁰

Wakely recalls that ‘the Gateways were onerous, but we got through them. The CPD added that layer on top [...] which was not helpful [...] what affected the project negatively was their interference; I have very little good to say about them’.²⁴¹

Construction proceeded close to programme, but with a few challenges; Richard Wakely classed them as broadly Geotechnical but was not prepared to give more detail other than to say that ‘it wasn’t helped by the authorities [...]

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ NIDirect gov.uk, *Northern Ireland Gateway Review process* (2019) <<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-gateway-review-process>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]. There are five review stages: Gateway 1 – Business Justification; Gateway 2 – Delivery Strategy; Gateway 3 – Investment Decision; Gateway 4 – Readiness for Service; and Gateway 5 – Operations Review and Benefits Realisation.

²⁴⁰ NIDirect gov.uk, *Gateway Review*.

²⁴¹ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

and again the role of the CPD is extraordinarily questionable'.²⁴² Why this should have presented a problem is not clear. The georecords show two boreholes on the site, one to 19m (62'4"), one to 15m (49'2").²⁴³ Despite its riverside location, flood maps show no historical flooding at the Ridgeway Street site, nor any flood risk from river, sea or surface water.²⁴⁴ Structural Engineers for the project, Cork-based Horgan Lynch, would have had access to geotechnical information on the ground conditions of the site and it is possible that they commissioned the borehole surveys on record.

Potential problems with ground conditions are predictable in a riverside location and there is evidence of previous geotechnical problems on sites around the city that have interfered with piling and excavation works. Since 2000, construction has been ongoing on new buildings for the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH), located in west Belfast 1.5 miles (2.4km) from the Lyric. The site has the same Sherwood Sandstone bedrock with a superficial layer of a different form of glacial till.²⁴⁵ In 2009, Chris Raison of project engineers Raison Foster Associates (RFA), presented a paper on the design of the Critical Care Centre.²⁴⁶ RFA commissioned extensive site investigation in 2003 and

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, *GeoIndex map of Lyric Theatre* (2019), available at <http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/GSNI_Geoindex/home.html> [accessed on 17 July 2019]. The information yields similar results to those for OMac; an underlying Sherwood Sandstone bedrock with superficial geology of silt, sand and gravel as glacial till deposits.

²⁴⁴ Department of Infrastructure NI, *Flood Map Lyric Theatre - River, Sea and Surface water* (2019), available at <<http://dfi-ni.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fd6c0a01b07840269a50a2f596b3daf6>> [accessed on 17 July 2019].

²⁴⁵ *GeoIndex map of Lyric Theatre*.

²⁴⁶ Chris Raison, 'Basement Construction RVH, Belfast Overcoming Piling Difficulties Caused by Sandstone Bedrock and Dolerite Inclusions', Proceedings of the British Geotechnical Association Conference, 2009, 1-94.

again in 2007.²⁴⁷ The studies found that the sandstone had a weak upper layer until 5m (16'5") below the bedrock's surface, which would necessitate deep piling to ensure good footings. In addition, dykes and boulders of the harder igneous rock Dolerite were discovered. Locating Dolerite is only possible through boreholing, and detecting it is critical, as it can result in 'pile refusal' which adds time and money to construction.²⁴⁸ RFA used innovative pinning and bolting techniques to overcome these problems.²⁴⁹ The geotechnical problem Richard alludes to may have resulted from late commissioning of geotechnical surveys, which should have been identified as a project risk. Such investigation is expensive and relies on good site access, so carrying out these works would not be possible until the existing building had been demolished, other than to the perimeter of the site.

The surrounding site was overgrown with vegetation, which the Lyric planned to clear as part of the project, and the team convinced BCC do the same with the remainder of the strip to the west.²⁵⁰ Tuomey recalls that there were problems with contamination to the upper part of the site which he believed were attributed to an historic coalworks,²⁵¹ however historical maps do not show such an operation, although one shows a bottle works to this part of the site.²⁵²

Once construction was above ground, progress was smoother and there were emerging benefits – 'we suddenly found we had this great big space

²⁴⁷ Raison, 'RVH', 1-94 (24).

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁵⁰ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*. In addition, a small amphitheatre was constructed following the topography of the hillside between the theatre and the embankment. It is mainly an attractive outdoor circulation space, but it is used in the summer for education and outreach events.

²⁵¹ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

²⁵² OSNI, *OSNI Historical Third Edition - (1900-1907)* (Belfast: Public Records Office NI, 1907). Later and earlier maps show no building on this part of Ridgeway Street until the appearance of the second Lyric.

under the building that we didn't have before [...] that's now become a very important storage space'.²⁵³ The design team and the main contractor were supportive of these changes and eager to make the most of such opportunities. As a D&B contract, O'Donnell + Tuomey's design would be hugely influenced by the main contractor's approach. Gilbert Ash had experience in theatre having worked on the Grand Opera House:

they knew a certain amount about the complexity of doing theatre work, but they also felt that they wanted to do something good; there was a bit of local pride [...] they put their money where their mouth was and said we want to do it properly.²⁵⁴

The approach served them well, the next project they won being the Everyman, Liverpool.²⁵⁵ At interview, all contractors were required to demonstrate their understanding of the site and present construction methodology. Gilbert Ash 'had a very convincing approach [...] and that weighed in their favour [...] on quality scoring, they were clear winners.'²⁵⁶

The third Lyric Theatre gave its first public performance on 29 April 2011 but the official opening was in the autumn starring Rob Brydon and Kenneth Branagh.²⁵⁷ The building was well-received by the architectural community and shortlisted for the 2012 RIBA Stirling Prize.²⁵⁸ This is a good

²⁵³ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*.

²⁵⁵ Designed by Haworth Tompkins Architects, the Liverpool Everyman was completed in 2013, winning the RIBA Stirling Prize the following year.

²⁵⁶ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

²⁵⁷ Maureen Coleman, 'Kenneth Branagh back in Belfast for Lyric Theatre debut', *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 September 2011, available at <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/kenneth-branagh-back-in-belfast-for-lyric-theatre-debut-28657930.html>> [accessed on 6 March 2020].

²⁵⁸ Rowan Moore, 'Exclusive: RIBA Stirling prize shortlist revealed', *The Guardian*, 22 July 2012, available at

theatre building, delivered thoughtfully for the needs of the users, both practitioners and spectators, designed with architectural flare and a sensitivity to context. It was a well-run design project, starting off on a solid footing with a robust and considered strategy developed by Richard Wakely – retaining him as project director kept the process on track, bringing the design back to the core brief and the essential functionality required of the building. A strong client group and motivated Board chair ensured that the voice of the theatre was heard throughout.

Within the design team there was a well-balanced relationship between architect, acoustician and theatre consultant. They stretched and contested each other's work, but the performance spaces show that they collaborated well to deliver excellent venues. The main Danske Bank theatre achieves the enclosed, asymmetric timber space sought by John Tuomey, while providing the low volume per person and acoustic intimacy and intelligibility for drama Bob Essert needed. It has something of the angular quality of the terracing of Hans Scharoun's Berlin Philharmonie, as Downes explored in his 1965 design, but on this small-scale there is insufficient space to build up the pattern. The setting out of technical systems, notably lighting and sound positions within the auditorium, is symmetrical despite appearing otherwise. The second space, the Naughton Studio, is a thoughtfully adaptable space, working well in the most typical end-on layout, but offering the opportunity to explore any design layout, facilitated by the tension wire grid overhead. The introduction of the window overlooking Ridgeway Street, and the large timber door which blacks it out, adds possibilities for other event types. Similarly, the rehearsal room, a space in which actors and creative teams may spend 40 hours or more each week, is an environment conducive to risk taking; sufficiently private to promote creativity, but not without connection to the outside world.

The excellence of the core spaces for performance and rehearsal is reinforced by finishes of a high standard throughout the building. That attention to detail and care has been taken by the contractors is evident, but it is

<<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/jul/22/riba-stirling-prize-shortlist-2012-revealed>> [accessed on 6 March 2020].

also clear that O'Donnell + Tuomey paid close attention to the interfaces, carefully detailing where walls, ceilings and floors meet to make it possible for the contractor to provide the cleanest possible finish. Where the Lyric is less successful is in the public spaces. The internal masonry certainly links the indoors to the outdoors, but it results in a rather austere space and the proliferation of hard, flat surfaces compounds the cocktail party effect when busy. There is grandeur in the height of the foyer affirmed by the view which opens out on summitting the entrance stair, but the first impression of the interior is of oppression when faced by this wall of steps. With the opportunity of the views of woodland and the River Lagan the decision to glaze the eastern façade of the foyer is understandable, however, there is so much view it can be taken for granted. The little framed views from the rehearsal room at level three near the top of the building, and the Board room at level one, are more arresting, drawing the visitor's attention to fragments of trees, houses, and the Castlereagh Hills beyond. The upper foyer, which is part of the circulation leading to the main theatre, is 4.4m (14'5") wide for most of its length, which feels pinched. The foyers are pleasant enough for a preshow drink but lack the soft welcome that attracts daytime visitors looking for a casual space. This, combined with its out of town location, make the Lyric less popular than the MAC as a meeting place. However, the building is a positive addition to the public realm in a part of the city that has little architecture other than residential and commercial buildings and a few churches. The Lyric has the indefinable quality that somehow suggests it as an arts building. It is deeply respectful of its context both in choice of materials and in scale; it is large, but the three linked compartments reduce the overall impact, their jaunty crowns enlivening the skyline.

'I think the Lyric came at a time in our career when we wanted the project, we wanted it to be great and they wanted to make a mark in Belfast, and we gave it a lot of attention. In my life, it's a very special building'.²⁵⁹ O'Donnell + Tuomey's Lyric is a fitting successor to the legacy of Mary O'Malley but, as with its forebears, it makes no direct connection with the

²⁵⁹ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

local community. It serves the artistic community of Northern Ireland and is open to the widest possible audience, regularly attracting people from all over the province, but for all the firm conviction that Stranmillis is its spiritual home, these core activities would not have suffered in a central location. How the Lyric will fare in a future where government funding of the arts is uncertain and where audiences are consuming many other cheaper and more easily accessible forms of culture remains to be seen.

Chapter 9

OMac and the MAC

The ‘noble room upstairs’: The development of the Old Museum arts centre

The development of OMac is examined in the context of the building’s history, the political situation, and the theatrical activities of the time. OMac, in the centre of Belfast, closed its doors for the last time in January 2010,¹ with the arts organisation that had inhabited the building and its 91-seat theatre space for more than 20 years moving to a new building in the city’s Cathedral Quarter, the Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC), which is explored later in this chapter. Grania McFadden described how ‘in 1989, under the guidance of David Grant, it opened its doors as an arts centre and since then has provided many happy nights for audiences’.² As the closure of OMac approached, Grant, now a senior lecturer at Queen’s University, Belfast, asked practitioners and audience members to contribute their memories of OMac to a blog. He received a warm response, and interviewed numerous practitioners, recording and transcribing their comments. Grant recounts how contributors spoke about OMac with affection and warmth, frequently using words such as ‘belonging’ and ‘home’ in their testimony.³ It was this warmth that ensured the relocation of OMac was a cornerstone of the placemaking policies for Cathedral Quarter. The repurposing of public areas as cultural destinations in a heritage-led

¹ Grania McFadden, ‘Bid a fond farewell to a Belfast legend’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 January 2010, available at <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/bid-a-fond-farewell-to-a-belfast-legend-28516135.html>> [accessed on 11 September 2019].

² McFadden, ‘Bid a fond farewell to a Belfast legend’.

³ David Grant, ‘Belfast’s Old Museum Arts Centre: A Quarter of a Century of Lived Space’ (unpublished paper: International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) 2010, Munich, Germany).

development, has become a trend among planners in the UK, Europe and beyond in the early-twenty-first century, but what is interesting about Cathedral Quarter is that it was led by the Department of Social Development and, while economic regeneration was a factor, the key objectives were about creating an inclusive, accessible public place, with an arts centre at its heart.

Arts centres, according to Robert Hutchinson in 1975, can be identified and distinguished from subsidised theatres by four criteria:

- (a) there is a program and a policy for more than one arts form.
- (b) more than one space is used for arts activities.
- (c) there is some professional input (artistic or managerial).
- (d) there is substantial usage which is not part of formal education (or adult education) provision.⁴

Judith Strong suggests that:

Arts centres provide for a range of activities to take place within the same building. They usually cater for a number of art forms and for different ways of practising these forms. They provide exhibition space alongside performance space, studios and workshops. They present art to the public and provide facilities to draw the public into participating in the arts.⁵

The two definitions broadly agree, although Strong does not refer specifically to professional operation; in 1975 the professionalization of arts buildings was still in progress, but by 1990 it could be assumed that UK arts centres were run professionally. Strong refrains from mentioning education, reframing it as participatory arts. In the 30 years since she wrote, this element of work has become one of the most important strands for any arts centre, particularly those visitors aged between 18 and 25 and over 65, which is part of a broader

⁴ Robert Hutchinson, in John Lane, with contributions by, Robert Atkins, Alec Davison, Denys Hodson, Catherine Mackerras, Peter Stark, Harland Walshaw, Dave Ward and Graham Woodruff, *Arts Centres: every town should have one* (London: Elek, 1978), p. 149.

⁵ Judith Strong, *The Arts Council guide to building for the arts* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1990), pp. 32-33.

conversation around inclusivity in the arts. Cochrane describes arts centres as signalling ‘a major cultural shift from the landscape of 1900’,⁶ a time when Warden was commissioning the Grand Opera House, not far from OMac. Some arts centres are large organisations with throughput of mostly professional work; Warwick Arts Centre, like the Barbican, houses a concert hall, theatre and studio alongside visual arts gallery and cinema. Smaller venues, including OMac, Cochrane states, ‘balanced a professional receiving programme with an amateur performance and/or educational activity’.⁷

Arts centres complement the offer from local theatres and do so in consultation with them. Likewise, they collaborate on a national and international network, with shared programmes, co-productions and tours. OMac regularly partnered with Project Arts Centre, Dublin and centres in Great Britain to help spread the cost. The arts centre staff make these collaborations possible and establish the tone of the artistic policy, and there is often movement between organisations. Úna McCarthy, the first permanent director of OMac, moved to the Arnolfini in Bristol, and later to the Model Arts Centre in Yeats’s homeland of Sligo.⁸ The value of arts centres in the professional development of staff is matched by their ability to promote new work and support emerging artists; OMac became home to several small theatre companies including Tinderbox, Ridiculusmus, Kabosh and Replay.⁹

The Old Museum was built by the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society (BNHPS), established in 1821 for ‘the investigation of

⁶ Claire Cochrane, *Twentieth-century British theatre: industry, art and empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 249.

⁷ Cochrane, *Twentieth-century British theatre*, p. 250.

⁸ ‘Arts Council post for former Model boss’, *The Sligo Champion*, 25 August 2004, available at <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/sligochampion/entertainment/arts-council-post-for-former-model-boss-27536826.html> [accessed on 12 September 2019].

⁹ Cochrane, *Twentieth-century British theatre*, p. 251.

Natural History and Antiquities of Ireland'.¹⁰ It grew rapidly 'and the idea of a permanent home for the society began to take shape.'¹¹ By 1830 fundraising by voluntary subscription had raised sufficient funds, and building started on the site at College Square North that May.¹² Belfast, at that time, 'took on a determined classical aspect which resulted in it receiving the nickname "The Athens of the North"',¹³ and the museum was designed by local men Thomas Duff and Thomas Jackson as a 'three-storey, five bay Greek Revival'¹⁴ building, at a published cost of £1,900,¹⁵ and 'embodied in both style and function the spirit of the new enlightenment'.¹⁶ Larmour describes the building as 'a scholarly piece of Greek Revivalism with details compiled from various Athenian sources'.¹⁷ The building now has Grade A listing.¹⁸

¹⁰ Arthur Deane (ed.), *The Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society. Centenary Volume 1821–1921* (Belfast: BNHPS, 1924), p.1.

¹¹ C. Douglas Deane, *The Ulster Countryside* (Belfast: The Universities Press, 1983), p. 20.

¹² A. Deane (ed.), *Centenary Volume*, p. 2.

¹³ Hugh Dixon, *An introduction to Ulster architecture* (Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1975), p. 45.

¹⁴ Ulster Architectural Heritage, *Old Museum Building* (2019), available at <<https://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/case-studies/old-museum-building/>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]. Volume II, Figure 64, shows a line drawing of the façade.

¹⁵ A. Deane (ed.), *Centenary Volume*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Dixon, *An introduction to Ulster architecture*, p. 45.

¹⁷ Ulster Architectural Heritage, *Old Museum Building*.

¹⁸ Historic Environment Division, *Finding a listed building* (2019), available at <<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/finding-a-listed-building>> [accessed on 13 September 2019]. The highest designation reserved for 'Special buildings of national importance including grand buildings and the fine, little altered examples of some important style or date'.

The museum was formally opened in November 1831, and society president, James Drummond,¹⁹ addressed assembled members and guests asserting, in a progressive attitude for its time, ‘that there is more satisfaction in seeing birds and other animals in all the activity of life and sensation, than to contemplate them dead and immoveable in the cases of a Museum.’²⁰ The society helped other organisations, and from 1825 it facilitated lectures from Belfast Historical Society, Juvenile Natural History Society, and later Ulster Amateur Photographic Society.²¹ Encouragement of the arts is demonstrated in the president’s address; ‘Little, indeed, has been done to encourage their progress [...] your noble room upstairs, when completed, would answer admirably for such a purpose’.²² By 1833 the collections were installed, and the first public museum in Ireland opened to the public.²³ By 1845 the society was promoting the museum as a special attraction for Easter Mondays, focusing on ‘the mummy of a woman named “Kabooti”, [...] a daughter of a priest of Ammon’.²⁴ Commonly known as Takabuti, every Easter she received around 5,000 visitors. Belfast Corporation adopted the collections in the early-twentieth century which were eventually rehoused at the Ulster Museum at Stranmillis which opened in 1929,²⁵ where today, Takabuti continues to attract the Ulster public.²⁶

The Old Museum remained in the hands of the society and was let out as a solicitor’s office and in the 1970s the offices of the Northern Ireland

¹⁹ Volume II, Figure 65, shows Drummond’s portrait.

²⁰ A. Deane (ed.), *Centenary Volume*, p.11.

²¹ *Centenary Volume*, p.21.

²² *Ibid.*, p.34.

²³ Deane, *The Ulster Countryside*, p.20.

²⁴ A. Deane (ed.), *Centenary Volume* p.17.

²⁵ Deane, *The Ulster Countryside*, pp.23-24.

²⁶ National Museums NI, *Takabuti the ancient Egyptian mummy* (2019) Available at <<https://www.nmni.com/our-museums/ulster-museum/Things-to-see/Takabuti-the-ancient-Egyptian-mummy.aspx>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]. Volume II, Figure 66, shows Takabuti in the Ulster Museum in 2008.

Housing Executive. By the early 1980s the Executive had relocated, and the building was unoccupied and falling into disrepair, although it had been altered very little in more than 150 years.²⁷ Arts groups, including Belfast Community Circus School and Neighbourhood Open Workshops (NOW) began to use the building on an *ad hoc* basis for rehearsals.

Belfast was in the grip of the Troubles and, despite the Anglo-Irish Agreement and Hume-Adams²⁸ talks, it was still a long way from the ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement.²⁹ The Old Museum is on the western edge of Belfast city centre close to the nationalist and largely Catholic Divis Street and Lower Falls Road. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the RUC and British Army patrolled the streets and regularly set-up checkpoints to search vehicles travelling into the city. Security barriers closed many streets overnight and at times of high-security alert, ensuring traffic could take only a few monitored routes into the city. College Square North had a barrier a few metres west of the entrance to the Old Museum. It was a quiet street at night, prone to frequent vehicle thefts and break-ins, not an ideal location, but growth continued in the use of the Old Museum, fuelled by lack of usable spaces elsewhere, many of the groups creating performance work.

The Troubles had taken its toll and the golden age of Belfast's small playhouses was over. In the 1950s the Arts, Lyric and Group presented a bold

²⁷ Ulster Architectural Heritage, *Old Museum Building*.

²⁸ Fionnuala O'Connor, 'John Hume obituary: Nationalist leader who championed 'agreed Ireland'', *The Irish Times*, 3 August 2020, available at <<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/john-hume-obituary-nationalist-leader-who-championed-agreed-ireland-1.4320556>> [accessed on 17 September 2020]. John Hume died in August 2020. He spoke for the moderate nationalists, and was instrumental in bringing about an end to the Troubles,

²⁹ Bill McDonnell, *Theatres of the troubles: theatre, resistance and liberation in Ireland* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008), p. 211. For more information see Chapter 1, above.

mix of Ulster, Irish and international drama,³⁰ however, 20 years after the first production of *Over the Bridge*, a new generation of practitioners emerged to comment and challenge. Martin Lynch's *Dockers*, first produced in 1982, owes much to Thompson; indeed 30 years later Lynch would adapt Thompson's script for a 50th Anniversary production at the Waterfront Studio.³¹ At the same time Charabanc Theatre Company was formed by five women actors frustrated 'at not only the lack of work available to women in theatre, but also the quality of what was available'.³² Graham Reid's controversial play *The Hidden Curriculum*, first produced at the Abbey in 1982, 'presented with realism and humour the extent to which violence as a means to an end enters the repertoire of the young'.³³ These practitioners built swiftly and prolifically on their initial success, inspiring others.

It was against this artistic and political backdrop that the Old Museum was first used by arts groups in Belfast amid a new spirit of creativity in the performing arts. By 1987 NOW was resident on the ground floor, with rehearsals and occasional performances taking place on the upper floors, and Grant running *Theatre Ireland* magazine from an office at the back. At this point, much as for the early members of the society, the expansion of interest in use of the various spaces suggested a need to establish something permanent. Belfast already had an arts centre, the Crescent, as mentioned in Chapter 7,

³⁰ See Chapter 4, above.

³¹ Grania McFadden, 'Review: Sam Thompson's *Over The Bridge* – Story of bigotry is still relevant today', *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 March 2010, available at <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/review-sam-thompsons-over-the-bridge-28526353.html>> [accessed on 11 September 2019].

³² Irish Theatre Institute Playography, *Charabanc Theatre Company* (2019), available at <<http://www.irishplayography.com/company.aspx?companyid=30167>> [accessed on 12 September 2019].

³³ Christopher Fitz-Simon, *Players and Painted Stage: aspects of the twentieth-century theatre in Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2004), p. 80.

above, in use since 1979 – and many of the arts organisations that used the Old Museum also used it. The Crescent had a participatory arts focus, with a lively programme of classes, workshops, and events. It had more office and meeting space than the Old Museum, but the larger spaces were oversubscribed. In addition, ongoing problems with electrics, structure and fabric of the building meant it was unreliable.³⁴ Pressure grew as theatre fragmented into separate disciplines – community, independent and education – leading to an increase in the number of companies requiring space. Grant and other stakeholders in the Old Museum sought funding to improve the fabric of the building, and in 1988, £130,000 in capital funding was secured from ACNI and work commenced, adding a protected fire escape to the rear, decorating the interiors and adding a lighting pipe-grid, power supplies and technical equipment to the theatre space.³⁵ Strong identifies some of the challenges of working on an existing building:

With a new building the use dictates the form. With an existing building, especially one of historic or architectural interest, the form has to influence the use to which the building as a whole and its individual elements are put. The skill in converting an existing building to a new use lies in the designer's ability to match spaces and activities.³⁶

Jan Branch

In January 1991 Jan Branch took over as interim director and the Old Museum arts centre was established. Jan was approached by Board Chair John Fairleigh and Director of ACNI, Ken Jamison, who had removed previous Director Mo Bates as there was a 'financial deficit of a very considerable size'.³⁷ Jan took on the role of acting manager, having made it clear to the Board that she did not wish to stay:

³⁴ Crescent Arts Centre, *History* (2011), available at

<<http://www.crescentarts.org/about/history/>> [accessed on 29 January 2011].

³⁵ John Riddell, *Interview* with Jan Branch (14 March 2019).

³⁶ Strong, *The Arts Council guide to building for the arts*, pp. 17-18.

³⁷ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

In the first three months, to get us to the end of the financial year, I had to get a bail-out from the Arts Council, the other option being to simply close the place and declare bankruptcy, which as it had only been open since the previous autumn was clearly not a particularly good thing.³⁸ This led to a creative period of resource-swapping with other arts organisations in the city, ‘which nobody at that stage seemed to have worked out was a way of extending everybody’s facilities’.³⁹ OMac only had a staff of three: Jan; development officer Elaine Gaston; and part-time caretaker, Patsy McKee. However, the Board determined that the building should be open for 84 hours per week, 9am – 11pm Monday to Saturday. With Elaine on a fixed contract of 38 hours and Patsy on half that, staffing was difficult. Jan formalised the unofficial tenancy of Tinderbox, a new theatre company formed in 1989, and brought in several new tenants including Out and Out.⁴⁰ The agreement gave the companies desk space, use of the photocopier, ‘limited use of the ’phone’,⁴¹ and they in return would contribute time to run the evening performances. A third resident, Theatre in Education company Replay, moved in during the spring.

The building was in a poor state; the escape stair, toilet block and shower had unresolved defects. Any problems with the fabric of the building were the responsibility of BNHPS, and, as much of the funding came from the Department of Education, procurement was slow. Jamison, Jan recalls, was invaluable in moving things forward; ‘he was very good at working with civil-servants’.⁴² The works were finished, and other items procured including the theatre seats and furniture necessary to run the building. ‘In that year it went from a half-finished, bankrupt, under-staffed, under-used building to an

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Another new company of six recent graduates from the University of Ulster presenting experimental work.

⁴¹ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

⁴² *Ibid.*

exciting place, in fact it became the kind of trendy place'.⁴³ Bomb-scares and evacuations were a regular occurrence with a suspect device in a parked vehicle on the opposite side of the street most Friday afternoons. 'Some were just stolen vans, others were carrying explosive devices and when they went off, the building did tend to have a slight feeling of lifting'.⁴⁴ The frequency of explosions damaged the building, the galleried space, which had housed the mummy Takabuti, had cracks under the windows, and 'when we had a particularly loud explosion, the sand from the walls used to run down the cracks and leave little pyramids at the bottom'.⁴⁵

David Grant's idea was for a centre for community drama, but the Board planned a broader remit and Grant did not get the post of director to which Mo Bates was appointed in 1990. Jan's view was that there was no clear strategy for the organisation and that what artistic policy there was, paid little heed to the financial and physical restrictions; equally, it failed to capitalize on potential opportunities beyond this limited vision. Jan corrected this with a clearly defined short-term strategy, leading to a 'combative relationship with the Board', the chair describing her approach as:

somewhat military. I saw no point in the pussyfooting which had taken it into the mess it was in. I was looking for clarification on a number of things [...] where are we going, what are we doing, how are we doing it? This is how I would like to go. That dynamic, which is pretty healthy between management and Board, continued.⁴⁶

By the start of the 1991 financial year, ACNI had committed funding allowing OMac to plan a programme for the coming year. In the summer, Jan encouraged the Board to recruit a permanent director, writing the job description and person specification for the post but taking no part in the process. In the autumn, Cork woman Úna McCarthy took up the post, a bold appointment in Jan's opinion; 'Úna came with a very strong visual arts

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

background and that's my weak area, so I was interested to see what she would do with those ground floor spaces which are great, and flexible, but limited in size and space'.⁴⁷ Jan was relieved that Úna was from outside the Province, 'we needed new blood, new faces and somebody who had no preconceptions about the building and its history, but was thinking future, future, future'.⁴⁸

OMac: The Building

The building was essentially as it was when built in 1831 and ACNI's view was that it should redevelop, but making changes to improve access to the Old Museum would be problematic. Jan commissioned a review to assess what could be done, but the ground conditions, amongst other constraints, prevented major interventions. The reports suggested that the Old Museum is built on shale with a tributary of the river Lagan running beneath, to sink a lift-shaft would mean piling and excavating to considerable depths which would have made the scheme unviable. In addition, the lift-shaft would be to the rear of the building which would require disabled users to access from Kings Street Mews, which immediately separates them from other visitors.⁴⁹ However, Jan believes the ACNI approach to access appears to have been motivated by a

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, *GeoIndex record for 7 College Square North* (2016), available at <http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/GSNI_Geoindex/home.html> [accessed on 1 July 2019]. The records of the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland support this statement, showing the site on a bedrock of Sherwood Sandstone with superficial geology made up of raised tidal deposits, clay, sand and gravel. There is no river running under the site, although the River Farset runs in a culvert a few dozen metres to the north, eventually opening into the Lagan east of High Street. The River Blackstaff runs to the south along Great Victoria Street before turning east past City Hall and down Chichester Street, the course again culverted below ground.

desire to promote an objective to provide newly built facilities, coupled with increasing prominence of the proposed Cathedral Quarter.

The entrance is up steps at the centre of the five-bay frontage and through a grand portico.⁵⁰ A weather lobby opens on to a corridor 2m (6'7") by 6m (19'8") leading to stairs to upper floors and rooms to either side. There are four ground floor rooms each approximately 6m (19'8") x 7m (23'), the front two rooms to the south forming front of house accommodation with the room to the southwest being a coffee bar. The northeast room is office accommodation, with access to the southeast room through an arch closable with sliding shutters. The northwest room has a pitched glass roof at approximately 6m (19'8"), allowing natural light into the room, making it ideal as the main visual arts gallery space. This space was used for exhibitions and installations throughout the OMac period, with an emphasis on photography. The front rooms each have a pair of large windows which also provide natural light. There are limited toilet facilities to the rear of the building at the half-landing between ground and first floor, and at street level approximately 0.5m (1'8") below ground floor level. A small building at the back, accessed via the small rear yard or an internal link corridor, provides office accommodation with four rooms. This is a simpler brick construction with rooms much lower in height than the grander main building.

The theatre space was on the first floor; a room of 14.75m (48'5") x 7.6m (24'11") x 4.5m (14'9") high, with five large windows in the southern elevation.⁵¹ Entering the room through double doors in the centre of the northern elevation, the seating is typically located to the west on seven rows, the stage to the east. A perimeter curtain track at ceiling level enables the room to be blacked-out for performance. A second single-width door in the north wall to the east, leads to a storage area and a protected fire escape beyond.

On the second floor, a room similarly proportioned to the theatre space has a perimeter gallery at +2.5m (8'2") accessed by a spiral staircase of cast-iron and timber construction in the centre of the south wall. This room was

⁵⁰ Volume II, Figures 67-72, show photographs of the building.

⁵¹ Volume II, Figure 73, shows a 1:200 scale plan and section of the space.

used extensively for rehearsals and workshops and the occasional performance, often of music. A second door in the north wall to the east end leads to a protected fire corridor with, to the west, a sunken room that serves as the only dressing room for the building.

David Grant's valedictory collection of blogposts, is filled with affectionate memories.⁵² It was a small room, the farthest and highest seat was within 7m (23') of the front of the stage, an important relationship in theatre planning – Southern quotes it as one of 20 key measurements to be taken when surveying a theatre.⁵³ This promoted intimate engagement between actor and audience, and communication between actor and technician. In end-on format, the most typical layout, 91 linked seats were tiered on wooden rostra. Although it could be reconfigured, it was time-consuming to do so. The temperature was difficult to manage, becoming hot on stage and in the audience, most noticeably in the back row, combined with a lack of air circulation that added to the discomfort. With only two doors into the space latecomers could not be admitted during most shows and the lack of backstage crossover meant that there was only an upstage right (USR) entrance which necessitated pre-setting performers behind masking on stage left (SL) before the house opened. The audience's route into the theatre involved climbing stairs and entering the space at downstage right (DSR), often crossing a section of show-floor. The house did not open until ten minutes before the start, the stairs being closed until this time to allow performers access to the toilets as there were no facilities adjacent to the dressing room.

Technical facilities were limited – with no flying or wing space, and little lighting and sound equipment. The get-in was difficult, with all items

⁵² Grant, 'Belfast's Old Museum Arts Centre: A Quarter of a Century of Lived Space'.

⁵³ Richard Southern, *Proscenium and Sight-Lines. A complete system of scenery planning and a guide to the laying out of stages for scene-designers, stage-managers, theatre architects and engineers, theatrical history and research workers and those concerned with the planning of stages for small halls* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), pp.108-12.

being carried from street level through three sets of doors, upstairs into the space, a distance of approximately 40m (130').⁵⁴ However, without the ability to have large sets and technical paraphernalia, the focus remained on the performance and the relationship with the audience. The fabric of the building was used effectively in some productions notably *Who Shall be Happy...?* written and directed by Trevor Griffiths, designed by Hayden Griffin, for Mad Cow Productions in 1995.⁵⁵ Set during the French Revolution, the fabric of the room evoked Danton's prison cell, exposing and painting the walls, alcoves and windows, the lines between production and building being deftly smudged by Griffin.

A sense of containment was given by the ceiling, which, at 4.5m (14'9") was low, but not intrusive, giving a volume per person of just less than 3m³ in the seating area (taking the whole room volume into account 5.5m³), intensifying the energy. Declan Donnellan remarked that the excessively open Olivier at the NT, London, 'demands the energy of plutonium just to get things across to the front row'.⁵⁶ As noted in Chapter 8, above, John Tuomey considered this overhead containment important in the design of the auditorium of the third Lyric Theatre.⁵⁷ It would not be commercially viable to create a

⁵⁴ This also affected the audience, notably disabled patrons, an issue which became one of the biggest roadblocks to redevelopment of the building.

⁵⁵ Trevor Griffiths, *Who Shall be Happy...?* (1995), available at <<http://www.trevorgriffiths.co.uk/site/1995/12/31/who-shall-be-happy/>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]. See Volume II, Figure 72.

⁵⁶ Peter Brook and Andrew Todd, *The Open Circle: Peter Brook's Theatre Environments* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), p. 252.

⁵⁷ There are no directly comparable spaces in Belfast today. The Crescent has a larger squarer space, the Waterfront Studio is much bigger, and the Baby Grand, the studio space at the GOH is higher. The upstairs theatre at the MAC is discussed later in this chapter, however, while it was conceived as a replacement and is well-received, it has failed to capture some of the intensity of the original. Something of the quality of OMac, at least in programme, is found in the Black Box, a Grade B listed mid-nineteenth-century building in

new theatre building with a single space at this size, but for a multi-space venue that is concerned with the creation and production of new work, these points are worth considering. The Naughton Studio at the third Lyric is 15m (49'2") x 12m (39'4") x 5.5m (18'1") to the tension wire grid (TWG), larger than OMac with a higher volume due to the 2.5m above the TWG, nonetheless it fulfils the same function.

The Old Museum remained in use as the home of theatre in education company Replay Productions, the theatre space being used for rehearsals. In January 2017, the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society (UAH)⁵⁸ moved into

Hill Street in the Cathedral Quarter a few minutes' walk from the MAC. Operating since 2006, the main space is larger than OMac seating 186 for theatre, the smaller Green Room seating 50. Black Box presents a mixed programme of visual arts, cinema, music and theatre. The Black Box, *Home* (2020), available at <<https://www.blackboxbelfast.com/>> [accessed on 13 March 2020]. What separates these space from the OMac theatre is proportions. It was approximately half as wide as its length and one third as high as its length i.e. $l=l/1$ $w=l/2$ $h=l/3$ where l is length, w is width and h is height. This is not to suggest a golden mean for the design of small studios; the proportions of the room are driven by the proportions of the five-bay frontage, which in turn drives the spacing of the floors in order to ensure a pleasing relationship in the neo-classical design. A contained stage and auditorium is restrictive technically but forces creative solutions to design and staging. A small stage and low seatcount creates less pressure on funding offering more companies the opportunity to create new work and take risks. A theatre on the first floor takes the audience on a journey which adds to the sense of anticipation and occasion. However, this presents immediate difficulties for access by wheelchair users and others with mobility issues. The proximity of the farthest and highest seat to the stage creates an intimacy that engages the audience and gives the performer a feeling of energy returning from the room.

⁵⁸ Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Our History* (2019), available at <<https://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/about/our-history/>> [accessed on 13 September 2019]. Founded in 1967 to promote and raise awareness of

the building and in 2019, with BNHPS, sought a team to undertake an architectural, structural, access and audiences survey and propose at least three options for sensitive redevelopment of the building.⁵⁹ The aspiration is ‘the promotion of history and heritage into the future’.⁶⁰ There is no guarantee that funds will become available for substantial redevelopment of the Old Museum, but it seems a fitting way for this fine building to celebrate the bicentenary of the society that built it. Perhaps Drummond and the founding cohort would approve.

A view to a move

Anne McReynolds got her dream job as director of the Old Museum arts centre in May 1996 and recalls: ‘in my first week in the job I had my first conversation with a consultant about what turned out to be the MAC’.⁶¹ The consultant was Russell Southwood who was preparing the review discussed in Chapter 7, above.⁶² Land adjacent to the site of the MAC had been designated for a major city centre arts centre with European funding and was being

historic buildings of Northern Ireland, but operates ‘as the lead independent voice for the historic built environment across the nine counties of Ulster’. Campaigning by the UAH in the early 1970s led to the introduction of listed building legislation in the province, the GOH being one of the first buildings recognised. UAH has also been instrumental in establishing a buildings at risk register and establishing conservation areas.

⁵⁹ Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Lead Consultant Assignment Brief Old Museum Back to Life* (2019), p. 1, available at <https://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HLF_BNHPS-UAH_OMB-Back-to-Life-Lead-Consultant-Brief_Jan-2019_final.pdf> [accessed on 13 September 2019].

⁶⁰ Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Back to Life*, p. 7.

⁶¹ John Riddell, *Interview* with Anne McReynolds (15 March 2019). A short introduction to Anne is given in Volume II, p. 79.

⁶² Russell Southwood, *Review of Performing Arts Venues and Spaces in Belfast* (Belfast City Council and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 1997).

promoted by Laganside. ‘This was before devolution so there was no DCAL (Department of Culture Arts and Leisure).’⁶³ Discussions continued over the years that followed, with the Lyric being asked to consider a move to the site; ‘they took the same decision as the Crescent, they didn’t want to move from where they were, they had a deep and rich history with the building and the location’.⁶⁴ At times ACNI, the Audience Development Agency, Ormeau Baths Gallery (OBG) and Belfast School of Music were all being considered along with OMac for possible shared development of the site. ‘It was a long, long journey and there were lots of times when it was not going to happen’.⁶⁵ The original outline for the scheme included 100m² (1,076ft²) of visual arts space; an improvement on the provision at OMac, but the focus of the new building was performing arts.

Anne had concerns about the basis of the business planning for the MAC, and in 2004 she questioned a senior civil servant on the projections for income and expenditure; ‘the costs are too low, and the income is too high’,⁶⁶ but she was advised that presenting these figures was the best way to ensure passing through to the next stage of the process:

that starting-point is still killing us – run it with as few people possible and pay them as little as possible. I have a senior team that is paid less than any other senior team in the arts in Northern Ireland.⁶⁷

Business planning and appraisal work was carried out by accountants and economists, with no arts consultancy business planner included, and none with an understanding of the nuances of the local conditions, consequently

⁶³ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*.

‘there were many, many erroneous assumptions’,⁶⁸ a view echoed by the architect. Deloitte forecast ambitious corporate sponsorship of £315,000, in practice, the MAC target for 2018-2019 was £50,000, achieving only £36,500 at considerable cost in resources. Anne cites MAC trustee Graeme Farrow;⁶⁹ ‘he doesn’t bother with corporate sponsorship, the cost benefit analysis doesn’t stack up; you exhaust yourself for nothing’.⁷⁰ Funding proposals to trusts and foundations, although equally demanding, are worth the effort and the MAC regularly submits large proposals as frequently as the terms of each foundation permits, hence the desire to appoint a full-time fundraiser.

Since the economic difficulties of 2008, funding from central and local government sources has come under pressure and the sector has sought to diversify and rely less on public bodies.⁷¹ In 2016, ACE commissioned a report into private investment which considered private philanthropy in the arts and culture. The findings were that private investment was growing in importance with individual giving accounting for ‘around half of all private investment in arts and culture’.⁷² The sector was moving towards a mixed model for revenue with growth anticipated in private investment. Crucially for Belfast, echoing Massey, donors continued to favour larger companies, especially those based in London.⁷³ Private investment accounts for 18 per cent of total income, with

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*. There were economic appraisals in 2005 and 2006 and a review by Price Waterhouse Cooper in 2007, followed by HR strategy work by McClure Watters and finally another business plan by Deloitte in 2011.

⁶⁹ Graeme Farrow was director of Belfast Festival at Queen’s and Derry~Londonderry City of Culture 2013 and is now artistic director of Wales Millennium Centre.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*.

⁷¹ *Private Investment in Culture Survey* (Arts Council England, 2016), available at <<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Private%20Investment%20in%20Culture%20Survey%202019.pdf>> [accessed on 10 July 2019], p. 7.

⁷² *Private Investment in Culture Survey*, p. 4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

smaller organisations most reliant on the public purse. Business investment saw large drops between 2012 and 2015, accounting for 20 per cent of the total private investment well behind individual giving and trusts and foundations.⁷⁴ The type of corporate sponsorship varies, but most come with an expectation of a return, such as naming rights, membership benefits or hospitality. Only 16 per cent was classified as corporate donations where no expectation of a return exists.⁷⁵ The visual arts benefit most from corporate sponsorship, with 32 per cent of the investment; theatre attracts 16 per cent.⁷⁶ Figures for Northern Ireland are not available, but the regional variations in England are extreme – London acquires 57 per cent of all business investment, compared to 10 per cent in the Northwest and just 1 per cent in the East Midlands.⁷⁷ It would be reasonable to assume that Northern Ireland would be towards the bottom end of this range. The MAC's audited accounts for the 2018 show a total income of £2.5 million.⁷⁸ The accounts show sponsorship of £95,000, and £142,000 for the previous year.⁷⁹ Anne explains that the difference is due to Ulster Bank sponsorship of MAC International, a £20,000 art prize, the largest in Ireland and one of the few major arts prizes in the UK.⁸⁰ The £315,000 corporate sponsorship predicted by Deloitte, about 12.5 per cent of total income, is not typically achievable outside London. The MAC's target of £50,000 is 2 per cent of income, realistic when related to the ACE figures.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ Harbinson Mulholland, *The MAC Financial Statements (2018)*, available at <<https://www.mac-uk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9d51305a-74d2-4783-b3ca-01ce8fa3263c>> [accessed on 11 July 2019].

⁷⁹ *The MAC Financial Statements*, p. 24. Note Cahoots NI's success with small, but targeted corporate sponsorship in Chapter 10, below.

⁸⁰ Anne McReynolds, 'Corporate Sponsorship', in email to John Riddell, 19 July 2019.

The NI Executive and Assembly collapsed in October 2002 and the Labour government imposed direct rule on the Province once again.⁸¹ During this period, £4 Million was pledged to the scheme to add an additional 900m² (9,688ft²) of visual arts space. ACNI and DCAL stated that they wanted the building to become ‘the leading contemporary arts gallery space in Northern Ireland’.⁸² This followed a feasibility study into the OBG,⁸³ from which ACNI withdrew funding in 2006.⁸⁴ Anne and the OMac Board wrestled with the offer: ‘the primary principle of the MAC is about additionality. We were not interested in diminishing cultural provision in Northern Ireland’,⁸⁵ or to play any part in the closure of ‘Northern Ireland’s Whitechapel Gallery’, was difficult, but the Board eventually decided it was the best course. This delayed the building by another year.

Jan Branch asserts that the MAC was to be a distinct entity having no direct connection with OMac:

it’s always been made very clear that the MAC is a new concept, a new build, there is no relationship between it and the Old Museum. The management of the Old Museum, by agreement of their Board and, as I

⁸¹ Rosie Cowan, ‘Direct rule imposed on Ulster’, *The Guardian*, 15 October 2002, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/oct/15/northernireland.northernireland>> [accessed on 7 August 2020].

⁸² Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

⁸³ ‘Ormeau Baths Gallery forced to close its doors’, *News Letter*, 30 October 2011, available at <<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/ormeau-baths-gallery-forced-to-close-its-doors-1-3199200>> [accessed on 9 July 2019]. OBG had 1,000m² (10,764ft²) of visual arts space in a converted Victorian swimming baths, which first opened in 1994 and showed works by leading contemporary artists from around the world including Gilbert & George and Yoko Ono.

⁸⁴ Don Anderson, ‘Ormeau Baths Gallery closed after arts council stops funds’, *Museums Journal*, 106/4 (2006), 7-14. Relations between ACNI and OBG Director Hugh Mulholland, had been strained for several years.

⁸⁵ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

understand it, by consensus with the Arts Council, rolled over to become the management of The MAC. There was no new recruitment; clearly there were new jobs because it was an entirely new and different venue. [...] Possibly that is why there was an anxiety to be very clear that this was a different animal. [...] It was a Board policy that had to have the agreement of the Arts Council and presumably the Department for Culture to do so.⁸⁶

Anne refutes this; ‘we had to kill the OMac brand in order to create the MAC’.⁸⁷ She feels that the funding bodies had difficulty detaching the vision for the MAC from ‘OMac’s dirty carpets’,⁸⁸ and compact, strained and overstretched spaces. Anne persistently reminded the funders and decision-makers that the new building was going to be huge:

in order for everybody to get their head around the fact that there were going to be additional requirements from the public purse for this thing that they had asked us to build, or else we were going to go the way of the Public in Birmingham with completely unrealistic projections around income and expenditure.⁸⁹

The Public, in West Bromwich, mentioned in Chapter 6, which opened in 2008 and closed just five years later,⁹⁰ was a massive public arts centre designed by

⁸⁶ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

⁸⁷ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*.

⁹⁰ Oliver Wainwright, ‘The Public: an inevitable end for the misguided arts centre’, *The Guardian*, 14 August 2013, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2013/aug/14/public-inevitable-end-arts-centre-architecture>> [accessed on 9 July 2019]. The £72 million complex featured a large interactive art gallery and a 250-seat theatre, ‘a valuable addition to a town that hadn’t seen such a venue for 40 years’.

Will Alsop.⁹¹ It is one of a number of unsuccessful projects cited as cautionary tales, having ‘generally been innovative building designs housing concepts that have proven to be unpopular, failing to connect with local people and their needs’.⁹² This demonstrates how arts and culture cannot be a secondary element bolted on to a regeneration scheme in isolation but, like The Lowry and subsequent projects at Salford Quays, be ‘cultural led regeneration initiatives’.⁹³ The plans for Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter certainly placed culture, the arts in particular, at the centre of the scheme.

‘We killed OMac in order to create the MAC, but the upstairs space *is* OMac. I spent many meetings with Peter Angier⁹⁴ and Mark Hackett designing that theatre.’⁹⁵ After failed attempts to agree a design for the smaller of the two spaces, Anne sketched her concept on paper to which Angier responded ‘ah, you want OMac, but fixed’, meaning improved.⁹⁶ Anne is clear about the importance of the space:

people said to me, when I went for job as director of OMac, [...] “it’s got 90 seats, it’s economically unviable” [...] I didn’t give a fuck, what happens in it has to happen; it’s the R&D lab, if you don’t have a space

⁹¹ ‘The Public art gallery in West Bromwich opens as a college’, *BBC News* 10 September 2014, available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-birmingham-29144730/the-public-art-gallery-in-west-bromwich-opens-as-a-college>> [accessed on 1 July 2020]. The venue was closed in 2013 to save money and reopened the following autumn as a Sixth Form College.

⁹² ACNI, *Standing Ovation – A Strategic Evaluation of the Capital Build Programme* (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2012), p. 20, available at <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/acni_capital_build_programme.pdf> [accessed on 8 July 2019].

⁹³ *Standing Ovation*, p. 20.

⁹⁴ Theatre consultant from Carr and Angier.

⁹⁵ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*.

that supports artists to take risks and do small-scale work, then we're fucked. It's an absolutely fundamental part of the ecology.⁹⁷

One of the drivers for creating the MAC, was to save OMac; on its own it would not survive indefinitely, however, as part of a bigger entity it had a chance. 'You can fit OMac in the back pocket of the MAC, but it's there'.⁹⁸ Anne acknowledges that the venue is presenting less of such work than she would like 'because we are not appropriately funded'.⁹⁹

The MAC: Procuring the design

Anne explains that she 'was immensely led and supported by two architects, Barrie Todd and Paul McStay, who were on the OMac Board', adding that she 'wrote the project brief with enormous help from them'.¹⁰⁰ This was during 2006 and informed the competition brief. Anne recalls that the competition was proceeding without definite funding and that it was during judging of the first stage of the competition that she received a call from DCAL¹⁰¹ to confirm that they would fund the building. The design competition was run by RIBA, which had recommended the appointment of an architect-led design team; the CPD¹⁰² promoted a contractor-led approach. The OMac Board sided with RIBA, unsurprising with two architects in post. Anne, as project director, found herself stuck in the middle, not fully appreciating the developing dynamic with the CPD; 'I believed them when they said, "I'm with CPD, I'm here to help"'.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

¹⁰¹ Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (Northern Ireland).

¹⁰² Central Procurement Directorate (Northern Ireland).

¹⁰³ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

Todd and McStay fought for a modified Traditional procurement approach, over the Design and Build preferred by CPD.¹⁰⁴ There was support from senior officials at DCAL who ‘took some risks’.¹⁰⁵ Anne was advised that ‘good clients get good buildings’¹⁰⁶ and that compromises would be necessary but she must decide what the MAC would *not* compromise on and stick to it. ‘What is the function of this thing? For us, it had been absolutely clear, it was for artists and audiences, so that meant the theatres, galleries and public spaces had to be paramount.’¹⁰⁷ Offices would be secondary. ‘Secondly, don’t make changes too late in the design process, because the later it is, the more it’s going to cost.’¹⁰⁸ She also began to read the tense dynamics within a design team noting that M&E¹⁰⁹ and architects ‘don’t have the most harmonious relationship and that M&E guys are notorious for underestimating purchasing costs and running costs’.¹¹⁰ She was acutely aware of buildings that had struggled and staff who had lost their jobs when a new building proved to be more expensive to run than predicted, so she made it clear that every effort was to be made to get this right. As the MAC was awarded ‘Excellent’ by respected

¹⁰⁴ Procurement approaches are summarised in Footnote 225 in Chapter 8, above.

¹⁰⁵ RMI Architects, *History* (2019), available at <<https://www.rmi.uk.com/about-us/>> [accessed on 9 July 2019].

¹⁰⁶ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*. Advice from Peter McGuckin of Robinson McIwaine Architects, who had been project architect on the Waterfront Hall.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*. Anne understood the importance of making clear, informed decisions about the Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) design. For example, one consistent instruction to the team was to provide appropriate provision in the café bar to prepare fried food, which requires specific extraction and fire control measures and comes with acoustic risks due to the noise associated.

¹⁰⁹ Mechanical and Electrical, sometimes also MEP or MEPH.

¹¹⁰ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

UK standards group BRE¹¹¹ under their flagship sustainability standards assessment BREEAM, this was successful.

The MAC: Architectural Design

The MAC open design competition was run by RIBA in 2007, Hackett & Hall winning.¹¹² Finalising the appointment took many months as the MAC had been advised to have lawyers prepare a designer's contract rather than use a RIBA standard services contract. This resulted in clauses demanding undeliverable and uninsurable items such as providing planning permission, something which is in the gift of the statutory authorities and not under the control of the design team. It was February 2008 before the appointment was concluded. Anne speaks as highly of Alastair Hall and Ian McKnight as they do of her; they are 'two of the most honourable men I've ever met [...] Alastair and Ian own this building [...] its successes are their successes and its failures are not theirs alone'.¹¹³ Former founding partner Mark Hackett she found less easy to work with – 'he's such an idealist, which I've no problem with because I am too, but he doesn't listen to his client'.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Formerly the Building Research Establishment, BRE was formed in 1917 when the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) proposed the creation of the organisation to investigate various building materials and methods of construction suitable to use in new housing following the First World War.

¹¹² An introduction to architectural practice Hackett & Hall, now Hall McKnight, appears in Volume II, pp. 80-81.

¹¹³ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*. Hackett struggled to accept that the design for the upstairs theatre should be as the client required, proposing interventions such as a Juliet balcony above the space and window at back of house overlooking Saint Anne's Square, neither of which were acceptable.

Hackett & Hall employed the design team on behalf of the MAC.¹¹⁵ The theatre consultant being Peter Angier of Carr & Angier – ‘what a gentleman; he [...] gave a sense of calm and experience to the process having been round the block so many times, he knew how to be patient with us.’¹¹⁶ Carr and Angier was involved in the design and sizing of the foyer and back of house spaces, but Anne believes they were not sufficiently integrated into the routine work of the design team. The result being that Hackett appears to have dismissed Angier’s review and commentary on the downstairs theatre, which is poorer as a result.

The MAC: The Brief

Todd guided the writing of the competition brief which Alastair recalls was well considered, as Anne and her team:

had a strong sense of what they wanted to do and although the scheme we won the competition with looks quite different from the scheme we [...] built, the ingredients are pretty similar. The biggest element of uncertainty was the visual arts component.¹¹⁷

The brief changed to adopt the increase in area following the demise of the OBG. The design moved quickly, for which Alastair credits Anne; ‘we dropped into a process at the end of three years of graft at the coalface of

¹¹⁵ Structural Engineers, Buro Happold; M&E Consultant, Buro Happold; Acoustic Consultant, Buro Happold; BREEAM Consultant, Buro Happold; QS, Neil McClintock, initially as Bailey Connor then Johnston Houston; CDM, Johnston Houston; Fire Engineer, White Young Green; PM, Ferguson McIlveen having been bought in 2006 by Scott Wilson Group, later URS and subsequently AECOM; Acoustic consultant, Buro Happold; Client-side Project Manager, Kieran Mooney. There were a variety of disciplines including lighting design, heritage, access and planning consultancy that might have attracted separate appointment in GB but was carried out by the architect.

¹¹⁶ Alastair Hall in John Riddell, *Interview* with Alastair Hall and Ian McKnight (27 November 2018).

¹¹⁷ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

Northern Irish procurement that she had been battering herself against'.¹¹⁸ The site had been established at competition stage, but the building was not sized by using net usable areas with a grossing factor applied, but by 'some fairly incorrect allowance which was [...] probably around half of what you would want it to be. Clients are often poorly advised at those early budget establishing stages in really understanding the difference between gross and net'.¹¹⁹ With net areas seen as fundamental to the business case, this created a tension between the brief and the design which forced on the practice the need to find creative ways of doubling up use. 'A lot of our design of the foyers is reliant upon delivering a quantum of the visual arts area within that public circulation.'¹²⁰

Ian McKnight was not with the practice at competition stage but recalls that the visual arts brief lacked detail. Having worked on a visual arts gallery that had requirements aligned with the Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS),¹²¹ he advised that it needed further detail once design commenced. The brief was changed later to include GIS requirements for what was called 'the close control gallery'. Discussion ensued about the level of control required

¹¹⁸ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*. The planning application was submitted in March in 2008 at Stage C+, about halfway through the design.

¹¹⁹ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*. At a meeting with the project board, Hall explained that they had not accounted for the area taken up by structures and wall build-ups, all of which is necessary, but unusable space, thus decreasing the amount of floor area available for use.

¹²⁰ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

¹²¹ The Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS) exists to enhance public access to culture by enabling some institutions to borrow artworks that they might not be able to due to the cost of commercial insurance. The Government indemnifies the owner against loss, underwriting the borrower's risk. Provision for the scheme is made in the National Heritage Act 1980, and allows for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to indemnify loans.

with drawings by Leonardo da Vinci ‘becoming some sort of reference point for discussion’.¹²²

The brief developed in a series of workshops on different topics including, access, theatre, office furniture. As part of this exercise, the client team visited Hackett Hall McKnight’s (HHMK) Portview offices in east Belfast. ‘We taped the offices out on the upper floor at Portview, with stackable plastic chairs. We had this constant refrain ringing in our ears, “what’s it going to be like?”.’¹²³ HHMK realised that some of the client team could not easily relate to drawings or even photoreal 3D visuals of the proposed design. Various parts of the building design were prototyped from MDF including the box office counter and the bar, with staff coming to spend time to assess the suitability of the design and give direct feedback to the team. The floor markup was an inspired choice. ‘To the MAC’s credit, there was an anxiety not to get it wrong. Sometimes [...] we felt, would you just trust us?’¹²⁴ Ian McKnight remembers a moment when the foyer had been built when Anne McReynolds visited site and became particularly excited exclaiming “I see what you mean now!” [...] That was the moment when she thought this is going to be OK’.¹²⁵

The project brief for the performance spaces gave the architect clear guidance on the client’s requirements. The main theatre is to seat 350 and be: located at ground level to facilitate the easy loading and unloading of sets [...] A flexible space that facilitates different types of performance

¹²² Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹²³ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*.

¹²⁴ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

¹²⁵ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*. Prior to this, Alastair and Ian had joked that, to communicate their ideas effectively to the client, it would be necessary to build a model at 1:1.

is important. Flat floor increases the potential of this. Stage @ ground floor level (no need for space beneath).¹²⁶

The brief directs the architect towards a retractable seating solution for the room on the grounds that it increases flexibility. While it does create the possibility of flat floor, it typically results in a rectilinear design with seats directly one behind the other. A more dynamic design can introduce a curve into the stalls, expressing itself in rows of different radii as the distance from the stage edge increases, the chairs offset from the row in front to maximise sightlines. Retractable seating requires a minimum step height to facilitate seat storage, which forces up the back-row height. Hall McKnight ‘fought a battle to end up with a split of around 40 per cent fixed to 60 per cent retractable’.¹²⁷ They understood the pitfalls of such a design citing ‘the mantra of flexibility versus character’.¹²⁸ The driver for the retractable seating was the business case and the perceived need to present awards ceremonies and product launches; ‘I remember some saying you have to be able to drive a car in here so you can do a car launch’.¹²⁹

The brief declares that a balcony is not preferred,¹³⁰ but ultimately one was introduced, without which the room would have looked bare and box-like. However, the balcony line is farther out from the edge of the proscenium than is desirable. This gives the room the appearance of being wider than it is, seemingly square in character and compromising the sightlines for spectators in

¹²⁶ OMAC[2] working title: *Project Brief for the appointment of an architect-led integrated design team* (Belfast: OMAC, 2006), pp. 11-12. Volume II, Figures 74-75, show 1:200 drawings of the spaces.

¹²⁷ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹²⁸ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

¹²⁹ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*.

¹³⁰ OMAC[2] *Brief*, p. 12. The finished MAC theatre has a hybrid approach with six rows of retractable seating leading up to four rows of low-balcony or high-parterre in front of the control room. Three shorter rows are added at the front of the retractable unit, one on the floor and two in a depression in the floor.

those seats. The side galleries are asymmetric with the auditorium-right upper-gallery stepping up and back from the lower one, further compromising the sightlines. Without the presence of the side galleries, the audience in the retractable seating would have little visual connection with their fellows due to the long, straight rows. Unlike the Lyric, the asymmetry extends to the setting out of technical rigging positions, making lighting difficult for those unfamiliar with the space.

The brief for the 120-seat studio space advised that the ‘artistic programme will include small-scale, experimental, contemporary, theatre, dance and music’.¹³¹ It was conceived as a direct replacement for the theatre at OMac; ‘they had a room with a particular quality and they [...] wanted to carry it with them and hold it within the new project’.¹³² The client team were anxious to retain the raked seating bank at one end, a flexible overhead pipe grid and the main audience entrance at auditorium left. However, the final room form is unbalanced by a vomitory entrance to auditorium right of the seating. This can be curtained off for performance, but there is a loss of energy from the additional room volume.¹³³ A central gangway in the seating bank was particularly important to the client team – greater efficiencies might have been gained by offsetting the aisle to one or both sides, but:

despite all the discussions and persuasions of ourselves and Peter [Angier] [...] they just knew that this had worked for them for years and that all the little theatre groups that work with them were coming

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹³² Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹³³ The room is approximately 25 per cent larger than the OMac theatre; most noticeably in the height of the space at 6m (19’8”). The pipe grid is hung at 4.5m (14’9”), the same height as OMac, but there is a resultant loss in intimacy brought about by the lack of overhead containment. This more generous layout would seem to be an advantage but leads to a drop in audience density, 7.8m³ per person over the whole room or 3.7m³ in the seating zone, and a reduction in the intensity of experience and connection between audience and performer.

with them too and they were happy to dismiss the orthodox wisdom of trying to avoid the central aisle.¹³⁴

In the competition Hackett Hall showed the main theatre reversed from its position in the final design. ‘The scheme involved a grand, formal stair that traced Hector Street on plan and brought you up to a salon, the seating raked back down to the stage.’¹³⁵ This arrangement, which was conceived as part of the gallery and exhibition space, generated a traditional journey from public realm to public space to ante-room and finally to theatre. It created servicing challenges and the client team wished to explore turning the theatre. Ian acknowledges that there was a ‘grandiosity to it and [...] what is great about how it turned out is that it all happens in this intense, connected space and it is more alive’.¹³⁶ The final design is efficient in delivering the three key relationships for theatre audience circulation; that between seat, toilets and bar. Site constraints caused the architects a problem in delivering the right amount of space where it was most needed ‘this forced public space up into the section, and in choosing a site for an arts project, you would not give yourself that problem’.¹³⁷ While this creates challenges for access and circulation and ensuring a sense of cohesion, a more generous plan can itself generate disconnection. The view of the foyer from the upper gallery levels gives an unusual perspective, offering ‘a landscape of space and thickness and depth’¹³⁸ over the balustrade and down to the space below:

That sense of a shared public is for me a spatial definition of a public environment inside a building; the engagement with the architecture of the building that frames that whole experience of being part of a city, part of a community, part of society. That foyer space then becomes something that demystifies that building. The shows in that gallery at

¹³⁴ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹³⁵ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

¹³⁶ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*.

¹³⁷ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

¹³⁸ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*.

the top are quite challenging, but the people of Belfast wander up and have a look at them because it's very clear that that's what they're meant to do; the building tells them that's what they're meant to do, and they feel comfortable doing it.¹³⁹

This contribution of vertical circulation to the experience of a building is reminiscent of the upward spiralling journey in Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim in New York. At the MAC, the stairs lead the visitor to a gallery space above; at the Guggenheim a continuous ramp is the route and viewing platform upon which the visitor stands to regard the artwork on the outer wall. While it is a masterpiece of design, the functionality is problematic – a level picture frame sits oddly against a sloping floor. Hall McKnight referenced the vertical circulation in Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin, where a central staircase behind a columnar façade, leads the visitor from the external space to an intermediate landing before entering the gallery.¹⁴⁰ The MAC foyer follows this approach, the space being mediated as the visitor moves:

from the simple street-like space behind brick to a moderated second public space beyond which you move again up another stair before you're in the gallery. Those transitions happen within short distances on plan but distinguish the project from being described as just an atrium.¹⁴¹

While Alastair waxes lyrical about the architectural provenance, Ian extols the practical virtues of the design. Maintaining a huge volume causes operational problems for the facilities management of public building, but the MAC design has built-in access for maintenance. The service gantry on the fifth floor

¹³⁹ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Steven Moyano, 'Quality vs. History: Schinkel's Altes Museum and Prussian Arts Policy', *The Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 585-608 (594-96). Available at <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3045763>> [accessed on 19 February 2019].

¹⁴¹ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

provides access to lights that wash the brick walls and the staircases below.¹⁴²

As Fair observes:

the way that central Belfast is dominated by narrow streets and tall buildings is echoed in the foyer, a full-height, top-lit space which cuts through the building and features a rich mix of brick and concrete textures.¹⁴³

Hall McKnight were anxious about the suggestion that an artwork should be installed in the expansive atrium of the public space. Anne's solution was to involve them in the selection process 'and that is the most successful public artwork in Northern Ireland'.¹⁴⁴ The parents of murdered north Belfast teenager Thomas Devlin, approached Anne with the idea to commission an artwork for the new building; 'they said this thing [the MAC] is about the future of Northern Ireland and it's about young people and young people looking out.'¹⁴⁵ The Board was wary, fearing that the work would be perceived as a Roman Catholic piece, but Anne argued that this was 'our Stephen Lawrence; this is going to bring us together [...] this is not about Catholic violence or Protestant violence, it's about violence, against young people'.¹⁴⁶ 'The Permanent Present' by Mark Garry was commissioned by the MAC and the Thomas Devlin Fund:¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*.

¹⁴³ Alistair Fair, *Play On: Contemporary theatre architecture in Britain* (London: Lund Humphries, 2019), p. 34.

¹⁴⁴ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Devlin was murdered on 10 August 2005, just yards from his north Belfast home. The 15-year-old had been on his way home after buying sweets with his friends when he was fatally stabbed in an unprovoked attack. The Thomas Devlin Fund, set up by Thomas's parents, aims to promote awareness of the effects and impact of gratuitous violence against young people in Northern Ireland.

The piece is a spectrum or sequence of colours made up of 400 lines of wire that travel through the building's central atrium space, it activates the space in a particular way. I wanted to make something neutral, something that was a mixture of spectacle and empathy.¹⁴⁸

The installation, 'a rainbow going through the foyer',¹⁴⁹ sits in contrast to the terrazzo, concrete and brick materiality. As the only thing which inhabits the centre of the vast space, the wires respond to the lighting with different coloured strands becoming more or less present as the lighting changes throughout the day. The foyer design has its own cohesion as different forms and materials blend in the space, but the linearity of the wires almost literally tie the space together. Anne recalls, shortly after the building opened, 'three wee girls having an argument about whether or not it was a real rainbow'.¹⁵⁰

The building features generous break-out spaces which were included in the design from the start, but possibilities were maximised as the design progressed. The visitor has many choices in how to engage with the space. Alastair acknowledges that the process of drawing the building allowed such spaces to be developed – 'you're mining the space for opportunities through drawing, sketching and working out what might be possible'.¹⁵¹ Tuomey and Wakely were aware of a similar journey at the Lyric, where the opportunities generated new private spaces; the richness of the visitor's experience of the MAC comes, in part, from the many places the visitor can choose to be. There are also examples of the intersection of design and practicality. The balustrade rail at first floor overlooking the bar, exploits the necessity to create a multi-purpose rail and shelf at which visitors can stand or lean and which can be used to layout pre-ordered interval drinks. In its original form, the slim, grey, mild-

¹⁴⁸ 'Artwork in memory of Thomas Devlin', *News Letter*, 25 May 2012, available at <<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/artwork-in-memory-of-thomas-devlin-1-3881651>> [accessed on 20 February 2019].

¹⁴⁹ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*.

¹⁵¹ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

steel bars that form the support structure were insufficiently strong to withstand the lateral loads imposed by groups of people. As a result, Hall McKnight introduced a diagonal brace to strengthen the structure and Ian notes that this is ‘being done more regularly now as an aesthetic; that’s a structural element that came from a structural concern and a structural solution, but we defined, we drew it and we designed it and we thought “that’s really beautiful”’.¹⁵²

The adjacent table booths make a useful informal workspace, with an acoustic absorbent screen, focusable reading lights and power sockets. As Ian says, these areas ‘have been designed at the scale of a human’;¹⁵³ the tables are sized for ‘one person to work on their own but not take up too much space, or for two people who really like each other to sit side by side’.¹⁵⁴ The booths, reminiscent of the snugs in Belfast’s Victorian bars, are one of the most successful features of the design – these could have been loose furniture from a proprietary supplier, but being part of the architecture of the building, they further unify the design. Hall McKnight paid considerable attention to the provision for printed material and temporary signage, which venues rely on for promotion of their own programme, and forthcoming attractions at partner venues. This has avoided the public spaces becoming a patchwork of ‘self-generated A4 laser print’.¹⁵⁵ Ian takes pride in the leaflet racks and poster panels; little practical details which demonstrate the union of form and function to the benefit of all. Alastair describes the MAC as ‘the type of building that absorbs a lot of imperfection’.¹⁵⁶ He recalls architectural commentator Ellis Woodman in comparing the MAC to some recent projects in Britain, described the MAC as ‘less brittle’.¹⁵⁷ Alastair interprets his meaning to be that the building:

¹⁵² Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

is more forgiving, the nuances of spatial adjustment are not serving some kind of diagram that you dare not deviate from – it’s accommodating. It’s also materially accommodating. It can take a bit of use and a bit of life and survive quite a long time before it would begin to show itself as suffering from occupation.¹⁵⁸

The site of the MAC is part of Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter. Alastair recalls that ACNI were keen to see the MAC in a location to the north of the city centre, ‘in contrast to the privileged south and the Lyric Theatre’.¹⁵⁹ There was also a desire to consolidate the many disparate arts groups in the city, many of them being unhappy with the idea of ‘being managed or manoeuvred, OMac were the ones who saw it as an opportunity’.¹⁶⁰ The location is adjacent to the former Art College, now part of University of Ulster and on the edge of Cathedral Quarter farthest from the city centre ‘it probably is a good site, but it was constrained by the masterplan for Saint Anne’s Square’.¹⁶¹

In 2003, a Department of Social Development report cites a number of guiding themes for the development of the city centre including retail, office and tourism and leisure, which specifically stated that ‘the need to give impetus to the Cathedral Quarter is considered essential and a City Centre Art Centre would help kick-start this initiative’.¹⁶² The report references several UK projects where arts has been included as a major component in the regeneration of an public area – ‘in Leicester for example, the Council recently has given

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹⁶² Gerry Hughes, *Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Framework* (2003), p. iii.

outline planning permission for a £26m new performing arts complex designed by world-renowned architect Rafael Vinoly'*(sic)*'.¹⁶³

An Arts Centre development in the Cathedral Quarter has the potential to act as a catalyst for levering in significant private sector monies to enable wider regeneration of the Cathedral Quarter to take place. The location of a facility of this nature in an area of high deprivation which abuts the wider North Belfast area which has suffered more than most from the civil unrest over the past 30 years could have substantial regeneration benefits.¹⁶⁴

The city centre arts centre would be 'an icon development' and as such would boost interest in further development'.¹⁶⁵ The report also stresses the importance to the wider city centre regeneration of 'permeability and connectivity – the extent to which the scheme facilitates pedestrian movement through it'.¹⁶⁶

As is explored in Chapter 10 in interview with David McClure, Belfast had little residential accommodation in the city centre, a consequence of the Troubles and the security segment noted in Richard Mills comments about the Group Theatre in Chapter 4. There was some night-time economy to the south of the city centre around the GOH, but this area to the north had little, so an anchor project was needed. As previously noted, culturally-led regeneration initiatives are widespread internationally, but in Belfast, the need was critical.

Cathedral Quarter is named after Saint Anne's Cathedral which stands to the southwest of the MAC across Exchange Street.¹⁶⁷ An £80,000,000 plan

¹⁶³ Hughes, *Belfast Regeneration*, p. 36. Rafael Vinoly is a Uruguayan architect whose buildings include the Walkie Talkie in London and Leicester's Curve Theatre in the St George's Conservation Area of the city.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁶⁷ Norman Weatherall, Belfast Cathedral, *History of the Cathedral* (2018), available at <<https://www.belfastcathedral.org/about/history>> [accessed on 11 December 2018]. St Anne's, or Belfast Cathedral, is a house of worship in the

for the regeneration of Saint Anne's Square by architects Taggart, was completed in 2009. The square is a modern interpretation of a neo-classical square, with a lower level of mixed commercial development characterised mostly by food and beverage outlets, with residential accommodation above, a car park, hotel and gym. 1,400m² (15,069ft²) of public square forms the forecourt and main approach to the MAC.¹⁶⁸ The design received a mixed reception winning several awards for excellence in design and innovation, but some less positive reaction with one contributor describing it as 'a neo-classical, pastiche mess'.¹⁶⁹ The site for the MAC is what remained of the planning of Saint Anne's Square, an arrowhead at the north of the square. Ian considers that the nature of theatre buildings, where there are key spaces that neither need nor want windows, meant that this site was more appropriate. To the north of the site is a large flank wall which could have no openings placed in it. The scheme for the MAC made a virtue out of this and other constraints;

Anglican Church of Ireland and is unusual in that it is the seat of two bishops – the Bishop of Connor and the Bishop of Down and Dromore. The construction of the cathedral started in 1895 and continued for more than 80 years when the transepts were completed. A lightweight stainless-steel spire was added in 2007. The cathedral has a basilica form in the Romanesque style with an apsidal east end nearest Saint Anne's Square.

¹⁶⁸ Gary Potter, *Saint Anne's Square* (2016), available at <<http://www.futurebelfast.com/property/saint-annes-square/>> [accessed on 11 December 2018].

¹⁶⁹ BBC News NI, *Three Belfast buildings nominated for 'ugly awards'* (2010), available at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/uk-northern+ireland-10645130>> [accessed on 11 December 2018]. The white architectural cast stone and brick inserts make for an odd pairing when viewed against the grey and yellow-brown tones of the cathedral, and the view from the square towards the apsidal east end of the cathedral, draws attention to the differing proportions of the windows; the tall slender openings of the cathedral with typical rounded arch, and the more squat windows of the residential buildings in the foreground with gently rounded brick lintels and cast-iron faux balcony.

‘we wouldn’t have the foyer in the form that it is with the L-shaped connection between the two streets’.¹⁷⁰ Hall McKnight resisted pressure to unify the architectural style of the MAC with that of Saint Anne’s Square, with full support from the MAC. They wanted the MAC to convey permanence and endurance, ‘we wanted to make something that felt as though it had been there before the square, in a way we were trying to make the oldest piece’.¹⁷¹ Their hope is that the MAC will continue to look relevant when the adjacent pastiche of Saint Anne’s Square begins to look tired.

The most significant impact of the building is that ‘you had to extinguish an historic street’.¹⁷² Hector Street ran for 130m (427’) from Exchange Street West to the southwest, crossing Exchange Street and terminating at Great Patrick Street to the northeast, with around 50m (164’) between Exchange Street and Great Patrick Street remaining. Far from extinguishing it, as Ian describes it, the street is incorporated into the building, honouring the past and bringing it into the present. The lost part of Hector Street lies directly under the foyer space of the MAC, the unsuspecting visitor walks along it with the bar to one side and seating to the other:

We were incredibly aware of that street [...] the grain of Cathedral Quarter [...] the laneways and the scale of streets and we somehow wanted the building to contribute to that. We quoted a Ciaran Carson poem which talks about the phenomenon in Belfast; the streets whose names are almost forgotten.¹⁷³

Turn Again

There is a map of the city which shows the bridge that was never built. A map which shows the bridge that collapsed; the streets that never existed.

¹⁷⁰ Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹⁷¹ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*.

Ireland's Entry, Elbow Lane, Weigh-House Lane, Back lane, Stone-Cutter's Entry –

Today's plan is already yesterday's – The streets that were there are gone.

And the shape of the jails cannot be shown for security reasons.

The linen backing is falling apart – the Falls Road hangs by a thread
When someone asks me where I live, I remember where I used to live.
Someone asks me for directions, and I think again. I turn into
A side-street try to throw off my shadow, and history is changed.¹⁷⁴

Ciaran Carson

The masterplan exercise was driven by business planning and availability of suitable sites for development, not an inherent reverence for an existing public context. The challenges of the site force a specific response 'which drives a tension that generates something that you wouldn't otherwise have done.'¹⁷⁵ The large brick wall that dominates the foyer is an example of this tension. Given an opportunity to maximise the efficiency of the site, it would have been obvious to propose opening the wall to create links through to

¹⁷⁴ Ciaran Carson, *Turn Again* (2019), available at <<https://wfupress.wfu.edu/poem-of-the-week/turn-again-ciaran-carson-poem-of-the-week/>> [accessed on 12 June 2020]. Ciaran Carson was a Belfast-born poet and novelist. He spent 20 years as the Traditional Arts Officer at ACNI until, in 1998, he was appointed Professor of English at Queen's University, where he established and was Director of the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry. He died in 2019. *Turn Again* also appears in several collections of Carson's work including, Ciaran Carson, *From There to Here*, (Winston-Salem; NC: Wake Forest University Press, 2019).

¹⁷⁵ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

the University of Ulster campus beyond. ‘Those constraints force extreme responses and it created this space that had to do an awful lot’.¹⁷⁶

Saint Anne’s Square is smaller in scale than many of the squares it seeks to emulate, notably the grand piazzas of European cities, however Ian believes that, because it is smaller, it is appropriate in its scale for the human activities it contains. The nearby Writer’s Square, to the west of the cathedral, is a larger, more open and porous space frequently used for events; Saint Anne’s Square creates a more intimate setting. The problem with Saint Anne’s Square is the ‘blank rear elevations’¹⁷⁷ to the south and west of the development which do not signify it as a welcoming cultural destination. ‘There is a fundamental mismatch between the aspirations of making a square and making a piece of city that connects.’¹⁷⁸ Despite having apartments and food and beverage outlets, the square fails to generate the busy atmosphere of other cities. The plan of the buildings is developed to accommodate the dwellings and does not provide sufficient block depth for restaurants to open onto both sides or be separated into two shops. This is evident when approaching the square from the south and west, east along Talbot Street and most especially north along Hill Street. The design and planning of Saint Anne’s Square may have fitted into a Beaux Arts city plan such as seen in France and later in the expanding new cities of North America, but it sits uneasily in Belfast where the city developed organically – ‘an historic plan that emerged out of the dense grain of what worked’.¹⁷⁹ Hall McKnight were conscious of making a set of public spaces that would sustain through ongoing use, even where the type of future use might not be easily predicted, showing awareness of the unpredictability discussed in performative urbanism in Chapter 3, above. Respectful of the loss of Hector Street, they made a new

¹⁷⁶ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

street-like internal public space that reflected ‘the street’s ability to endure’.¹⁸⁰

Alastair says:

one of the things I love most about the MAC is that people just go there to meet up; you may never have gone to the theatre and you may not be interested in contemporary art, but it’s a good place to meet and to be in the city.¹⁸¹

The recovery of the ghost of Hector Street is the key to the design. The spaces in the MAC are intensely interdependent, but that one element defines the design, in the way the L-shaped vertical foyer acts as the connection between streets, with the box office set at the junction in a way that controls both halves of the space. The decisions that followed on from this were defined by this relationship. The block to the east, which contains the main theatre with visual arts space, offices, studios and rehearsal room above, emerge from the rectilinear demands of the functional brief for those rooms. By contrast the space to the west which contains the upstairs theatre and gallery spaces, including the close-control gallery, is a more dynamic form which emerges from the constraints of the site within which these volumes are expressed, responding to the form. Hall McKnight’s intention at the outset was not to create two distinct sectors but that they would be ambiguous, however, in practice the two blocks developed their own identity; the rectilinear theatre block took on a warehouse-like feel, a familiar look, reminiscent of Belfast’s industrial past, while the western block adopted a more distorted and abstract quality.

Linking the building with the square is a basalt-clad campanile, the tower unifying the differing architectural approaches. Shelly McNamara¹⁸² compared the tower to a ‘stake driven into the ground which the

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Shelley McNamara is a founding partner with Yvonne Farrell of RIBA Gold Award-winning Dublin-based Grafton Architects.

neighbourhood orientated and understood itself'.¹⁸³ The three elements offer different interpretations to the visitor. The tower is recognisable as a universal theme in a city context; the two brick-built blocks specifically speak to the architectural language of Belfast. The campanile is one of the most striking features of the building. The planning restrictions imposed a height limit on the site from the start, ensuring that the competition entries did not spend time speculating with excessive height. The tower can be viewed from numerous high-points in the city, especially at night; on the M2 approaching Belfast from Glengormley to the north, on the M3 Lagan Bridge from the east 'my favourite view is from Victoria Street just passing the Albert Clock near the corner of Waring Street'.¹⁸⁴ Illuminated at night, it has little practical function, but unlike the Belfast of the 1970s, it is celebratory, declaring its presence as a night-time destination. Alastair argues that it reflects the heritage of Belfast industrial architecture which is 'populated with objects that don't necessarily have a defined and easily described function [...] objects of a forgotten sense of industry. The tower allows the MAC to present itself beyond the confines of its introverted position in the city'.¹⁸⁵ The design sought to express permanence 'counter to the wall-papering of the commercial square'¹⁸⁶ and McNamara observes that 'the tower provides a focus to this new public space and completely changes the register: the architecture of the existing surrounding buildings recedes and the public space becomes the primary element'.¹⁸⁷

As Fair notes, 'the MAC presents an asymmetric elevation of brick and basalt, with a glazed tower rising above the roofline',¹⁸⁸ all materials redolent of Belfast architecture. The stone specified was a European basalt, but the winning tender did not allow for that and a local basalt from the Antrim plateau

¹⁸³ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*.

¹⁸⁷ Shelly McNamara, 'Re-imagining the city: Hackett Hall McKnight at the MAC', *Architecture Today*, 228 (2012), 40-50 (40).

¹⁸⁸ Fair, *Play On*, p. 34.

was adopted, the same basic material used at the Giant's Causeway Visitors Centre near Bushmills, and both projects have had problems with the quality of the finished product. Ian recalls the difficulties in using twenty-first-century building techniques to deliver a form that seeks to carry the weight and permanence of an older building. Using the comparison with the neighbouring cathedral, built in solid stone, the campanile at the MAC is clad in thin slips; 'the amount of time it took to construct St Anne's Cathedral just wouldn't be acceptable in today's world'.¹⁸⁹ There have been well publicised issues with the durability of the façade finishes on the MAC as portions of the cladding have disintegrated and this must be attributed in part to the obsession of project managers to minimise cost and programme in order that they be seen to deliver a project at the right price. Inevitably quality suffers, either in the use of lesser materials, building methods or the time allowed for construction. This is problematic even for simple building designs such as commercial and industrial premises, however, for complex performing arts buildings, the loss of quality can affect functionality as well as finish.

The three elements of the southern elevation – west block, east block and campanile – demonstrate different patterns of façade material and fenestration. The eastern block and campanile are layered, giving different patterns at each level. Alastair explained that by grouping the accommodation in the adjacencies required by the brief 'each floor has a natural rhythm of masonry to window whether it's a floor of dressing rooms, an open-plan office or some larger studios'.¹⁹⁰ This results in an irregular, dynamic layout of windows as viewed from the square, a thought shared by John Tuomey at the Lyric as noted in Chapter 8, above. A further demand on the design from the functional brief, was the sectional heights of each floor. Theatre spaces need significant height but when contained within the centre of a building have little impact on the elevations, however, other spaces such as studios and rehearsal

¹⁸⁹ Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*. In contrast it is notable that staircase in the Lyric is made of solid York stone rather slips. See Chapter 8, above.

¹⁹⁰ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

rooms require heights that are greater, meaning that floor levels need to be adjusted to ensure consistent levels throughout. On the façade, the regular dimensions of brickwork make it difficult to accommodate changes in level, so to facilitate this, the concrete stringcourses which divide up the floors and express themselves as a band on the external elevation, are set to varying heights from 150mm (6”) to 180mm (7”). Again, this accords with Tuomey’s setting out of the Lyric according to the 75mm (3”) brick with some specials. The differences are not visible. Full scale mock-ups of all the façade materials were constructed off site for approval. This gave Hall McKnight and the client team the opportunity to check for quality prior to the work being carried out on site and gave the contractors the chance to check sequencing and buildability of the design.

The fenestration of the building results in some great views. For Hall McKnight it was important that the MAC should bring an awareness of the city into the building:

If you’re in a street and there are houses off that internal street you don’t expect to have lost your connection to the views of the city beyond. Whilst I think some of the windows provide serendipitous moments [...] it certainly was planned that there would be very particular moments of connection to a foreground or middle-ground of the city.¹⁹¹

The windows in the galleries need to be blacked-out from time to time, but rather than use a simple blackout blind, Hall McKnight designed ‘heavy sliding panels that are recessed into the wall and are part of the architecture’.¹⁹² This ensures that closing off a window view to the city is a very deliberate act, the same approach Tuomey took in the Naughton Studio at the Lyric.

The MAC: Procuring the construction

In 2002, the NI Executive agreed to a revised public procurement policy and the core principles have remained broadly the same; to achieve Best Value for

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

Money (BVM) which the policy defined as ‘the most advantageous combination of cost, quality and sustainability to meet customer requirements’.¹⁹³ While these are laudable aims, achieving the necessary balance of BVM requires expertise across a range of disciplines including architecture, quantity surveying and sustainability. The cost and quality of a building are linked inextricably with the building size and construction programme. The quality of a space is defined not only by the level of the finishes, but also the size of the space. A hotel with a five-star rating has bigger bedrooms than a three-star hotel, the mechanical ventilation is quieter and easier to control and the acoustic separation between the room and adjacent bedrooms, corridors and external spaces is better. To reduce costs, the room may be shrunk by a few square metres, which reduces materials and the time and labour necessary to build it, which may impact the hotels star rating. The risks associated with a reduction in quality for arts buildings are greater than the loss of a star rating; rooms, particularly performance and support spaces, may fail to function effectively. Of course, there are many examples of found spaces which have functioned well and have become well-loved by audiences and performers alike, despite their flaws, OMac being one. However, users are more forgiving of older buildings and expect greater levels of comfort and quality in new builds, and building designers strive to make improvements in building quality.

While the CPD retains expertise in the delivery of residential, civil engineering, health care, business and educational buildings, unsurprisingly there is no resident expert in arts buildings.¹⁹⁴ The procurement policy is not flexible enough to permit the fluidity needed in arts building design, and by imposing rigid strictures on the procurement of contractors to rectify defects, lacks the agility needed to respond effectively. The CPD wanted ‘to procure

¹⁹³ Department of Finance and Personnel, *Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy* (Belfast: Central Procurement Directorate, 2014), p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ *Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy* (2014), p. 9.

this in such a way that risks not getting the right people to do the work'.¹⁹⁵ The procurement of the building was originally intended to be traditional but, Ian describes an unusual set-up in public procurement at the time where a main contractor would bid for a job and if it was completed and delivered to the satisfaction of the CPD, they would be awarded up to two other jobs. For the MAC this resulted in a two-stage process where the main contractor would be awarded the first stage and would work with the design team to complete the design, resolve issues of buildability and agree a fixed price for construction at Stage Two. Typically this arrangement is conducted with the main contractor being paid under a Pre-Contract Services Agreement (PCSA); on the MAC, they were proceeding unpaid and at risk 'almost like a free consultant to the design team'.¹⁹⁶ Given the construction climate at the time in Northern Ireland, main contractors were grateful of any opportunity that might lead to work.¹⁹⁷ The process had some benefits as the contractor could develop a strategy to deal with the difficult ground conditions, underground water and adjacent basements, thus de-risking the project for the client.

The chosen contractor was a joint-venture between Cork-based John Bowen Construction and Mascott Construction in Belfast. Concern was raised over the commercial viability of smaller company Mascott, but it was the larger Bowens that went into liquidation in July 2011,¹⁹⁸ leaving Mascott to complete the project. Ian notes that the construction culture in Northern Ireland has made operation difficult for contractors. Typically, in builds in England, a contractor can expect to claim reasonable additional costs for extension of time and changes to building materials brought about by unplanned discovery during the build. At the MAC, the main contractor was discouraged from

¹⁹⁵ Alastair Hall in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*. Concerns shared by Richard Wakely, see Chapter 8, above.

¹⁹⁶ Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*.

¹⁹⁸ 'Bowen Construction goes into liquidation', *RTÉ online*, 25 July 2011, available at <https://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0725/304159-bowen_construction/> [accessed on 21 February 2019].

seeking more costs no matter how credible their claim might be.¹⁹⁹ This resulted in contractors developing a litigious and confrontational approach.²⁰⁰

‘It was probably one of the hardest times to build anything.’²⁰¹ Mascott faced commercial problems, ultimately succumbing to administration in 2016.²⁰² This left Hall McKnight managing the defects period, the builder’s obligation, running a separate tendering process for a contractor to carry out the necessary works at additional costs to the project. The rectification of defects in specialist installations was difficult as the need for a specific contractor with the ability and certification to work on these items did not lend itself to the rigorous demands of CPD. It continues to have an effect on the correction of defects which Anne is determined to see remedied; ‘I’m never letting go’.²⁰³ The defects resolution failed ultimately due to CPD taking so long to review and accept the tendered bids, that the tender price submitted was no longer valid and the process had to begin again. The problems with the façade is not of great concern for Anne. ‘Our customer ratings have increased year-on-year [...] the overall look and feel of the building continues to increase year-on-year [...] and that tells me it’s all about what happens in it.’²⁰⁴ In 2017 Tourism NI acknowledged this, presenting the MAC with the Award for Outstanding Visitor Experience, largely in recognition of a Hockney exhibition the year before.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

²⁰⁰ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

²⁰¹ Ian McKnight in *Ibid.*.

²⁰² Simon Cunningham, ‘Belfast builders Mascott Construction falls into administration’, *The Irish News*, 18 August 2016, available at <<http://www.irishnews.com/business/2016/08/18/news/belfast-builders-mascott-construction-falls-into-administration-657221/>> [accessed on 21 February 2019].

²⁰³ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*.

²⁰⁵ The MAC, *MAC wins Tourism NI Award for Outstanding Visitor Experience* (2017), available at <<https://themaclive.com/about-us/news/mac->

The building had been programmed to complete in the summer of 2011 but was eventually handed over in February 2012, which in architectural and construction time is a swift delivery. As a publicly funded project, at key points throughout design, progress was assessed in a UK Government Gateway Review.²⁰⁶ At times in the design process the funding bodies became anxious and there was the threat that the project might be cancelled, however, the gateway review described the project as exemplary. Hall McKnight believe the leadership shown by Anne McReynolds during moments of doubt was what ensured the project was completed.²⁰⁷

Costs at completion were approximately on budget. Including all plant, the project is 6,266m² (67,447ft²) gross area and was delivered for £13.3M – £2,122/m² (£197/ft²). The project was procured at a low-point in the construction industry and attracted low prices from contractors eager for work to keep their operation going. ‘Two builders went bust during the process so there’s an argument to say they didn’t tender high enough’,²⁰⁸ Ian feels a fairer price might have been £13.6M; still excellent value. Press reports in the years after the opening criticised DCAL for the project going over-budget, stating that the original budget had been £9M ‘but added facilities brought the cost to almost double that’.²⁰⁹ Such statements misunderstand construction budgets often confusing the project cost, which includes design team fees and client

wins-tourism-ni-award-for-outstanding-visitor-experience> [accessed on 11 July 2019].

²⁰⁶ *Office of Government Commerce OGC* (2018), available at <https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Office_of_Government_Commerce_OGC> [accessed on 6 March 2019]. See Chapter 8 including footnote 239 for a summary of the process.

²⁰⁷ Ian McKnight in Riddell-Hall/McKnight, *Interview*.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*.

²⁰⁹ Maggie Taggart, ‘Audit report criticises DCAL for project overspends’, *BBC News N Ireland*, 22 March 2013, available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-21885728>> [accessed on 6 March 2019].

fixtures, fittings and equipment (FF&E), with the construction cost, which is the amount paid to the main contractor and sub-contractors for carrying out the works. There is a general perception that major projects always run over budget and take longer to complete than originally agreed, however, in practice, the two factors most affecting this, the initial cost plan and programme, are most likely to be at fault.

Anne says:

The pressure the architects were put under by government around achieving Excellence in BREEAM – the work Ian McKnight did would have broken a lesser man, as he was trying to build an incredibly technically complex building with a level of oversight, mistrust and undermining that was disgraceful. This building is a testament to integrity on the part of the architects. Some things didn't work, but lots of stuff did.²¹⁰

One of the greatest benefits of the building for Anne is that it 'has allowed us to deliver on our social space aspirations'. Anne recalls that before the design competition or the writing of the brief, she wrote

an eight-bullet-point piece to Aideen McGinley²¹¹ the Permanent Secretary of DCAL [...] one of the things I wanted this place to be was

²¹⁰ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

²¹¹ Aideen McGinley, Derry and Strabane District, *Aideen McGinley Biography* (2019), available at <<http://meetings.derrycityandstrabanedistrict.com/documents/s15949/Appendix%203%20Sandra%20Janoff%20and%20Aideen%20McGinley%20biographies.pdf>> [accessed on 11 July 2019]. Aideen McGinley was the first woman CEO in local government in Northern Ireland and subsequently the first woman Permanent Secretary in the newly devolved government in 1999, taking charge of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. She was involved with the Regeneration Company for Derry~Londonderry and the successful City of Culture bid for 2013 and is now jury member for Northern

a place people would just come and hang [...] come and drink beer or coffee. We have tens of thousands of people a year who walk past warmer coffee shops to come here and that's because of the dropped ceilings, and the "bitching booths"²¹² it's about the absolute exquisite beauty.²¹³

One failing in the building as experienced by Anne and her team is with the doors. Ian insisted on a design that included sliding doors to the foyer, despite the client's reservations. Sliding doors are problematic and rely on the presence of an air-curtain to prevent movement of air between spaces, even then, users' experience of the systems are rarely positive. 'The fact that that Hackett Hall McKnight gave us such a beautiful building is an incidental bonus prize; it was never about the building for me, it was about the work that was going to happen in it.'²¹⁴

The future of the MAC

Anne identified from the start that the business planning for the arts centre was flawed – a factor that has continued to haunt the MAC, and is compounded by building defects and the three-year period with no sitting Assembly which tied-up public funding. In 2017 the BBC reported that BCC²¹⁵ had paid £40,000 'to keep the doors open until the end of October', an additional £300,00 being needed before the year-end at March 2018 and a further £270,000 for the

Ireland on the UK City of Culture panel and the Province's national trustee on the BBC Trust.

²¹² The MAC's colloquial term for the built-in snugs that line the north wall of the foyer.

²¹³ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*.

²¹⁵ Belfast City Council.

financial year 2018-2019.²¹⁶ The same article referred to an ‘independent report provided to councillors’, which described the MAC as a ‘high-performing organisation, exceeding targets and compares favourably when benchmarked with other (longer established) UK venues’.²¹⁷ Anne asserts that the MAC is paying lower salaries than comparable venues in Northern Ireland and is reliant on the enthusiasm of her team, their love of the building and its work. While this may be working at present, it is not a recipe for sustainable practice.

The most problematic operating cost insufficiently provided for is maintenance and, as noted in Chapter 7, this affects all arts facilities. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)²¹⁸ produces the annual Building Costs Information Service (BCIS) report based on information from facilities managers. The 2016 report shows that ‘maintenance expenditure represented 1.04 per cent of the value (at replacement cost) of the stock of buildings and works maintained. This figure varies from 0.91 per cent for housing to 1.2 per cent for non-housing’.²¹⁹ For the MAC, 1.2 per cent of £13.3M represents approximately £160,000 per annum for planned preventative maintenance to keep the building operating effectively. The figure grows annually tracking market prices and, as Jackson suggests, organisations should be provided with the funds to do this. With the MAC and the Lyric fast approaching their tenth year of operation, they each need around £1.5M to catch up.

²¹⁶ Robbie Meredith, ‘Belfast’s MAC theatre in emergency funding bid’, available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-42385809>> [accessed on 27 March 2020].

²¹⁷ Meredith, ‘Belfast’s MAC theatre in emergency funding bid’.

²¹⁸ A UK based world leading professional body for qualifications and standards in land, property, infrastructure, and construction.

²¹⁹ Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, *Report: Economic Significance of Maintenance Report 2016* (2016), available at <<https://www.rics.org/uk/products/data-products/facilities-management/report-economic-significance-of-maintenance-report-2016/>> [accessed on 27 March 2020].

The future of the MAC does not seem to be in doubt, but the building and the organisation face a hand-to-mouth existence. The financial struggles of the MAC and the Lyric are a distraction, sucking energy from the core work of delivering art to the people of Belfast. Their value as venues lies in part in their mixed programme, but greater value may be in the provision of excellent and well-used public spaces. Unlike the Lyric, the MAC foyers thrive on passing-trade and are as busy during the day with professional people many of whom work in the arts. However, like the Lyric, it is less clear how well the MAC actively serves the adjacent inner-city population of North Belfast. The next chapter explores this dilemma – how to align housing the arts with a desire to build a wider audience through an active, inclusive programme for and by the people.

A recurrent theme in this thesis is the professionalization and formalisation of theatre space from found-space to new-build. The Arts, Lyric and OMac all started with a group of people seeking a space in which to rehearse, devise and present work when they had access to none. To provide a small space in a new venue does not, however, create the same conditions; the dynamic of the small found-space is informal and adaptable; it may be possible to make alterations to the room, paint walls and floors and fix scenery to structures in ways that the management of a new venue may not tolerate. There will be a formal operating structure in the new-build with greater attention to contract terms, hours of access and use of equipment. It may be more expensive to hire or, if the new theatre is supporting the incoming company, they will be more conscious of the cost of the support. A new venue can appear less approachable; a new cultural building will usually endeavour to be permeable and welcoming to visitors, but this does not necessarily make it approachable to a small, new company looking for a place to perform.

The key factor for audience development is threshold – how can those who do not typically visit an arts building be enabled to take that first step through the door? Consequently, the continued use of empty shop-front premises, banks and other vacant commercial premises, shows that the demand for found-space continues. Companies that do so enjoy the freedom that comes

from having a space they can work in with fewer time pressures, and with little interference, although they do have additional costs in being responsible for a building. These matters are at the heart of the next chapter.

Anne McReynolds recounts that a visitor remarked how the upstairs theatre reminded her of past shows at OMac, where the theatre space had a quality that many enjoyed, performer and audience alike:

We liked that we were so close to the action, but it wasn't about the room it was about what happened in the room. You couldn't get in if you were in a wheelchair and if you did get in you could hear your car getting broken into outside while you watched the show. It was boiling in the summer and freezing in the winter; it was a nightmare, but it was what happened in it.²²⁰

One of the differences between the OMac space and the upstairs theatre at the MAC is extra height; 'it was too low',²²¹ Anne states. However, this lack of height at OMac promoted intimacy and retained acoustic and performer and audience energy which added intensity, as noted earlier in this chapter. Anne, however, dismisses the importance of the space on the experience of the performance, focusing on the work instead.

Like all cultural venues, the MAC was closed for most of the spring and summer of 2020 but reopened in early September.²²² Unlike the Lyric, it has the benefit of the art galleries, and has commissioned two exhibitions of work reflecting experiences during lockdown, *In a Rainbow of Coalitions*, 'works, across a number of disciplines, by amateur, professional artists as well as work created by children'.²²³ and another by Peter Liversidge 'whose Sign Paintings

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² The MAC, *Keeping You Safe* (2020), available at <<https://themaclive.com/keeping-you-safe>> [accessed on 17 September 2020].

²²³ The MAC, *Exhibition – In a Rainbow of Coalitions* (2020), available at <<https://themaclive.com/exhibition/in-a-rainbow-of-coalitions>> [accessed on 17 September 2020].

for the NHS powerfully captured the public mood during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic'.²²⁴ This shows a determination to be relevant and relatable to a community, but the MAC can, as a result, open the café bar, bringing a few more staff back to work.

²²⁴ The MAC, *Exhibition – Peter Liversidge* (2020), available at <<https://themaclive.com/exhibition/peter-liversidge>> [accessed on 17 September 2020].

Chapter 10

Non-Formal Spaces

Innovative and inventive theatre work has been happening in vacant shops in Northern Ireland, and several theatre companies actively working in such non-formal spaces make for informative and complementary performance-space studies to the traditional venues. This section demonstrates how work in non-formal spaces has contributed to making theatre present and relevant in the everyday lives of people in ordinary towns and cities across the Province. It focuses on those leading the way in this work; one might call them visionary, although in truth, they had no grand plan. This chapter is based largely on interviews with these practitioners, and there is bias inherent in their passionate advocacy of the work – they took hold of the artistic and commercial opportunities presented to them and, as a result, changed their practice, and the communities and environment in which they perform. This chapter concerns people, places and buildings, but it is also a case study in practical cultural value, cultural sustainability and the reinvention of the high street in times of austerity. The Lyric remains rooted in a familiar, elite theatre tradition with limited links to its location and community. The MAC, with its multiple uses and public spaces, is firmly located in a socially-led cultural development in a heritage context, with the local community in mind. The subjects of this chapter return, unknowingly perhaps, to the origins of European theatre.

Since the Easter morning in Winchester cathedral when the angel inquired ‘*Quem Quaeritis?*’,¹ theatre has been performed in buildings not intended for the purpose, and in the streets and public spaces surrounding them. Theatre has been associated with mass-gatherings such as market days but has

¹ A. M. Nagler, *A Source Book in Theatrical History* (New York: Dover, 1959), p. 39. ‘Whom do you seek?’, asked of the Benedictine monks performing the arrival of the three Marys at the sepulchre, as recorded by Bishop Ethelwold in the *Concordia Regularis* (973).

also been the centrepiece of feast days and celebrations, attracting visitors and their spending money to the area. While many works had religious content including the Mystery Cycle plays and the moralities, others, harked back to folk-tales and the mummers' tradition. Although recorded instances are not as early as in England, mummers were strong in Ulster, with groups known as Wren Boys, casting Cuchulain, St Patrick, and later Oliver Cromwell, among the list of heroes and villains.² These works often took place outdoors and had a processional or promenade format, often going from house-to-house, the location becoming the setting, with costumes and props an important support. It was theatre of the people, the performers a mix of professionals, initially clergy, and ordinary people from the community. The audience assembled naturally in a circle or semi-circle around the performers.³ As time went by, local commerce in the form of the guilds became involved in the works in England, which in turn led to the civic authorities validating and supporting their endeavours.

The parallels with the studies that follow are striking. The work described directly addresses issues of diversity, inclusivity, and access, most notably by softening or eliminating the threshold, and by providing a variety of types of 'third place' and engaging in performative urbanism, as discussed in Chapter 3 above, doing so more successfully than either the Lyric or the MAC. In recent endeavours, some have taken these public spaces online, serving to further expand the debate about the nature of space, place and community, and how audiences can more actively engage in the creation and curation of the work.

² Alan Gailey, 'Chapbook Influence on Irish Mummers' Plays', *Folklore*, 85 (1974), 1-22 (6-8).

³ A trait exploited by theatre practitioners ever since, and a rich source of material explored by Leacroft, Southern, Guthrie, Peter Brook and Mackintosh, among others.

Zoë Seaton and Big Telly

The conversation that started this research occurred in a personal interview with director Zoë Seaton who,⁴ with her company Big Telly, is based in Portstewart, a small seaside town of 8,000 inhabitants on the coast 60 miles northwest of Belfast. Big Telly had a history of working in found spaces, and one such was a former branch of First Trust Bank, bought in 2012 by Zoë's husband.⁵ With no plans to develop the space, he offered it to Big Telly which, as a charity, would pay no rates. Sceptical at first, Zoë said 'I can't see what we'll do in it', however, the effects on the company have been profound, offering a new way to work and to frame how work is presented and consumed.

A few months after taking over the premises, christened The Box, the local authority asked Big Telly to create an event for the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay. Zoë suggested an installation in the shop window; she employed two actors and they spent a day making a piece of silent clown theatre, *The Complete Olympic Games*, performing every Olympic sport in the shop window on a floor of sand to an audience outside the glass. It played once an hour during late afternoons and evenings over two days. 'Queues' she recalls: '500 people over two days came to see that show, sitting on the pavement with their cappuccinos, standing there with their ice creams, bringing little rugs.' Zoë was engaged by this response.⁶ She was already feeling that the traditional way of presenting theatre was changing, at least for Big Telly:

⁴ John Riddell, *Interview with Zoë Seaton* (20 August 2014). All quotations in this section are from this source unless otherwise stated. For an introduction to Zoë Seaton and Big Telly, see Volume II, p. 103.

⁵ Proprietor of the adjacent Roughan's newsagents and ice cream parlour on the seafront Promenade.

⁶ Reminiscent of the TV rental shops of the 1960s and 1970s, where viewers would gather on the street outside to look at the big screens in the window. This was often the case on a Saturday afternoon when the football was on, so to present something on the Olympic Games, taps into memory for older audiences.

That thing where it's on at eight o'clock and you book your ticket. You know, when you look at a contraption like the umbrella and you go "that's dated already", it feels like that, that it's not going to be here as a regional model forever.

The shop window was an opportunity to find a more immediate way for people to consume culture:

What if you walk down the street and suddenly saw something for five minutes and then went? How would that affect your life, rather than the effort of booking and going and paying and choosing? I'm interested in how it can just interrupt your day; hijack your leisure time.

Portstewart is a resort, people come to the seafront 'to have a walk, have a coffee, look at the view; there isn't anything else to do here so you've already got people's leisure time'. Zoë had no idea how the piece would be received or how it would be watched; would people stop and look for a moment and then walk on? They generally stayed for the whole performance, watched the piece, went away and talked about it which in turn generated new audiences for later showings. 'Word of mouth happened within three hours', she notes.

The Box quickly became Big Telly's base for community work, its location and presence on the Promenade making it a part of that local community. Theatre companies working in and out of shops is not in itself new.⁷ Theatre Absolute operate their Shop Front Theatre in what was Fishy Moore's in Coventry, which is a found space turned into a 40-seat venue in a variety of formats.⁸ The Box differs, although occasionally presenting work

⁷ Pitlochry Festival Theatre has a shop, called Just the Ticket, which is separate from the theatre on the high street, and operates as a ticket outlet and gift shop. Pitlochry Festival Theatre, *Ways to Buy Tickets* (2020), available at <<https://pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com/about/ticketing-information/>> [accessed on 17 April 2020].

⁸ Theatre Absolute Ltd, *Shop Front Theatre* (2020), available at <<http://www.theatreabsolute.co.uk/shop-front-theatre/>> [accessed on 17 April

inside to small groups, its primary use is as a focal point from which work spreads out onto the street and into neighbouring shops and restaurants. This makes Portstewart the playing space, adding something new and unexpected to a walk along the prom – when it finished, nothing remained but the memory of the performance. Portstewart played a part in *Big Sunday* first held in late September 2013,⁹ reviving an old tradition that combined the last weekend of the season with a get-together for farmers celebrating the harvest. Reminiscent of the medieval guilds, local traders asked Big Telly to create an event, but Zoë insisted that they became active and ran events in their shops. Reticent at first, she persuaded them to think about leading games. A successful example was the postmaster who opened the post office on a Sunday for three sessions of pass-the-parcel: ‘he had really expensive gifts and he had 50 people at the first one, 80 at the second and then 130 people playing pass-the-fucking-parcel in a post office on a Sunday’. Bouncy castles were banned, and shops were encouraged to do something unique that could only happen in that space responding to the town, the building and its architecture. ‘It’s about space and about individuality’. This work set Zoë and Big Telly on a course to develop what has become a productive strand of site-responsive theatre – street-theatre made of, and for, the people and the location.

Big Sunday was about community and place, but drama did not play a big part. In *I Spy Portstewart*,¹⁰ one of Big Telly’s most innovative projects, the town and its people, the audience, and random passers-by, all had their roles. Presented in July 2014, *I Spy* was a piece of adventure theatre conceived

2020]. The company also operates in the local shopping centre and outdoor precinct and in other areas of the town, crossing the threshold to meet the public outside of the space.

⁹ BigTelly, *Big Sunday* (2013), available at <<http://www.big-telly.com/other-projects/sandelford-school-project/>> [accessed on 23 September 2014].

¹⁰ BigTelly, *I Spy Portstewart* (2014), available at <<http://www.big-telly.com/archive/performance-work/one-sandwich-short-of-a-genius/>> [accessed on 23 September 2014].

in collaboration with London based Coney HQ.¹¹ The audience, or participants, started in small teams at ten-minute intervals from The Box. They were each given a secret identity as a spy and a cover story of attending a wedding. The performance took the audience along the prom in and out of shops and cafés, following instructions from shopkeepers and the occasional actor or disembodied hand emerging from a bank night safe. They were directed into alleys and yards at the back of shops, found clues, pursued a suspect who suddenly disappeared being discovered later as a corpse, answered payphones, followed talking rubbish bins, and were questioned by real police officers. For the participants, the most extreme section came when, arriving at the Anchor Bar, they saw their photographs surrounding the stage and crowds of fans screaming for them, the band, to start their set. This was swiftly followed by the warning of a death threat and being hustled out of the fire escape. Zoë wanted to create a fun but challenging piece:

All the immersive stuff I'd seen was quite urban and edgy. I wanted to know if we could do, and if people could have, the *craic*¹² of their lives rather than a dangerous experience. What I wanted it to be was bewildering, but not in a scary way.

The teams were not escorted but 'picked up and abandoned' not knowing what was happening next, 'everybody becomes suspicious and everybody becomes

¹¹ Coney, *About us* (2014), available at <<http://coneyhq.org/about-us/>> [accessed on 23 September 2014]. Coney 'weave together theatre and game design to create dynamic shows and experiences' and work extensively in areas of learning and participation.

¹² Niall Ó Dónaill and Tomás De Bhaldraithe, 'Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla' (Baile Átha Cliath: An Gúm: An Roinn Oideachais, 1992). The Irish-English Dictionary gives the definition of *craic* as 'conversation, chat', however common usage encompasses a broad set of meanings including fun, gossip, news, entertainment. In Ulster-Scots the word appears as *crak*, with a similar definition, as noted in James Fenton, *The Hamely Tongue: A Personal Record of Ulster-Scots in County Antrim* (Conlig: Ulster-Scots Academic Press, 1995), p. 36.

interesting'. Some participants asked about the roles of certain people they had noticed, only to be told they had no connection to the piece. Stopping teams from colliding with each other required several elastic pieces of improvisation that could hold the audience back when needed.¹³ *I Spy* had 25 people from Big Telly running it, including ten professional actors and five youth trainees, plus 30 staff from participating shops and businesses; 'not my most cost-effective show' Zoë remarked. However, it generated its own publicity as, for the three days it ran between 2pm and 5pm, it was impossible to be in Portstewart and miss the action. The participant team size was eight, so about 150 people saw the show each day; 'that wasn't capacity' said Zoë 'we could have had more [...] we could have filled it and filled it', not just with audience, as locals were keen to take over roles.

Game of Phones, used mobile 'phones, texting and Quick Response (QR) codes to take the audience on a journey around the town.¹⁴ This reached a young audience who, as native users of the technology, live in a virtual world. *I Spy* and *Game of Phones* were non-formal theatre pieces in which the lines between audience and performer were blurred. The participants became an impromptu entertainment for unsuspecting bystanders, they in turn mistaken

¹³ The work highlights at least three of the four attributes of Performative Urbanism discussed in Chapter 3, above – Unpredictability, Ambivalence and Perception as a performative process. The fourth, Transformative power, is present in the theatre of the event.

¹⁴ The title is fun, irreverent, and satirical, referencing the HBO hit series, much of which was shot in Northern Ireland, but it also pokes fun at those of all ages with their heads in their 'phones. The company had previously used the technology, immediately engaging younger audiences, the native-users. The 2014 *Big Sunday* had a Teddy Bear theme and included a bear hunt during which the audience found QR codes that linked to video performances giving clues to the location of the bears. Portstewart has patchy access to mobile broadband and, if signal quality drops, handsets tend to roam to mobile networks in the Republic of Ireland, visible to the northwest 8.5 miles (13.5km) away.

for actors. The theatre space was at times the virtual world and at others the town, its buildings and hidden passageways the backdrop.

Events like these are costly to organise and Zoë describes the solution as a combination of ‘de-professionalising and re-professionalising [...] To make *Big Sunday* and *I Spy* happen we absolutely needed professionals to “make” it. [...] It needed four, five-minute pieces of theatre within it.’ This gave structure, shape, opportunities for exposition and rebuilding energy. For *I Spy*, Big Telly hired ten actors – Zoë believes only six were necessary, although she stresses that the company is committed to giving work to actors. ‘If all you’ve got to say is put that in the bin you don’t need any training. I could employ people from Grafton Recruitment at £8 an hour rather than £100 a day.’ Big Telly did not do this but did use volunteer performers in minor roles – shopkeepers, bar staff, police officers, another direct link to medieval theatre. The troublesome ones were the local amateur dramatics folk who turned ‘put that in the bin’ into a melodrama.

Big Telly have seven full time members of staff making them a significant employer in the town and in the arts in Northern Ireland. The Box became the hub for a rolling training programme for unemployed graduates, mostly in arts subjects. They were set up as a small company, given the space and tasked with presenting something once a week, every week during their traineeship. Zoë describes them as cultural entrepreneurs whose training echoes her own formative experience; learning through persistent practice, making mistakes, constantly trying new things, and examining critically what works and what does not:

You’ve got to pay attention to when people are watching you or when they’re not, or when they’re having fun or when they’re not, you’ve got to monitor, you’ve got to know if it feels eggy to ask them to come in, are you asking the right questions [...] how are you making people feel? Are you scaring them? Intimidating them? Are they having a good experience?

Beyond developing creatively and collaboratively, it helps them as artists find their own strengths and which skills they can be paid for. This Zoë suggests, ‘is when it becomes sustainable’. Big Telly was started with funding from the

Enterprise Allowance Scheme, ‘you got £40 a week and your rent paid, you could start your own company and you didn’t have to dodge the dole’. The cultural entrepreneurs initiative mirrors that process; ‘when I look at what we’re doing now I think, of course it’s what we’re doing, it’s where we started.’

Big Telly opened three more shops each year over the next three years under a new brand, the Creative Shops Project. With funding from Esme Fairbairn and local councils, 2015 saw shops in Ballycastle, Strabane and Banbridge. Big Telly implemented an eight-week programme working with the local community and professional facilitators. They then withdrew and supported the space from a distance. The hope was that those spaces would generate and sustain their own work, developing as led by the local community. This aspiration was not fulfilled as committing to running and maintaining a building was too much, however, the programmes gave the communities the impetus to develop and sustain their own practice.¹⁵

Big Telly did not take the scheme to Belfast because, according to Zoë, ‘it gets 78 per cent of the arts funding, so I’m not putting any more into it’. The development of new shop spaces is based on the principle that artists mediate between community, audience, and people with non-performance skills and interests. The activities in the shops are guided by each community, but an attitude of cultural browsing, permission to play and ongoing participation are core. One of the first pieces in the Strabane shop was a micro-festival curated by a man with no prior connection to the arts but a small collection of lorries. Zoë believes these opportunities to engage and participate have benefits for the wellbeing of all who take part.

Ballycastle has similarities with Portstewart as a seaside town and resort, although less well-off. Strabane, however, is different, a larger town in a rural community it has a chronic unemployment problem with the second highest unemployment figures in NI.¹⁶ This moves away from the established

¹⁵ John Riddell, *Zoom Interview* with Zoë Seaton (20 April 2020).

¹⁶ ‘Number of unemployed on the decline across Strabane district’, *Tyrone and Donegal Reporter and Strabane Weekly News*, 13 October 2014, available at

model of outreach workshop followed by an 8pm show, packing up and doing it again in another town the next day. The shops offer people somewhere to engage any time they drop in, including the older folk who presented ‘desert island discs in The Box’, interviewing each other and playing their favourite songs or the ‘Sunday evening live lounge’ where young people get to try out new music and performance material through the speakers outside The Box.

2020 Big Telly update

The Box was Big Telly’s benchmark shop but has not been in regular use since 2016 and is sold pending redevelopment. Portstewart, Zoë argues, ‘is not needy enough’,¹⁷ preferring to focus attention on less-wealthy towns elsewhere. Creative Shops continues to be a part of Big Telly’s work with recent projects completed in other towns some of which will be visited again, the current programme running until 2021.¹⁸ Site-responsive theatre has now become a significant feature of their programme, but does not need to be tied to the occupancy of a particular building. These works range from professional productions created in response to their location, to The Garvagh Wedding, conceived as ‘a live soap opera [...] over three weeks’¹⁹ and based around stories collected from and developed by members of the community.²⁰ The

<<http://www.strabaneweekly.co.uk/articles/news/39761/number-of-unemployed-on-the-decline-across-strabane-district/>> [accessed on 12 April 2015].

¹⁷ Riddell-Seaton, *Zoom Interview*.

¹⁸ Big Telly Theatre Co, *Creative Shops* (2020), available at <<https://www.big-telly.com/participation/creative-shops/>> [accessed on 24 April 2020].

¹⁹ Big Telly Theatre Co, *Reality is Stranger than Fiction* (2020), available at <<https://www.big-telly.com/reality-is-stranger-than-fiction/>> [accessed on 24 April 2020].

²⁰ Garvagh Town, *About Garvagh Town* (2020), available at <<https://garvaghtown.com/about/>> [accessed on 24 April 2020]. Garvagh is a rural village in County Londonderry, 47 miles (76km) northwest of Belfast with a population of 1,500. Originally founded by planters the Canning family

project, which was halted after one week, should have culminated in a series of events across the town during the wedding day, with many smaller events along the way including stag and hen parties, dress fittings, flower arranging and visits to the hairdresser. In the most striking parallel with medieval street-theatre, it was to take place in shops, pubs, restaurants and other spaces in the village, with a core cast of ten professional practitioners but many significant parts being cast from within the community.²¹

The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic adversely affected Big Telly's core work. When the period of lockdown began in late March 2020, Zoë had 15 actors, staff and crew contracted for six different projects, including *The Garvagh Wedding* – all of which were immediately cancelled – but she was determined to honour their contracts and find some way of using them. Zoë was eager to try something interactive and to capture the shared experience of live theatre. In the summer of 2019, she had directed *The Tempest* for Oxfordshire-based Creation Theatre which also found itself with seven performers on the payroll from a cancelled show, the combined forces being enough to present an abridged version of the show. By cutting and reshaping the production over two weeks in late March 2020, Zoë and the company put together a new version for video conferencing platform Zoom.

The process involved experimentation days with performers and collaborators connecting using WhatsApp group calling from their respective homes. As the process developed each performer began to use two devices so they could provide a close-up of them or their actions plus a wider shot that showed the context or gave a behind the scenes view. Zoë was surprised to find the process 'really joyous',²² finding the same shared sense of ensemble as making the work in a rehearsal room. In performance on Zoom the maximum number of devices was initially limited to 100 with an audience of 50 devices, later expanded to 100 devices. The audience watched on Zoom while sharing

in the seventeenth century, Garvagh is typical of the plantation town with a wide main street.

²¹ Riddell-Seaton, *Zoom Interview*.

²² *Ibid.*.

the video from their own device. They were encouraged to watch in Speaker View which presents the video of one speaker at a time. The Stage Manager held hosting privileges on Zoom, muting and unmuting microphones and video feeds for all participants, and could spotlight the video of audience members particularly engaged in the action. Technology and internet connections are not guaranteed to be reliable and resulted in performers losing connection from time to time and having to re-join the call while others improvised. Zoë recounts that when Caliban's poor video feed was accompanied by the legend 'Caliban has limited bandwidth', one reviewer assumed this to be a statement about privilege.²³

The result was collaborative and interactive, based on the game formats Zoë had previously used, the audience participating in the performance and encouraged to contribute the noises of the island, their images appearing on screen from time to time with the actors.²⁴ Sold through Creation at £20 per device, the show was scheduled for six performances over the Easter weekend, but it sold so well additional performances were added. Audiences attended from all over the world including a large contingent from the USA, which resulted in additional shows being scheduled at midnight to accommodate that market. Not only has this work kept both companies active and productive, it has also made money and led to the speedy creation of new pieces including *Operation Elsewhere*, a journey into the world of Irish myths and legends, well-trodden ground for Big Telly, presented over the first weekend in May 2020. Zoë reports that Big Telly has kept the existing cohort of practitioners in work, extending several contracts and employing new performers and creatives to develop new work.²⁵

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Miriam Gillinson, 'The Tempest review - interactive online production goes down a storm', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2020, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/apr/12/the-tempest-review-interactive-online-zoom#maincontent>> [accessed on 17 April 2020].

²⁵ Riddell-Seaton, *Zoom Interview*.

Undoubtedly other companies will be working on equally inventive methods of creating and sharing work. What is clear is that the shared experience of interactive performances such as these need not be viewed as second-class when compared to attending live theatre – it is just different. The links with early forms of theatre are particularly evident in Big Telly’s site-responsive work, but it persists even online, not only because the subject matter is reminiscent of the tales told by the Wren Boys, but it also reflects their house-to-house tradition and, by the interactive nature of the show, involves the audience in the action, even requiring them to bring find own props. Considering that Big Telly has generated additional work for theatre practitioners at a time when most theatres had placed staff on furlough and were facing extreme financial hardship, this questions once again the sustainability of the traditional model of the theatre building.

Paul Bosco McEneaney and Cahoots NI

Paul McEneaney was convinced that children should have access to theatre for its own sake, not always tied to the curriculum. He created his own Christmas shows founded on a simple business model and the premise that rural schools could not afford to take the children to see pantomime, so for a fee of £400 per day, he and two crew would take his one man magic and illusion show on the road from mid-November until January. The shows were ‘bold, brash, cabaret for kids; a magic show with a bit of theatricality thrown in’.²⁶ Out of these shows, he was commissioned in 2001 to create a piece for Belfast Children’s Festival, *Puppet Magic*, a simple story about a man, played by Paul, interacting with inanimate objects which came alive. It was presented at the Group Theatre, Belfast and was booked by the Imagine Edinburgh Children’s Festival to play the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh in summer 2002, subject to being developed and expanded. The result was *Buster*, for which Cahoots NI was formed:

²⁶ John Riddell, *Interview* with Paul Bosco McEneaney (3 February 2015). For an introduction to Paul Bosco McEneaney and Cahoots NI, see Volume II. p. 108.

I was very clear about what we were. We were not an organisation that was there to teach children about societies faults, that was not our remit. Our remit was for a child to sit in a theatre to look at the stage and go, ‘Wow! Anything is possible’.²⁷

This echoes the experience Paul had at panto in the old cinema in Armagh:

I believe that what we do and what arts does is it empowers empathy. I was adamant that we do not do any sort of teaching, it’s about spectacle it’s about just telling a story, but actually there was a lot of teaching in those shows, a lot of empathy-sharing, appreciation-sharing.²⁸

After the onset of the recession of 2008 and the subsequent reductions in funding, Cahoots began to explore different ways to support their work.

Cahoots had already had some success in attracting sponsorship:

we have found innovative ways to bring business into arts funding. [...] What are we doing next year? Who is a good sponsor for that project? What can we offer them that’s more and greater than just a link on the poster and their sign at every show? What do they need that we’ve got?²⁹

The key, he suggests, is not selling sponsorship but selling an idea and tailoring it to the right person in an organisation. For example, Cahoots developed a five-year relationship with an Irish soft drink manufacturer. ‘I want my audience to think this product I’m watching is organic, it’s made for my kids and it’s good for them’,³⁰ the brand benefiting by association. He believes part of Cahoots’ appeal is talking about the work ‘as product rather than the arts terminology which would be more precious’.³¹ Speaking at a breakfast meeting of Arts and Business (A&B) NI in 2008/2009 about the Cahoots NI strategy,

²⁷ Riddell-McEaney, *Interview*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*. Note the difference between relatively small corporate project funding and the larger funding the MAC business plan suggested was possible.

³⁰ *Ibid.*.

³¹ *Ibid.*.

Paul indicated that ‘partnerships between arts organisations and business didn’t need to be just financial’.³² He mentioned things that cost Cahoots time and money which businesses might provide without parting with cash, also noting that Cahoots, as with many theatre companies, is a charity and as such more appealing to partners.

David McClure, of leading Belfast commercial property consultants Osborne King (OK), was at the meeting and was intrigued by these closing remarks. McClure joined Osborne King in 1998 and quickly rose through the company becoming a director at the age of 30. ‘Everything was going fantastically well until 2006-2007, the wheels came off and the market crashed.’³³ This gave David pause, and he realised it would be necessary to re-evaluate their working methods. With less work and more time on his hands to develop new business, he started looking at his contacts both professional and personal; ‘is there any obvious synergy that I could introduce my skillsets into?’³⁴ Involved in the company’s marketing committee he was introduced to A&B NI where there was an existing relationship, he attended a few events and then, as costs were modest, committed to becoming a member.³⁵

At the meeting of A&B NI, David was seated next to Belfast actor, director and television presenter Dan Gordon. David explained the difficulties they were having with empty space. Dan spoke about the rehearsal process he was in at that time and how the company used rehearsal space in various church halls and similar venues for which they paid a hire fee. The charitable status of theatre companies was also mentioned and for David ‘the penny

³² *Ibid.*

³³ John Riddell, *Interview* with David McClure (3 February 2015).

³⁴ Riddell-McClure, *Interview*.

³⁵ David had developed an interest in the arts at school, Campbell College, and had teachers who encouraged engagement with the arts, in particular Mark McKee brother of Coleraine born actor Alan McKee. Combined with studying in Edinburgh, where the arts scene became another influence, involvement in the arts was a natural step. Also, in his class at school was Gary Lightbody, lead-singer of Northern Irish rock band Snow Patrol.

dropped'.³⁶ He suggested to Dan that he could potentially provide space at no cost and possibly 'take it to the next level and give you space that you could perform in'.³⁷ This was not born out of philanthropy as he had several clients with large-scale property vacancies:

for which they were getting clobbered for vacant rates which are charged at 50 per cent [...] and one of the routes for exemption are if the properties are in charitable occupation.³⁸

David realised that 'charitable designation does not mean necessarily Oxfam or any of the guys who will be occupying space very obviously on the High Street up and down the length of the country'.³⁹ David had a mix of private and corporate clients but thought that a corporate client would receive the spirit of the idea better than a private client 'who would not get the idea of sharing with anyone, it's all about them and they want 100 per cent of the benefit'.⁴⁰ He identified long term corporate client Northern Bank; 'now trading locally as Danske Bank',⁴¹ they had vacated a branch on Donegall Square North opposite Belfast City Hall 'so we were sitting with a great space, slap bang in the centre of town'.⁴² Danske 'were carrying a very significant rates burden, without going into it in too much detail it would have been touching £100,000 *per annum*'.⁴³ To save that kind of money 'that's a big win'.⁴⁴ It does presume that the space will be empty for some time which, prior to the recession, would not have been the case. In retail, 'the landscape had completely changed',⁴⁵ the main difference between this and the previous recession was the rise of internet

³⁶ Riddell-McClure, *Interview*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

banking. ‘The only retailers which were still performing well on the high street were ones that had raised that online side as well and were able to trade the two platforms.’⁴⁶ Those that did not, are extinct.

For many practical reasons David could see the sense in having a resident ‘as a custodian of the space’.⁴⁷ Insurance costs are cheaper with a resident who will notice if there is a burst pipe or leaking roof thus avoiding the kind of major damage that can be done ‘if it’s left untended for a relatively short time’.⁴⁸ David floated the idea with Danske, received a positive response and explored the idea with Heather Carr, Business Development Manager at A&B to see if a suitable partner could be found. Cahoots NI became favourite, Paul being considered to have a good track record in relationships with business, understanding the commercial needs of the partnership. David was initially cautious, ‘he was very cagey of arts wishy-washy people [who] say one thing [and] do another’.⁴⁹ However, the two got on well and when he discovered that Cahoots had an existing and ongoing relationship with Danske, he was comfortable enough to proceed and proposed a deal to Danske for a trial period of six months when Cahoots would occupy the space at a rent of £1 per month, with no charge for utilities and access to the facilities management team for any building repairs needed. Danske had to accept some risk. There was a chance that the Land and Property Services⁵⁰ (LPS) would contest the rates saving, but David pointed out that Danske had to pay them anyway and they would be no worse off. LPS were under pressure themselves to ‘justify every pound of refund, every leakage from the system in terms of rates coming into the public pot’.⁵¹ There was initial resistance to the proposal which took some time to resolve; ‘when the first rate bill came in to Cahoots the rates

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Riddell-McEneaney, *Interview*.

⁵⁰ Land & Property Services (LPS) is part of the Department of Finance and Personnel for Northern Ireland.

⁵¹ Riddell-McClure, *Interview*.

office challenged it'⁵² but with a change of case officer at LPS, the discount was given the green light, although this took so long that it was not finally resolved until after Cahoots had moved out of the space. Precedent, however, had been set and it was clear that future ventures would be simpler. As with Big Telly above in this chapter, the echoes with early medieval theatre are striking. Not only is there the involvement of a commercial organisation in a performing arts venture, but the LPS represents civic engagement in the process in a meaningful and practical way.

David was pleased with the prospect of rolling this out among his other long term vacant lots, but after an unsuccessful attempt with a visual arts company he concentrated on Cahoots, although he also facilitated space for the Young at Art⁵³ festival, another continuing relationship. There was an attempt with Place NI⁵⁴ to house a government funded initiative to get disabled young people into work, but it fell through due to a lack of funding. The goal, which David and Paul shared, was to have 'a pool of arts organisations with charitable designation which we could move about the place [...] at relatively short notice'.⁵⁵ However, as the market improved and things got busier, impetus was

⁵² Riddell-McEneaney, *Interview*.

⁵³ Young at Art provides creative experiences for children and runs Belfast Children's Festival.

⁵⁴ Planning Landscape Architecture Community Environment, *What is PLACE?* (2015), available at <<http://www.placeni.org/about.html>> [accessed on 5 July 2015]. PLACE is an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the making of great places across Northern Ireland, composed of a multi-disciplinary team combining expertise and extensive experience in architecture, town planning, visual art, curation, design, social science, education, research, community engagement and event management. It was established in 2004 by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects and Belfast City Council, with support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland under its Architecture and Built Environment Policy. It became a registered charity in 2011.

⁵⁵ Riddell-McClure, *Interview*.

lost. David was, however, surprised that OK and Cahoots are the only companies on each side of the fence to be active in this area.

The Danske Bank space was well-suited to performance. It consisted of a double height banking hall with a mezzanine above, all on about 1,000m² (10,764ft²). The building opens onto Donegall Square North, ‘in terms of rateable value we had the two most expensive windows in Belfast, facing City Hall’.⁵⁶ The company rehearsed their shows in the bank, built scenery and rigged lighting and sound for technical rehearsal ‘it was a working backstage theatre’.⁵⁷ From the very first iteration of the ideas, David had been fascinated by the possibility of what the passer-by would see through the window. He encouraged Paul to keep the glazing clear to allow people to see what was going on behind; rehearsal, set-building, etc.. Paul was unsure, but David’s idea links to Zoë Seaton’s early open rehearsal practice with Big Telly. Paul felt that ‘the windows were there to promote the work that we were preparing inside’.⁵⁸ Cahoots were about to tour *A Spell of Cold Weather* by Charles Way, which featured a levitation, ‘we floated someone in the window four times a day; the queues outside the window were unbelievable’. Belfast City Council quickly picked up on this success and offered funding to expand the idea into *Window Stopping*, a two-week festival in March 2012 featuring Cahoots and other companies. The driver was to promote new work, but it allowed the company to develop new audiences, generate additional revenue ‘and new pieces of work that we didn’t see coming’.⁵⁹ *Window Stopping* led to more work in the window over the two years or so that Cahoots occupied the bank. Big Telly, Tinderbox, composer Conchúr Mitchell, harpist Ursula Burns and others all prepared work for the space.

Cahoots used the inside spaces primarily for rehearsal, but they did some small performances, usually to an invited audience of around 20, like Zoë’s practice in The Box. They also held open day events with public invited

⁵⁶ Riddell-McEneaney, *Interview*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*.

into the building to see short extracts of work. These, Paul suggests, were not as successful as the shop window events. Cahoots tenure in the bank was always intended to be time-limited if a commercial client became available. The bank became a tourist information office, the Belfast Welcome Centre. Cahoots use of the space, *Window Stopping* in particular, had a direct impact on how the space was laid out as columns in the windows were removed to maximise the space available.

David was committed to finding another space for the company and took Paul to see alternative vacant spaces. The passer-by on the street was aware of what was happening in the bank and for David ‘it made the next move easier’.⁶⁰ When he went on to approach Hermes Pension Fund, the owners of Castle Court a city centre shopping mall which first opened in 1990, he could point to the activities on Donegall Square North as an example. A space became available in Castle Court in what had been a TK Maxx. It had nearly twice the area of the bank, but as it was formed on two floors the height was restricted to around 3m (9’10”). Cahoots moved in and ‘set about creating a relationship with Castle Court’,⁶¹ but the senior management were cautious. Castle Court as a performance venue was not without its problems. Where Cahoots could come and go as they pleased at the Danske Bank, they were restricted to the opening hours of the centre. There was always some flexibility and David was confident that the centre manager, Paul McMahan, and Paul McEneaney would get on well. There were ‘a few teething problems operationally in the first few weeks’⁶² but McMahan soon accepted the concept and ‘could see the benefit from the in-house marketing point of view’.⁶³ This left David taking more of a back seat leaving Paul and the centre to develop the relationships.

To begin with, Cahoots used the space to rehearse work and build scenery, but that year, 2013, the company was not producing a Christmas show

⁶⁰ Riddell-McClure, *Interview*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*.

⁶² *Ibid.*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*.

so over a relationship-building coffee with the centre manager, Paul pitched the idea of doing something in Castle Court, ‘as a free experience’⁶⁴ for the customers of the centre. It might be free to the customer, but Paul needed Castle Court to buy the work, effectively using the same strategies used to pitch to potential sponsors; ‘what we do and what you need’.⁶⁵ The centre provided Santa’s Grotto, popular with younger children, but Paul found that their offer to family audiences was limited to providing a stilt-walker and balloon modeller on the four weekends before Christmas. Paul proposed creating a Vaudeville style cabaret venue within the space where the company would present ‘a 15-minute mind-blowing illusion show to run three times an hour for three hours every day in the run up to Christmas’.⁶⁶ He asked how much the centre paid for the stilt-walker and balloon-modeller which was £12,000, so Paul suggested they give that money to Cahoots. A&B provided some additional funding taking the total to over £18,000. They created the piece for an audience of eight people at a time, ‘they were literally queuing around the shopping centre to get in’.⁶⁷ For Paul this was another epiphany. ‘Here was a demographic that never go to theatre’,⁶⁸ an audience so inexperienced that Paul says ‘they didn’t know to applaud, they were a brand-new audience for us’.⁶⁹ The show, *The Family Hoffman’s Mystery Palace*, included eight illusions in 15 minutes. The centre management were suitably impressed with the response asking the company to extend the run and programme it to return during the Easter holidays. As with *Window Stopping*, this was new product that was not part of the company’s yearly programme, was self-funding, providing work for practitioners, an experience for audiences and saleable product for Cahoots and Castle Court. The big impact for Cahoots

⁶⁴ Riddell-McEaney, *Interview*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*.

was in audience development and they took advantage of it by giving out fliers on exit and even offering discount vouchers for forthcoming shows.

The difficulty comes in trying to measure the impact. As Paul realised, Cahoots never sell the tickets, consequently it was difficult for them to get hold of audience data. However, at Castle Court, Cahoots gave feedback sheets to visitors and captured address and contact details resulting in a big increase in the size of their database.⁷⁰ Prior to Christmas 2014, when *The Family Hoffman's Mystery Palace* was due to play the MAC as a fully developed production, Cahoots presented extracts in Castle Court much as they had done the year before. This time, the MAC provided a box office and sold tickets after the performances offering all visitors 20 per cent off, for which there was good take up. 'If I've been told once "we didn't think this was for us", I've been told it a million times since being at Castle Court.'⁷¹ The company's experience was of an audience that was either unaware of the arts sector, not having heard of the Lyric or the MAC, or believing that the theatre is not for the likes of them. It could be considered that encountering a piece of work like this as part of the shopping experience is just a diversion from the everyday, but Paul believes 'it is more than a distraction'.⁷² Paul recounts the story of a little boy asked by his parents where he wanted to go on holiday, "Spain" replied the boy "because they like me there".⁷³ Subsequent enquiry got to the root of the matter; children are accepted as being present in the Spanish culture much more than they are in Northern Ireland:

We go into a restaurant in Spain at 9pm and it's fine; nobody's putting the child in the corner. In many ways I feel in Northern Ireland the

⁷⁰ This was prior to the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which has made recording and storing audience information more complex.

⁷¹ Riddell-McEneaney, *Interview*.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

voice of the child isn't really heard. [...] I worry sometimes that, as a society, we aren't as good with children as we think we are.⁷⁴

One of the benefits of having access to these unconventional commercial spaces for rehearsal and performance has been in the process, 'we're constantly looking at new and innovative ways to develop work, or to think about work, or to get an idea for work [...] we can't just think like a child, we need technique and stimuli to create new work'.⁷⁵ The process for the 2015 show considered how blind and visually impaired children would experience a show based on illusion. This was not to 'create a show for blind people, it was to create a new way for me to think about creating a show'.⁷⁶ Music became a core element of the piece exploring the tension between a brother, an Irish traditional musician, and his classical pianist sister. Staged in promenade, the set leads the audience on a journey through a series of corridors and rooms with multiple loudspeaker installations. Sliding walls and doors change the shape of the spaces and a revolve on which the audience sits in one of the central spaces further contributes to their disorientation, somewhat levelling the playing field between the visually impaired and sighted audience. Paul maintains 'this piece could never be performed in a theatre, you've got to be beside the actor, you've got to smell the actor, smell the environment you're walking into, feel some spaces are warm, some are cold'.⁷⁷ *The Gift* is a show with a direct-line to medieval morality plays, not only in the promenade style and presentation in a public shopping area, but also in the journey the characters take. It is subtler than the struggle between good and evil, but the tension between classical and traditional music is resolved through self-discovery and acceptance.

This brings the use of these spaces full circle. Cahoots have gone from rehearsing privately in a space, promoting work in the shopfront window, a

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

festival of such work, bringing the audience into the space to see an excerpt of the work and finally bringing the audience in to see a piece of work made for that space. 'It's about the here and the now and is not promoting anything outside of that.'⁷⁸ Without access to these spaces this would not have happened. Funding the show was not easy and the budgets were reduced due to a shortfall. The development process attracted funding as it involved working with visually impaired children, work for which multiple funding streams were accessible. However, to fund an experience that only takes an audience of 40 twice a day over a two-week period but has production costs of £70,000 is a major challenge in the post-funding era. Cahoots went to the businesses with which they have relationships, such as OK and Castle Court, and asked them to invest. 'It's a win, win, win, win, win.'⁷⁹ The owner saves on rates and insurance, the commercial managers get commission and the theatre company gets space and much needed cash which may qualify for matching funding. The storage of scenery and illusions is a considerable benefit for Cahoots saving the company thousands each year and making it much easier to reuse and recycle existing material, thereby adding to the sustainability of their work. Paul estimates that the set for *The Gift* cost 30 per cent of building it from scratch. This partnership approach appears across the company's operation; partnership with OK on spaces, partnership with other companies on productions. The company has a series of co-productions planned with UK and international companies in the coming years, prompted by 'funding realities'.⁸⁰ Paul is uncomplaining about funding cuts:

It's too easy to say we've no money. We're doing more work now than we've ever done, we're producing better work than we've ever done and touring to more countries internationally. Our funding got cut like everyone else's. Get on with it.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Paul is realistic about the time limits of this venture. ‘If the recession were to stay for another ten years, you’d create a brilliant business model, but it’s not going to. What opportunities will be in a new location?’⁸² Paul is also aware of the legacy the company leaves behind. They leave an owner or a management team aware of the benefits theatre can bring to their space and will be open to the possibilities for the future. David believes there will be further opportunities for Cahoots in new spaces, each will be different bringing its own challenges, it might not be in Belfast city centre but rather ‘a retail park or on an arterial route or a very different provincial town centre but there will definitely be an opportunity to do something’.⁸³

David cannot say with any authority that the Cahoots deals have led to any further lettings in the city. To David the benefit is principally derived from having ‘a bit of life, a bit of something different [...] nowadays a successful shopping centre model is about so much more than shopping’.⁸⁴ He cites the newest Belfast shopping centre at Victoria Square as an example of one with a leisure component of cinema and restaurants all designed to promote ‘increased dwell time’ among the customers. Castle Court, which David describes as a second-generation shopping centre, benefits from the presence of Cahoots; ‘it lifts it and gives it something else’.⁸⁵ David notes that the rates system at the time of this interview had been in place since 2003 with rateable values ‘pegged at April 2001’.⁸⁶ The new rates from April 2015 are based on 2013 figures, ‘as a rule of thumb in-town high street rates will fall and out of town rates will go up to rebalance that equation’.⁸⁷ The changes in the city centre are significant with Donegall Place ‘our prime retail pitch’ reducing by 50 to 60 per cent and Castle Court by 40 to 50 per cent. Given that a large retail unit on

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Riddell-McClure, *Interview*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Donegall Place will have an existing ‘rates burden of £600-700,000 a year’⁸⁸ it will make a big difference.

This will undoubtedly change the profile of Belfast City Centre. David is adamant that ‘there are too many shops, end of story; anybody who thinks that all of those voids will be let again as traditional retail units is barking mad’.⁸⁹ The planning system in Northern Ireland is, he believes, too rigid to facilitate creative change of use. He cites the Lisburn Road in Belfast as an example of a successful arterial shopping road suffering as a result, ‘niche shopping, fashion, high end. We had this ridiculous scenario where there was a practically uniform rateable value from Tates Avenue all the way to Balmoral Avenue’,⁹⁰ where the reality of hot and cold spots should have been reflected in ‘a fluctuation and a variance’⁹¹ in rates. Consequently, when the retailers in the colder spot were affected by the recession ‘they could no longer afford the rent and we were left with a mass of vacant units’.⁹² This led to the return of traditional services, such as solicitors, that had been pushed out, or in some case up to the floors above moving back into the ground floor shop fronts creating a healthier mix of uses. David sees the same happening in Donegall Place although not without some resistance from the planners who recently objected to the proposed occupation of a unit in this ‘retail core’⁹³ by a Building Society.

Most of the accommodation above the ground floor in Donegall Place and Royal Avenue is vacant and ‘that is a unique situation in the British Isles context because of the Troubles’.⁹⁴ Belfast city centre in the 1970s and much

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

of the 1980s shutdown at 5pm and was a no-go area at night.⁹⁵ ‘In every other city of a similar size people live up there’⁹⁶ having had continuous residential occupation for hundreds of years. At that time, the ‘leisure time venue was the Golden Mile because it was that little bit outside; that has now switched to Cathedral Quarter’.⁹⁷ The Golden Mile, along Great Victoria Street to Shaftesbury Square, is now in need of major regeneration and ‘that’s a long way off’. He cites Edinburgh as an example of successful mixed use, with hotels and private accommodation occupying the upper floors above the shops on Princes Street. David believes ‘the numbers don’t stack up’⁹⁸ for developers considering investing in residences in the upper floor of some of Belfast city centre’s finest buildings so the spaces are lying derelict. Residents who do live in the areas immediately surrounding the city centre complain of the lack of facilities at night. David believes there is a lack of incentive for developers to create residential accommodation in the City Centre and that investment is needed to increase the appeal.⁹⁹

Occupy the high street

The work of Big Telly, Cahoots, and the buildings they occupy, is applicable to organisations looking for new ways to operate, as noted in the Introduction to the thesis, above, but it also has wider significance for society and the economy. In 2011, Mary Portas published her greatly anticipated review of high streets in England and Wales, with hopes pinned on its ability to revive the flagging fortunes of community shopping. Portas made bold statements; ‘The only hope our high streets have of surviving in the future is to recognise

⁹⁵ Affirmed by Richard Mills recollection of the Group Theatre in Chapter 4, above.

⁹⁶ Riddell-McClure, *Interview*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁹⁹ This was addressed to some extent as part of the social development aspiration of Cathedral Quarter as discussed in Chapter 9, above, however, while adjacent, it is not strictly a city centre location.

what's happened and deliver something new'.¹⁰⁰ She suggested that a change in approach is needed to bring community back into the high street 'once we invest in and create social capital in the heart of our communities, the economic capital will follow'.¹⁰¹ She quoted Jane Jacobs assertion that a street with its variety of shops, bars and cafés adds up to more than the sum of its parts; 'most of it is ostensibly trivial [...] but the sum is not trivial at all',¹⁰² but Portas' case studies in Ely and Swindon seem a far cry from Jacobs' great American cities.¹⁰³ Having set out a stall that looked away from retail and business for the life of the high street, Portas proceeded to make recommendations focusing on business and retail. Community involvement is restricted to a say in planning,¹⁰⁴ and the arts is barely mentioned, appearing only in the category of 'meanwhile use', the notion that a space will be returned to retail use whenever possible.¹⁰⁵

Watching from the side-lines was Bill Grimsey, who revived the fortunes of Wickes and Iceland.¹⁰⁶ Grimsey was critical of Portas who 'promised the earth but delivered little [and] failed to highlight to Government

¹⁰⁰ Mary Portas, *The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets* (2011), available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf> [accessed on 13 August 2020], p. 3.

¹⁰¹ *The Portas Review*, p. 3.

¹⁰² Anthony M. Orum and Zachary P. Neal, 'Introduction', in Anthony M. Orum and Zachary P. Neal (eds), *Common ground?: readings and reflections on public space* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1-10, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Belfast is a considerably larger city than either study.

¹⁰⁴ *The Portas Review*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁶ Bill Grimsey, *The Grimsey Review: An alternative future for the high street* (2013), available at <<http://www.vanishinghighstreet.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/GrimseyReview04.092.pdf>> [accessed on 28 September 2020], p. 56.

the dramatic structural changes impacting the retail industry'.¹⁰⁷ Grimsey's own review was published in 2013, and was clear that 'town centres/high streets cannot depend on retailing for future prosperity'.¹⁰⁸ Like Portas, he was not short on big ideas, his central theme being a 'complete community hub solution'¹⁰⁹ drawing together manufacturing, retail, business, residential, education, arts and leisure. He called for solutions tailored to the individual needs and heritage of each town. Where Portas was light on detail, Grimsey was specific, defining business rate cuts, time frames for trials and suggesting rates for compulsory investment from national retail chains.¹¹⁰ He promoted technology in 'The Networked High Street' based on mobile broadband to connect people and businesses locally and nationally,¹¹¹ and community versions of Apple's Genius Bar in local micro-tech hubs with open access Maker Labs and 3D printing facilities.¹¹² Neither Portas nor Grimsey covered Northern Ireland, but the problems they highlighted in Great Britain are as pressing in NI. Where Grimsey reported shop vacancy figures of over 14 per cent for GB in 2012,¹¹³ property agent Lisney reported 19 per cent shop vacancy in NI and 23 per cent in Belfast. Newry, in the southeast, and Coleraine, in the northwest, were said to have fared worst with vacancies doubling in the year from 2011.¹¹⁴

Both Big Telly with Creative Shops, and Cahoots NI with the work in the Danske Bank and Castle Court, answer several of the points raised by both Portas and Grimsey. Creative Shops is the stronger of the two, as it fits

¹⁰⁷ *The Grimsey Review*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Kevin Magee, BBC News, *Rise in number of empty shops across Northern Ireland* (2012), available at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-19700759>> [accessed on 3 October 2014].

Grimsey's community hub – not the complete solution he proposes with its tech and small manufacturing focus, but Creative Shops, as demonstrated by the breadth of work with young and old, retailers, community and tourists, is a resource rooted in its community and available not for the making of things, but the making of art. That the Box and Creative Shops around the Province are located in smaller, semi-rural areas, gives potency and presence. The locations are prominent and central ensuring the locals become aware of it and are rooted in and tailored to the locality. The Cahoots venues in Belfast are no less visible, although diluted by the town context, but Cahoots adds significantly to the sum of parts identified by Jacobs and to the life and variety which David McClure asserts is important. Both fit Portas' model of 'meanwhile use', although a timescale is not defined. In Northern Ireland this has already been many years and as David suggests, Belfast may never again see full retail occupancy in the city centre, so meanwhile could last a long time.

The work described here is not the core work of the companies featured in the studies above. They still develop, commission, present and tour work around Britain and Ireland. Both Big Telly and Cahoots regularly attend festivals in the UK, Ireland and internationally, although that is likely to change as a result of the pandemic. The shops work is a new strand, self-funding, self-generating and self-sustaining, a creative response to austerity and a grasping of opportunities. The use of the spaces has not been a drain on meagre and dwindling resources, and the work presented has not been at the expense of other shows, production values or professional practitioners, but has allowed the companies to operate more sustainably using the spaces for auditions, rehearsals, set building, storage and performance. Production budgets have been small, but reusing and adapting items that they previously could not have afforded to store, ensured creativity and cost effectiveness. Performers and practitioners have gained from additional paid work and audiences, many not conversant with theatre, have experienced art, sometimes for free, as part of their weekly shop. These companies have naturally adapted a centuries-old street-theatre practice, but neither Portas nor Grimsey have looked for any parallels in the retail sector.

There are other examples of the practice. Theatre Deli acts as a broker between arts organisations and those with empty premises, placing small arts groups in spaces such as the old Guardian offices at Farringdon, London and more recently a former Woolworths store in Sheffield.¹¹⁵ This is a worthwhile service which has succeeded in finding space for some hard to accommodate artists including aerialists and acrobats. There is, however, something more sustainable in a company working directly with a building owner or manager, developing an ongoing relationship that may continue in other forms once they move out. The stories of Big Telly and Cahoots are ongoing. The success of these projects has not been despite adversity but rather because of it. That Northern Ireland should have so many empty shops at the same time as theatre companies are suffering from continuing funding cuts, served to provide the right conditions for this model to emerge.

Part Three Conclusion

Part Three has shown why two of Belfast's most significant cultural institutions came into being and how and they developed over time. The presence of a highly-driven individual or small group was shown to be critical to the development of these spaces, especially the newly built venues, and the clarity and appropriateness of the brief was seen to be key to the delivery of a successful project. The quality of professional advice was influential in the decision to proceed with the projects, how well the spaces met the brief, and how sustainable the completed project would be, economically, socially and environmentally. This was seen to enable the company to plan for a culturally sustainable future. As important as the professional team of designers were those involved in the economic appraisal and business planning that pre-dated project inception, as the flawed and optimistic planning of the MAC attests. These two chapters have shown that a project champion or champions with a clear brief, leading an engaged and active team of staff and professional

¹¹⁵ Roland Smith, 'The work of Theatre Delicatessen', Theatres Trust Conference 15 – Valuing Theatres, 2015.

advisers, can deliver a successful project, even when the obstacles of public building procurement are against them.

Professionalization was evident in the timelines of the Lyric, OMac and the MAC, and the later de-professionalization and re-professionalization of theatre was seen in the spaces of Big Telly. This has shown how the matter of threshold affects not only access to a building, but an individual's opportunities to access work as a practitioner, be it paid, as an early-career trainee, or unpaid as a community member. The use of non-formal spaces may appear to be a recent development, but the comparison with the origins of European theatre shows that it is rediscovered. These studies show how the threshold of non-formal spaces is less clearly marked, making the spaces more accessible, in all its meanings, than the formal spaces. This has resulted in a broader reach for audiences – although this was impossible to measure effectively – and for presenters of work, a model closer to curation than programming is evident. Although Chapter 10 does not offer a strategy for the reinvention of town centres, the work of Bill Grimsey and others in this field shows that there are opportunities for small spaces for theatre to contribute meaningfully as part of a broader local-government-led approach. Chapters 9 and 10 show how this might be facilitated either with a flagship project including the MAC, or smaller interventions such as Creative Shops.

The following chapter forms the conclusion to the thesis and aims to draw together the themes uncovered in Part Three, with the wider understanding of context, culture and space brought by Parts One and Two.

Conclusion

Where to now for small theatres in Belfast?

First Pantomime

He took us to the Christmas Pantomime;
it was our first, this tale of Beanstalk Jack.
We'd heard the story told time after time,
so, though they danced and sang, I could keep track;
but Jack a girl, his mother a man, the cow
a man in front and one behind, seemed daft,
that clumsy canvas shape bulged anyhow –
it was small wonder other children laughed.

I liked the Giant's family on their stilts,
handing the dropped cap up from left to right,
but that was all, till, in my school book years
those strolling players, Doran and his peers,
Caesar in togas and *Macbeth* in kilts,
for me first set the curtained stage alight.¹

John Hewitt

Like Hewitt, many of those interviewed for this thesis identified pantomime as their first experience of live theatre. In 2020, as Covid-19 hits the performing arts hard, many theatres have had no choice but to cancel this year's Christmas show, typically the highest-earner of the year, underpinning their business. Even pre-Covid, theatres were struggling as funding declined, and competition for audiences increased. As noted in Chapter 7, above, large receiving theatres in England seating more than 1,000 have been the only ones showing growth in audiences, but their programming has been reduced to more populist fare.

¹ John Hewitt, *Kites in Spring: A Belfast Boyhood* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1983), p. 17.

Small theatres and arts centres, including the Lyric and the MAC, are already living a hand-to-mouth existence. To become economically and culturally sustainable they need to maximise their engagement with the communities they serve and make the most of their two greatest assets – their people, and their buildings. The buildings provide many opportunities outside the performance space and show times, but in a post-Covid world where audiences may not return in large numbers, they need to look not only at how they maximize the built asset, but how they can take their work out of the building and engage with audiences and communities in other ways, to increase their relevance and help to ensure their sustainability.

Cultural Sustainability

For small theatres and theatre companies, economic sustainability is an ever-present imperative, but it is environmental sustainability, particularly as a solution to the climate emergency, that most will think of when sustainability is mentioned. As well as benefitting the planet, it can help theatres to run more efficiently and thus help their economic sustainability. Initiatives such as Julie's Bicycle exist to assist theatres in accessing resources that help them maximize their environmental sustainability.² However, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, above, social sustainability has seen theatres placed at the centre of initiatives to improve the wellbeing of towns and cities, and was at the core of the Cathedral Quarter development in Belfast examined in Chapter 9, above. The thread that ties this together for theatres is cultural sustainability, questions around which run through this thesis. There is no generally accepted working definition of cultural sustainability as it may be applied to theatres and theatre companies, but the Warwick Commission report from 2015, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth*, offers a useful set of criteria. It is a

² Julie's Bicycle, *Why we exist - About us* <<https://juliesbicycle.com/why-we-exist/about-us/>> [accessed on 10 September 2020]. Based in London, the charity, created with assistance from Theatres Trust, Julie's Bicycle helps the creative community advocate for environmental sustainability, and provides practical tools to help organisations improve their sustainability.

significant piece of work that attempts to see ‘how Britain can secure greater value from its cultural and creative assets’.³ Yet, Northern Ireland was not under consideration for the commission, indeed the membership and much of the research is centred on London or the more substantial regional arts bodies. As such, it misses the hardship experienced by the small theatres at the coal-face of arts delivery in the UK, which, as the report was written ‘at a time of austerity and significant cuts in public funding’,⁴ were those suffering most. Despite this, the arts were flourishing with creativity and inventiveness, as displayed by Big Telly and Cahoots in Chapter 10, above. The situation in autumn 2020 is entirely different, and the outlook bleak. The report provides a means of framing the observations made in the space studies in Chapters 8-10, above, by showing how a cultural sustainability approach might help a theatre to channel its resources most effectively. It focuses on five areas of cultural value and concludes each section with a series of goals and recommendations for growth and enrichment, which serve as a checklist for the cultural sustainability of arts organisations and local and regional arts communities.

The goals are: a cultural and creative ecosystem generating cultural wellbeing,⁵ economic growth and opportunity for all communities; production and consumption of culture and creativity should be enjoyed by the whole population; a world-class cultural education for all to ensure the wellbeing of the population and secure a future for the creative industries; a thriving digital cultural sphere that is open and available to all; and a vibrant creative life at local and regional levels that reflects and enriches community expressions of

³ Jonathan Neelands *et al.*, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (University of Warwick: Report of the Warwick Commission, 2015), available at

https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_report_2015.pdf [accessed on 11 June 2020], p. 6.

⁴ *Enriching Britain*, p. 23.

⁵ Access to arts and culture has become a recognised part of the debate on wellbeing, with GPs connecting their patients with local practitioners through Arts on Prescription schemes.

identity.⁶ Joined-up policy making and scaling of investment is recommended, points which the UK government, NI Assembly and local authorities have not actioned since the report; in fact investment has reduced and Brexit has kept the focus of policy making off culture. Reductions in funding to arts organisations, in Northern Ireland, compounded by the prolonged closure of the Assembly, as noted in Chapter 1 above, included in-year funding cuts which caused problems for many NI companies.

Theatres and theatre companies in NI would do well to consider these goals as part of a culturally sustainable future – some are already doing well. Big Telly and Cahoots have shown innovation for creative and cultural expansion, with increased programme output, and economic growth with more jobs for practitioners, in-kind sponsorship and commercial benefit from increased footfall and dwell times. The Box and Creative Shops, with a community of users and the hub feel promoted by Grimsey, deliver significantly on diversity and personal culture, and the Castle Court shows accessed new audiences in large numbers from a section of the community isolated from the arts. Building participation is demonstrated anecdotally in the performance-space studies, but measurement is a tougher task in which neither company has succeeded, unsurprisingly as many events were unticketed. Even for ticketed events, such as Big Telly's *I Spy* and *Game of Phones*, there was inadvertent participation by those not booked to attend who got caught up in the action. Where data for attendance and participation does exist, it is quantitative, in the form of contact information, although some of Cahoots' efforts ask for comments, permitting a qualitative strand.⁷

Paul McEneaney's⁸ assertion that Cahoots work is not tied to the curriculum, shows a broad approach to cultural education. That the work is produced on its own merit but carries opportunities for learning among a young

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-73.

⁷ Making sense of data is time-consuming and requires skilled analysts to interpret and examine trends, a service best provided at a regional or national level.

⁸ The Artistic Director of Cahoots NI, studied in Chapter 10, above.

audience, is a successful model for the company, and not just for the young. Parents are educated when attending a Cahoots show as their first theatre experience, a trend which Paul has noted strongly. Creative Shops expands creative education beyond the young, with many events being curated by older people with assistance from professional facilitators.⁹ Elements of this work were reflected in the events in the Box and Creative Shops, and Big Telly has created significant opportunities for graduates working in the Box with the Cultural Entrepreneurs scheme. This does not diminish the work of the Lyric and the MAC in these areas, both of which have active and engaged education and outreach departments which will be more critical than ever to the companies in a post-Covid Belfast.

Before Covid-19 became the necessity that spawned invention, digital culture was a small, separate strand for most companies. The streaming of theatre to cinemas and homes in initiatives like NT Live is a high-profile example, but innovation and development in this field has come from the small companies engaging creatively with the idea. *Game of Phones* was an early example, using technology provided by the user and infrastructure by the 3G network, they produced a new piece of work that combined the digital with live performance and the local environment. Big Telly could not control the quality of service in the telephone network, so Grimsey's assertion that High Street connectivity should be provided, is noteworthy; if the audience could subscribe to a local Wi-Fi service, the production would benefit. That Covid-19 and the associated lockdown occurred in a UK that had widespread high-speed internet and 4G data coverage, made it possible for inventive approaches to delivering work by small companies with the technology to hand.¹⁰ This is an area where the Lyric and the MAC must improve their offer in order to retain and develop audiences. In early summer 2020, the Lyric partnered with BBC NI to

⁹ Big Telly has a strand of work with older people in their Spring Chickens company, which uses workshop activities to create performance pieces by older people based on their stories and experiences.

¹⁰ With the 5G network rolling out nationwide, the bandwidth available will increase, and the possibilities expand further.

commission six five-minute dramas from local writers, actors and directors; a successful initiative which gave opportunities to practitioners to work in a different medium, transferring their skills from stage to small screen.¹¹ Staff in front of house and technical roles are not so fortunate as, at the moment, their jobs are reliant on performances at the theatre. However, in some cases there are opportunities for these staff in delivering and curating the new online content, and venues are seeking ways to apply the skills of their staff to new activities.

Identity is a complex issue in Northern Ireland within which ideas of community, place and space are tightly bound. The work of Cahoots reflects the identity of children and young people and, in the case of *The Gift* in Castle Court, deftly confronts the meaning of conflict through music and a multi-sensory approach. Given an audience that may come from anywhere in the city or beyond, the notion of community is broadly defined. In the Box, however, Portstewart itself became a protagonist in much of the work, using the beauty of the seaside resort as the base for a shared sense of community on which locals and tourists can agree. This site-responsive approach to the work was Zoë Seaton's key driver for the work in the Box and Creative Shops around the Province – all rooted firmly in their locality. The idea of promoting regional equity and Grimsey's desire to see specific solutions for each area, are unified in Big Telly's Creative Shops Project. The MAC, with its strong connection to the creative community and location on the northern edge of the city centre, has opportunities to develop this with the local community to the north – the presence of the foyer artwork 'The Permanent Present', indicates an organisation that is aware of seeking to engage with this community. For the Lyric, this connection to community is less easy to envisage due to its location, so a different approach to community may be needed, possibly in the digital realm.

¹¹ Lyric Theatre Belfast, *Splendid Isolation: Lockdown Drama*, available at <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/splendid-isolation-lockdown-drama/>> [accessed on 10 September 2020].

Theatres are among the most visible parts of the cultural ecosystem and have a built asset and infrastructure that assists them in delivering product and services to audiences, but the same opportunities can hinder them in delivering on other goals. Threshold can be a perceived barrier to diversity and inclusivity. The MAC and the Lyric are not on the High Street, and to enter requires a definite act on the part of the visitor compared to stepping into a shop. Theatres are fixed in one location – the company may tour or conduct outreach work, but this lacks the persistent presence of longer-term intervention in a community offered by Creative Shops. The digital cultural sphere offers the greatest opportunity for development. Theatres are well-placed to deliver digital content and increasingly rely on the internet to promote engagement through social media, but Covid-19 has shown that any company, using available technology and inexpensive platforms, can interact with audiences across the globe in real-time. All theatres are exploring the ways they can make the most effective use of their buildings to help them sustain their operations; this must become an increasing part of their work if they are to develop new strands of income and activities that bolster their usefulness and relevance.

Whether the reliance on digital tools of communication brought about by Covid-19 will lead to the dystopian future predicted, uncannily, by E. M. Forster in *The Machine Stops*,¹² or the positive message of Marinetti's contemporaneous *Futurist Manifesto*,¹³ only time will tell. The truth will be

¹² E. M. Forster, *The Machine Stops* (London: Penguin, 2011). Forster's 1909 science fiction novella envisages a world where humans live below ground in standardised accommodation, communicating only by video conference and instant message. All human needs are met by the all-powerful Machine, a form of artificial intelligence.

¹³ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters. March, 1912. [With an Initial Manifesto of Futurism by F. T. Marinetti.]* (London: Sackville Gallery, 1912). The poet Marinetti heralds technology and machinery as the way forward, decrying those fearful of progress. Far from being swamped by the growth of the machine, the arts

somewhere in between and will certainly not be homogenous – unlike Plato’s prisoners,¹⁴ most of us have enjoyed broad and varied experiences of the world, so we know that the flickering shadows on our monitors are not the only reality. There is a danger, however, as the online world permits, even fosters, a blinkered approach that promotes confirmation bias without the benefit of a moderating influence.

The future of capital projects in Belfast

The work of Big Telly and Cahoots NI made the most of corporate sponsorship, sponsorship-in-kind by those providing space, and project funding from local government, statutory agencies including ACNI, and from trusts and foundations. The construction of the MAC and third Lyric relied on capital project funding from the UK government, the devolved government of Northern Ireland, and their agencies. In 2020, almost a decade after their completion, the landscape of funding for capital projects in the arts has changed – Big Lottery funding of major arts buildings peaked in the mid-2000s, and the subsequent Heritage Lottery funding of arts refurbishments has dwindled. This has reduced the number of capital arts projects being developed in the UK, and those now being funded are smaller, however this does offer an opportunity to small venues and those using the Community Asset Transfer.¹⁵

would be absorbed within it becoming part of the rapidly changing world to the extent that libraries and museums would be destroyed.

¹⁴ Plato, ‘The Allegory of the Cave’, in Francis MacDonal Cornford (ed.), *The Republic*, VII Vols, Vol. V (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 227 (ll. 514a–520a). The *Allegory of the Cave* reflects on education and experience and how they inform perception. Prisoners in the cave see only the shadows cast on the wall they face by the fire behind them. Each perceives reality based on their own experience; only through exposure to a world beyond the wall and the cave can the prisoner contextualise what he has seen in the shadows.

¹⁵ Department for Communities, *Community Asset Transfer policy framework* (2020), available at <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/community-asset-transfer-policy->

A few commercial theatre operators, including Delfont Mackintosh Theatres, Ambassador Theatre Group, and Nimax, have spent money on refurbishing their venues, but their appetite for such work will undoubtedly be diminished by the effects of Covid-19. There is no commercial theatre operation of this type in Northern Ireland, so there is little likelihood of any such project in Belfast. There remain a few substantial projects funded centrally by the UK government, including The Factory in Manchester, and such projects will occasionally come up in Belfast, as was the case with the Waterfront Hall and Odyssey/SSE Arena. However, as demonstrated in Chapter 7 above, these projects were politically motivated and dismissed other proposals responding to a need in the community. The late 1990s and 2000s saw most NI councils develop new arts venues under the direction of the ACNI initiative, so local government-led capital projects will only occasionally continue to appear.¹⁶

As a theatre consultant, I am aware of the changes happening in the funding and procurement of projects, and one of the most likely route to new capital projects is through developer-led partnerships, where a commercial developer of retail, office or industrial accommodation seeks to include a performing arts venue in the scheme. Similarly, developers may be required to

framework#:~:text=This%20is%20a%20policy%20framework,from%20public%20bodies%20to%20communities.> [accessed on 7 September 2020].

Community Asset Transfer is a change in management and/or ownership of land or buildings, from public bodies to communities.

¹⁶ Newry Chamber of Commerce & Trade, *£20m Newry City Centre Regeneration Scheme Receives Further £8m From BRCD*, available at <<https://newrychamber.com/20m-newry-city-centre-regeneration-scheme-receives-further-8m-from-brcd/>> [accessed on 7 September 2020]. Newry and Mourne District Council, in the southeast of the Province, is currently procuring the redevelopment of the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre and adjacent Town Hall as the centrepiece of a city centre regeneration scheme. This £20-million placemaking scheme is funded, in part, from the Belfast Region City Deal, where funding is provided by the UK government direct to local authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships.

refurbish an existing building for the right to build on adjacent land. This may be as a planning obligation through Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy, or Section 76 in NI, as discussed in Chapter 3, above, which gives local authorities some control over the character of a development. In shopping centres in the UK, developers have typically provided cinemas or ice rinks, however China, the Middle East and Germany have developed, or are developing, malls that include a theatre – Japan had already developed this idea decades before. In Belfast, this is a natural extension to the work of Cahoots in Castle Court, as discussed in Chapter 10 above, and could prove a more sustainable way for a theatre company to operate without the expense and worry of the managing and maintaining the facility.

Incorporating small performance spaces into larger projects occurs in other ways, for example the Studio Theatre at Birmingham Library,¹⁷ not the first but one of the most high-profile venues to be part of a library building.¹⁸ Schools continue to develop performance spaces, most commonly independent schools in the secondary sector, as do universities – the planned Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities at Oxford University will feature a recital hall and several other performance spaces.¹⁹ There are also those spaces

¹⁷ The Studio links directly to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre foyer.

¹⁸ The Barbican is another large example, but smaller local authorities have followed this model. Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire and Enfield are two examples.

¹⁹ Much of Theatre Project's work in the US is in university level performance space design.

in heritage buildings, including the theatres at Chatsworth House and Stanford Hall,²⁰ which make possible another strand of visitor experience.²¹

The days of substantial public funding of capital arts projects in the UK are gone, but the creative industries are still working towards a sustainable future. Covid-19 has accelerated the conversation surrounding the sustainability of theatre building that had already begun, and it presents the opportunity to have audiences more actively engaged in the curation of the product, an aspiration of the Warwick Commission Report. As the work outside the buildings is more important for sustaining audiences, for now at least, the smaller, more agile and adaptable companies including Big Telly and Cahoots NI are best-placed to take advantage of any opportunities. Return to theatre operations as we know it is unlikely until 2021 at the earliest, so the future for the MAC and the Lyric is uncertain. The MAC has some advantages being centrally located in a recently developed heritage quarter focusing on culture, offering a broad programme, and range of spaces, making it possible to be creative in the way it might monetize them. The Lyric, however, a building dedicated to the creation and presentation of theatre, is less well located in the city, and has fewer spaces.

As Northern Ireland approaches its centenary, its capital, Belfast, must look beyond its boundaries to see how other areas have responded to the move into the twenty-first century. Other cities in the Province including Armagh and

²⁰ This 1930s theatre is now part of the Defence National Rehabilitation Centre (DNRC) where public performances and tours will be limited for operational reasons. However, it has recently undergone substantial renovation and conservation, with the installation of new equipment. For TP I conducted a feasibility study in 2019 into the operational implications and viability of public events in the theatre.

²¹ There are no such spaces in Northern Ireland, however, Clotworthy House Arts Centre, Antrim, features a studio theatre in the former stable block of Antrim Castle. From 1985–2009, Castle Ward Opera staged an annual festival in a converted stable on the grounds of Castle Ward, a National Trust property in Co. Down.

Derry, which each have a distinct cultural aspiration, are worthy of investigation. Derry was the UK City of Culture in 2013 and a strand of work to examine the legacy of that year could prove instructive. However, it is also essential for those involved in culture in Belfast to review how their works sits in the wider context. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, above, Belfast has always looked south to the Republic and east to Britain to define itself politically, economically, socially, and culturally. An awareness of cultural trends in Dublin is essential, but the vibrant arts scene of Cork and Galway, the latter having a strong international arts festival, are important for context. Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester are cities with which Belfast has strong historical links, but the cultural offer in other UK cities of a similar scale and population could prove instructive including Stoke on Trent, Coventry which is about to embark on a very challenging year as UK City of Culture in 2021, Sunderland, which shares a similar industrial heritage, and Hull, which delivered its UK City of Culture offer in 2017. It is also easier than ever to develop relationships with other cities in Europe and across the globe and, as Big Telly has demonstrated, to reach new audiences in previously unforeseen territories.

The next few years will be challenging for all venues and theatre companies in Belfast, especially the Lyric which, as it approaches the 70th anniversary of the first Lyric in 1951, differs greatly from the venue Mary O'Malley founded. How it and the MAC fare in years to come should be watched closely.

Culture, identity and the big outstanding questions

2020 will surely be remembered as the year of Coronavirus, and its effects on theatres and cultural life will continue for some time, but it will pass. Yet normality as it was in 2019, however it was experienced by everyone, will not be the same when it returns, and the creation, curation and consumption of culture will continue to evolve. The pandemic has also diverted attention away from the effects of Brexit which are not yet fully understood and look set to be potentially damaging. Northern Ireland has become the centrepiece for debate around Brexit, as any plans for the border have far-reaching consequences for

the experience of identity in the Province. There was an opportunity to make NI a special case in terms of EU/UK shipping of goods and freedom of movement, but the DUP were against this as it would effectively make NI different to the rest of the UK, which is counter to their policy.

The border has been invisible for most of this century, the only indication being a change in road signage. There are no checkpoints or barriers, and it is an important tenet of the Belfast Agreement that this remain the case. Following Brexit, customs checks need to take place somewhere, which could have implications for all arts organisation touring into and out of the EU. Companies from both sides of the border, amateur and professional, tour extensively across the island and, often crossing the border several times over the course of a tour. The Lyric and the MAC both regularly accommodate shows from the Republic. The practical implications are more acute on the island of Ireland and might include the need for an ATA and CPD Carnet,²² to permit the tour van and its contents to transit into or through the territory – an expense, administrative task and possible cause of delay, that does not currently exist. Practical considerations for cast and crew could include passport checks. Anyone born in NI prior to 31 December 2004 is entitled to Irish citizenship and a passport²³ and, since Brexit, many British passport holders in NI have taken up the opportunity to hold both, but those who hold British-only passports may be subject to checks. Practical considerations can be resolved, but any interventions at the border will inevitably lead to a sense

²² GOV.UK, *Notice 104: ATA and CPD carnets*,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-104-ata-and-cpd-carnets/notice-104-ata-and-cpd-carnets#countries-that-accept-ata-carnets> [accessed on 24 September 2020]. The *Admission Temporaire*/Temporary Admission (ATA) Carnet is required for the temporary export of goods and the *Carnet de Passages en Douane* (CPD) allows the temporary export of UK registered motor vehicles.

²³ Citizens Information, *Irish citizenship through birth or descent*,

https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/irish_citizenship/irish_citizenship_through_birth_or_descent.html [accessed 24 September 2020].

of separateness, accentuating the perception of difference between north and south. It adds another threshold to be crossed for theatre companies and audiences, as those venues in towns near the border, including Derry, Strabane, Newry, and Monaghan, attract visitors from both territories. It also raises a question about the carrying of passports for identification – in certain places or situations in NI, being discovered carrying the wrong passport might be inadvisable, as the nationality could be taken as a marker for the religion of the holder.²⁴

Brexit and Covid-19 together, raise crucial questions about the nature of cultural identity in the Province, particularly for theatre companies. Covid-19 forced practitioners into isolation, but they responded by opening to an online audience in many ways. All the companies and venues studied in Part Three had a local and regional identity – their home area and the Province – but as discussed in Chapter 10, above, they have seen opportunities for a national and international audience. What is unknown is how this will affect their sense of identity and how it is presented in their work. Will their local/regional voice retain its distinctive quality, or will it be diluted by a need to appeal to a wider audience? What is true for theatre companies is also true for audiences, who can now engage with work from across the globe. Will the experience of participating regularly on a global platform diminish the individual's sense of Irish/Northern Irish/British identity, or will it, more positively, encourage a more outward-looking perspective that would help each person reframe their own prejudices? Or will it encourage individuals to seek out only online experiences that confirm their bias?

There is irony in the fact that Covid-19 has offered a global audience to companies in NI, just as Brexit looks set to place obstacles in the way of physically connecting with their audience on the same island. What is certain, is that theatre companies and theatres will take on the challenge and respond

²⁴ Belfast has strong links also with North America, both the United States and Canada. The USA considers itself instrumental in the Peace Process and has persistently expressed concern about the possible effects of Brexit on the border and freedom of movement on the island.

creatively – the ‘door into the dark’, now a window onto projected light. Heaney, interviewed in 1972, the worst year of the Troubles, offered hope which is equally relevant in current times: ‘If we winter this one out, we can summer anywhere’.²⁵

²⁵ Seamus Heaney in, ‘New book of poems launched’, *Cork Examiner*, 22 November 1972.

Bibliography

Manuscript Sources, archive notes and drawings in Public Archives

Belfast

Linen Hall Library Belfast, Digital Theatre Archive, Lyric Collection

LY-0257/1725, *Programme – Four Plays of the Cuchulain Cycle*, 1969

LY-0078/1577, *Programme – We do it for love by Patrick Galvin at the Lyric Theatre*, 1976

Linen Hall Library Belfast, Irish Theatre Archive

Belfast/Civic Arts Theatre Press Files # 1 & 2, *Northern Whig*, 11 February 1947

Belfast/Civic Arts, Green Folder, Theatre Press Files # 1 & 2, Pratley, David & Associates with Price Waterhouse Coppers, *The future of middle-scale theatre in Belfast for Belfast City Council*, 1999

Belfast/Civic Arts Theatre Press Files # 1 & 2, Rafferty, Gerald, *Over to you, Arts Council*, undated

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

BCT/6/14/4, McLelland, Allan, *Arts Theatre Movement 1944*

CAB 9D/81/1, Cabinet Secretariat, *Cabinet Conclusions*, 19 November 1948

COM/4D/2, Festival of Britain NI Theatre Sub-Committee Minutes 14 July 1949

D22435/4, Wilmot, Hubert, *Arts Theatre press release*, 1959

Downer, W. H. N., Draft memorandum on Ulster Theatre Company to Sir Basil Brooke, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 1948

Coleraine

Riverside Theatre Archive

Riverside Theatre Brochure

Peter Moro and Partners, *Report – Proposed Theatre for the New University of Ulster*, 1972

Galway

National University of Ireland Galway, James Hardiman Library, Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive

T4/502, Lyric Theatre Belfast, *Board Minutes May 1960–January 1969*

T4/503, Lyric Theatre Belfast, *Board Minutes February 1969–September 1978*

T4/595, Downes, J. Neil, *Small Theatre for Belfast for Mrs Mary O'Malley*, 1959

T4/597, Downes, J. Neil, *New Theatre at Ridgeway Street for the Lyric Players Theatre Belfast*, 1964

T4/599, Lyric Theatre, *Programme for the laying of the Foundation Stone of the New Theatre 1965*

T4/601-607, Fundraising, Lyric Theatre, *Various documents on the development proposals for the new Lyric to raise £130,000*, 1964-1967

T4/609, Fundraising, Lyric, *Lists of guests invited to fundraising dinners*, 1966

T4/611, Downes, J. Neil, *Lyric Theatre drawings 36-39*, 1966

T4/613, Moore, Robert Alan, *Deed of sale of 28 Ridgeway Street*, 1974

T4/614, Downes, J. Neil, *Lyric Theatre drawings 42-43*, 1967

T4/617, *Lyric Theatre photographs*

T4/619, McAlpine, Sir Alfred, *Construction Drawings of Lyric Theatre*, 1968

T4/623, ISER Architects, *Lyric Players Theatre Phase II Dressing Room Revisions*, 1976

T4/661, Theatre at Guildford, *Architects Journal*, 1965

T4/817, Downes, J. Neil, *Letter to Pearse O'Malley*, 1968

Primary Sources: Printed

Books

Carson, Ciaran, *From There to Here*, (Winston-Salem; NC: Wake Forest University Press, 2019)

Heaney, Seamus, *Door into the dark* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969)

Heaney, Seamus, *Eleven Poems* (Belfast: Queen's University, 1965)

- Hewitt, John, *Kites in Spring: A Belfast Boyhood* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1983)
- Longley, Michael and Frank Ormsby (eds), *John Hewitt: selected poems* (Belfast Blackstaff Press, 2007)
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso, *Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters, March, 1912. [With an Initial Manifesto of Futurism by F. T. Marinetti.]* (London: Sackville Gallery, 1912)
- Forster, E. M., *The Machine Stops* (London: Penguin, 2011)
- Plato, 'The Allegory of the Cave', in Cornford, Francis MacDonald (ed.), *The Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

Official papers

- Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Objectives and Strategies* (Belfast: Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 1990)
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Building for the Arts - Celebrating 10 years of Lottery Funding* (Belfast: Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2004)
- BOP Consulting, *Measuring the economic benefits of arts and culture* (London: Arts Council England, 2012)
- CEMA Northern Ireland, *First Annual Report 1 February 1943 – 31 March 1944*
- CEMA Northern Ireland, *Second Annual Report 1944 – 1945*
- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2013)
- Department of Finance and Personnel, *Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy* (Belfast: Central Procurement Directorate, 2014)
- Equality Act 2010* (London: HMSO, 2010)
- Equality Act 2010: Explanatory Notes Northern Ireland* (London: HMSO, 2010)
- Hughes, Gerry, *Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Framework* (Belfast: Department for Social Development - Northern Ireland, 2003)
- Northern Ireland, Statistics & Research Agency, *Individual Questionnaire* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency, 2011)

- Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency, *Northern Ireland census 2011: key statistics summary report* (Belfast: NISRA, 2014)
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *2018 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland* NISRA Statistical Bulletin (Belfast: NISRA, 2019)
- OMAC[2] working title: *Project Brief for the appointment of an architect-led integrated design team* (Belfast: OMAC, 2006)
- Priestly, Clive, *Structures and Arrangements for Funding the Arts in Northern Ireland: Report to Jeremy Hanley MP, Minister with Responsibility for the Arts* (Belfast: Department of Education NI, 1992)
- Southwood, Russell, *Review of Performing Arts Venues and Spaces in Belfast* (Belfast: Belfast City Council and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 1997)
- Strong, Judith, *The Arts Council guide to building for the arts* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1990)
- The Green Book – Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation* (London: HM Treasury, 2018)
- Winter, Graham, Louise Smith, Suzie Cave and Alan Rehfisch, *Comparison of the planning systems in the four UK countries - Research Paper 713-2015* (London: House of Commons Library, Northern Ireland Assembly, National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Parliament Information Centre, 2016)

Interviews and private correspondence

Interviews available at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/004ipix4siyaygp/AADX9Py2Of4lFpUPPLkLh-TNa?dl=0>

- Riddell, John, *Interview* Branch, Jan (14 March 2019)
- Riddell, John, *Interview* Forster, Bob (4 February 2015)
- Riddell, John, *Interview* Hall, Alastair and Ian McKnight (27 November 2018)
- Riddell, John, *Interview* McClure, David (3 February 2015)
- Riddell, John, *Interview* McEaney, Paul Bosco (3 February 2015)
- Riddell, John, *Interview* McReynolds, Anne (15 March 2019)

Riddell, John, *Interview* Mills, Richard (4 March 2015)
Riddell, John, *Interview* Seaton, Zoë (20 August 2014)
Riddell, John, *Zoom Interview* Seaton, Zoë (20 April 2020)
Riddell, John, *Interview* Tuomey, John (11 June 2019)
Riddell, John, *Interview* Wakely, Richard (14 March 2019)

Riddell, John, email from McReynolds, Anne, 'Corporate Sponsorship', 19 July
2019

Secondary Sources

Books and Articles

Adams, David (ed.), *Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment* (London: Association of British Theatre Technicians, 2013)
Adamson, Ian, *The Identity of Ulster: The Land, the Language and the People* (Belfast: Pretani Press, 1982)
Agnew, John A., *Geopolitics: re-visioning world politics* (London: Routledge, 2003)
Agnew, John A., *Making political geography* (London: Arnold, 2002)
Agnew, John A. and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering space: hegemony, territory and international political economy* (London: Routledge, 1995)
Anderson, Don, 'Ormeau Baths Gallery closed after arts council stops funds', *Museums Journal*, 106 (4) (2006), 7-14
Beckett, J. C., *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923* (London: Faber, 1981)
Bell, Stanley, Norman Marshall and Richard Southern, *Essentials of Stage-Planning* (London: Frederick Muller, 1949)
Bell, Sam Hanna, *The theatre in Ulster: a survey of the dramatic movement in Ulster from 1902 until the present day* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972)
'New book of poems launched', *Cork Examiner*, 22 November 1972
Arthur, Paul, *The People's Democracy 1968-73* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1974)
UK Theatre and TRG Arts, *Sales Data Headlines 2018* (London: UK Theatre, 2019)

- Brandis, Nikolai Frhr. v, *Perception and Analysis*, in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 67-72
- Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin, 2008)
- Brook, Peter and Andrew Todd, *The Open Circle: Peter Brook's Theatre Environments* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003)
- Brown, Stephen, 'Central Belfast's Security Segment: An Urban Phenomenon', *Area*, 17 (1985), 1-10
- Byrne, Ophelia, *The stage in Ulster from the eighteenth-century: selected from the theatre archive of the Linen Hall Library* (Belfast: Linen Hall Library, 1997).
- Cahill, Sean, 'The Politics of the Irish Language Under the English and British Governments', *The Proceedings of the Barra Ó Donnábhain Symposium* (2007), 111-26
- Carruthers, Mark, *Alternative Ulsters: Conversations on Identity* (Belfast: Liberties North, 2014)
- Carruthers, Mark and Stephen Douds (eds), *Stepping Stones: the Arts in Ulster 1971–2001* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001)
- Churchill, Winston, *Lord Randolph Churchill* (London: Macmillan, 1906)
- Cochrane, Claire, *Twentieth-century British theatre: industry, art and empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
- Connolly, Roy, *The evolution of the Lyric Players Theatre, Belfast: fighting the waves* (Lewiston, N.Y. and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000)
- Corry, P., *Stage Planning and Equipment* (London: Strand Electric and Engineering Company, 1949)
- Crowley, Tony, 'The Political Production of a Language: The Case of Ulster-Scots', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 16 (2006), 23-35
- Crozier, Maurna (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1989)
- Crozier, Maurna (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1997)

- Daldal, Asli, 'Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A Comparative Analysis', *Review of History and Political Science*, 2 (2014), 149-68
- Darby, John, 'Varieties of Scottishness' in Maurna Crozier (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queens University of Belfast, 1997), 3-20
- Darwin, Charles, *The descent of man, and selection in relation to sex. In two volumes with illustrations* (London: John Murray, 1871)
- Dean, Joan FitzPatrick, *Riot and Great Anger: Stage censorship in twentieth-century Ireland* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004)
- Deane, Arthur (ed.), *The Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society. Centenary Volume 1821–1921* (Belfast: BNHPS, 1924)
- Deane, C. Douglas, *The Ulster Countryside* (Belfast: The Universities Press, 1983)
- Dell, Christopher, 'Producing Space', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 147-52
- Dillard, Jesse and Mary C. King, *Understanding the Social Dimension of Sustainability* (New York: Routledge 2009)
- Dixon, Hugh, *An introduction to Ulster architecture* (Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1975)
- Dodds, Klaus, *Geopolitics: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Dorney, Kate and Frances Gray, *Played in Britain: Modern Theatre in 100 Plays* (London: Methuen, 2014)
- Eren, İmre Özbek, 'Can place-attachment provide cultural sustainability? Empirical research on Turkish neighborhoods "mahalle"', *ITU A|Z Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 10 (2013), 138-59.
- Fair, Alistair, *Modern Playhouses: an architectural history of Britain's new theatres, 1945–1985* (Oxford: Oxford 2020)
- Fair, Alistair, *Play On: Contemporary theatre architecture in Britain* (London: Lund Humphries, 2019)

- Fair, Alistair (ed.), *Setting the scene: perspectives on twentieth-century theatre architecture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015)
- Fenton, James, *The Hamely Tongue: A Personal Record of Ulster-Scots in County Antrim* (Conlig: Ulster-Scots Academic Press, 1995)
- Finlayson, Alan, 'The Problem of "Culture" in Northern Ireland: A Critique of the Cultural Traditions Group', *The Irish Review* (1997), 76-88
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika, 'Performativity and Space', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 31-38
- Fitz-Simon, Christopher, *Players and Painted Stage: aspects of the twentieth century theatre in Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2004)
- Flint, Colin, *An introduction to geopolitics* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011)
- Foley, Imelda, *The girls in the big picture: gender in contemporary Ulster theatre* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2003)
- Forsyth, James, *Tyrone Guthrie: a biography* (London: Hamilton, 1976)
- Foster, R. F., *Modern Ireland 1600–1972* (London: Penguin, 1989)
- Foucault, Michel and Jay Miskowicz, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22-27
- Gailey, Alan, 'Chapbook Influence on Irish Mummers' Plays', *Folklore*, 85 (1974), 1-22
- Gallagher, Tony, 'Education for Diversity and Mutual Understanding: the Experience of Northern Ireland', *Termtalk* (2011), 6-26
- Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Fontana, 1973)
- Gillespie, Sandra and Gerry Jones, *Northern Ireland and its neighbours since 1920* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995)
- Gurr, Andrew, *The Shakespearean stage: 1574–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- Guthrie, Sir Tyrone, *A Life in the Theatre* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960)
- Hall, Stuart, 'What Is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture?', *Social Justice*, 20 (1993), 104-114

- Ham, Roderick, *Theatres - Planning Guidance for Design and Participation* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1987)
- Hamer, Mary, 'Putting Ireland on the Map', *Textual Practice*, 3 (1989), 184-202
- Hawkes, John, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability* (Victoria: Common Ground Publishing, 2001)
- Hawthorne, James, 'Introduction', in Crozier, Maurna (ed.), *Proceedings of the Cultural Traditions Group Conference* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1989), pp. i-viii
- Hewison, Robert, *Cultural capital: the rise and fall of creative Britain* (London: Verso Books, 2014)
- Hewitt, John and Tom Paulin (eds), *Rhyming weavers: & other country poets of Antrim and Down* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2004)
- Hickey, Raymond, 'Preface', in Hickey, R. (ed.), *Sociolinguistics in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. i-xxii
- Hidalgo, M. C. and B. Hernández, 'Place attachment: conceptual and empirical questions', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21 (2001), 273-82
- Hobson, Bulmer, Editorial Notes, *Ulad A literary & critical magazine*, 1 (1904), 1-3
- Hocking, Bree T., *The Great Reimagining: public art, urban space, and the symbolic landscapes of a 'new' Northern Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2015)
- Hodgett, Susan and David Johnson, 'Troubles, partnerships and possibilities: a study of the Making Belfast Work development initiative in Northern Ireland', *Public Administration and Development*, 21 (2001), 321-32.
- Holdsworth, Nadine, *Joan Littlewood* (London: Routledge, 2018)
- Holdsworth, Nadine (ed.), *Theatre and National Identity: Re-Imagining Conceptions of Nation* (London: Routledge, 2014)
- Ireland, David, *Cyprus Avenue* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016)
- Izenour, George C., *Theater technology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996)
- Izenour, George C., Vern O. Knudsen and Robert B. Newman, *Theater design* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1977)

- Jackson, Annabel, *Desk Review of ACNI's Five Year Strategic Plan Final Report* (Bath: Annabel Jackson Associates, 2018)
- Jacobs, Jane, *The death and life of great American cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Jonathan Cape, 1972)
- Jones, Alan and David Brett, *Toward an architecture: Ulster: building our own authenticity: an enquiry* (Belfast: Black Square Books, 2007)
- Kellner, Douglas, *Cultural Marxism and Cultural Studies* (Los Angeles: UCLA, 2018)
- Keyes, John, *Going dark: two Ulster theatres* (Belfast: Lagan, 2001)
- Kuper, Adam, *Culture: the anthropologists' account* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1999)
- Laing, Lloyd Robert, *The Archaeology of Celtic Britain and Ireland c. AD 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2006)
- Lane, John, with contributions by, Robert Atkins, Alec Davison, Denys Hodson, Catherine Mackerras, Peter Stark, Harland Walshaw, Dave Ward and Graham Woodruff, *Arts Centres: every town should have one* (London: Elek, 1978)
- Laurence, Dan H. and Daniel J. Leary (eds), *Bernard Shaw The complete prefaces* (London: Allen Lane, 1993)
- Leacroft, Richard, *Civic Theatre Design. With illustrations by the author* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949)
- Leacroft, Richard, *The Development of the English Playhouse* (London: Methuen, 1988)
- Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991)
- Littlewood, Joan, 'A Laboratory of Fun', *New Scientist*, 14 May 1964
- Loester, Barbara, "'A significant part of an insignificant identity": Tradition, globalisation and the re-articulation of north-east Scots', *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 21 (2017), 335-47
- Lucas, Raymond *Research methods for architecture* (London: Laurence King, 2016)
- Lyons, Francis Stewart Leland, *Culture and anarchy in Ireland, 1890–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979)

- Mackey, Sally, 'Performing location: place and applied theatre', in Hughes, Jenny and Helen Nicholson (eds), *Critical perspectives on applied theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 107-126
- Mackintosh, Iain, *Architecture, actor and audience* (London: Routledge, 1993)
- Massey, Doreen, *World City* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007)
- Matarasso, Francois, *Within Reach – A Strategy for Community-Based Arts Activities in Belfast* (London: Comedia, 1995)
- Mathews, Stanley, 'The Fun Palace: Cedric Price's experiment in architecture and technology', *Technoetic Arts*, 3 (2005), 73-92
- Maver, Irene, *Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000)
- McAuley, Gay, *Space in performance: making meaning in the theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999)
- McDonnell, Bill, *Theatres of the troubles: theatre, resistance and liberation in Ireland* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008)
- McDowell, Wallace, 'Within These Walls The Beaux Stratagem, the City of Derry and "The Only Loyalist Theatre Producer in Ireland"', in Holdsworth, Nadine (ed.), *Theatre and National Identity: Re-Imagining Conceptions of Nation* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 58-74
- McIntosh, Gillian, 'CEMA and the National Anthem: The Arts and the State in Postwar Northern Ireland', *New Hibernia Review*, 5 (2001), 22-32
- McNamara, Shelly, 'Re-imagining the city: Hackett Hall McKnight at the MAC', *Architecture Today* (2012), 40-50
- McVea, David and David McKittrick, *Making Sense of the Troubles* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2000)
- Morash, Christopher, *A history of Irish theatre, 1601–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- Morash, Chris, *Places of Performance*, in Nicholas Greene and Chris Morash (eds), *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Morash, Chris and Shaun Richards, *Mapping Irish theatre: theories of space and place* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

- Moyano, Steven, 'Quality vs. History: Schinkel's Altes Museum and Prussian Arts Policy', *The Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 585-608
- Mulryne, J. R. and Margaret Shewring (eds), with advisory editor Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare's Globe rebuilt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with Mulryne & Shewring, 1997)
- Mulryne, Ronnie and Margaret Shewring (eds), with technical editor Jason Barnes, *The Cottesloe at the National: 'Infinite Riches in a Little Room'* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Mulryne and Shewring, 1999)
- Mulryne, Ronnie and Margaret Shewring (eds), with consultant editors Iain Mackintosh and Michael Reardon, *Making space for theatre: British Architecture and theatre since 1958* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Mulryne and Shewring, 1995)
- Mulryne, Ronnie and Margaret Shewring (eds), *This Golden Round The Royal Shakespeare Company at the Swan* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Mulryne and Shewring, 1989)
- Nagler, A. M., *A Source Book in Theatrical History* (New York: Dover, 1959)
- Ó Dónaill, Niall and Tomás De Bhaldraithe, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Gúm: An Roinn Oideachais, 1992)
- Oldenburg, Ray, *Celebrating the Third Place: inspiring stories about the "great good places" at the heart of our communities* (New York: Marlowe & Co., 2001)
- Oldenburg, Ray, *The Great Good Place: cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community* (New York: Marlowe, 1997)
- O'Malley, Mary, *Never shake hands with the Devil* (Dublin: Elo publications, 1990)
- Opsahl, Torkel and Andy Pollak, *A citizens' inquiry: the Opsahl report on Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Lilliput Press for Initiative '92, 1993)
- Orum, Anthony M. and Zachary P. Neal, 'Introduction', in Orum, Anthony M. and Zachary P. Neal (eds), *Common ground?: readings and reflections on public space* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1-10
- O'Toole, Fintan, 'Letter from Dublin', *The Spectator*, 14 September 2019

- Ott, Max, 'Designing Performatively – Participation and Appropriation', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 107-110
- Parr, Connal, *Inventing the Myth: Political Passions and the Ulster Protestant Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford, 2017)
- Phelan, Mark, 'Introduction to The Enthusiast', in Hugh Odling-Smee (ed.), *Its own way of things: a celebration of the Ulster Literary Theatre* (Belfast: Lagan Press, 2004), pp. 11-16
- Pilkington, Lionel, *Theatre and the state in twentieth-century Ireland: cultivating the people* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001)
- Ponty, M. Merleau, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962)
- Primavesi, Patrick, 'Audio Moves as Urban Performance (Part I)', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 49-56
- Primavesi, Patrick, 'Participate in (the) Public: Audio Moves as Urban Performance (Part II)', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 153-62
- Rheingold, Howard, *The virtual community: homesteading on the electronic frontier* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1993)
- Riddell, John, 'Up the Close: The Close Theatre at the Citizens', Glasgow', *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, 5 (2012), 79-116
- Said, Edward W., *Culture and imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994)
- Santilli, Paul, 'Marx on Species-Being and Social Essence', *Studies in Soviet Thought*, 13 (1973), 76-88
- Scannell, Leila and Robert Gifford, 'Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30 (2009), 1-10
- Shellard, Dominic, *Economic impact study of UK theatre* (London: Arts Council England, 2004)

- Simmel, Georg and Everett C. Hughes, 'The Sociology of Sociability',
American Journal of Sociology, 55 (1949), 254-61
- Simpson, George Eaton and J. Milton Yinger, *Racial and cultural minorities: an analysis of prejudice and discrimination* (New York and London: Plenum, 1985)
- Smith, Roland, 'The work of Theatre Delicatessen', in *Theatres Trust Conference 15 - Valuing Theatres*, Milton Court, London (2015)
- Soja, Edward W., *Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (Cambridge, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)
- Southern, Richard, *Proscenium and Sight-Lines. A complete system of scenery planning and a guide to the laying out of stages for scene-designers, stage-managers, theatre architects and engineers, theatrical history and research workers and those concerned with the planning of stages for small halls* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964)
- Southern, Richard, *Stage-Setting for Amateurs and Professionals* (London: Faber and Faber 1937)
- Stewart, A. T. Q., *The Narrow Ground: Aspects of Ulster, 1609–1969* (London: Faber, 1977)
- Stewart, A. T. Q., *The shape of Irish history* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2001)
- Strong, Judith (ed.), *Theatre buildings: a design guide* (London: Routledge, 2010)
- Till, Jeremy, *What is architectural research?* (London: RIBA, 2014)
- Tuathail, Gearoid Ó., *Critical geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 1996)
- Tylor, Edward B., *Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom* (London: J. Murray, 1871)
- Venturi, Robert, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA. and London: M.I.T. Press, 1972)
- Ward, Paul, *Unionism in the United Kingdom, 1918–1974* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
- Watson, Iarfhlaith, 'The Irish Language and the Media', in R. Hickey (ed.), *Sociolinguistics in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 60-80

- Wickham, Glynne, *A History of the Theatre* (London: Phaidon, 1992)
- Wilford, R. A., 'Dame Dehra Parker', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana, 1976)
- Wilmore, David, *Frank Matcham & Co* (Dacre: Theatresearch in association with Theatreshire Books Ltd., 2008)
- Wilson, Robin and Tom Hennessey, *With all due respect: pluralism and parity of esteem* (Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, 1997)
- Winthrop, Robert H., *Dictionary of concepts in cultural anthropology* (New York and London: Greenwood, 1991)
- Wolfrum, Sophie, 'Performative Urbanism', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 5-6
- Wolfrum, Sophie, 'Generating and Designing Urban Space', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 11-16
- Wolfrum, Sophie, 'State of Affairs', in Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015), pp. 27-30
- Wolfrum, Sophie and Nikolai Frhr. v Brandis (eds), *Performative Urbanism Generating and Designing Urban Space* (Berlin: Jovis, 2015).

Unpublished papers

- Grant, David, 'Belfast's Old Museum Arts Centre: A Quarter of a Century of Lived Space' (unpublished paper: International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) 2010, Munich, Germany)
- Riddell, John, 'The Archive and the lost spaces of Belfast's Arts Theatre', *Performing the Archive*, Conference at the National University of Ireland, Galway (unpublished paper, July, 2015)

Broadcasts

- Atwal, Priya (presenter), Burman, Mark (producer), ‘Northern Ireland - Healing History?’, in *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (BBC Radio 4), 31 January 2020
- Bragg, Melvyn (presenter), Morris, Thomas (producer), ‘Culture and Anarchy’, in *The Value of Culture* (BBC Radio 4), 31 December 2012
- Bragg, Melvyn (presenter), Morris, Thomas (producer), ‘Culture of the Anthropologists’, in *The Value of Culture* (BBC Radio 4), 1 January 2013
- Bragg, Melvyn (presenter), Morris, Thomas (producer), ‘Mass Culture’, in *The Value of Culture* (BBC Radio 4), 3 January 2013
- O’Donoghue, John (presenter), ‘A Belfast Centre for Theatre and Art’, in *Broadsheet* (RTÉ), 2 October 1963
- Wilson, John (presenter) and Akalawu, Ekene (producer), ‘Useful Art, Embodying Ruskin, National Theatre for Northern Ireland? Unicorn Store’, in *Front Row* (BBC Radio 4), 9 April 2019

Websites

- ‘An Appreciation – Ernest Gerald Isherwood’, *The Irish Times*, 18 July 2011, available at <<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/letters/an-appreciation-1.603553>> [accessed on 6 September 2019]
- ‘Arts Council post for former Model boss’, *The Sligo Champion*, 25 August 2004, available at <<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/sligochampion/entertainment/arts-council-post-for-former-model-boss-27536826.html>> [accessed on 12 September 2019]
- ‘Artwork in memory of Thomas Devlin’, *News Letter*, 25 May 2012. available at <<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/artwork-in-memory-of-thomas-devlin-1-3881651>> [accessed on 20 February 2019]
- ‘Bowen Construction goes into liquidation’, *RTÉ online*, 25 July 2011, available at <https://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0725/304159-bowen_construction/> [accessed on 21 February 2019]
- ‘Number of unemployed on the decline across Strabane district’, *Tyrone and Donegal Reporter and Strabane Weekly News*, 13 October 2014,

- available at
 <<http://www.strabaneweekly.co.uk/articles/news/39761/number-of-unemployed-on-the-decline-across-strabane-district/>> [accessed on 12 April 2015]
- ‘Ormeau Baths Gallery forced to close its doors’, *News Letter*, 30 October 2011, available at <<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/ormeau-baths-gallery-forced-to-close-its-doors-1-3199200>> [accessed on 9 July 2019].
- ‘The Public art gallery in West Bromwich opens as a college’, *BBC News*, 10 September 2014, available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-birmingham-29144730/the-public-art-gallery-in-west-bromwich-opens-as-a-college>> [accessed on 1 July 2020]
- ‘The Queen in Ireland: Dublin Castle speech in full’, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 May 2011, available at <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/queen-elizabeth-II/8522318/The-Queen-in-Ireland-Dublin-Castle-speech-in-full.html>> [accessed on 5 July 2019]
- ACNI, *History* (2019), available at <<http://artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/history-of-the-arts-council/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]
- ADCI, *About the Amateur Drama Council of Ireland* (2019), available at <<http://adci.ie/about.html>> [accessed on 2 September 2019]
- ARK, *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, 2018* (2019), available at <www.ark.ac.uk/nilt> [accessed on 20 August 2019]
- Arts Council of Ireland, *Auditoria Survey – Ardhowen Theatre* (2001), principal contributor John Riddell, available at <<http://auditoria.artscouncil.ie/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Standing Ovation - A Strategic Evaluation of the Capital Build Programme* (2012), available at <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/acni_capital_build_programme.pdf> [accessed on 8 July 2019]
- Association of British Theatre Technicians, *Theatre Planning Committee* (2019), available at <<http://www.abtt.org.uk/about-us/theatre-design-committee/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]

- Association of Ulster Drama Festivals, *History* (2019), available at <http://www.audf.org.uk/history1.htm> [accessed on 2 September 2019]
- BBC News NI, *Three Belfast buildings nominated for 'ugly awards'* (2010), available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/uk-northern+ireland-10645130> [accessed on 11 December 2018]
- BDO, *National Theatre of Wales (NI) Financial Statements 2019*, available at http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends52/0001127952_AC_20190331_E_C.PDF [accessed on 16 June 2020]
- Belfast City Council *Development Committee Wednesday 20th January 1999* (1999), available at [https://minutes3.belfastcity.gov.uk/Data/Pre%20April-2015%20Development%20Committee/19990120/Minutes/\\$Minutes.doc.pdf](https://minutes3.belfastcity.gov.uk/Data/Pre%20April-2015%20Development%20Committee/19990120/Minutes/$Minutes.doc.pdf) [accessed on 7 September 2020]
- Belfast Met, *Home Page* (2019), available at <https://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/> [accessed on 5 July 2019]
- Big Telly Theatre Co, *Creative Shops* (2020), available at <https://www.big-telly.com/participation/creative-shops/> [accessed on 24 April 2020]
- Big Telly Theatre Co, *Reality is Stranger than Fiction* (2020), available at <https://www.big-telly.com/reality-is-stranger-than-fiction/> [accessed on 24 April 2020]
- Big Telly, *Big Sunday* (2013), available at <http://www.big-telly.com/other-projects/sandelford-school-project/> [accessed on 23 September 2014]
- Big Telly, *I Spy Portstewart* (2014), available at <http://www.big-telly.com/archive/performance-work/one-sandwich-short-of-a-genius/> [accessed on 23 September 2014]
- Black, Rebecca, 'Integrated schools "roadmap to end division" in Northern Ireland', *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 April 2018, available at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/integrated-schools-roadmap-to-end-division-in-northern-ireland-36813844.html> [accessed on 6 August 2019]

- Bridge Theatre, *About the Bridge* (2019), available at
<<https://bridgetheatre.co.uk/about-the-bridge/>> [accessed on 19
September 2019]
- Byrne, Ophelia, Culture Northern Ireland, *Sam Thompson Self-taught
playwright and trade union activist* (2006), available at
<<https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/article/748/sam-thompson>>
[accessed on 8 August 2019]
- Carroll, Rory, 'How the "neithers" could decide Northern Ireland's political
fate', *The Guardian*, 15 August 2019, available at
<[https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/aug/15/how-the-neithers-
could-decide-northern-irelands-political-fate](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/aug/15/how-the-neithers-could-decide-northern-irelands-political-fate)> [accessed on 20 August
2019]
- Carson, Ciaran, *Turn Again* (2019), available at
<[https://wfupress.wfu.edu/poem-of-the-week/turn-again-ciaran-carson-
poem-of-the-week/](https://wfupress.wfu.edu/poem-of-the-week/turn-again-ciaran-carson-poem-of-the-week/)> [accessed on 12 June 2020]
- Citizens Information, *Irish citizenship through birth or descent*,
<[https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/irish_citizenshi
p/irish_citizenship_through_birth_or_descent.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/irish_citizenship/irish_citizenship_through_birth_or_descent.html)> [accessed 24
September 2020]
- Coleman, Maureen, 'Heaney's words help Lyric build for the future', *Belfast
Telegraph*, 11 September 2009, available at
<[https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/heaneys-
words-help-lyric-build-for-the-future-28494390.html](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/heaneys-words-help-lyric-build-for-the-future-28494390.html)> [accessed on 4
September 2019]
- Coleman, Maureen, 'Kenneth Branagh back in Belfast for Lyric Theatre debut',
Belfast Telegraph, 14 September 2011, available at
<[https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/kenneth-
branagh-back-in-belfast-for-lyric-theatre-debut-28657930.html](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/kenneth-branagh-back-in-belfast-for-lyric-theatre-debut-28657930.html)>
[accessed on 6 March 2020]
- Colombani, Jean-Marie, 'Nous sommes tous Américains', *Le Monde*, 13
September 2001. Available at
<[https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/09/09/nous-sommes-tous-
americains_1569503_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/09/09/nous-sommes-tous-americaains_1569503_3232.html)> [accessed on 29 September 2020]

- Coney, *About us* (2014), available at <<http://coneyhq.org/about-us/>> [accessed on 23 September 2014]
- Coveney, Michael, 'Richard Brett obituary', *The Guardian*, 24 January 2014, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/jan/24/richard-brett>> [accessed on 16 July 2019]
- Cowan, Rosie, 'Direct rule imposed on Ulster', *The Guardian*, 15 October 2002, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/oct/15/northernireland.northernireland>> [accessed on 7 August 2020]
- Crescent Arts Centre (2010), available at <<https://gilbert-ash.com/projects/crescent-arts-centre>> [accessed on 1 July 2019]
- Crescent Arts Centre, *History* (2011), available at <<http://www.crescentarts.org/about/history/>> [accessed on 29 January 2011]
- Culture Northern Ireland, *The 'Little Magazines' A range of publications that have helped to keep literature alive in the city* (2016), available at <<https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/features/literature/little-magazines>> [accessed on 6 August 2019]
- Culture Northern Ireland, *Thomas Carnduff - Working class poet and playwright* (2019), available at <<https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/features/literature/thomas-carnduff>> [accessed on 7 August 2019]
- Cunningham, Simon, 'Belfast builders Mascott Construction falls into administration', *Irish News*, 18 August 2016, available at <<http://www.irishnews.com/business/2016/08/18/news/belfast-builders-mascott-construction-falls-into-administration-657221/>> [accessed on 21 February 2019]
- Dancer, Simon, Steve Carr, Claire O'Shaughnessy and Graham Russell, English Partnerships The National Regeneration Agency, *Additionality Guide - A standard approach to assessing the additional impact of interventions* (2008), available at <<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/up>

loads/attachment_data/file/378177/additionality_guide_2014_full.pdf>
[accessed on 13 December 2019]

Department for Communities, *Community Asset Transfer policy framework* (2020), available at <<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/community-asset-transfer-policy-framework#:~:text=This%20is%20a%20policy%20framework,from%20public%20bodies%20to%20communities.>> [accessed on 7 September 2020]

Department of Infrastructure NI, *Flood Map Lyric Theatre - River, Sea and Surface water* (2019), available at <<http://dfi-ni.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fd6c0a01b07840269a50a2f596b3daf6>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]

Derry and Strabane District Council, *Aideen McGinley Biography* (2019), available at <<http://meetings.derrycityandstrabanedistrict.com/documents/s15949/Appendix%203%20Sandra%20Janoff%20and%20Aideen%20McGinley%20biographies.pdf>> [accessed on 11 July 2019]

Devine, Paula, *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2018 Technical Notes* (2019), available at <www.ark.ac.uk/nilt> [accessed on 20 August 2019]

Devlin, Patrick, Ulster History Circle, *Thomas Carnduff (1886–1956): Poet and playwright - 'The Shipyard Poet'* (2019), available at <<http://www.newulsterbiography.co.uk/index.php/home/viewPerson/224>> [accessed on 7 August 2019]

Electoral Office of Northern Ireland, *European Parliamentary Election Electoral Region of Northern Ireland 2019* (2019), available at <<http://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/2d393c0e-ba88-48da-af69-fec342d34be0/European-Election-2019-Result-Sheet>> [accessed on 21 August 2019]

EMAP Publishing Ltd, *Lyric Theatre* (2012), available at <<https://www.ajbuildingslibrary.co.uk/projects/display/id/4504>> [accessed on 16 July 2019].

- EMAP Publishing Ltd, *Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC)* (2012), available at <<https://www.ajbuildingslibrary.co.uk/projects/display/id/5233>> [accessed on 16 July 2019]
- Fermanagh District Council, *The Ardhowen celebrates 30 years* (2016), available at <<https://www.fermanaghmagh.com/article/ardhowen-celebrates-30-years/>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]
- Findlaters, *Our Dublin Theatre - the Star, later the Empire Palace*, available at <<http://www.findlaters.com/chapter7.html>> [accessed on 7 August 2019]
- Fisher, Philip, *Clever Dick - Crispin Whittell - Hampstead Theatre* (2006), available at <<https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/cleverdick-rev>> [accessed on 18 July 2019]
- Garvagh Town, *About Garvagh Town* (2020), available at <<https://garvaghtown.com/about/>> [accessed on 24 April 2020]
- Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, *GeoIndex map of Lyric Theatre* (2019), available at <http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/GSNI_Geoindex/home.html> [accessed on 17 July 2019]
- Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, *GeoIndex map of Lyric Theatre* (2019), available at <http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/GSNI_Geoindex/home.html> [accessed on 17 July 2019]
- Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, *GeoIndex record for 7 College Square North* (2016), available at <http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/GSNI_Geoindex/home.html> [accessed on 1 July 2019]
- Gillinson, Miriam, 'The Tempest review – interactive online production goes down a storm', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2020, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/apr/12/the-tempest-review-interactive-online-zoom#maincontent>> [accessed on 17 April 2020]
- GOV.UK, *Notice 104: ATA and CPD carnets*, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-104-ata-and-cpd-carnets/notice-104-ata-and-cpd-carnets#countries-that-accept-ata-carnets>> [accessed on 24 September 2020]

- Grand Opera House, *Laughter, tears and applause since 1895...* (2019), available at <<https://www.goh.co.uk/about-us/history-heritage/>> [accessed on 28 August 2019]
- Griffiths, Trevor, *Who Shall be Happy...?* (1995), available at <<http://www.trevorgriffiths.co.uk/site/1995/12/31/who-shall-be-happy/>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]
- Grimsey, Bill, *The Grimsey Review: An alternative future for the high street* (2013), available at <<http://www.vanishinghighstreet.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/GrimseyReview04.092.pdf>> [accessed on 28 September 2020]
- Harbinson Mulholland, *The MAC Financial Statements* (2018), available at <<https://www.mac-uk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9d51305a-74d2-4783-b3ca-01ce8fa3263c>> [accessed on 11 July 2019]
- Historic Environment Division, *Finding a listed building* (2019), available at <<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/finding-a-listed-building>> [accessed on 13 September 2019]
- Histpop - Online Historical Population Reports, *Census of Ireland, 1901. Preliminary report, with abstracts of the enumerators, summaries, etc.* (1901), available at <[http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census%20\(by%20geography\)/Ireland/1901&active=yes&mno=444&tocstate=expandnew&tocseq=500&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&pageseq=first-nonblank](http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census%20(by%20geography)/Ireland/1901&active=yes&mno=444&tocstate=expandnew&tocseq=500&display=sections&display=tables&display=pagetitles&pageseq=first-nonblank)> [accessed on 25 July 2019]
- Irish Theatre Institute Playography, *Charabanc Theatre Company* (2019), available at <<http://www.irishplayography.com/company.aspx?companyid=30167>> [accessed on 12 September 2019]
- Irish Theatre Institute, *God's Gentry by Donagh MacDonagh*, available at <<http://www.irishplayography.com/play.aspx?playid=1578>> [accessed on 6 April 2015]
- Irish Theatre Institute, *The Passing Day* (1936), available at <<http://www.irishplayography.com/play.aspx?playid=31988>> [accessed on 28 August 2019]

- Irish Theatre Institute, *Workers –Thomas Carnduff* (2019), available at
<<http://www.irishplayography.com/play.aspx?playid=31187>> [accessed on 7 August 2019]
- Julie's Bicycle, *Why we exist - About us* (2020), available at
<<https://juliesbicycle.com/why-we-exist/about-us/>> [accessed on 10 September 2020]
- Kelly, Ben, 'Why is there no government in Northern Ireland and how did power-sharing collapse?', *Independent*, 30 April 2019, available at
<<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/northern-ireland-talks-latest-power-sharing-deal-stormont-sinn-fein-dup-a8893096.html>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- Kenny, Ciara, 'New Irish "DNA atlas" maps genes of the people of Ireland', *The Irish Times*, 18 December 2017, available at
<<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/new-irish-dna-atlas-maps-genes-of-the-people-of-ireland-1.3331369>> [accessed on 31 July 2019]
- Kent, Brenda, Arts and Disability Equality Charter, *ADE Charter Workbook* (2015), available at
<<https://sites.google.com/site/artsdisabilityequalitycharter/the-paper-work>> [accessed on 5 May 2015]
- Leonard, Allan, *Sluggie O'Toole for Northern Ireland: Parity of esteem and reconciliation* (2019), available at
<<https://sluggerotoole.com/2019/08/04/for-northern-ireland-parity-of-esteem-and-reconciliation/>> [accessed on 6 August 2019]
- Lyric Theatre (NI) *Financial Statements 2019*, available at
<https://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/ccni_ar_attachments/0000100173_20190331_CA.pdf> [accessed on 16 June 2020]
- Lyric Theatre Belfast, *Programme – Over the Bridge* (1970), available at
<<https://history.lyrictheatre.co.uk/cms-admin/resources/skmbtc284e181027162101-copy-compressed.pdf>> [accessed on 6 September 2019]

- Lyric Theatre Belfast, *Splendid Isolation: Lockdown Drama* (2020), available at <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/splendid-isolation-lockdown-drama/>> [accessed on 10 September 2020]
- Lyric Theatre, *Lyric Artistic director bows out after five years in post* (2013), available at <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/lyric-artistic-director-bows-out-after-five-years-in-post/>> [accessed on 18 July 2019]
- Magee, Kevin, BBC News, *Rise in number of empty shops across Northern Ireland* (2012), available at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-19700759>> [accessed on 3 October 2014]
- Mastercraft Construction UK, *The Lyric Theatre Belfast* (2019), available at <<https://mastercraftconstruction.co.uk/projects/the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 19 July 2019]
- McAleese, Deborah, 'Historic moment Martin McGuinness shook hands with Queen Elizabeth', *The Irish News*, 21 March 2017, available at <<http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2017/03/21/news/historic-moment-martin-mcguinness-shook-hands-with-queen-elizabeth-971302/>> [accessed on 5 July 2019]
- McCreary, Mark, MGN Ltd, *Aerial view of the new theatre* (2015), available at <<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture-news/gallery/lyric-theatres-history-and-transformation--9421475>> [accessed on 9 June 2015]
- McFadden, Grania, 'Bid a fond farewell to a Belfast legend', *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 January 2010, available at <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/bid-a-fond-farewell-to-a-belfast-legend-28516135.html>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]
- McFadden, Grania, 'Review: Sam Thompson's Over The Bridge - Story of bigotry is still relevant today', *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 March 2010, available at <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/theatre-arts/review-sam-thompsons-over-the-bridge-28526353.html>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]

- McLaughlin & Harvey, *Our People – Philip Cheevers - Group Chief Executive* (2019), available at <<https://www.mclh.co.uk/who-we-are/our-people/>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Service, *The Irish Peace Process – Chronology of Key Events (April 1993 – April 1998)* (1993–1998), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/pp9398.htm>> [accessed on 19 March 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Services, *'Bloody Sunday', 30 January 1972 – Summary of Main Events* (2019), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/bsunday/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Services, *Anglo-Irish Agreement - Summary of Events* (2019), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/aia/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Services, *Internment – Summary of Main Events* (2019), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/intern/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Services, *The Deployment of British Troops - Summary of Main Events* (2019), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/troops/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Services, *The Hunger Strike of 1981 – Summary* (2019), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/hstrike/summary.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Services, *The Irish Peace Process - Summary* (2019), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- Melaugh, Martin, CAIN Web Services, *Ulster Workers' Council Strike - Summary of Main Events* (2019), available at <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/uwc/sum.htm>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]

- Meluagh, Martin, *Deaths outside Northern Ireland* (2012), available at <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/victims/gis/maps/gismaps-22.html>> [accessed on 12 November 2018]
- Meredith, Robbie, 'Belfast's MAC theatre in emergency funding bid', available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-42385809>> [accessed on 27 March 2020]
- Meredith, Robbie, BBC Northern Ireland, *Seamus Heaney HomePlace 'jewel in our crown'* (2019), available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-47476475>> [accessed on 1 July 2019]
- Moore, Rowan, 'Exclusive: RIBA Stirling prize shortlist revealed', *The Guardian*, 22 July 2012, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/jul/22/riba-stirling-prize-shortlist-2012-revealed>> [accessed on 6 March 2020]
- National Air Traffic Services Ltd, *Noise* (2019), available at <<https://www.nats.aero/environment/aircraft-noise/>> [accessed on 19 July 2019]
- National Museums NI, *Takabuti the ancient Egyptian mummy* (2019), available at <<https://www.nmni.com/our-museums/ulster-museum/Things-to-see/Takabuti-the-ancient-Egyptian-mummy.aspx>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]
- National Opera House of Ireland, *O'Reilly Theatre* (2019), available at <<https://www.nationaloperahouse.ie/venue-hire/venue/oreilly-theatre>> [accessed on 16 September 2019]
- Neelands, Jonothan, *et al.*, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Warwick, University of, 2015), available at <https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/final-report/warwick_commission_report_2015.pdf> [accessed on 11 June 2020]
- Newry Chamber of Commerce & Trade, *£20m Newry City Centre Regeneration Scheme Receives Further £8m From BRCD*, available at <<https://newrychamber.com/20m-newry-city-centre-regeneration-scheme-receives-further-8m-from-brcd/>> [accessed on 7 September 2020]

- News Letter archive, *New Arts Theatre proves that Ulster is not a cultural Sahara* (1961), available at <<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/retro/the-way-we-were-new-arts-theatre-proves-that-ulster-is-not-a-cultural-sahara-1-6169754>> [accessed on 10 July 2014]
- NI Direct, *Changes to government departments* (2019), available at <<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/changes-government-departments>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]
- NI Direct, *Northern Ireland Gateway Review process* (2019), available at <<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-gateway-review-process>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]
- NI Direct, *Ordnance Survey history* (2019), available at <<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/ordnance-survey-history>> [accessed on 18 July 2019]
- Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, *Sid McDowell - Chair* (2016) <<https://www.niacro.co.uk/executive-committee/sid-mcdowell>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]
- O'Connor, Fionnuala, 'John Hume obituary: Nationalist leader who championed 'agreed Ireland'', *The Irish Times*, 3 August 2020, available at <<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/john-hume-obituary-nationalist-leader-who-championed-agreed-ireland-1.4320556>> [accessed on 17 September 2020]
- O'Brien, Dave, DCMS, *Measuring the value of culture: a report to the Department for Culture Media and Sport* (2010), available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/77933/measuring-the-value-culture-report.pdf> [accessed on 9 July 2019]
- O'Donnell + Tuomey, *Sadler's Wells East, London, UK* (2019), available at <<http://odonnell-tuomey.ie/sadlers-wells-dance-theatre>> [accessed on 19 July 2019]
- O'Donnell + Tuomey, *The Lyric Theatre, Belfast Northern Ireland* (2019), available at <<http://odonnell-tuomey.ie/the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 16 July 2019]

- Office of Government Commerce OGC* (2018), available at
 <https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Office_of_Government_Commer ce_OGC> [accessed on 6 March 2019]
- Oldenburg, Ray, *Project for Public Spaces* (2014), available at
 <<http://www.pps.org/reference/roldenburg/>> [accessed on 1 January].
- Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland, *OSNI Historical Third Edition (1900–1907)*, available at <<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-proni-historical-maps-viewer>> [accessed 19 July 2019]
- Pitlochry Festival Theatre, *Ways to Buy Tickets* (2020), available at
 <<https://pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com/about/ticketing-information/>>
 [accessed on 17 April 2020]
- Planning Landscape Architecture Community Environment, *What is PLACE?* (2015), available at <<http://www.placeni.org/about.html>> [accessed on 5 July 2015]
- Portas, Mary, *The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets* (2011), available at
 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf> [accessed on 13 August 2020]
- Potter, Gary, Future Belfast, *Saint Anne's Square* (2016), available at
 <<http://www.futurebelfast.com/property/saint-annes-square/>> [accessed on 11 December 2018]
- Private Investment in Culture Survey* (England, Arts Council, 2016), available at <<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Private%20Investment%20in%20Culture%20Survey%202019.pdf>> [accessed on 10 July 2019]
- Queen's University Belfast, *BA Drama and English* (2019), available at
 <<https://www.qub.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/drama-english-ba-wq43/>> [accessed on 5 July 2019]
- Queen's University Belfast, *BA in Film and Theatre Making* (2019), available at <<https://www.qub.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/film-theatre-making-ba-ww65/>> [accessed on 5 July 2019]

- Queen's University Belfast, *David Grant, Senior Lecturer – Profile* (2019), available at <[https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-grant\(dabf8a8b-f8b8-4819-820d-2c18a906c67e\).html](https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-grant(dabf8a8b-f8b8-4819-820d-2c18a906c67e).html)> [accessed on 18 July]
- Queen's University Belfast, *David Johnston, Professor - Profile* (2019), available at <[https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-johnston\(31ef7ce2-a5ec-488d-8691-38c949aba005\).html](https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/david-johnston(31ef7ce2-a5ec-488d-8691-38c949aba005).html)> [accessed on 18 July]
- Raison, Chris, 'Basement Construction RVH, Belfast Overcoming Piling Difficulties Caused by Sandstone Bedrock and Dolerite Inclusions', in British Geotechnical Association Conference (2009), available at <<http://www.raisonfosterassociates.co.uk/downloads/presentations/RFA-P14%20BGA%20Conference%202009%20-%20Basement%20construction%20for%20RVH.pdf>> [accessed on 17 July 2019]
- Riddell, John, Persona Associates, *AA/JR/7-1 CPO 2018 Statement of Evidence* (2019). Available at <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/calverley/proofs-rebuttals/aa/7-AA_JR/AA_JR_7-1%20Statement%20of%20Evidence%20%28John%20Riddell%29.pdf> [accessed on 19 September 2019]
- Riverside Theatre *The history of Riverside Theatre* (2019), available at <<https://www.riversidetheatre.org.uk/your-visit/history>> [accessed on 17 September 2019]
- RMI Architects, *History* (2019), available at <<https://www.rmi.uk.com/about-us/>> [accessed on 9 July 2019]
- Royal Institute of British Architects, *RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2007* (2008), available at <<https://www.architecture.com/-/media/gathercontent/riba-plan-of-work/additional-documents/ribaoutlineplanofwork2007revised2008pdf.pdf>> [accessed on 16 July 2019]
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, *Report: Economic Significance of Maintenance Report 2016* (2016), available at <<https://www.rics.org/uk/products/data-products/facilities->

- management/report-economic-significance-of-maintenance-report-2016/> [accessed on 27 March 2020]
- Royal Irish Academy, *Leabhar Gabhála / The Book of the Invasions* (2019), available at <<https://www.ria.ie/leabhar-gabhala-book-invasions>> [accessed on 31 July 2019]
- Scruton, Roger, 'The Great Swindle', *Aeon*, 17 December 2012, available at <<https://aeon.co/essays/a-cult-of-fakery-has-taken-over-what-s-left-of-high-culture>> [accessed on 2 August 2019]
- Spatial Agency, *Constant Nieuwenhuys, Individual – Amsterdam, Netherlands 1920–2005* (2020), available at <<https://www.spatialagency.net/database/the.situationists>> [accessed on 9 June 2020]
- Starbucks, *Heritage*, available at <<http://www.starbucks.co.uk/about-us/our-heritage>> [accessed on 28 November 2014]
- Sullivan, Robert, *Ervine, St. John G. (St. John Greer) (1883–1971)* (2019), available at <http://modjourn.org/render.php?view=mjp_object&id=mjp.2005.01.015> [accessed on 11 June 2020]
- Sweeney, Joanne, 'Mark Carruthers: Confessions of a political anorak', *The Irish News*, 17 September 2016, available at <<https://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2016/09/17/news/mark-carruthers-confessions-of-a-political-anorak-696772/>> [accessed on 18 July 2010]
- Taggart, Maggie, 'Audit report criticises DCAL for project overspends', *BBC News N Ireland*, 22 March 2013, available at <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-21885728>> [accessed on 6 March 2019]
- Taylor, Cliff, 'The euro 20 years on: Ireland's long journey to currency union', *The Irish Times*, 2 January 2019, available at <<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/the-euro-20-years-on-ireland-s-long-journey-to-currency-union-1.3745399>> [accessed on 22 July 2019]

- The Albany Deptford, *About* (2019), available at
 <<http://funpalaces.co.uk/about/>> [accessed on 16 September 2019]
- The Black Box, *Home* (2020), available at
 <<https://www.blackboxbelfast.com/>> [accessed on 13 March 2020]
- The MAC, *Exhibition – In a Rainbow of Coalitions* (2020), available at
 <<https://themaclive.com/exhibition/in-a-rainbow-of-coalitions>>
 [accessed on 17 September 2020]
- The MAC, *Exhibition – Peter Liversidge* (2020), available at
 <<https://themaclive.com/exhibition/peter-liversidge>> [accessed on 17
 September 2020]
- The MAC, *Keeping You Safe* (2020), available at
 <<https://themaclive.com/keeping-you-safe>> [accessed on 17 September
 2020]
- The MAC, *MAC wins Tourism NI Award for Outstanding Visitor Experience*
 (2017), available at <[https://themaclive.com/about-us/news/mac-wins-
 tourism-ni-award-for-outstanding-visitor-experience](https://themaclive.com/about-us/news/mac-wins-tourism-ni-award-for-outstanding-visitor-experience)> [accessed on 11
 July 2019]
- The Wood Database, *Iroko* (2019), available at <[https://www.wood-
 database.com/iroko/](https://www.wood-database.com/iroko/)> [accessed on 19 July 2019]
- Theatre Absolute Ltd, *Shop Front Theatre* (2020), available at
 <<http://www.theatreabsolute.co.uk/shop-front-theatre/>> [accessed on 17
 April 2020]
- Theatreplan, *Hampstead Theatre* (2019), available at
 <<https://theatreplan.com/projects/hampstead-theatre>> [accessed on 18
 July 2019]
- Turner, John, 'Building a new musical heritage', *The Guardian*, 8 November
 2006, available at
 <[https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/nov/08/guardianobituarie.s
 bituarie](https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/nov/08/guardianobituarie.sbituarie)> [accessed on 19 March 2019]
- Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Lead Consultant Assignment Brief Old
 Museum Back to Life* (2019), available at
 <[https://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/wp-
 content/uploads/2019/01/HLF_BNHPS-UAH_OMB-Back-to-Life-](https://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HLF_BNHPS-UAH_OMB-Back-to-Life-)

- Lead-Consultant-Brief_Jan-2019_final.pdf> [accessed on 13 September 2019]
- Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Our History* (2019), available at <<https://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/about/our-history/>> [accessed on 13 September 2019]
- Ulster Architectural Heritage, *Old Museum Building* (2019), available at <<https://www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk/case-studies/old-museum-building/>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]
- Ulster-Scots Agency/Boord o Ulster-Scotch, *An Introduction to the Ulster-Scots Language* (2017), available at <<http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com/what-is-ulster-scots/language/>> [accessed on 11 June 2017]
- University of Birmingham 2019, *CCCS archive* (2019), available at <<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/history/research/projects/cccs/archive.aspx>> [accessed on 2 August]
- University of Ulster, *Courses in theatre* (2019), available at <<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/courses?query=theatre&f.Level%7CY=>>> [accessed on 5 July 2019]
- Wainwright, Oliver, 'The Public: an inevitable end for the misguided arts centre', *The Guardian*, 14 August 2013, available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2013/aug/14/public-inevitable-end-arts-centre-architecture>> [accessed on 9 July 2019]
- Weatherall, Norman, Belfast Cathedral, *History of the Cathedral* (2018), available at <<https://www.belfastcathedral.org/about/history>> [accessed on 11 December 2018]
- Well, The, *What is the WELL?*, available at <<http://www.well.com/>> [accessed on 1 December 2014]
- World Population Review, *Cities in Europe by Population 2019* (2019), available at <<http://worldpopulationreview.com/continents/cities-in-europe/>> [accessed on 29 July 2019]

Wylie, Lennon, *Belfast Street Directory Q-R* (1960), available at
<<https://www.lennonwylie.co.uk/qrcomplete1960.htm>> [accessed on 6
September 2019]

Yvonne Arnaud, *What's On* (2019), available at <<https://www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk/whats-on>> [accessed on 19 September 2019]

‘A Door into the Dark’
Small Spaces for Theatre in Belfast, 1950–2020

Volume II of II
Appendix: A Resource

by

John Riddell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Warwick, Theatre and Performance Studies,
School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures
September 2020

Table of Contents

Curating this Resource	3
List of Illustrations: Figures and Tables	4
Part One: Illustrations and tables	10
Introduction to the Timeline of Significant Events.....	14
Part Two: Illustrations and Tables	24
Chapter 4	25
Chapter 6	26
Chapter 7	27
Table 1 Capital Build Programme venues and capacities.....	27
Table 2 All venues with capacities.....	27
An Introduction to Jan Branch	33
Part Three: Illustrations and supporting material.....	34
Chapter 8	35
Bob Forster recalls the second Lyric’s technical installation.....	53
An introduction to O’Donnell + Tuomey Architects	56
An introduction to Richard Wakely	57
Table 3 Northern Ireland Audit Office Project Costs	58
Chapter 9	73
An introduction to Anne McReynolds	79
An introduction to Hall McKnight Architects	80
Chapter 10	103
An introduction to Zoe Seaton and Big Telly	103
An introduction to Paul Bosco McEaney and Cahoots NI.....	108
Introduction to Interviews	113
Ethical Research information and signed consent forms	114
Bibliography of sources in Volume II.....	131

Curating this Resource

This thesis has used a wide range of sources, and Volume II brings together all the relevant resources that support the work in Volume I. It is intended to be read alongside Volume I, to inform the reader's understanding and provide greater context to the text.

Volume II presents these previously uncollated resources in a sequence that relates to the order of Volume I. I have produced maps to illustrate the geographical context and to show how the venues discussed are distributed around Belfast and Ulster.

The theatre drawings found in archives or provided by architects, have been made more accessible by my colleague Ruofan Yao of Theatre Projects, Beijing, by presenting them in a consistent style and at the same scale.

Volume II also provides information on the background of the interviewees quoted in Volume I, which contextualises their comments and demonstrates where bias may exist. The audio files of the interviews accompany this thesis.

The tables have been recreated faithfully to the source, which is appropriately credited.

All photographs are my own, unless otherwise credited.

List of Illustrations: Figures and Tables

Figure 1 Map of Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.	11
Figure 2 Map of the four provinces of Ireland.	12
Figure 3 Map of the nine counties of the province of Ulster. Those in Orange are part of Northern Ireland.	13
Figure 4 Timeline of significant events.	23
Figure 5 Locations of relevant Belfast venues.	25
Figure 6 Relevant towns and cities in Northern Ireland.	26
Figure 7 Riverside Theatre Coleraine 1:200 @ A4	28
Figure 8 Ardhowen Theatre Enniskillen 1:200 @ A4	29
Figure 9 Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre Armagh 1:200 @ A4.	30
Figure 10 Millennium Forum Derry Plan 1:200 @ A4.	31
Figure 11 Millennium Forum Derry Section 1:200 @ A4.	32
Figure 12 Young Mary and Pearse O’Malley	35
Figure 13 The First Lyric Theatre at Derryvolgie Avenue 1:200 @ A4	36
Figure 14 First Lyric stage from auditorium.	37
Figure 15 First Lyric auditorium from stage.	37
Figure 16 Planning application for rear extension to first Lyric.	38
Figure 17 Planning application map	39
Figure 18 Rear of first Lyric viewed from garden, with completed extension, taken after the final performance	40
Figure 19 Downes’ 1959 1:200 @ A4	41
Figure 20 Model of Downes’ 1959 scheme	42
Figure 21 Page from the Architects Journal showing a markup on the Yvonne Arnaud auditorium plan	43
Figure 22 Downes 1964 1:200 @ A4	44

Figure 23 Downes 1965 1:200 @ A4	45
Figure 24 Second Lyric Theatre 1:200 @ A4.....	46
Figure 25 The steel frame of the second Lyric in construction.....	47
Figure 26 Austin Clarke at the foundation stone ceremony.....	48
Figure 27 Cover of the foundation stone ceremony programme	48
Figure 28 The audience at the opening night.....	49
Figure 29 Mary O'Malley outside the second Lyric Theatre.....	50
Figure 30 The second lyric viewed from Stranmillis Embankment	50
Figure 31 The lower foyer.....	51
Figure 32 The upper foyer.....	51
Figure 33 The stage from rear auditorium right.....	52
Figure 34 Plan of third Lyric main house 1:200 @ A4.....	59
Figure 35 Centreline section of third Lyric main house	60
Figure 36 Naughton Studio at third Lyric Theatre 1:200 @ A4	61
Figure 37 Aerial view of Lyric looking south west	62
Figure 38 View from bottom of Ridgeway Street.....	62
Figure 39 View from Stranmillis Embankment looking east.....	63
Figure 40 View of foyer and coffee bar from junction of Stranmillis Embankment and Ridgeway Street	63
Figure 41 View from Stranmillis Embankment looking north towards Ridgeway Street	64
Figure 42 The landscaped amphitheatre	64
Figure 43 The main view on entry	64
Figure 44 Box office and main stair.....	65
Figure 45 Main stair from foyer level.....	65
Figure 46 View towards main stair and café bar beyond.....	65

Figure 47 View from top of stair to toilets looking towards café bar, with threshold stone from second Lyric set into the brickwork.....	66
Figure 48 View of foyer from top of main stair.....	66
Figure 49 View back along foyer towards main stair	67
Figure 50 View from foyer looking south west towards River Lagan.....	67
Figure 51 View up atrium towards rehearsal and upper levels.....	67
Figure 52 View from top of stairs to toilets.....	68
Figure 53 View from bottom of stairs to toilets.....	68
Figure 54 The gents' toilets.....	68
Figure 55 View from bottom of stairs to board room	69
Figure 56 View from café bar towards foyer and Naughton Studio	69
Figure 57 Café bar.....	69
Figure 58 View from café bar looking towards Ridgeway Street.....	70
Figure 59 Main house from auditorium right.....	70
Figure 60 Stage from auditorium left.....	71
Figure 61 Naughton Studio looking onto Ridgeway Street	71
Figure 62 Rehearsal Room.....	72
Figure 63 View down Sandhurst Drive towards get-in.....	72
Figure 64 Line drawing of the Old Museum façade	73
Figure 65 James Drummond President of BNHPS.....	74
Figure 66 The mummy Takabuti in the Ulster Museum, 2008.....	75
Figure 67 Photograph of the front of OMac 2011.	75
Figure 68 The view from the half-landing between ground and first floor.	76
Figure 69 The doors into the theatre.	76
Figure 70 The theatre in end-on format.	77
Figure 71 The gallery on the second floor.	77

Figure 72 Kulvinder Ghir in <i>Who Shall be Happy...?</i>	77
Figure 73 OMac Theatre 1:200 @ A4	78
Figure 74 The MAC Theatre Downstairs 1:200 @ A4.....	82
Figure 75 The MAC Theatre Upstairs 1:200 @ A4.....	83
Figure 76 The MAC main entrance and campanile from Saint Anne's Square	84
Figure 77 The outside of Saint Anne's Square viewed from Hill Street	84
Figure 78 Looking west from Saint Anne's Square towards the cathedral	85
Figure 79 The view looking east from Writer's Square towards St Anne's Cathedral, the campanile of the MAC evident in the distance.....	85
Figure 80 The view southwest along Edward Street towards the get-in.....	86
Figure 81 Views along the remaining part of Hector Street	87
Figure 82 Views of the Exchange Street entrance, the University building seen in the background of the second photograph	88
Figure 83 The external face of the large blank wall that forms the north wall of the foyer, viewed from Academy Street	89
Figure 84 The box office and welcome point with the main entrance from Saint Anne's Square beyond.....	90
Figure 85 The bar counter and cafe bar viewed from the Exchange Street entrance	91
Figure 86 The importance of daylight in the foyer is evident in these photographs.....	92
Figure 87 The scale of the foyer is clear in these photographs.....	93
Figure 88 The wire sculpture installation, 'The Permanent Present'	94
Figure 89 St Anne's Cathedral, one of several framed views provided in different parts of the building.....	95
Figure 90 Light wells above the foyer	96

Figure 91 Snug seating along the north wall of the foyer at ground and first floor. Power sockets for laptops and chargers can be seen under the table in the first photograph	97
Figure 92 The balustrade and drinks shelf at first floor	98
Figure 93 Opportunities for breakout space have been exploited throughout the building	99
Figure 94 Display cabinets and leaflet holders	100
Figure 95 Downstairs Theatre	101
Figure 96 A conference in the Downstairs Theatre	101
Figure 97 The Upstairs Theatre.....	102
Figure 98 Portstewart Promenade view looking south from Harbour Hill. The Box is visible to the left of the picture behind the blue bus	104
Figure 99 Big Telly - The Box, Portstewart.....	104
Figure 100 Poster advertising <i>I Spy Portstewart</i>	105
Figure 101 Performance outside the Strabane Creative Shop.....	106
Figure 102 Creative Shop window performance in Enniskillen	106
Figure 103 Poster advertising <i>The Garvagh Wedding</i> , which was cancelled because of lockdown	107
Figure 104 A screenshot from <i>Operation Elsewhere</i> , Big Telly's interactive show on Zoom.....	107
Figure 105 Danske Bank Donegall Square North.....	109
Figure 106 Cahoots NI, <i>A Spell of Cold Weather</i> in the window of the bank 2013.....	109
Figure 107 Performance in the bank window 2014	110
Figure 108 Visit Belfast's Welcome Centre now occupies the ground floor of the bank	110
Figure 109 Paul Bosco McEneaney of Cahoots NI (centre) and David McClure of Osborne King (far left) at Arts & Business Awards 2013	111

Figure 110 The Cahoots Units at Castle Court Shopping Centre112

Figure 111 Production shot from *The Gift* at Castle Court112

Part One: Illustrations and tables

The following pages include maps and a timeline of events, relevant to Volume I, Part One.

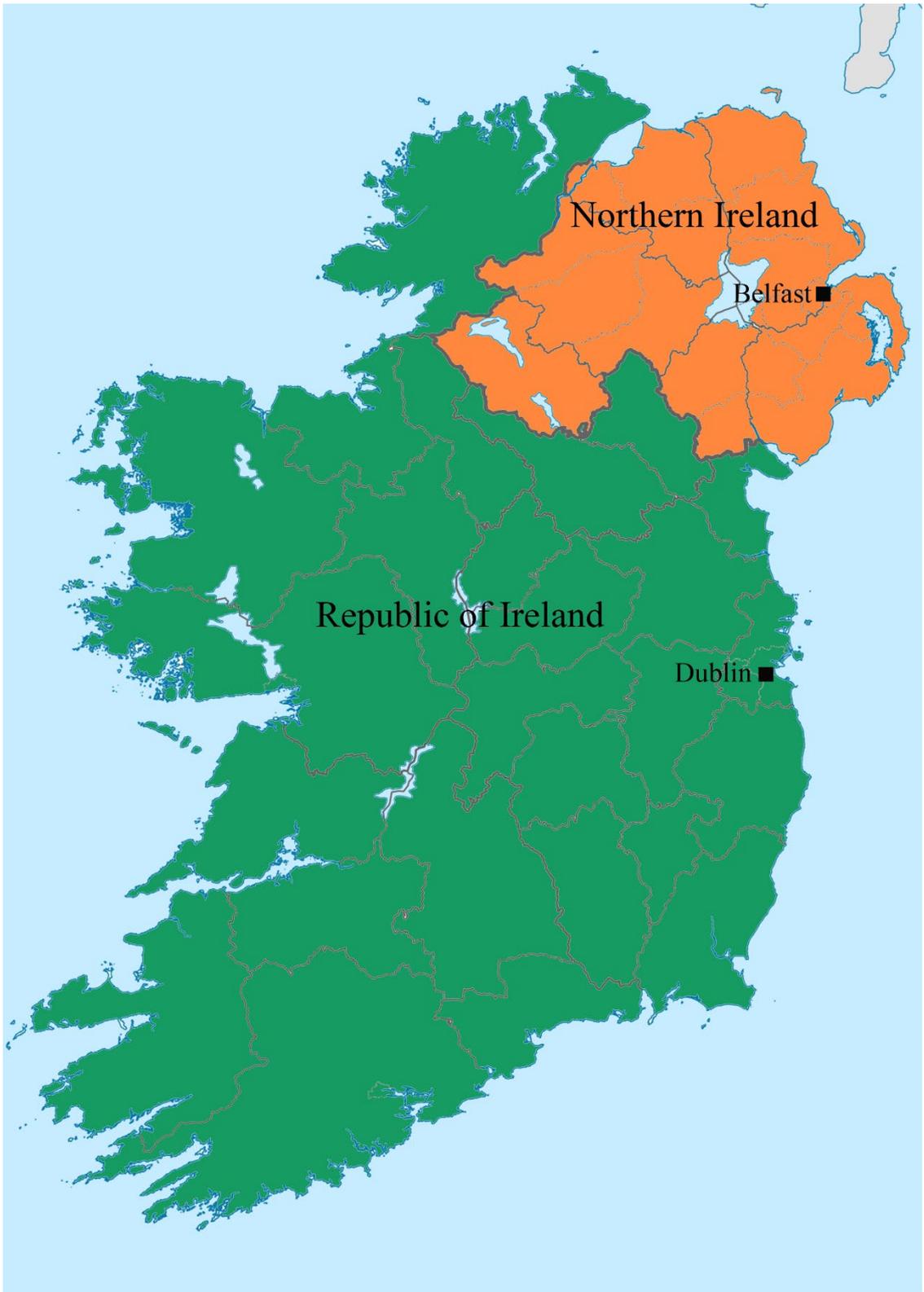


Figure 1 Map of Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

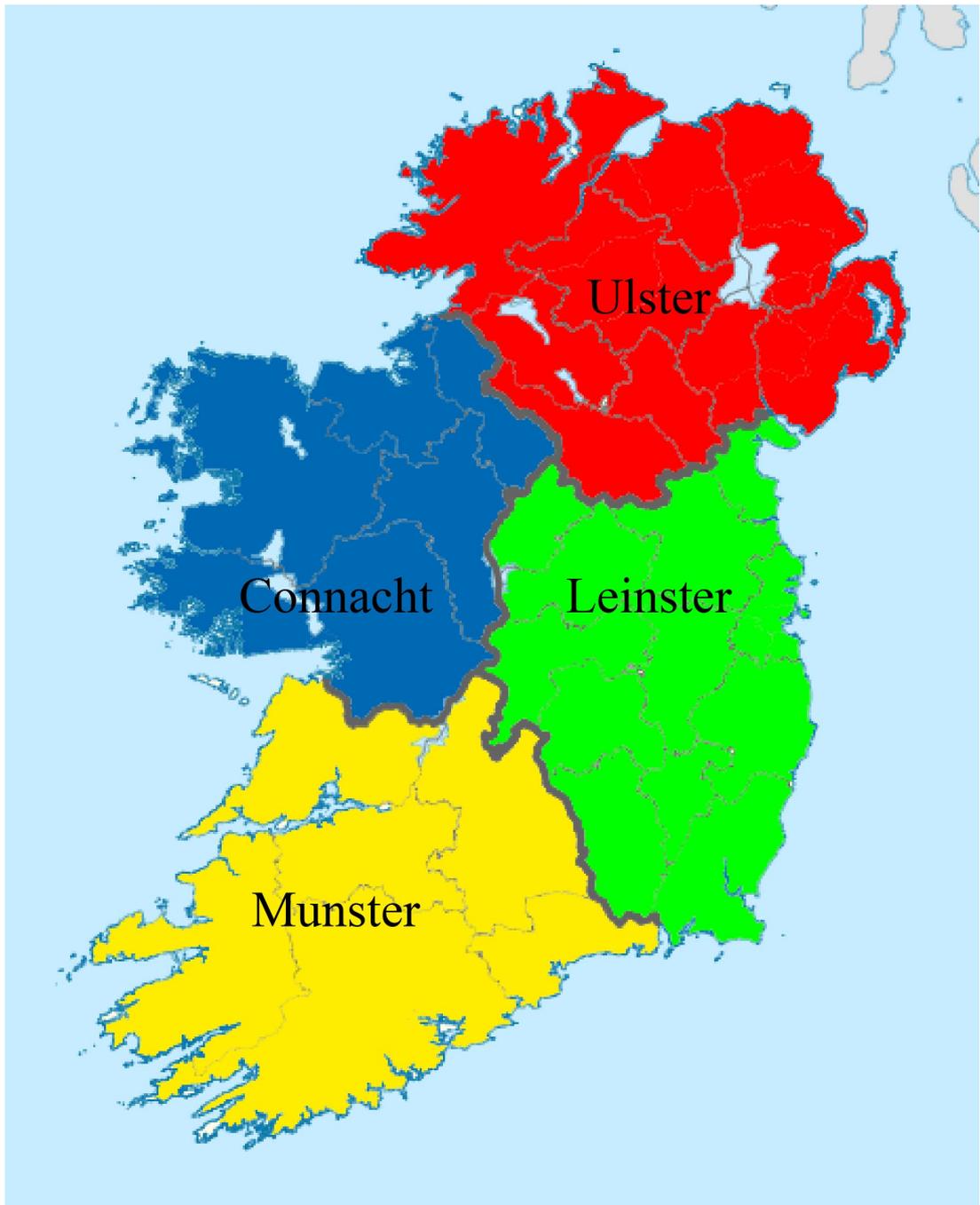


Figure 2 Map of the four provinces of Ireland.

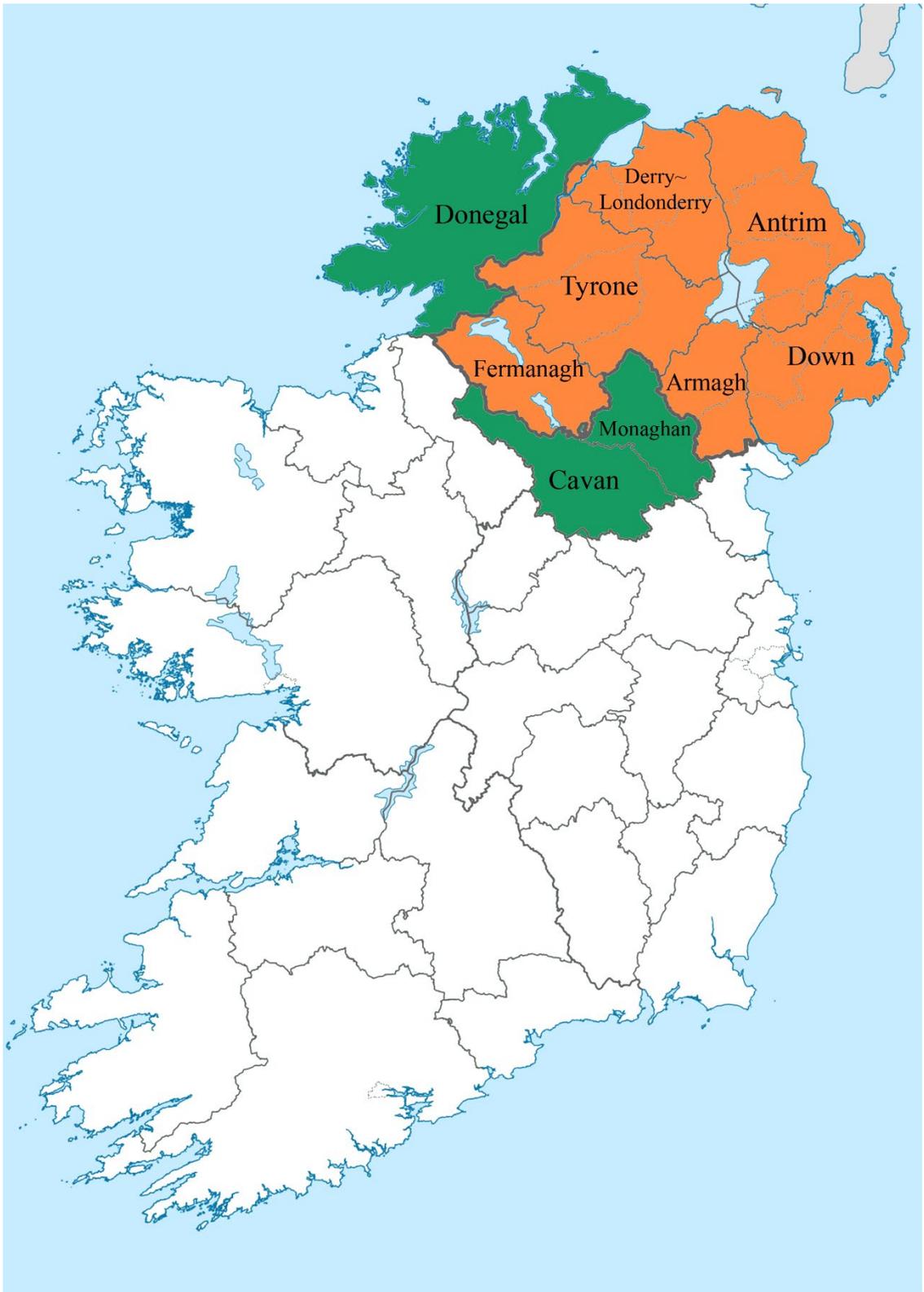


Figure 3 Map of the nine counties of the province of Ulster. Those in Orange are part of Northern Ireland.

Introduction to the Timeline of Significant Events

The table of the pages below gives an overview of events in Ireland from the reign of Henry VII until the present day. The table is formed of three columns:

Column one shows events in British, Irish or Northern Irish history that are mentioned in the text in Volume I or are otherwise significant for context or general understanding.

Column two shows the year of the event.

Column three shows cultural events that are mentioned in the text in Volume I or are otherwise significant for context or general understanding.

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
Accession of Henry VII	1485	
Poynings' Law crown veto on Irish Political decisions	1494	
Elizabeth I dies - Tudor conquest complete	1603	
Accession of James I	1603	
Flight of the Earls	1607	
Plantation of Ulster expanded	1610	
Accession of Charles I	1625	
Rebellion in Ulster	1641	
Catholics hold 60% of land	1641	
Charles I executed	1649	
Cromwell becomes Governor of Ireland	1649	
Catholics hold 20% of land	1663	
Irish wool exports banned	1661	
Cattle Act bans exports to England	1663	
Popish Plot and proclamation against Catholic clergy and schools	1678	
	1662	Smock Alley Theatre opens in Dublin
	1684	Dublin Philosophical Society founded
Accession of James II	1685	
Glorious Revolution - Accession of William		
James flees to France	1688	
James arrives in Ireland	1689	
Siege of Derry begins	1689	
Siege of Derry relieved	1689	
William arrives in Ireland	1690	
James defeated at the Boyne	1690	
James flees to France	1690	
Battle of Aughrim	1691	
Treaty of Limerick - 15% of land in Catholic hands	1691	
Penal Laws restrict Catholics right to education and to bear arms	1695	
Further Penal Laws restrict Catholic landholding	1704	

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
Accession of George I	1714	
Accession of George II	1727	
Franchise removed from Catholics	1728	
	1736	Smock Alley tours to Newry and Belfast
Volunteering movement begins in Ulster and spreads across Ireland	1778	
Catholic Relief Act grants some rights to inheritance and land leasing	1778	
	1780	Rosemary Lane Theatre Belfast presenting three shows a week
	1783	Theatre Royal opens in Newry
	1789	Artillery Lane Theatre opens in Derry
Foundation of United Irishmen in Belfast	1791	
Catholic franchise restored	1793	
Orange Order founded in Co. Armagh	1795	
United Irishmen Rebellion begins in Leinster	1798	
Outbreak in Ulster	1798	
Defeat of rebels at Vinegar Hill	1798	
Pitt advocates Union	1799	
Irish Act of Union	1800	
Uprising and Robert Emmet executed	1803	
First recorded 'Twelfth' riots in Belfast	1813	
Accession of George IV	1821	
Daniel O'Connell elected MP for Clare	1828	
Catholic Emancipation Act	1829	
Franchise raised from forty-shillings to ten pounds	1829	
Accession of William IV	1830	
Accession of Victoria	1837	
Census population 8,175,124	1841	

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
First record of potato blight outbreak	1845	
Repeal of Corn Laws	1846	
Death of O'Connell	1847	
Census population 6,552,385	1851	
Irish Republican Brotherhood formed in Dublin	1858	
Census population 5,798,967	1861	
Harland & Wolff founded in Belfast	1862	
	1871	J F Warden's 2,000 seat Theatre Royal Belfast opens
Census population 5,412,377	1871	
	1873	Warden's Music Hall Belfast opens
Home Rule movement formed	1879	
Census population 5,174,836	1881	
	1882	Theatre Royal fire - Phipps contracted for the redesign
Census population 4,704,750	1891	
	1894	Adam Findlater's Empire Theatre of Varieties opens
	1895	Warden's Grand Opera House opens, designed by Macham
	1899	First production of Irish Literary Theatre
Accession of Edward VII	1901	
Census population 4,458,775	1901	
	1902	<i>Cathleen ni Houlihan</i> performed by ILT
	1902	Ulster Literary Theatre formed by Hobson and Parkhill
	1904	Abbey Theatre opens
	1904	ULT presenting in the Ulster Hall's Minor Hall
	1907	Royal Hippodrome opens next door to GOH
Carson becomes leader of Irish Unionism	1910	
Accession of George V	1910	

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
Census population 4,381,951	1911	
Solemn League and Covenant signed in Ulster	1912	
Home Rule Bill passes Commons	1914	
War with Germany	1914	
Home Rule Bill suspended	1914	
Easter Rising in Dublin	1916	
Rebels Surrender	1916	
Last of the rebels executed	1916	
Government of Ireland Act creates Northern Ireland and Irish Free State	1920	
Stormont opened by George V	1921	
	1921	Tyrone Guthrie becomes first BBC NI Director
Daily approves Anglo-Irish Treaty	1922	
Census Pop: Free State 2,971,992; NI 1,256,561	1926	
	1929	Empire Players, later Belfast Rep Co. formed at the Empire Theatre
	1932	The Little Theatre begins using the Minor Hall
	1932	Carnduff's <i>Workers</i> performed at the Abbey
Dehra Parker becomes first woman MP in NI	1933	
Census Pop: Free State 2,968,420	1936	
Census Pop: NI 1,279,745	1937	
De Valera's constitution approved. Eire adopted as name.	1937	
	1937	Belfast Repertory Company closes
	1937	Little Theatre closes - reopens as the Playhouse
	1939	The Playhouse closes
Eire announces neutrality	1939	
War in Europe	1939	
	1940	Group Theatre formed at the Minor Hall

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
	1940	Mask Theatre Guild, forerunner of the Arts, opens in Linehaul Street
	1941	A month of Blitz on Belfast ends
	1943	CEMA NI formed
Census Pop: Eire 2,955,167	1946	
	1947	Mask moves to become Arts Theatre Studio in Upper North Street
	1948	First suggestion of a national theatre under Tyrone Guthrie
Eire leaves the Commonwealth becomes Republic of Ireland	1949	
	1949	GOH considered as a possible rep theatre under Guthrie
	1950	Arts moves to 200-seater in Fountain Mews
	1950	Mary O'Malley presents one-act plays at Unsterile House
	1951	NI Company presents Festival of Britain programme in London to great acclaim
	1951	Lyric Players Theatre founded
	1952	Lyric moves to Beechbank, Derryvolgie Ave
	1954	Arts moves to 200-seater in Little Donegall Street
Flags and Emblems Act NI legislates to prohibit display of the Irish flag	1954	
	1956	Secret cabinet memo on national theatre starts a flurry of activity
	1959	J Neil Downes presents first plans for a new Lyric
	1960	GOH and Royal Hippodrome sold to Rank Odeon
	1960	<i>Over the Bridge</i> by Sam Thompson opens at the Empire

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
	1961	Empire closes - Littlewoods opens on the site
Census Pop: ROI 2,818,341; NI 1,425,642	1961	
	1961	Arts opens 450-seater in Botanic Avenue
	1965	Lyric foundation stone laid at Ridgeway St
NI Civil Rights Assoc founded	1967	
Second Lyric Theatre opens	1968	
People's Democracy begins with student demonstrations in Belfast	1968	
Battle of the Bogside ends; British troops assume control	1969	
IRA split into Provisionals and Officials	1970	
Census Pop: ROI 2,978,248; NI 1,536,065	1971	
	1971	Guthrie makes final attempt to launch a national theatre, this time in Derry
	1971	Group closes for refit and remains closed for five years
Internment introduced	1971	
DUP founded by Ian Paisley	1971	
	1972	GOH closes and is sold to developers
'Bloody Sunday' 13 killed in Derry	1972	
Stormont suspended - Direct rule from Westminster	1972	
	1972	Peter Moro commences design of the Riverside Theatre
ROI joins EEC	1973	
	1974	GOH becomes first building listed for architectural merit
Ulster Workers Council strike begins	1974	
Ulster Workers Council strike ends	1974	
	1976	ACNI purchases GOH

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
End of Special Category Status for prisoners	1976	
	1976	Group reopens as home for amateur theatre
	1976	Lyric extension completed
	1976	Riverside Theatre, Coleraine, opens
	1980	GOH reopens after extensive refurbishment
	1980	Flowerfield Art Centre Portstewart opens
Hunger strike begins at the Maze Prison	1981	
Hunger strike ends following ten deaths	1981	
	1982	Newry Arts Centre (now Sean Hollywood AC) opens
	1984	Construction begins on Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen
Anglo-Irish Agreement signed	1985	
	1986	Brian Friel opens the Ardhowen Theatre
	1989	Old Museum first used
	1991	First bombing of the Grand Opera House
	1991	Portadown Town Hall opens
	1992	The Playhouse Derry opens after refurbishment
Hume/Adams Talks start the peace process	1993	
	1993	Second bombing of the Grand Opera House
IRA announce 'complete cessation of military activities'	1994	
Loyalist ceasefire	1994	
IRA ceasefire ends with London Docklands bombing	1996	
IRA renew the ceasefire	1997	
	1997	Waterfront Hall Belfast opens

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
Belfast Agreement signed on Good Friday	1998	
ROI joins Eurozone	1999	
	2000	The Burnavon Cookstown opens
	2001	Arts Theatre closes Belvoir Studio opens Market Place Armagh opens Island Arts Centre Lisburn opens Millennium Forum Derry opens
	2001	Procurement of third Lyric design begins
RoI starts using the Euro	2002	
	2003	O'Donnell + Tuomey appointed as Lyric architect
	2005	Belfast City Council closes the Group to amateur companies
	2006	GOH redevelopment of back of house and new studio added
	2006	Alley Theatre and Conference Centre Strabane opens
	2007	Hackett and Hall appointed as the MAC architect
	2007	Strule Arts Centre Omagh opens
	2008	Second Lyric closes for demolition
	2008	Braid Arts Centre Ballymena opens
	2009	Threshold stone laid for third Lyric Theatre
	2010	OMac closes
	2010	Crescent AC reopens following refurbishment Theatre at the Mill Newtownabbey opens
	2011	Third Lyric Theatre opens
Portas Review published	2011	

National Event	Year	Cultural Event
The Queen and Martin McGuinness shake hands in the Lyric foyer	2012	
	2012	The MAC opens
	2012	Big Telly start using the Box
	2012	Cahoots start using the Danske Bank
	2013	Cahoots move to Castle Court
Grimsey Review published	2013	
	2014	Big Telly founds Creative Shops
	2015	Warwick Commission Report issued
	2016	Seamus Heaney HomePlace Bellaghy opens
NI Assembly suspended	2017	
	2020	GOH redevelopment commences
NI Assembly reconvenes	2020	

Figure 4 Timeline of significant events.

Part Two: Illustrations and Tables

The following pages include maps, tables and venue drawings relevant to Volume I, Part Two, with numbers given to indicate to which chapter they relate.

Chapter 4

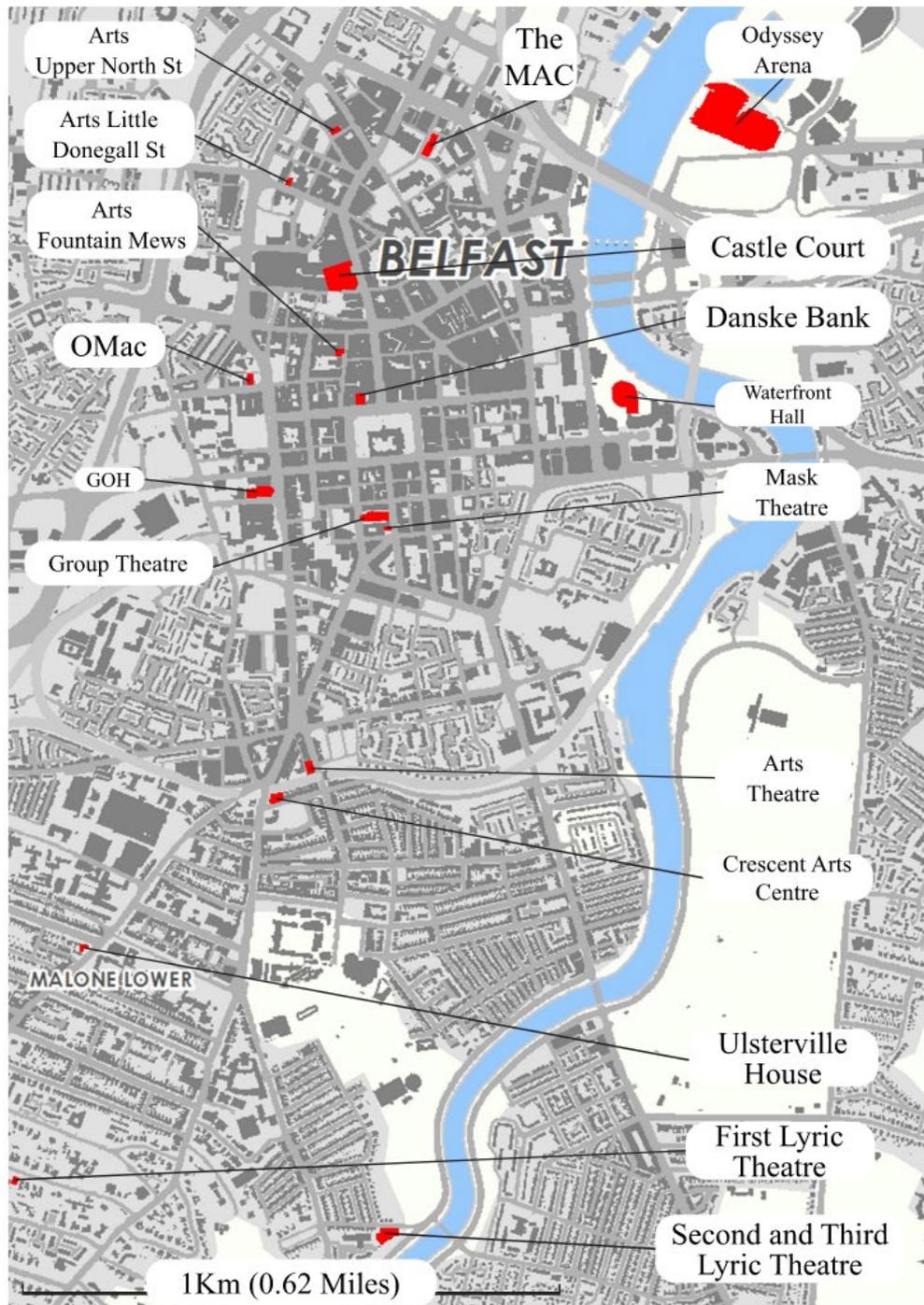


Figure 5 Locations of relevant Belfast venues.

Chapter 6



Figure 6 Relevant towns and cities in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 7

Venue	Seating capacity
Alley Arts Centre, Strabane	265
Belvoir Players Studio, Belfast	200
Burnavon Arts Centre, Cookstown	351
Flowerfield Art Centre, Portstewart	150
Island Arts Centre, Lisburn	400
Market Place Theatre, Armagh	400
Millennium Forum, Derry~Londonderry	1,000
Strule Arts Centre, Omagh	384

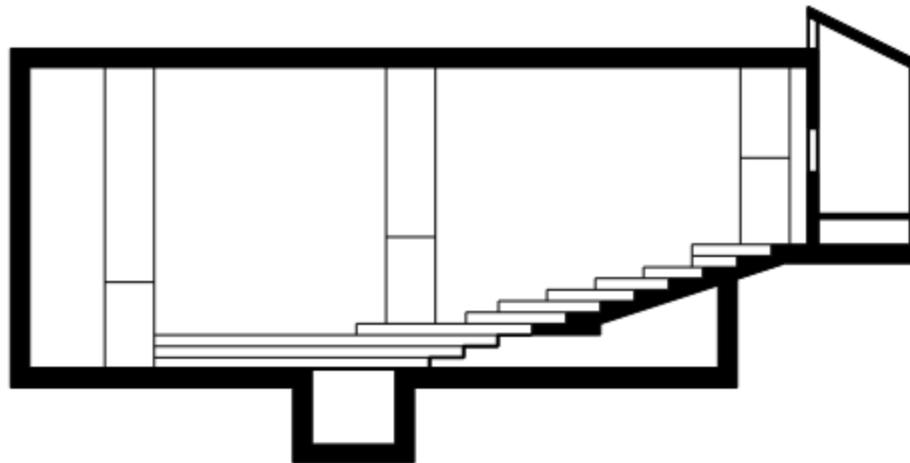
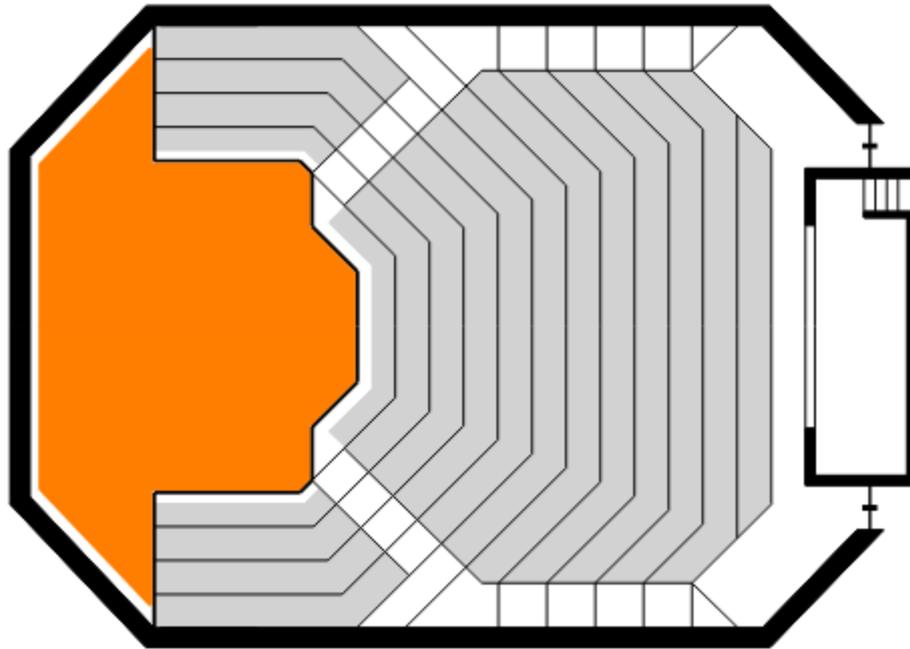
Table 1 Capital Build Programme venues and capacities

Venue	Seating capacity
Riverside Theatre, Coleraine	290-360
Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen	290
The Playhouse, Derry	152-176
Theatre at the Mill, Newtownabbey	400
Braid Arts Centre, Ballymena	400
Sean Hollywood Arts Centre, Newry	150
Portadown Town Hall	260
The Lyric, Belfast ¹	394
The MAC, Belfast	350

Table 2 All venues with capacities

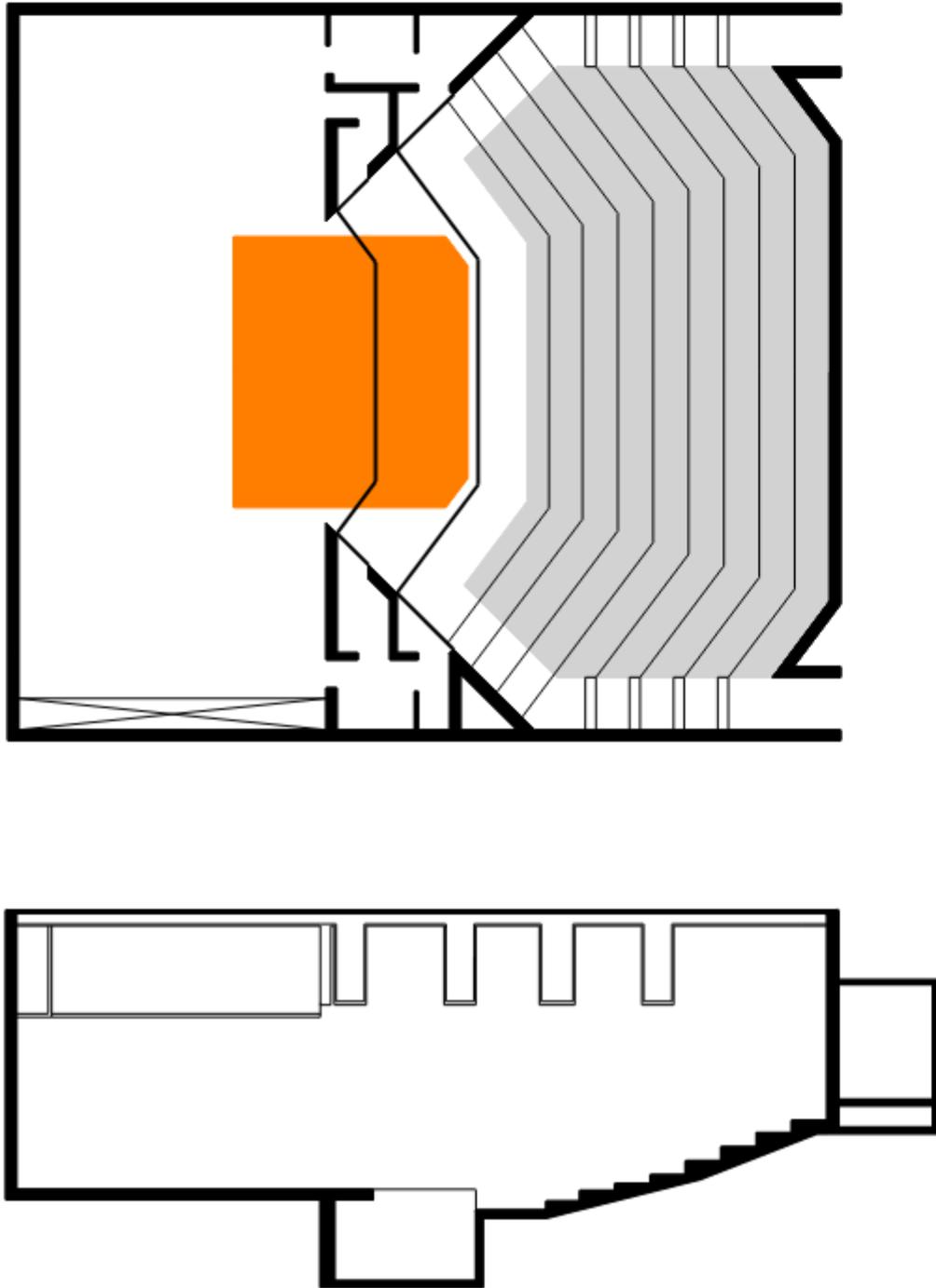
¹ The Lyric remains officially a producing theatre but has an increasing presenting programme.

Figure 7 Riverside Theatre Coleraine 1:200 @ A4²



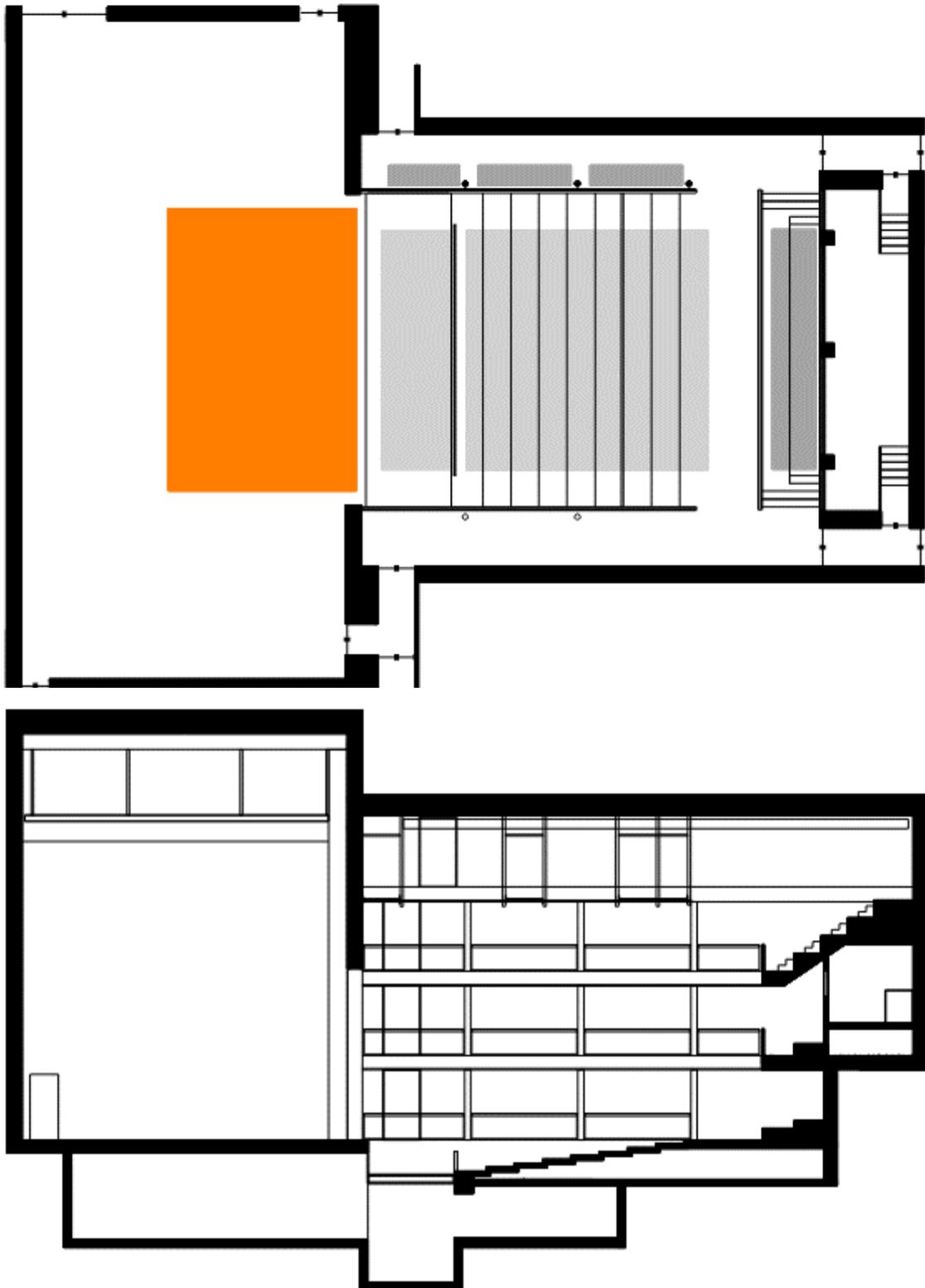
² Redrawn from drawings in Peter Moro and Partners, *Report – Proposed Theatre for the New University of Ulster*, 1972, pp. 11-14. Dimensions verified on site.

Figure 8 Ardhowen Theatre Enniskillen 1:200 @ A4³



³ Redrawn from plans from the joint Arts Council Auditoria Survey of 2000.

Figure 9 Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre Armagh 1:200 @ A4⁴



⁴ Redrawn from plans provided by Glenn Howells Architects.

Figure 10 Millennium Forum Derry Plan 1:200 @ A4

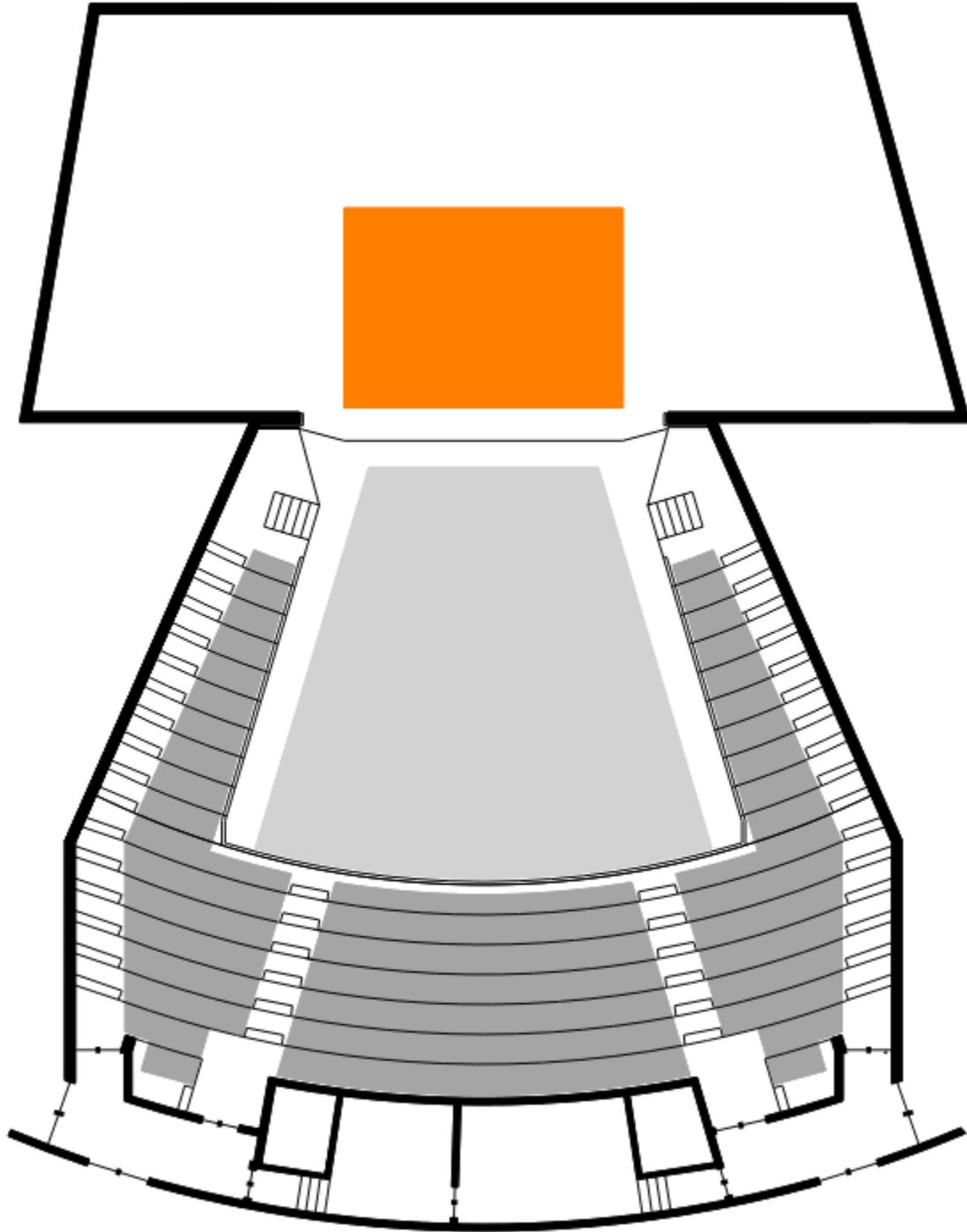
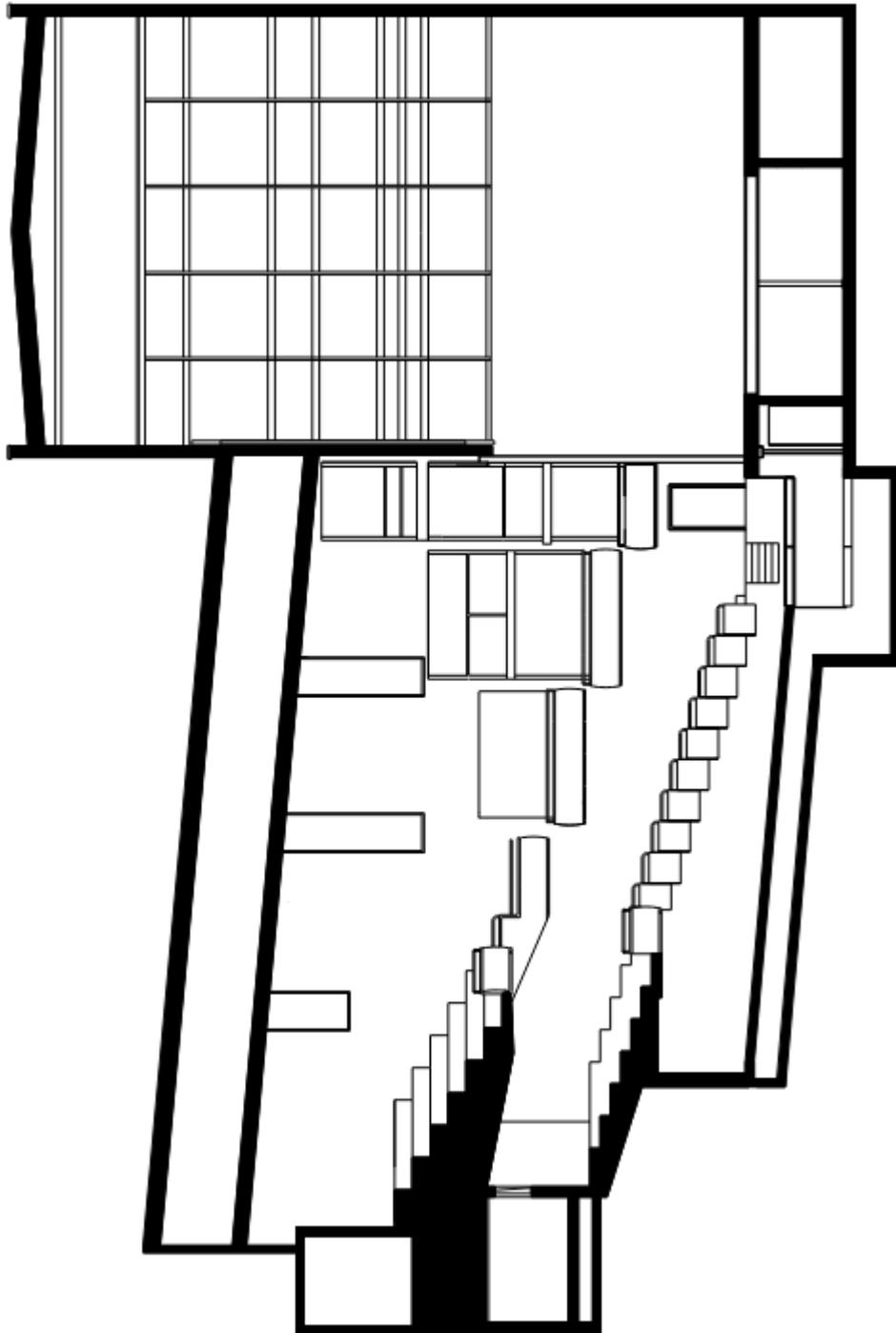


Figure 11 Millennium Forum Derry Section 1:200 @ A4⁵



⁵ Redrawn from plans provided by theatre consultant Dr Michael Holden.

An Introduction to Jan Branch

Jan Branch came to Northern Ireland in 1971, ‘not a good time for an English twenty-something year-old to work as a personnel officer, so I followed my inclinations rather than a sensible career path [...] went into the Belfast Festival office and offered my services when Festival resumed again in 1973’.⁶ Having thought that a job selling programmes was in store, she came away as Box Office manager which she did for the 1973 and ’74 seasons before joining the administrative team with which she stayed until 1983. Festival work occupied about half her year and for the rest of the time Jan worked for the province’s semi-professional opera companies, Studio Opera Group and the Northern Ireland Opera Trust, her work involving fundraising. ‘Fundraising has been an ongoing theme in my life, not because I like fundraising, I don’t – nobody does – but if you want to do work you have to find the means to do it.’⁷ Jan was married at this time to John Branch the General Manager of the Grand Opera House which had reopened in September 1980 which was having problems implementing a box office system, so Jan took on an additional role there for a year until a new box office team could be recruited. Staying in Northern Ireland at this time may not have been the obvious choice for an aspiring mid-career arts administrator, but Jan recalls that ‘there was clearly a lot to be done, but with the opportunity to have fingers in so many pies and, to a certain extent, dictating how those pies developed and were cooked’.⁸ The arts professions, she asserts, are more structured today with much less flexibility and variability in the roles available. Now retired but keeping a keen interest and involvement in the Ulster arts scene, Jan’s recollections of nearly fifty years of arts strategy have been invaluable.

⁶ John Riddell, *Interview* with Jan Branch (14 March 2019).

⁷ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

⁸ Riddell-Branch, *Interview*.

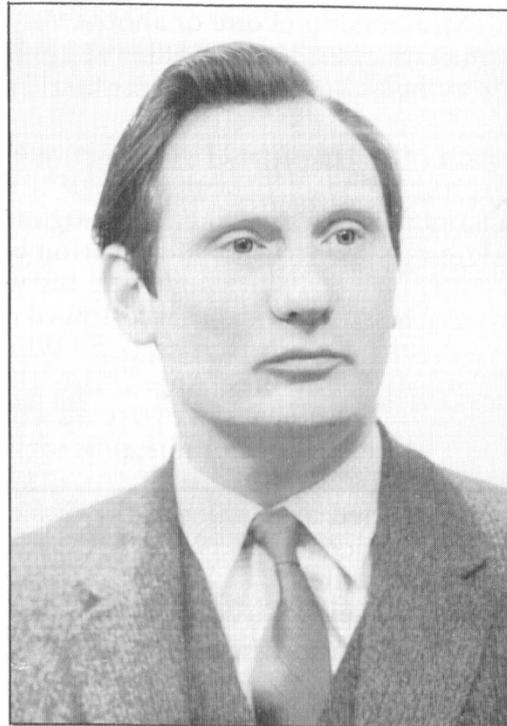
Part Three: Illustrations and supporting material

The following pages include biographical information on interviewees and venue drawings listing events relevant to Volume I, Part Three, with numbers given to indicate the chapter to which they relate to.

Chapter 8



Mary



Pearse

(Photos: David Ross Studios)

Figure 12 Young Mary and Pearse O'Malley⁹

⁹ Mary O'Malley, *Never shake hands with the Devil* (Dublin: Elo publications, 1990), p. 32.

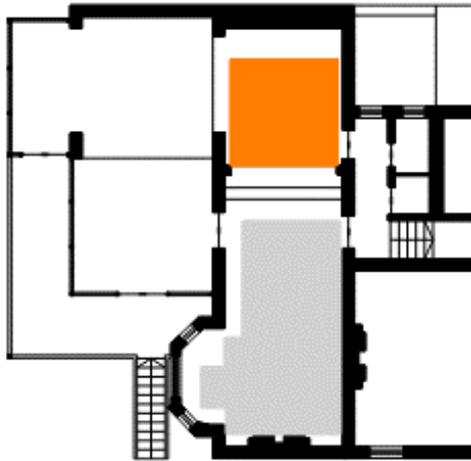


Figure 13 The First Lyric Theatre at Derryvolgie Avenue 1:200 @ A4¹⁰

¹⁰ Redrawn from material in Cormac J MacLynn, *Planning Application*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, National University of Ireland Galway: James Hardiman Library, T4/592.



Figure 14 First Lyric stage from auditorium



Figure 15 First Lyric auditorium from stage¹¹

¹¹ *Lyric Theatre photographs*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/617.

17/576

TO BE LODGED IN TRIPLICATE

BELFAST PLANNING SCHEME
COUNTY BOROUGH OF BELFAST

The Planning Acts (Northern Ireland), 1931 and 1944

Planning (General Interim Development) Order
(Northern Ireland), 1944

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Application No. 2256
Development Plan No.
Register Book
Folio

Date received 20-6-56
Date submitted to Committee 24-8-56 20-8-56
Date ratified by Council 3-9-56

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION to proceed with the development of Land in accordance with the above order.

* State nature of interest—e.g., fee simple, lease, etc., and whether absolute or conditional upon permission being granted hereunder.
If leasehold, state name and address of immediate lessor.

1. I/WE, having the following interest*, viz. Leasehold

in land situate at 11, Seelyvolgie Avenue
Belfast.

hereby apply for—

Delete whichever does not apply. (a) general permission conditional on the subsequent approval by the Corporation of the detailed particulars of the proposed development, or
(b) permission subject only to compliance with By-Laws, Local Acts, etc.,

to proceed with the undermentioned development of land in the Corporation's area as shown upon the plans deposited herewith and in accordance with, and subject to, the provisions of the above-mentioned Acts and Orders.

2. If permission is granted I/We propose to carry out the development immediately/within

3. Name of Applicant(s) Pearse P. O'Malley F.R.C.P.

4. Address 11, Seelyvolgie Avenue
Belfast.

5. Purpose and brief general description of proposed development. (Detailed particulars to be given on page 2).
Extension of Recreation Room in Private Dwelling House.

6. Purpose for which Premises (if existing) were last used Private Residence

7. Name and address of person(s) depositing application and to whom all communications are to be addressed.
Gormac J. Mac Kynw. A.R.I.B.A.,
Chartered Architect
142, Royal Avenue Belfast.

X SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT Pearse O'Malley

Dated this 20th day of June 19 56

Figure 16 Planning application for rear extension to first Lyric.

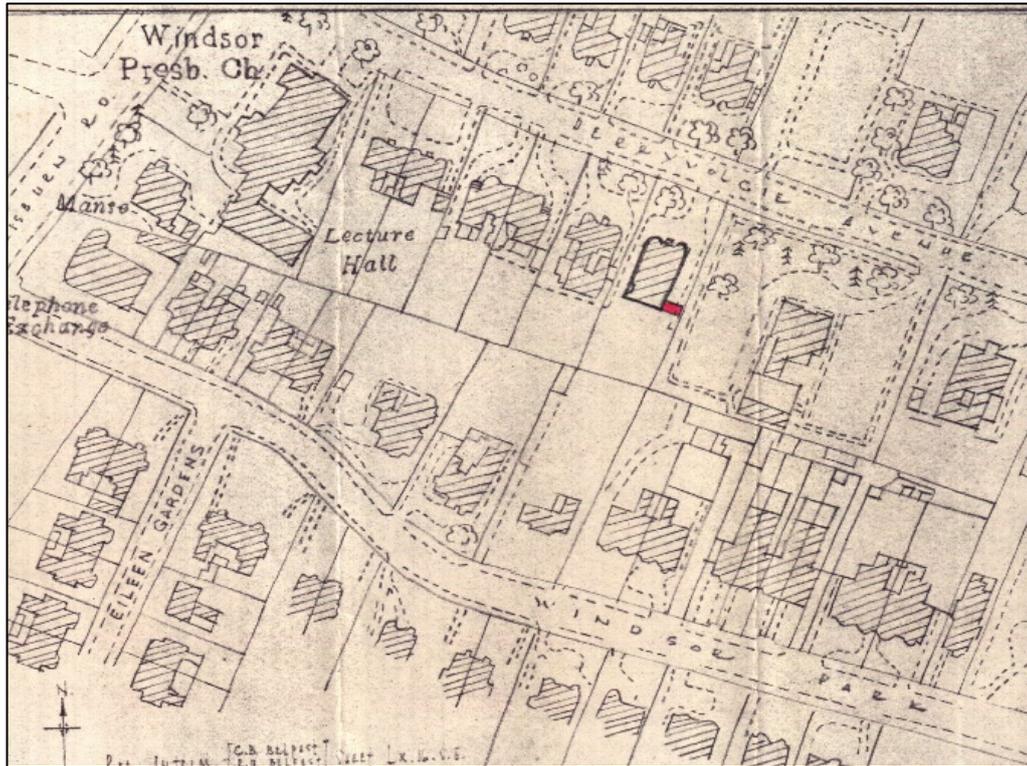


Figure 17 Planning application map¹²

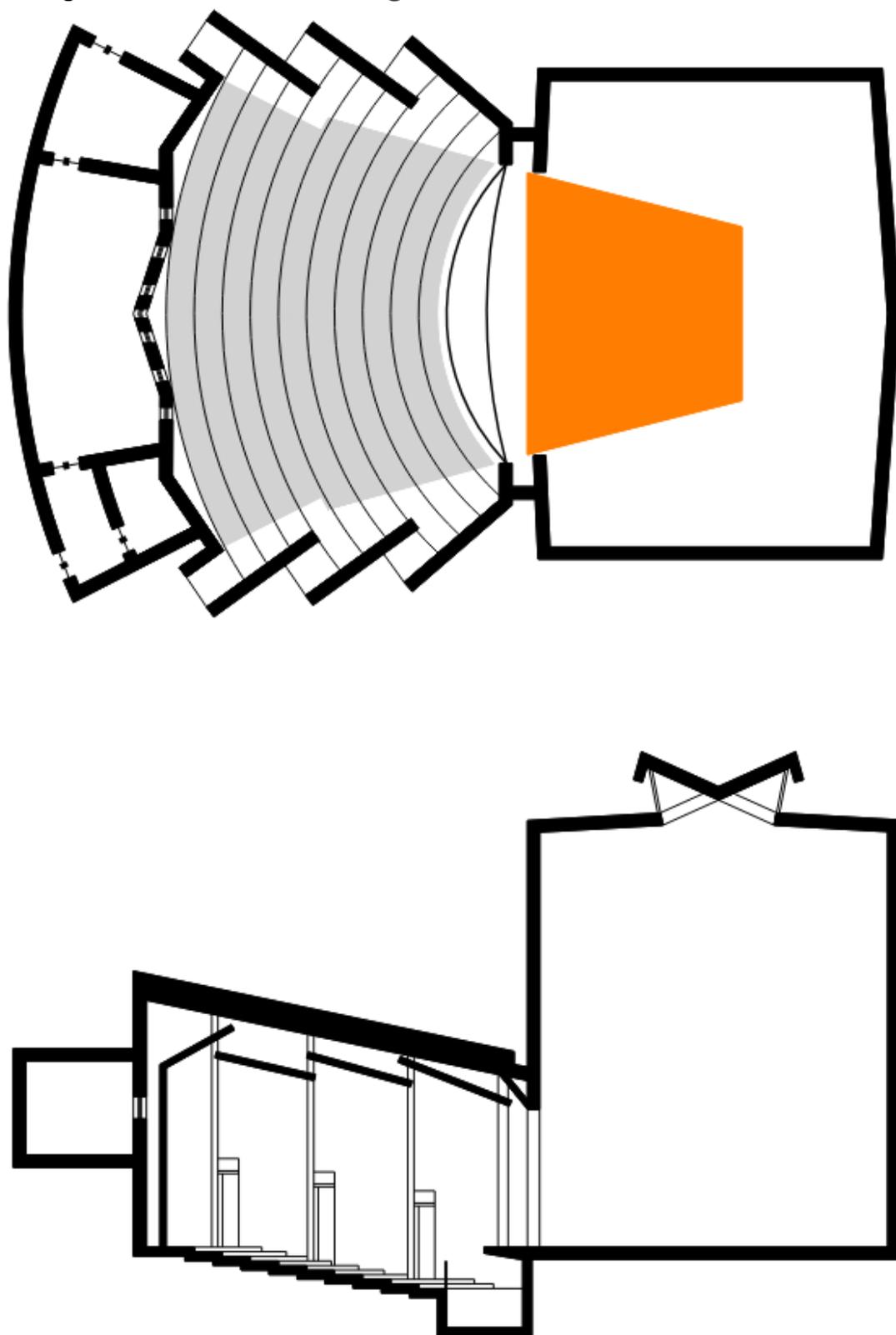
¹² *Planning Application*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.



Figure 18 Rear of first Lyric viewed from garden, with completed extension, taken after the final performance¹³

¹³ *Lyric Theatre photographs*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.

Figure 19 Downes' 1959 1:200 @ A4¹⁴



¹⁴ Redrawn from material in J. Neil Downes, *Small Theatre for Belfast for Mrs Mary O'Malley*, 1959, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/595.

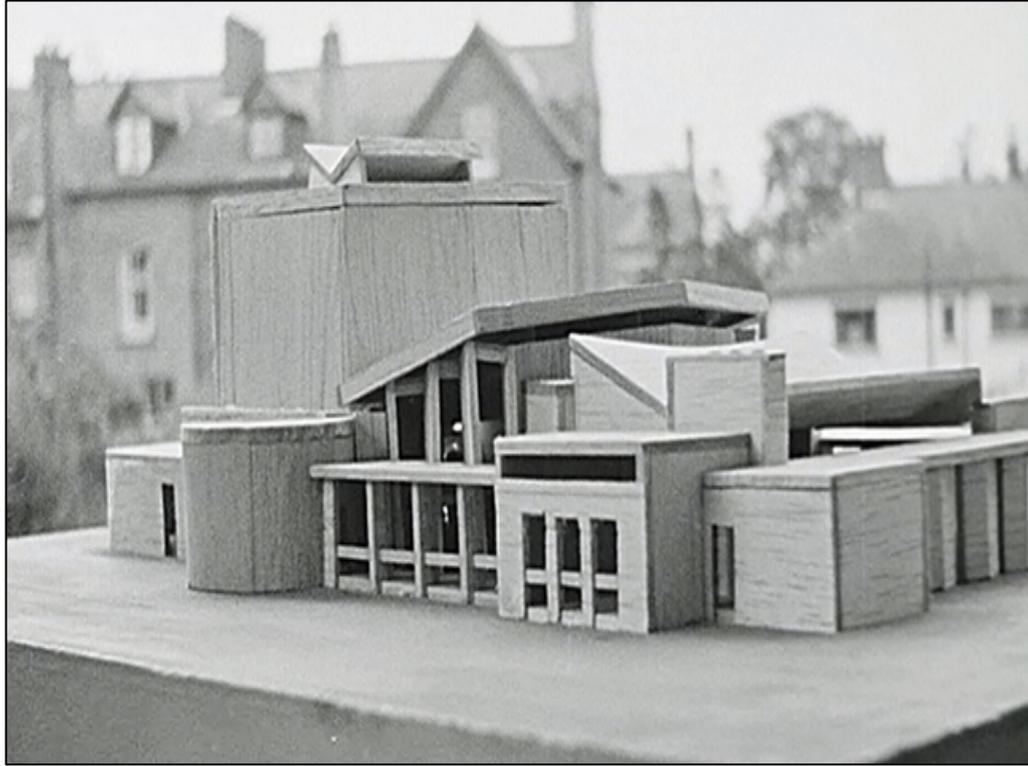


Figure 20 Model of Downes' 1959 scheme¹⁵

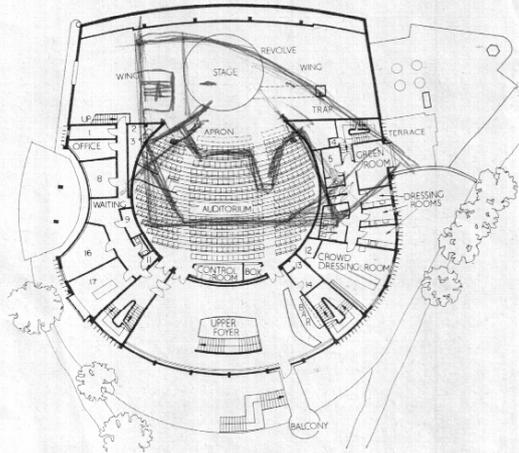
¹⁵ Still taken from television interview in John O'Donoghue (presenter), 'A Belfast Centre for Theatre and Art', in *Broadsheet* (RTÉ), 2 October 1963.

projects above its surrounding wrapping but is not clearly expressed because of a clerestory which has been introduced to conceal ventilation pipes and provide access to the roof and the space over the auditorium. From most points of view the surrounding envelope is the dominant feature. The roof slopes up from the stage to its highest level over the foyer and the public area at the opposite end. The effect of this sloping plane cutting the v-shaped curve has

a weakness which is emphasised by the small scale fascia detail used to terminate it **2**.

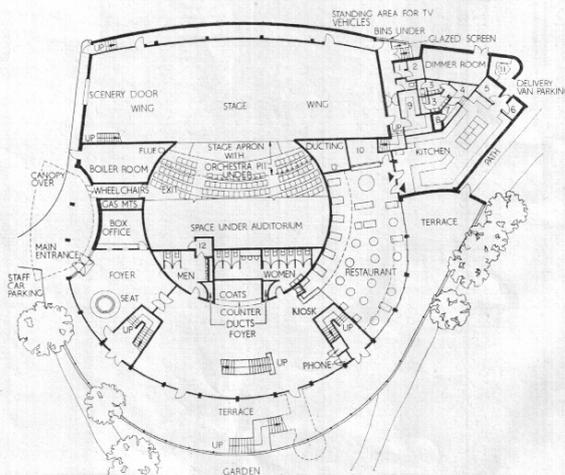
External walls to foyers and public rooms are entirely glazed between the reinforced concrete perimeter columns, and those to offices and dressing rooms are filled with brick panels with various sized windows. The wall to escape stairs is infilled with concrete. In an attempt to achieve some unity in this façade the brick and concrete

- 1 Secondary battery room
- 2 Boiler flue
- 3 Air duct
- 4 Phone
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Store
- 7 Shower
- 8 Manager
- 9 Stationery
- 10 Lavatories
- 11 Cleaner
- 12 Trunks
- 13 Service lift
- 14 Bar store



First floor plan at upper foyer level with main access to the auditorium

- 1 Door man
- 2 Calorifier
- 3 Lockers
- 4 Vegetable store
- 5 Cold store
- 6 Chef's office
- 7 Dry store
- 8 Air duct
- 9 Props
- 10 Catering manager
- 11 Bins

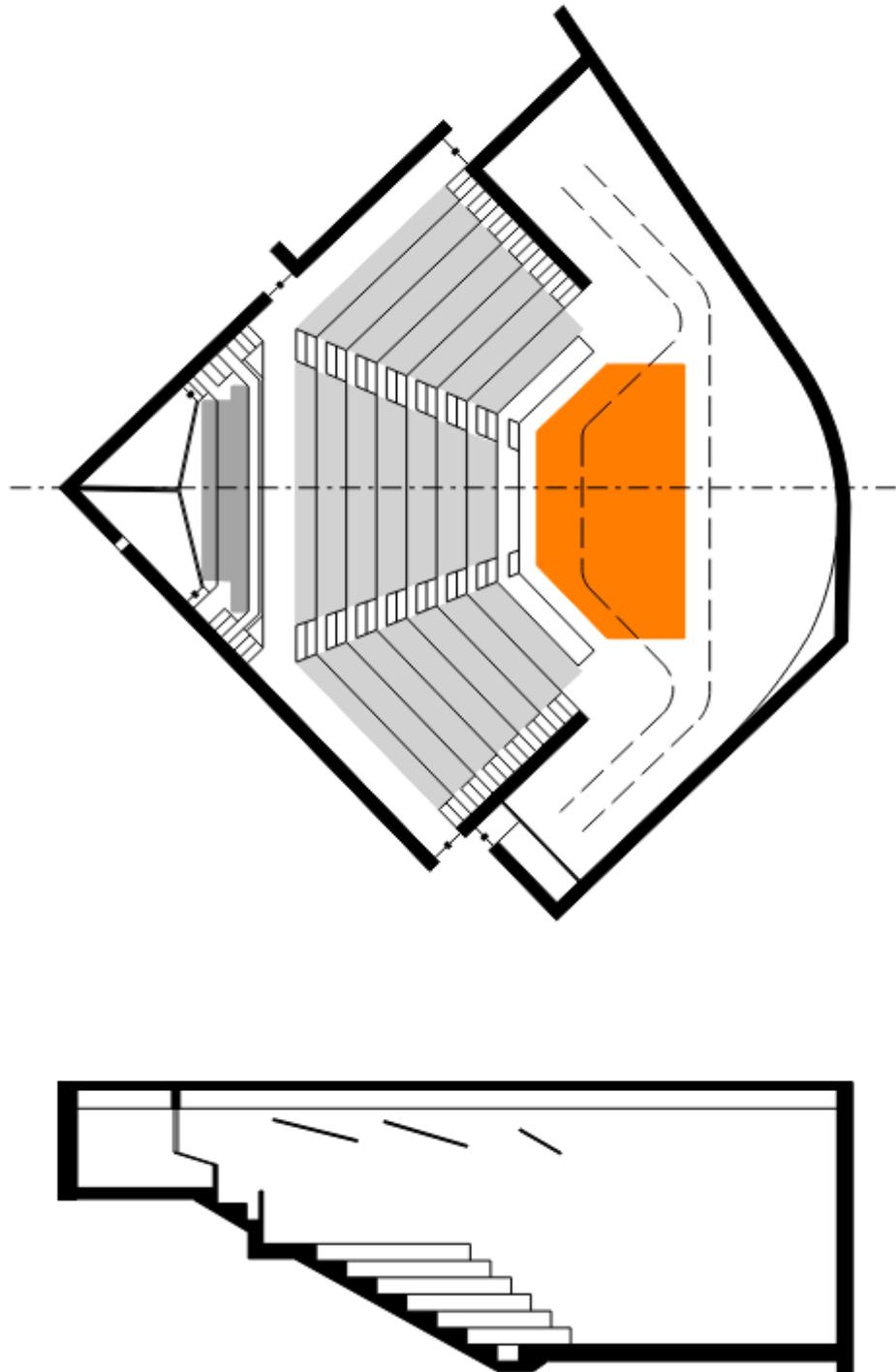


Ground floor plan at entrance level (1/4" = 1 ft)

Figure 21 Page from the Architects Journal showing a markup on the Yvonne Arnaud auditorium plan¹⁶

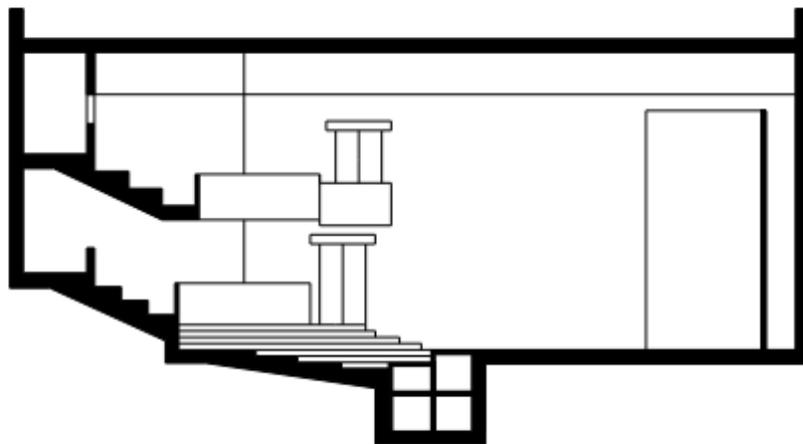
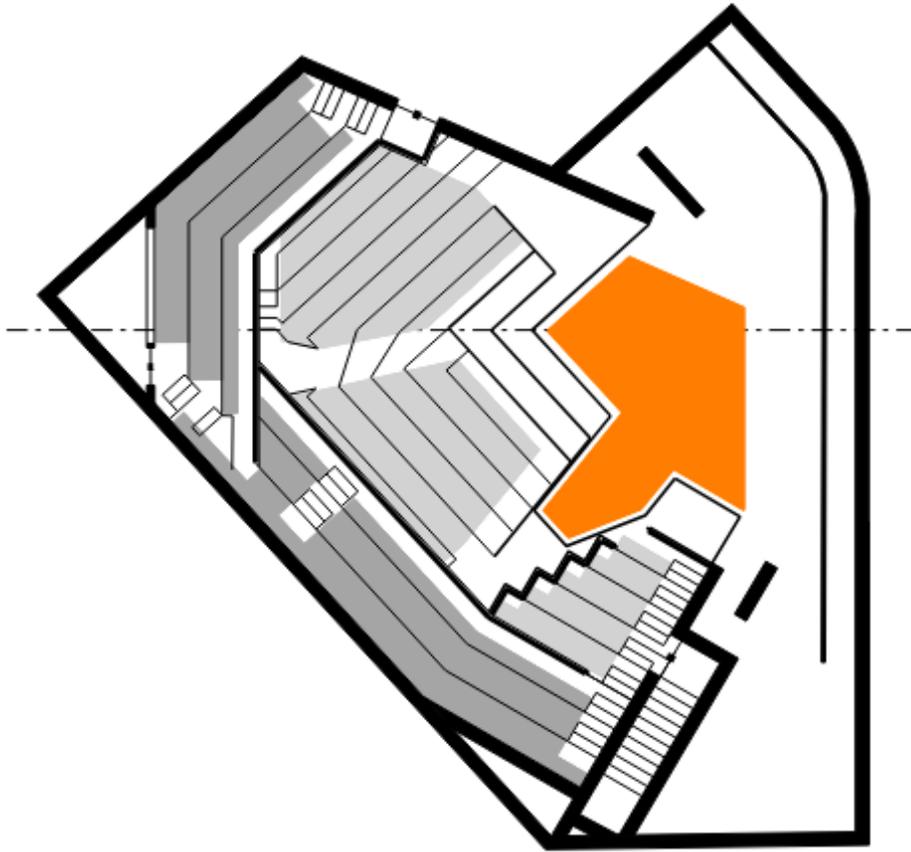
¹⁶ Anon., *Theatre at Guildford*, *Architects Journal*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/661.

Figure 22 Downes 1964 1:200 @ A4¹⁷



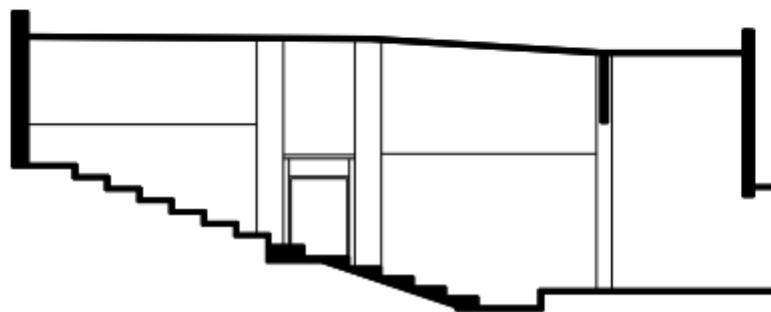
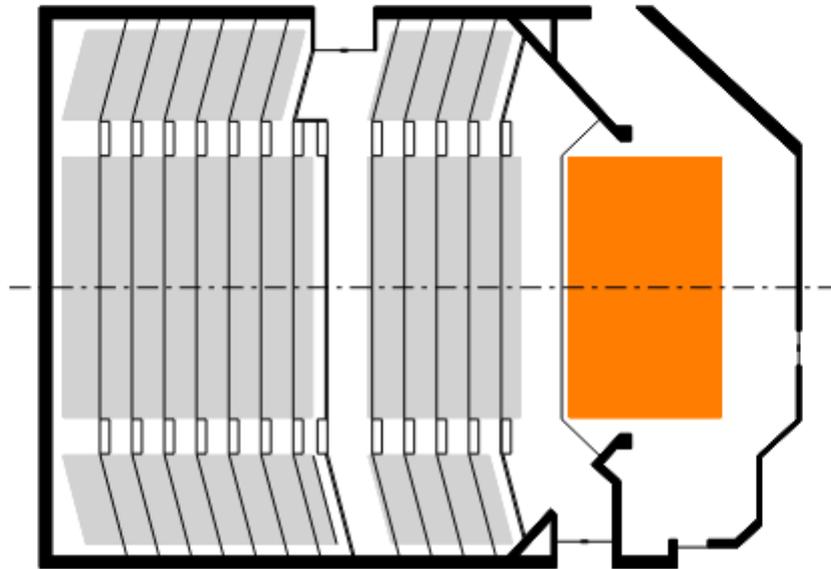
¹⁷ Redrawn from material in J. Neil Downes, *New Theatre at Ridgeway Street for the Lyric Players Theatre Belfast*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/597.

Figure 23 Downes 1965 1:200 @ A4¹⁸



¹⁸ Redrawn from material in J. Neil Downes, *Lyric Theatre drawing 22*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/598.

Figure 24 Second Lyric Theatre 1:200 @ A4¹⁹



¹⁹ Redrawn from material in Sir Alfred McAlpine, *Construction Drawings of Lyric Theatre*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/619.



Figure 25 The steel frame of the second Lyric in construction²⁰

²⁰ *Lyric Theatre photographs*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive.



Figure 26 Austin Clarke at the foundation stone ceremony

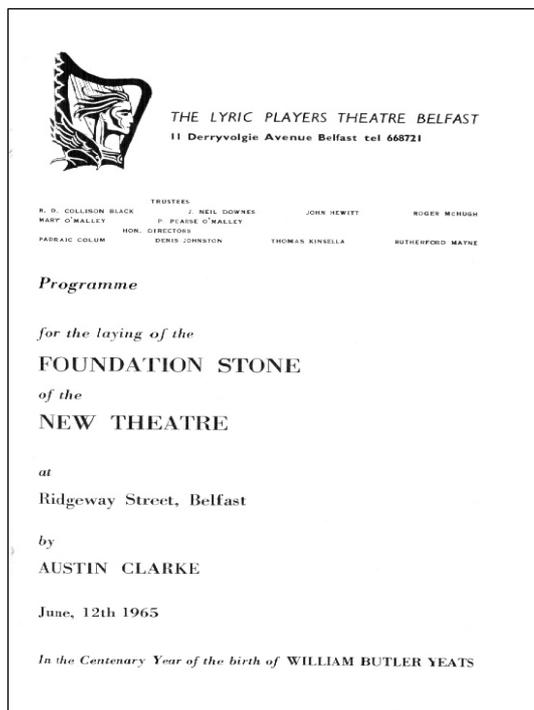


Figure 27 Cover of the foundation stone ceremony programme²¹

²¹ Unknown, *Lyric Theatre foundation ceremony photographs*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/600.



Figure 28 The audience at the opening night²²



Figure 29 Mary O'Malley outside the second Lyric Theatre



Figure 30 The second lyric viewed from Stranmillis Embankment

²² Unknown, *Lyric Theatre opening night photographs*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/621.



Figure 31 The lower foyer



Figure 32 The upper foyer



Figure 33 The stage from rear auditorium right²³

²³ Five photographs from Unknown, *Second Lyric Theatre completed building photographs*, in the Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive, T4/620.

Bob Forster recalls the second Lyric's technical installation

Bob Forster recalls the lighting installation specified by Martin Carr and delivered by Eric Baker of Strand Lighting. The specified lighting desk was a Strand SP-40,²⁴ 'a two-preset group desk but it wasn't ready in time and they gave us a JP-40²⁵ which was a three-preset no group desk and two JTM²⁶ [dimmer] racks'.²⁷ This was adequate at the time as the lighting stock was

²⁴ Theatrecrafts.com, *Equipment Detail – SP Series 1966–1979*, available at <<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=5011>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]. The SP was a 20,30,40 channel 2-preset in table / wall-mount or. 40,60,80 channel 3-preset in seated desk. Two groups or both common to all presets originally by twin pushbutton, later 3-position toggle switch. Linear motion master faders with quadrant scale. Designed for use with JTM Thyristor dimmers. The last 3-preset version was built in 1976. The 2-preset version continued until 1979, when it was replaced by the AMC.

²⁵ Theatrecrafts.com, *Equipment Detail – JP Series 1965–1975*, available at <<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=5006>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]. The JP was a 20/40/60 channel 20 channel 2-preset desktop or wall mounting or 40/60 channel 3-preset in near-vertical wing. All with rotary master dimmer per preset. Originally with twin shared quadrant scale faders in two or three rows, later twin flat scale faders. For remote control of 20 x 2kW max JTM dimmer racks. First in 1965, a 40 channel 3-preset desk for Studio, Cannon Hill arts centre, last was in 1975. (Early date for transistors of JTM trigger card is explanation of Strand's 0 to -10V analogue interface).

²⁶ Theatrecrafts.com, *Equipment Detail – JTM 1965–1975*, available at <<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=7013>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]. JTM was a relatively inexpensive variable-load dimmer housed in compact 20-channel or 10-channel racks. Replaced by STM rack.

²⁷ John Riddell, *Interview* with Bob Forster (4 February 2015).

limited; Carr's lighting scheme was costed at £4,500.²⁸ with only four Strand Patt.264²⁹ profiles. Bob, having moved back from working and studying at Cambridge needed to make a trip to pick up equipment so administrator Archie Johnson gave him £200 and asked him to acquire suitable second-hand lighting

²⁸ Minutes 4 June 1968 in Lyric Theatre Belfast Board, *Board Minutes May 1960 - Jan 1969*, in Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive (National University of Ireland Galway: James Hardiman Library), T4/502. A typical rule of thumb for equipping a modern theatre is between 10% and 15% of build cost which this figure agrees with, however, today that would cover Production Lighting, Sound & Comms and Stage Engineering, therefore from today's perspective Carr's budget looks excessive. However, the Lyric was built at very low cost, so such a comparison is interesting, but not especially instructive.

²⁹ Theatrecrafts.com, *Equipment Detail – Patt.264 1965–1975*, available at <<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=1264>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]. The 264 was the bifocal brother of the Patt.263 and was known colloquially as the Banana in the UK and in Europe as the Elbow. Strand engineer Roderick Mackenzie designed the complex reflector shape using a slide rule. The 264 was notoriously noisy with the shutter assembly clicking persistently as the unit heated up and cooled down. At the Lyric this is sufficiently irritating to appear in the minutes of the board in November and December 1968, with Carr being summoned to sort it out. On 17 December it was noted that Strand would be providing new shutters.

gear – ‘I got some 243 fresnels³⁰ and Patt.45s;³¹ stuff like that, which eked it all out and we had enough’.³²

³⁰ Theatrecrafts.com, *Equipment Detail – Patt.243 1960–1978*, available at <<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=1243>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]. This 2kW Fresnel was introduced in December 1959, replacing the Patt.43. It was one of the last fixtures designed by John Morgan McLeod who had also designed the iconic Patt.23 for Strand Electric in 1953.

³¹ Theatrecrafts.com, *Equipment Detail – Patt.45 1928 approx.– 1978*, available at <<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=1045>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]. The Patt.45 had three versions. Mk 1 was a 250w miniature spot introduced around 1928. The Mk 2, from 1952, was a 250/500W (P28 or T1) Miniature Spot with a 4.5 x 6.5 inch plano convex lens. It was replaced in 1960 by Mark 3 a 250/500W (P28 or T1) Junior Spot with 16-45 degrees focus zoom and 4.5 inch diameter fresnel lens, but no reflector. It was replaced in 1978 by Pattern 833.

³² Riddell-Forster, *Interview*.

An introduction to O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects

John Tuomey and partner Sheila O'Donnell formed the practice in Dublin in 1988. The pair had worked and studied together in London in the late 1970s and then taught in Dublin during the 1980s. Their first two commissions were in culture – a collaborative pavilion for an international art show, and the Irish Film Centre, now the IFT. 'All of our career we've oscillated from education projects [...] to cultural projects [...] or social projects'.³³ Those first commissions came not from competitions but from personal connections which 'gave us a very false idea of practice [...] after that nothing ever happened like that again'.³⁴ John had little exposure to theatre in his childhood but living in London in the late 1970s he saw a lot of theatre; likewise in Dublin in the 1980s:

there was a kind of theatre renaissance [...] and I remember all those plays of Tom Murphy and Brian Friel. [...] Through our teaching at UCD we made contacts with theatre groups like Wet Paint or Rough Magic who were helpful to us in guiding our students' project work. Cinema was what we did when we were not in the office; theatre we became more and more involved in.³⁵

John recalls a particular influence from the time, Florian Beigel's Half Moon Theatre, Mile End Road 'an indoor/outdoor sort of space [...] the idea that when you go into the building you still are outdoors and when you're outside you're kind of indoors – the yard idea, and I'm sure that had a big impact on [...] the film centre'.³⁶ They appreciated the intimacy of small theatres like the Donmar Warehouse; 'I have very strong memories of things I saw there, and, in the early days of living here, [...] the Project Arts Centre, that was a great place. That sort of poor-relation arts project is where we found

³³ John Riddell, *Interview* with John Tuomey (11 June 2019).

³⁴ Riddell-Tuomey, *Interview*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*.

our corner'.³⁷ The practice did some studies for Garry Hynes at Galway's Druid Theatre to look at potential designs for the theatre, 'a lot of stuff that didn't happen [...] but was in the air'.³⁸

An introduction to Richard Wakely

Producer and consultant Richard Wakely joined the team as client-side project director in 2008. He had been involved with the early stages of the Hampstead Theatre development at Swiss Cottage from feasibility study, project brief and design team procurement through securing National Lottery funding, but he did not see the project onto site. As a consultant, Richard conducted feasibility studies on major arts developments in Oman, Hong Kong and in the UK and Ireland. This experience combined with an interest in architecture, he had prepared a report for the Arts Council of Ireland on how to encourage greater appreciation of architecture as an artistic discipline, gave him the experience needed to act as a consultant for the Lyric. 'As Project Director for the Lyric, I was bringing my experience as a theatre practitioner and producer, but also that appreciation of architecture as an artform.'³⁹ He stresses that his skills are not as a project manager in the construction sense nor as an architect or a theatre planner; 'I have ideas and thoughts, but I defer always to the experts'.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ John Riddell, *Interview* with Richard Wakely (14 March 2019).

⁴⁰ Riddell-Wakely, *Interview*.

Project	Original Business Cost £millions	Project Cost £millions	DCAL funding £millions	ACNI Lottery funding £millions	Other fundraising £millions	Public funding %	Difference estimated v final cost %
Lyric Theatre	12.4	17.8	9.8	2.4	5.6	68%	42.4%
The MAC	9.2	17.6	10.8	5.0	1.8	90%	91.3%

Table 3 Northern Ireland Audit Office Project Costs ⁴¹

⁴¹ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2013), p. 25.

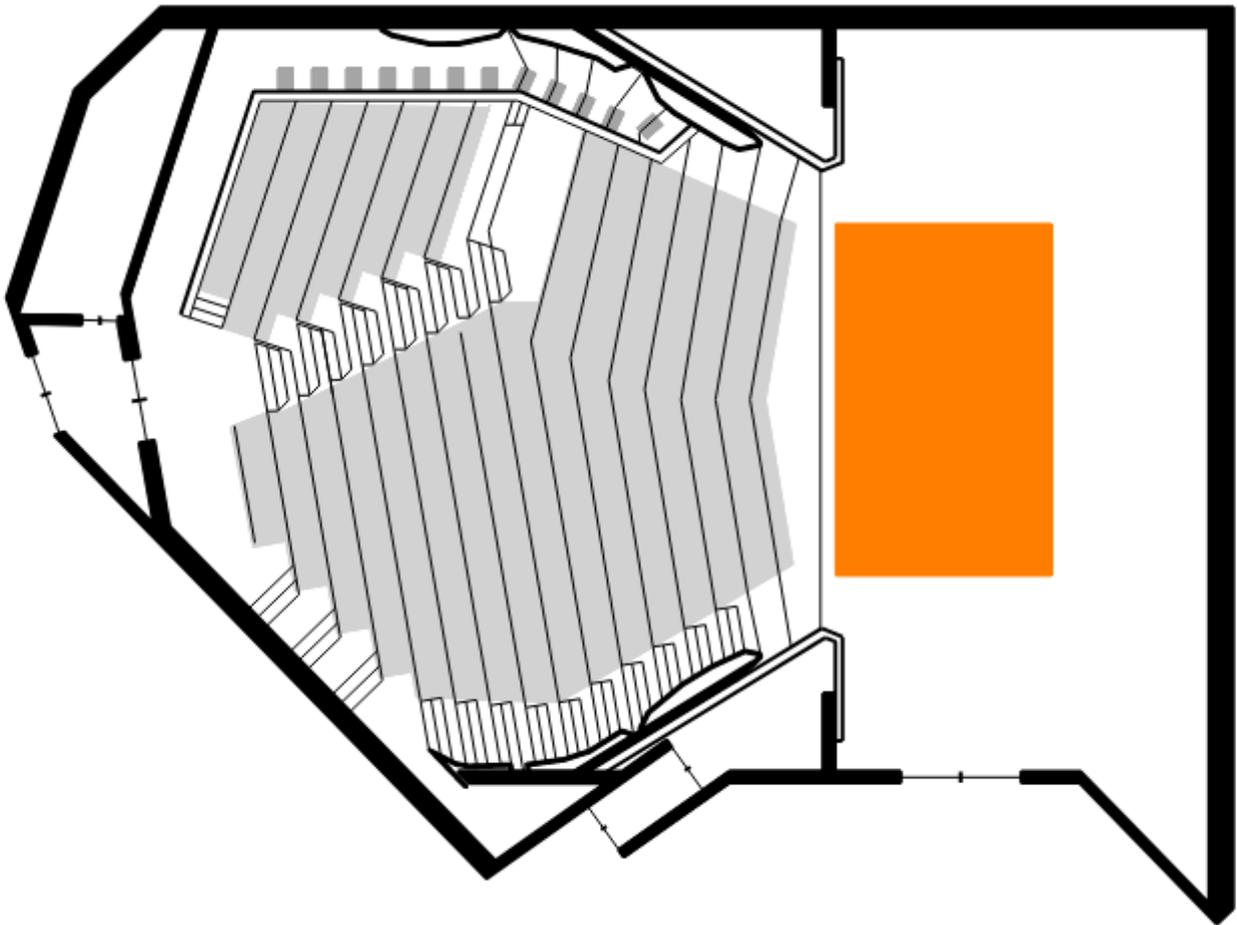


Figure 34 Plan of third Lyric main house 1:200 @ A4

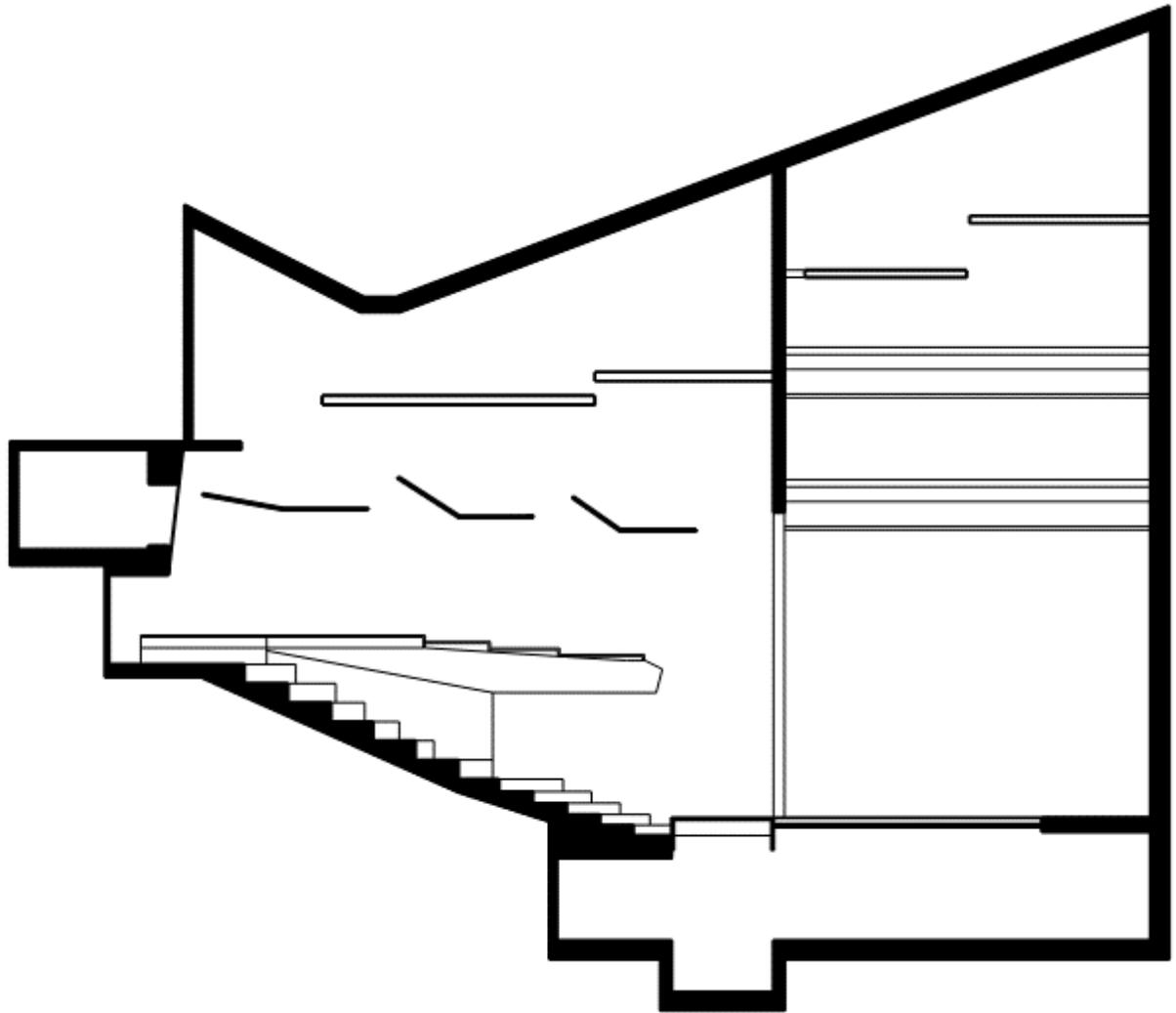


Figure 35 Centreline section of third Lyric main house 1:200 @ A4⁴²

⁴² Redrawn from as-built drawings provided by O'Donnell + Tuomey.

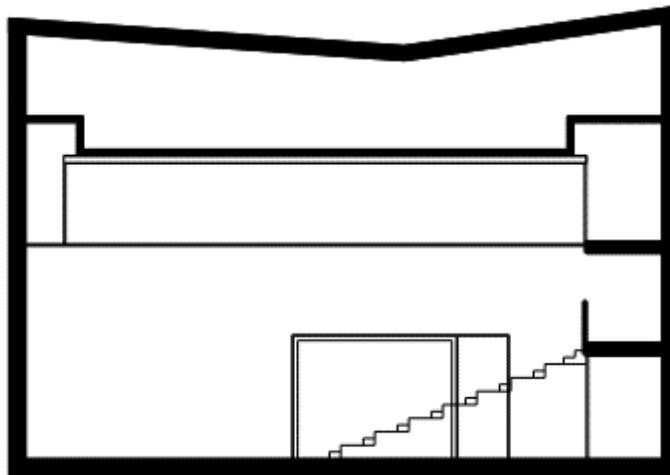
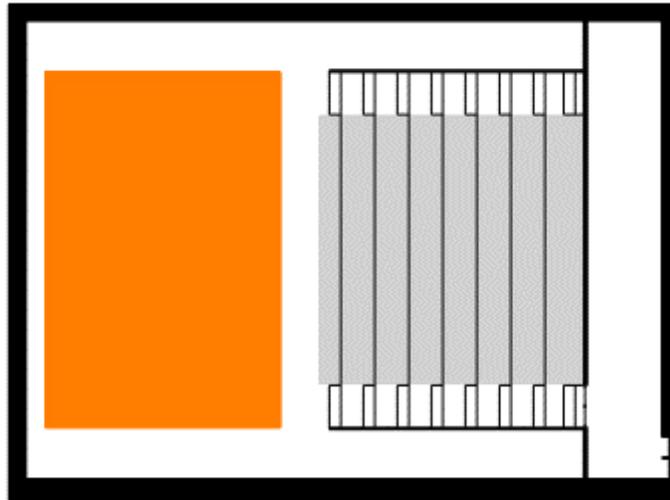


Figure 36 Naughton Studio at third Lyric Theatre 1:200 @ A4⁴³

⁴³ Redrawn from as-built drawings provided by O'Donnell + Tuomey.



Figure 37 Aerial view of Lyric looking south west ⁴⁴



Figure 38 View from bottom of Ridgeway Street

⁴⁴ Mark McCreary (photographer), MGN Ltd, *Aerial view of the new theatre* (2015) <<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture-news/gallery/lyric-theatres-history-and-transformation--9421475>> [accessed on 9 June 2015].



Figure 39 View from Stranmillis Embankment looking east



Figure 40 View of foyer and coffee bar from junction of Stranmillis Embankment and Ridgeway Street



Figure 41 View from Stranmillis Embankment looking north towards Ridgeway Street



Figure 42 The landscaped amphitheatre

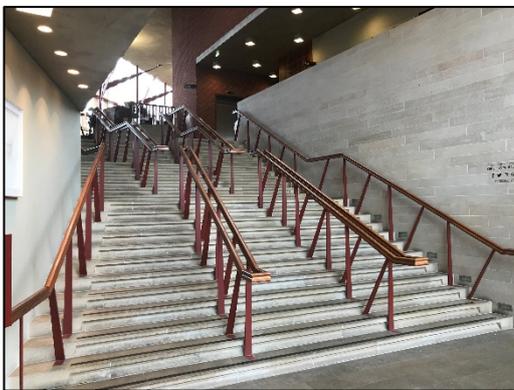


Figure 43 The main view on entry

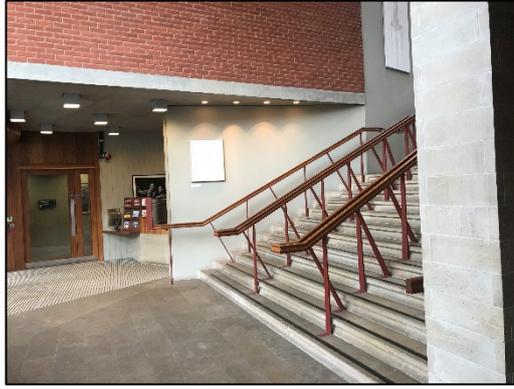


Figure 44 Box office and main stair



Figure 45 Main stair from foyer level



Figure 46 View towards main stair and café bar beyond

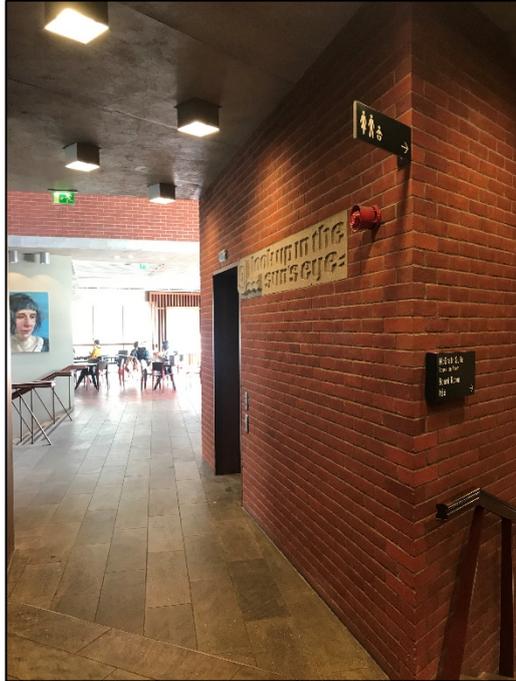


Figure 47 View from top of stair to toilets looking towards café bar, with threshold stone from second Lyric set into the brickwork



Figure 48 View of foyer from top of main stair

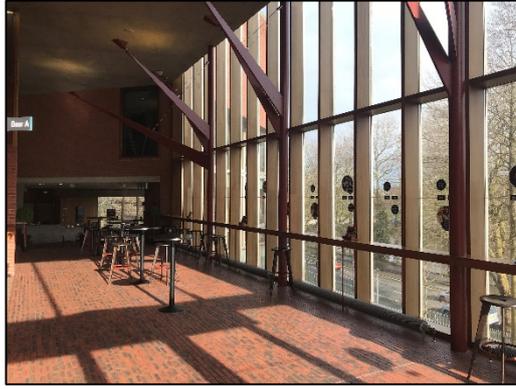


Figure 49 View back along foyer towards main stair



Figure 50 View from foyer looking south west towards River Lagan



Figure 51 View up atrium towards rehearsal and upper levels



Figure 52 View from top of stairs to toilets

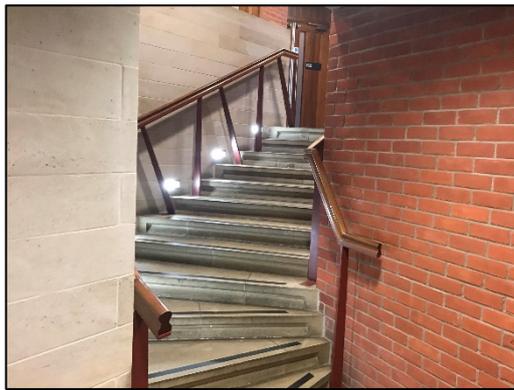


Figure 53 View from bottom of stairs to toilets



Figure 54 The gents' toilets

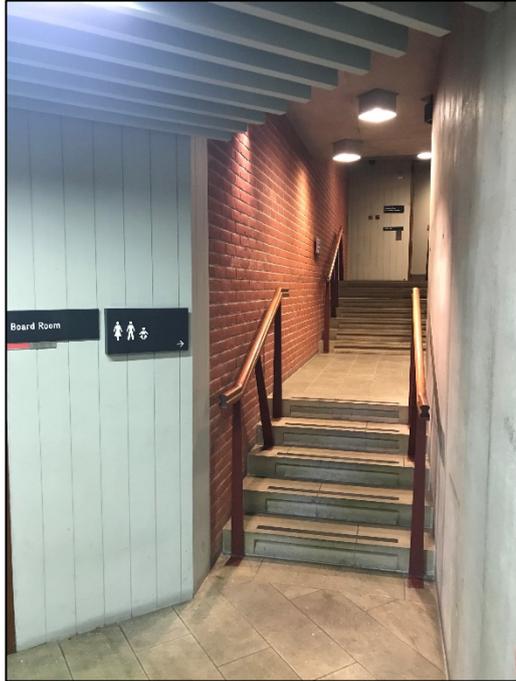


Figure 55 View from bottom of stairs to board room



Figure 56 View from café bar towards foyer and Naughton Studio



Figure 57 Café bar



Figure 58 View from café bar looking towards Ridgeway Street⁴⁵



Figure 59 Main house from auditorium right⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Photographs John Riddell 14 March 2019.

⁴⁶ Lyric Theatre, *Hire a space* <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/your-visit/venue-hire/>> [accessed on 3 July 2020].



Figure 60 Stage from auditorium left⁴⁷



Figure 61 Naughton Studio looking onto Ridgeway Street⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Gilbert Ash, *Stage from auditorium left* <<https://gilbert-ash.com/projects/the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 3 July 2020].

⁴⁸ Dennis Gilbert (photographer), Lyric Theatre *Naughton Studio technical information* <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/technical/>> [accessed on 3 July 2020].



Figure 62 Rehearsal Room⁴⁹



Figure 63 View down Sandhurst Drive towards get-in⁵⁰

⁴⁹ O'Donnell + Tuomey, *The Lyric Theatre Belfast* <<https://odonnell-tuomey.ie/index.php?p=the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 3 July 2020].

⁵⁰ O'Donnell + Tuomey, *The Lyric Theatre Belfast*.

Chapter 9

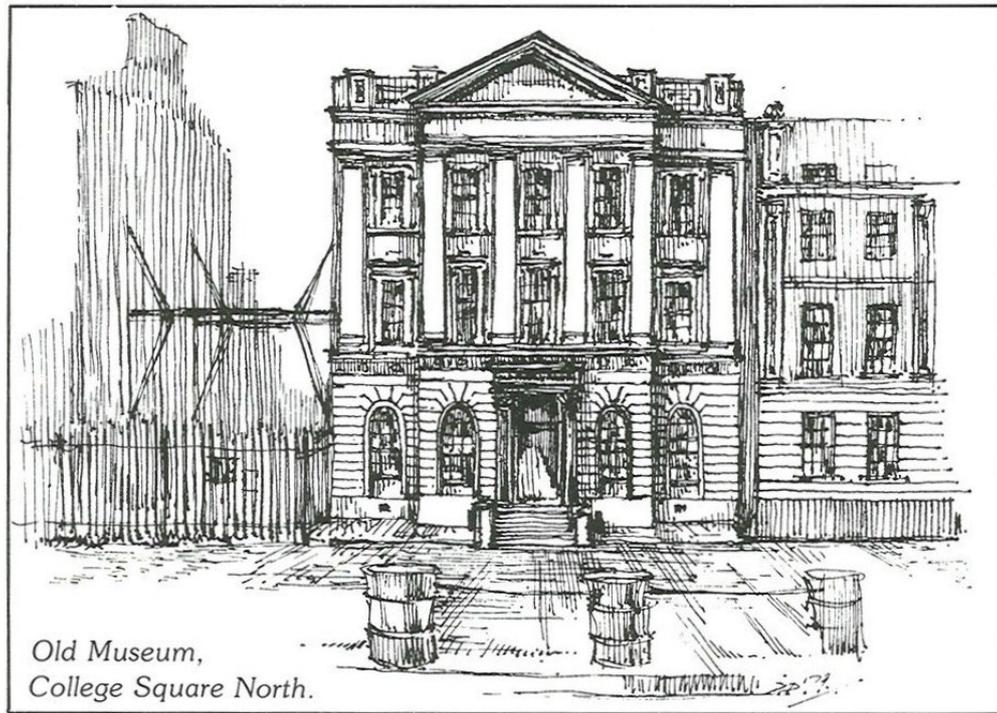


Figure 64 Line drawing of the Old Museum façade⁵¹

⁵¹ C. Douglas Deane, *The Ulster Countryside* (Belfast: The Universities Press, 1983), p. 24.



Figure 65 James Drummond President of BNHPS.⁵²

⁵² Arthur Deane (ed.), *The Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society. Centenary Volume 1821-1921* (Belfast: BNHPS, 1924).



Figure 66 The mummy Takabuti in the Ulster Museum, 2008.



Figure 67 Photograph of the front of OMac 2011.



Figure 68 The view from the half-landing between ground and first floor.



Figure 69 The doors into the theatre.



Figure 70 The theatre in end-on format.

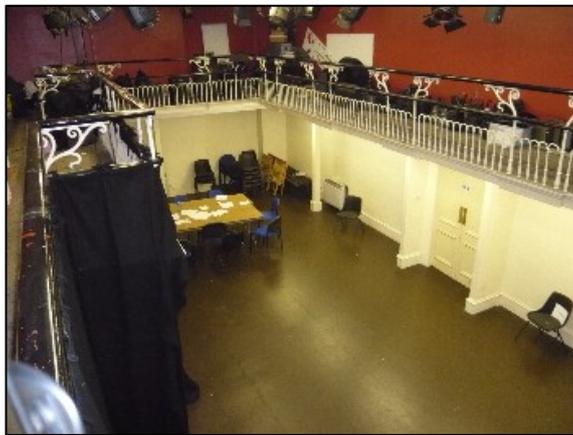


Figure 71 The gallery on the second floor.



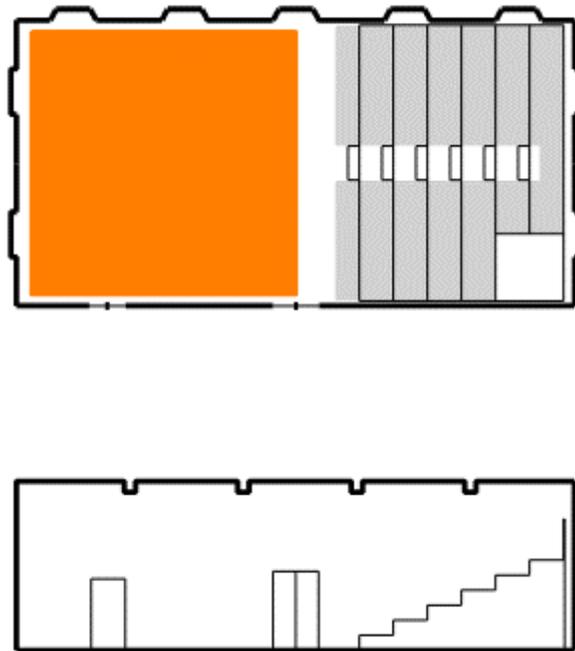
Figure 72 Kulvinder Ghir in *Who Shall be Happy...?*⁵³

⁵³ Trevor Griffiths, *Who Shall be Happy...?* (1995)

<<http://www.trevorgriffiths.co.uk/site/1995/12/31/who-shall-be-happy/>>

[accessed on 11 September 2019].

Figure 73 OMac Theatre 1:200 @ A4 ⁵⁴



⁵⁴ Redrawn from drawings produced by John Riddell.

An introduction to Anne McReynolds

Anne McReynolds studied English at Queen's University followed by postgraduate study in Law and Business and in Cultural Management. 'I worked in Belfast Festival at Queen's as almost everybody of a certain generation who wanted to work in the arts did.'⁵⁵ This was in 1989 under the directorship of Robert Agnew who 'brought a bit of stability'⁵⁶ to Festival. After a brief period in the US selling accidental death insurance, Anne returned to Belfast to run Belfast Community Circus. Founded in 1985 to introduce 'community circus to Northern Ireland during a time when there was a desperate need for positive shared experiences for young people from different communities' Belfast Community Circus School trains children, young people and professional teachers and performers, working with other practitioners from around the world. In 1999, the company moved into a purpose-built facility in what is now Cathedral Quarter.⁵⁷ 'I got my dream job as the Director of the Old Museum arts centre in May 1996, and in my first week in the job I had my first conversation with a consultant about what turned out to be the MAC.'⁵⁸

⁵⁵ John Riddell, *Interview* with Anne McReynolds (15 March 2019).

⁵⁶ Tom Collins, 'Saving the Festival is like nailing legs to a cadaver and telling it to walk', *Scope NI*, 23 March 2015, available at <<https://scopeni.nicva.org/article/saving-festival-nailing-legs-cadaver-and-telling-it-walk>> [accessed on 8 July 2019].

⁵⁷ Belfast Community Circus School, *History* (2019), available at <<http://www.belfastcircus.org/history>> [accessed on 8 July 2019].

⁵⁸ Riddell-McReynolds, *Interview*.

An introduction to Hall McKnight Architects

Architects Hall McKnight began as Hackett & Hall in July 2003 with Alastair Hall and Mark Hackett, who had studied together at Queen's as undergraduates, Hall going on to Cambridge and Hackett to the Mackintosh School of Architecture at Glasgow, but by the late 1990s they were working together at Kennedy Fitzgerald Architects in Belfast an interesting practice not well known outside the province, responsible for some of the most significant buildings in late twentieth century Ulster modernism. 'We'd leave work and half five or six and go and drink coffee and draw',⁵⁹ the pair preparing several competition entries over the coming years. Early in their career, the pair were shortlisted for the Lyric Theatre design. The Lyric design was procured using an open competition run by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects. Hackett & Hall were one of five shortlisted entries, together with O'Donnell + Tuomey, participating in a more detailed process at the end of which Hackett & Hall and O'Donnell + Tuomey were declared joint winners. The two winners were asked to 'participate in an additional process to our loss, but Belfast's benefit, John and Sheila's building is beautiful, and Belfast is all the better for it'.⁶⁰ Disappointed by the loss, 'usually you start a practice by winning a competition – we started by losing one',⁶¹ but buoyed by the success, Hackett and Hall built some momentum in the first year with number of small but significant commissions, including some work for the Royal Society of Ulster Architects, immediately adding a public building to their project list. Ian McKnight joined the practice the following year in the Spring of 2008. Mark and Alastair had an affinity with Ian, another Kennedy Fitzgerald colleague, and were keen to bring in his experience on larger projects and to add a new

⁵⁹ Alastair Hall in John Riddell, *Interview with Alastair Hall and Ian McKnight* (27 November 2018).

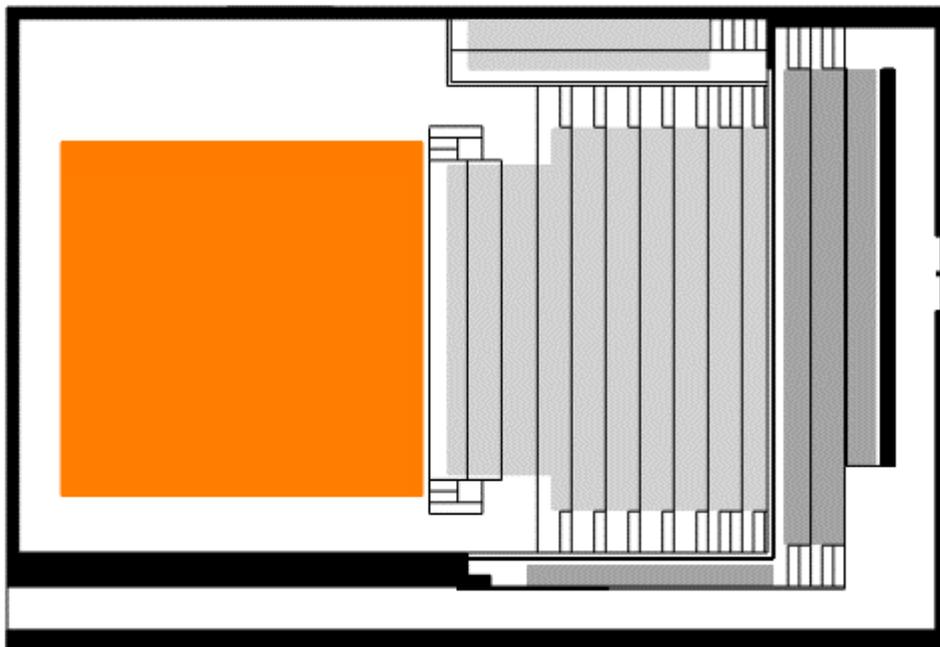
⁶⁰ Alastair Hall in *Ibid.*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*.

dynamic. 'Mark and I were quite similar in many ways, happy to draw and be dreaming all the time'.⁶²

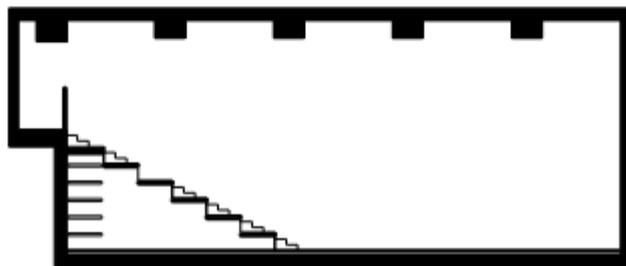
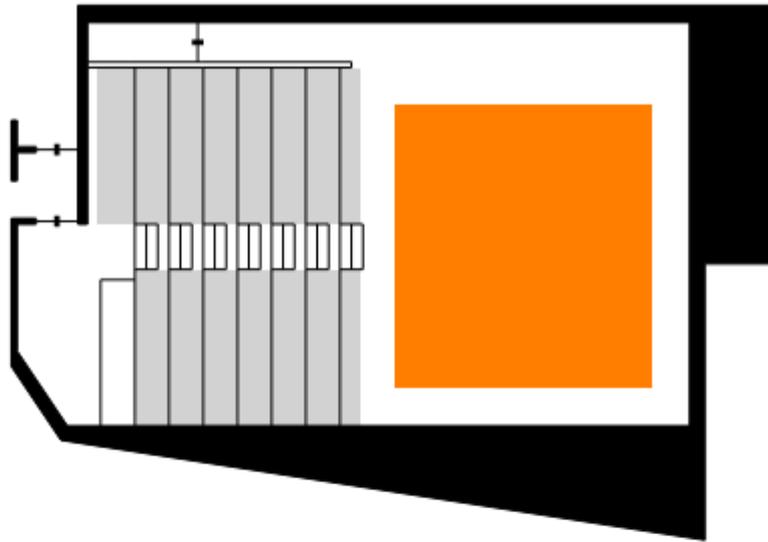
⁶² *Ibid.*

Figure 74 The MAC Theatre Downstairs 1:200 @ A4⁶³



⁶³ Redrawn from plans provided by Hall McKnight Architects.

Figure 75 The MAC Theatre Upstairs 1:200 @ A4⁶⁴



⁶⁴ Redrawn from plans provided by Hall McKnight Architects.



Figure 76 The MAC main entrance and campanile from Saint Anne's Square⁶⁵



Figure 77 The outside of Saint Anne's Square viewed from Hill Street

⁶⁵ The scaffolding obscuring the main entrance and façade shows the rectification of defects work that was still continuing in March 2019.



Figure 78 Looking west from Saint Anne's Square towards the cathedral



Figure 79 The view looking east from Writer's Square towards St Anne's Cathedral, the campanile of the MAC evident in the distance



Figure 80 The view southwest along Edward Street towards the get-in



Figure 81 Views along the remaining part of Hector Street



Figure 82 Views of the Exchange Street entrance, the University building seen in the background of the second photograph



Figure 83 The external face of the large blank wall that forms the north wall of the foyer, viewed from Academy Street

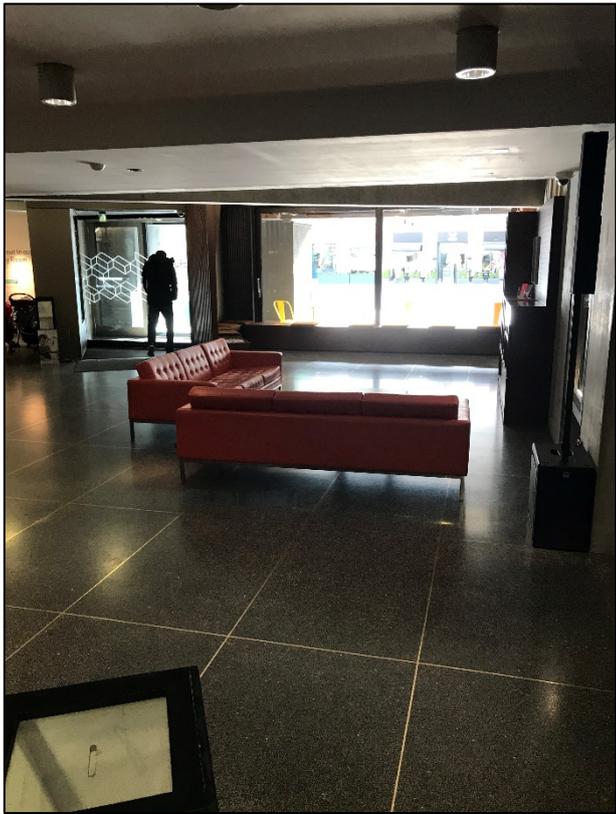
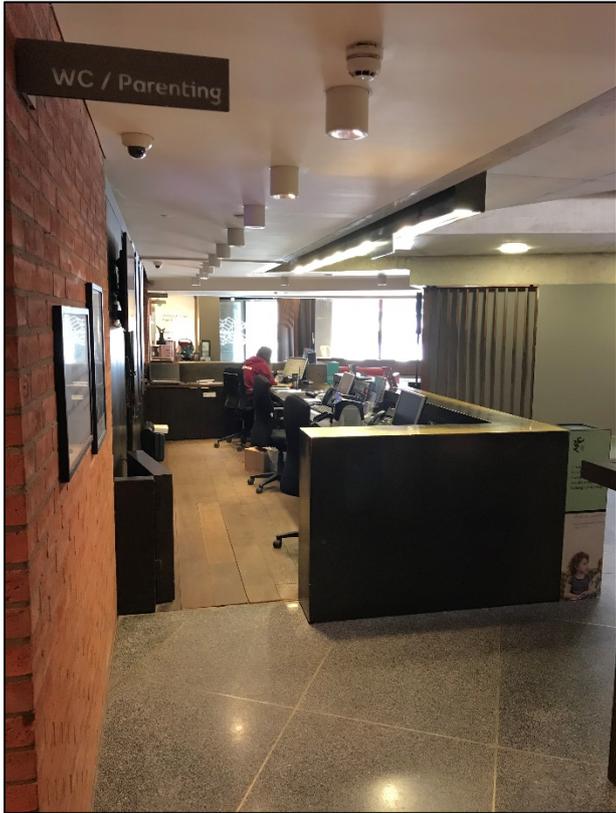


Figure 84 The box office and welcome point with the main entrance from Saint Anne's Square beyond

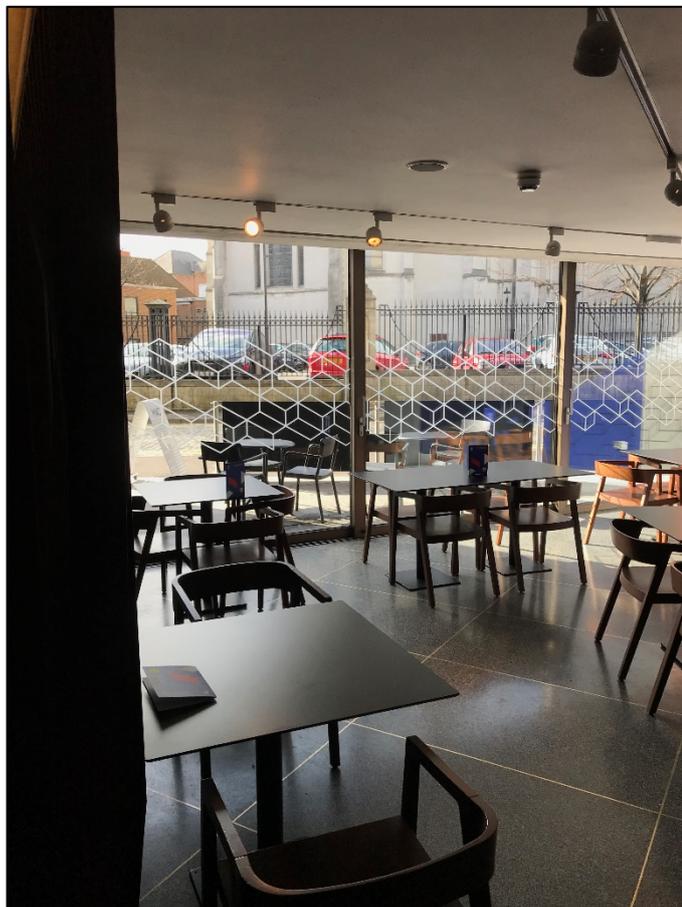


Figure 85 The bar counter and cafe bar viewed from the Exchange Street entrance

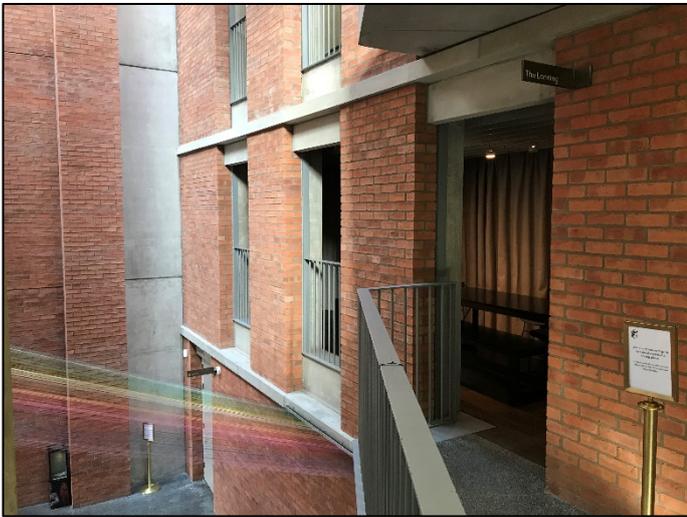
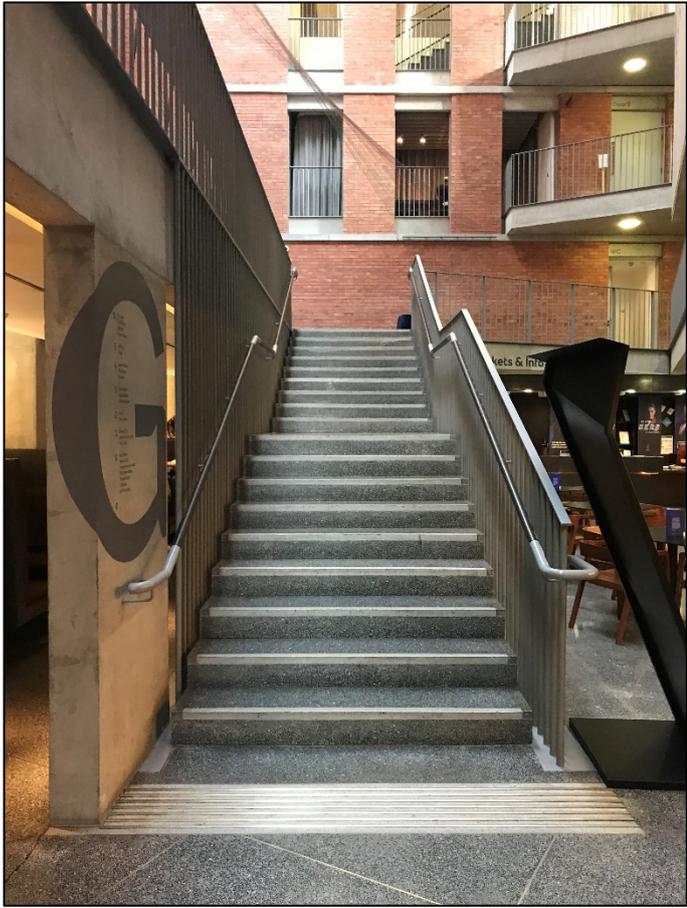


Figure 86 The importance of daylight in the foyer is evident in these photographs



Figure 87 The scale of the foyer is clear in these photographs

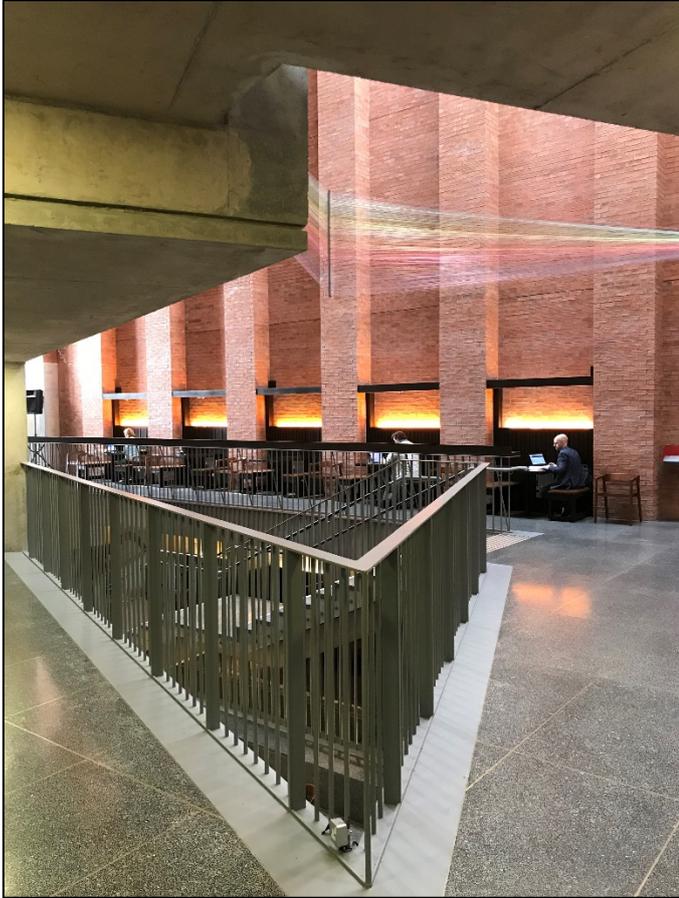


Figure 88 The wire sculpture installation, 'The Permanent Present'

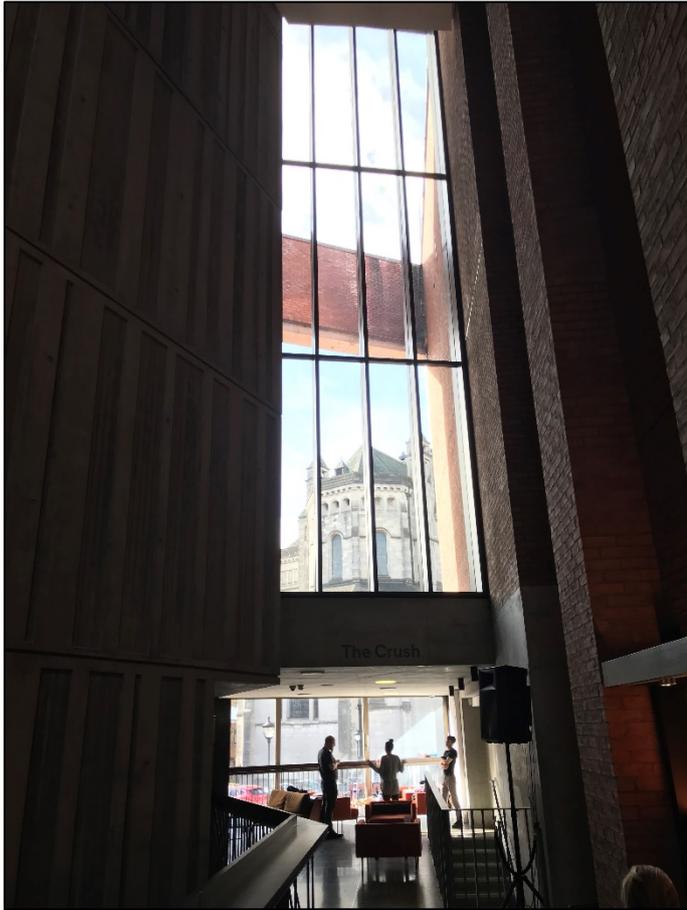


Figure 89 St Anne's Cathedral, one of several framed views provided in different parts of the building

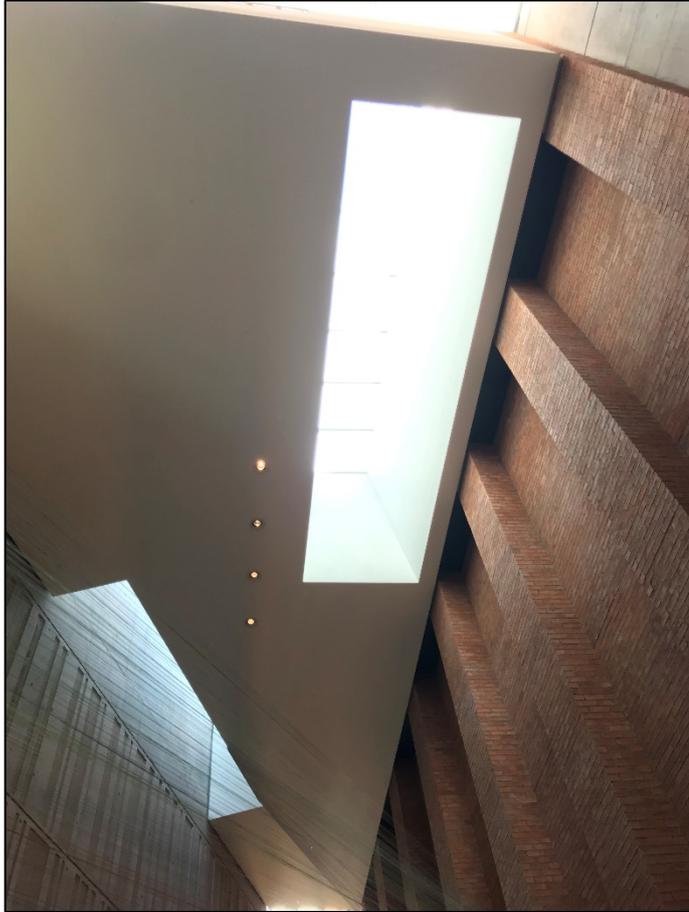


Figure 90 Light wells above the foyer



Figure 91 Snug seating along the north wall of the foyer at ground and first floor. Power sockets for laptops and chargers can be seen under the table in the first photograph

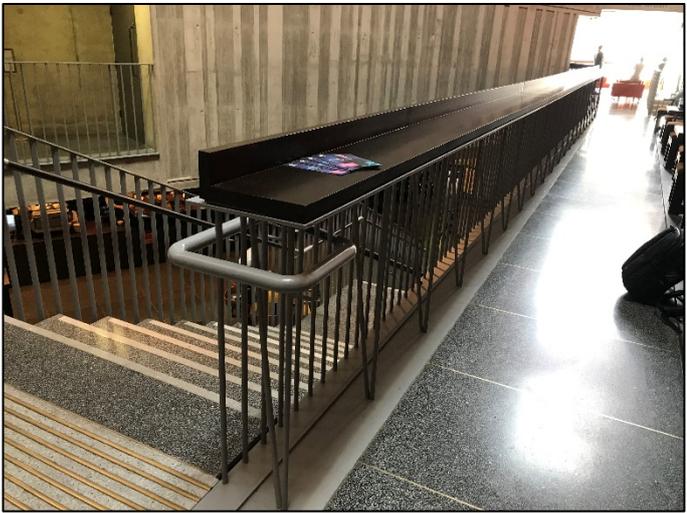
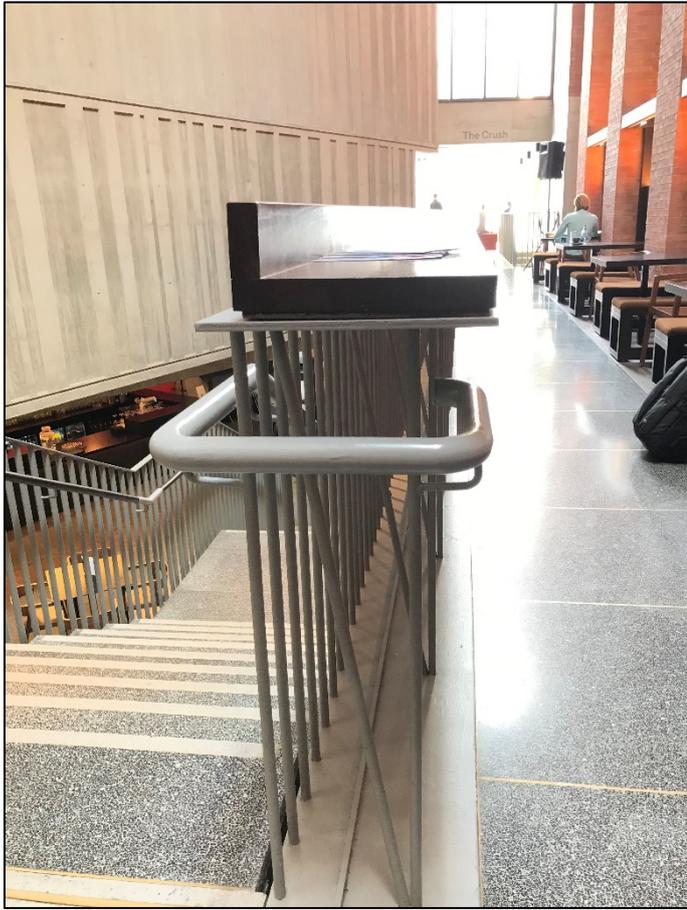


Figure 92 The balustrade and drinks shelf at first floor



Figure 93 Opportunities for breakout space have been exploited throughout the building

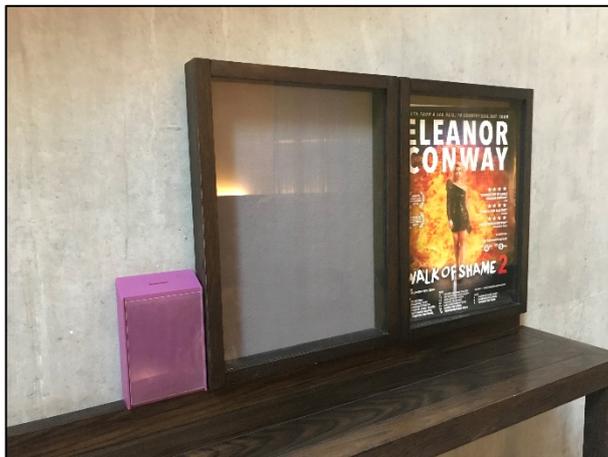


Figure 94 Display cabinets and leaflet holders



Figure 95 Downstairs Theatre⁶⁶



Figure 96 A conference in the Downstairs Theatre⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The MAClive, *Accessing the MAC* (2020), available at <<https://themaclive.com/accessibility>> [accessed on 9 August 2020].

⁶⁷ The MAClive, *Explore Spaces Downstairs Theatre* (2020), available at <<https://hirethemacs.com/explore-spaces/downstairs-theatre>> [accessed on 9 August 2020].



Figure 97 The Upstairs Theatre⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Ian Grundy (photographer), *Belfast MAC 1236* (2014), available at <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stagedoor/13261711104>> [accessed on 9 August 2020].

Chapter 10

An introduction to Zoe Seaton and Big Telly

Zoe Seaton, a native of Portstewart, a small seaside town of eight thousand inhabitants on the coast sixty miles northwest of Belfast, Seaton studied at the University of Kent in Canterbury, specialising in directing in her final year. In June 1987, not waiting to attend graduation, she and fellow student Jill Holmes hitch-hiked their way from Canterbury to Portstewart starting Big Telly theatre company on the way and taking up residency at the town's Flowerfield Arts Centre. Big Telly quickly established an intense and rigorous practice informally presenting a new show every two weeks ranging from Ionesco to Alan Bennett and developing their own work. Their practice included an open rehearsal process in the art gallery at Flowerfield; 'the deal was people could come in and see the art, see the rehearsal [...] and we'd say "do you like this bit?". We weren't interested in being in a rarefied arts environment'. This strong, confident practice removed the mystery from the process and the ego from director and performer; the process became the product. The company grew over the following decade and Seaton found herself in demand elsewhere, with spells as a resident director with Hull Truck Theatre Company and the RSC, but returning home she made a new commitment to Big Telly redefining the style of the company with 'more devised work, more physical, more visual'. This was precarious, 'doing the most experimental work with the most fragile organisation' while freelancing elsewhere, mostly in England, on more commercial work. Big Telly eventually developed a more mixed practice with well known plays, often by Irish authors, touring to formal theatre venues, and new and devised work frequently presented in found spaces.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ John Riddell, *Interview with Zoë Seaton* (20 August 2014).



Figure 98 Portstewart Promenade view looking south from Harbour Hill. The Box is visible to the left of the picture behind the blue bus⁷⁰



Figure 99 Big Telly - The Box, Portstewart⁷¹

⁷⁰ Booking.Com, *Portstewart Promenade* (2016), available at <<https://q-cf.bstatic.com/images/hotel/max1280x900/215/215323318.jpg>> [accessed on 10 August 2020].

⁷¹ NI Archive, *The Box, Portstewart* (2016), available at <<https://niarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/TS-26.jpg>> [accessed on 10 August 2020].

TOP SECRET

ISPY

PORTSTEWART

**Things you don't know.
Places you don't go.**

Go to the sweet shop with the footballs outside. Take a green football and ask the man behind the counter where the nearest pitch is. He will give you instructions. Do exactly the opposite of what he tells you. He works for counter intelligence. Be aware of your surroundings. Blend in. Choose a trustworthy team. Anticipate **SurPrIsES**.

Are you ready?

WED 2ND, THURS 3RD & FRI 4TH JULY 2PM-5PM

Each adventure lasts 1hr and starts at **The BOX, 13 The Promenade, Portstewart**

Each team starts at a different time. Email collette@big-telly.com to book your start time. Minimum team size 4 people. Under 14 years must be accompanied by an adult.

Tickets: £5 (limited introductory offer) Under 3's go free.

Contact us about special group/party/corporate rates on 028 7083 6473

  **Big Telly**
Theatre Company

COMING SOON

GAME OF PHONES

INTERACTIVE MYSTERY TOUR AROUND PORTSTEWART | SMART PHONES & SMART PEOPLE
STARTS AT THE BOX ON SAT 26TH JULY | TICKETS £5

 @BigTellyNI  [facebook.com/bigtelly](https://www.facebook.com/bigtelly)

Figure 100 Poster advertising *I Spy Portstewart*⁷²

⁷² Pinterest, *I Spy Portstewart Poster* (2014), available at <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/10/ab/d0/10abd0bc6e6466435f135153e86425c1.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020].



Figure 101 Performance outside the Strabane Creative Shop⁷³



Figure 102 Creative Shop window performance in Enniskillen⁷⁴

⁷³ Big Telly, *Creative Shops performance in Strabane* (2018), available at <https://www.big-telly.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/53259907_1978849215570722_8137317684078444544_n-2.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020].

⁷⁴ Big Telly, *Creative Shop performance in Enniskillen* (2018) <https://www.big-telly.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/53259907_1978849215570722_8137317684078444544_n-2.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020].



Figure 103 Poster advertising *The Garvagh Wedding*, which was cancelled because of lockdown⁷⁵



Figure 104 A screenshot from *Operation Elsewhere*, Big Telly's interactive show on Zoom⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Big Telly, *The Garvagh Wedding poster*, available at <https://www.big-telly.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/89293203_107353247547516_5867451279441133568_o.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020].

⁷⁶ Emer D Blog on Wordpress, *Operation Elsewhere screenshot*, available at <https://emerdblog.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/img_20200503_180035.jpg?w=1200> [accessed on 10 August 2020].

An introduction to Paul Bosco McEneaney and Cahoots NI

Born and raised in Armagh, to the south of the province near the border with the Republic, Paul McEneaney's 'first theatrical experience [...] was in the old cinema which has subsequently become the Marketplace Theatre in Armagh'.⁷⁷ Armagh Theatre Group put on a pantomime every winter in the cinema and McEneaney remembers attending the panto in the late 1970s at the age of seven or eight, 'a big goose trying to lay a golden egg and I honestly remember having the moment of "I want to do that"'. Fascinated by magic 'I remember my parents buying me a David Nixon magic set [...] that was pre-Paul Daniels, in the early or mid '70s.' He performed poorly at school, but now recognises that he was focusing his academic skill on reading and understanding magic; 'it's a practical appliance of literature [...] you read, you practice in front of a mirror and it's there'. He also trained, self-taught for the most part, as a drummer, the complementary skills requiring dexterity and precision. After a spell touring the US with a rock band, McEneaney decided upon a future in performing arts and enrolled in a two-year Higher National Diploma (HND) course in theatre. The course gave a broad introduction to the performing arts covering production skills as well as performance practice. 'What that course allowed me to do was actually get an understanding of the industry.'

⁷⁷ John Riddell, *Interview* with Paul Bosco McEneaney (3 February 2015).



Figure 105 Danske Bank Donegall Square North⁷⁸



Figure 106 Cahoots NI, *A Spell of Cold Weather* in the window of the bank 2013

⁷⁸ Future Belfast, *Danske Bank Donegall Square North* (2016), available at <http://www.futurebelfast.com/property/9-donegall-square-north/> [accessed on 11 August 2011].

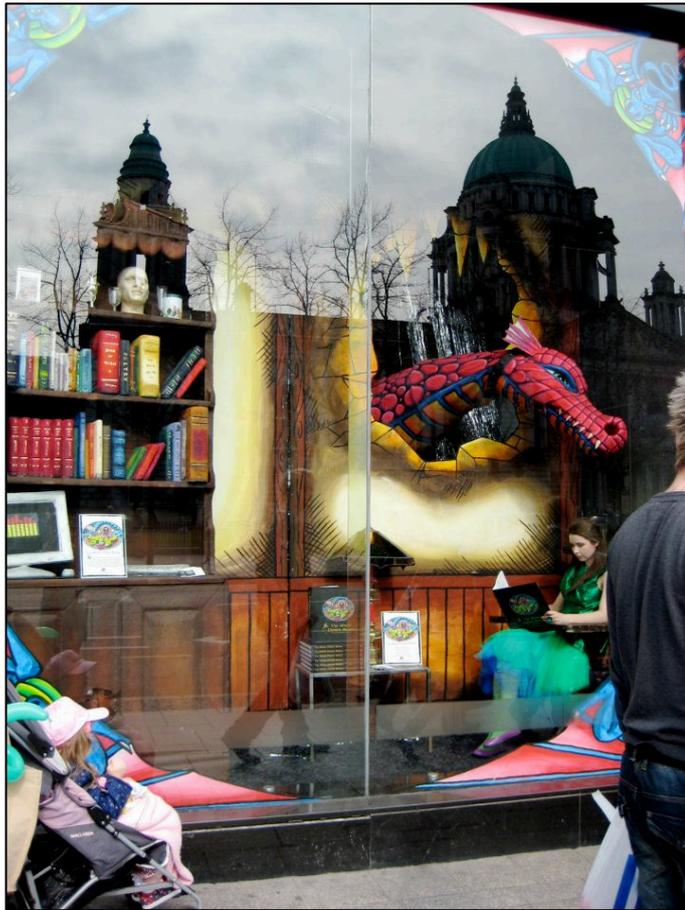


Figure 107 Performance in the bank window 2014⁷⁹



Figure 108 Visit Belfast's Welcome Centre now occupies the ground floor of the bank⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Photographs supplied by Cahoots NI.

⁸⁰ Visit Belfast, *Front of Visit Belfast Welcome Centre* (2019), available at <https://visitbelfast.com/plan/front-of-visit-belfast-welcome-centre/> [accessed on 11 August 2020].



Figure 109 Paul Bosco McEneaney of Cahoots NI (centre) and David McClure of Osborne King (far left) at Arts & Business Awards 2013⁸¹

⁸¹ Osborne King, *Cahoots NI and Osborne King collect Arts & Business Award 2013* (2013), available at <https://www.osborneking.com/siteFiles/resources/images/marketing/ArtsandBusinessNIAwardsWeb.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020].



Figure 110 The Cahoots Units at Castle Court Shopping Centre⁸²



Figure 111 Production shot from *The Gift* at Castle Court⁸³

⁸² Alan Meban on Blogger, *The Gift Castlecourt* (2015), available at

<<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/->

WAQc1dzpfX0/VPjo1ux7tGI/AAAAAAAAAJU/h5Z7gqGYCVc/s1600/The%2BGift%2B-%2BCastlecourt.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020].

⁸³ Alan Meban on Blogger, *The Gift production shot* (2015), available at

<<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/->

lcHukLVqhEs/VPjpAlyoNRI/AAAAAAAAAJc/WKuUQ_zVDkw/s1600/The%2BGift%2B-%2BCahoots%2B-%2BClare%2BKeith%2BNiall.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020].

Introduction to Interviews

The theatre space studies in Volume I contain direct quotations from interviews with theatre practitioners, architects, project managers and arts administrators. The interviews have not been transcribed in full, but the associated audio recordings accompany this thesis as .mp3 files. Recorded on iPhone or Samsung Galaxy, they are acceptable for transcription and reference, but are not of broadcast quality. Not all the recorded material appears in the text, but files are included and may prove useful for further work. Signed consent forms appear on the following pages.

Interviews conducted are as follows:

Interviewee	Date
Brendan Carson	30 January 2014 and 21 May 2014
Zoe Seaton	20 August 2014
Bob Forster	4 February 2015
Richard Mills	4 February 2015
Marianne Crosslé	3 February 2015
Houston Marshall	4 February 2015
Paul Bosco McEneaney	3 February 2015
Paula McFetridge	3 February 2015
David McClure	3 February 2015
Alastair Hall	27 November 2018
Ian McKnight	27 November 2018
Jan Branch	14 March 2019
Richard Wakely	14 March 2019
Anne McReynolds	15 March 2019
John Tuomey	11 June 2019

They are available for listening at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/004ipix4siyaygp/AADX9Py2Of4IFpUPPLkLh-TNa?dl=0>

Ethical Research information and signed consent forms

CONSENT FROM

Participant Name/ID: JAN BRANCH

Title of Project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition.

Name of researcher(s): John Riddell

Supervisor: Dr Margaret Shewring

University of Warwick Dept: School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

Participant Information: This thesis examines the development and use of theatre spaces in Northern Ireland since the founding of the state in the 1920s. Focusing on theatres in Belfast, the thesis combines archival research of historical buildings with investigation of new buildings which may have replaced an earlier venue. Your input is of great value in furthering the understanding of each building's design and its context.

Please initial box

1) I confirm that I have read and understood the above information provided for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.



2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.



3) I consent to audio recording, use of verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material.

OR

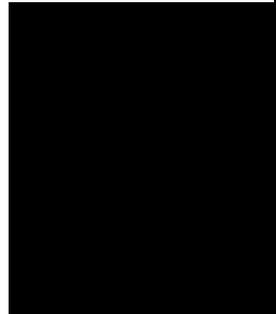
4) I consent to audio recording, use of anonymized verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material where my identity is not disclosed.



5) I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.



6) I agree to take part in the above study.



Name of Participant 14/3/19
Date

John Riddell

Name of Researcher 14/3/19
Date

CONSENT FROM

Participant Name/ID: John Tuomey

Title of Project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition.

Name of researcher(s): John Riddell

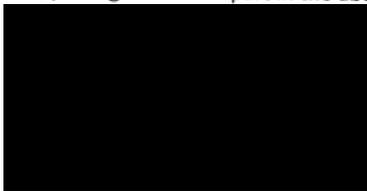
Supervisor: Dr Margaret Shewring

University of Warwick Dept: School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

Participant Information: This thesis examines the development and use of theatre spaces in Northern Ireland since the founding of the state in the 1920s. Focusing on theatres in Belfast, the thesis combines archival research of historical buildings with investigation of new buildings which may have replaced an earlier venue. Your input is of great value in furthering the understanding of each building's design and its context.

Please initial box

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the above information provided for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
 - 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
 - 3) I consent to audio recording, use of verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material.
- OR**
- 4) I consent to audio recording, use of anonymized verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material where my identity is not disclosed.
 - 5) I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.
 - 6) I agree to take part in the above study.



John Riddell
Name of Researcher

11-6-19
Date



12/6/19
Date

CONSENT FROM

Participant Name/ID: RICHARD WAKELY

Title of Project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition.

Name of researcher(s): John Riddell

Supervisor: Dr Margaret Shewring

University of Warwick Dept: School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

Participant Information: This thesis examines the development and use of theatre spaces in Northern Ireland since the founding of the state in the 1920s. Focusing on theatres in Belfast, the thesis combines archival research of historical buildings with investigation of new buildings which may have replaced an earlier venue. Your input is of great value in furthering the understanding of each building's design and its context.

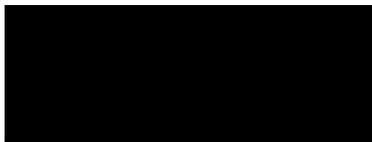
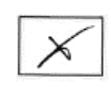
Please initial box

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the above information provided for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
- 3) I consent to audio recording, use of verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material.



OR

- 4) I consent to audio recording, use of anonymized verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material where my identity is not disclosed.
- 5) I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.
- 6) I agree to take part in the above study.



14/3/19
Date

John Riddell
Name of Researcher

14/3/19
Date



CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

- Be interviewed
- Have my interview audio recorded
- Have my interview video recorded
- Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

- In the production of a published volume on the project
- On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK
- In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous



Name of Participant

4/02/15

Date



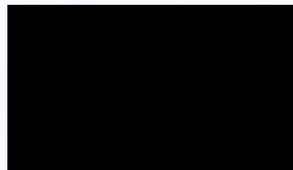
Signature

John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

4/2/15

Date



CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

- Be interviewed
- Have my interview audio recorded
- Have my interview video recorded
- Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

- In the production of a published volume on the project
- On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK
- In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

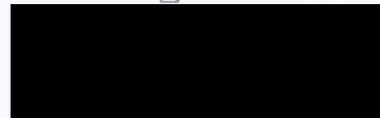
I wish for my data to remain anonymous



Name of Participant

4/2/2015

Date



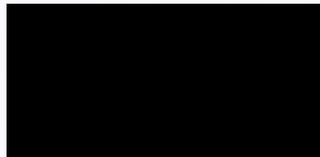
Signature

John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

2/2/2015

Date



CONSENT FROM

Participant Name/ID: ANNIE MC REYNOLDS

Title of Project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition.

Name of researcher(s): John Riddell

Supervisor: Dr Margaret Shewring

University of Warwick Dept: School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

Participant Information: This thesis examines the development and use of theatre spaces in Northern Ireland since the founding of the state in the 1920s. Focusing on theatres in Belfast, the thesis combines archival research of historical buildings with investigation of new buildings which may have replaced an earlier venue. Your input is of great value in furthering the understanding of each building's design and its context.

Please initial box

1) I confirm that I have read and understood the above information provided for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

3) I consent to audio recording, use of verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material.

OR

4) I consent to audio recording, use of anonymized verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material where my identity is not disclosed.

5) I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.

6) I agree to take part in the above study.

[Redacted Signature]

15-3-19.
Date

[Redacted Signature]

John Riddell
Name of Researcher

15.3.19
Date

CONSENT FROM

Participant Name/ID: Alastair Hall

Title of Project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition.

Name of researcher(s): John Riddell

Supervisor: Dr Margaret Shewring

University of Warwick Dept: School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

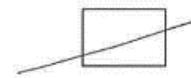
Participant Information: This thesis examines the development and use of theatre spaces in Northern Ireland since the founding of the state in the 1920s. Focusing on theatres in Belfast, the thesis combines archival research of historical buildings with investigation of new buildings which may have replaced an earlier venue. Your input is of great value in furthering the understanding of each building's design and its context.

Please initial box

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the above information provided for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
- 3) I consent to audio recording, use of verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material.

OR

- 4) I consent to audio recording, use of anonymized verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material where my identity is not disclosed.
- 5) I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.
- 6) I agree to take part in the above study.



27th Nov.
Date

John Riddell
Name of Researcher

27/11/18
Date



CONSENT FROM

Participant Name/ID: Ian McKnight

Title of Project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition.

Name of researcher(s): John Riddell

Supervisor: Dr Margaret Shewring

University of Warwick Dept: School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

Participant Information: This thesis examines the development and use of theatre spaces in Northern Ireland since the founding of the state in the 1920s. Focusing on theatres in Belfast, the thesis combines archival research of historical buildings with investigation of new buildings which may have replaced an earlier venue. Your input is of great value in furthering the understanding of each building's design and its context.

Please initial box

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the above information provided for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
 - 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
 - 3) I consent to audio recording, use of verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material.
- OR**
- 4) I consent to audio recording, use of anonymized verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material where my identity is not disclosed.
 - 5) I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.
 - 6) I agree to take part in the above study.

[Redacted Signature]

27.11.18
Date

John Riddell
Name of Researcher

27/11/18
Date

[Redacted Signature]

CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: **Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition**

Name of Researcher: **John Riddell**

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated **January 2013** for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

Be interviewed	✓
Have my interview audio recorded	✓
Have my interview video recorded	✓
Take part in the project's workshop	✓

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

In the production of a published volume on the project	✓
On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK	✓
In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher	✓

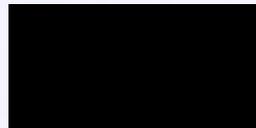
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous



20/8/14

Date

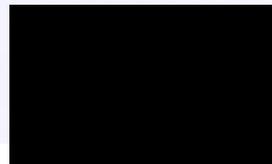


John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

20/8/14

Date



CONSENT FROM

Participant Name/ID: Zoe Seaton (Zoom Interview)

Title of Project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition.

Name of researcher(s): John Riddell

Supervisor: Dr Margaret Shewring

University of Warwick Dept: School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

Participant Information: This thesis examines the development and use of theatre spaces in Northern Ireland since the founding of the state in the 1920s. Focusing on theatres in Belfast, the thesis combines archival research of historical buildings with investigation of new buildings which may have replaced an earlier venue. Your input is of great value in furthering the understanding of each building's design and its context.

Please initial box

1) I confirm that I have read and understood the above information provided for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

3) I consent to audio recording, use of verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material.

OR

4) I consent to audio recording, use of anonymized verbatim quotations, photographs, drawings, sketches and other electronically copied printed material where my identity is not disclosed.

5) I understand that my data will be securely stored for a minimum of 10 years, in line with the University of Warwick's Research Data Management Policy.

6) I agree to take part in the above study.

[Redacted signature]

20/4/2020
Date

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted initial box]

[Empty initial box]

[Redacted initial box]

John Riddell
Name of Researcher

20/4/2020
Date

[Redacted signature]

CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

- Be interviewed
- Have my interview audio recorded
- Have my interview video recorded
- Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

- In the production of a published volume on the project
- On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK
- In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous

[Redacted]

Name of Participant

3/2/15

Date

[Redacted]

Signature

John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

3/2/15

Date

[Redacted]

CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

- Be interviewed
- Have my interview audio recorded
- Have my interview video recorded
- Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

- In the production of a published volume on the project
- On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK
- In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous

[Redacted]

Name of Participant

3/2/2015

Date

[Redacted]

John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

3/2/15

Date

[Redacted]

CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

- Be interviewed
- Have my interview audio recorded
- Have my interview video recorded
- Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

- In the production of a published volume on the project
- On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK
- In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

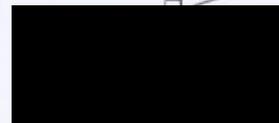
I wish for my data to remain anonymous



Name of Participant

30/1/14

Date



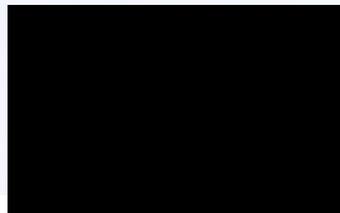
Signature

John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

30/1/14

Date



CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

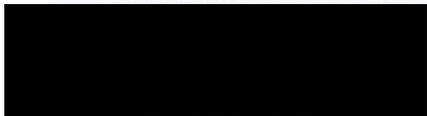
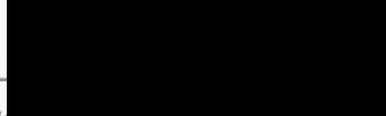
- Be interviewed
- Have my interview audio recorded
- Have my interview video recorded
- Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

- In the production of a published volume on the project
- On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK
- In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous

 4/2/13 
Name of Participant Date Signature

John Riddell

4/2/13

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

Date

Signature 

CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

- Be interviewed
- Have my interview audio recorded
- Have my interview video recorded
- Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

- In the production of a published volume on the project
- On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK
- In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous

[Redacted]

Name of Participant

03/02/15

Date

[Redacted]

Signature

John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

3/2/15

Date

[Redacted]

CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participating interviewees)

Title of Thesis/project: Theatre Space in Northern Ireland since Partition

Name of Researcher: John Riddell

School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 2013 for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to (please tick those you agree to):

Be interviewed

Have my interview audio recorded

Have my interview video recorded

Take part in the project's workshop

I understand that my information will be held by the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies and agree to its being used for the purposes of research in the PhD/MPhil/Master's thesis and in possible future items of publication as follows:

In the production of a published volume on the project

On the website of the School of Theatre, Performance, and

Cultural Policy at the University of Warwick, UK

In further publications and / or presentations of the researcher

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous

Name of Participant

Date

3 Feb 2015

John Riddell

Name(s) of Researcher(s)

Date

3/2/15

Bibliography of sources in Volume II

Manuscript Sources, archive notes and drawings in Public Archives

Coleraine

Riverside Theatre Archive

Peter Moro and Partners, *Report – Proposed Theatre for the New University of Ulster*, 1972

Galway

National University of Ireland Galway, James Hardiman Library, Lyric Theatre/O'Malley Archive

T4/502, Lyric Theatre Belfast, *Board Minutes May 1960–January 1969*

T4/592, MacLynn, Cormac J., *Planning Application*

T4/595, Downes, J. Neil, *Small Theatre for Belfast for Mrs Mary O'Malley*, 1959

T4/597, Downes, J. Neil, *New Theatre at Ridgeway Street for the Lyric Players Theatre Belfast*, 1964

T4/598, Downes, J. Neil, *Lyric Theatre drawing 22*

T4/600, Unknown, *Lyric Theatre foundation ceremony photographs*

T4/617, *Lyric Theatre photographs*

T4/619, McAlpine, Sir Alfred, *Construction Drawings of Lyric Theatre*, 1968

T4/620, Unknown, *Second Lyric Theatre completed building photographs*

T4/621, Unknown, *Lyric Theatre opening night photographs*

T4/661, Theatre at Guildford, *Architects Journal*, 1965

Interviews and private correspondence

Interviews available at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/004ipix4siyaygp/AADX9Py2Of4IFpUPPLkLh-TNa?dl=0>

Riddell, John, *Interview Branch*, Jan (14 March 2019)

Riddell, John, *Interview Forster*, Bob (4 February 2015)

Riddell, John, *Interview* Hall, Alastair and Ian McKnight (27 November 2018)
Riddell, John, *Interview* McEneaney, Paul Bosco (3 February 2015)
Riddell, John, *Interview* McReynolds, Anne (15 March 2019)
Riddell, John, *Interview* Seaton, Zoë (20 August 2014)
Riddell, John, *Interview* Tuomey, John (11 June 2019)
Riddell, John, *Interview* Wakely, Richard (14 March 2019)

Primary Sources: Printed

Official papers

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Management of Major Capital Projects* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Audit Office, 2013)

Secondary Sources

Books and Articles

Deane, Arthur (ed.) *The Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society. Centenary Volume 1821–1921* (Belfast: BNHPS, 1924)
Deane, C. Douglas, *The Ulster Countryside* (Belfast: The Universities Press, 1983)
O'Malley, Mary, *Never shake hands with the Devil* (Dublin: Elo publications, 1990)

Broadcasts

O'Donoghue, John (presenter), 'A Belfast Centre for Theatre and Art', in *Broadsheet* (RTÉ), 2 October 1963

Websites

Belfast Community Circus School, *History*, available at
<<http://www.belfastcircus.org/history>> [accessed on 8 July 2019]
Big Telly, *Creative Shops performance in Strabane* (2018), available at
<https://www.big-telly.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/53259907_1978849215570722_8137317684078444544_n-2.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020]

- Big Telly, *Creative Shop performance in Enniskillen* (2018), available at <https://www.big-telly.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/53259907_1978849215570722_8137317684078444544_n-2.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- Big Telly, *The Garvagh Wedding poster*, available at <https://www.big-telly.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/89293203_107353247547516_5867451279441133568_o.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- Booking.Com, *Portstewart Promenade* (2016), available at <<https://qcf.bstatic.com/images/hotel/max1280x900/215/215323318.jpg>> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- Collins, Tom, 'Saving the Festival is like nailing legs to a cadaver and telling it to walk', *Scope NI*, 23 March 2015, <<https://scopeni.nicva.org/article/saving-festival-nailing-legs-cadaver-and-telling-it-walk>> [accessed on 29 September 2020]
- Emer D Blog on Wordpress, *Operation Elsewhere screenshot*, available at <https://emerdblog.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/img_20200503_180035.jpg?w=1200> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- Future Belfast, *Danske Bank Donegall Square North* (2016), available at <<http://www.futurebelfast.com/property/9-donegall-square-north/>> [accessed on 11 August 2011]
- Gilbert Ash, *Stage from auditorium left*, available at <<https://gilbert-ash.com/projects/the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 3 July 2020]
- Gilbert, Dennis (photographer), Lyric Theatre, *Naughton Studio technical information*, available at <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/technical/>> [accessed on 3 July 2020]
- Griffiths, Trevor, *Who Shall be Happy...?* (1995), available at <<http://www.trevorgriffiths.co.uk/site/1995/12/31/who-shall-be-happy/>> [accessed on 11 September 2019]
- Grundy, Ian (photographer), *Belfast MAC 1236* (2014), available at <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stagedoor/13261711104>> [accessed on 9 August 2020]

- Lyric Theatre, *Hire a space*, available at <<https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/your-visit/venue-hire/>> [accessed on 3 July 2020]
- McCreary, Mark (photographer), MGN Ltd, *Aerial view of the new theatre* (2015), available at <<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/whats-on/arts-culture-news/gallery/lyric-theatres-history-and-transformation--9421475>> [accessed on 9 June 2015]
- Meban, Alan, on Blogger, *The Gift Castlecourt* (2015), available at <<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-WAQc1dzpfX0/VPjo1ux7tGI/AAAAAAAAAJU/h5Z7gqGYCVc/s1600/The%2BGift%2B-%2BCastlecourt.jpg>> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- Meban, Alan, on Blogger, *The Gift production shot* (2015), available at <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-lcHukLVqhEs/VPjpAlyoNRI/AAAAAAAAAJc/WKuUQ_zVDkw/s1600/The%2BGift%2B-%2BCahoots%2B-%2BClare%2BKeith%2BNiall.jpg> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- NI Archive, *The Box, Portstewart* (2016), available at <<https://niarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/TS-26.jpg>> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- O'Donnell + Tuomey, *The Lyric Theatre Belfast*, available at <<https://odonnell-tuomey.ie/index.php?p=the-lyric-theatre>> [accessed on 3 July 2020]
- Osborne King, *Cahoots NI and Osborne King collect Arts & Business Award 2013* (2013), available at <<https://www.osborneking.com/siteFiles/resources/images/marketing/ArtsandBusinessNIAwardsWeb.jpg>> [accessed on 10 August 2020].
- Pinterest, *I Spy Portstewart Poster* (2014), available at <<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/10/ab/d0/10abd0bc6e6466435f135153e86425c1.jpg>> [accessed on 10 August 2020]
- The MAClive, *Accessing the MAC* (2020), available at <<https://themaclive.com/accessibility>> [accessed on 9 August 2020]
- The MAClive, *Explore Spaces Downstairs Theatre* (2020), available at <<https://hirethamac.com/explore-spaces/downstairs-theatre>> [accessed on 9 August 2020]

- Theatre crafts.com, *Equipment Detail – JP Series 1965–1975*, available at
<<http://www.theatre crafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=5006>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]
- Theatre crafts.com, *Equipment Detail – JTM 1965–1975*, available at
<<http://www.theatre crafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=7013>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]
- Theatre crafts.com, *Equipment Detail – Patt.45 1928 approx.– 1978*, available at
<<http://www.theatre crafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=1045>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]
- Theatre crafts.com, *Equipment Detail – Patt.243 1960–1978*, available at
<<http://www.theatre crafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=1243>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]
- Theatre crafts.com, *Equipment Detail – Patt.264 1965–1975*, available at
<<http://www.theatre crafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=1264>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]
- Theatre crafts.com, *Equipment Detail – SP Series 1966–1979*, available at
<<http://www.theatre crafts.com/pages/home/archive/equipment/detail/?id=5011>> [accessed on 5 September 2019]
- Visit Belfast, *Front of Visit Belfast Welcome Centre* (2019), available at
<<https://visitbelfast.com/plan/front-of-visit-belfast-welcome-centre/>>
[accessed on 11 August 2020]