



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Wexford Festival Opera (WFO) is committed to following the Action Plan set out below in order to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within our organisation and to ensure that everything we do and the way it is done makes reference to and considers the impact upon our EDI objectives. Placing EDI centre stage in our organisation will enrich the cultural landscape and ensure that the transformative power of art will play its part in contributing to EDI for all in society.

### AUDIENCES

#### Goals

- To be welcoming and accessible to all audiences including persons with disabilities both visible and invisible.
- To make live performance of opera available to as broad and diverse an audience as possible, by continuing to share the magic of WFO with our existing audiences, but also seeking new and more diverse audiences particularly audiences that are reflective of Ireland's diversity.
- To broaden and deepen community engagement by developing strategic partnerships and providing a platform for dynamic, sustained engagement and participation in the arts by diverse communities and make critical cultural experiences more accessible to them, in order for them to engage and participate meaningfully in the arts.
- To use digital technology and broadcasting media to ensure more people engage with opera as an art form through our website, YouTube channel, other social media platforms, and through national and international broadcasting channels.
- To capture data that will measure audience engagement with opera and their awareness of it and assess what other opportunities might exist to take opera to a broader audience.

#### Actions

- Ensure equality of access for those who use our services by:- carrying out an accessibility audit of the National Opera House (including our box office systems and viewing platforms); exploring the possibility of having audio described performances ;introducing induction loops in the National Opera House; making our website available in audio format; communicating to our audiences using inclusive language across all media(our website, social media, and printed materials).
- Address how opera is perceived and remove barriers to accessing opera as an art form because of economic or other reasons; create shared experiences by continuing to make free events available in different spaces and places around the town of Wexford; present a variety of events which allow access at different price points; take opera beyond the confines of a

conventional space/idea of a theatre and entice new audiences to explore opera by continuing to develop initiatives such as the Pop Up Events, Community Opera and Tickets in the Community.

- Through further collaboration with bodies such as Wexford County Council, Music Generation Wexford and Creative Places Enniscorthy, ensure that the diverse communities of Wexford and its environs have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the musical and artistic activities of the Festival each year by continuing to engage with primary and secondary schools, academic institutions, care homes, youth groups, family support groups and other community groups, welcoming them all to experience opera.
- Continue to make the productions in WFO available to listeners and viewers through national and worldwide broadcasts, through radio and online to audiences across digital platforms on a free-to-view basis, both live and on a repeat viewing basis.
- Listen and learn from our audiences, in particular those with diverse requirements to ensure that any innovations we put in place are appropriate and useful. Explore how best to capture feedback from our audiences about current barriers to engagement with WFO and to understand and put steps in place that will make WFO more accessible and attractive for them.

## **EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS AND BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Goals**

- To embed EDI in the workplace, recognising, respecting and valuing differences among our employees, volunteers and Board members in order to promote an inclusive culture for all.
- To create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, while promoting tolerance and fairness, and dignity and respect for all and ensuring that individual differences and the contributions of all employees, volunteers, Board members, artists, visitors, the public and any others we meet in the course of our work are recognised and valued.
- To recruit and engage employees, volunteers and Board members without discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the Irish traveller community, or socio-economic status, as set out in the Arts Council's EDI policy and strategy.
- Develop a process to capture data to monitor the impact and success of our EDI policy.

### **Actions**

- Treat each other with respect actively listening and hearing one another; be welcoming and accessible for all employees, Board members and volunteers; challenge inappropriate and offensive behaviours, using informal and open dialogue with colleagues and if needed through HR policies and processes; use gender neutral language across our organisation in all formal and informal correspondence and documents.
- Continue to provide training to employees, volunteers and Board members about equality awareness and about their rights and responsibilities under our EDI policy, including the responsibility to prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination; provide EDI training (including Safe to Create training) to all new employees, volunteers and Board members; review EDI related policies annually, explain changes resulting from a policy review and provide training on the content of any new policies; commence Investors in Diversity Silver training with the Irish Centre for Diversity.

- Ensure the issue of gender equality and diversity is of central importance to our organisation and within all our existing HR policies, including recruitment, induction and performance management; state our support of diverse voices in our communications regarding employment opportunities; assess more closely the diversity of our employees, volunteers and Board members in recruitment and Board selection processes; carry out a review of the methods used for communication of all vacancies; promote job opportunities through open and transparent recruitment processes; provide equality and fairness for all job applicants; ensure fair treatment of applicants which is free from bias.
- Capture data through a survey of employees, volunteers and Board members to assess how our EDI related policies and action plan are working, particularly in respect of the take up of any specific benefits against the ten grounds of discrimination so as to identify and address any unfavourable trends.

## **ARTISTS AND PRODUCTION TEAMS**

### **Goals**

- To recruit and employ Artists and Production Personnel without discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, civil status, family status, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the Irish traveller community, or socio-economic status as set out in the Arts Council's EDI policy and strategy, properly remunerating them for their work and honouring the principle of fair and proportionate rates of pay.
- To ensure WFO is welcoming and accessible, safe and supportive to all our artists and production teams in all their diversity
- To promote opportunities to the widest possible group of artists and production personnel and to encourage all artists and production teams to develop their skills and resources so that they can reach their full potential.
- To capture data and insights in relation to our artists and production personnel in order to inform our decision-making.

### **Actions**

- Recruit people who are representative of the diverse and contemporary society which we live in; continue to be committed to gender balance in our selection process in respect of our artistic and production teams and embrace the full diversity of their talent; ensure all of our artistic and production personnel feel equally valued, included and supported; commit to paying all employees a living wage as a minimum and continue to subscribe fully to the Arts Council's 'Pay the Artist Policy'.
- Continue to make our performance spaces welcoming and accessible. Ensure we are a safe space for all artists and production teams with no tolerance for disrespectful speech or behaviour, harassment or bullying; treat everyone fairly and with respect.
- Seek to balance the gender of composers engaged by us by committing to the presentation of work by female composers; focus on the presentation of work by female composers through our 'composer in residence programme' and support work by female composers through the commission of new work; support young and talented artists and production personnel in Ireland providing them with a springboard for their careers, both through the Wexford Factory programme and their employment for the purposes of the many Festival events.
- Collect and analyse data to better understand the ten protected characteristics as they pertain to artists and to gain a better perspective on the diversity of the artists who work with us;

explore how best to introduce a meaningful feedback mechanism among all our artists and production teams; evaluate our actions and outcomes and how they impact them.

Our EDI action plan is a living document through which we aim to create a more diverse and engaged organisation of employees, volunteers and Board members. We know we might not always succeed in the goals we have set, but we aim to listen, learn and improve. We will strive to identify where improvement and changes are needed and continue to improve our action plan. The progress of the actions set out in this action plan shall be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Executive Director who will present a report annually to the Board at the beginning of each year. EDI shall be an agenda item at each of the regular Governance and Nominations Committee meetings and at each regular Board meeting. The Board shall assess how WFO's EDI policy and Action Plan is working in practice and take action to ensure that the goals set out are achieved.