

Beyond the Notes

ICO Strategy (2024 – 2028)



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Irish Chamber Orchestra

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Message from Chair & CEO



Aibhlín McCrann *Chair*

After more than fifty years delivering musical excellence and world-class performances to Irish and international audiences, our second strategy *Beyond the Notes* illustrates our ongoing journey of development and discovery; extending our reach and collaborating with a wide range of distinguished artistic partners to create unique musical experiences for our audiences nationally and internationally.

With the support of our principal funder, The Arts Council, An Chomhairle Ealaíon, this strategy illustrates our ambition and



Gerard Keenan *CEO*

provides a framework for decision-making and resource allocation. It shows us continuing to build organisational capacity while defining our artistic programming and future focus.

Our acclaimed ICO Schools (formerly Sing Out With Strings) initiative is the only music education programme in Ireland linked to a professional orchestra. It offers free access to music education to children and young people, where they gain an abundance of opportunities and life-enhancing skills. Together with our local schools and

philanthropic partners, we are determined to maintain our efforts to sustain the programme.

From our purpose-built studio on the University of Limerick campus, our post graduate degree in Classical String Performance is thriving through our collaboration with the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance. We value our creative association with the University Concert Hall.

In a world where awareness of environmental, social, governance (ESG) is essential to our organisation's future direction, our strategy outlines our plans to decrease our carbon footprint so that we may play our part in taking positive climate action.

As always, excellence, inclusivity, engagement, collaboration and innovation are the hallmarks of what we do; these values underpin our ambition, our exhilarating,

dynamic style and our desire for performance excellence. *Beyond the Notes* is another milestone on our journey to present world-class performances of classical and contemporary repertoire to as many people as possible.



Our Vision



To be one of the world's most inspiring and innovative chamber orchestras, performing to the highest artistic standards for the widest possible audience.



Our Mission



To enrich the lives of everyone we engage with through world class performances, collaborations and music education and engagement programmes.



We do this through:

- Engaging leading soloists, conductors and musicians to ensure excellence in performance.
- Embracing repertoire that is diverse and inclusive, and reflecting various cultures and musical styles.
- Partnering with other artistic and cultural organisations to create innovative, interdisciplinary performances.
- Working with children, young people and local communities through our education and engagement programmes, workshops and events.
- Listening to our audiences and adapting our approach to better meet their needs and preferences.



Our Values

Excellence
Inclusivity
Engagement
Collaboration
Innovation



Excellence

We strive for excellence in all that we do, through our artistic programming and performance, our education and engagement programmes, and our management and governance.

Inclusivity

We promote inclusivity, equality and diversity across our organisation, encouraging inclusive practice in the way we work and across the design, development and delivery of our performances, programmes and collaborations.

Engagement

We work with the finest and most talented musicians and artists across the creative disciplines to engage with audiences of all ages, and with the broader music community, nationally and internationally.

Collaboration

We collaborate with partners and key local, national, and international stakeholders enabling us, through a shared vision to deliver world-class experiences to diverse audiences.

Innovation

We seek to grow and innovate, developing cutting-edge programmes, projects and commissions, with and by Irish and international composers and artists; presenting our performances in unexpected places and spaces where our audiences can meet to enjoy our music.



Our Strategic Priorities



**Artistic
Development**

Audiences

**Education &
Engagement**

**Finance &
Governance**

**Climate
Awareness**

Artistic Development



Goal 1

Define a clear artistic strategy, ambition and identity.

With a new programming team in place, we are re-defining our artistic policy to provide a clearer direction and focus to help us achieve our vision and mission.

This artistic policy will shape our approach, differentiate us from others and provide a framework for decision-making and resource allocation.

It will guide our programming, repertoire, and collaborations, leading to increased creativity and innovation in our approach and output.

It will promote our unique identity, voice and perspective, helping us attract and retain audiences, donors, and other stakeholders.



Objectives

- 1.1. Implement a strategic approach to programming which extends our repertoire, our support of Irish musicians and composers, driving innovation in presentation.
- 1.2. Maintain our exceptional performance standards and artistic excellence.
- 1.3. Cultivate existing partnerships, develop new relationships and collaborations to enhance artistic output, and build on our reputation as a leading cultural ambassador for Ireland.
- 1.4. Consolidate and develop our recording and broadcasting output.



Audiences

Goal 2

Diversify, increase and continuously engage our audiences.

Our audiences are our lifeblood, essential for our sustainability, providing stimulus and encouragement for our musicians, and the financial and social support needed for us to thrive.

Their continued support reflects our success in delivering quality programming and performance and creates further opportunities for increased engagement, stimulating our creativity and innovation in programming and performance.

We cultivate this connectivity through programmes that reflect our audience's interests and values; working with them over the timeframe of this strategy to broaden our relevance and enrich the lives of those who experience our work.

Objectives

- 2.1. Reimagine, redefine and effectively communicate our ambition and identity.
- 2.2. Develop innovative ways for increased audience engagement with our work.
- 2.3. Develop opportunities for more diverse audiences to access and engage with us as part of our national touring programme.
- 2.4. Further develop our strategic relationship with the University of Limerick to position ourselves at the heart of its rich cultural landscape.



Education and Engagement

Goal 3

Enhance access to and engagement with our education and community engagement programmes.

Our free education and engagement programmes are a powerful and equitable way in which we engage with and build diverse audiences, by developing greater access to music for all ages and backgrounds. They foster a love of music and support the development of key life skills including communication, collaboration, confidence and creativity, influencing children's aspirations, enhancing motivations and subsequent attainment. They also strengthen our position as a socially-conscious cultural entity, committed to engaging with and serving the wider community through music.



Objectives

- 3.1. Continue to ensure the voice of all our communities is included in the development of our education and engagement efforts.
- 3.2. Create a strategic framework for sustainability and growth of our education and engagement programmes.
- 3.3. Enhance and develop connectivity between the orchestra and our education programmes.
- 3.4. Implement agreed outputs from ICO Schools review project.
- 3.5. Integrate planning between our artistic and education programming to develop opportunities for additional creative and social engagement.

Finance and Governance

Goal 4

Ensure our financial sustainability is underpinned by good governance practices.

We are committed to continuous improvement in our financial management and governance, operating with integrity, transparency, and accountability at all levels. Our sound financial planning, management and oversight are central to our success.

Our governance practices are aligned with our mission and values and our engagement with our stakeholders ensures their voice forms part of our decision-making process. Our board and management's commitment to good governance enables us to fulfil our ambition, maintain our relevance and our commitment to inclusivity in all that we do.

Objectives

- 4.1. Increase philanthropic and corporate/individual giving.
- 4.2. Secure an increase in Arts Council funding for organisational sustainability and advancement of our artistic ambition.
- 4.3. Develop new revenue streams from Government and other relevant agencies.
- 4.4. Ensure continuity in appropriate payment for artists, other creatives and arts workers.
- 4.5. Build organisational data to support the development of income streams.
- 4.6. Ensure prudent financial controls are in place to safeguard our financial stability.
- 4.7. Position ourselves as an organisation that embraces equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 4.8. Implement succession planning and capacity building to ensure leadership continuity, artistic excellence and effective implementation of our strategic objectives.



Climate Awareness

Goal 5

Wherever possible, we will strive to minimise our impact on the environment and work towards ensuring the sustainable use of our precious natural resources.

We recognise that at a time when awareness and understanding of climate change have become common place across society, we must minimise our impact on the environment, particularly in the production of carbon.

We, like every organisation, have a carbon footprint; we will examine our activities and where possible, reduce the size of this footprint. We will adopt a leadership role in our sector to take action in our collective battle to minimise climate change in line with the Paris agreement of 2016¹.

[1] 2016 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)



Objectives

- 5.1. Develop our own Climate/Environmental Policy.
- 5.2. Ensure continued reduction of our environmental footprint as it relates to our administration and management.
- 5.3. Adopt eco-friendly practices for our touring schedule, while continuing to deliver exceptional musical performances to our audiences.
- 5.4. Work in alignment with the University of Limerick's green agenda, highlighting our commitment to environmental awareness and action.

Orchestra

Violin

Nicola Sweeney *Asst. Leader*

André Swanepoel *Principal*

Diane Daly

Anna Cashell

Oonagh Keogh

Clíodhna Ryan

Louis Roden

Kenneth Rice

Emily Nenniger

Viola

Joachim Roewer *Principal*

Mark Coates-Smith

Robin Panter

Cello

Aoife Nic Athlaoich *Principal*

Richard Angell

Peggy Nolan

Double Bass

Malachy Robinson *Principal*

Oboe

Daniel Bates *Principal*

Matthew Draper

Horn

Stephen Nicholls *Principal*

Hannah Miller

Board of Directors

Aibhlín McCrann *Chair*

Gearóid Stanley *Company Secretary*

Gareth Byrne

Ger Holliday

Sara Moorhead

Tom Gallagher

Caroline Grant

Evelyn Grant

Executive

Chief Executive

Gerard Keenan

Deputy CEO/Operations

Cathriona Murphy

Artistic Adviser

Ronan Tighe

Communications

Charlotte Eglington

Education

Simon Thompson

Finance & Governance

Ann O'Donoghue

Marketing

Michelle Buckley



Music that sets your heart racing

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An Roinn Cultúir,
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta
Department of Culture,
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

