

ADCI Opening Statement to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media on 15th November 2023.

The Amateur Drama Council of Ireland (ADCI) is in existence for seventy one years serving the amateur drama movement in Ireland. The aims of ADCI are to foster, promote and encourage amateur drama in Ireland. This is done by facilitating drama festivals throughout the island and providing mentorship for amateur drama groups at festivals in order to develop skills and raise standards. It also encourages new and non participating groups to the festival circuit and bring live theatre to audiences throughout Ireland. Many of these communities wouldn't have easy access to theatre otherwise.

ADCI is a voluntary organisation made up of four provincial councils and overseen by a National Executive Committee. It is also a thirty-two county organisation. Given its long history it has fostered and encouraged cross border engagement and integration through the toughest years of the 'Troubles' with drama groups traveling the length of Ireland to perform their plays.

The Amateur Drama Council of Ireland (ADCI) is the governing body of all affiliated Drama Festivals. In total there are 50 affiliated festivals, between full length and one act festivals. They offer the unique experience to over 100 drama groups to perform all over the country, with the added bonus of getting a professional adjudication on their work. The value of this professional adjudication has helped raise the standards of production greatly.

Putting on stage activities in the autumn and winter periods is to a community what sporting activities are in the summer period. These activities galvanise a community, and not just local communities, but neighbouring communities support each other in these activities, creating a complex web of social and cultural interaction and networking that is unique to Irish Society. Through its survey of affiliated Festivals the ADCI can confirm to over 120,000 attendees at festivals across Ireland and volunteer activity from 740 local people. The participants range in age from 10 years old to people in their 80's, it embraces all age groups, irrelevant of class, gender, orientation, religion or creed.

The Festival circuit is also a key contributor to the local economies in a period in the year when activity in the hospitality sector is quiet. Local bars and restaurants are supported by audiences and Drama Groups and all Festivals provide significant overnight stays for local hotels.

The Amateur Drama Council of Ireland (ADCI) was part of a delegation to the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports & Media, on the 27th June 2019. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss with the Minister the amateur drama movement in Ireland and explore the possibility of funding to support this sector into the future. Following this in the Budget 2020 a funding amount of €250,000 for amateur theatre was announced. This was intended as an annual award to be administered with the Department and the Amateur Drama Council of Ireland (ADCI), the Drama League of Ireland (DLI) to further develop amateur Drama. The current minister, Catherine Martin, came into office in 2020 and took the decision to allocate this funding to the Arts Council for administration. This was on the basis of a 26 county allocation. The amateur theatre community worked with the Arts Council and through a pilot scheme, in 2021 / 2022 this ringfenced funding was allocated to the Amateur Drama Council of Ireland (ADCI), the Drama League of Ireland (DLI) and the Association of Irish Musical Societies (AIMS). The Arts council then discontinued the pilot scheme for 2023 and included the amateur theatre sector in the mainstream funding process.

The Arts Council primarily support the professional art world, so the amateur sector now had to compete with professionals for funding. As a result, the funding allocated to the amateur sector for 2023 was drastically reduced by over two thirds of the original to circa €75k. This was a huge disappointment to the amateur sector. In the year 2023/24 this funding has been ceased totally.

In conclusion the ADCI has a long history as part of the cultural fabric of the island and has provided quality drama to urban and rural communities improving their well being and tackling isolation and loneliness in the dark months of the year. It has also been instrumental in producing many of our

professional actors, directors and technicians for the industry. We would therefore urge the Committee to support the amateur drama sector to restore the grant funding and if possible on a 32 county basis.