

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM CHULTÚR, OIDHREACTH AGUS GAELTACHT

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

Dé Céadaoin, 16 Deireadh Fómhair 2019

Wednesday, 16 October 2019

The Joint Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Danny Healy-Rae,	Maura Hopkins,
Aengus Ó Snodaigh,*	Marie-Louise O'Donnell,
Niamh Smyth.	Fintan Warfield.

* In éagmais / In the absence of Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire.

Teachta / Deputy Michael Collins sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Business of Joint Committee

Vice Chairman: On behalf of the committee, I congratulate the Chairman, Deputy Ó Laoghaire and his partner on the recent birth of their son, Fiach.

The joint committee went into private session at 1.37 p.m. and resumed in public session at 1.44 p.m.

Dance as a Performance Art: Discussion

Vice Chairman: I welcome from CoisCéim Dance Theatre, Ms Bridget Webster, executive producer and CEO; from the Arts Council, Mr. Davide Terlingo, head of circus, dance and street arts and spectacle, and Ms Liz Meaney, arts director; from Dance Theatre of Ireland, Mr. Robert Connor; Ms Loretta Yurick, co-artistic director; and from Firkin Dance Company, Dr. Catherine Foley, board member; and Ms Patricia Crosby, board member.

Before I ask the witnesses to address the meeting, I remind them that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, they are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to this committee. However, if they are directed to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise nor make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. Any opening statements or other documents that have been submitted to the committee may be published on the committee's website after this meeting. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I ask Ms Webster to make her presentation. She has to leave at 2.45 p.m. to be in Galway this evening, so we will facilitate her.

Ms Bridget Webster: I thank the Chairman for the opportunity to contribute to this meeting of the Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to discuss the importance of dance as a performance art. In Ireland, dance has often been considered theatre's lesser sibling. However, in recent years, Irish contemporary dance has exploded out of this shadow to stake its place strongly on the national and global stage, as artists with rich, diverse voices appear at the world's major festivals and venues and their works feature in lists such as *The Guardian's* best dance of the 21st century.

Arts and culture are cornerstones for a healthy society and dance is an elemental part of that fabric. I would like to start this presentation with words from our younger audience members as they left the theatre, having seen David Bolger's "The Wolf and Peter", to emphasise the fact that culture transforms, culture is not neutral and the language of dance is universal.

From an audio-visual presentation:

I really like The Wolf and Peter; I liked how they showed it all by dancing and not by talking; My favourite part was when the wolf was dancing; We thought it was really funny; I liked when they were doing gymnastics; The music was really good; It was interesting when the wolf was dancing; The piano could do anything without stopping; It was really good; My favourite character was the cat; My favourite character is Peter the cat; I like all the animals; They are all really funny; I think everybody should go and see this show; Me too; There are some funny parts and scary parts and some sad parts; I would give it ten out of ten; I would give it 100 out of ten.

CoisCéim is unique in an Irish context in the way that we coherently connect performance and participation activity to broaden, deepen and diversify the public's engagement with the performing arts through contemporary dance. We aim to inspire, challenge, provoke and stimulate and actively seek to collaborate at every stage. Our work is benchmarked with the best in world and David Bolger's distinctive style on stage, on film and off site has accessed millions of people, introducing many to the art form for the first time. Projects such as "The Wolf and Peter" with Creative Dance Tales, These Rooms and 38 Women, clearly show how an integrated approach can help to embed creative capacity into communities for the long term. With the support of the Arts Council of Ireland and Culture Ireland, CoisCéim has had an extraordinary five years as we have magnified this reputation as creators of relevant, meaningful work at the forefront of contemporary art practice.

For example, the show, "The Wolf and Peter", thrilled almost 20,000 children and their families from Sligo to the Sydney Opera House. Our major four-year co-production entitled, These Rooms, brought Irish artists back to the London International Festival of Theatre for the first time in 27 years and featured in the 14-18 NOW's culmination programme to mark the centenary of the First World War. The performance entitled, "Body Language", in collaboration with Royal Hibernian Academy Gallery, enabled more than 13,000 people to encounter contemporary dance in a different context, and their response to this work was remarkable.

The primary reason behind these successes was a synergy between funding and programming cycles. Both "The Wolf and Peter" and "These Rooms" benefited from Arts Council advance planning funding strands. This meant that we were able to initiate and lead collaborations and co-productions with presenters, festivals and other funders to allow the full artistic potential of the works to be realised at home and abroad, thus unlocking fascinating opportunities for the future for contemporary dance made in Ireland. For example, "These Rooms" brought CoisCéim together with ANU Productions and the Dublin Theatre Festival, London International Festival of Theatre, LIFT, 14-18 NOW, Shoreditch Town Hall, Tate Gallery in Liverpool, National Museum of Ireland, National Archives of Ireland, Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, and Culture Ireland, doubling the Arts Council investment.

Why is dance important? It is said that more than 65% of our communication is non-verbal. Numerous studies describe the benefits of seeing and participating in contemporary dance. As David Bolger notes in an interview for our new production, "Francis Footwork", which has its world premiere this evening in Galway:

When we are infants we are quite proficient at communicating with our bodies. We learn to understand movement as a language. We learn rhythm from the heartbeat in the womb, and carry forward that sense of rhythm. Dancing is a natural feeling, it makes you feel stronger, happier and is hugely important for our development as adults. It improves communication skills and has only positive benefits in every aspect of our lives.

Dance is not just an important and fundamental component of the performing arts; it is a core ingredient for happy and healthy citizens.

It is concerning that Dance Ireland is not represented here today, given the focus of the meeting on dance as a performance art. It is a bit like having a discussion about wages for artists without the presence of the Equity union.

Finally, dance has been disproportionately affected by funding cuts in recent years, materially impacting on the ability of artists to create work. As an inherently non-commercial art form, State support is vital for the sector to thrive. We call strongly on the Government to deliver on its 2017 pledge to double arts funding by 2020.

Vice Chairman: I thank Ms Webster for her presentation. I invite Mr. Terlingo to make his presentation on behalf of the Arts Council.

Mr. Davide Terlingo: I thank the Chairman and members of the committee for the invitation.

I will make a number of points that reflect my work at the Arts Council and 30 years of professional experience in dance. I worked in a number of roles before joining the council. I shall start by defining dance. The meaning of dance extends beyond the genres that we support through the council. Usually, when we talk about dance in our policy, we refer to activities that are led by professional artists or companies, although these activities have a high level of involvement by audiences, such as in dance shows or participatory activities such as dance classes, local festivals or community projects. These are the activities that we usually refer to in policy papers. We talk about artistic productions, tourism, dance centres and services, youth practice and community projects. We also talk about dance genres such as classical ballet, modern dance, contemporary dance, dance theatre, traditional Irish dance, hip-hop, etc. There are many possible narratives. All of these terms represent a vast field of practice. However, when talking about dance, it is essential to consider an even deeper meaning - it is that represented by dance as a primordial manifestation of human emotions and the human spirit, it is that of embodied emotions and social interactions, and it is the way in which human beings have celebrated throughout history and across world cultures. In practical terms, I am referring to simple activities such as people dancing in a club or at a wedding. I am also referring to spontaneous street dance, someone dancing in his or her bedroom or a couple dancing a waltz. It is important to the many manifestations of dance. Once we consider this broad definition of dance, we can more comprehensively discuss its importance as an art form.

Dance is a vast and important topic. I propose a narrative based on two types of benefits. One is the importance of dance to the individual and the other is the importance of dance for society. In terms of the importance of dance to the individual, the narrative refers to forms of psychological or physiological benefits. I am not a medical expert but, as a former professional dancer, I can testify to the value of body awareness. Many medical conditions are the result of skeletal misalignments, poor physical posture and general disregard for the signs that our bodies constantly send us. Besides the most obvious benefits associated with a physically active lifestyle, dance is a powerful tool for acquiring body awareness, and it is particularly true of contemporary dance and all dance genres. Over the years, contemporary dance has been associated with certified disciplines such as body-mind centering, the Feldenkrais method, the Alexander technique, somatic studies, Pilates and the more ancient disciplines of yoga and tai chi. The latter are not types of dances but they are some of the practices that have informed contemporary dance in recent times. I can provide some anecdotal evidence of the psychological benefits in building confidence, expressing personal emotions and mediating interaction

with others. These elements are particularly important for youth practice but they are relevant for us all. In my professional career, I have come across specific studies on these topic and I have direct experience and heard stories of how people's lives have been transformed by dance.

In terms of the importance of dance to society, dance is a shared identity that unites specific communities. Each type of step is a symbol that carries meaning. It is a way to express a particular shared identity and world view. This can be said as much for the aesthetics of ballet as for the types of step dancing that are related to different communities in Ireland. As mentioned by Ms Catherine Foley in her book, *Step Dancing in Ireland*, dance can express, shape and embody different notions of cultural identity: self, affinity groups, regional, national, global or imagined.

The importance of dance can also be discussed in the context of critical discourse and international exchange. As dance is part of a worldwide heritage, its practice allows people to connect with people in other countries and be part of a global community - one that is founded on beauty and ideas rather than blind profit and division.

In conclusion, I will give an overview of how funding by the Arts Council is distributed as part of the dance budget and I am open to questions on same. In 2019, €3.3 million has been allocated to dance. With this fund, we support 11 strategically funded organisations that are of core strategic and national importance. Crucially, this year almost €500,000 has been allocated through the arts grant funding scheme, which will support an additional three production companies, three independent dance artists and one resource organisation. This is important to the investment in dance. I wish to also stress the importance of independent dance practice pursued by artists working outside formal company structures. We support this practice throughout the country and across various genres by means of several projects and awards such as regional dance residencies, bursary awards, travel and training awards and a partnership for young emerging dance artists, entitled Step Up. It is important to note that we provide additional supports to dance through corporate programmes such as the touring and dissemination of work scheme and the festival events scheme. Further supports are provided from other teams' budgets such as traditional arts, young people, children and education, arts venues, arts participation and festivals.

Vice Chairman: I invite Ms Yurick to make her presentation on behalf of the Dance Theatre of Ireland. She will share time with her colleague, Mr. Connor.

Ms Loretta Yurick: I thank the committee for the invitation to appear before it. Mr. Connor and I have been professional dancers, choreographers, teachers and artistic directors for both Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre and the Dance Theatre of Ireland in the past 30 years. We are grateful to have been able to make more than 40 works and to create, perform and teach throughout Ireland, Europe, the USA and Korea. We are co-founders and former officers of Dance Ireland and will discuss some issues in that regard. It was set up to represent the needs of professional dancers and choreographers. We are founders of the Dublin Youth Dance Company, as well as the Dance Theatre of Ireland centre for dance in Dún Laoghaire, which is one of the first purpose-built centres for dance and which was opened by former President, Mary McAleese. More than 2,000 members of the public dance recreationally there, with participants from the age of three to 93. We run one of Ireland's largest educational outreach programmes in dance, which has introduced more than 80,000 adults and young people to modern dance. Most recently, in the past five years, we were co-founders of the Well-Dance for Seniors programme and are current finalists for the 2019 national lottery good causes award.

We wish to address the needs of professional dance and what can be done better in that

regard, as well as the importance of dance for health and well-being. Dance has a major contribution to make to culture, community and people. We are passionate about dance, but it is not a profession for the weak of heart. Training takes many years and is costly, the hours are very long and the work is demanding and highly competitive. Rates of pay are poor and contracts are short term. There is little security. That said, dance is one of the most powerful and vibrant art forms. It can move us in a way nothing else can and helps us remember things we need to remember. Dance matters because, through dance, we understand how we matter.

Mr. Robert Connor: There is funding for independent projects, resource organisations and dance production companies to create on a project basis, but they are all under-funded. What is missing in this landscape is sufficient money for dance companies to offer dancers sustained work on an ongoing basis. Why does this matter? The biggest problem facing dance is sustainability. The lack of sustainability means dance artists are not able to work consistently. Funding on a project-to-project basis provides valuable seed money, but sufficient funding for a number of production companies to employ dancers on longer contracts is needed. That would constitute investment in the growth and development of artists and dance.

To be a choreographer and make work, one must also be a producer, recruiter, administrator, grant writer, fund raiser and gig-booker. One must find and hire dancers and navigate the tax system or find an administrator willing to work short-term for little money. One must find a composer, a lighting designer and a costume and graphic designer and organise everything else to get the work onstage. Choreographers do all that at night and are in the studio during the day. Dancers and choreographers, whether small or large, need more money to employ dancers and to invest in full-time administrative resources.

Ms Loretta Yurick: The other issue we wish to raise with the committee is that dance, and contemporary dance in particular, is poised to make a significant contribution to social, physical and mental well-being for all. What would the members say if they were offered a prescription that would make them feel less pain, improve their balance, make it easier to meet people, feel less stiff, more fluid, think clearer, breathe deeper, sleep better, reach higher, smile more and be more confident, and without any side effects? That is what contemporary dance can do. We have developed an evidence-based programme that can be delivered by professional dance artists and that makes people feel good in themselves and is good for them. It is called Well-Dance for Seniors. It is a modern dance and music programme designed and developed specifically for older adults and those with Parkinson's disease or dementia. It addresses balance, fitness, mobility, cognitive functioning, memory and recall and, more important, it takes people into their own well of creativity.

Why dance and why now? Ireland's population is shifting to one with a much higher proportion of older people, with the proportion to double by 2031. There is a tsunami of age-related illness coming, including dementia, falls, cardiovascular disease and arthritis. Recent studies indicate 28% of all seniors are either clinically depressed or borderline, and of those, almost 50% have a low rate of engagement; their world has shrunk. We are living longer; the challenge is to live better.

Mr. Robert Connor: There is a social and economic imperative to find solutions. We spend €1.69 billion annually on dementia care, half of which expense is borne by families. A recent Canadian study found that if people increase their physical activity, it can offset a dementia diagnosis by two years, which would equate to a saving of €3.4 billion. Dance is recognised in international research, including in a two-year study by Dr. Deirdre Connolly, head of occupational therapy at Trinity College Dublin, as the most effective activity for offsetting and

delaying many age-related illnesses. People who dance frequently are 76% less likely to develop dementia. It also reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension and depression and benefits reaction times and cognitive performance.

Ms Loretta Yurick: We need more funding for dance and health and more sustained two and three-year funding, including full-time administration, for more dance production companies. However, the 2020 Arts Council allocation of just over €80 million is lower than the funding level in 2008. Dance accounts for a very small part of that allocation. Dance is one of the greatest celebrations of the human spirit. It has existed since the beginning of time as ritual, recreation and spectacle. As a theatre art, it communicates with a directness unlike anything else. It is worthy of increased funding and recognition.

Dr. Catherine Foley: I am joined by Ms Patricia Crosbie, another director of the board of Firkin Crane. As Isadora Duncan once said, “If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it.” I thank the committee for the invitation to address it on the importance of dance as a performance art and related matters. I have worked at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick for 23 years, designing and directing the first masters course in ethnochoreology at any university in Europe, and designing and directing the first masters course in dance performance focusing on Irish traditional dance at any university in the world. I am a founding director of the National Dance Archive of Ireland and founding chair of Dance Research Forum Ireland. I am the elected chair of the International Council for Traditional Music, ICTM, study group on ethnochoreology and an elected member of the ICTM executive board. My dance performance training and ethnochoreological research encompasses Irish dance, Irish music, archives and festivals, with particular focus on issues of dance performance, dance documentation, identity, community, cultural heritage and tourism. I address this meeting as a performer, an academic and, more recently, a director of the Firkin Crane.

Dance as a performance art has the potential to effect change, transcend ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries, challenge popular ideologies and bridge horizons of understanding between peoples of diverse cultures. Dance as a performance art has the power to transform, educate and challenge. The Firkin Crane places great importance on dance as a performance art. Historically, this is illustrated by the fact that since the 1980s, it has been home to two professional dance companies, the Irish Ballet Company and the Irish National Ballet, both under the artistic directorship of Joan Denise Moriarty. In the 1990s, the development officer, Mary Brady, made the Firkin Crane home to the Institute of Choreography and Dance, which placed a focus on choreographic research and dance performance. With this focus, new dance work was created which included Michael Keegan-Dolan’s 1997 work, “Sunday Lunch”, which was launched when he founded Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre at the Firkin Crane. Since 2006, the Firkin Crane has developed dance, dance audiences and dance initiatives in Cork under Paul McCarthy, the current CEO.

The Firkin Crane programme consists of four strands, namely, professional development and training; performance and production development; Cork city dance artists in residence at Firkin Crane; and youth and community dance. The Firkin Crane therefore has a continuing dance legacy which it aims to sustain and develop further. As well as providing access to advanced dance training and skills for dancers to pursue careers as professional dancers and to make and present new dance works, the Firkin Crane aspires to enable this training and knowledge to filter into the wider society. For example, the Firkin Crane is located in a poor area of Cork city where extracurricular dance tuition is financially out of reach for the majority. The

Firkin Crane is attempting to address this issue by engaging dance artists in local schools to provide opportunities for young people to dance and to assist in building further audiences for dance as a performance art. Moreover, with an ethos of inclusivity and diversity, the Firkin Crane engages with dancers of different abilities and disabilities across diverse ethnic, gender, age and class boundaries. Examples of these inclusive dance initiatives include the Firkin Crane's ReCreate partnership with the Cope Foundation's department of arts and creative arts therapies in 2019. This partnership aims to develop and pilot a range of performing arts based classes and leadership opportunities for marginalised adults at risk or unemployed who may wish to transition to employment in the performing arts sector. Accreditation with the education and training board is being sought. This follows an earlier partnership project with the Cope Foundation in 2015, which related to a training programme for carers and dance teachers with people with intellectual disabilities. Other examples include the older people in dance programme, which was developed between the Firkin Crane and the HSE. These collaborative and outreach programmes continue to be indicative of the ethos of inclusivity and diversity of the Firkin Crane.

The Firkin Crane aims to continue to develop as a centre of excellence in dance. It has a twin-track objective. First, it aims to provide advanced vocational training and creative opportunities for dancers to produce and present new dance work in order to pursue careers as professional dancers. Second, it aims to develop inclusive dance which engages the wider community. To realise these objectives, the Firkin Crane is undertaking a reorganisation of management structures, an independent expert review in consultation with the Arts Council of Ireland and the appointment of a new artistic director.

The Firkin Crane is fortunate in that it owns the historical Firkin Crane building on the north side of Cork city with dance studio spaces and a working theatre with a stage. It is one of the few dance facilities in Ireland where dance can be made, produced and presented. This is a valuable resource for aspiring and professional dancers and for audience development and engagement. To facilitate the development of an inclusive dance programme, however, the Firkin Crane is currently securing a lease on the Butter Market House building, another historical building next door to the Firkin Crane. This will also have a dedicated dance studio space. Continued investment will be required to maintain and sustain the Firkin Crane as a leading place for dance in Ireland.

On behalf of the Firkin Crane, I thank the committee for the opportunity to present today.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I thank the witnesses for appearing today and for their presentations. This has been very refreshing. The arts could teach politics so much, from the voice to the body. Working in politics, we tend to live in our heads. We have other ways of walking here. All the presentations took the philosophical view of dance as an artistic discipline that is necessary for us as human beings as we have become so sedentary. It is also important in light of the fact that Ireland is set to become the fattest nation in Europe in 2020.

I was also interested in what the witnesses had to say about our elders. I congratulate the witnesses on all the outreach and collaborative programmes which were mentioned. My own pathology kicks in here. I refer to concerns around dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and the emphasis on movement and keeping people alive, walking and moving. I do not think the Government has locked into that. I would like to ask all the witnesses a general question. When I finish they can chime in with their answers. Has any of the witnesses had a meeting with the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht?

My second question is for Dr. Foley, as well as the other witnesses. Does this come down to a lack of money? The Arts Council of Ireland does great work, but is dance at the end of the table with a many other things coming before it? It does not quite get the scraps but €3 million does not sound like much for either of these projects, although it is extremely well used. Has there been insufficient projection of what could happen, as Ms Webster said? Has this sector failed to highlight resources that have been given to it and have actually worked?

Is it also the case that the witnesses have not spoken loudly enough about elders when talking to the Department of Health? We only think of dance in connection with the Arts Council. We do not connect it with social welfare, Tusla, education and the HSE. Some collaborations were mentioned. Do we not talk about those collaborations or is nobody listening? Apart from the development of artists trying to live and work as dancers, form contemporary companies and promote dance in the same way as oral theatre, these collaborations are the most defined issue I have heard about here. They are the most educationally and physically useful aspect. The organisations represented here have done extraordinary work there.

My questions are general. What can we do? Does the Arts Council simply lack facilities because it does not get enough money, or does it not make the right decisions? I am not playing a blame game. I am just trying to find out. Since dance is one of the most important areas and disciplines in our lives, can we not prioritise it accordingly? The witnesses are all doing this in their own way. What are we not listening to?

I have asked very general questions rather than specific ones because all of the witnesses have made extraordinary and well-researched contributions. The collaborations are really something else. I congratulate the representatives of the Firkin Crane on the new directorship. They said in their-----

Dr. Catherine Foley: I am a director on the Firkin Crane board, as is Ms Crosbie.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: Is it looking for a new director?

Dr. Catherine Foley: That is news to me.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: An artistic director?

Dr. Catherine Foley: We are trying to get a new artistic director.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: It might be Dr. Foley. Anyway, those are my general questions.

Vice Chairman: I thank Senator O'Donnell. I will take questions from Senator Warfield and then the witnesses might answer the questions.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank the witnesses for their contributions. They were informative and interesting. This is not an art form I know much about. I am a musician. Will the witnesses detail what areas of the art form are most popular among younger people and various age groups? Irish music is my area. I see sean-nós dancing is very popular. Some older neighbours of mine are learning it. Others include Irish dance and ballet. What are the popular areas of the art form at present? What is the Arts Council funding and how does it compare to other areas?

Ms Patricia Crosbie: My background is ballet. We say the word dance, which is a very small word but it covers everything. I was with Joan Denise Moriarty 900 years ago when Irish

National Ballet was founded and Firkin Crane was started. I feel like I have come full circle. In answer to the question of whether it is all about funding, much of it is and we are all in agreement on that.

Ms Loretta Yurick: Absolutely.

Ms Patricia Crosbie: We all have some wonderful ideas. Everybody who has spoken here has said much the same thing, whether about contemporary dance, Irish dance, ballet, hip hop or circus. It is all dance and, as I say, it is a five letter word but it encompasses a lot. I have come full circle, having started out in ballet. Through that, I have worked with the wonderful Dr. Foley on Irish dance. I teach ballet and contemporary dance to undergraduate and post-graduate dancers in the University of Limerick. It goes right across the board. We have started a youth ballet company in Cork which operates out of the Firkin Crane, which we started three years ago. I have worked in outreach programmes, including in Knocknaheeny in north Cork, bringing in dancers with talent who would be afraid to come into a building such as the Firkin Crane. It has become more a part of the community. Much is going on that is similar to that. In answer to the question about the programmes for older people, working with the HSE, I have taught beginners' ballet to adults and we all see and feel the benefits. I do not know what the answer is. Part of the reason we are all here is to get help and answers from the committee. I remember that we were still looking for funding in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. As Senator O'Donnell said, €3.5 million is not a huge amount.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Is the €3.5 million an Arts Council figure?

Ms Loretta Yurick: I have not met with the current Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht but I met the previous two Ministers because I have been in dance for that long. We have tried to continually meet with Ministers. I am not sure that any of us has met with the current Minister. I applaud what Ms Crosbie said. Much of it is about money. We get some money from the Arts Council and, from that money, we are expected to raise other money. We have about five other fundraising programmes. We go after agencies and put together piecemeal, in our spare time, the money for these wonderful outreach programmes. I am sure I am speaking for my colleagues. I came to this meeting from a class of 60 seniors. The work is full-time. We need leadership in the Government that says that dance has a power and is relevant today. The Government needs to support this because it is good for young people, for adults who are stressed and for seniors who are lonely, who may not have a husband or children any more, and are living alone. It brings people together communally and the things they are doing are diverse. I am sorry I have not met with the current Minister, especially because she is originally from Dún Laoghaire. There are only so many hours in a day. We are all trying to get funding.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: The Arts Council obviously knows all these arguments. Has it made this case?

Mr. Davide Terlingo: I should clarify my role in the Arts Council. I work as a head of team. My work is specific and I would not necessarily interact with the Minister. The level of funding for dance is a conversation to have with senior management because I do not participate in the decision of how to divide funding across the artforms. I can talk about general dance policy within the Arts Council and how it compares to other countries. Perhaps it is a matter to write to the council about.

Ms Liz Meaney: To answer the Senator's question, the budget for dance is €3.3 million. That is the Arts Council's annual allocation for 2019. There are many other budgets through

which dance is supported, such as arts centre. Virtually every arts centre in the country has dance programmes. We recently saw extraordinary work by Irish choreographers working in collaboration with other artforms. An example would be Emma Martin, who recently worked as a choreographer with the Irish National Opera. All of the direct expenditure on dance is not reflected in that €3.3 million. I do not have the full breakdown of the allocation across the arts teams to hand. I can give some figures off the top of my head. The budget for arts centres last year was €5.6 million. The budget for festivals and events, of which a number are specifically dance festivals, was approximately €2.8 million. The budget for music is approximately €4.6 million. There is a variety of budgets.

I concur that the quality and strength of dance practice in Ireland at present is very strong, especially for a country of this size. Dance companies such as Teac Damsa, CoisCéim and the resource organisations here today do work with an impact on our audiences. We estimate that there were as many as 20,000 engagements between the public and dance across the country in 2019. There is real strength and I think that will absolutely benefit from further investment. I would equally make the case that other art forms would benefit from additional investment. It is our role as the Government's agency to shepherd and support to ensure that we are investing as far forward as we can. Ms Webster spoke about the benefit of advance planning. We would like to do that more to give companies their money two to three years in advance so that they can create these international collaborations and partnerships that will lead to our dancers or artists taking their work around the world and bringing it back here.

Senator Fintan Warfield: The Arts Council probably gets applications for and can gauge the popularity of varying forms of dance based on the applications.

Ms Liz Meaney: We support various genres of dance. The dance budget is predominantly for resource organisations and professional dance companies. We also support traditional dance through our traditional arts budget. We support youth dance through our young people and children in education in budget. Young people are a critical priority for the Arts Council. We have a programme called Creative Schools where we have creative associate artists working in 300 schools across the country. Many are dancers. They are bringing those school children out into dance settings as well engaging with them, so they will have lived life as cultural citizens, where dance and the arts have meaning in their lives. All those different engagements are very important and are funded in a number of different ways.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Does Ms Meaney believe it is time we enabled young people, perhaps through their guardians as the legal agent in their application, to receive funding from the Arts Council?

Ms Liz Meaney: There are some schemes where they can receive funding. There is a scheme called Young Ensembles, where groups of young people can come together and make an application to us for support. I absolutely agree that it is something we need to do more of. There is a very good programme run by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which enables the voice of the child in decision-making. This is something we have rolled out in those 300 Creative Schools, so that young people are making the decisions about what they are engaging with and how they are engaging, and what the cultural programming is. We need to do more and more of that to enable their enfranchisement as cultural citizens.

Vice Chairman: I call Deputy Niamh Smith. I ask her to bear in mind that Ms Webster will be leaving in 15 minutes, so if she has any questions for her, she might wish to direct them to her first.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: At the beginning of her presentation, Ms Webster mentioned an organisation we did not invite in and that she is disappointed it is not here. What organisation is that?

Ms Bridget Webster: It is Dance Ireland, which is the representative body for the people who make dance, encompassing production companies and individual artists.

On the last point, I agree with what was said about the work for young people. We were very lucky with Francis Footwork and to be involved in the children's council programme that is run through The Ark, where children have an input as to how work is created. We also have our participation activity project which called Broadreach. It accesses around 5,000 people a year from primary schools to older people. We have many projects for people aged 50 plus who collaborate with Age and Opportunity in the Bealtaine Festival. We run a number of different projects with Dublin City Council.

To return to the points made by everyone, the core thing is that everyone agrees the pot is not big enough, but that is the pot. How does one use those resources most effectively to be able to deliver what one can with the capacity one has? In our experience, it is about collaboration. If one has time, one has the possibility to move outside one's own box, to work with the Department of Health and with national and international agencies to access other strands of funding and develop those projects that can embed creative capacity in a meaningful way. That is how we would look at it.

I totally echo what Ms Yurick said about dance and health and the immediate benefits one sees when working with older people. This is exactly the same with younger people and children. With "The Wolf and Peter", we worked together with the St. Patrick's College, now DCU Institute of Education, where we were in residence for three years, to develop a digital resource for educators that is freely available on the arts and education portal. It includes four lesson plans for educators to use in their own schools. This is a series of workshop programmes for children aged six to ten. We will develop a new one in tandem with Francis Footwork. It is about slowly but surely building capacity at every angle, so that people grow up with dance in their lives in a more effective way.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I understand Dance Ireland has sent in a submission. I hope we can invite it in another time. We do not want to exclude anybody.

Ms Bridget Webster: That is brilliant. I thank the committee.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I attended the University of Limerick and did a postgraduate course on dance education under Teresa Leahy on dance education so I am curious to know from the three organisations - CoicCéim, the Dance Theatre of Ireland and Firkin Crane - what engagement they have had so far with Creative Ireland?

Ms Bridget Webster: None.

Mr. Robert Connor: We had two projects through the local authority, which offered Creative Ireland bursaries. One permitted us to do a short project of some taster classes with older people in three different areas of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. In a follow-up to that, we have been able to do a six-month project in two of those locations. We have been able to engage with other communities outside of where our own centre for dance is.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: To narrow that down, the Dance Theatre of Ireland has done two

projects through Creative Ireland.

Mr. Robert Connor: Yes, two.

Ms Loretta Yurick: What about the primary care takers? We were also involved in Healthy Ireland. I think Senator O'Donnell is on to something there. I wrote the articles and memorandum for Dance Ireland and I am trying to represent professional dancers. I am also speaking about dance being poised to have a huge impact creatively and health-wise in Ireland, for obesity, for young people, and for older people. The Arts Council is funding professional dance and many research organisations and outreach programmes. I make applications to the HSE, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, the Arts Council, the Ireland Fund, Bealtaine and to lots of things. We need a vanguard and we look to Government because Creative Ireland and Healthy Ireland seem to be a place where the impact of dance could be felt on a very large scale. Dance is always with music. Music is an incredible part of the power of what we deliver.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Can I stop Ms Webster there because I want to get a sense of where we are with Creative Ireland? Has Firkin Crane any engagement with Creative Ireland?

Dr. Catherine Foley: Not that I know of.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: What about CoisCéim?

Ms Bridget Webster: We are funded through Dublin City Council by Creative Ireland, beginning with the first series of Cruinniú na nÓg, with a project that was called Off the Walls, for people aged 50 plus. This was an inter-generational project which brought young people together with people aged 50 plus in the LAB Gallery.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Has Firkin Crane or CoisCéim had any engagement with Creative Schools?

Ms Bridget Webster: We applied, but there has been no engagement.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: There is a higher implementation group, and its role and remit is where the Department of Cultural, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Education and Skills come together to see how we can best implement arts policy, which would include the visual, performing and literary arts. Are any of the organisations involved with that higher implementation group?

Ms Loretta Yurick: What is the name of the group?

Deputy Niamh Smyth: The higher implementation group.

Ms Loretta Yurick: No.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: To my knowledge, Kildare County Council is a good example of where the local authority rolls out regular education. It does the Laban Guild Dance, which is the dance format, style or genre it works with. There is a greater opportunity through our schools to roll out dance. Dance should be like music or art. One has a music class. There should be a dance teacher in every school, particularly in light of physical and mental health, where we are spending millions of euro on addressing those two issues. Access should be provided for pupils in secondary school. They do not experience dance unless it comes from the parents and they get the opportunity to do these extracurricular activities or go to fee-paying classes. The problem for artists is the short contracts. They have to make a living but they have

no security, healthcare, or continuity in their job, which is awful.

In regard to where funding and Arts Council funding is going and the application form for the Arts Council, do the organisations believe there is a shift away from dance companies, as such? Are we moving towards individual dancers, to which there is merit? What happens to the dance companies? They may be more encompassing of professional dancers. I refer to delivering to more than just individuals. Perhaps I am wrong. I get a sense from the dance community that there is a shift happening. We need to be made aware of that and we need to know whether it is the right or wrong shift.

Do the delegates agree with delivery through schools?

Dr. Catherine Foley: I agree totally with the Deputy. Firkin Crane has engaged with schools. It has brought dance teachers to schools and schools to the Firkin Crane. Firkin Crane was engaged in a poor area of Cork city where the children could not afford to have private classes or go to contemporary dance or ballet classes. This relates to the educational system. I agree that dance should be taught to all children in primary school. There is music up to leaving certificate level in secondary school. Dance, however, is not on the curriculum.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I understand it is part of physical education, PE, which is madness.

Dr. Catherine Foley: Dance is on the applied leaving certificate programme.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: When I went to UL, the vast majority were PE teachers. I came from a ballet background but there were very few dancers participating because of the PE teachers. It was a box-ticking exercise because those teachers had to deliver modules in dance.

Dr. Catherine Foley: That is because they were PE teachers. I mean no disrespect to PE teachers. They are marvellous and have been doing a great service by bringing dance to secondary schools. There are university programmes, such as the one in UL, and young people go to university to obtain degrees in dance but I would like these dancers to go back into the education system. I would like the Government to recognise dance in a serious way. I did a PhD in dance 30 years ago. It was the first in the world in Irish dance. I did it because I wondered why nobody was doing it. I knew it could be done. I did not do it because I believed it would result in anything afterwards but because I loved it and believed in it. I believe in it to this day. Dance is an extraordinary field. We have all talked around this table about the power of dance and how it crosses psychological and ideological divides. I refer to all the agendas beyond the physicality of the body, including tackling health issues. The power of dance is quite incredible but the Government needs to recognise that. It can happen within the education system. The Government needs to recognise dance as a serious school subject.

Years ago, perhaps in secondary school, I was told that if I was academic, I should do the sciences and that if I was not, I should do the softer subjects, such as music. I asked why that should be. I believe we are now changing but I would love to see dance in secondary schools. As with the music system, it is not a matter of ballet or contemporary dance but of all dance. Irish dancers, in particular, have rarely been included in this regard. When I was at university, doing a music degree, I was told during the Irish music module that I could play a bodhrán but that I would not be allowed to do an Irish dance. That was when I was 20. I believed there was something wrong when dance, as an intelligence, was not recognised.

Howard Gardner wrote a book called *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Dance is an intelligence. It upsets me to see it is not recognised as such. It is not given the

credit it deserves and it is not acknowledged for what it is. I believe strongly in dance and I want it everywhere. I want it to be an inclusive art and I want it in the educational system. I want to see an advancement of the technical training of professional dancers in Ireland because it is not just a matter of one or the other; it is a question of many facets in Ireland. Dance fulfils many functions.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: Papers are currently being written on changes people would like to be made to the leaving certificate curriculum. Dr. Foley might like to make a contribution in that regard.

Dr. Catherine Foley: I would love to make a contribution.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I believe Dr. Foley should. Having listened to her and the other panellists, who know the heartbeat of their art form, they need to start making the case for it to the relevant Ministers, including the Ministers responsible for social welfare, education and the arts. We can do it but the delegates are the purveyors of their own art form. They need to have a great voice.

I saw recently on an TED video professional dancers explain a concept in physics using dance. This indicates the intelligence of dance. It is said that if we could dance the idea of a war, we would never go to war.

Dr. Catherine Foley: That has happened in many societies around the world.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: The concept of atoms was shown brilliantly using dance. I agree completely that we are not training enough dance teachers to tentacle into schools. The witnesses need to be the powerhouse. They are the purveyors of their own art form. There is nobody better than them to stand up and talk about this at every available opportunity.

Dr. Catherine Foley: A former Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Mr. Jimmy Deenihan, persuaded me and helped me to get my book on Irish traditional step dancing in north Kerry, my PhD, published.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: He knew about Siamsa Tíre, at least.

Dr. Catherine Foley: Yes. He knew about his locality in north Kerry and the rest of Kerry. Since my work was based on a lot of research there, he was the person who pushed for, and supported, the publication of my book.

Ms Loretta Yurick: Reference was made to dance in schools. In the 1980s, a curriculum was developed in this regard. I was part of the Dance Council of Ireland. It was considered a first step towards a syllabus for primary school teachers through which to deliver dance in schools. Then there was a focus on secondary level, where the syllabus was to have modern dance for secondary school students, but the teachers were not dancers. There may be wonderful PE teachers but some may not be into dance. If we are to go into schools, we should speak the language and talk the talk. A trained dancer has a big toolbox. We know contemporary dance and ballet. We have done a little hip-hop. One gets the students with the hip-hop in the schools and then develops their creativity and choreography. There is a bigger blend of styles.

We were asked whether there has been a shift away from companies. There was definitely a shift at the time of the recession. Many companies suffered cutbacks. The budget shrank and the strategy was then to spread out all the funding. I came out of a milieu in which funding was

guaranteed for three years. One knew exactly what one had. We were able to deliver a beautiful centre for dance in the three years. Three parties, including the county council and the developer, were put together to do that. It is still open and thriving. We could not have done this had we not known that we had funding for three years. We had two or three productions per year.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: What way does funding work now?

Ms Loretta Yurick: We are no longer funded in dance but in arts participation. Once a year, we apply for funding for two years, but this year we got it for one year. The Arts Council has, just in the past couple of years, begun to offer more two-year funding for companies. Many companies were subject to cutbacks. CoisCéim and a few other companies were left, and some newer companies are coming up. They are operating on a project-to-project basis. Dance Ireland, a resource organisation, tries to nurture and offer opportunities for the creation of work. We are all collaborative. Dance is collaborative. We are working with musicians, designers, visual artists and poets. The work is across the board. This is not new and has been going on since the beginning of time. It is all collaborative. How does one sustain this work? I take on board what was said in that we need champions. Dance Ireland is supposed to be the voice with the Government. I am sure it is trying.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: Trying hard.

Ms Loretta Yurick: I am sure it is trying. Out of everything we put together, we still get a small portion for dance from the Arts Council and HSE. It is about strategy. If this art is to be imbibed by many people, we need a concrete strategy and priority around it.

Ms Liz Meaney: The Arts Council customarily makes input into policy and curriculum development in the Department of Education and Skills. We are in the process of developing a submission to the next round for the curriculum, which customarily will call upon the various heads of team and their expertise to inform it. We will develop a new dance policy for the Arts Council in the coming year as well, which will examine our strategy within dance, on which we will consult widely with the sector.

As mentioned, we are in a phase of rebuilding the ecology and strengthening the infrastructure, so we are again offering multi-annual funding through a number of different strands, including strategic funding, which is our core funding of the critical infrastructure, and arts grants funding. An example of a recently arts grants funded organisation would be Luke Murphy Dance based in Cork, which is associated with the Firkin Crane, which is a production company that receives arts grants funding and creates work and employment for artists. It is funded for a series of programmes over a number of years. We are beginning to take that approach again.

On Creative Schools, the programme is in 300 schools across the country. There are a number of different types of creative practitioners, including architects, dancers, musicians and opera singers, such as Sharon Carty.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I appreciate the council tries to cover all art forms but I would like to know the number for dance artists?

Ms Liz Meaney: I do not have that information to hand. Rather than give a number that is incorrect, I will follow up with the committee with the correct number. I know there are a number of dancers but I cannot give an exact number. It is challenging for us because we are trying to work across the range of artistic disciplines to ensure there is representation of each. The schools are beginning to engage again with their local cultural infrastructure. Some schools

will choose to engage mainly in dance and others will choose other art forms. I agree that it is important that all are represented.

One of the real strengths for us from the Creative Schools project is the partnership between the Arts Council and the Department of Education and Skills. This means that artists are being given time in school hours, supported by teachers, to deliver a programme of work. Creative Schools strategies for those schools are being directed by children and young people. Heretofore, we have not been able to do that. It is wonderful to see progression in this way. All of the work that will manifest itself, whether those involved are dancers, audiences or people who will participate in the arts throughout their lives, will come from that. This is a programme we very much want to strengthen and develop further.

Ms Patricia Crosbie: In regard to the professional stream, I agree on the need for engagement with schools. I have done it. We have awarded some children scholarships to work with Cork City Ballet, two of whom ended up dancing on the Cork Opera House stage, which in their wildest dreams they never thought they would do. One of them said to me that she never thought she would walk inside the door of the Firkin Crane building let alone the Opera House. Engagement does happen and it works but we need help. This meeting provides us with the opportunity to get that help.

In regard to professional dancers, as in the case of so many other artists, it is a really hard profession.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: Having worked in the arts all my life, but mainly in the vocal arts, aurality of literature, poetry and so on, I know that life in the arts is an uphill struggle.. The Government recently reversed the decision to bring history back as a core subject, having previously made the decision to make it a discrete subject. We sometimes think we are moving on when we are actually moving 40 ft backwards. The Government announced its decision and congratulated itself on doing so even though it had made the initial decision to get rid of the subject.

In regard to the leaving certificate examination, we give 25 additional points for passing higher level mathematics but we do not the same for the visual arts or music, which along with dance is a great artistic healer, such that one wonders what kind of education system we believe is good. That is a general point. The other point is that we now use the term “culture and heritage” to describe art. We no longer refer to literature, dance, drama, oracy, literacy and visual art. We now refer to culture. It is akin to a Tescoisation of what we are because we are afraid to refer to creative Ireland, the Arts Council and culture. There is also increasing competition in this area. Rather than leave the Arts Council to what it was doing, we now have the Creative Ireland Programme and its funding, with applicants now having to navigate their way through various funding streams.

The witnesses are here for good reason. This is the committee tasked with cultural affairs. We can engage on their behalf internally but they need to be as powerful about what they want as they were in their presentations. They are practitioners of their art form. Many of the people who appear at this committee are academics living in their heads, which I gave up at 60 because it does not work. As practitioners of their art form, the witnesses need to demand meetings with Ministers rather than the tentacles of their offices. They should co-ordinate and bring together a common narrative such that they are not all around the houses like a wasp trying to find secure funding.

Ms Loretta Yurick: One of our outreach programmes was called, Nature Moves. Through that programme, we worked in schools for a long time. In a number of primary schools we worked with environmentalists and brought the children outside and highlighted their senses. We then went back into the studio and we worked with them on creating a dance that was inspired by nature. There is no lack of ideas in terms of how professional dancers can express inspiration, movement and creativity. We have spoken a great deal about dance. Tapping the creativity of each individual within our art form is something I feel very passionate about. I have seen it happen. It is amazing when one turns that key and it affects everybody's life.

We have been approached by various organisations to train volunteers to do what we do. I am challenged by this idea because we are successful on the basis that we are professionals who have a history of making work and touring work. Someone who does not have that tool box cannot do that.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: There is a lack of expertise.

Ms Loretta Yurick: People want to do this but there is not enough to pay the people who could do it. I wish I could say it is not just about money.

Dr. Catherine Foley: It is all about funding.

Vice Chairman: We must bring our discussion on this matter to a conclusion. I thank our guests for their engagement with the committee today. It has been a very informative meeting.

The joint committee adjourned at 3 p.m. until 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 November 2019.