



GSA GAIETY
SCHOOL
OF ACTING

The National Theatre School of Ireland

**DRAMAMATIC
EVOLUTION**

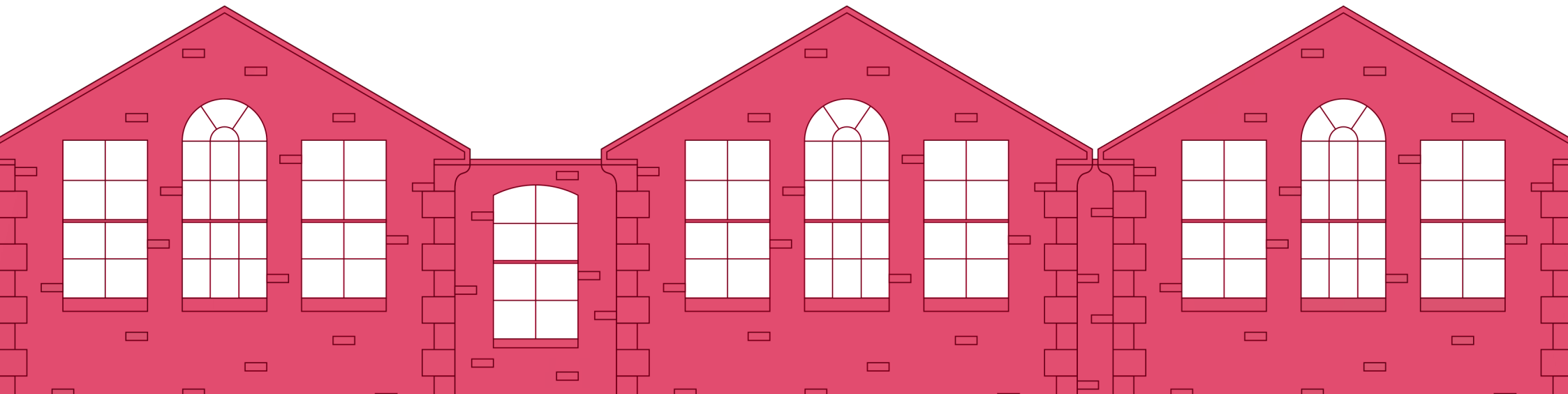
2024 - 2029

Our mission is to provide training in the dramatic arts up to the highest level, empowering people of all ages and stages, cultures and backgrounds, to lift their horizons, discover their artistry, and go beyond what they thought was possible.

**WE ARE AN INCLUSIVE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY OF PLAYERS.**

**WE BELIEVE IN THE TRANSFORMATIONAL
POWER OF STORIES.**

**WE LEARN FROM THE PAST, GIVE TO THE
PRESENT, AND SHAPE THE FUTURE.**





Chairman's Statement

Mark Byrne, Chairman of the Board

The Gaiety School of Acting will soon be celebrating its 40th anniversary and this will be an opportunity to reflect and celebrate our wonderful heritage and contribution to Ireland's culture. Last year the board undertook to produce a new 5 year strategy and commissioned Jane Daly to draft a wide ranging report on the activities of the school and interviewed staff, students, board members, alumni and stakeholders. I would personally like to thank all those who contributed to this report.

Patrick Sutton who led the school for almost 30 years retired last year. Patrick leaves an indelible legacy on the school with which he has been synonymous for so long. When Joe Dowling established the school in 1986, it was the only full time actor training course in the country. Now there is a wider training ecology, and the end of Patrick's tenure is the ideal opportunity to see how far we've come, explore where we might go next, and reassert our uniqueness.

Our first challenge was to recruit a new director and, in February 2024, the board was delighted to welcome Will Wollen who brings incredible energy and experience to the role. Another challenge we recognise is to increase the diversity of our student populace. Undoubtedly the financial cost of attending the school is a barrier so we have already started establishing a number of bursaries to go some way to address that issue. More needs to be done and this is one of the key focuses in my time as chair.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow board members for giving freely of their time to provide wonderful counsel and support for the school and the executive team.



Introduction

Will Wollen, Director & CEO

I am proud to present this strategic document, which outlines our vision for the future and the path we will take to continue leading as Ireland's premier acting school. For nearly four decades, we have nurtured the creative potential of students, providing world-class training and producing some of the finest actors in theatre, film, and television.

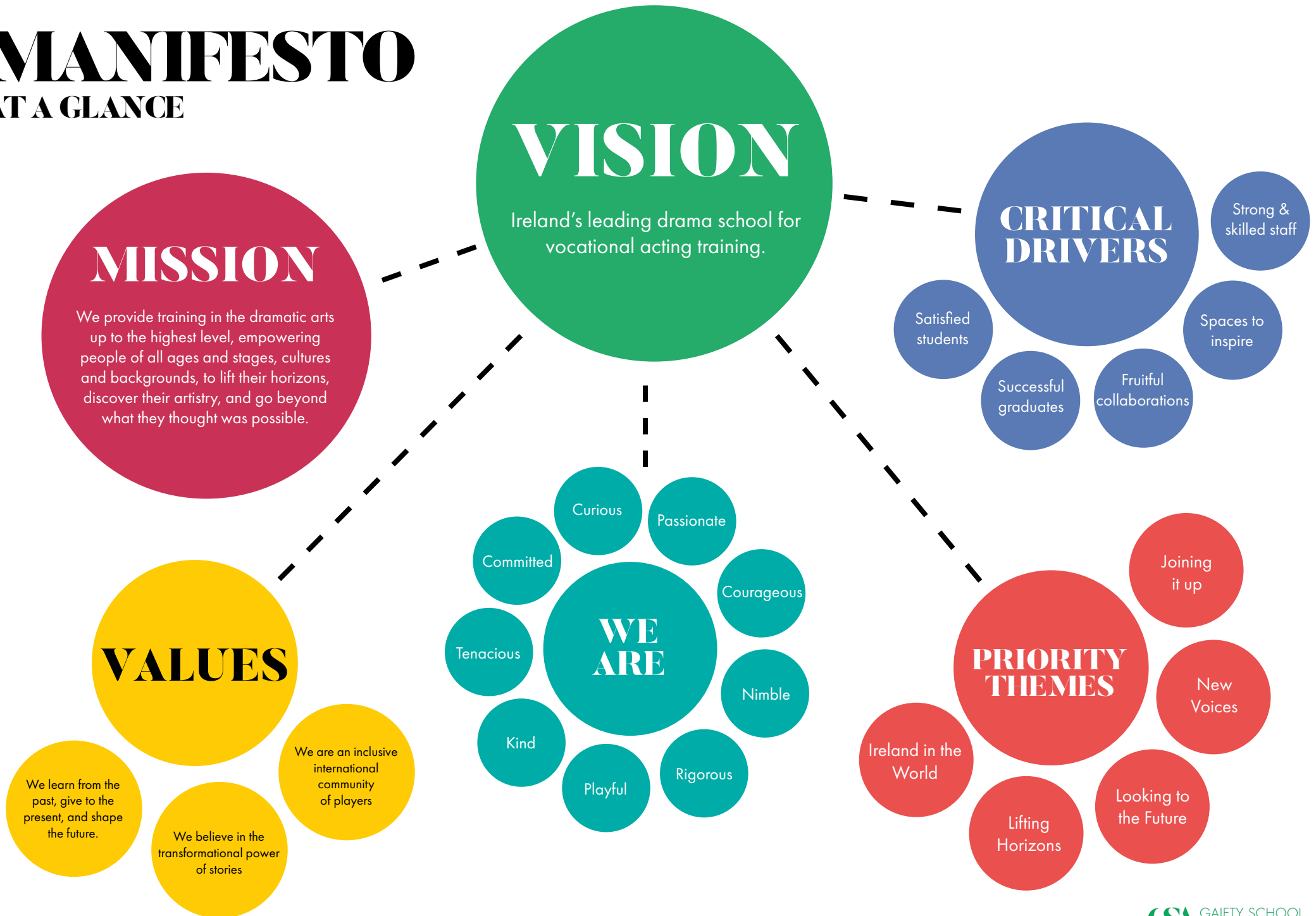
This 5-year strategy reaffirms our commitment to excellence, inclusivity, and innovation, while also addressing the changing needs of the stage, screen and audio industries and the broader creative ecology.

The themes outlined in this document are designed to build on the strong foundation laid by previous directors Joe Dowling and Patrick Sutton, ensuring that we are at the forefront of arts education on the island of Ireland and to develop our international reach.

We will continue to evolve our curriculum, foster collaborations with industry partners, and invest in the personal and professional growth of our students at every level. By doing so, we not only aim to inspire the next generation of actors but also to enrich the cultural fabric of our society.

MANIFESTO

AT A GLANCE



NEEDS & CHALLENGES

A SECURE HOME

The Gaiety School of Acting ("the GSA") needs to grow to meet the challenges of the next forty years. Its home in Temple Bar has only 4 studios, which will not meet the need of an expanded student population and it has no TV, film or audio studios of its own. The replacement of Smock Alley Theatre with Dublin Municipal Theatre means that we will be looking for new premises for the medium and longer term.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

There is a notable gap in the diversity of our student body, particularly on the Full-Time and Young Gaiety programmes. Despite our success, we have not kept pace with Ireland's changing demographic landscape. According to the 2022 census, 77% of the population identified as White Irish, leaving a significant portion of society unrepresented at the GSA. This gap is not one of interest or aspiration, but of access. This is a challenge we can solve. Our strategy sets targets to broaden diversity by 2028, establishing both policy and practical actions to ensure that the GSA truly reflects the Ireland of today.

TEACHING

In service training and development opportunities for our tutors need updating. In the past, tutors have crafted their own course content, and while this allows flexibility and innovation, it leads to inconsistency in the student experience. By investing in the professional development of outstanding in-house tutors, we can create a more cohesive and stable learning environment, enhanced by expertise from external practitioners. Greater internal connectivity will strengthen our courses, enhance student experience, and increase tutor engagement.

MODERNISATION

To thrive in today's entertainment landscape, our actors must be skilled across a broad spectrum of media, from television and screen to animation and gaming. GSA will equip our students for this reality. Our curriculum is getting a forward-thinking overhaul, embracing trends and technologies that are now integral to both stage and screen. It is essential that we raise our standards to match the best in the world, updating our facilities and ensuring our teaching staff are fully prepared to work with the latest technology.



NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REACH

Despite being the National Theatre School of Ireland, our focus remains largely on Dublin and Ireland, limiting our broader influence. While we've had success with Erasmus+ programmes like IStem (2020-23), there is more we can do. We have enjoyed long-standing partnerships with US universities such as those in Montana, Illinois, and Minnesota, but there is significant untapped potential to establish deeper and more formal relationships with key institutions in Europe, the US and beyond. Expanding our national and international reach will be crucial to maintaining our status as a leader in the field of actor training.

7 KEY AIMS

1 Enhanced Curriculum Innovation, Teaching Excellence, Student Satisfaction and Graduate Outcomes

2 Upgrading Facilities and Technological Resources

3 Increased National and International Presence

4 Foster Diversity and Inclusion

5 Develop Industry Partnerships and Alumni Network

6 Ensure Long-term Financial Stability and Growth

7 Ensure Strong Governance, Management and Staffing



STRATEGIC THEMES

Our 5 Strategic Themes provide us with a framework for decision-making across the next five years. At every stage we will examine our activity to make sure that it contributes to at least two of these key areas.



IRELAND IN THE WORLD

Our focus is on elevating the School globally and showcasing Irish talent. Over the next five years, we'll build strong international partnerships, enabling students and alumni to display their work and collaborate with global artists through exchanges, joint projects, and showcases.

We aim to both send students into the world and bring the world to them. Inviting leading international practitioners for workshops and residencies will give students unparalleled learning opportunities.

Additionally, we'll develop credit-bearing courses to attract international students, leveraging Ireland's unique position as a cultural bridge between Europe, the US, and its distinct literary heritage.

Our curriculum will evolve to reflect this global vision, introducing classes on international theatre practices and intercultural performance alongside the Irish canon. We also plan to offer new study abroad opportunities, ensuring our graduates are globally equipped while rooted in a rich oral teaching tradition.



NEW VOICES

Our five-year strategy emphasises nurturing and amplifying fresh, diverse talent in stage and screen arts. We aim to create an inclusive training environment where emerging artists feel empowered to share their stories. Through targeted scholarships, outreach, and collaborations with community partners, we'll spotlight underrepresented voices, bringing a broader range of perspectives to enrich both the School and the industry.

The New Voices initiative also drives curriculum innovation. We'll explore diverse storytelling forms, blending cultural traditions with contemporary social issues. Our graduates will be versatile, forward-thinking artists, telling new stories that reflect their world today. By creating pathways for new voices, the Gaiety School of Acting becomes a launchpad for empowered citizens and fresh, relevant, and impactful work.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We are committed to keeping the School at the forefront of the performing arts. As technology reshapes the industry, we will integrate advanced screen technologies—like motion capture, virtual production, and digital storytelling—into our curriculum. Collaborating with industry partners, we'll equip students with skills to thrive in a world where live performance and digital innovation intersect, blending these tools with a solid grounding in classical techniques.

Central to this vision is establishing a new state-of-the-art home for the School. This facility will support both live and digital production with modern studios and workshops, meeting the needs of our growing student body while fostering innovation. By securing and investing in a permanent home, we strengthen the School's future as a leader in world-class performance training, ready to evolve alongside a rapidly changing industry.

LIFTING HORIZONS

The Lifting Horizons theme aims to inspire individuals across Ireland to see creative careers as both valuable and achievable. Through outreach, workshops, and collaborations with schools and community groups, we will highlight the arts as a viable career path. We seek to offer opportunities to those who may not have considered creative industries, encouraging discovery of new talents and perspectives. This initiative fosters awareness, mentorship, and a supportive environment where future creatives feel empowered to take risks and innovate.

Additionally, Lifting Horizons anticipates excellence in our graduate outcomes. We're committed to equipping students with the skills, networks, and career support necessary to thrive in a competitive industry. By continuously updating our curriculum and fostering connections with industry leaders, we aim to ensure our graduates excel in stage, screen, and leadership roles. We will help build a stronger future for the creative arts in Ireland and beyond.





JOINING IT UP

The Joining it Up theme focuses on strengthening connections within the Gaiety School of Acting, the wider community, and across disciplines. By building collaborations with institutions, industry partners, and arts organizations, we'll create an integrated ecosystem that provides students with real-world professional opportunities, exposure, and networks essential for their future careers. This approach not only enriches learning but solidifies the School's position as a central hub in Ireland's artistic landscape.

Internally, we'll break down barriers between disciplines to encourage interdisciplinary learning, inspired by our Manifesto strand. By highlighting connections across acting, writing, directing, and devising, we're fostering a creative, adaptable approach that prepares students for diverse careers in the arts.

Joining it Up also reflects our commitment to excellence in actor training across all levels. By developing clear pathways from youth education to our flagship training programs, we'll guide aspiring actors through every stage of their journey, ensuring talent is nurtured and developed at all levels. This holistic approach strengthens the overall training experience and prepares students to thrive in an ever-evolving industry.

CRITICAL DRIVERS

STRONG & SKILLED STAFF

- Positive action recruitment strategy
- Family-friendly working
- Staff well-being programme
- Enhanced staff development

SATISFIED STUDENTS

- Strong student rep system
- Closed-loop feedback
- Diversity celebration calendar
- Revitalised curriculum

SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES

- Industry opportunities
- Alumni networking
- Internationalised curriculum
- US & UK showcase opportunities

SPACES TO INSPIRE

- A long-term home
- Upgraded facilities
- Securing mid-term space to allow growth

FRUITFUL COLLABORATIONS

- New Tech partnerships
- Develop new connections to work with areas of lower engagement and underrepresented groups
- Regional pipeline projects to discover new talent

GSA 2029...

- ACCREDITED COURSES INCLUDING NEW BA AND POSTGRADUATE COURSES IN PROFESSIONAL ACTING
- REVISED CURRICULA AT ALL LEVELS
- PERMANENT HOME
- FULL TECHNICAL UPGRADE
- INTERNATIONAL SHOWCASES
- INTERNATIONAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIP
- STUDENT MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES
- ERASMUS+ ACCREDITATION
- 4 REGIONAL PIPELINE PROJECTS
- 10 BURSARIES EACH YEAR
- 3-4 KEY INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS