

ROUGH

MAGIC

STRATEGY 2023-25

CONTENTS

Introduction: Resilience, Regeneration and Plays	3
Who We Are	4
Where We Are Now	6
Where We Go Next	8
Our Vision and Mission	10
Our Values	11
Objective 1: Art and Excellence	14
Objective 2: Audiences	16
Objective 3: Artists, Colleagues and Collaborators	18
Objective 4: Funding and Development	20
Objective 5: Legacy and Sustainability	22
Conclusion	23
Production History	24

RESILIENCE, REGENERATION AND PLAYS

“Rough Magic has an incredible track record for producing much loved classics from the canon but also all that is new and exciting in Contemporary European. What they have done for nearly forty years is staggering and has extended and deepened the cultural landscape and educated a whole new generation of Theatre Makers. Rough Magic is the hottest ticket in town”

Marina Carr, playwright

Rough Magic’s next chapter is designed to embrace and celebrate the foundational values of theatre.

We are a collective organisation, based on democratic participation and active audience engagement. Our commitment is to the unique civic and political value of theatre as a beacon of resistance, resilience and regeneration.

Against a backdrop of global economic uncertainty, climate anxiety and political instability, our strategy will focus Rough Magic’s resources on producing a powerful new body of work designed to engage and entertain audiences in the coming years. From both the best established and emerging voices in theatre-writing we will create a programme of new plays and adaptations addressing contemporary concerns; produced, designed, and delivered to the highest standards of excellence.

Increasing our reach, we will make this body of work available through a comprehensive touring and co-producing initiative, continued exploration of the opportunities provided by digital media presentations, and increased diversification of our audience engagement activities; including in 2024 the inaugural Rough Magic Assembly, in collaboration with Technological University Dublin – a two-day symposium on theatre and citizenship.

Throughout 2024 we will mark our 40th anniversary with a year-long programme celebrating the company’s legacy and achievements, while laying the foundations for its continued growth over the coming decades. An extension of our pioneering artist engagement programmes will see us redouble our commitment to incubate talent and support theatre makers nationwide.

Strategy 2023–25 represents an important milestone in the story of Rough Magic and articulates our belief that live performance expressing the human experience is needed now more than ever.



Owen Roe in *Melt*, 2017. Photo Credit: Ros Kavanagh

STRATEGY 2023-25:

WHO WE ARE

“When invited to work as an actor with Rough Magic, a spark ignites in your artistic soul and you know that the upcoming journey will be one of discovery, revelation and deep satisfaction. You are once again reminded of why you chose this path in the first place. A matchless company.”

Owen Roe, actor

Founded in Dublin in 1984, Rough Magic is a national, independent theatre company that delivers a comprehensive programme of new Irish writing, reimagined classics and contemporary international plays to audiences across Ireland and beyond. Our work is expansive, playful, and – whatever its form – focused on the moment.

Operating as an ensemble across the spectrum of scale and style, our programme offers fresh perspectives, engaging the audience with the qualities that define us: wit, subversion, intellectual rigour, and free artistic expression.

Guided by these core values Rough Magic has consolidated as a dynamic creative entity and a valued institution, with a portfolio of over 135 productions, including 69 Irish premieres. Our values are articulated in the way we work; and our commitment to equality of representation and diversity of expression.

The company has been a pioneer in mentoring and support. We believe in artist development, showcasing and platforming theatre makers at all stages of their career, prioritising trust in our colleagues and collaborators, supporting them to take artistic risks.

Over four decades Rough Magic has established a vital presence in Dublin and across Ireland. Our working model is based on strong relationships – with venue partners, co-producers, and co-presenters, nationally and internationally – reflecting the company’s resilience and adaptability.

Independent, artist-led, and inherently collaborative, Rough Magic exists at an unexpected angle to the mainstream, providing an anchor for independent artists, and rich theatrical experiences for audiences across the country and the world.



Aoibhéann McCann, Kieran Roche, Karen McCartney, Paul Mescal and Peter Corboy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2018. Photo Credit: Ste Murray

STRATEGY 2023-25:

WHERE WE ARE NOW

“Rough Magic has supported and facilitated my first steps in theatre in Ireland. I am an artist from India and have recently made Dublin my home. Working with them makes me hopeful and optimistic about my future in the arts in Ireland.”

Ankur Vikal, actor, writer and theatre-maker



Ankur Vikal and Rory Nolan in *The Tempest*, 2022. Photo Credit: Ros Kavanagh

In 2020, at a moment of suspension for the theatre sector, Rough Magic launched **COMPASS**, in an initiative to develop and produce an ambitious programme of new plays and adaptations by emerging and established writers, and in collaboration with key producing partners across the country, reach greater audiences and new destinations. As the name suggests, COMPASS is an instrument by which we can achieve our strategic aims.

Pandemic restrictions exposed the need for new kinds of infrastructure and support; for art to reach audiences and for artists to sustain livelihoods. **COMPASS** Stage 1 (2020–2022) addressed this by offering artists opportunities to generate new ideas, and support to enable the long-term development of new work.

Supported by the **Lackendarragh Bursary**, a significant donation from patron Seán Páircéir, Rough Magic launched a suite of new artist and play development programmes:

- **Commissions:** 8 new commissions awarded to writers, both emerging and established, to develop new plays with the company
- **Rough Ideas:** an open call for expressions of interest from writers and theatre-makers to begin a structured and funded conversation with the company about the possibilities for future projects and collaborations. This produced 207 responses, 8 of which were selected for further development
- **SEEDS** (Seek out–Encourage–Enable–Develop–Stage): a new iteration of Rough Magic’s highly regarded development programme for emerging artists, providing mentorship across all creative disciplines (including design, direction and producing) as well as opportunities for paid placements on Rough Magic productions. Since its launch in 2001, 55 artists have participated in the SEEDS programme; of these, 50% have been professionally employed directly by Rough Magic and 87% continue to work in the industry today
- **Rough Weekend:** a two-day showing of Rough Ideas works-in-development for audiences and industry partners, made in collaboration with – and showcasing – our SEEDS participants

Staying active, and in production throughout the Covid-19 crisis, Rough Magic maintained a positive health and safety culture within the company, providing opportunity and employment for artists and colleagues. Over the three pandemic years we produced six live shows (*Solar Bones*, *Glue*, *All The Angels*, *Rough Weekend*, *Tonic* and *The Tempest*), filmed three for presentation (*Hecuba*, *Glue* and *Solar Bones*) and streamed our first audio play (*Cleft*). During this time, and despite fluctuating theatre attendance restrictions, the company reached 16,564 audience members. In 2022, we crowned our partnership with Kilkenny Arts Festival with a production of *The Tempest* that played to 85% capacity

STRATEGY 2023-25:

WHERE WE GO NEXT

“Rough Magic is critical to the robust,
resounding heartbeat of Irish Theatre.”

Theatre Lovett, theatre company



Choy-Ping Clarke-Ng in *Rough Weekend*, 2022. Photo Credit: Jeda de Brí

COMPASS Stage 2 will be activated over the next 3 years. A programme comprising cohesive and expansive touring across Ireland and the creation of a new alliance of producing partners, will broaden our audience reach and consolidate our position as Ireland's most connected theatre company.

- **National Network Partners:** We have begun to establish a community of co-producers and co-presenters in major cities across Ireland. The first partnerships, with The Lime Tree | Belltable in Limerick, Theatre Royal in Waterford and The Everyman Theatre in Cork, have identified common priorities and will combine resources to produce work that is national in reach and embedded in local contexts. Initial works in development include the world premiere production of Erica Murray's *Anthropocene* with the Lime Tree in 2023, followed by an adaptation by Hilary Fannin of Gorky's *Children of the Sun* with the Theatre Royal in 2024, and a new project with the Everyman for 2025
- **Touring:** A key strategic component will be touring both at home and abroad, establishing a regular presence for Rough Magic across vital urban centres in Ireland, while extending our international reach through renewed relationships with festivals, venues and producers in the UK, US and France
- **Artist Support:** Continued artist engagement and mentoring with creative teams, dramaturgy, and production support; supported by the Lackendarragh Bursary

In 2024, Rough Magic will celebrate its fortieth anniversary with a year-long programme; marking four decades of original and ambitious work, acknowledging the loyalty and enthusiasm of our audiences, the skill and talent of our collaborators and colleagues – and saluting the resilience, energy, ambition and inventiveness of independent theatre.

COMPASS 2023-25 builds upon this significant legacy, consolidating Rough Magic's values and strengths while also creating a springboard for the company's future.



VISION

Artists and audiences; renewal and invention; wit and words.

MISSION

To be a national, independent theatre company driven by a passion to engage and excite audiences and support and develop artists, inspired by the endless possibilities of language and play, and committed to celebrating theatre's unique ability to unite and uplift; to entertain and renew.



Aislín McGuckin in *Hecuba*, 2019. Photo Credit: Ste Murray

VALUES

Independent and Collaborative

Unique in personality, generous in approach, connected across the sector

Artist-led and Audience-focused

A partnership between the creative ensemble and the engaged audience to celebrate the collective experience of live theatre

Constant and Regenerative

Using our core principles over four decades to respond to the moment and replenish both the company and the sector

Playful and Rigorous

Expansive and playful, taking our work seriously but not ourselves – combining a sense of purpose with an instinct for fun

STRATEGY 2023-25:

OBJECTIVES



“No company elevates the artist’s voice in the way that Rough Magic does. The environment is collaborative, challenging and playful, and creates long-lasting creative relationships with artists”

Simone Kirby, actor

1. ART AND EXCELLENCE

- Produce an ambitious and varied programme of new plays and adaptations, including at least 5 world premieres, in collaboration with producing partners across the country
- Provide all productions with the necessary resources and support systems, to deliver exceptional theatre of the highest standard
- Tour our productions annually, including - but not limited to - our National Network partners, and extend our reach to audiences in the UK and beyond
- With the aid of the Lackendarragh Bursary, support the delivery of our COMPASS commissions through workshops, dramaturgical support, and funding for research as required
- Remain open to support and co-production with independent artists and ideas; and along with our National Network co-presenters, to maintain a flexible approach to new makers, and a nimble response to emerging projects
- Curate and co-produce the inaugural Rough Magic Assembly, a two-day symposium on theatre and citizenship, in collaboration with Technological University Dublin, in 2024
- Provide two 18-month cycles of our artist development programme, SEEDS, each bringing 3-5 emerging artists into Rough Magic through apprenticeships and mentoring
- Plan a second round of our Rough Ideas open call for new ideas from writers and theatre-makers to engage in a structured and funded conversation with the company
- Present Rough Weekend 2 in 2025 - a 2 day showing of work in development to audiences and industry partners, co-curated with our SEEDS participants and building on our reputation as an industry leader

“The company’s record of reinvigorating classics, commissioning new work, and nurturing young writers, directors and performers was a revelation, channelling audacious talent, creative energy and inspirational resourcefulness. Rough Magic have carved out a special place in Irish cultural life and occupy it with inimitable panache.”

Professor Roy Foster, former board member

2. AUDIENCES

- Place audiences at the heart of all the decisions we make
- Respond to their needs through audience reaction surveys, attendance data reviews and an engaged social media presence
- Create a programme of additional public engagement events including dramaturgical workshops, post-show discussions with artists and creative teams, and targeted showings of work in development
- Investigate the potential for further reach using other media, including podcasts, audio plays, cinema event releases and digital download
- Devise and implement a comprehensive audience engagement survey to feed into the creation of a new Audience Development Plan by December 2023
- Embrace the opportunity provided by the variety and diversity of our programme to build new audiences and encourage repeat attendance from production to production. With a view to building initial audience targets to 70% capacity
- Activate a cohesive company narrative across our branding, digital platforms and promotional material, to raise the profile of the company and its work
- Play in accessible venues and provide audio-described or interpreted performance on a regular and ongoing basis
- Implement an effective response to changing audience concerns and needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the economic crisis

“Kilkenny found in Rough Magic the ideal festival collaborators—brave, dynamic, driven, with an absolute commitment to excellence. It is the kind of artistic partnership festivals dream of, with audiences and artists at the centre of all their thinking—Rough Magic delivers in spades.”

Olga Barry, Director of Kilkenny Arts Festival



Conor O'Riordan in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2018. Photo Credit: Ste Murray

3. ARTISTS, COLLEAGUES AND COLLABORATORS

- Attract and engage artists, technicians and core staff members of the highest calibre with the talent and experience required to ensure the company achieves its artistic ambitions and strategic goals
- Uphold our commitment to support artists and theatre workers, to create work of quality through the provision of industry-leading working conditions, remuneration, employment opportunities, and artist development programmes
- Foster meaningful, long-term relationships with co-producers nationally, starting with our National Network partners The Lime Tree | Belltable, Limerick; The Everyman Theatre, Cork; and Theatre Royal, Waterford
- Strengthen our core team to comprise three full-time positions – Artistic Director, Producer and General Manager; and two part-time positions – Associate Director and Literary Manager; to ensure the delivery of the ambitious programme 2023–25
- Provide training and upskilling opportunities for core staff members as needed
- Assess and respond to the impact and effectiveness of our newly developed artist engagement programmes: Rough Ideas, Rough Weekend and the most recent iteration of SEEDS
- Sustain our commitment to our Board-ratified employment policies regarding Recruitment, Diversity and Equal Opportunities, and Remuneration. These policies will be reviewed and assessed by the Governance Subcommittee every 3 years
- Enhance our relationship with our Board, empowering them to act as company ambassadors in support of the company’s values and ambitions
- Seek out and recruit new Board members to engage with the implementation of our Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy. This policy will be reviewed and assessed by the Governance Subcommittee every 3 years

“Working with Rough Magic has left an indelible impression on my work as an artist, and as a producer. They take care of every single artist involved in a process, and foster a collaborative and extremely inventive creative space that is just a joy to participate in. Their work doesn’t just light up the stage, it also invests in the Irish theatre community in real and vivid ways that resonate throughout the sector. Those core values, of creativity and community, are ever present in Rough Magic’s decision making process, and it helps the company set the bar for contemporary Irish theatre.”

Matt Torney, Artistic Director of Theatrical Outfit



4. FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Manage and maintain our existing sources of investment and explore new opportunities to diversify funding and improve the company's operational flexibility
- Nurture and grow our relationship with our core funder, The Arts Council | An Comhairle Ealaíon, with a view to increasing our annual public funding in line with our ambitious programming plans
- Seek out and nurture meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships with co-producers and presenters, with a view to combining resources
 - increasing productivity and value for money
- Pursue high-level sponsorship for our artist engagement programmes to continue the work of the Lackendarragh Bursary from 2024 onwards
- Engage our patrons with the company's ethos, activity and programme, as essential collaborators in the work we make
- Investigate the viability of hiring a part-time Development and Fundraising Officer to enhance the company's potential to attract individual and corporate patronage
- Commit, with the assistance of our Development Subcommittee, to increase our private donation income level by 12.5% by 2025
- Reinforce the company's financial resilience by maximising the effective use of the company's resources; working towards the allocation of a portion, not less than 4%, of our fundraising to reserves

“Rough Magic is a dedicated hardworking company, open to new developments but loyal to tradition”

Catherine Cashman Santoro, Rough Magic Patron

Patrick Martins and Peter Corboy in *Much Ado About Nothing*, 2019. Photo Credit: John D Kelly

5. LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Design and deliver a programme, celebrating our artists' achievement and our audience's loyalty to mark the company's fortieth anniversary in 2024
- In line with the company's long-standing practice of regeneration, work with our Board to devise and develop a Succession Plan to ensure we can meet Rough Magic's future leadership needs and deliver on the company's legacy for decades to come
- Formalise our approach to sustainable practices by devising a company-wide Green Strategy to be ratified in autumn 2023, committing to a mindful use of resources by maintaining our stores and making our inventory accessible for the sharing and reusing of set pieces, materials and costumes by our colleagues and peers
- Ratify a new Board Nominations Policy to assist in the delivery of a diverse, representative and robust board structure, and to review and assess the policy every 3 years

STRATEGY 2023-25:

CONCLUSION

Rough Magic will shortly be celebrating 40 years of production as a unique creative ecosystem, offering work that takes in 360 degrees of the human experience in live performance, crossing boundaries of geography and time to speak directly to the moment.

Active throughout the pandemic we have emerged from the stasis of COVID-19 with a renewed sense of momentum. We look forward to expanding the company's reach, and embrace the opportunities we see in the years to come.

Strategy 2023-25 was created collectively by the company's core team and under the guidance of our Board and Strategy Subcommittee. Rough Magic is extremely grateful to the artists, colleagues, funders, patrons and stakeholders who we consulted and who contributed such valuable insight and robust debate in the making of this document.



Rebecca O'Mara in *All the Angels*, 2021. Photo Credit: Patrick Redmond

PRODUCTION HISTORY

(NB excluding revivals and touring)

2022	Solar Bones	2015	Everything Between Us
2022	Hecuba – Film Version	2015	Famished Castle
2022	The Tempest	2015	Anna Bella Eema /Enjoy/Unspoken {SEEDS showcase}
2022	Rough Weekend		
2021	All the Angels	2014	How to Keep an Alien
2021	Glue		
2021	Tonic	2013	The Critic
		2013	Digging for Fire
2020	Solar Bones	2013	Jezebel
2020	Venus in Fur {SEEDS Showcase}	2013	Assassins/Way to Heaven {SEEDS showcase}
2019	Hecuba		
2019	Much Ado About Nothing	2012	Travesties
2019	Cleft	2012	The House Keeper
2018	A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man	2011	Peer Gynt
2018	A Midsummer Night's Dream	2011	Plaza Suite
		2011	Jumping off the Earth {SEEDS Showcase}
2017	Mr Burns {SEEDS Showcase}		
2017	Melt		
2017	The Train	2010	Phaedra
2017	The Effect	2010	The Importance of Being Earnest
		2010	Sodome, My Love
2016	Northern Star		



The Tempest, 2022. Photo Credit: Ros Kavanagh

PRODUCTION HISTORY

2009	Solemn Mass for a Full Moon Summer	2003	Shiver
2009	Dying City/Serious Money {SEEDS Showcase}	2003	Olga
2008	Life is a Dream	2002	Copenhagen
2008	Pentecost/Spokesong (Stewart Parker season)	2001	Dead Funny
2007	Don Carlos	2001	Midden
2007	Attempts on Her Life	2000	Pentecost
2007	Is this about Sex?	2000	Three Days of Rain
2007	Caligula/Pilgrims of the Night {SEEDS Showcase}	1999	Boomtown
2006	The Taming of the Shrew	1999	The Whisperers
2006	The Bonfire	1998	The School for Scandal
2006	Dream of Autumn	1997	Mrs Sweeney
2005	The Life of Galileo	1997	Halloween Night
2005	The Sugar Wife	1996	Northern Star
2005	4.48 Psychosis /Liliom/Woyzeck {SEEDS Showcase}	1995	Pentecost
2004	Take Me Away	1995	Danti-Dan
2004	Words of Advice for Young People	1994	Hidden Charges
2004	Improbable Frequency	1994	Down Unto Blue



Cleft, 2019. Photo Credit: Eamon Ward

PRODUCTION HISTORY

1993	The Way of the World	1986	The Woman in White
1993	New Morning	1986	The Country Wife
1992	The Emergency Session	1986	Bloody Poetry
1992	The Dogs	1986	Aunt Dan and Lemon
1991	Digging for Fire	1986	Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth
1991	Love and a Bottle	1986	Betrayal
1990	I Can't Get Started	1985	Caucasian Chalk Circle
1990	Lady Windemere's Fan	1985	Midnight at the Starlight
1989	Our Country's Good	1985	The Only Jealousy of Emer
1989	Spokesong	1985	Victory/No End of Blame (Barker season)
1989	A Handful of Stars	1984	American Buffalo
1988	Serious Money	1984	Top Girls
1988	Bat the Father, Rabbit the Son	1984	Sexual Perversity in Chicago
1988	Tea and Sex and Shakespeare	1984	Decadence
1988	Tom and Viv	1984	Thirst
1988	The White Devil	1984	The Big House
1987	A Mug's Game	1984	Fanshen
1987	The Silver Tassie	1984	Talbot's Box
1987	The Tempest		
1987	Road		
1987	Nightshade		



A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 2019. Photo Credit: Ste Murray

ROUGH --- MAGIC

Board of Directors

Anne Byrne
Alison Cowzer (Chair)
Dr. Tanya Dean
Michelene Huggard
Robert Power
Eileen Punch
Bruce Stanley

Artistic Director: Lynne Parker
General Manager: Gemma Reeves
Producer: Sara Cregan
Associate Director: Ronan Phelan
Literary Manager: Karin McCully

www.roughmagic.ie
12 Parliament Street
Dublin 2
Company Reg: 122753
Charity Reg: 20205902