



Ulster Youth Choir
Front cover - Opera Theatre Company, 'Rodelina'

Further Information

Full details of all Council funding are available from:

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music and opera

funding policy

Strategic Priorities

The Arts Council will give a priority to artists, arts organisations, arts initiatives and partnerships which:

- A increase opportunities for creative participation in the arts;
- B develop new audiences for the arts and build on existing ones;
- C extend opportunities for artists to develop their work and practice;
- D strengthen the capacity of arts organisations to deliver quality experiences of the arts.

Strategic Objectives

The Arts Council is committed to:

- 1 increase opportunities for artists working to the highest standards and in innovative ways;
- 2 strengthen the arts infrastructure;
- 3 engage with community arts to increase opportunities for creative participation, to develop new audiences and to expand the range of contexts in which artists work;
- 4 engage with voluntary arts to increase opportunities for creative participation, to develop new audiences and expand the range of contexts in which artists work;
- 5 increase the quality of access for disabled people to the arts;
- 6 enhance children and young people's access to creative expression through the arts, in contexts of their own choosing, and increase opportunities for participation as they grow and develop;
- 7 increase audiences for the arts.

The arts: inspiring the imagination, building the future

Music and Opera Funding Policy

Introduction

The historical focus of the Arts Council's spending on music and opera has been on professional infrastructure and performance as the means of delivering high quality musical experiences to local people as both participants and audiences. The Ulster Orchestra is the Council's largest single client and employs 80 people, 63 of whom are full-time professional musicians engaged in an annual programme of concert, educational, recording and broadcasting work.

In the field of Opera, notoriously the most expensive of all artforms, the Council offers a programme encompassing all scales of production with appropriate education, outreach and training elements. This has been achieved through importing UK and Irish based companies such as Welsh National Opera and Opera Theatre Company as well as supporting indigenous productions through Castleward and the Grand Opera House's Youth Opera project. Aspirations to invent an all-Ireland Opera Company on a grand scale have so far proved elusive although many would argue that the all-Ireland opera company most suited to the needs of the island's population already exists in Opera Theatre Company.

The population of Northern Ireland is too small to sustain many professional music producing companies or instrumental ensembles on a full-time basis. Accordingly, the Council concentrates its annual funding on organisations delivering programmes of professional concerts and educational or training activities with national and international artists, including Irish, across Northern Ireland. In particular, it has supported those organisations best placed to offer a professional platform to new work by home-grown composers, as well as providing funds for the commissioning of such new work. It also supports touring programmes of professional orchestral, chamber, jazz and traditional music through its client organisations.

The range of musical styles and forms the Council supports has broadened considerably in recent years through the advent of Lottery funding, benefiting the substantial voluntary sector, including amateur and community music groups and festivals of all kinds. Where formerly such work was supported through relevant 'umbrella bodies' or groups such as Northern Ireland Bands Association and Association of Irish Musical Societies, or through project grants directed towards the costs of working with professional musicians, the Council now assists individual groups directly with Lottery funds.

Flute, accordion, silver and pipe bands have benefited from a unique Lottery scheme for the purchase of musical instruments, backed up by a detailed consultation with the sector. This funding recognised both the enormous level of local participation in band music and also the practice of training and musical education through bands.

The Council also directly assists songwriters, producers and popular music performers, and there has been a rapid growth in funding applications from this area.

It owns two Steinway concert grand pianos and a Zuckermann harpsichord, which are used regularly for public performance free of charge. It also owns a valuable Gagliano violin, which is made available through a dedicated award for aspiring career musicians.

Definitions

The Council has traditionally funded music activities under the separate headings of Music and Opera, Traditional Arts (Irish and Ulster Scots traditional music) and Community Arts (music collectives). These headings now apply more loosely, and the definition of music and opera encompasses western classical and contemporary concert music, opera, music theatre and musicals, jazz and improvised music, contemporary popular music, world music and traditional music, as well as amateur/voluntary music activities such as bands and music festivals, and community music practices. The application of new technologies to arts practice is of general importance to the Council's strategy, and is particularly relevant in the area of music. Music technologies have been central to the growth of creative work by musicians with disability.

Funding

Music activities are funded through all the Council's programmes, but of specific interest are:

- Support for the Individual Artist Programme (for individual musicians and music administrators wishing to develop their professional practice. Relevant schemes include the General Arts Award – also open to students – Travel Awards, the Young Musicians' Platform Scheme, the Skidmore Jazz Award, the Milton Violin Award, and various foreign residency schemes)
- Annual Support for Organisations (for music and opera organisations with year-round programmes)
- Access to the Arts (aimed at addressing the needs of communities in areas of social and economic deprivation or supporting the involvement of children and young people)
- New Work (if it is the creation of innovative original work)
- Equipment (for purchase of musical instruments (other than for bands), office and other music-related equipment for music organisations)
- Awards for All (for projects under £5,000. Applicants should consult www.awardsforall.com. Tel. 0845 600204).

Funding Objectives

A concerted focus of attention on Music and Opera enables the Council to realise its four Priorities and meet its seven Strategic Objectives.

Funding objectives are to:

- promote the work of Northern Ireland-based musicians and composers locally, nationally and internationally (1, 7)
- enable musicians and music organisations in Northern Ireland to develop and present innovative and original work for local and international audiences (1, 2)
- strengthen key music and opera organisations (2)
- ensure a range of professional opera provision from local and visiting companies (2, 7)
- support a wide variety of high quality music touring programmes across Northern Ireland (2, 7)
- support musical activities in and by communities of ethnic origin and cultural diversity in Northern Ireland (3)
- support opportunities for musicians and music practitioners to develop facilitation skills for work in community settings and education/training contexts (3, 4)
- support and develop the bands sector (4)
- develop and strengthen partnerships with organisations such as the Education and Library Boards and Northern Ireland Music Industry Commission towards the provision of music education and training for young people and aspiring professional musicians (1, 6)