

Activity Report 2020



Cover illustration by Ann Kiernan

INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS RIVERBANK?

Riverbank Arts Centre is the county arts centre based in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, funded by The Arts Council and Kildare County Council. Riverbank Arts Centre works in partnership with international, national and local artists to deliver an accessible and consistently high quality arts programme in an intimate environment. We provide a multi-disciplinary programme which includes theatre, cinema, comedy, music, dance, workshops and visual arts.

With a dedicated children's gallery and programming of high quality theatre and workshops for younger audiences, Riverbank is also committed to promoting early engagement with and access to the arts.

In the **first quarter of 2020**, Riverbank Arts Centre presented **54 events & workshops**, which were attended by **3172 people**.

Riverbank Arts Centre closed to the public on 13th March 2020, due to Health & Safety measures to prevent the spread of Covid 19.

From April-December, 2020, Riverbank Arts Centre:

- Presented **60+ online events** including live broadcasts, workshops, online exhibitions & theatre, music, literary and family events which reached approx. 15,000 people
- Created an innovative, interactive **Whiteboard Programme** for schools which **2,200 Kildare primary school children** took part in.
- Supported 21 artists as part of a residency programme, ranging from Multi-Annual residencies to short term development residencies.

Riverbank Arts Centre is a producer and coproducer of new work. We work closely with visual artists and theatre artists to develop and present work, with a particular focus on arts experiences for young people. We commission exhibitions, host residencies and have presented world premieres of work by leading theatre companies including Theatre Lovett, Monkeyshine, Moonfish, Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Company, Branar Téatar do Pháistí, Collapsing Horse, and Super Pua.

'Riverbank Arts Centre is a welcoming, friendly, accessible space to bring arts and culture to the centre of civic life and community in Newbridge and environs. We aim to germinate and generate a future audience for the arts in Newbridge and the wider county, by supporting lifelong participants and advocates for the arts.' **Linda Geraghty, Venue Director**

"While the last nine months of 2020 has been challenging for the team at Riverbank, for our audiences, stakeholders and the community as a whole, we are immensely grateful for the continued support we have received. It has inspired the team to dig deep and find new ways of producing meaningful work. It is at times like this that the creative arts can support, comfort and entertain people and help keep us all connected. As a board we are very proud of the way that the small team at Riverbank have reinvented the way performance is produced and delivered, undergone an entire digital transformation and have worked so hard to ensure that the community continues to have this vital resource.." **Paul Davis, Chair**

Some highlights



In January, we hosted a **Fighting Words** volunteer cultivation event and we were joined by **Roddy Doyle**, co-founder of Fighting Words. In addition to the information event, Roddy sat in on our creative writing workshop for sixth year students in Scoil Dara (Kilcock) - followed by a Q&A. It's not every day you are given writing tips by a Booker Prize winner!

Fold/Unfold - an Exhibition by artist **Vanya Lambrecht Ward** was co-commissioned by Riverbank Arts Centre and Linenhall Arts Centre (Castlebar).

The art of paper **folding**, generally known as origami, allows us to form a bridge between our 2D and our 3D understanding of the world, with all sorts of applications from space travel to medicine.

We marked the opening of the exhibition with a tour guided by Vanya and workshop for 4th Class from St. Conleth's and Mary's, Newbridge.



Rolling in the Years

McKenna Gallery

Portraits of Newbridge's senior citizens by South Kildare Photography Club.

Opened 28th February with many of the subjects of these wonderful photographs in attendance.

The Lonsdale Project

A Co-Production with Riverbank Arts Centre and Super Paua



The Lonsdale Project is a new theatre show about the life and work of Kathleen Lonsdale (1903-1971) – chemist, crystallographer, anti-war campaigner, writer, mother, and former inmate of Holloway Prison.



Due to the required Covid-19 closure, we were unable to present the planned school performances and the World Premiere of this Riverbank Arts Centre co-production with theatre collective Super Paua. However, we presented one preview performance of the show a school audience, by great coincidence the group in attendance were from St. Patrick's NS Newbridge, the very school that Kathleen herself attended for a brief time!

We received excellent national and local press coverage for this planned production - including a full page feature in The Irish Times and an interview with writer/director Sian Ni Mhuiri RTE's Arena.



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We are working with the company to remount ***The Lonsdale Project*** in the near future.

FIRST LIVE BROADCAST


PURE MENTAL, a work-in-progress of a new play by Keith Walsh, directed by Janet Moran, developed with the support of Riverbank Arts Centre, was presented live from the Riverbank stage on Saturday, 27th June. This presentation received fantastic feedback and engagement with more audience members joining us in 'real time' than could fit in the auditorium, and **4,300 viewers** of the recording over the next 48 hours.



'AT HOME' PERFORMANCES

SING ME TO THE SEA is a magical watery adventure for children with Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and their families. These at HOME performances took place for individual families in their own gardens/driveways as part of a very special tour in August.



 [See video on RTE website](#)

SING ME TO THE SEA was originally performed in hydropools (over 100 performances to date across Ireland), however because of the Covid 19 situation, Anna Newell and the company toured a brand new 'dry-land' version in August in collaboration with the Mermaid, the Civic and Riverbank Arts Centre. This re-imagined @HOME version was performed in the gardens/drives/outside the windows of homes of families of children with PMLD.



Live broadcast with Luka Bloom for Culture Nigh

tRiverbank Arts Centre was delighted to welcome Luka Bloom to the venue for a live broadcast for Culture Night. The renowned Kildare singer-songwriter performed tracks from his brand new album, **Bittersweet Crimson**, interspersed with a conversation with Keith Walsh about making and recording music in 2020. This fusion of songs and stories was broadcast **live from the Riverbank stage**, using a multi-camera set up. Those tuning in online were able to comment and ask questions - and experience a unique live event, curated with a local audience in mind, and accessible to a worldwide one!

The recording has been viewed by 5,000 people to date

WHITEBOARD SCHOOLS PROGRAMME:

Riverbank Arts Centre presented a **WHITEBOARD PROGRAMME** for primary schools Interactive and **live-streamed into classrooms** including literary events with leading authors **Shane Hegarty** and **Pádraig Kenny**.



The first Whiteboard broadcast took place on 13th October, 2020 - Shane Hegarty presented **Boot: A Small Robot on a Big Adventure**

Three separate broadcasts Live Streamed to the following Kildare schools:

- **Naas Community National School**
- **Kildangan National School**
- **Scoil Mhuire, Newbridge**

Shane talked about his new book in the Boot series about a little robot with a big heart and answered questions from the children.

Shane Hegarty is the bestselling author of the 'Boot' - about a toy robot with only two-and-half-memories. 'Boot' was recently Dublin UNESCO City of Literature Citywide Read.



Due to Level 5 restrictions, Riverbank Arts Centre's activities for the final part of the year was mostly virtual/online presentations including:

SUPER PAUA Science week **STEAM workshops**

Cahoots NI - **The University of Wonder and Imagination** - a digital immersive show.

Greetings, Heroes! The Christmas Edition - an interactive storytelling experience where the students took the role of characters in the story, led by expert storyteller Graham Tugwell.

Our **Christmas programme** for schools included online shows from two companies that we would regularly have on the Riverbank stage in December:

Rockin' Christmas Rhymes - **Branar Téatar do Pháistí**

The Gift of Winter - **Lyngo Theatre Company**.



In Autumn 2020, **2205 school children** took part in our WHITEBOARD Programme

VISUAL ARTS

Riverbank Arts Centre's programme in Autumn 2020 included:

McKenna Gallery 11th September- 18th December

ART FEEDS - Kildare Art Collective group show

Kildare Art Collective & Friends presented a collaborative project developed as a platform to process and document our lives throughout these strange times, while creating an opportunity for communication, conversation and crossover between disciplines. Participating artists worked collaboratively exchanging ideas and working together using alternative methods of communication such as email, letter, carrier pigeon, phone calls, telepathy, video calls and text. The diverse work created during this project is an eclectic mix with interesting themes and details arising as we adjust to our new reality and navigate changes to how we work together.



Artists and collaborators included:

Michelle McBride & Dave O'Hanlon; Caoimhe McGuckin & Philip d'Alton; Kirsten Hodgson & Annie Morris; Stephen Connelly & Laura Caffrey; Dee McNally & Amy Gaffney; Sharon Fidgeon & Fabiana Scaglioni; Martina McDonald & Wayne McManamon; J.D. Lutteral & Lyn Worrall; Holly Delaney & Carol Anne Connolly; Conor Lane & Peter Lane; Claire Murphy & Ingrid Casey; Ciara Ahern & Aoife O'Callaghan; Stephanie Craig & Laura Craig; Derek Finn & Aingeala Finn; Lesley Kelly; Amy O'Connor & Anna DeCleur.

In light of Covid 19 restrictions, we collaborated with Kildare Art Collective on the presentation of online materials including:

[Artist Interviews](#)

[Virtual Tour](#)

[School Resource Pack](#)



FAMILY PROGRAMME

Whether at level 3 or level 5, Riverbank Arts Centre worked with artists and companies to provide a family programme on online events and activities. These included:

Cahoots NI - The University of Wonder and Imagination - a brand new type of immersive theatre, broadcast live from a purpose-built set in Belfast. The show was interactive - and led by the audience members.



Spooky Hallowe'en Crafts with artist Marta Golubowska

Riverbank Arts Centre invited artist Marta Golubowska to design some 'deadly' Hallowe'en **Arts and Crafts** for families to try. Each video is about 15 minutes and suitable for a variety of ages. Four videos were filmed at Riverbank arts Centre— Mexican-inspired printed Sugar Skulls, Guatemalan Kites, Tinfoil Monsters and A Haunted House Lamp. **Marta Golubowska** is an artist living and working in Kildare. Her solo practice is intertwined with teaching art and facilitating workshops in school and community settings.



Ceol Connected created a series of immersive 360° videos of their interactive TREEHOUSE production, filmed at Riverbank Arts Centre, which weaves together traditional and newly composed music/song alongside puppetry. We presented a pilot version of **TREEHOUSE 360°** to family audiences in December.

RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

Supporting artists to create new work is a cornerstone of our activity at Riverbank Arts Centre. We host short term residencies, development weeks and multi-annual residencies.

Multi-Annual residency - Dan Colley

Theatre-maker Dan Colley began a 2-year artist residency hosted by Riverbank Arts Centre and at various locations in Co. Kildare with the aims of:

- Researching and developing three new theatre projects; **Lossless, The Wren** and **Sugar Plum**
- Developing and deepening his own artistic practice through research and writing
- Developing the artistic practice of collaborating artists and providing paid employment opportunities for theatre artists and technicians throughout the residency period.



MOMENTUM AWARD

In September 2020, Riverbank Arts Centre issued an **OPEN CALL** inviting applications from professional artists and creative practitioners to take part in a new artist support programme.

There was a significant response to the call out, and the standard of applications was exceptionally high. The professional artists and creatives selected by an independent panel were

awarded a cash bursary (€2,000), support-in-kind and a working space (studio/venue space if required) and the option to take part in an activity or sharing event. Recipients of the award are as follows: MOLLIE MOLUMBY (theatre maker), ALAN HOWLEY (performer/writer), ÁINE O'HARA (Visual artist, theatre-makers), COLLABORATIVE PROJECT: MARK BALL & AOIFE RALEIGH MARK BALL. COLLABORATIVE PROJECT - ALLIE WHELAN, EMMA FINEGAN, LISA NALLY & JENNIFER AUST.



In addition we hosted short term residencies with Ceol Connected to develop and record **TREEHOUSE 360°** and Theatre Lovett to develop a brand new work.



LOCAL ARTS:

SPOTLIGHT ON...

In November, Riverbank Arts Centre partnered with **Newbridge Drama Group** to present an online celebration of their work, hosted on our YouTube channel. Matching the dates the company was scheduled to perform on stage, we presented a series of four videos compiled by NDG member, Kieran Galvin, on our website and across our social media platforms.



Online celebrations of other local companies, organisations and artists are planned in the coming year including **The Odd Theatre Company, Griese Youth Theatre** and **June Fest**. We are aware that Covid 19 restrictions have impacted these organisations and our ability to partner with them and support them - we look forward to welcoming them back to the Riverbank stage when it is safe to do so.



APPENDIX I - statement by Venue Director, August 2020

Riverbank Art Centre is a vibrant, multi-disciplinary venue which works in partnership with international, national and local artists to deliver an accessible and consistently high quality arts programme in an intimate environment. We present a broad programme which includes theatre, cinema, comedy, music, dance, workshops and visual arts. With a dedicated children's gallery and programming of high quality theatre and workshops for younger audiences, Riverbank is also committed to promoting early engagement with and access to the arts. Quality of experience and accessibility is at the core of what we do at Riverbank and we aim to reflect this ethos through all aspects of our work, both public facing and behind the scenes.

In March 2020, following a government announcement, public buildings and arts centres closed their doors in a national effort to curb the spread of Coronavirus, Covid 19. The impact of Covid 19 on the arts and culture sector is immense, its effects long-lasting and the sector will require much support to recover following the worst of the pandemic. The public health guidelines and restrictions required to ensure adequate social distancing mean that many arts centres will find it difficult to safely welcome an audience to their venues in the coming months.

As an intimate venue, Riverbank Arts Centre finds itself in this challenging position and is exploring all options and opportunities to return a live audience to their seats. However, public health and safety is at the forefront of all decisions and actions at this time and Riverbank aims to ensure that we play our role in following guidelines rigorously, ensuring best practice is adhered to, as we navigate through this difficult time. This means that, by necessity, our capacity will be severely restricted, our programmes altered and it may be some time before we have the option to host a live audience in the theatre. As the guidelines stand, with a social distancing requirement of 2 metres, the audience capacity in the theatre would be 14 people and unfortunately, with this number it won't be possible to present live shows. We are continually assessing, evaluating and exploring our options and opportunities to return to some degree of normality. However, until it is possible to safely welcome a feasible number of audience members, creativity will remain at the core of our work and we will continue to adapt our practice and programmes to provide a quality service and arts experiences for our audiences, if not onsite then virtually or at remote locations. Our strategy and key goals for the remainder of the year will be heavily focused on supporting artists in developing new work through commissions, co-productions, providing venue space, technical support and more at Riverbank. We will continue to work with artists and facilitators to engage with the public, schools and young people by providing alternative, creative and exciting mechanisms of interacting with arts and culture.

With the utmost respect and consideration for the value and livelihoods of artists, crew and arts workers, the board, executive and team at Riverbank Arts Centre are committed to continuing to engage, commission, present and support artists and arts workers through these challenging times. With our experienced, skilled and committed team and the continued support of our key stakeholders and audiences, I have no doubt that this difficult period will be successfully overcome together.

Linda Geraghty
August 2020



TEAM

Venue Director Linda Geraghty (Maternity Leave, August 2020)

Programme Manager Alexandra Rosiak (**Acting Director**, from August 2020)

Marketing & PR Manager Caroline Williams

Box Office & FOH Manager Theresa Davidson

Technical Manager Phil Jennings

BOARD

Paul Davis - Chair

Maureen Bergin

Mona Considine

Thomas Hunter McGowan

Teresa Murray

Lucina Russell



NETWORKS

Riverbank Arts Centre is a member of Strollers, Nomad, Shortworks and the Network of Extraordinary Audiences touring networks.

RIVERBANK ARTS CENTRE WORKS WITH THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL PROGRAMME PARTNERS:

Fighting Words, access>CINEMA, VMDIFF, Irish Writers' Centre, Words Ireland, Children's Books Ireland, The National Gallery, Laureate na nOg, Youth Theatre Ireland, First Fortnight, Culture Night, Music Network.

FUNDERS

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Riverbank Arts Centre CLG is a registered Charity (20074982) with Revenue Commissioners (CHY 19193)



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council