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Theatre History II

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Ten Popular Theatrical Locations in Central Dublin: Walking Tour

For my final project, I have compiled a list of ten of the most popular theatrical companies in Dublin. For each location, I have added a blurb on their history and founding, what sort of work they do, and things they are best known for. I examined five theatres, two resource organizations, one festival, the government funding of theatre, and the national school of acting. I traveled abroad to Ireland this past summer and studied at the school I will be discussing, The Gaiety School of Acting. While I was there, I fell in love with the culture and the theatre in Ireland. Therefore, I wanted to reminisce on my experiences a little bit as well as learn more about certain places I was unable to visit. Through examining these ten different theatrical locations, I hope to give the viewer a glimpse into what theatre in Ireland is like, how it varies from America and other places, and the impactful work they have consistently done with theatre for social change.

The first theatre I reviewed was The Gaiety. Open for over a century, The Gaiety is known for producing all kinds of high-level productions, including housing the iconic “Riverdance” every summer. In fact, the 25th anniversary of the show was this past summer and I will never forget the experience I had with that show; it was absolutely breathtaking. The second theatre I reviewed was The Abbey Theatre. In December, they will celebrate their 120th Anniversary of being open (The Abbey Theatre: History). The Abbey is extremely monumental to the success of theatre in Dublin, being as it is The National Theatre of Ireland. The third theatre I reviewed was The New Theatre. This smaller, more intimate theatre specializes in producing new works with the hope to provide as many opportunities for

artists to work in a professional setting as possible. The fourth theatre I reviewed was The Gate Theatre. The Gate produces both new and existing works from Ireland and all over the world. Many famous Irish actors got their start there, leading it to become an internationally renowned theatre. The last theatre I reviewed was the historic Smock Alley Theatre, 1662. Smock Alley was the very first theatre to open in Dublin and only the second theatre to open in all of Ireland at the time, during the rule of England. Therefore, they claimed to be Dublin's newest and oldest theatre.

I also examined the resource organizations Irish Theatre Institute and Theatre Forum. Both of these organizations provide resources for artists of all kinds including jobs, festival opportunities, spaces, mentorship, etc. Both companies work to provide resources both nationally and internationally, hoping to support actors, directors, designers, etc. in growing their careers. I wanted to include these two organizations to help highlight the work the people and the country contributes in order to ensure a successful and healthy theatre industry. I find it is interesting to learn how drastically different theatre is treated in Ireland than in America. It is heavily ingrained in their history and has become an outlet for people of all kinds to go.

In addition, I looked into the Dublin Theatre Festival. This is a yearly festival that includes work of all kinds including dance, music, theatre, etc. In addition, they provide resources and job opportunities, panels to interview artistic figures, performances and workshops, and more. Although we do have theatre festivals in America, I find that DTF is laid out in a more opportune way than most, providing all kinds of resources, not just performances and talkbacks.

What sort of help does the government provide in order to ensure better opportunities for artists? The government actually helps fund theatrical productions in Ireland. The Arts Council is the government agency in charge of doing this work. They have all kinds of different grants, scholarships, and funding for a wide array of organizations including theatres, schools, festivals, etc. I found this

important to include because it is interesting how Ireland, and a handful of other countries, has a government that not only supports the arts, but actively works to fund and expand the arts.

Finally, I researched the Gaiety School of Acting (GSA). It is the national school of acting in Ireland, but it offers so much more than just straight acting classes. The non-for-profit school trains actors in theatre, film, and television through workshops, intensives, and a 1 or 2-year in-depth training program. The school has trained a plethora of famous actors known for theatre, film, and television. I found that the program changed the way I approach theatre in a drastic and positive way.

So, how is this all relevant and important information to learn about? Not only is theatre in Ireland just incredibly interesting to research, I think it goes to show that when theatre is as ingrained into a history as theatre is in Dublin or even London, for example, the appreciation and opportunities rise. Even during the most recent strike in the U.S., Europe continued their productions because they just have a fairer system there. In addition, it is incredible to see what work they are doing on theatre for social change. For example, I provided a clip of The Abbey Theatre's 2020 production of "Dear Ireland". The goal of that production was to question society and begin a productive conversation for what changes need to be made, especially in the time of the pandemic. The amount of push for new work in Ireland means they are consistently bringing in cutting-edge productions, often relative to society today. I think it is important to learn about the differences in how we learn and practice theatre versus everywhere else around the world. If anything, I hope I made you want to visit and experience the incredible theatre scene Dublin has to offer.

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