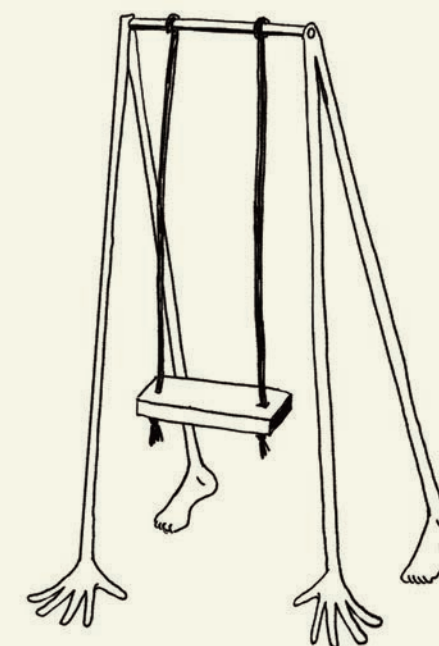




BRANAR **Strategy**
2022 -2025



BRANAR Strategy

2022 –2025



Welcome to the first strategy of Branar. Now 21 years in existence, the company has undergone significant change and expansion and it is fitting that this strategy offers both a strong statement of who we now are and of where we wish to go during the next four years. It is a celebration of identity and a roadmap of intent.

At the heart of Branar is the recognition that children are citizens in their own rights, with bespoke needs and with a powerful role to play. At a time of global uncertainty, with compelling questions being asked of us and our relationship with our planet, democracy, social justice and identity, we need powerful people. We believe that the arts make children powerful in the world. This strategy unashamedly lionises work for our young citizens. We commit to listening carefully to them, to hearing and harmonising with their needs and to amplifying their voice as we share the story of the immense potential of the arts with our leaders, policymakers and all adults.

Engagement with the arts creates a space for wonder and possibilities. Our work will create moments in which young people may look deeply, hear stories, empathise and find a space to dream. In order to fulfil these ideals, we will make innovative and high calibre work that celebrates the fact that young people, no matter how small, deserve excellent art.

Making Great Art Work demands that we play a role in making great artists, and artists are at the heart of the work of Branar. We believe in our artists. They are our colleagues, our friends, our collaborators and our successors. The company commits to continue to invest in the development of artists who wish to create work for young audiences and to invite them to work in our studios and be part of our performance companies.

Finally, running a professional company for our smallest citizens demands that we do so with even greater heart and bigger vision. As an organisation, we want to celebrate openness and transparency in our work and run our company in accordance with the highest professional standards. We will do this while protecting the playful and welcoming spaces in which our fantastic team, under Marc's passionate leadership, imagine new stories, innovate ways of telling them and serve our young citizens.

Ar aghaidh linn!

The Board of Branar

Dr Micheal Finneran (Chair)

Marc Mac Lochlainn (Secretary)

Rhona Matheson

Jennifer Loftus

Mary Carty

Lali Morris



Branar exists to create wonderful arts experiences for children so that they and their imaginations may thrive. In this statement of purpose there is, of course imeartas focail, a play on words. In Branar we love language and spraoi is very much a part of who we are and what we do: to be playful is one of our values. Branar is about wonder and wondering, iontas agus ionadh, about being wonderful and wonder-full, sa tóir ar an iontais.

It seemed appropriate, as Branar moves into its third decade of existence, to develop a strategy and harness this intent. We wanted to make clear our purpose, vision, mission and values and to set out our ambition and the choices we have made in pursuit of 'wonder-full', in every sense of the word, over the next four years. I am very pleased and proud to share this, our first strategy.

Clear in our purpose, over the term of this strategy we seek to consolidate, refine or extend much of what we do already. Our three sizeable goals define ambitions about the making and sharing of art and of enabling more children to enjoy high quality arts experiences; about advancing, in policy and in practice, the provision of excellent art for children; and about developing our own capacity and securing our future.

There's much to look forward to in the time ahead: close engagement with children to infuse our work with their imagination and experience, innovation in our approach

as we explore new ways of making work and of reaching our audience wherever they are. In that regard, we also look forward to being back on tour, but in ways that limit our impact on the environment; to forming new and furthering older, more established creative partnerships locally, nationally and internationally. Collaboration and co-operation have always been at the heart of our practice. As such, we also look forward to expanding the opportunities we create through **Meitheal** to share our expertise and resources and to support our peers and a new generation of practitioners to make exemplary work for children and young people. In a new approach, we will also seek to encourage and enable adults to encourage and enable children's engagement with the arts and specifically with our work.

This strategy commits us to amplifying the voice of the child within our creative practice. Chun glór an pháiste a sníomh tríd ár chleachtais. We look forward to continuing our work with children, with academic and industry colleagues, to discover how best we achieve that for the good of all.

Over the next few years, we are also committing to amplify our voice, le bheith glórach, and to increase our role as advocates for parity of esteem and resourcing of work for young audiences. As a sector, we enjoy awareness of and admiration for our work. At this stage though, such recognition is not enough. We need policy. We need excellent practice and for that to be systemic. We need those in power to act on the convention they ratified 30 years ago and deliver the 'provision of appropriate and *equal opportunities*' of artistic activities for children. With no small ambition, part of our advocacy efforts here will be to advance the provision of a dedicated cultural centre for children in the West of Ireland. It is their right.

Being strong in championing quality arts for children is one of our values. *Láidir* sits alongside *cróga* (being brave), *flaithúil* (being generous), *spráíúil* (being playful) and *ionraic* (being true) Simple words for such big ideals. They express what we believe in and try to live every day.

As a company, Branar has never shied away from hard work and our small team has achieved so very much. This strategy has given us the opportunity to consider and ensure the sustainability of our work, what we do and how we do it. We have prioritised the development of our capacity and have sought to affirm and strengthen processes and practices that will allow us to be **‘wonder-full’** and to deliver on the ambition of this strategy.

As a final word, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of this strategy for Branar. Ciallaíonn ag déanamh Branar a bheith ag déanamh éachta. Used as a verb ‘branar’ means doing great things. We look forward to doing great things, to creating wonder. Tá an Branar curtha. The field has now been sown.

Artistic Director
Marc Mac Lochlainn

Branar, - air, m., a fallow field; the loose surface of a grubbed field (*called also cac ar aghaidhin M.*); *Ag déanamh branair*, turning up the surface of land, fig. Doing great things, uprooting or upsetting things; *Goirtín branar*, a little fallow field; the loose surface of a fallow field was burned and the ashes spread as manure; “*Cionnur atá an branar?*” “*Mhuire cuibhearach; cuid de curtha gan dóghadh is cuid de dóighte gan cur*” “How is the fallow?” “Well only middling; some of it planted without having been burnt, and some of it burnt without having been planted” (Wat.); corn was generally sown in fallow fields; *fearann branair*, fallow land; act of clearing the lea surface; *fig.* of writing, etc.

Who we are



Branar is one of Ireland's leading theatre companies making work for children. Based in the West of Ireland, Branar is renowned for creating highly imaginative and beautiful work that exists within and beyond the Irish language.

Established in 2001 by Artistic Director Marc Mac Lochlainn, Branar has created over 20 shows in that time. It works closely with an ensemble of exceptional artists and collaboratively with a number of creative partners, including The Ark, Baboró, NIE (England), Starcatchers (Scotland), Teater Refleksion (Denmark) and many leading Irish arts centres and festivals. The company tours nationally and internationally, bringing its work with equal enthusiasm to leading arts venues such as the South Bank Centre, London as to a local school in Galway. Branar is committed to reaching its audience, wherever they are. As a result of the Covid-19 public health crisis, the company has recently developed a bespoke digital strand of work and looks forward to continuing to develop its practice in this area.

Branar believes in sharing its expertise and resources with peer professionals and next generation practitioners. For many years it produced the professional development programme Tiny Shows, managed the Ag Roinnt Theatre Resource Sharing Scheme and offered mentorship opportunities. In 2021, in recognition of the company's commitment to and expertise in work of this nature,

Branar became one of three organisations participating in the Arts Council's Creative Production Services pilot scheme. Meitheal is the company's two-year scheme which aims to support independent theatre makers in the development, creation and presentation of work for young audiences across Ireland.

Branar is affiliated with ASSITEJ - International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People, is a member of Theatre for Young Audiences Ireland, Theatre Forum, UNIMA - Union Internationale de la Marionette and Business to Arts.

Branar is governed by a voluntary board of six people (including the Chairperson) who are appointed for a term of three years, up to a maximum of nine years. The work of Branar is delivered by a small but mighty artistic and administrative team. Branar is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital. It is currently seeking charitable status.



Policy context

Branar operates within the context of several key policy frameworks in relation to the arts and to children. Our work over the next few years recognises and will seek to contribute to their ambitions and priorities. We will also attend to any relevant local or national policies or strategies that emerge over the period of this strategy.

The **Arts Council's** ten-year strategy **Making Great Art Work** (2016 -2025) has at its core twin priorities of supporting artists ‘to make excellent work which is enjoyed and valued’ and to enable more people to ‘enjoy high-quality arts experiences’. This latter priority encompasses a discrete objective to plan and provide for children and young people.

The **Arts Council** is placing particular emphasis on advancing its **Equality, Human Rights and Diversity** policy which seeks to ‘respect, support and ensure representation of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today, from all sections of society, from existing and new communities, inclusive of people of all abilities, backgrounds and traditions’.

The **Arts Council** also seeks to ensure the realisation of its **Paying the Artist** policy with its vision of ‘an environment in which artists can make work of ambition and quality and be remunerated appropriately’.

Creative Ireland, the all-of-government programme which aims to connect people, creativity and well-being, has a dedicated pillar of work, **Creative Youth**, and places a special focus on enabling the creative potential of every child.

The **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures** policy which aligned government commitments to children and young people against five national outcomes concluded in 2020, but its intent and influence is likely to continue.

Hub na nÓg's National Participation Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making seeks to support organisations to improve their practice in listening to children and young people and giving them a voice in decision-making.

First 5 is the whole-of-Government ten-year strategy to improve the lives of babies, young children and their families. It seeks to make sure all children have positive early experiences and get a great start in life.

The **Arts and Education Charter**, first published in 2012, is the joint commitment of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, in association with the Arts Council, to promote and integrate the arts in education.

The **Assitej Manifesto** sets out ‘the actions necessary if our children and young people are to flourish through engagement with the arts’ and amplifies the imperative of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 which calls for children to be heard in the processes of making decisions that affect them.

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child [1989] which declares:

1. State Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.’
2. State Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Strategic Goals



GOAL #1

More children are enjoying quality arts experiences

GOAL #2

Excellent art and arts experiences for children are prioritised in policy and practice

GOAL #3

A secure, sustainable future for the company

GOAL #1

More children
are enjoying quality
arts experiences



Why?

We believe every child should have the best childhood possible and that excellent art made especially for them should be part of it. That’s why making work for children is urgent and important. We will continue to make art for children and to extend the reach of our work through innovative practices and creative partnerships. We will involve children in our creative processes to ensure that the work that we make fires their imaginations and validates their experiences. To reach more children, there needs to be more artists making work that is excellent, ambitious and imaginative and we need more adults to facilitate children’s engagement with the arts.

Objectives

- Create new works of scale and ambition over the lifetime of this strategy.
- Commission innovative new work from world-class artists across a diversity of genres, which expand the reach and touchpoints of our work.
- Tour nationally and internationally to meet children wherever they are, taking care to do so sustainably and to limit environmental impact.
- Forge and sustain creative partnerships that ensure the quality and vitality of our work and strategic partnerships that support the growth and diversification of our audiences.
- Explore and formalise how we integrate and validate the voice of the child in our artistic practice.
- Establish Meitheal, a bespoke programme of support and practice development for independent artists who wish to create work for young audiences.
- Build the capacity and confidence of adults to encourage children’s engagement with our work.



Outcomes

We will have created a body of work with exceptional artists, across different disciplines and on new platforms, which will have increased and diversified who we reach and will have transformed how we engage with audiences. Our new work will sit comfortably alongside an established repertoire of work that continues to be revived and to tour in ways that accord with our environmental policy. The work of the company will be advanced by a nexus of partnerships and will be informed and strengthened by the views of children. Through Meitheal we will have supported a new cohort of practitioners in the creation of work for young audiences and extended our own development capacity. We will have encouraged a key cohort of adult stakeholders to facilitate the children in their care engaging with our work.

GOAL #2

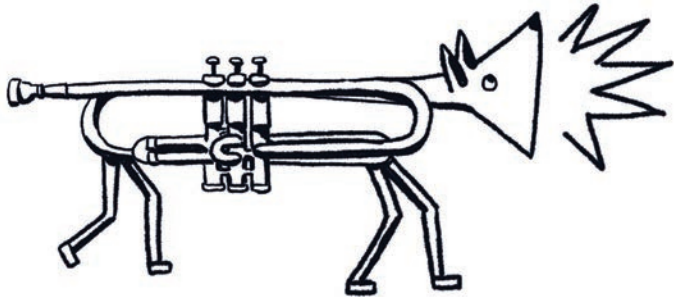
Excellent art and arts experiences for children are prioritised in policy and practice

Why?

In 1992, Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child, recognising the rights of children to “*participate fully in cultural and artistic life*” and by doing so committed to “*encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities*”. We have come a long way since then, but the cultural rights of children have not yet been fully, equally realised. We want to play our part in ensuring the culture, conditions and funding that delivers these rights for children. Included in our ambition here, is the development of a dedicated cultural centre for children in Galway. We want to reanimate prior expressions of interest and mobilise action for children in the West of Ireland and beyond.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of the essentiality of the arts in the lives of children with policymakers, peers, the media and the general public, in concert with other like-minded organisations.
- Work towards parity of esteem and funding for art for children and young people.
- Make a case for the development of a dedicated children’s cultural centre in Galway.
- Participate in research and promote international best practice to advance understanding of the inherent value of art in children’s lives.



Outcomes

Art for children and young people will be better understood and valued, and equitably supported in policy and in practice, locally and nationally. Branar will be recognised by peers and others for our contribution to this advance. The insight we have gathered from research and from engagement with our international peers will be of huge value to us and to the sector, furthering understanding and motivating ambition. We will have garnered the necessary support and will have confirmed plans for a dedicated children’s cultural centre in Galway.

GOAL #3

A secure,
sustainable future
for the company



Why?

For twenty years, Branar has managed to do remarkable things through the enterprise and ingenuity of a small but mighty team. As we enter our third decade, clear about our ambition and purpose, we need to build our capacity and invest in our brand and in the people, policies and practices that will allow us to realise our full potential. Our participation on the RAISE programme opens up new opportunities for us in terms of income generation and we must capitalise on that. Having this goal ensures that we attend to that which enables our continued success.

Objectives

- Nurture and strengthen our core team, building their capacity and confidence to deliver this strategy and ensuring their well-being at work.
- Broaden and diversify the profile and skillset of our board of directors.
- Identify and secure sustainable, diverse sources of income to support our strategic purposes.
- Ensure operational excellence and best practice compliance with relevant legislation, policies and codes.
- Develop and implement an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, to ensure that we are fair, welcoming and unbiased in everything that we do.
- Develop and implement an Environmental Policy to ensure the company's sustainability competencies and practices.
- Invest in strategic communications activities to build our brand, strengthen our positioning and ensure our influence.
- Institute practices of review and reflection to ensure the intent, efficacy and impact of our work.



Outcomes

Branar will have a board and team with the imagination, expertise and influence to deliver this strategy. The company's income profile will have altered, with increased statutory and private funding from a range of partners. Exemplary governance and management practices will be in place and relevant policies effected, in particular in relation to Paying the Artist, our own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and Environmental policy. As a brand, Branar will have increased profile and influence, and will be recognised as a leading authority on work for children and young people. Our work will benefit from reflective practice, now very much part of how we work.

Brave

Brave in our choices

Strong

Strong in championing quality arts for children

Generous

Generous in how we work

Playful

Playful in our approach

True

True to who we are

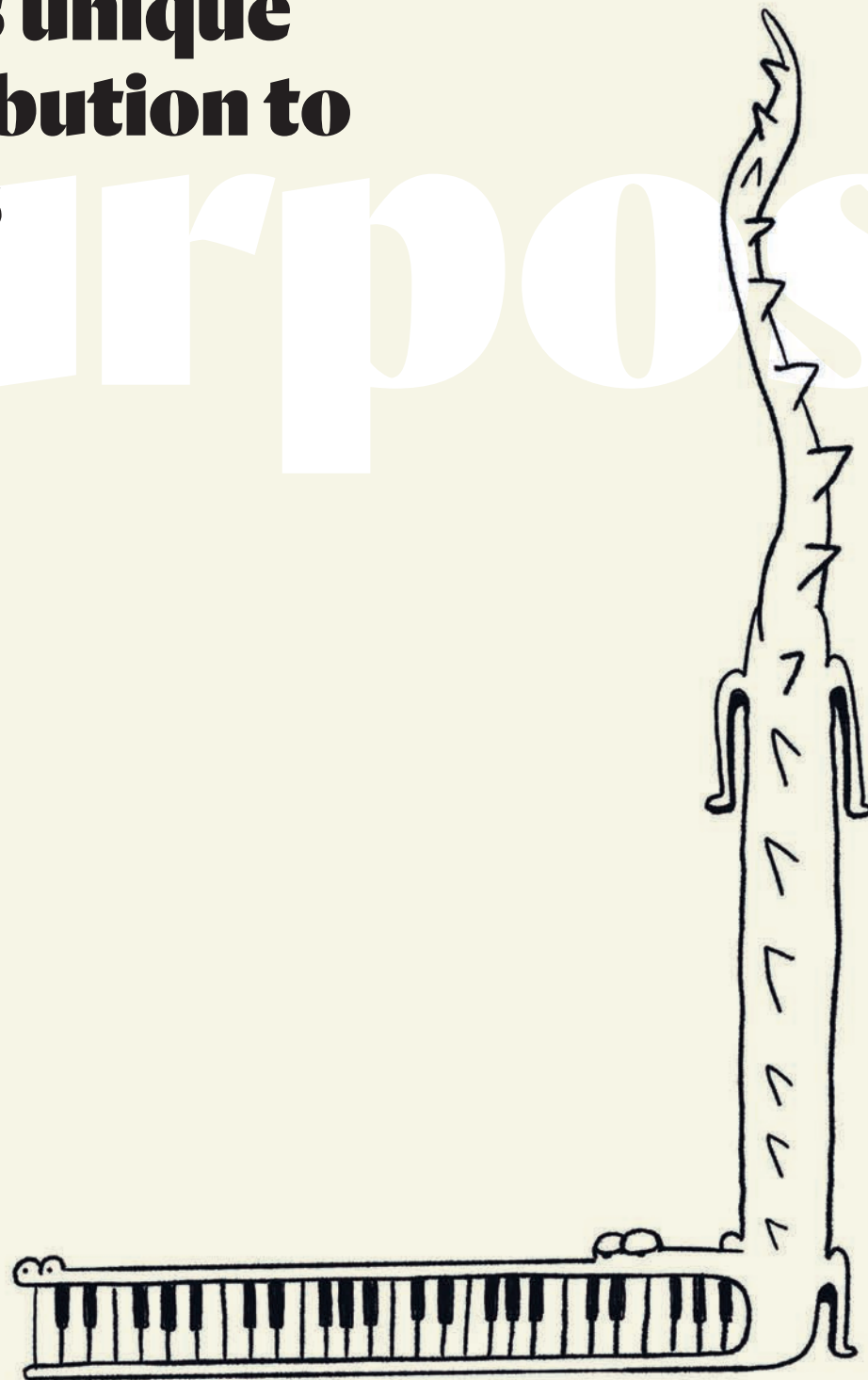
Our Values

**What Branar
stands for**

Purpose

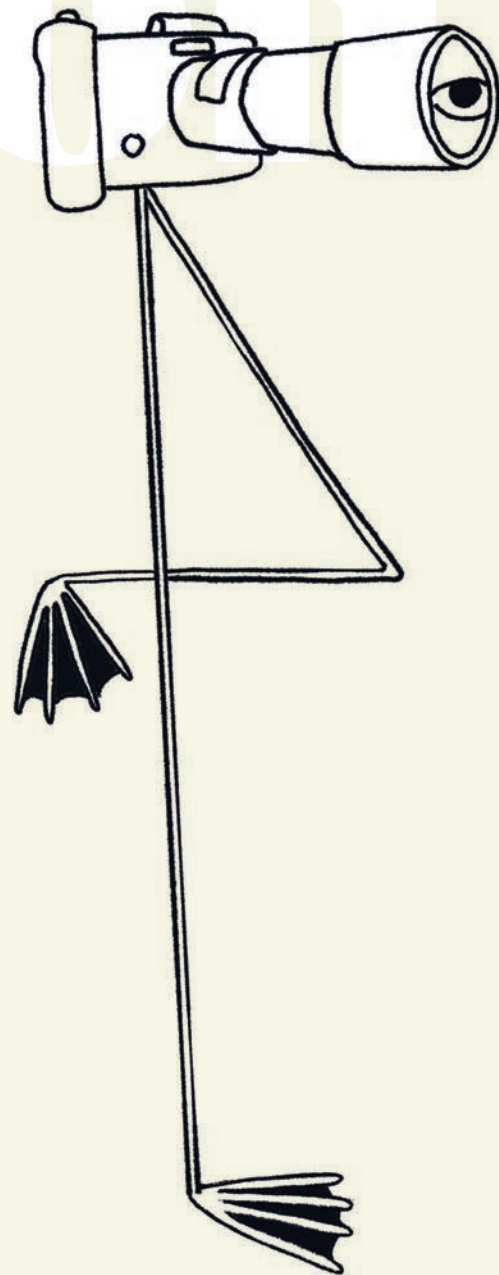
**Why Branar exists
and its unique
contribution to
others**

**We create
wonderful arts
experiences
for children
so that they
and their
imagination
may thrive**



Vision

**The idea Branar
is working
towards**

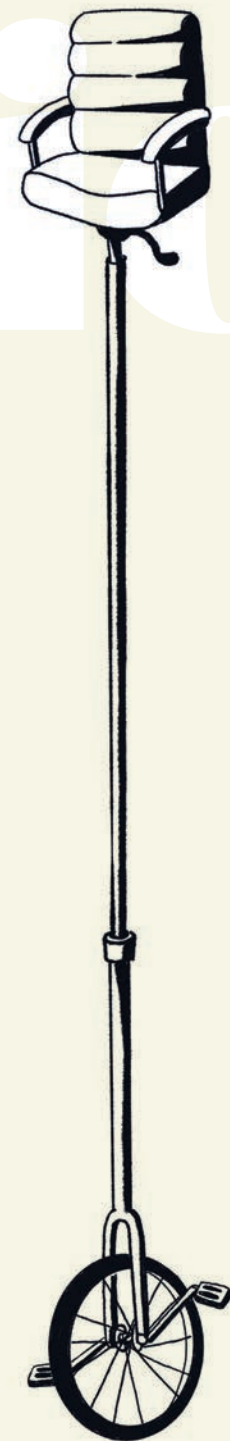


**We look forward
to a future in which
the curiosity,
compassion and
creativity of every
child in Ireland,
as an equal citizen
in the world, is
nurtured through
engagement with
exceptional arts
experiences**

Mission

**What Branar
does to achieve
its vision**

Mission



**We create excellent
arts experiences
for children and
young people and
we champion the
creation of more
and better arts
experiences for
children and
young people**

Branarfesto

01

We love stories. We promise to create stories that children will enjoy.

02

We will be brave, strong, generous, playful and true to who we are. Through our work we will invite children to be so too.

03

We believe that all children are creative. We will advance children's right to be creative.

BRANARfesto



04

We promise to make wonder-full art for children because we believe art should be an essential part of every childhood.

05

We will help others to make wonder-full art for children and we will work with other exciting artists to make wonder-full art for children.

06

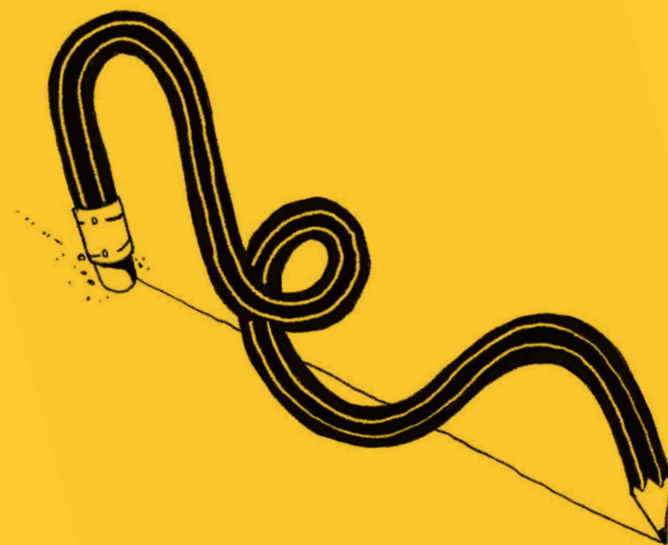
Children will ALWAYS be at the heart of our work. They are our audience and the experts whose opinion we seek.

07

We will shout loudly for art for children to be better understood, to have its own space and to be better resourced.

08

We will honour children's imagination and intelligence and we will never patronise them.



09

We believe that every child should see a play at least once a year. We will do our best to make that happen for children in Ireland.

10

We will be kind to the environment so that children will inherit a healthier planet to play on.



Woolly's Quest



The Way Back Home



Spraoi



Rockin Rhymes



An Seanfhear Beag



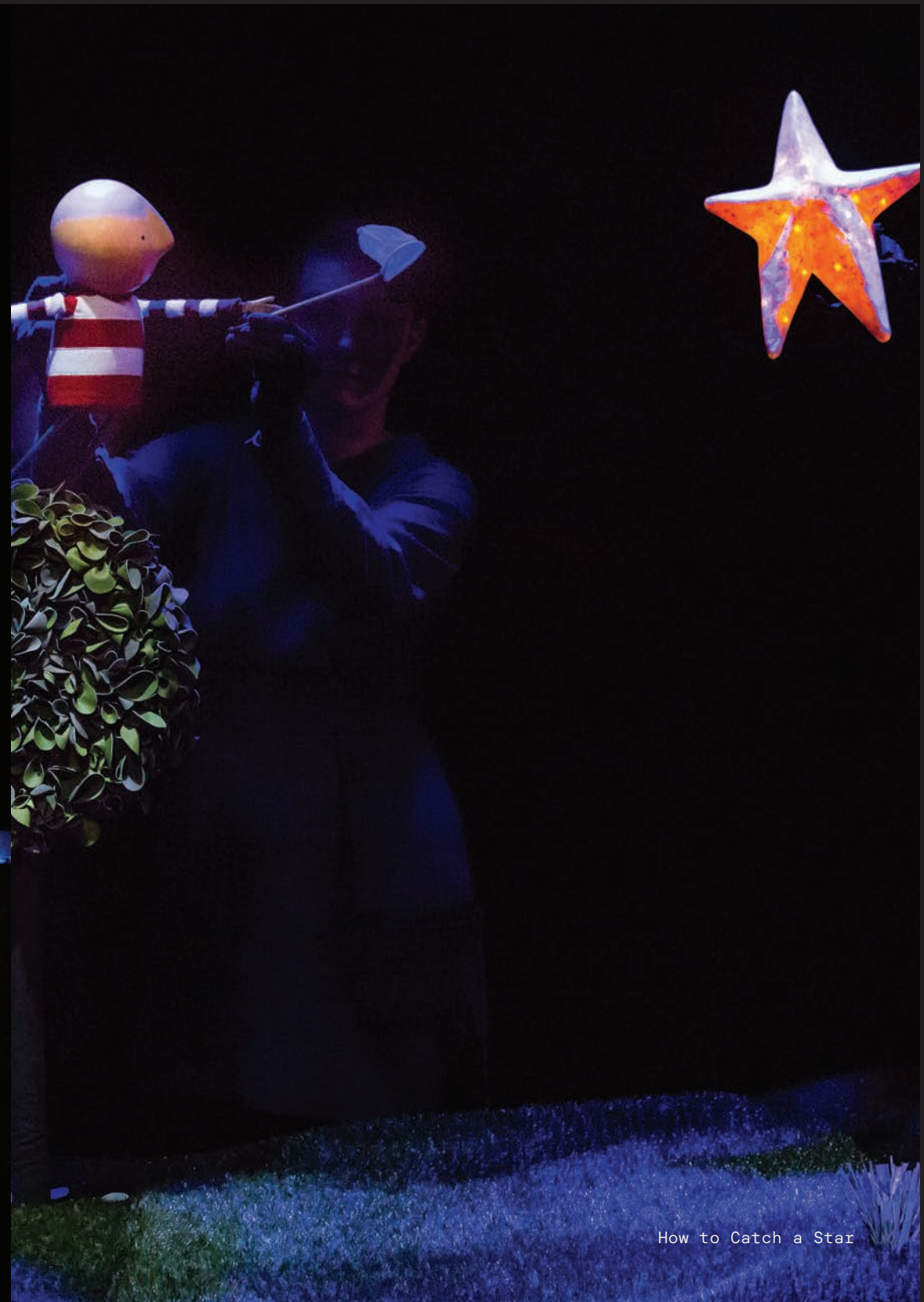
The Shape of Things



Maloney's Dream



Siuth na Teanga





Mise Scéal Cailín



Bláth

