

Fishamble: The New Play Company - Gender Policy Document

This policy is an evolving one, and may be developed and revised over time. It is part of the *Fishamble Employee Handbook* and sits within the overall context of that document.

Fishamble seeks to ensure best practice in gender policy across three key areas:

- (1) in the artistic programme;
- (2) in short-term and contract employment;
- (3) within the structure of the company itself and at board level.

Fishamble seeks to address gender equality in the overall theatre sector, and in the work of the company. This does not preclude the company from further consideration of gender inclusivity in a non-binary context.

(1) Artistic Programme

Fishamble recognises its key role in Irish theatre as a producer of new plays and therefore identifies gender equality and representation among playwrights as a priority.

- Fishamble aims for a **gender balance in the production of new work by male and female writers, balanced over a five-year period**. 'New work' is defined as productions of stand-alone plays for which public monies are used, and revivals for which a rehearsal period is required. A 'five-year period' is defined as the two years preceding, and the two years following, the year of a given AGM.

It is inevitable that commissions will not all reach fruition, or will have different time-scales to production, but the company undertakes to commission and programme with this intention, and with the flexibility in planning to achieve it over the five-year timeframe.

- Fishamble values the **artistic freedom of the playwright**, so does not propose gender equality with regard to written parts. However, the company recognises that casting may be flexible within the context of any production and will, in collaboration with the playwright, consider gender balance and diversity in casting as an active possibility.
- Fishamble recognizes that the budget, scale, touring, audience ambition, publication, and individual number of performances for each production are relevant factors with regard to gender equality. It also recognises that very significant artistic work may have a limited run and/or audience engagement for a wide variety of reasons. The company proposes to be actively mindful of these considerations, when **monitoring gender equality in its programming**.
- When Fishamble produces multi-writer projects (e.g. *Shorts*, *Whereabouts*, *She Was Wearing...*, *Tiny Plays for Ireland*, *A Play for Ireland*) the company undertakes, both in the process by which the project is structured, and in the outcome, to **consider gender equality in creating a diverse programme**. This includes but is not limited to:
 - (a) taking expert advice in the field during preparation;
 - (b) communicating clearly with artists and the public about how diversity is to be achieved;

- (c) including elements in the process, such as bias assessment, considered use of language in project descriptions, 'see it to be it' practical initiatives, and gender-neutral elements when appropriate;
 - (d) checking programme choices before public announcements;
 - (e) post project assessment to inform future projects.
- In the case of **formal support structures**, including *New Play Clinic*, *Show in a Bag*, *A Play for Ireland* and *Training & Mentoring Scheme* initiatives, Fishamble aims for gender equality among lead artists.

For *New Play Clinic*, the company makes an annual gender based assessment of lead artists, and makes "what works" adjustments to the programme where necessary.

In partnership with Dublin Fringe and ITI, Fishamble has made "what works" type changes to *Show in a Bag*, with successful outcomes for improved gender equality. The company seeks to sustain this over time, as part of the normal practice for the project, making changes as appropriate.

Overall, it is the job of the Literary Manager to track and make changes, where necessary, to promote gender equality and inclusiveness in other aspects of Fishamble's Literary activity. This includes, but is not limited to (a) course participants, (b) mentor groups, (c) playwrights submitting work, and (d) post-show panel discussions.

It is the job of the Literary Manager to present all the above information at the AGM. It is the role of the board to discuss this presentation and provide guidance where necessary. It is the role of the company, under the Artistic Director, to make best efforts to deliver these commitments, as part of the artistic programme.

(2) Short-Term and Contract Employment

Fishamble undertakes an annual analysis of persons other than playwrights or performers (dealt with above) who are employed on a short-term or contract basis by the company.

Fishamble is an equal opportunities employer. It is the job of the General Manager to **monitor gender equality in employment** and to present the facts to the board at the AGM. Gender equality among employees, and equality in pay scales, are priorities for the company.

(3) Company Structure and Board

At staff level, Fishamble currently operates with three full-time and two part-time staff. Without prejudice to fair offers of employment, when full or part-time positions become available, the company seeks to **encourage a diverse range of applicants**.

The board undertakes to **consider gender equality as a priority** when recruiting new board members.