



A TRUE SYMPHONY: a selection of images from the Allianz Business to Arts Awards event, which took place on 20 May 2009 at Castletown House, along with some of the projects that were recognised

# A new chapter



Amidst the chaos the economy has been plunged in right now, marrying the arts with business is one way we can bring Ireland back to centre stage, as this year's winners of the Allianz Business to Arts Awards so vibrantly reflect

THERE isn't a cliché that hasn't been used to describe the period of unprecedented economic and social change, which we find ourselves in. But, rather than dwelling on the circumstances, it is incumbent on us all to work to adapt and discover the opportunity that lies within the turbulence.

This year's Allianz Business to Arts Awards were no exception to this, as the organisations involved sat down to consider what changes were needed, and what was the right response to the current climate.

One area both Allianz and

Business to Arts were in complete agreement on was that after 18 years, it was more important than ever to recognise continuing relationships between the arts and business communities.

This belief was rewarded with 84 nominations for the awards, a small decrease on 2008, whose combined value represented over €6.4m of investment in the arts. An increase on the 2008 figure, this was a great achievement when you consider that these relationships and projects took place during the past 12 months, despite mounting

financial pressures.

When planning the Awards event itself, the notion of the traditional black-tie gala dinner seemed at odds with the current situation. A new format that was both celebratory and appropriate was needed. In the end, the result could not have been better.

With the kind support of the Office of Public Works (OPW), the event was held in the Long Gallery of Castletown House in Celbridge, Co Kildare. A special invitation-only winner's lunch was held, with the awards presented by President Mary McAleese. It

was a tremendous honour for those successful in this year's competition.

In many ways, Castletown House was the perfect venue for this event. Not only is this stunning property probably the most important of its kind in Ireland, but it is also home to a number of arts organisations, in line with OPW's objective of establishing the House as a cultural hub.

This is being achieved through a residency programme, where organisations are invited to base themselves at Castletown House and find ways of focusing cultural

attention on the building.

The Performance Corporation, a leading independent theatre company, is one of those organisations lucky enough to call Castletown House home. In the spirit of wanting to support the OPW concept, Business to Arts worked with its artistic director, Jo Mangan, to re-imagine and rework a performance originally created during the Corporation's unique 'Space' programme.

'Space' invites architects, actors and choreographers to work together to design new work within the House. This

meant that the Awards were not just hosted by OPW, but the event itself also engaged the artists based at the House and allowed Allianz and Business to Arts to showcase the talent that lay within its walls.

Having given some 100 guests a unique perspective on Castletown House, the awards ceremony itself was a fitting tribute to the winners, with speeches from President McAleese, Brendan Murphy, chief executive of Allianz, and Stuart McLaughlin, chief executive of Business to Arts, before the presentation of the awards themselves.

The experience of all of the winners at this year's Allianz Business to Arts Awards is that these projects have transcended the times in which we find ourselves and provide an example of what can be achieved when we marry together these two disparate worlds.

In his speech, Stuart McLaughlin noted that, in its awards, Business to Arts

strives to look for all the possibilities that might exist in collaboration between the business and arts communities, and this year's winners truly represented this.

They range from the large-

been of the highest standard, and this is often achieved within the confines of small budgets and limited resources.

One could argue that a culturally engaged business community will enhance

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scale sponsorship of the Gate Theatre by Ulster Bank, through to the creative use of collaboration with theatre by both the Irish Council for Bioethics and Mundipharma Ireland, or the creative artist-in-residence programme of the Art@Work project in Roscommon.

Much of the artistic achievement that is celebrated has

Ireland's reputation at home and abroad, and as we all work to understand the new world order, and re-establish Ireland's leadership position, it is striking that the standards and success of these projects might provide an example that allows us to take the advantage of opportunities that lie within the chaos.