



erson plays. The theatre, which
nes lunchtime shows and bowls
p, has been a staple of the capi-
ltural life for the past 20 years.
premieres have included *My Left*
Michael Patrick and Oisín Kear-
hich is now a BBC series, and
t Kirwan's *Dublin Oldschool*.

€1.3bn
VALUE OF LIVE ARTS TO
THE IRISH ECONOMY

down 50% of the
grant for this year, and Henry reasons:
“We’re getting taxpayers’ money, and
it’s our job to work in the arts and
create access.” He feels that theatre
producers will have to be extremely
careful in the near future, however.
“You can’t plan if there’s a 50% chance
that a play is going to be cancelled, or if
there’s going to be a second spike [of
infection] or a third spike.”

Lynne Tracey, the chairwoman of
the New Theatre in Temple Bar, hopes
that being small means it can be
flexible. “Not having the day-to-day
work gave scope to thinking, and
Anthony Fox [its artistic director] has
reimagined the space,” she says. One of
its forthcoming projects is a perfor-
mance of Gerard Humphreys’s play
Jackie, about Jackie Kennedy, which it
hopes to stage in St Stephen’s Green.
“We will bring theatre wherever is the
right place for us to be,” she says.

The New Theatre tried digital media
with its Fight Back Festival but,
although happy to have done it, Tracey
is aware of growing online fatigue.
“One thing that came out of it is that
digital theatre is not actually theatre.
Theatre is unedited, theatre is live,” she
points out.

While there have been mixed
responses to digital performances, Roe
thinks they have a role: “It keeps the
light on in the Abbey. It’s wonderful but
... we’re still at home, on our own. It’s
not theatre. It’s a form of theatre.”

Roe himself has been working on
speculative projects and remains hope-
ful of resuming his career, but admits
to being grateful for the government’s
Covid-19 payment throughout the lock-
down. “If I didn’t have that, I don’t
know what I’d do,” he says frankly.
“I’ve been working for 40 years and I
still get into taxis and they’ll say, ‘Are
you still doing the auld acting?’ It’s
almost as if the perception is we’re not
too far removed from the amateur
circuit, that we do this for a bit of craic.
We don’t. We do this for a living.” **C**