



ABTT TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD:

2021 WINNER

Sorcha Steele:

NOMINATION STATEMENT:

“We would like to nominate Sorcha Steele, the Royal Exchange Theatre’s Head of Sound, for this year’s ABTT Technician of the Year Award.

Sorcha began her career in 2005 working with various Am Dram groups in Ireland and gaining enough knowledge to move into the Industry as a professional. During those early years she earned invaluable experience honing her craft working in a variety of different environments including film, TV, theatre and corporate engagements.

Sorcha started her career journey at the Royal Exchange Theatre in 2012 when she was appointed Senior Sound Technician. She very quickly revealed herself to be an invaluable part of the Team and was asked to step up to Deputy Head in 2013 after the tragic death of Steve Brown, Head of Sound. Within two years she impressed enough to be appointed Head of Sound, a position she has held since then.

Sorcha’s leadership and thinking within her specialism has consistently displayed innovation, excellence and passion. She always strives to push the Sound Department in its practice, while supporting her colleagues and freelance designers, and ensuring both they and the Theatre are held. By continually researching and championing new ways of working that reflect innovation within the industry, and responding to advances in technology and the expectations of sound designers, she has consistently encouraged and enabled the advancement of her own craft, that of her colleagues, and the quality of the Theatre’s artistic output and sector reputation.

During her time at the Royal Exchange she has delivered: a full front of house upgrade from analogue to digital systems, a CADAC J-type was replaced by a Digico SD10-T with full redundancy QLab playback, an upgraded digital comms system,

she identified access requirements and updated systems based on the needs of the audience (greatly enhancing our access offer), and maintained an existing, ageing infrastructure while still being able to provide current technology that is expected on productions.

Within her Department, Sorcha showed strength of leadership in 2017 by rebuilding the team when both senior technicians left within a few months of each other to pursue other careers. She single-handedly recruited and trained the new appointments, with great success. Sorcha has always understood the significance of training next generation Sound practitioners and regularly develops casual technicians in their skills and confidence and by providing opportunities for them to access that support. Her nurturing has developed several people's careers and enhanced many professional lives.

Sorcha's reputation amongst freelance Sound Designers is second to none. Her extensive specialist expertise of 'in the round' sound and her open and supportive demeanour means that designers are fully supported to realise their ideas in our spaces and deliver work that pushes both their boundaries and ours. Her enthusiasm for her specialism is infectious, her attitude is always positive and proactive, and coupled with her keen sense of responsibility and nurturing leadership she has made our Sound Department a coveted place to work within the sector.

As an individual, Sorcha is inspiring. She has constantly pushed herself to grow as a specialist and now heads a Sound Department in an Industry that is still pre-dominantly male. Now with a young family, she is even more determined to break down barriers, set an example and show the sector that people with children can continue a career in technical theatre and flourish.

In summing up, we are so proud of Sorcha and her enduring commitment to Sound, and of how she has enriched the professional lives of countless fellow colleagues and artists, as well as our audiences, through her work. We believe the singular environment of creative freedom that she enables has not only contributed greatly to our reputation within the sector, but also to the advancement of Sound within the Industry overall."

Michelle Hickman, Leadership Coordinator.

Supporting Statements:

SUPPORTING STATEMENT ONE:

" Sorcha has been a fantastic collaborative person to head up a team and help realise the complexities and nuances of the sound elements of the shows we have worked on together. Her creative and technical prowess enables me to push the sound and music elements from small studio shows to large scale main house shows and international tours.

Sorcha's technical knowledge and creative understanding and approach to sound solutions have been invaluable to delivering the technical and creative elements of the intricate and challenging sound designs we have worked on together.

Sorcha is a great team player and brings a wealth of knowledge to help realise the sound requirements from the simplest to the most complicated of shows, from studio based 2 handers to international tours with bands, actors and even radio mic'd paper puppets."

Giles Thomas, Sound Designer

SUPPORTING STATEMENT TWO:

"As somebody from a working class background who didn't attend drama school, getting into theatre was difficult. I genuinely don't think I would be where I am now in my career if it wasn't for Sorcha's support and guidance. Not only did Sorcha give me the opportunity to prove myself in a technical capacity and helped me gain valuable hands on experience, she also provided me with a much needed mentor and role model. I learnt so much about my discipline as well as theatre in general through working alongside her and she is a HUGE asset and an integral part of the Royal Exchange Theatre."

Elanor Theodorou, Sound Engineer

SUPPORTING STATEMENT THREE:

"I have worked on many projects with Sorcha since 2013.

Whatever specific role Sorcha has taken on my shows, whether that be as Production sound engineer, sound operator, Head of sound for the venue or indeed as Associate Sound Designer, she has always brought the same level of professionalism, expertise, determination, conscientious work ethic and creativity to all of the projects we have collaborated on.

Sorcha is dedicated to the excellence of sound and sound design whilst always striving to maintain a fair, inclusive and enjoyable working environment. I would definitely say that Sorcha deserves recognition for her great work and tireless approach to Audio in the Theatre."

Richard Brooker, Sound Designer

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOUR:

“Sorcha was recruited as part of the technical team opening the Convention Centre Dublin, as one of the first recruits to the technical team in a newly built building Sorcha had her work cut out in testing the systems and setting up the equipment the technical infrastructure along with the processes and procedures. Its always a challenge to open a new venue from the start, with unproven infrastructure and building a team to deliver high quality technical services for all incoming events and shows.

Sorcha proved herself to be a fantastic team player and highly experienced in sound, managing to get the place and the team up and running to deliver high quality shows, Sorcha’s technical understanding was a great asset and key to the success of our opening and delivery with the CCD winning international awards in its first year of business. Sorcha is a great team player with a brilliant sense of humour always with a solution to any problem and more than willing to roll her sleeves up and get on with the job. Sorcha has great leadership ability and took on many tasks that were outside her remit, very calm on the floor and excellent with clients and incoming productions, I found Sorcha an absolute joy to work with and attribute a high level of the venues success to her professionalism and team work, as a manager Sorcha is exactly the type of person you want on your team, I would not hesitate in recommending Sorcha for this award.”

Lee Forde, current General Manager, Creative Technology Dubai, formerly Head of Production, Convention Centre Dublin
