

36 WESTLAND ROW



HOME OF THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY OF
MUSIC



ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN & REDEVELOPMENT

RIAM
Royal Irish
Academy of Music

Summer 2023

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ORIGINS & OWNERSHIP

In 1772, William Phillips of Phillips Green, Co. Wicklow, conveyed to Nicholas Tench of Fassaroe, Co Wicklow, land in Westland Brickfields. The land consisted of a frontage of 140 feet in Westland Row and stretched 212 feet from front to back.

Under the terms of the deed, Tench was to build "four good and substantial dwelling houses." Nos. 34, 35 & 36 Westland Row (originally Nos. 2, 3 & 4) remain. The developer was also responsible for building houses in Ely Place and Hume Street.

The Academy acquired No 36 in 1870 from Henry de Burgh for the sum of £2,000. Prior to that, it had been located in the Antient Concert Rooms in Pearse Street.



ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

No 36 is a fine Georgian house with less grand neighbours (also a feature of rows in Merrion Square and Merrion Street). It is a four bay house of four storeys and basement with a granite façade at ground-floor level and red brick above with granite quoins on both corners. The tall windows on the first floor have surrounds of Portland Stone.

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Some of the original features which remain today include: the lamps on the front steps, the brass-bound lock and drop handle on the front door, the mahogany doors (those on the first floor inlaid), some marble chimney-pieces, the chair-rails, skirting boards and the beautiful stone staircase.

An unusual feature of the rooms on the first floor is the pewter decoration on the skirting-boards, chair-rail, door-cases and window-cases. The only other house in Dublin known to have this is the University Club at 17 St Stephen's Green.

DESIGNERS

The plasterwork on the barrel-vaulted staircase ceiling, in the chief reception rooms and on the relief plaques on the walls of the entrance hall is believed to be that of Michael Stapleton, one of the chief stuccodores of the time. It closely matches similar work in Clonmell House, Harcourt Street.



The painted murals in the Board Room and the ceiling paintings in the Early Music Room are probably by Peter de Grée, a Dutch artist living in London who worked in Ireland from 1785 to 1789. Other examples of his work can be found in 52 St Stephen's Green.

In 1877, the whitewash which was covering the drawingroom ceiling was removed and it was discovered "that the ceiling was of very beautiful workmanship and had been painted in oil colours." It was decided to restore it. One of the RIAM Governors at the time, Sir Thomas Jones, believed the paintings to be the work of François Boucher.

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RESTORATION, RENOVATION & EXPANSION

While much of the original character of the building has been retained, there have also been many changes over the years. In 1871, a wall between the front and rear rooms on the first floor was removed to create a large concert room. The Academy's first organ, built by Telford and Telford of 109 St Stephen's Green, was installed here in 1879.

The original windows on the rear wall were replaced by Gothic-style window-cases complemented by an unusual Gothic-style chimney-piece. The paintings on this chimney-piece are possibly the work of Angelica Kauffmann. 1899 saw the installation of a bicycle run from the street to the basement area. A telephone line was installed in 1904 and, after much delay, electricity was finally installed in 1914.



To the rear of the premises was a yard with stables. At various times, new buildings were constructed here to accommodate the growing numbers of students. In 1890, a band room and teaching rooms were added at a cost of £310. The band room was later converted into the Dagg Hall, later renamed the Katherine Brennan Hall.

Nos 37 and 38 Westland Row were acquired in 1915 for £250. These buildings date from the mid-19th century.

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Much restoration work was carried out in the 1960s and a major investment of £300,000 from the government in the 1980s was required in order to satisfy fire and safety regulations and provide extra space. In 1987, the Academy purchased a building at the back of No 39. This was named the Esposito Hall and later housed the RIAM Library. 2001 saw the addition of a new extension at the back of the premises.

By 2015, the Academy had once again reached a critical stage with regard to space and facilities. The RIAM Strategic Plan 2020 included the ambition to redevelop the site at Westland Row to create a state-of-the-art music conservatoire which would match international standards. Todd Architects were chosen to design the new building. In 2018, €9 million funding was secured from the Irish government.



REDEVELOPMENT 2020-2023

Work began in 2020 with the demolition of the 2001 extension to the rear of the Georgian building. By January 2023, the first phase of the project was complete. Joining the Georgian building via a glass link bridge, the new building doubles the number of teaching rooms and includes an opera studio, music technology hubs, music therapy room, as well as a penthouse library overlooking Dublin city centre.

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RIAM 175 AND BEYOND



Autumn 2023 will see the opening of the 300 seater Whyte Recital Hall in time for the RIAM's 175th anniversary celebrations.

Thanks to the Irish government and the generosity of our Irish, UK and American donors, the Academy is on its way to delivering a world-class music conservatoire for Ireland, but there is more to do.

If you would like more information about how to support the Academy's continued development, please visit our website at:

<https://www.riam.ie/support-us>

Information about venue hire can be found on our website at: <https://www.riam.ie/venue-hire>

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GEORGIAN DUBLIN

For more about Georgian Dublin:

Irish Georgian Society: www.igs.ie

A glimpse into life in a Dublin Georgian Townhouse:

<https://numbertwenty-nine.ie/>