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Acting for Peace – The Effectiveness of Drama and Theatre as a Tool for Promoting Peace-Building and Reconciliation

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Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd

Acting for Peace



Research by  greenhat

- *The Effectiveness of Drama and Theatre as a Tool for Promoting Peace-building and Reconciliation*
- *More Ideas and Inspirations for using Drama and Theatre as Tools for Peace-building and Reconciliation*

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Whilst this research has been commissioned by Smashing Times Theatre Company and features the work of the company as a case study, it is intended that the theatre and wider arts sector on both sides of the Irish border and beyond can benefit from it.

The research will directly feed back into the work of Smashing Times Theatre Company and help inform its artistic processes and ways in which it engages with its audiences, participants, funders and partners.

The research and associated outputs will be widely circulated so that learning can be shared and discussion provoked about the contribution of drama and theatre to the peace-building process both in the past, present and future.



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by the European Union
Peace and Reconciliation Programme



Border Action
Fóidéal agus Comhalt. Fíochairt. Working in partnership.



SOME THOUGHTS ON DRAMA AND THEATRE AS A TOOL FOR PEACE-BUILDING...

*“All theatre is necessarily political,
because all the activities of man are
political and theatre is one of them”*

[Augusto Boal]

“Theatre is the mirror of life”

[Sophocles]

*“The theatre is called the popular school.
It teaches us how to feel and think”*

[Maxim Gorky]

*“The object of theatre is not to teach us
what this or that particular person has
done, but what every person under
certain circumstances would do”*

[Gotthold Ephraim Lessing]

CONTENTS

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DRAMA AND THEATRE AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING PEACE-BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
About Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd	6
Project Partners and Funder	6
Context of drama, theatre and peace-building	7
Research Methodology	10
Case Study 1: <i>The Wedding</i>	11
Case Study 2: Sole Purpose Productions	14
Case Study 3: <i>Yo Mister</i>	15
Case Study 4: Upstate Theatre Company	17
Case Study 5: Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd: Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre	18
Summary of findings and conclusions	21
Implications of research and Acronyms	24
Acknowledgements	25
Bibliography	25
Appendix – Maps of project areas	26

MORE IDEAS AND INSPIRATIONS FOR USING DRAMA AND THEATRE AS TOOLS FOR PEACE-BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

Introduction	31
Guidelines	32
Panel of Professional Artists and Tutors and Biographies	33
Directory of Useful Contacts	37
Additional Suggestions for Further Reading	39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research examines the effectiveness of drama and theatre as a tool for peace-building through a series of primary research case study interviews, and through secondary research comprising desk research and literature review.

The case studies provide a rich and fascinating insight into how drama and theatre have been and are being used as tools for peace-building and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties. The case studies are all highly distinctive, and the organisations and projects are as individual as those who designed and delivered them.

The research concludes that there is no such thing as a formula for 'how to do drama and peace-building' in the context of the conflict. Many of the interviewees felt uncomfortable about the term 'best practice', particularly in relation to their own work. They felt that it would imply a 'recipe' or that their project was the 'best' way to undertake this kind of work. However, many of them said 'this is what works for us'.

The research identified a series of common approaches, practices and methodologies and inter-related factors shared by all or most of the case studies. We will call these 'key success factors':

They are:

- Access to non-arts funding
- Artistic integrity
- Significant and designed participation
- Use of non-arts spaces
- Artistic risk-taking
- Principled leadership on artistic and behavioural standards
- Going where wanted and invited
- Company understanding of the complexity

- of peace-building
- Longevity of work
- Individuals with strong personal commitment to both peace-building and the arts

The distinctiveness of theatre and drama to peace-building is identified as the creation of 'safe spaces'. This is unique to drama as an art form and so has the potential to be used as its 'Unique Selling Point' (USP) as a tool for peace-building and conflict transformation to the wider community, funders and others.

Conclusions are drawn from the research and the implications for Smashing Times Theatre Company, the wider theatre sector and for peace-building in the Irish border region are outlined.

Finally, this research could easily have been 10 times the length that it is, such was the amount, significance and quality of information gathered. Therefore, the researcher humbly acknowledges that this report only begins to scratch the surface of documenting the contribution of drama and theatre to peace-building in an Irish context.

INTRODUCTION

Summary

This research examines the effectiveness of drama and theatre practice as a means to promoting peace-building and reconciliation within the Irish context. This research will consider a number of drama and theatre projects in Northern Ireland and border counties, which have been designed and delivered to contribute towards peace-building and reconciliation.

The research was commissioned by Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd and undertaken by Green Hat.

The research was commissioned as part of the Smashing Times Theatre Company project Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre which is a cross-community and cross-border drama and theatre training programme implemented by Smashing Times Theatre Company in association with the Mid-Ulster Women's Network and University College Dublin – the accrediting body.

The project takes place in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties and consists of two training programmes – the Certificate in Community Drama and the Diploma in Drama Facilitation Skills – and additional support and mentoring services. The project is designed specifically to promote peace building and reconciliation through high quality artistic processes.

Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre is funded by the European Union's Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Cross-border Consortium.

Research aims

The aims of this research project are to:

- Identify five drama and theatre projects which have been established specifically to contribute towards peace-building and reconciliation
- Document project activities, methodologies, approaches and participants
- Describe project successes, benefits, effectiveness and possible future models for best practice
- Examine project challenges, gaps in provision and limiting factors
- Disseminate project findings to the theatre, arts, community and other relevant sectors, to provide a resource, share

learning, best practice, highlight challenges and difficulties and provide a source of information and inspiration

Definitions and use of language

The researchers want to acknowledge the importance, significance and sensitivity of language around the events from 1969 to 1994, whether people refer to this as the Northern Irish / Irish / Anglo-Irish conflict, the 'war' or the 'Troubles'. This research will use the term 'the conflict' as this is generally regarded as neutral terminology.

The use of the term 'Ireland' refers to the 'island of Ireland' in order to abbreviate Northern Ireland [NI] and the Republic of Ireland [ROI]. No political or other inference is intended. We also recognise that the term 'Republic of Ireland' whilst widely used and understood has no constitutional standing.

The term 'Border region / area' refers to counties on both sides of the border who share a considerable number of features, including many as a result of the conflict. These counties are: Armagh, Cavan, Derry, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Tyrone. As a number of the case studies and other relevant projects received funding from the EU Peace I, II & II extension, the county of Sligo is also included.¹

The two main traditions are referred to as Catholic / Nationalist / Republican (CNR) and Protestant / Unionist / Loyalist (PUL). This is to acknowledge the diversity within each of the two main communities and that this diversity goes beyond just religion. It is not to suggest that all Catholics are Republicans or all Protestants are Loyalists, but rather that within each community there is a wide spectrum of views, opinions and perspectives.

In this research we have also talked about 'ex-combatants'. Again, we acknowledge that there are some sensitivities around the use of this word, and that some would rather we used the term 'terrorists' or similar. We have taken this term from the Geneva Convention, who use it to describe anyone who has taken an active armed role in a conflict whether they are legally defined as being a 'lawful' or 'unlawful combatant'. In the context of the conflict, the term 'ex-combatant' is usually used to describe a former member of a paramilitary organisation, for example IRA, UVF, INLA, UFF, etc.²

We have also used the terms 'survivors' and 'victims' in this research. Although less controversial than the term 'ex-combatants', we nevertheless want to acknowledge that the use of such terms need sensitive application. We use these terms to define anyone who has been directly affected in any way by the conflict, regardless of what 'side' they have come from. We are aware that the use of the terms 'innocent victim', 'victims of State violence' and similar have political implications.

This research looks at both drama and theatre as tools for peace-building. For the purposes of this report, the term 'drama' refers to the drama workshop process which might include role-play, devising, improvisation etc. This is what Johnson (2005) describes as 'a collaborative event' in *The House of Games*. The term 'theatre' refers to the production and presentation of a story using drama and other art forms to an audience. In our case studies theatre is usually written, directed and produced professionally, with actors coming from professional, community and amateur / voluntary backgrounds.

Finally with regard to the use of language in this document, we acknowledge that the case studies consider theatre and drama of different types: community theatre and professionally-produced theatre. This is probably less important to those working outside of the theatre sector, but of significance to those working within it. *The Wedding* and *Yo Mister* were both community theatre projects whilst Smashing Times Theatre Company, Upstate Theatre Project and Sole Purpose are professional theatre companies.

¹ Co Sligo is defined as a border county under EU Peace I, II & II extension funding programmes

² Irish Republican Army; Ulster Volunteer Force; Irish National Liberation Army and Ulster Freedom Fighters

ABOUT SMASHING TIMES THEATRE COMPANY

Smashing Times – Theatre for Change

Performance Training Participation

Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd is a professional theatre company involved in professional performance, training and participation. The work of the company is underpinned by a rights-based approach and a commitment to artistic excellence and social engagement. The company was established in 1991 by a group of women actors, who met at the Focus Theatre, Dublin.

Smashing Times are committed to:

- Professional performance
- Professional training and education in drama and theatre
- Participatory theatre practice – supporting direct access for local communities and communities of interest

- Theatre for change – supporting the use of theatre as a form of knowledge and as a means of transforming society so as to promote social justice and equality
- Links and research between professional and participatory theatre within Ireland and on an international basis

The company has four high profile patrons – Maeve Binchy, Brian Friel, Tim Pat Coogan and Robert Kee. Smashing Times Theatre Company is supported by Dublin City Council Arts Office.

Board

Dr. Patricia Kennedy

Dr. Eric Weitz

Dr. Ciara McMahon

Finola O’Riagain

Artistic Director: Mary Moynihan

Company Manager: Freda Manweiler



Various images from Smashing Times Theatre Company.

PROJECT PARTNERS AND FUNDER

About Mid-Ulster Women’s Network

Based in Magherafelt, Co Derry, the Mid-Ulster Women’s Network (MUWN) provides training, advice, counselling and a range of other support, educational and social activities for women in the mid Ulster area and beyond. The role they played in Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre was to attend management meetings and make decisions and provide support to the overall running of the project. They also supported the project by conducting outreach and recruitment for course participants in the Mid-Ulster Area of Northern Ireland.

About University College Dublin

University College Dublin (UCD) is one of

Ireland’s leading universities. It has a particular reputation for research and post-graduate learning. UCD comprises 5 colleges and 35 schools and focuses on humanities and sciences. The main campus is on the outskirts of Dublin at Belfield, with additional campus’ in the city centre as well as a research farm in Co Kildare.

The Certificate in Community Drama and Diploma in Drama Facilitation Skills are delivered in partnership with UCD’s Adult Education Centre as part of the Adult Education Centre’s outreach programme.

About the Funder

Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre is part-financed by the European Union’s Programme for Peace and

Reconciliation, managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Cross-border Consortium.

The Cross-Border Consortium comprising Border Action, Co-operation Ireland and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is involved in the implementation of Measure 5.4 (Promoting Joint Approaches to Social, Education, Training & Human Resource Development) of the Peace II programme under which this project is funded.

Border Action is a partnership between Pobal (formerly ADM Ltd) and Combat Poverty Agency (CPA), established by the Irish Government to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality through integrated local social and economic development within communities.

CONTEXT OF DRAMA, THEATRE AND PEACE-BUILDING

Peace-building issues facing theatre sector

There are a number of peace-building issues facing the theatre sector, both in terms of the impact on individuals and on the organisations. They are briefly summarised below.

The impact on and legacy of the conflict on our wider society is of course reflected in the participants and personnel of theatre companies and drama projects across NI and the border region. This research did not seek to tell or document the conflict-related stories of individuals working in or with theatre or drama on this island, although there are undoubtedly many.

For those from rural communities involved in the work of Smashing Times Theatre Company, Upstate Theatre Project and Sole Purpose, the closure of border roads has had a major economic, social, political and psychological affect in many areas. The isolation of rural areas has only added to this. This has affected where theatre professionals have been able to work, both in terms of getting physical access to venues but also where it has been safe and acceptable (by the local communities) to work.

There has been an impact on the freedom of speech and right to cultural expression. For example Gary Mitchell, who is from a working-class Protestant background was forced to leave his home in Rathcoole, and later Glengormley, to go into hiding because of Loyalist death threats relating to how he was portraying his own community in his plays. Addressing freedom of expression and other human rights (for example cultural rights) has been an aim of theatre projects by companies such as Quare Hawks Theatre Company (Sligo) and Smashing Times Theatre Company.

The use of both the Irish language and Ulster Scots dialect has also created huge political discussion and debate, with both CNR and PUL communities accusing the other of using the others' language for political intent.

The funding of the arts in Northern Ireland has been given an extremely low priority, when compared to the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Arguably, this low priority has in part been due to the significant spending in Northern Ireland on

security, policing, segregated education and housing and other conflict-related public spending. Even if the conflict and low level of arts funding are unrelated, the reality is that there are huge issues for the sector in terms of who and how they engage their public. The spend per head on the arts in Northern Ireland is currently £6.13; this compares to £12.61 in the Republic, £8.39 in England, £11.93 in Scotland and £9.17 in Wales.

Finally, there is still the perception that theatre is an exclusive (largely middle or upper-class) activity. This is a genuine barrier to participation and provides the theatre sector with a particular challenge for peace-building in terms of reaching out to working-class communities.

Addressing the legacy of the conflict

There are, of course, many ways to address the legacy of the conflict. The strength of theatre and drama as a tool for peace-building is that it can engage with people who would not otherwise participate in such activities. Drama and theatre can address issues of peace-building, conflict, reconciliation and diversity, both in a very direct way but also in a more subtle implicit way which can be more accessible and less threatening to some people.

The dissemination of this report will, in its own small way, contribute towards addressing the legacy of the conflict by documenting creative projects that have brought people together through drama and theatre, and made a contribution towards peace-building on both sides of the border.

Area projects cover

The geographical area that this research covers is wide, and is different for each case study.

The Wedding project engaged communities in two areas in Belfast - Short Strand and the Lower Newtownards Road.

Sole Purpose Productions is based in Derry City but works across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and internationally.

Yo Mister was originally produced for the Shankill community in Belfast but ended up touring throughout Northern Ireland, to

both rural and urban communities.

Smashing Times Theatre Company is based in Dublin, and delivers work throughout Ireland, north and south. Their Acting for Peace-Creative Training in Drama and Theatre project was delivered through a series of residential weekends at a number of venues in border counties, again on both sides of the border.

Upstate Theatre Project is based in Drogheda, Co Louth, and they work throughout the border region. Their Crossover Theatre Project is being delivered in counties Fermanagh, Tyrone, Louth and Monaghan.

The appendix contains maps of these areas.

Target audience and recipients of research findings

This research is intended to contribute to and support theatre companies and practitioners using their art to contribute towards peace-building and reconciliation. It is also hoped that youth and community development workers might also find some of this content useful to their work, and that the case studies might influence and inspire them to consider the use of drama and theatre in their peace-building work.

This research will be fed back to the theatre community and youth/community development sector – across the whole of Northern Ireland, border counties and to others who work in these areas.

Use of theatre in community settings

In *The House of Games* (Johnston, 2005), drama is described as an art form having 'considerable advantages over music or the visual arts by criteria of accessibility. There is an immediacy to its practice'. Indeed the language of drama is seen as the language of social experience, and comparisons are drawn between improvisations as part of the drama process and the 'improvisations' that each and everyone one of us undertakes every day of our lives as we experience new and different situations.

Drama is also seen as totally non-discriminatory by virtue of the fact that there is no physical or mental condition that might prevent a level of participation.

Furthermore, Johnston sees drama as an art form which is particularly appropriate for individuals and groups who are either excluded from mainstream culture or who choose to be excluded from it. This has particular resonance for peace-building, for example in engaging with ex-prisoners, ex-combatants, victims and survivors.

Establishing a specific interest grassroots group, such as a drama group, is described by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (Community Development: Guide to Good Practice, n.d) as being one of three main ways of acting as a catalyst for change in local communities. *The Wedding* is surely a remarkable example of this.

The contribution of community drama and smaller-scale professional theatre to community relations in Northern Ireland is well documented. David Grant's *Playing the Wild Card* (1993) provides a comprehensive review of the contribution of the theatre sector to community development at that time.

The arts in international peace building

There are a range of drama-based practices being actively used in peace-building initiatives throughout the world. It is not the purpose of this research report to document these, but we mention several to give a brief flavour of these activities.

Through a programme sponsored by the Catholic Relief Services in Ghana in 2002-03, a new genre 'Culture-Drama' emerged. This drew on psychodrama theories and practices, and used re-enactment as a tool for socially therapeutic activities with the aim of conflict transformation. Culture-Drama has roots in what *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005) calls 'the third stage' – the integration vehicle which carries through the peace process.

Based in Devon, UK, Wolf + Water Arts Company use theatre to explore themes in conflict management and peace-building, concentrating on individual, group and cultural responses to violence. They have become a specialist peace-building arts company and have worked in and with groups from Indonesia, Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East and Chechnya.

Lederach and the arts

The American John Paul Lederach is widely regarded as one of the most influential peace-building thinkers, writers and practitioners in the world. He has visited and worked in Northern Ireland.

In his book *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005), John Paul Lederach, makes frequent reference to the positive power of creativity and the arts in areas of conflict. He describes attending a conference in Co Fermanagh, where a specially-commissioned dance piece is performed by a cross-community group of women and performed to Paul Brady's *The Island*. While the women dance, photographs of the conflict appear on a large screen, without comment. Those present, including Northern Ireland's leading politicians, policemen and other officials, are reduced to tears. Lederach says of the performance 'The whole of the conflict was held in a public space, captured in a moment that lasted fewer than five minutes'. Whilst he struggles to answer the questions he himself raises about the connection of the arts to political change in areas of conflict, he does state that 'arts and finding our way back to our humanity are connected'.

Lederach also cites Herm Weaver – a musician, psychology professor and former Christian minister in *The Moral Imagination*. Weaver reflects on the 'fun' element of the creative process in reconciliation. 'The reason I like the arts – music, drama, dance, whatever the form', he wrote, 'is precisely because it has the

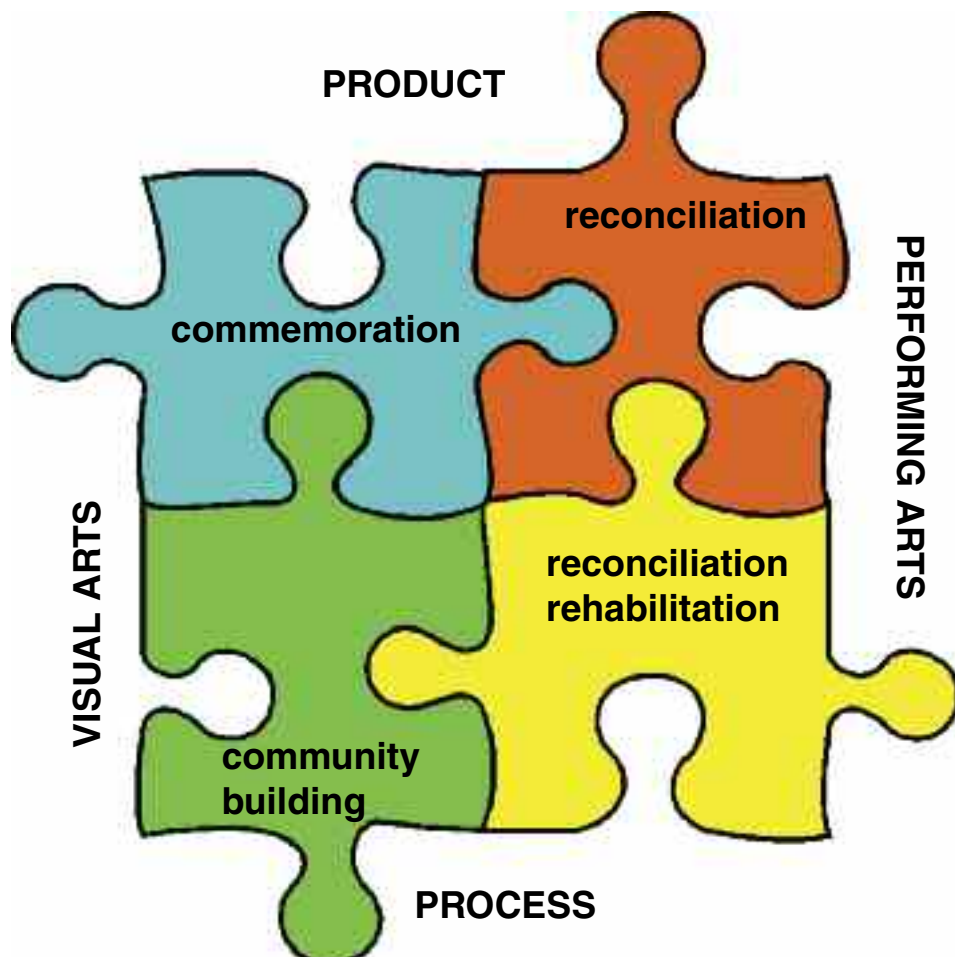
capacity to build a bridge between the heart and the mind'.

Lederach goes on to cite a range of peace-building projects which draw heavily on the arts as a tool for expression, reconciliation and/or understanding. These included Carol Kane's *Petals of Hope*, a visual arts project made in response to the Omagh bomb.

Theatre and conflict resolution

Making a Leap: Theatre of Empowerment (Clifford & Hermann, 1998) was developed for youth work professionals wanting to use drama and theatre to explore personal and social issues, including conflict resolution and community theatre. It was developed from 10 years of active research in community settings. In the introduction, the authors describe why drama has been chosen as the tool of choice:

'Drama engages both the head and the heart...In the realm of imagined experience, we take on roles of other characters and experience different situations, so that our understanding of ourselves, of others and of the world we live in grows. Drama provides an opportunity to address moral dilemmas, to express our feelings, to be creative and to explore new ideas and ways of being. Drama demands interaction between people – and



it is a social process... and of course, drama is fun!

In *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach describes the concept of 'the gift of pessimism', a reality check that those affected by conflict often demonstrate. Lederach believes that 'constructive pessimism' teaches us that the most significant weakness in developing and sustaining peace is the lack of genuine engagement with local communities, lack of ownership of the process, lack of opportunities to participate and inability to generate commitment which convinces that peace is a better option than war. Drama is perfectly placed to make that engagement and to explore the concept of 'constructive pessimism'.

In *People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World* (European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 1999), Kees Epskamp proposes a model illustrating the methods by which the arts can contribute to building a just society (see previous page for this model).

The performing arts is seen as playing its most significant role in contributing to reconciliation and rehabilitation, and through a combination of both product and process. That said, there are also many examples of how theatre and drama have been used to commemorate and contribute to community building (the other two pieces of this model).

This contribution can be seen not only in post-conflict and peace-process scenarios, but also in more day-to-day community conflict situations. In *Arts Approaches to Conflict* (Liebmann, 1996), Forsyth describes how drama was used to resolve friction between young and elderly people through a police-based initiative in the Falkirk area of Scotland.

In addition, many arts and peace-building projects are seen as making a contribution towards the fulfilment of human rights (Schabas & Fitzmaurice, 2007). Smashing Times are cited in Border Action's *Respect, Protect and Fulfil: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Peacebuilding and Reconciliation* research as their training is aimed at raising awareness of the need for universal respect for human rights.

Boal and theatre as a tool for radical social change

Far from being a new concept, the use of theatre as a tool for social change goes back to Ancient Greek times. One of the most commonly referred to 'gurus' in this field is Augusto Boal, a theatrical writer, director and politician, working in São Paulo state in southeast Brazil. His technique, Theatre of

the Oppressed (Boal, 1973), developed in the 1960s, was a blend of the genre 'theatre for development' and participatory theatre, which he called Forum Theatre.

Boal was elected as a Vereador (the Brazilian equivalent of a councillor) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. After he failed to be re-elected in 1996, Boal developed another kind of Forum Theatre to help identify and address the key social problems of the city. He called this Legislative Theatre (Boal, 1998).

Boal is often cited as a key influence by those working in or exploring working in the field of theatre and peace-building, and he is still living and working in Brazil and continues to establish theatre companies that make major contributions to community development.

In the UK, Cardboard Citizens are the leading exponents of Forum Theatre. The company is the UK's only homeless people's professional theatre company and is based in London. Interestingly, whilst Forum Theatre is frequently cited as an influence, those delivering theatre as a tool for peace-building have utilised or developed alternative techniques and approaches. At present, there is no Irish theatre company specialising in Forum Theatre, although there are a number of theatre practitioners who are highly skilled in related techniques. The Border Arts Centre, at the Dundalk Institute of Technology, aims to engage communities – who have been affected by conflict – by using the arts, in particular Theatre of the Oppressed.

Theatre and the Conflict Productions and playwrights

Theatre has long been a tool with which to explore the conflict. Productions have taken place across the island of Ireland and the UK at regional, national and local levels and gaining both high and low profiles outside the theatre / arts community. Many contemporary playwrights, from Sean O'Casey to Brendan Behan, have drawn on the conflict for inspiration. Recent examples of the conflict being explored on stage include *Marching On* by Gary Mitchell,³ *The Official Version* by Laurence McKeown,⁴ *The History of the Troubles According to My Da* by Martin Lynch⁵ and *Convictions*, a site-specific piece comprising seven short plays by Daragh Carville, Damian Gorman, Marie Jones, Martin Lynch, Owen McCafferty, Nicola McCartney and Gary Mitchell.⁶

The above examples are all notable for different reasons. Gary Mitchell and members of his family were forced out of their homes in November 2005 after a

campaign of violence and death threats. Mitchell's plays draw on his own working-class Protestant background and many explore Northern Ireland's Loyalist communities and culture.

Laurence McKeown survived the 1981 IRA hunger-strike. *The Official Version* told the story of the hunger-strike from a Republican perspective, and draws on McKeown's experience as an ex-combatant and ex-prisoner.

Ironically, *The History of the Troubles According to My Da* was first produced in London. In Northern Ireland, the play became a major hit, broke box office records and there have been several tours across the region. The play made a major contribution to audience development for drama, as it attracted many people with no previous interest or experience of theatre. In this respect, through his play Lynch made a significant contribution to a wider public discussion on the conflict through theatre.

Convictions was a promenade piece set in Crumlin Road Courthouse, a building steeped in the history of Belfast, and specifically associated with the conflict. To many it was a symbol of justice/injustice, and of judgement. These were the two central themes linking the seven plays that comprised this piece.

Verbatim theatre

Verbatim theatre has recently experienced a rise in popularity. As its name suggests, this form of theatre only uses the exact words spoken by interviewees about a particularly event or topic. There are two examples of relevance to peace-building in an Irish context. *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* by Richard Norton-Taylor⁷ and *Talking to Terrorists* by Robin Soans.⁸

The former recreated the scenes from the Bloody Sunday Inquiry into the shooting dead of 13 civilians by the British Army in January 1972. The latter featured the voices of people from around the world affected by and involved in terrorism. It is worth noting that Alistair Little, the coordinator of and performer in *Yo Mister* (one of this research report's case studies), contributed to *Talking to Terrorists*.

³ Produced by the Lyric Theatre (Belfast) in 2000

⁴ Produced by Dubbeljoint Theatre (Belfast) in 2006

⁵ Produced by the Tricycle Theatre (London) in 2003

⁶ Produced by Tinderbox Theatre Company (Belfast) in 2000

⁷ Produced by the Tricycle Theatre (London) in 2005

⁸ Produced by Out of Joint Theatre Company (London) in 2005

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Brief

In summary, this research project set out to examine the effectiveness of drama and theatre practice as a means to promoting peace-building and reconciliation within the Irish context. The research considered a number of theatre projects across the island of Ireland, which have been designed to contribute towards peace-building and reconciliation.

A wide range of individuals and organisations were involved throughout the research period. The research took place over a 9-month period, beginning in March 2007 and being completed in November 2007.

Research methodology

This research was conducted through the use of a mixed methodology, mostly primary sources. The main body of information was collected through five case studies which comprised face-to-face interviews with individuals from theatre companies, community development organisations, project participants and others involved in the delivery of relevant theatre projects. Other interviews took place by phone, and with some people there was email contact only.

Desk research was also undertaken, as was a literature review on previous and existing projects that have been delivered on the island of Ireland, in the UK and elsewhere and other initiatives of direct relevance.

A mixed methodology was considered the most appropriate way of gathering information for this research. The desk research was essential to be able to set the context of theatre and drama as tools for peace-building. It was also important to

review (in brief) the huge volume of academic and more informal research and documentation that is already in the public domain.

In-depth Interviews

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were undertaken with:

- Jo Egan, coordinator and producer of *The Wedding*
- Dave Duggan and Patricia Byrne, Artistic Directors of Sole Purpose
- Alistair Little, coordinator / facilitator / performer of *Yo Mister*
- Freda Manweiler, General Manager of Smashing Times Theatre Company
- Mary Moynihan, Artistic Director of Smashing Times Theatre Company
- Declan Mallon, Community Development Officer of Upstate Theatre

All key interviewees are theatre professionals, with the exception of Alistair who is a facilitator and activist in the field of peace and reconciliation. The format for each case study is different, reflecting the diversity and individuality of each project.

Email and telephone interviews

These interviews took place with a range of individuals and organisations who either have a theatre/drama, peace-building or community development remit but who were not directly involved in the delivery of the case study activities. These organisations included the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, An Chomhairle Ealaíon (The Arts Council), National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway, Border Arts Centre and others.

Desk research and literature review

We undertook secondary research for this project by looking at and for examples of how drama and theatre have been used to contribute to peace-building and reconciliation, particularly in the context of the conflict. We also reviewed a range of peace-building and community development literature for any evidence or documenting of drama and theatre as a tool.

Projected research outcomes

From this research into the effectiveness of drama and theatre as a tool for peace-building and reconciliation, Smashing Times hope to achieve the following outcomes:

- To raise the profile of the work currently being undertaken in the field and the confidence of those undertaking it
- To create a multiplier effect in terms of sharing learning and building understanding throughout the theatre sector
- To provide inspiration and insight to those who would like to 'dip their toes into the water' of drama as a tool for peace-building
- To help support the case for the arts as an effectiveness and accessible tool for peace-building and other community development activities
- To provide evidence (particularly to funders) that the arts can and does have an impact on individuals and communities in terms of contributing to increased quality of life, celebrating diversity, bringing people together and creating positive social change, particularly to sceptics who see arts as self-indulgent, elitist or exclusive.

CASE STUDY 1 – THE WEDDING

Summary and background

The Wedding was a community play project, developed by Jo Egan and Martin Lynch, and performed in Belfast in Autumn 1999. The project took 15 months to develop from inception to performance. *The Wedding* project was incredibly ambitious and genuinely innovative, and its complexity created a range of real challenges. Jo Egan – who was interviewed for this research – was keen to emphasise that it should ‘not be used as a model of best practice’ but also acknowledged that *The Wedding* was a seminal project, critically acclaimed and ‘people are still talking about it’.

The Wedding was a site-specific performance and followed events on the wedding day of a couple entering a ‘mixed’ (i.e. Catholic and Protestant) marriage. The performance itself took place in real venues – two houses, a church and reception venue. After boarding a bus in Belfast city centre, the audience were first taken to the groom’s house in (Catholic) Short Strand, then on to the (Protestant) bride’s house on Madrid Street, on the lower Newtownards Road. There the audience were able to ‘eavesdrop’ on both families. The audience then travelled to the wedding ceremony at Rosemary Street Church, and finally on to the reception at The Edge (a restaurant, bar and conference venue on the Laganbank in Belfast).

Written by two of Northern Ireland’s best-known and loved playwrights, Marie Jones and Martin Lynch, with four different directors (one for each scene) and co-scripted and acted by seven community theatre groups, the process of *The Wedding* was always going to be complex and challenging. That it happened at all – particularly given the political climate at the time – is nothing short of astounding. Despite taking place nearly a decade ago, *The Wedding* has been included as a case study here as it was an amazing project, a landmark piece of theatre and nothing like it has been undertaken since.

Initial concept and funding

The concept of this site specific performance and cross-community initiative was the vision of Jo Egan. The project was developed with Martin Lynch through informal conversations over a number of months in late 1997 and 1998.

The project was in part inspired by a Bill

Cleveland⁹ project on James Joyce that Gerry Stembridge¹⁰ had told Jo about. It involved 2 x ½ hour performance pieces in James Joyce’s house.

In July 1998, Jo took a group of 10 women – five Catholic and five Protestant – to a conference in Dublin on women and identity. Drama was used a tool to explore notions of identity, particularly within the context of the ‘Troubles’.

The experiences of the women from the Dublin conference and the concept of a house-based theatre project led to further discussions between Jo Egan and Martin Lynch, and *The Wedding* was born.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (Access lottery programme) was the main funder, but the project also received financial support from Belfast City Council, Community Relations Council (CRC), Belfast European Partnership Board, Laganside and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA).

Context and timeline

The context of *The Wedding* was all-important, and played a significant role in affecting the relationship between participants, contributing to community relations more generally, informing the writing process and wider political and social environment. 1998 was the year of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA),¹¹ the Omagh bomb, the first meeting between David Trimble and Gerry Adams,¹² the deaths of the three Quinn boys in Ballymoney,¹³ the first prisoners to be released under the GFA and a visit by the then US President, Bill Clinton.

Participants

All the community theatre groups on the Community Arts Forum (CAF) database (approximately 25 organisations) were contacted and requested to make expressions of interest in developing a cross-community site-specific production in Belfast. Seven theatre groups came forward. They were:

- Ballybeen Community Theatre Company
- Dockward Community Theatre Company
- Real World Theatre Company
- Shankill Community Theatre Company
- Stone Chair Community Theatre Company
- Tongue n’ Cheek
- Walkway Women’s Group

Six of the theatre groups were based in local (geographic and mostly single identity) communities, and the seventh – Real World – had a focus on participation by people with disabilities.

A committee was formed to support the project, with one representative from each of Stone Chair (‘Catholic’) and Ballybeen (‘Protestant’) representing the community theatre groups themselves, as well as members of the project team.

Project development

In October 1998, Jo began to gather material that would contribute towards the scripts. She did this through the collection of oral history by talking to members of clubs, women’s groups, GAA¹⁴ members, Old Tyme Dance classes, youth groups and other community organisations and networks. The key focus was on people talking about issues of identity and mixed marriages. These oral histories were presented to the writers at Christmas 1998 for them to draw on in their scripts, so that the voices of the characters were truly authentic, plausible and relevant.

In January 1999, the groups took part in a short series of single identity workshops. CAF hosted these, and the writers were present whenever possible. These workshops consisted of role-play, drama games and other drama-based activities and explored the role of the media in mixed marriages as well as issues of identity and symbols.

Jo describes this period as ‘struggling to get to the hub’. Two issues from the subject matter arose at this point, which affected the participants – one from each group. Catholics didn’t generally feel safe marrying into the Protestant community; Protestants felt that they were in danger of losing their identity as a result of a mixed marriage. Jo said ‘we were very aware that the project could just blow open at any stage’. This was clearly a testing time for the participants as well, with a number leaving the project either because they didn’t feel it was safe to continue participating or because they had lost interest. In one case, a whole group was lost as key people within this group no longer felt able to participate. Their influence was such that others from their community did not feel able to continue without them.

After three single-identity workshops, all of the participants were brought together for

one joint workshop at Belfast Unemployed Centre. This joint session was in preparation for a weekend residential. Shortly before Christmas 1998, there was a celebrational party, which acknowledged the achievements of even just coming together and being part of a shared process. It was also an informal ice-breaker between members of all the groups but also played a role in acknowledging that this was a difficult and challenging process.

The residential was held at the Share Centre in Lisnaskea, Co Fermanagh in March 1999. The process for the residential was very carefully planned and the facilitators who took part were all extremely experienced, both in terms of drama and theatre practice and the facilitation of difficult conversations / issues and conflict. Activities over the course of the weekend included presentations, workshops, group work and testimonies. A range of tensions arose during the residential between and within the groups, which culminated in a (physical) fight between two women and which was grounded in Catholic / Protestant differences and perceptions. However, the residential also brought the participants together and gave them a sense of shared purpose, and some friendships did begin to emerge. There was a constant tension between success and failure and the fragility of the project put huge pressure on the project leader.

Creative process

Jo Egan not only had to manage and facilitate issues arising within the participating groups and their members, but also with the two writers. The first draft of the scripts were due to be completed before the summer so that the community theatre groups could consider them over the holiday period, provide feedback and so have the revised scripts ready for September. In the event, the final scripts were not ready until 24 September, only five weeks prior to the first performance!

This created major difficulties in terms of rehearsing and production plans, but more significantly, the creative process was a collaboration between the two writers, Marie Jones and Martin Lynch, and the theatre groups themselves. There was, perhaps inevitably, going to be issues raised by participants about script content, character behaviour, perceptions and portrayals which were linked to individual, community and cultural identity, and so a feedback and revision period had been factored in.

In June 1999, the draft scripts for the

house scenes were made available to participants, and were read aloud. By July 1999, a number of Protestant participants asked to meet with Marie Jones to talk about concerns about her script for the bride's house. There were issues over references in Martin Lynch's script of a Loyalist drive-by shooting, and concerns were raised that there was not a 'comparable' incident referred to in the Bride's (Protestant) house. These were difficult discussions, and some members felt that Marie Jones (a self-described 'East Belfast Prod') was not accurately representing the Protestant community. The Protestant representatives felt that violence against their community was unrepresented (or at least under-represented) in the play. The artistic process won the day and the script was not changed, but having the opportunity and being able to challenge it had been very important to the participants, and it did build trust. Significantly, a decision was taken that Marie could articulate an authentic, genuine and relevant Protestant voice.

Script development continued through the summer and the marching season, and although rehearsals began in early September, some participants began to feel very uneasy about the lack of finished scripts. There was suspicion and concerns about 'what might be in the scripts' and that they're being kept 'hidden'. By mid-September, many participants from the Protestant community were ready to walk away from the project, the key issues being suspicion about the lack of a final script. Jo clearly felt that there was real potential for the whole project to fall apart at the last minute.

During the latter stages of the project, relationships between some of the key personnel were incredibly strained. It was a particularly stressful time for Jo as she was now making all the decisions, as well as undertaking all the project management activities and directing one of the scenes. Jo felt that "I had a very clear vision of what I was doing, but I was just drowning in work, and no-one understood how the revolving action in the rooms worked except me".

Jo was responsible for managing both the artistic and peace-building / community development processes, a huge and unsustainable burden. At the end of September, Paula McFetridge joined the project team as Production Manager, and Jo was at last able to share some of the workload.

Benefits for participants

The Wedding produced a significant number of benefits for the participants. From a theatre perspective, it acted as a springboard to a range of other activities both in and outside of drama and other art forms. Some participants went on to undertake further training in theatre and several are now working professionally in theatre. Others used their experience in *The Wedding* to explore other art forms.

For those who took part, the production built confidence, both for personal and professional lives. It also built an acceptance – but not necessarily an understanding for everyone – of the 'other'; in other words, participants reached at least a level of tolerance of their Catholic / Protestant counterparts. Some obviously did begin to understand and appreciate each others' perspectives, issues and culture, but the project team realistically acknowledged that involvement in the project was the first step in a longer process. There was also a sense of building a critical mass of people who were exploring alternative means of expression other than through violence. This puts *The Wedding* at the heart of the peace-building process in these communities at the time, and its impact was as significant (if not more) as any other 'mainstream' community relations initiative.

Gatekeepers and community issues

Jo felt that 'gatekeepers' from each of the local communities should be involved in the project as participants and/or advisors. Frankie Gallagher, then from the Gae Lairn Resettlement Project and later the Ulster Political Research Group (UPRG), an advisory body with links to the UDA, was involved as a participant through the Ballybeen Community Theatre Company. Pod Deveney, representing a political ex-prisoners group in Short Strand was consulted and also acted as an advisor.

'Bouncers' for each venue were needed, to provide reassurance and protection for audience members, and to act as door stewards / ushers for the performances. The project committee felt that it was important that these door stewards were seen as neutral within their own community, so that audience members felt that they were there for everyone. Finding appropriate stewards in Short Strand was not a problem, but the UDA made it known that they should be providing the security for Madrid Street. The project team had to seek assurances from the UDA that audiences would be safe. Guarantees were initially not

forthcoming but after discussions through community gatekeepers, the issue was resolved and two local women provided security, armed only with mobile phones. The gender issue was significant in providing a resolution to the ‘bouncer’ problem.

Communications between gatekeepers and community leaders, activists and the local community in general were important. The project team felt that everyone in each local community should know what was happening in each of the houses. This was important for the local community, the participants and the audience.

During the performance run, a husband of one of the participants was attacked in Short Strand with a machete by a group of young drug addicts from the Newtownards Road (close to Madrid Street). Whilst the incident was unrelated to *The Wedding*, it brought home the reality of ongoing violence in local communities and the ‘live’ social issues in Belfast at that time.

Project achievements

The Wedding was a huge artistic and commercial success. It was the hit of the 1999 Belfast Festival at Queen’s, and in terms of quality stood up next to professional theatre productions from around the world. It received rave reviews by everyone who reviewed it, and was ranked at No. 1 in *The Guardian Guide* for the period it ran. Its uniqueness, the raw honesty of the performances, the Belfast-specific nature of the piece and the high production standards were all cited as major success factors.

It was a landmark piece of theatre, and the quality of engagement with its audience was exceptionally high. The project triumphed in both the process and product. The process was rooted in community development and the product was of a high artistic quality. The production was both a physical act and practical manifestation of cross-community work, and the process involved finding creative ways to bring people together and work towards a common goal.

On the evening of Saturday 27 November 1999, the last performance of *The Wedding* took place. That night, at almost exactly the same time, David Trimble was making a landmark speech in Belfast’s Waterfront Hall and the UUP voted in favour of supporting the Mitchell Review of the GFA¹⁵ which would play a key role in establishing the NI Assembly. The play was absolutely ‘of its time’ and eight years later there is still huge resonance and considerable learning for the wider theatre and peace-building community.



Image from *The Wedding* community play.

⁹ US writer, research and community arts activist and musician; the Director of the Center for the Study of Art and Community, Washington State

¹⁰ Irish writer, director and actor

¹¹ *The Good Friday Agreement* (also known as the Belfast Agreement) was signed on 10 April 1998 by both the British and Irish governments and was supported by all major parties except the DUP. It was a landmark agreement and among other things created a power-sharing assembly

¹² David Trimble was the-then Leader of the UUP and in 1999 would become the First Minister for the Northern Ireland Assembly; Gerry Adams was (and remains) the President of Sinn Féin

¹³ Jason (aged 9), Mark (10) and Richard (11) were killed when their house was attacked with petrol bombs by the UVF on 12 July

¹⁴ Gaelic Athletic Association – an all-Ireland organisation for the promotion of traditional Irish sports such as gaelic football, camogie, hurling and handball; it is organised on a county basis and is seen as a largely Nationalist organisation

¹⁵ The famous quote by David Trimble in this speech was “We’ve jumped Mr Adams, now it’s your turn”

CASE STUDY 2 – SOLE PURPOSE PRODUCTIONS

Sole Purpose Productions was established in Derry in 1997 by Patricia Byrne and Dave Duggan.

In their own words, “Sole Purpose Productions is a professional theatre company that exists to use the discourse of imagination to investigate and illuminate social and public issues. Our work is situated at the crossroads of art and politics”.

There are three key elements to the work of Sole Purpose:

- New productions
- Touring, including festivals
- Projects and workshops

New productions

The company’s artistic directors have written, directed, produced and performed ten new pieces of work in the last ten years. Most recently, Dave Duggan wrote and directed *AH6905*, a one-man show dramatising the experience of truth recovery in a society coming out of conflict. Patricia Byrne developed, rewrote and produced an alternative pantomime – *Snow White – The Remix*, which challenges the impact of the beauty industries on the self-image and self-esteem of girls and young women.

Touring including festivals

Sole Purpose’s primary audiences are in non-theatre venues. That is community halls and centres, pubs, Orange halls, church halls, hospitals, clubs etc. Their productions have toured to venues as diverse as Glencree Reconciliation Centre in Wicklow to Longford Golf Club, from Limerick Institute of Technology to Crumlin United Football Club. They have also performed in theatres and at arts festivals in Ireland, Scotland and elsewhere over the last ten years. In 2006-07, the company performed at festivals in Dublin, Belfast and Donegal.

Projects and workshops

In addition to producing its own work, Sole Purpose has undertaken a range of projects and workshops with a wide range of individuals and groups. This part of their work is often undertaken in response to a specific request to use theatre as a tool for addressing a social issue. Over the last two years this work has included addressing

issues such as racism, victims of crime and peace-building.

In 2005, Sole Purpose undertook a Peace Theatre Residency at Kilcranny House, a peace centre outside Coleraine. The residential provided an experiential learning experience on using theatre to address peace issues. Participants came from across Northern Ireland, and from Dublin and England.

Company philosophy

The work of Sole Purpose is rooted in the philosophy of ‘making the world a better place’ and so it has set out to directly contribute to discussion and debate about the conflict, and to provide work which challenges the audience and themselves as writers and performers. They are absolutely committed to the highest artistic standards and to the tradition of theatre practice, and strongly believe that work in non-theatre surroundings does not mean that standards have to be compromised. For example, the discipline of not allowing late-comers into performances is enforced in community venues in the same way that it is in theatres.

The company describe the key ingredients of their work as:

- High artistic standards
- Relevant and engaging
- By invitation only
- Volunteer audiences
- Interactivity
- Tradition of drama and theatre practices

Sole Purpose and peace-building

In addition to *AH6905*, Dave Duggan has written four pieces of theatre which address issues of the conflict and its legacy, including the *Peace Process Trilogy*. *The Shopper and the Boy* (1996) looks at Loyalist marching; *Without the Walls* (1998) dramatises the challenges of a society trying to police itself as it moves out of violent conflict; and *Waiting...* (2000) explores issues around ex-prisoners, victims and the theme of moving on.

Scenes from an Inquiry (2002) marked the 30th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, and aimed to provide audiences with an insight into the Saville Inquiry. The play was performed by members of families of the



AH6905 by Dave Duggan, a Sole Purpose Production, with Darren Greer. Photo by Max Beer.

Bloody Sunday victims. A subsequent radio drama version was broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1.

Sole Purpose performances nearly always have some kind of interaction with the audience. For *Waiting...* around 80% of performances had interactive workshops where audience members directed the cast to carry out actions they thought should or might have happened. For example in *Waiting...* a victim comes face to face with a perpetrator; there is no physical violence in the play but in the workshops audience members often suggest actions like “hit them!” The actor’s role play this with the directors asking ‘what now?’ afterwards to create a sense of the consequences of our actions.

The company have set up safe structures and spaces for dealing with contentious issues. The company has a strong policy of only performing where they are invited and where they are wanted by the whole audience (‘volunteer’ audiences). Therefore, Sole Purpose don’t tend to work in schools, at conferences or with other audiences who might not be expecting them. They take time to build up a relationship with the communities they work with, usually through local community gatekeepers such as ex-prisoners, church leaders or community relations officers.

The company is keen to emphasise that they are not therapists, but they do acknowledge that some of their work can be therapeutic. There is longevity in their work (they don’t do one-off tours) that reflects the longevity of the peace process itself.

CASE STUDY 3 – YO MISTER

Background

Yo Mister was a short one-act play set in the waiting room of a prison, and performed by Loyalist ex-prisoners. The play featured three characters – a Loyalist prisoner waiting for a visitor, and two prison officers. Integral to each performance was a post-show discussion or workshop. The play was performed throughout Northern Ireland in community venues such as community centres, pubs, schools, halls and other non-arts venues. The play was performed both to public and ‘invited’ host audiences.

The play was the idea of Alistair Little, a facilitator with experience of working in conflict transformation on the island of Ireland, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia, England and South Africa. He is a former member of the UVF and an ex-prisoner.

The idea for *Yo Mister* came out of the development of an exhibition on Loyalism (mainly UVF focused) which contained photographs of the conflict, handicrafts made by ex-prisoners and video footage. The exhibition was held at the Argyle Business Centre in the Shankill Road area (Belfast), and was initiated by EPIC (Ex-Prisoner Interpretative Centre, a Loyalist ex-prisoner support organisation), and its then director Martin Snodden, himself a former UVF member and ex-prisoner. Alistair felt that a performance piece would bring the exhibition to life and articulate some of the many issues it raised.

Project development

A group of six to eight ex-prisoners including Alistair got together to talk about their experiences of prison. They talked about incidents, experiences, feelings and emotions. Out of these discussions, one of the group members – Willy Mitchell – wrote *Yo Mister*. The script did not produce a piece of verbatim theatre, but all incidents were based on true stories.

The group who developed *Yo Mister* wanted the play to attempt to give people an insight into prison life, the effect on the prisoner, their family and friends. They wanted to tell the stories of their families and to try to dispel the notion that good and evil can be easily and unequivocally defined.

The play was originally created for a one-off performance as part of the Shankill exhibition.

Creative product

The audience is seated between a prison cell and the visiting area. The play opens with two prison officers marching the prisoner roughly through the audience. *Yo Mister* is mostly a monologue, with the prisoner talking out loud waiting for his visitor. He is only referred to by his ID number. The prisoner was played by Alistair Little and other members of the ex-prisoner group played the prison officers on rotation. The themes of waiting and of time are present throughout, and the Bible’s Ten Commandments are an underlying concept.

The set was very simple, and all in black and white, to represent the concept of ‘good / evil’ and to symbolise the ‘greyness’ of prison. A map of Northern Ireland formed a backdrop. In addition to performances of *Yo Mister*, the prisoner’s monologues were performed on their own, followed with a question and answer session. This happened largely in educational settings, in schools, residential training or as part of a course (for example conflict, peace-building, community relations).

That the play was written, developed and performed without any assistance from theatre professionals is perhaps in itself unremarkable. What is notable is that the play – through word of mouth recommendations (and perhaps a little help from an article in the *Belfast Telegraph*) – went on to tour throughout Northern Ireland, and to great acclaim. Alistair is an experienced facilitator, and uses storytelling, visual arts, colour and model-making in conflict transformation workshops to articulate experiences and personal stories. He was able to draw on these skills and experiences of the power of arts to articulate deep emotions and complex ideas. Alistair was involved in the development of *Talking to Terrorists*, the internationally acclaimed verbatim theatre piece by Robin Soans and commissioned by Out of Joint and the Royal Court.

Audience and community interaction

Yo Mister was written, developed and performed solely as part of the Loyalist exhibition in the Shankill. However, it provoked discussion and debate beyond its original PUL audience and soon word of mouth recommendations resulted in the



Alistair Little.

group being invited to perform the piece at venues across Northern Ireland.

The concept of a post-show discussion was absolutely integral to the performance piece, and crucial to the integrity of the piece as perceived by the ex-prisoner group.

Initially, the post-show discussion involved just Alistair Little but it quickly became clear that the audience was very keen to engage in discussion and debate and that to be effective, credible and balanced, there should be a panel. As the key performer, an ex-prisoner and an experienced facilitator, Alistair was a permanent member of the panel. Whilst other members varied depending upon the location and timing of the performance, they usually included another ex-prisoner, church minister, an academic and peace-building practitioner.

Yo Mister was performed once for international visitors. The post-show discussion following this performance was understandably very different from that with a Northern Irish audience, but the feedback and discussions provided a useful external perspective on ex-combatants.

Facilitating conversations

The key success factor in terms of *Yo Mister*’s contribution to peace-building and reconciliation was the post-show discussion. The group intended to challenge stereotypes and perceptions about prisoners and ex-prisoners, and to build and develop understanding between themselves (as a section of society) and others involved in the conflict.

Audience members were allowed to vent and challenge actions, behaviour, opinions and ideas articulated in the play. This was safe for the performers, as it was their character, not themselves, that was being challenged. It was the group members’

experience that audience members were no less passionate or emotional because they weren't challenging 'real' people

By presenting 'faceless' characters rather than 'real' people, these post-show discussions created a safe space which facilitated the starting of difficult conversations between the panel and audience, and sometimes between audience members themselves. For example, after the performance on Lusty Beg Island, Co Fermanagh, Alistair found himself involved in a public and in-depth conversation with the daughter of a prison officer, who through her father's experience had very strong views on prisoners and ex-prisoners. Alistair was certain that this conversation could not and would not have happened outside of the safe space created by the performance, and it was a discussion that appeared to deeply affect both of them.

Whilst the prisoner in *Yo Mister* was obviously a Loyalist one, many of the issues transgressed political and religious boundaries. Following an invited performance in Derry, the audience members – comprising of Republican ex-prisoners – said that by simply changing names, places and a few expressions, *Yo Mister* could have been about a Republican ex-prisoner. The play therefore connected with them and they felt that despite the obvious political perspectives, there were more shared experiences than different ones. Following this performance, the panel members were taken on a tour of the Bogside by some of the Republican ex-prisoners and their encounter concluded with a pint of Guinness in a local bar. Again, members of the *Yo Mister* group believe that there is no way that there could have been discussions between the two ex-prisoner groups without the play, and the preparation undertaken before it to bring the two groups together.

Alistair described how *Yo Mister* brought conversations to life and made them visual, in terms of the audience seeing what lies behind particular issues and the messages that are being put out. He felt that an audience will be more reflective if they are 'sucked in' to the play, by engaging emotionally, visually and aurally, in the same way that they are watching a film. *Yo Mister* said things that would be difficult or impossible in ordinary conversation, and could 'stir up' issues that would be too provocative to otherwise raise.

Despite being in community venues, the theatre space itself was incredibly important to the success of *Yo Mister* as seen by the performers. Alistair felt that the creation of a theatre space facilitated people to come

into the room with 'the other side', an act which they simply would not be able to do in an 'ordinary' room – even the same room but without the theatre context. Theatre therefore neutralised the space, wherever that space might be.

Initially, some people believed that the play was about ex-prisoners justifying their own actions, but the post-show discussion provided a forum to explore and challenge this notion and audience members were encouraged to ask any question they wanted – and they did!

Yo Mister engaged with young people as well as older people who been directly involved, engaged in or affected by the conflict. There was a wide variety of reactions by the young people in terms of how they felt about being able to engage with ex-combatants and ex-prisoners. These reactions included fear, and the group had anticipated this. In the workshops with young people, they were asked to prepare questions in groups to provide a sense of safety that no remarks would be individually attributed. One performance took place at the Ulster Folk Park in Omagh, and brought together young people – both Catholic and Protestant – from three schools – and to a neutral venue. There was considerable interaction between audience members themselves, as well as between the performers and audience.

When asked if there was any negative reaction to the play itself (as opposed to the post-show discussions), the researcher was told that one Church Minister was very offended by the underlying theme of the Ten Commandments and felt that their use was anti-Christian. This hurt some of the participants who were committed Christians, and who felt that their judgement on this issue was being questioned. Interestingly, another Protestant Minister wanted to use some of the material in his sermons, as he felt that the issues had a wider application on the themes of forgiveness, understanding and reconciliation.

Barriers to participation and skills development

When asked about barriers to participation, Alistair felt that there was a feeling in some communities that 'theatre's not for us'. There were pre-formed ideas about what a theatre performance involved, and Alistair felt that this was largely a class issue. For some people the arts were the barrier to participation, whilst for others using the arts removed the barrier to participation in difficult, sensitive and complex conversations that otherwise would not have taken place.

Within the Protestant community, another

barrier to participation was that theatre is seen by some as immoral and 'un-Christian'.

The performers felt an initial sense of embarrassment (a common feeling amongst people taking part in theatre productions for the first time), but found that other aspects motivated them more and that this barrier could be fairly easily overcome. The performers developed confidence both as individuals as well as a group. They developed new skills as they went along and Alistair felt that in particular intellectual understanding and emotional intelligence had been significantly built through the *Yo Mister* process.

The power of theatre

In contrast to some of the other interviewees, Alistair strongly believes that the contribution of drama and theatre to peace building and reconciliation can only be made if there is a follow up or interactive activity, such as a workshop or post-show discussion. Whilst creating a safe space to hold difficult conversations, Alistair believes that there is a danger that (in a peace-building context) performers can use theatre to hide behind. Without a post-show discussion or other activity, the audience is left without a mechanism to challenge and so all power rests with the performers. In other words, the performers are saying 'I can throw out this issue to you as an audience, but you can't come back to me and question and challenge me about it', and that this is an abuse of power. Alistair felt that this lack of interaction between writer / performer and audience was a major contributing factor to the violent reaction by some in the Loyalist community to Gary Mitchell's plays.

Alistair was not challenging the power of theatre to inspire or entertain, but felt that it could only make a valid contribution to peace and reconciliation if followed up with interactive work. He believes that to play a role in understanding conflict and conflict transformation – and therefore an educational role – theatre needs this dimension of interaction with its audience in order to build understanding.

This belief is perhaps explained by where Alistair and his colleagues are 'coming from'. Their intent is that of building and deepening understanding about the conflict, specifically from an ex-combatant and ex-prisoner perspective, rather than an artistic expression. It is the marked difference of the roots of *Yo Mister* from the other case studies that is the reason for its inclusion. All other practitioners / leaders in the case studies have come to peace-building through a theatre context; Alistair has come to theatre through a peace-building context.

CASE STUDY 4 – UPSTATE THEATRE COMPANY

Upstate Theatre Project (UTP) is an independent performing arts organisation located in Drogheda, Co Louth. The company was founded in 1997 following a year of action research in the North East region. Upstate's work draws not only from the life and culture of the town and surrounding area, but also from the wider border region, an area rich in literary and theatrical tradition. UTP also exists to develop links with colleagues and communities across the border in Northern Ireland.

UTP's relationship with local communities is based on:

- Developing meaningful partnerships
- Jointly developing dramas for performance by non-professional local groups
- Participation in local arts and community development networks
- Technical resourcing
- Placing artists / facilitators in residence
- Involvement in cross-border programmes

Crossover Theatre project

Since 2002, the company has run the Crossover Theatre project, a cross-border, cross-community participative drama programme that has involved hundreds of adults and teenagers in learning processes and in devising new theatre performances. It is funded by Border Action through Peace II.

The project is delivered in four geographical areas that are centred around, but drawn from across the areas of: (1) Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, (2) Clones, Co Monaghan and Newtownbutler, Co Fermanagh, (3) Dundalk, Co Louth and (4) Monaghan town. There is a mix of rural and urban, cross-border and single domain communities and of cultural diversity.

UTP feel that drama and theatre don't bring anything exclusive to peace-building in terms of properties, but rather that the arts are just one way in which conflict can be explored. They believe that the strengths of drama and theatre as peace-building tools are in its use of teamwork, in the combination of the physical and intellectual, and in the psychological and intellectual engagement between participants and their audience. UTP believes that drama brings, rather than forces people together. For them, it is a voluntary commitment to

peace-building through a creative process.

Crossover offered opportunities to people to develop their own language and vocabulary, and explore whatever related issues they want using their own form of expression. For example, the Fermanagh group used black humour in their play about the 'Troubles'.

Upstate see (generic) conflict as being the central crux to any play with a general resolution being usual. Therefore, they believe that the concept of conflict is already embedded within theatre, and to explore a specific conflict and its issues is a natural step beyond this.

UTP has no policy on the creation of cross-community groups, although the groups largely met in 'neutral' spaces to encourage participation. Most of the Crossover project groups were quite homogenous but this was by accident rather than design. UTP approached this project through the creation of safe spaces for issues to be explored and conversations facilitated, rather than by designing the make-up of groups.

The project didn't seek to work with specific groups of people, e.g. ex-prisoners, ex-combatants, victims. Indeed, the very term 'victim' was rejected by a number of participants as being a negative, almost derogatory term.

From the outset, UTP acknowledged that delivering a peace-building project in rural areas in border areas would have a very different feel and approach to those which were taking place in major urban areas. They recognised that whilst there are no peace walls in rural areas, there are almost exclusively single identity communities, which are in effect rural enclaves, for example Roslea in Co Fermanagh (Catholic) and Fivemiletown in Co Tyrone (Protestant), and that there are invisible interfaces.

Reported benefits to participants included increased self-esteem and confidence, creation of a new vocabulary and new language, and improved understanding of the 'other' side of the community and/or border.

There has been a crossover between this project and Smashing Times' training programme, with one of Upstate's facilitators being trained through Smashing Times Theatre Company.

Through accident rather than design, two of the Crossover groups have been all-female.



Dundalk Crossover group member.

This has provided an interesting perspective as women are often seen as having the strongest peacemaker role, yet have largely been excluded from the Northern Ireland peace process (Maher & Basanth, 2004). These all-women groups have provided empowering opportunities for women to explore the conflict on their own terms through drama.

Crossover challenges

From UTP's perspective, the Crossover project was unsuccessful in engaging with Protestant adults, which they measured through lack of participation. They did not have the same issue with young Protestants. UTP were not able to say why this was, although it was felt that the perception of some members of the Protestant community towards theatre as being 'immoral' in some way might have played a part. Other possible barriers to participation included class issues, gender issues and the lack of access to theatre in rural areas.

UTP was also afraid of taking, or being seen to take, a 'parachutist' approach; that is to 'parachute' into a local area, undertake work, and then disappear back to base. They were particularly sensitive about their work in Northern Ireland, as they are based in the Republic, and did not want to be seen as 'drama missionaries' from the south.

Many people were slightly afraid of addressing issues around the conflict in a head on way. In some cases this was the remoteness of their geographical location from areas of conflict, in others the political and/or emotional remoteness from it and for others (for example some members of the Dundalk group), it just hadn't been part of their culture, life experience or personal/family/community history.

CASE STUDY 5 – SMASHING TIMES THEATRE COMPANY – ACTING FOR PEACE: CREATIVE TRAINING IN DRAMA AND THEATRE

Summary of training programme

Smashing Times Theatre Company designed and delivered two training programmes in drama and theatre, specifically to promote peace-building and reconciliation, through high quality artistic processes. Both courses were developed and delivered in partnership with University College Dublin (UCD), the accrediting body and the Mid-Ulster Women's Network (MUWN). The training is funded by the European Union's Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Cross-border Consortium.

Smashing Times have a long history of using theatre to promote peace-building, of women-focused theatre and of working on a cross-border basis. They also advocate the use of drama and theory to influence social policy. MUWN provides local women in the mid-Ulster area with opportunities for personal development and training, and education and leisure pursuits.

The aims of the training programmes were to:

- Support the ongoing development of drama and theatre in a community context
- Raise awareness of how drama and theatre can be used for addressing issues of cultural diversity, peace-building and reconciliation within a community context
- Facilitate access to training for disadvantaged sectors and to facilitate community leadership training through drama
- Raise standards within community theatre provision by enabling participants to bring a high level of professionalism back into the community
- Obtain a nationally recognised qualification in the arts

The first course was a Certificate in Community Drama. It provided an introduction to drama and theatre skills, and to the theory and practice of community drama and was therefore aimed at people

with an interest in community drama / theatre and in community development. There were no formal entry requirements and short-listed candidates were interviewed.

The second course was the Diploma in Drama Facilitation Skills which provides specialised training and a recognised qualification for professional artists who wish to become drama facilitators (teachers of drama) within a local arts context and is aimed at more experienced practitioners / artists who wished to work as drama facilitators. There were minimum entry requirements including basic academic achievements and significant drama / theatre / community development experience. Again, short-listed candidates were interviewed. Trainees work with leading professional directors, playwrights, writers and devisers and explore the promotion of issues such as anti-racism, peace-building and conflict resolution through drama and theatre.

Both courses were delivered over a 12-month period, and involved 128 hours of direct contact over 10 residential weekends. Participants were assessed through a variety of written work, continuous assessment and presentations. The Diploma course was the first-ever (and remains the only) course in Ireland to provide accredited training at university level for drama facilitation within local contexts.

The programme was supported by an advisory panel which included representatives from Smashing Times, Louth County Council, arts organisations, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, UCD and the Community Relations Council amongst others (see list of panel members on page 25).

The main tutors for the training programmes included Mary Moynihan, Freda Manweiler, Chrissie Poulter, Andy Hinds, Gillian Hackett and Ena May. In addition, there were a number of visiting speakers and workshop leaders over the

duration of both programmes. All are well-respected drama facilitators with extensive artistic experience as well as skills and experience of working on a cross-community and cross-border basis.

Recruitment of participants

Smashing Times put in place a robust recruitment process, which included both a written application and, for short-listed candidates, an interview. During the interview, the company made it very clear that whilst the course was first and foremost about participants undertaking professional drama training, it was an academic programme (although there was huge practical content) and that it was essential that the legacy of the conflict was addressed – in other words that peace-building was at the heart of the training.

There was a very diverse mix of participants on all training courses in terms of Catholic / Protestant / other or no religion, gender, age, with or without disability and from both sides of the border. This diversity of participants was taken into account during the recruitment process, but there was no positive (or negative) discrimination. Smashing Times succeeded in attracting a genuinely diverse mix of applicants and so was able to end up with a diverse group.

One criteria of being accepted onto the training programmes was that participants had to demonstrate how not only they, but their own communities, would benefit from both the drama and peace-building skills and experience they would gain. This ensured longevity for Smashing Times' project but also took the learning back to communities to contribute to its development and to help address the legacy of the conflict.

Creative training process

Theatre and drama was used as the tool to raise new and existing issues for the participants, and they addressed peace-



Creative Training performance.

building, conflict and equality in a wider context as well as within the Irish one. Drama and theatre enabled them to explore individual and group stereotypes and perceptions, and themes of conflict ran throughout the course, for example violence, sectarianism, paramilitary activity and racism.

The huge diversity of participants on many of the courses provided new opportunities to Smashing Times' staff and course facilitators / tutors for their own learning. Again, this was an unplanned outcome, and the diversity contributed to the success of the training.

In addition to the facilitation and exploration of issues through drama and theatre techniques, participants had a session on the theory and principles of peace-building with Dr Brandon Hamber. This gave participants the opportunity to learn more about peace-building and conflict resolution theory from an internationally respected academic working in the field.

A strong link to community development practice was instilled from the outset. All participants were required to research peace-building and reconciliation issues in their own community, as a way of gathering material to contribute towards their final theatre piece. This ensured that participants were making a tangible link to their own learning and the community in which they work and/or live, but also enabled community theatre and community development practice skills to be developed in tandem. By drawing on their own or their community's experiences, participants brought a range of stories to the programme, for example an ex-combatant returning to his family and migrant workers in poultry processing factories in rural Northern Ireland.

Each course culminated with the performance of a play devised, developed and performed, and in some cases co-written, by course participants. Professional artists/scriptwriters Gillian Hackett, Ena May, Andy Hinds and Chrissie Poulter worked alongside participants to script the plays from a devising process. The plays were performed to an invited audience of friends, family and work colleagues. Some of these plays told individual participants' stories. This was not a process that everyone wanted to undertake although everyone contributed some idea or experience, whether their own, made up or belonging to a third party. As in common with other case studies, the use of theatre de-personalised the stories to allow characters, rather than individuals, to tell the stories and so held them in a safe space. Audience members were, on occasion, reduced to tears.

Interactive activity is a core feature of Smashing Times; post-show discussions after performances complete the circle; participative drama workshops accompany performances; and training programmes support skills development in local communities.

The performances were followed by post-show discussions which were recorded either by note-taking or by video. All the participants sat up on the stage for these discussions. This was a 'friendly' audience in so much as everyone was known to at least one participant and was there to show support. This gave the audience / actor relationship a sense of connectedness and helped provide a 'safe' environment in which the participants could be questioned and issues discussed.

Development of and benefits to participants

Through this course, Smashing Times believe that many of the participants worked with people that they would never have done so before. This was not just the more obvious Catholic / Protestant communities, but also people from distinctly different urban and rural communities.

Previously 'unlikely' friendships were developed and appear to have been maintained.

An understanding of the different issues facing rural and urban communities was developed, and this was an unplanned outcome for all, including Smashing Times.

Many participants from the south travelled across the border into Northern Ireland for the first time. A deeper understanding of peace-building issues and perspectives from each side of the border was also developed.

Some people discovered that they had a real and genuine interest in peace-building and reconciliation, when prior to the course they had seen it as more of a background or secondary issue. Conversely others discovered how normalised to the conflict they had become, and through the course acknowledged that they had been involved in the conflict and needed to be healed in some way. This was not the remit of the training but nonetheless enriched the experience for the participants, and brought the grey areas around personal support and professional practice for facilitators sharply into focus.

The training programmes focused on the main Orange / Green divide, but through the course participants explored a wider context of equality and had a chance to examine their own prejudices including their perspectives and views on the Travelling community, sexism and racism.

The process of developing an original piece of theatre to performance standard involved considerable teamwork and collectivised experiences for participants. It created a sense of common purpose and of collective achievement.

Creative training challenges

A very small number of participants were seeking a therapeutic process, rather than an artistic one and facilitators needed to provide a clear steer to ensure it remained an artistic process.

A number of participants from the African community brought a totally different perspective on gender equality to the training programme, and the group had to deal with what they saw as sexist views from their fellow participants. This threw up many challenges but also gave the

participants – and Smashing Times – an entirely new perspective on conflict.

There was conflict within the group during social evenings at the residencies. This manifested itself through heated discussions on a range of issues, such as philosophical approaches to religion and, rather unexpectedly, north versus south driving styles. There were also the inevitable personality clashes. The more obvious conflict-related divisions and perspectives did not emerge. This was unexpected.

Surprisingly, given the programme's roots in community development and community theatre, some participants were competitive both academically and through performances. Again, this was unexpected.

Success factors for Smashing Times

Smashing Times identified the following as success factors – for them – of drama and theatre as tools for peace-building:

- Drama is a fun process to explore issues
- Process to dis-inhibit to enable people to perform and therefore talk
- Team effort – ‘drama is not a solo pursuit and you have to work together or it doesn't happen’
- Opportunity to play different roles can lead to the understanding of different perspectives – how it feels to be the ‘other’ – it's a very physical experience and one which can be difficult to ignore
- Audience can be moved from their comfort zone – performances can jar them, even if the ‘post-show discussion’ happens at home
- Audience relates to people performing – everyone is in the same boat and people will reveal as much or as little as they want
- Drama exercises are designed to bond and build trust – conflicts are seen as acceptable in a creative environment – ‘it's OK to have two positions within the group’
- Use of experienced facilitators – all had worked with Smashing Times previously – all were experienced and highly respected

drama and theatre practitioners; all had some experience of peace-building and cross-border work and were themselves drawn from different community backgrounds and perspectives

Smashing Times acknowledge that ‘drama and theatre as a tool for peace-building isn't for everyone, but then no process is’.

Smashing Times believe there is a powerful creative energy in a theatre that wants to support social change. As Peter Brook says, “the wish to change society, to get it to confront its eternal hypocrisies, is a great powerhouse” (*The Empty Space*, page 79). The company uses drama and theatre as artistic processes in their own right, aiming to provide a quality arts experience with ensuing artistic benefits, and also uses drama and theatre to develop a stronger awareness of the issues raised. The company recognises transformative benefits, which are in many instances ‘life changing’.

One participant described participation on the Creative Training courses (they undertook both the Certificate and the Diploma) as “the most enjoyable, most fruitful, most productive, yet most demanding in my life so far” and concludes . . . by saying “may your excellent work continue long and flourish, transforming people and transforming communities”.

Outputs from the creative training

The participants on the Certificate course produced three original pieces of theatre:

Long Way Around

Tells the story of the divide, both cultural (religious traditions) and the physical (barriers separating communities) in Northern Ireland and how healing begins with talking and bringing both sides together.

Victim of a Victim

A compelling story of how someone can be indoctrinated as part of a family tradition, and how that person can suffer as a result. It

is about the ‘wakening up’ and seeing things for oneself and challenging inherent values.

Lipstick Power and Politics

Explores the power of following trends without realising so; how asking a person's surname in Northern Ireland can indicate religious affiliation and how others would prefer to see someone alone rather than dating a person from the ‘other’ tradition.

The participants on the Diploma course also produced three original pieces of theatre:

No Way Out

Delves into the subversive paramilitary culture in Belfast where extortion and blackmail are used; focusing on how some of the paramilitary groups use young women as commodities. The play centres on a man returning to Belfast after years of being on the run in England. He faces old debts and paramilitary group members, and must choose between a punishment beating or offering his sister for sex.

Bag Full of Dreams

Explores the culture of Northern Ireland in a growing cosmopolitan society. How a migrant worker comes to the North in search of work and faces appalling conditions and treatment. It deals with feelings of isolation and rejection and how one woman's strength prevails to assert herself and challenge the oppression.

If Your Father was Living Now

Looks at the intrinsic feelings of fear and prejudice; two Catholics in a southern registered car, frantically trying to catch a flight, are caught up in a 12th of July parade in Belfast. Members of the parade try to help them but the Catholics mistakenly see their approach as aggressive – what you ‘think’ is real is what you see as real until proved otherwise. Trying to impersonate Protestants, they eventually abandon their journey and join the marching bands.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The case studies provided a remarkable and inspirational insight into the work of theatre and peace-building in Ireland.

When this research project began, it was initially thought that Smashing Times Theatre Company would be able to draw up 'best practice' guidelines from it. However, many of the key interviewees were at pains to emphasise that their success factors were not 'how to do peace and drama', but instead 'this is what works for us'.

However, through the analysis of the research, ten approaches, philosophies and processes were identified across all or most of the case studies. This research is not proposing that these are essential ingredients of a peace-building and drama project, but rather that they are features of the case studies examined here.

Common features

1. Drawing on non-arts funding

For example, Sole Purpose receives core funding from the Community Relations Council in NI. This not only gives an indication of how seriously this work is taken by those outside of the arts community, but also an acknowledgement of the benefits to the wider community.

2. Artistic integrity

For the theatre companies interviewed, the quality of artistic activity is paramount. The issue of peace-building or indeed any other is secondary. The process, practice and outputs must have absolute artistic integrity and be of the highest standard; other benefits are a bonus. As Dave Duggan from Sole Purpose said, "we are artists, not community development workers".

3. Significant and designed participation

All of the case studies had a significant amount of deliberate and designed interaction with their audience and/or participants. Furthermore, the engagement was of high quality. This is where their work appeared to have the biggest and most significant impact. It is through this participation that the difficult conversations have been facilitated and new relationships and perspectives forged. The success and high impact of *Yo Mister* was due to its unprecedented level of post-performance interaction.

4. Use of non-arts spaces

The use of non-arts spaces has had a dual benefit for the projects and participants. Firstly, it has removed a barrier to access / participation for theatre and drama (and indeed the arts in general), and took the art to the heart of communities rather than expecting communities to travel to the art. Secondly, the creation of a theatre space in a community venue or non-arts space transforms it into a neutral space. For example, both Smashing Times Theatre Company and Upstate Theatre have built a network of community, youth, church, sport, school and other venues which they use and have transformed into theatre spaces during their use.

5. Artistic risk-taking

Like No. 2 (artistic integrity), artistic risk-taking was absolutely at the core of most of our case studies. *The Wedding* is a perfect example of this; there were many other easier ways of producing high quality cross-community theatre, but the use of site-specific performance, internationally-acclaimed playwrights and a complex revolving scene process meant that artistic risk-taking was just as important as (if not more than) the peace-building process.

6. Principled leadership on artistic and behavioural standards

The theatre companies – Smashing Times Theatre Company, Upstate and Sole Purpose – who contributed case studies to this research were keen to provide leadership on artistic and behavioural standards of theatre. This meant that communities could experience the principles of professional theatre practice on their own doorsteps, which often made it a more accessible experience. It also ensured that artistic standards were placed at the forefront of the company's work.

These practices included starting performances promptly, refusing admission after curtain up (wherever the venue), involvement of professional theatre practitioners and the highest performance and production standards.

7. Go where wanted and invited

All the performances and workshops in our

case studies were only carried out in communities where the people involved had been specifically invited. None of our projects involved the leaders 'inviting' themselves to perform, work, talk or train.

Sole Purpose go further. They rarely perform through 'open' invitations, for example at conferences. They want to ensure that every member of their audience is expecting them and can therefore respond, engage and interact with both theatre and the issues being raised. If there is a significant community issue for the hosts, Sole Purpose Productions is willing to re-negotiate even up to the last minute. For example, in Kesh, Co Fermanagh, their performance was scheduled for the same day as a local RUC officer was being buried; he had been shot. Sole Purpose did not know until literally a few minutes beforehand whether or not their (conflict-related) play could be performed, as it was such a sensitive time for that community.

8. Understanding of the complexity of peace-building and conflict resolution

Another key feature of our case studies was that the companies and individuals involved demonstrated a real understanding of the complexity of peace-building, with a number of them emphasising that this complexity should never be underestimated. This understanding was demonstrated in a wide variety of ways, for example the negotiation of the scripts for *The Wedding*; Sole Purpose deliberately ensure a mix of actors from different community backgrounds; *Yo Mister* increased the size and diversity of its post-performance discussion panel to be more inclusive and accessible to its audience; Upstate Theatre have focussed attention on rural single-identity enclaves and worked to develop these areas through theatre; and Smashing Times Theatre Company ensured that its training participants were fully equipped with both artistic and peace-building skills that they could share with their own communities.

9. Longevity of work

The longevity of their work (made all the more significant because of the difficulties of arts funding, particularly in the north) with regard to its peace-building elements was

implied throughout most of the projects. Perhaps because the case studies were carefully chosen that this research did not find any evidence of short-termism or ‘on-trend’ aspects of using drama and theatre to support peace-building. Many of the companies and projects demonstrated a sense of being part of a long-term process or at least taking just a small step in that long process.

10. Individuals with genuine and strong personal commitment to peace-building and the arts

As with the success of so many aspects of life, these case studies were particularly effective, imaginative, innovative, risk-taking and had significant impact because of the individuals involved. Again, all the case studies had at their heart people with absolute commitment not only to the arts but to peace-building. In short, they totally believed in what they were doing, in terms of its artistic quality and integrity, its benefits to everyone involved, its need and its impact.

Distinctiveness of drama and theatre as tools for peace-building

This research identified that what drama and theatre contribute most to the peace-building and conflict resolution process is the creation of ‘safe spaces’ – both literal and metaphorical. The creation of these special and safe spaces to promote dialogue and explore issues in a peace-building context, are unique to this art form.

The theme of safe spaces emerged as both an underpinning and overarching theme, and takes a central place (albeit in different guises) in each of our case studies. These safe spaces facilitate and enable difficult conversations to take place, either between individuals or organisations, or through the dialogue, interactions or representations of characters on stage.

Sometimes these safe spaces are literally created through the transformation of a community venue, hall or other space into a ‘theatre space’. Theatre appears to have a neutralising effect on a space, and so renders it ‘safe’. The removal of previous or existing associations with the space before it became a ‘theatre one’ enables views, opinions or perceptions to be temporarily suspended. In practice, this means that issues and discussions which may not have been possible prior to the creation of this space (possibly just a couple of hours earlier), now became possible. The audience entered the space as a theatre space, rather than for

example St Mary’s Hall. Both Sole Purpose and the *Yo Mister* project directly referred to this, and the use of [real] houses in Belfast for *The Wedding* were transformed into neutral theatre spaces despite being in the heart of almost completely single-identity communities.

Another type of safe space – metaphorical – is created through the use of drama. The use of characters and fictional dialogue again creates a safe space to facilitate difficult conversations. Even when dialogue may be almost verbatim, it is still characters rather than ‘real’ people who speak the words, raise the issues and challenge or reinforce stereotypes. It is more acceptable for a character than a ‘real’ person to speak or behave in a particular way, as they are fictional, part of someone’s imagination and so not seen as ‘real’. This in turn then provides an opportunity for the audience or participants to challenge the words or actions of a character that they simply would or could not do with a ‘real’ person. In short, the character provides a safe space to challenge. The work of both Smashing Times Theatre Company and Upstate Theatre Project are excellent examples of this.

Furthermore, through drama and interactive theatre an opportunity to explore the consequence of actions and words is provided. Both in Upstate’s Crossover Project and the development of performance pieces through Smashing Times’ training programme, opportunities are created for participants to explore the conflict and related issues through drama. Post-performance interactive workshops by Sole Purpose provided opportunities for the audience to explore ‘what if’ scenarios. Similarly, post-performance panel discussions and workshops following *Yo Mister* offered the same opportunity to explore consequences of words and action in a safe space.

Being present in a neutral theatre space and/or the use of characters also brought people together to have conversations that otherwise would not have been possible. This happened across all of the case studies. In some cases, this was facilitating conversations between people from Catholic and Protestant communities, from urban and rural areas, from each side of the border or across class divides or ethnic backgrounds. In other cases, this was between people whose beliefs had brought them into direct conflict with each other, for example the discussions between the Republican and Loyalist ex-prisoners after *Yo Mister*.

Research challenges

There were two key inter-related project challenges for this research project. Firstly, the scope of this research was potentially huge as much work has been done in the wider field, although little documented. Theatre has also been used as a tool for conflict resolution and exploration, peace-building and to bring about social change in various different and dynamic ways throughout the world. It was difficult to keep focussed on a specific area and it was felt that the potential scope of the research was huge, given the breath and diversity of information.

The second challenge was a common one when undertaking research (particularly qualitative): that of getting to speak to the relevant people within the timescale of this project. In some cases, we were able to find alternative interviewees from projects, in other cases we had to rely on internet, printed and other information.

There were several other less significant issues. Some members of the arts community are not used to talking about working in the peace-building context. They either do not see what they do as making any contribution or take a rather naïve view of the conflict (‘it’s all in the past’). We also had to bear in mind that the peace-building element is very much a secondary aspect to the work of theatre practitioners. The primary concern is the production of high quality art and arts experience; for some people, if that contributes towards peace-building then it’s a bonus but is not essential. Several of the key interviewees were keen to stress that they are artists, not community development works or peace-builders. It is the view of this report that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Summary of learning

This research project has provided so much learning for Smashing Times Theatre Company, the researchers, and hopefully in the future for the theatre community and for community development in the border region.

In summary this learning is:

- There are many different ways and approaches of using drama and theatre as a tool for peace-building
- Smashing Times Theatre Company is now better placed to share knowledge and provide services for drama and theatre / peace-building projects
- There is no such thing as ‘how to do drama, theatre and peace-building’

- Smashing Times Theatre Company have excellent (and continuing to grow) cross-border, arts and cross-community networks
- Drama and theatre are increasingly accepted as legitimate tools for tackling conflict and contributing to reconciliation
- The arts can play a major role and make a significant contribution to the ongoing peace process in Northern Ireland and in the border region
- Peace-building is extraordinarily complex and no one style, approach or type of project will ever fit all
- The theatre sector (and indeed wider arts community) needs to develop processes for documenting their work to share experiences and learning, build profile and credibility and develop capacity for future projects

Research dissemination

The research will be disseminated widely amongst those who have contributed directly to it. It will also be distributed as widely as possible to those with an interest in using drama / theatre as a tool for peace building and conflict resolution, both in terms of arts practitioners using theatre as a tool for peace building, and community development individuals / organisations drawing on theatre to deliver peace-building initiatives. It will also be disseminated to Border Action, the funders of the research.

Research Conducted by Green Hat

This research was undertaken by Bryony Flanagan, the Director of Green Hat, a community-based consultancy based in Co Fermanagh.

Green Hat provide research, evaluations, facilitation, strategic planning and project management services to the community and voluntary sector across Northern Ireland, border counties and north Midlands. They have worked on numerous single identity, cross-community and cross-border projects, many of which had a community development or peace-building remit.

In a previous life, Bryony worked as an arts development officer, theatre and arts centre director and production company manager.

Smashing Times Theatre Company would like to thank Bryony Flanagan for the wonderful work she has done as researcher for this project.



IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

Implications for Smashing Times Theatre Company

There are a number of implications for the work of Smashing Times Theatre Company which arise out of this research. They are:

- That there is a need to build further understanding of the use and scope of drama and theatre as a tool for peace-building
- That Smashing Times Theatre Company is well-placed to undertake further research on, and dissemination of, this field of work
- That Smashing Times Theatre Company has developed through this project and highlighted existing and built additional skills in the evaluation, research and analysis of peace-building projects
- That Smashing Times Theatre Company now has increased capacity and confidence to undertake more peace-building research and evaluation

Implications for theatre sector and similar projects

The lack of documented projects – as opposed to the lack of projects themselves – has implications for the way that the theatre community collects, keeps and disseminates information about its activities. This lack of sharing information, knowledge, experiences and skills have major implications:

- Lack of shared working, collaboration and cooperation between drama and theatre projects throughout the island of Ireland
- Learning has not been externalised so there has been much ‘reinventing of the wheel’



- Theatre practitioners risk being isolated in their practice
- Positive and negative experiences have not been shared to either celebrate successes or prevent the same challenges arising
- Lack of collective sharing of experiences in peace-building by theatre practitioners has reduced opportunities for wider appreciation of the tool by the mainstream

More in-depth research, documenting current practices and wider dissemination of findings and information will make a significant contribution to overcoming the above issues.

On a more positive note, this research has implications in terms of building understanding by the theatre sector of what activities, programmes and projects colleagues throughout Ireland have and are undertaking. It will contribute towards a better understanding of the different applications and approaches of drama and theatre as tools for peace-building. There are possible openings to additional or new funding in terms of creating awareness of the benefits of theatre (and the arts in general) and what they can contribute to social issues and community development, and to a society emerging from the shadow of conflict.

There is also an opportunity for theatre practitioners in Ireland to begin to share their experience and learning of their craft as a tool for peace-building with other regions in the world coming out of conflict, for example the Basque country.

Implications for peace-building in the border region

In particular, this research will build understanding in Border areas where rural communities are sometimes seen as not being appropriate participants for drama or theatre projects. There are numerous examples in the case studies of drama being used to develop a better understanding of those on the other side of the border by and of rural communities and those who live in them.

Drama and theatre projects have worked particularly well in rural and border areas (for example Sole Purpose in counties Derry and Donegal, Upstate in Fermanagh and Monaghan, Smashing Times’ residencies throughout the border area), and there is much learning that can and should be shared from this.

The lack of trained facilitators has possibly prevented further development of drama and theatre projects in the border region, although Smashing Times’ project has undoubtedly boosted existing numbers of personnel.

Through commissioning this research, Smashing Times Theatre Company have also created opportunities and an environment in which drama, theatre and peace-building activities can be further explored.

ACRONYMS

ACNI	Arts Council of Northern Ireland	NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
CAF	Community Arts Forum (NI)	UDA	Ulster Defence Association
CRC	Community Relations Council (NI)	UPRG	Ulster Political Research Group
GFA	Good Friday Agreement	UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
IRA	Irish Republican Army	UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

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Special thanks:

To ensure that they drew upon a range of theatre, arts, community and education expertise and knowledge, Smashing Times

Theatre Company created a Cross-border Advisory Panel for Acting For Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre.

The panel members were:

- Ivan Armstrong – Formerly Community Arts Officer, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- Heather Floyd – Director, Community Arts Forum
- Brian Harten – Arts Officer, Louth County Council
- Katherine Atkinson – Development Officer, Create
- Dr Patricia Kennedy – Senior Lecturer in Social Policy, University College Dublin
- Mary Moynihan – Artistic Director, Smashing Times Theatre Company
- Brian Mullens – Core Funding Officer, Community Relations Council
- Deirdre Toomey – Coordinator, Ennis Community Development Project
- Dr Eric Weitz – Lecturer in Theatre Studies / Coordinator in Acting Studies, Trinity College

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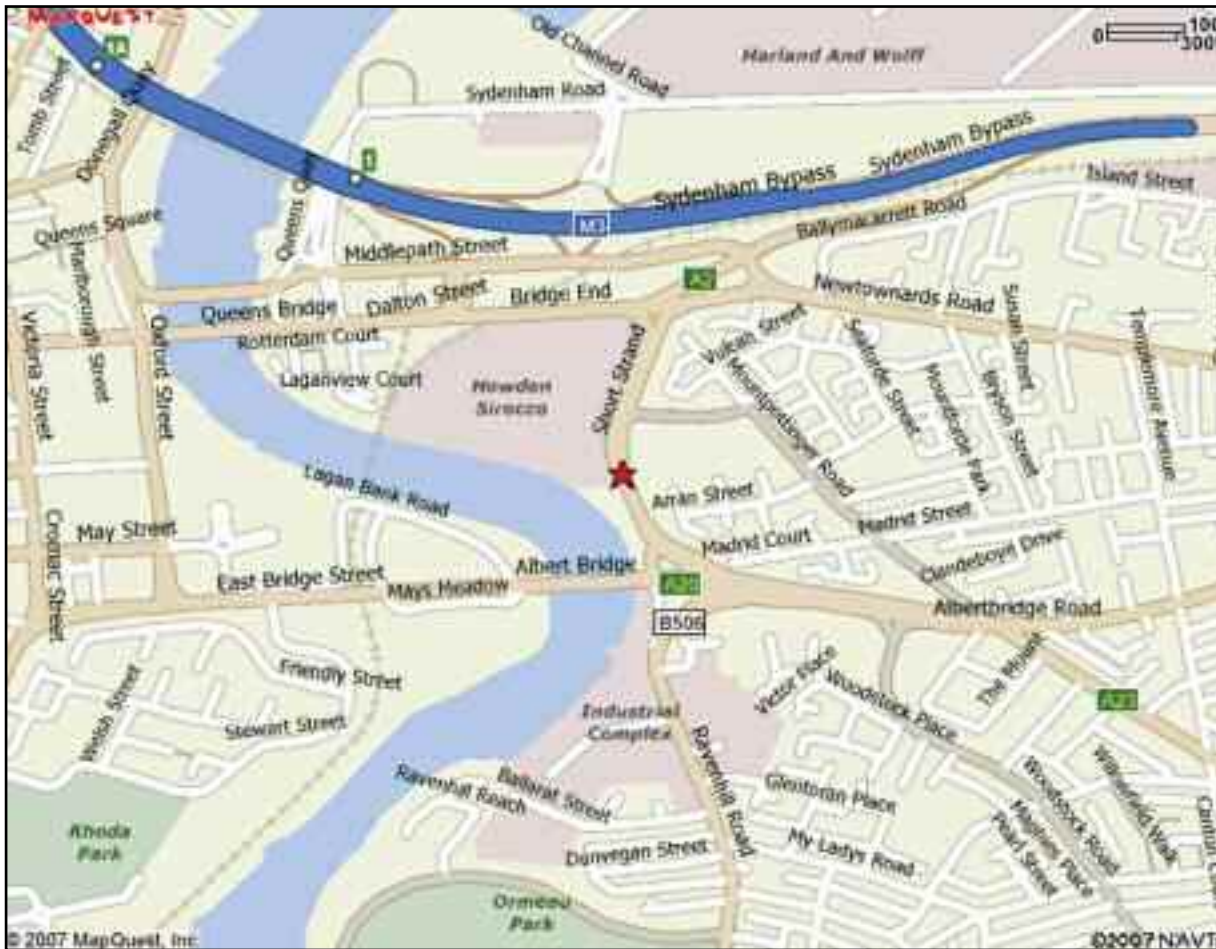
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APPENDIX

Maps of areas covered by case study organisations and projects

THE WEDDING: KEY AREAS OF WORK

Map showing Short Strand and Lower Newtownards Road areas of Belfast



SOLE PURPOSE: LOCATION
Derry / Londonderry



YO MISTER: KEY AREA OF (ORIGINAL) WORK

Map showing Shankill Road area of Belfast



UPSTATE THEATRE PROJECT: KEY AREAS OF WORK

Map showing Fermanagh and Monaghan border areas



Map showing Monaghan and Louth border areas





More Ideas and Inspiration for using Drama and Theatre as Tools for Peace-Building and Reconciliation



Produced by **greenhat** and Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd

INTRODUCTION

This section ‘More Ideas and Inspirations for using Drama and Theatre as Tools for Peace-Building and Reconciliation’ aims to share experiences and to provide further ideas, information and inspiration for those interested in the use of drama and theatre to promote peace-building and reconciliation and for those interested in developing cross-community and cross-border drama and theatre projects and partnerships.

Additional information consists of:

- 1) A list of principles of good practice used by Smashing Times Theatre Company when implementing Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre
- 2) Panel of Professional Artists and Tutors – set up by Smashing Times Theatre Company for Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre
- 3) Directory of Useful Contacts
- 4) Additional suggestions for further reading

GUIDELINES USED BY SMASHING TIMES THEATRE COMPANY LTD

The following are a list of guidelines used by Smashing Times Theatre Company when implementing their projects.

Smashing Times Theatre Company is committed to promoting clear aims in each project and to developing and maintaining principles of good practice.

Principles underlying the work

- Ensuring the artistic, creative process is central
- Commitment to high quality artistic processes and quality of expertise
- Each project unique and implemented in collaboration with key artists and partners
- Work underpinned by a rights-based approach and a commitment to artistic excellence and social engagement and to inclusion and respect for all
- Support long-term engagement with local communities and communities of interest

Preplanning

- Identify key artists and partner organisations
- A process of collaboration including meetings to develop relationships between key artists, partners, participants and funders
- Ongoing respect and recognition of different experiences, skills, knowledge, needs and practices of all those involved
- Ensure clarity on roles of each partner organization and key individuals/artists
- In relation to new partnerships, allow time to work out clearly in advance and in writing the separate roles and

responsibilities for partner organizations

- Define aims, objectives, outcomes and benefits arising
- Identify timelines, action plans, key personnel, roles and responsibilities, insurance, health and safety, child protection (where applicable), resources and budgets, specific requirements such as space, equipment, materials, provision for participants with special needs, awareness of host organisation / participant / funding requirements
- Identify management and financial requirements
- Identify documentation and evaluation procedures
- In relation to recruitment and access – develop links within the local community; links that represent many different traditions; plan strategies that encourage and support representation from the different traditions such as taster workshops, ongoing outreach, building relationships/trust with community leaders/workers and developing pilot projects (if funding and time permit)

Implementation

- Ongoing creative engagement between key artist, partner organizations and participants
- Ongoing reference and review of objectives, intended outcomes, timelines etc, review of work completed to date and work still to be done including incorporation of new developments as they arise

- Ongoing management and financial reviews
- Ongoing documentation and evaluation

Ideas for documentation and evaluation

- Ongoing feedback from key artists, partners, participants, key individuals
- End of project feedback from key artists, partners, participants, key individuals
- Feedback to include verbal, written, questionnaires, and creative ideas such as stories, poems, drawings etc
- Focus group feedback: one session with key partners
- External evaluation where funding permits
- Documentation including photographs, videos and written materials
- Final Evaluation/Documentation report to address project content, achievements and outcomes including reference to artistic processes, education outcomes, personal and social development, etc
- Final evaluation/documentation to include unexpected outcomes, shortcomings and recommendations for change and recommendations for future projects

In relation to professional training ensure artists and trainers are highly skilled and fully briefed. Aim to have structures in place to provide academic and pastoral support for students and to provide supports for students with disabilities. Aim to provide clear and concise guidelines for trainers and students; to hold regular meetings with trainers; and regular debriefing/feedback sessions with students.

PANEL OF PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS AND TUTORS

As part of Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre Smashing Times established a panel of drama and theatre artists with expertise in participatory drama and theatre practice and a panel of people to provide support services to professional training programmes and projects run by Smashing Times. If you are interested in applying to the panel please contact Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd. Below is a list of panel members.

Mary Moynihan

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre
Theatre Consultancy and management

Gillian Hackett

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Chrissie Poulter

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Andy Hinds

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in drama/theatre

Eric Weitz

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Ena May

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Carol Walsh

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Wilma Nicholl

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Anne Sheehy

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Valerie Bistany

Mentoring in Drama/Theatre
Peace Building and Reconciliation

Brian Mullen

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Dave Duggan

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Mentoring in Drama/Theatre

Brandon Hamber

Peace Building and Reconciliation
Raul Araujo
Peace Building and Reconciliation

Laurent Salaun

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Karin El-Monir

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Valerie Coyne

Tutor/Facilitator in Drama/Theatre
Eva Urban

Peace Building and Reconciliation
Technical Support

Eva Walsh

Technical Support

Mary Buckley

CV and Interview Techniques

Louise Fitzpatrick

Community Development

Ruth Fagan

Community Development

BIOGRAPHIES

Mary Moynihan is a theatre director, writer, drama facilitator and trainer. She lectures in drama and theatre studies for the Bachelor of Arts in Drama (performance) at the Conservatory of Music and Drama, Dublin Institute of Technology where she teaches the Stanislavski system of actor training, Michael Chekhov techniques, movement and drama facilitation and directs final year performances. She is a founding member and current Artistic Director of Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited and an associate director/artist with the Focus Theatre and a member of the Focus play reading panel. She also conducts an actor's studio at Focus theatre using the Stanislavski system of actor training.

Mary originally trained as an actor and director at Focus under the direction of Deirdre O'Connell, her friend and mentor. Mary has an honours M.A., in Film Production from the Dublin Institute of Technology and an honours B.A. in Drama and Theatre Studies from the University of Dublin Trinity College.

Professional directing credits include *In One Breath* from *Testimonies* for Smashing Times Theatre Company, *Olga* from *Picasso's Women* by Brian McAvera for Focus Theatre, *Orpheus Descending* by Tennessee Williams, Mill Theatre Dundrum, *Two Rooms* by Lee Blessing for Focus Theatre, *Talk To Me Like The Rain and Let Me Listen...* by Tennessee Williams, Focus

Theatre, *May Our Faces Haunt You* (nationwide tour), *A Chain of Hands* (Royal Hibernian Academy), *Medea* (Smashing Times on nationwide tour), and *Yerma and Riders to the Sea* (Samuel Beckett Theatre). She was assistant director to Bairbre Ni Chaoimh for *Very Heaven* at Focus.

As a playwright, Mary's work includes the highly acclaimed *Testimonies* (co-written with Paul Kennedy), *May Our Faces Haunt You*, *Out of the Outside* and *Silent Screams*. She is the author of a chapter titled 'Death of a Mother' for *Motherhood In Ireland*, edited by Dr Patricia Kennedy, Department of Social Policy, UCD and printed by Mercier Press (2003). She co-authored a chapter titled 'Laughing Together: Community-based theatre's vital sense of humour' for *Comedy in Contemporary Irish Theatre*, edited by Eric Weitz, lecturer in Drama, University of Dublin, Trinity College and printed by Carysfort Press (2004).

She is currently developing a new improvisational theatre company and a collaborative interdisciplinary arts project involving theatre and improvisation, music and visual arts. Mary is passionate about using drama and theatre practice to promote social justice and equality.

Gillian Hackett began her drama career acting and devising theatre with Team Educational Theatre Company in 1976 and then went on to act and direct in the Focus Theatre, Dublin and with a variety of other companies, acting in stage and film. She joined Smashing Times Theatre Company in 1991 when it was founded, initially as a board member, and has since gone on to work as a writer, director and drama facilitator for the company. She has been involved as a trainer, director and writer for the Certificate in Community Drama run by Smashing Times Theatre Company in association with the Mid-Ulster Women's Network and University College Dublin, the accrediting body. She has been involved with the Smashing Times Acting for the Future programme since its inception and works as a drama facilitator for this project conducting drama workshops to promote positive mental health and suicide prevention with schools and local communities.

Chrissie Poulter is a director, deviser and trainer. A founder member of Jubilee Community Arts (now The Public) in 1974, Chrissie went on to teach at Birmingham University for seven years (1979 – 86), leaving to be Drama Officer and later Deputy Director for Yorkshire Arts (funding agency for Yorkshire – now part of the English Arts Council). Returning to education as Head of Expressive Arts at Accrington and Rossendale College she came to Ireland in 1990 to take up her current post as lecturer in the School of Drama at Trinity College Dublin.

She was co-director and founder of Arts Lab (Ireland) (1997) an interdisciplinary, intercultural arts laboratory engaged in local/international collaborations. Projects took place around Ireland as well as in Poland, Greece, France, Italy, Spain and the UK. Invited to advise the Northern Ireland Arts Council on the development of community arts in Belfast in 1979, Chrissie became increasingly involved in training community drama leaders around that city and it was for them that she wrote her first book, *Playing The Game*, a recipe book of theatre games (later published by MacMillans, 1987, now Palgrave).

Since 2001 her focus has been on borders and disputed territories. In 2001 and 2002 this centred on intra-lingual performance, created in response to performers' engagement with text, landscape and mother tongue. Two performance pieces were commissioned by and created at the Roy Hart Voice Centre in France. In 2004 a similar "performance essay" was created and presented as part of Lille's year as European city of Culture. These projects evolved through a process of performed response to inputs – the Roy Hart work was inspired by Beckett, the Lille project by Frank McGuinness' *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* and the story of Scheherazade. All these pieces involved singing and were in some way site-specific. In 2001/2/3 some of the artists from the Roy Hart project collaborated on a series of projects with young people in their respective homelands – Kerry, Enniskillen, Bera de Bidasoa (Navarre) and Toroella de Montgrís (Catalunya). This also linked in with My Voice Theatre from Bushwick in the Bronx, (New York).

During 2003/4/5 Chrissie was mentoring a pool of 30 actors/film-makers and painters designing and delivering a cross-border schools-exchange peace project in Ireland for Co-operation Ireland. The emphasis here has been on intra-art collaboration, actors working with visual artists (painters

and film-makers). During 2004/5 and into 2006/7 she developed a parallel project with the Stamsund International Theatre Festival and Teater Nor on the Lofoten Islands, off the coast of Norway. Her collaborator in this is visual artist Kate Buckley, who was a collaborative artist with Arts Lab in the 1990s.

Chrissie's most recent collaboration was with Lizbeth Goodman's SMARTlab on the project *Streets Called Home* commissioned by the UN World Summit Awards and performed in Tunisia at the 2005 Summit on the Information Society. Chrissie was local choreographer in Tunis, contributing director in Ireland and contributor of some of the video footage used in the final performance.

Her work centres on the application of theatre arts to non-theatre contexts and vice versa – the application of what is learnt from such a process back into the world of professional theatre practice. Chrissie is increasingly asked to apply her work to the public, private and voluntary sectors. She has been a senior manager, consultant, chair of numerous committees and was a member of the Northern Ireland Arts Council for six years in the 1990s. She is currently a board member of IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting), a network of over 400 theatre and dance producers/directors /programmers from 40 countries.

Andy Hinds is a successful theatre director, acting teacher and writer. Derry-born Andy Hinds has had many successful theatre and opera productions over the years with all the main theatre companies in the country including Druid, Abbey, Gate, Lyric, Red Kettle, Charabanc, Storytellers and Wexford Opera. Productions over the years include *The Bacchae*; *Macbeth*; *As You Like It*; *The Winter's Tale*; *Fidelio*; *La Cenerentola*; *Mother Courage*; *The Revenger's Tragedy*; *The Government Inspector*; *All's Well That Ends Well*; and *Twelfth Night*. His highly successful production for Druid of *Wild Harvest* won A Bank of Ireland/RTÉ Arts show award.

Andy has been associate director of the Bristol Old Vic with their long tradition of high quality productions of the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Restoration repertoire. He has had an ongoing association with the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London where for many years he taught and directed their classic productions in the course of which he worked closely with some of the most distinguished classical acting teachers in the world.

In Dublin for the last fourteen years he

has specialised in the training of young and experienced actors in the performing of classical texts (at The Gaiety School, Trinity College, and in the highly successful Classic Stage Ireland Classical Acting Studio). He also lectures on classic European Theatre on the MA course at the Drama Studies Centre at UCD. He founded and ran 'Open House Theatre Project', a Dublin-based project which, over two and a half years, offered training to a number of young Irish Directors North and South of the border.

His first two plays, *October Song* and *The Starving* have been performed professionally in England and Ireland and have recently been published.

He is a founding member and currently Artistic Director of Classic Stage Ireland. The company is based on the campus of DCU. The founding of Classic Stage Ireland is regarded by commentators as one of the most important developments in the cultural life of the country in recent times. Classic Stage Ireland presents regular productions of the world classics to Irish audiences and offers ongoing training to younger and more established actors in the specific skills required to perform and stage such works.

Andy is an associate artist with Smashing Times Theatre Company and works with them as a writer, director and drama facilitator.

Dr Eric Weitz is a lecturer in Theatre Studies at Trinity College Dublin, where he is coordinator for the Bachelor in Acting Studies and teaches on the Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Theatre Studies. He lectures occasionally in the Drama Studies Centre at University College Dublin and is a board member of Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited. He is also a performing member of Tapestry tap-dance company in Dublin. Eric has a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Theatre from Boston University, and an MA in Modern Drama Studies from University College Dublin and a PhD in Theatre Studies from Trinity College, Dublin.

Publications: editor and contributor, *The Power of Laughter: Comedy and Contemporary Irish Theatre*, (Carysfort, 2004); *Lady Gregory's Humour of Character: A Commedia Approach to "Spreading the News"* in Irish University Review Special Issue, Spring/Summer 2004; Various contributions to the Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance, ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Oxford, 2003).

Professional Affiliations: Member, International Society for Humour Studies;

Board of Directors, Arambe Productions (Ireland's first African theatre company) and Smashing Times Theatre Company (devoted to the exploration of social issues and direct engagement with local actors and audiences).

Ena May, a Dubliner, trained at Focus Stanislavski Studio under the tutelage of the late Deirdre O'Connell. She is an experienced stage actress, having played leading roles in over forty productions; she has also done TV, radio and film work. Her directorial work for the stage is also extensive. Ena started writing in the 1980s. Her stage plays, the one-act black comedy *Out of the Beehive* and the two-act *She's Your Mother Too, You Know!* were well received and had long, successful runs. With Ruth Jacob, she co-wrote and directed a play for women, *That Fine Line* which played at the now defunct Actors Centre. Ena worked for a year with a group of inner-city women training them in stage techniques and wrote many short pieces for them including the play *Maria's Claim*, which was based on their experiences in the 'black economy'. *Love, Lust and the Lack of It*, a free adaptation of Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, had a public rehearsed reading during the week of anti-war plays. Her short-story collection, *A Close Shave with the Devil* (Lilliput Press, 1998) was long-listed for an *Irish Times* literary award and got great reviews, as did her one-woman show based on three of the stories from the book. She has just finished another collection of short stories and is working on a novel.

Carol Walsh is a drama facilitator and performer. Having trained with Smashing Times Theatre Company and the National Association of Youth Drama, she has facilitated youth theatres, youth and adult community groups and schools around Ireland. Among those she has worked for are the Vocational Educational Committee for Henrietta Street's Adult Education Programme, Finglas Youth Project, Inchicore Youth Group and individual youth theatres and schools. Her work has included everything from introducing groups to drama to devising and directing pieces for public performance. She has also delivered workshops, on behalf of Smashing Times, to raise awareness on the issue of positive mental health and suicide prevention. Currently she is studying Lecoq based physical theatre in London's International School of Performing Arts.

Wilma Nicholl has an honours BA in Theatre Studies from the University of Ulster; a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary) from St. Patrick's College Dublin and a Licentiate Diploma in Speech and Drama from the Leinster School of Music, Griffith College, First Class Honours with Distinction. She has a Diploma in Drama Facilitation Skills from Smashing Times and accredited through University College Dublin. Wilma is a drama facilitator and theatre director with the St. Vincent's Trust/HACE community based drama programme and has worked on various projects for Smashing Times Theatre Company as a drama facilitator. She has trained with Smashing Times on Acting for the Future which uses drama to promote positive mental health and suicide prevention.

Ann Sheehy: As an actress, Ann has appeared for Smashing Times Theatre Company in *May Our Faces Haunt You* and *A Chain of Hands*. Other Dublin theatre credits include *Two Rooms* and *Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen...* (Focus Theatre); *Shesawhore* (The Project); *Ines de Castro* (Open Door Theatre Co.); *How I Learned to Drive* and *Machinal* (Tricksters). She is a founding member of Signature Theatre Company in New York City. U.S. credits include *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *The Heiress* and *Camino Real*. Ann took part in Smashing Times' Acting for the Future programme and has taught drama and theatre workshops with local communities for the company. She is a Stott Certified Level II Pilates teacher.

Brian Mullan has been involved in Community Theatre for over 15 years. His interest in theatre began when he became part of the writing team with Youth Initiatives in Belfast in the early nineties. Brian went on to study theatre in the University of Ulster where he focused his attention on conflict resolution through the arts. Having run many youth theatre projects over the years he is now the youth theatre director for the Patrician Youth Centre in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland where he directs two major productions a year with a cast of over 80 11-18 year olds.

Dave Duggan is a writer, director and former co-artistic director of Sole Purpose Productions. He wrote and directed the *Peace Process Trilogy: The Shopper and the Boy, Without the Walls and Waiting...* for Sole Purpose. Other work for the company includes *Scenes from an Inquiry*: a theatrical

evocation of The Saville Inquiry, *The Recruiting Office* and *AH 6905*. Film work includes *Turn of Mind* and the Academy Award nominated *Dance Lexie Dance*. He has written radio drama for RTÉ and BBC Radio 4. A collection, *Shorts for Stage and Screen*, is published by Lagan Press. A novel, *The Greening of Larry Mahon*, is published by Guildhall Press. He has an MA in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Ulster.

Valerie Bistany: Originally from Lebanon, Valerie Bistany is a facilitator, producer and researcher, working in the fields of the arts and education over the past 21 years in the UK, USA and Ireland. She currently works in a freelance capacity with The Ark (as evaluator of the artist-in residence programme); with the Pavilion Theatre (as coordinator of their first international children's theatre festival and as Board facilitator); and with Schools Across Borders, a cross-border conflict awareness and exchange project (as development facilitator.) In 2005, Valerie co-founded the Mentoring Development Project, an all-island action research project into artist development, commissioned by the Arts Councils of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In recent years, Valerie trained as a mediator, and has worked as a facilitator for political dialogue workshops in Glencree Centre for Reconciliation. She is currently working in family mediation and is on the steering group of Facing Forward, a restorative justice initiative focusing on mediating the impact of crime on victims and offenders.

Dr Brandon Hamber: At the time of undertaking training work for Smashing Times Theatre Company Dr Brandon Hamber worked as an independent conflict transformation consultant. He has consulted to many community groups, policy initiatives and government bodies in Northern Ireland and South Africa. He has undertaken consulting work and participated in various initiatives in Liberia, Mozambique, the Basque Country and Sierra Leone, amongst others. He was born in South Africa and currently works in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He was trained as a clinical psychologist in South Africa and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Ulster. He is also a consultant to and co-founder of the Office of Psychosocial Issues based at the Free University, Berlin. Prior to moving to Northern Ireland, he coordinated the Transition and Reconciliation Unit at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa. Currently he holds a Senior Lecturer post at the

University of Ulster and is the Research Coordinator of INCORE, a United Nations Research Centre for the Study of Conflict at the University of Ulster.

Raul Araujo, a psychologist from Sao Paulo, Brazil, specialises in developing projects in the area of Art and Social Change. He has developed several projects in Brazil, Italy, England, Northern Ireland and Ireland. He has trained and worked with Augusto Boal (Brazil). He is one of the founders of Mudanca de Cena. He has created a range of art projects to empower individual, groups and communities in many different places such as favelas, housing estates, prisons, mental health hospitals, schools, communities under conflict, and with victims of conflict, former combatants and young people from different types of backgrounds. He has lectured in several colleges in Brazil and Ireland among them the international Masters in Drama and Education in TCD. He is the arts coordinator for the Border Arts Centre – DKIT.

Laurent Salaun is originally from Brittany. He has been living in Ireland for nine years. As an actor, he trained at the French-American school in Paris, under Sarah Eigerman, and at the Focus Theatre in Dublin under Deirdre O'Connell. As a drama teacher, he trained at the National Association for Youth Drama in Dublin. He also trained at the Cross Border Centre in Dundalk, in Forum Theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed under Raul Araujo. He has worked for various drama schools and theatre companies including the Gaiety school of acting and Smashing Times Theatre Company. He specialises in Drama in Education, using drama as a learning medium and to raise awareness of different social issues such as racism, discrimination and immigration.

Karin El-Monir is a facilitator of Theatre in Social Fields. She has extensive experience in the facilitation of and the participation in Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal, especially Forum Theatre. She is active in both her native Austria with a group and in Ireland as a facilitator. She has worked with a wide range of communities, such as underage refugees, survivors of domestic abuse, homeless people, drug users etc. Her main field of work is with young people and she very much enjoys the experience of empowerment and learning through theatre techniques.

Valerie Coyne has an MA in Modern Drama and Performance Studies from UCD and a Certificate in Design from Ballyfermot Senior College. Valerie has been a member of the Focus Studio training in the Stanislavsky System of actor training. She is the recipient of an Arts Council training award and is currently a member of the Board of Directors for Dublin Youth Theatre from 2003 to the present. She has worked as Artistic Director/Writer for The Lost Forest Project in 2004 which was an international exchange within the framework of Culture 2000 involving members of Tallaght Youth Theatre, DVT from Lithuania and Collusion Theatre Company Scotland and was a director for The City Project 2001-2003 for Dublin Youth Theatre.

Eva Urban is an Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences Government of Ireland Doctoral Scholar at the University College Dublin School of English and Drama. Her current research topic "Community and Identity in Northern Irish Drama" examines the work of contemporary playwrights and theatre practitioners in the light of the peace process. She is on the panel of tutors of Smashing Times Theatre Company and has been working as a tutor and occasional lecturer at UCD, and as a teacher of drama and music to children, and to adults with disabilities. Eva is also a trained actor from Dublin Institute of Technology and a singer/songwriter interested in social justice issues, women's rights and freedom of thought and speech.

Eva Walsh has worked for Smashing Times Theatre Company since 2004, initially working on the Acting for Peace – Creative Training in Drama and Theatre project in a technical capacity as lighting designer and operator of the end of year performances and then as student support on the same project. In 2005 she stage managed and lit *Testimonies* as part of the Acting for the Future project and also worked as project coordinator on this project. Eva has been Technical Manager of Andrews Lane Theatre up to its closure in July 2007 and has combined this with other freelance work in RTÉ continuity, and numerous other theatre companies.

Mary Buckley: For a number of years Mary Buckley has worked as a recruitment consultant for the public service for a wide range of bodies and positions, including the Gardai, Senior Planner, Chief Officer in the

Prison Service, and the position of Welfare Officer.

In her previous career she worked in both the civil and diplomatic services and was chairperson of the board of the Health and Safety Authority, which is the body with responsibility for safety and health in the workplace. She also was a full-time homemaker for a number of years, during which time she became involved in her local community both at school and parish level.

She has worked with Smashing Times Theatre Company since 2004 teaching CV skills and interview techniques – advising students on the recruitment process from CV preparation to final interview stage, and on the skills required by members of interview boards. She finds the experience particularly stimulating and rewarding, due to the broad range of experience of the students, their ability to challenge and question and their enthusiasm.

Louise Fitzpatrick is currently writing her PhD in Social Science at University College Cork. She has an honours BA in Community Development from DIT and a Masters in Adult and Community Education from NUI, Maynooth. She currently works as Project Manager for the Youth Work Degree Course with Dundalk Institute of Technology in County Louth. She is responsible for the development and delivery of the part-time in-service youth work degree course. She has worked as a Liaison Officer for the City of Dublin Youth Service Board and was responsible for the support and monitoring of youth work projects in the North East Inner City. She has sat on a number of boards for organisations such as RAPID, the Drugs Task Force and Youth Development Group.

Ruth Fagan has an MA in community development from NUI Galway; a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and studies in psychology from University College Cork; and a Certificate in Applied Social Studies from DIT. She has participated in Drama Spaces – a training course run by the NYCI in using drama with young people. Ruth has worked as an Adolescent Support Worker with the Galway Youth Federation where she was responsible for the development and maintaining of a variety of programmes and has worked as a College Placement worker planning and delivering a number of creative programmes on a variety of issues related to youth.

DIRECTORY OF USEFUL CONTACTS

Note: This is not a comprehensive list of contacts. Contact details are provided as a convenience only and should not be taken as an endorsement of any website, content, product or service. Visits to listed websites are at your own risk. For additional information on contacts please view the Smashing Times Theatre Company website www.smashingtimes.ie.

FUNDING BODIES

Border Action

Main Office, Monaghan:

M:TEK II Building, Armagh Road,
Monaghan, Co Monaghan
Tel: 047 71340
Fax: 047 71341
Email: info@borderaction.ie
Website: www.borderaction.ie

Letterkenny Office:

Border Action, McCaul House, Pearse
Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.
Tel: 074 9104220
Fax: 074 9168232

Dundalk Office:

Border Action, The Ramparts, 12a
Partnership Court, Dundalk, Co Louth.
Tel: 042 9329330

Sligo Office:

Border Action, Harbour House, 16 Holborn
Street, Sligo, Co. Sligo.
Tel: 071 9145373
Fax: 071 9145316

Belfast Office:

Border Action, Belfast Unemployed
Resource Centre, 45-47 Donegall Street,
Belfast BT1 2FG
Tel: 0044 28 90248310 or
0044 28 90961111

Pobal

Holbrook House
Hollis Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 2400700
Email: enquiries@pobal.ie
Website: www.pobal.ie

The Community Foundation for Ireland

32 Lower O'Connell Street

Dublin 1

Tel: +353 (0)1 8747354
Fax: +353 (0)1 8747637
Email: info@foundation.ie
Website: www.cfi.foundation.ie

Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Belfast Office:

Community House
Citylink Business Park
Albert Street
Belfast
BT12 4HQ
Tel: +44 (0) 28 90245927
Fax: +44 (0) 28 90329839
Email: info@communityfoundationni.org

Derry Office:

Unit 4, Rath Mor Centre
Bligh's Lane
Creggan
Derry
Londonderry BT48 OLZ
Tel: +44 (0) 28 71371547
Fax: +44 (0) 28 71371565
Email: info@communityfoundationni.org
<http://www.communityfoundationni.org>

Community Relations Council

6 Murray Street
Belfast, BT1 6DN, Northern Ireland.
Tel: 028 9022 7500
Fax: 028 9022 7551
Email: info@nicrc.org.uk
www.community-relations.org.uk

Cooperation Ireland

Dublin Office:

20 Herbert Place
Dublin 2
Ireland
Phone: +353 (0)1 661 0588
Fax: +353 (0)1 661 8456
Email: info@cooperationireland.org

Belfast Office:

Unit 5
Weavers Court Business Park
Linfield Road
Belfast BT12 5GH
Northern Ireland
Phone: +44 (0)28 9032 1462
Fax: +44 (0)28 9089 1000
Email: info@cooperationireland.org
www.cooperationireland.org

The Ireland Funds

Caitriona Fottrell,
Director
No. 5 Foster Place
Dublin 2
Ireland
Tel: 353-1-662-7878
Fax: 353-1-662-7879
Website: www.irlfunds.org/ireland

International Fund for Ireland

Belfast Office:

PO Box 2000
Belfast
BT4 1WD
Tel: Belfast 9076 8832

Dublin Office:

PO Box 2000
Dublin 2
Tel: Dublin 478 0655
Website:
www.internationalfundforireland.com

Special EU Programmes Body

6 Cromac Place,
Belfast BT7 2JB
Northern Ireland
Tel: Belfast +44 28 9026 6660
Email: info@seupb.eu
Website: www.seupb.org

Special EU Programmes Body On-line
applications site www.eugrants.org

Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd

New Hope Centre
2 Erne Road
Enniskillen
BT74 6NN
Tel: +44 (0) 28 6634 0710
Fax: +44 (0) 28 6634 6845
Email: info@icban.com
Website: www.icban.com

INTERREG-Ireland/Wales

Website: www.interreg.ie
Contact for Ireland
Paul O'Keefe
St Manntan's House
Kilmantin Hill
Wicklow
County Wicklow
Email: interreg@eircom.net
Tel: +353 (0) 404 66058

RDC

Northern Ireland Rural Development
Council
17 Loy Street
Cookstown
Co Tyrone
BT80 8PZ
Northern Ireland
Tel: 028 8676 6980
Fax: 028 8676 6922
Email: info@rdc.org.uk
Website: www.rdc.org.uk

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

77 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6AQ
Tel: +44 (28) 90385200
Fax: +44 (28) 90661715
Email: info@artscouncil-ni.org
Website: www.artscouncil-ni.org

The Heritage Lottery Fund

Tel: 020 7591 6000
Fax: 020 7591 6271
Email: enquire@hlf.org.uk
Website: www.hlf.org.uk/english

Big Lottery Fund Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland office
1 Cromac Quay
Cromac Wood
Belfast
BT7 2LB
Tel: 028 9055 1455
Textphone: 028 9055 1431
Fax: 028 9055 1444
Email: enquiries.ni@biglotteryfund.org.uk
Website:
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/northernireland

AWARDS FOR ALL “Lottery Grants for Local Groups”

Awards for All
1 Cromac Quay
Cromac Wood
Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 2JD
Tel: 028 9055 9090
Fax: 028 9055 1444
Textphone: 028 9055 1431
Email: enquiries.ni@awardsforall.org.uk
Website: www.awardsforall.org.uk/northernireland/index.html

The Arts Council

70 Merrion Square,
Dublin 2.
Tel: + 353 1 618 0200
Callsave 1850 392492
Email info@artscouncil.ie
Website: www.artscouncil.ie

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS**Combat Poverty**

Bridgewater Centre
Conyngham Road
Islandbridge
Dublin 8
Website: www.cpa.ie

The Centre for Cross Border Studies

Main office:
39 Abbey Street
Armagh, Northern Ireland
BT61 7EB
Tel. +44 (0)28 3751 1550
Fax. +44 (0)28 3751 1721
(or 048 from the Republic of Ireland)

Dublin office:

The Centre for Cross Border Studies
Room QG11, Business School
Dublin City University
Dublin 9
Republic of Ireland
Tel. +353 (0)1 700 8477
Fax. +353 (0)1 700 8478

Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation

Glencree
Enniskerry
Co Wicklow
Republic of Ireland
Tel +353 (0) 1 282 9711
Fax +353 (0) 1 276 6085
Email: info@glencree.ie

Upstate Theatre Project

Barlow House
West Street
Drogheda
Co Louth
Republic of Ireland
Tel: +353 (0) 419844227
Email: admin@upstate.ie
Website: www.upstate.ie

Sole Purpose Theatre

Theatre & Arts
The Playhouse
5-7 Artillery Street
Derry
Co Derry
BT48 6RG
Northern Ireland
Tel: +44 (0) 2871279918
Email: solepurpose@mac.com
Website: www.solepurpose.org

USEFUL WEBSITE CONTACTS**Research and Confliction Resolution Bodies:**

- ARK www.ark.ac.uk
- CAIN www.cain.ulst.ac.uk
- Central Statistics Office www.cso.ie
- Centre for Cross border Studies www.crossborder.ie
- Economic and Social Research Institute www.esri.ie
- Glencree Centre for Reconciliation www.glencree.ie
- INCORE www.incore.ulst.ac.uk
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation www.jrf.org.uk
- NI Statistics and Research Agency www.nisra.gov.uk
- North/South Ministerial Council www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org
- TFF: The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research: www.transnational.org
- Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Limerick: www.ul.ie/cpds
- Centre for the Study of Conflict, Coleraine: www.incore.ulst.ac.uk
- Irish School of Ecumenics, Dublin: www.tcd.ie/ise

Europe:

- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living & Working Conditions www.eurofound.ie
- European Movement www.europeanmovement.ie
- European Parliament (Brussels) www.europarl.eu.int
- European Social Fund www.esf.ie
- European Structural Funds www.eustructuralfunds.ie
- Special EU Programmes Body On-line applications site www.eugrants.org

Northern Ireland – Government:

- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure www.dcalni.gov.uk
- Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland www.dsdni.gov.uk
- Department of Education www.deni.gov.uk
- Department for Employment and Learning www.delni.gov.uk
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety www.dhsspsni.gov.uk
- Department of Finance and Personnel www.dfpni.gov.uk
- Northern Ireland Assembly www.niassembly.gov.uk
- Northern Ireland Executive www.nics.gov.uk
- Northern Ireland Office www.nio.gov.uk

Republic of Ireland – Government:

- Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism
www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie
- Department of Community, Rural and
Gaeltacht Affairs www.pobail.ie
- Department of Education and Science
www.education.ie
- Department of Environment, Heritage and
Local Government www.environ.ie
- Department of Agriculture and Food
www.gov.ie/daff
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law
Reform www.justice.ie
- Department of the Taoiseach
www.taoiseach.gov.ie
- Department of Finance
www.finance.gov.ie
- Department of Foreign Affairs
www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie
- Department of Health and Children
www.dohc.ie

**Other Useful Websites –
Republic of Ireland**

- Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd
www.smashingtimes.ie
- Comhairle www.comhairle.ie
- Public Service Information
www.citizensinformation.ie.
- NDP Gender Equality Unit
www.ndpgenderequality.ie
- Citizens Information Database
www.cidb.ie
- Community Exchange
www.activelink.ie
- Community Workers Co-operative
www.cwc.ie
- National Women's Council of Ireland
www.nwci.ie
- The Equality Authority
www.equality.ie
- Association for Higher Education Access
and Disability www.ahead.ie
- Irish National Association of Adult
Education www.aontas.com
- Further Education and Training Awards
Council www.fetac.ie
- National Youth Council of Ireland
www.youth.ie

Other Useful Websites – Northern Ireland

- NI Human Rights Commission
www.nihrc.org
- Victims Liaison Unit
www.nio.gov.uk/issues/victims.htm
- Equality Commission for Northern
Ireland www.equalityni.org
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary
Action www.nicva.org
- Northern Ireland Economic Council
www.niec.org.uk
- Youth Link: NI, Belfast

www.youthlink.org.uk

- Mediation Northern Ireland
www.mediationnorthernireland.org
- EGSA – Educational Guidance Service
for Adults www.egsa.org.uk
- OnlineNI the citizen portal for Northern
Ireland www.onlineni.net
- Youth Net Network for the Voluntary
Youth Sector
www.youthnetni.org.uk

**ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS
FOR FURTHER READING**

BOAL, A (1992) *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Routledge

FREIRE, Paulo *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin

POULTER, Christine (1987) *Playing the Game*, Macmillan

VAN ERVEN, Eugene (2001) *Community Theatre: Global Perspectives*, Routledge

ODDEY, Alison (1997) *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*, Routledge