



#YouthTheatreTuesdays is an initiative of Youth Theatre Ireland. Due to the restrictions of movement and the gatherings of large numbers due to the COVID19 health emergency, this is a way for our community to stay connected and share practice.

Each Tuesday, youth theatre leaders come together through video conferencing to share ideas, insights and inspirational ways to keep their programmes on track.

These facilitated discussions are open to youth theatre leaders, facilitators and assistants. Each week a new area of discussion is proposed and guests are invited to submit ideas and exercises to be shared with the cohort. A volunteer takes the notes and then they are then shared with the group. These notes are more of an aid memoire rather than an extensive write up of any exercise or idea. Using the medium of Zoom software, the exercises make reference to the functionality of that app. i.e. chat boxes etc.

These are the notes from:

#YouthTheatreTuesdays May 5th 12pm

Dear Ireland

Proposal: Continuing with our deep dive into developing a New Form for creating meaningful work in this new self- isolating, tech reliant environment, we are delighted to welcome Phillip McMahon and Deirdre Molloy to **#YOUTHTHEATRETUESDAY - Dear Ireland**

Phillip and Deirdre, two of Ireland's leading theatre makers, both worked on The Abbey Theatre's Dear Ireland project *as writer and as a performer respectively.*

A national conversation led by Ireland's artists 50 writers, 50 actors
<https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/dear-ireland/>

Each artist will talk about their experiences of working on the project as writer and performer respectively. They will share some insights, techniques and reflections on the process and how we might move forward to continue to create meaningful work online with our youth theatre members.

Phillip and Deirdre have a long association with youth theatre, as members, facilitators and the National Youth Theatre and have a deep insight on creating work with young people.

Biogs:

Deirdre Molloy

An ex member of Dublin Youth Theatre and National Youth Theatre, Deirdre has directed and facilitated extensively in youth drama, most recently Show Me Love, DYT's Big Show 2016. She devised and directed Wake Up Sleeping Beauties and directed Red Ball for Dublin Youth Theatre. For Waterford Youth Arts, she directed The Pilgrimage (chosen from 150 productions to play at the Royal National Theatre, London as part of BT Connections Festival). She facilitated on Calipo Theatre and Picture Company's Sharp Focus film project and has worked as project manager on many events for Youth Theatre Ireland including NYT and their annual National Festival of Youth Theatres.

Deirdre has also directed numerous award winning pieces of new writing including Phillip McMahon's Danny and Chantelle (Still Here) for THISISPOPBABY - winner of Spirit of the Fringe Award 2007 and is currently working on a new show, WELCOME TO IRELAND - Meltdown of an Irish Tour Guide which was to be presented in May 2020, now re-programmed for Spring 2021.

As an actor, she has performed throughout Ireland and the UK, most recently in one of The Abbey's Dear Ireland monologues. She has produced a number of national theatre tours, including the award winning How to Square a Circle. She was also producer of THISISPOPBABY's hit show RIOT and company manager for its international tour. Deirdre has also worked extensively behind the scenes on many of Ireland's top festivals including Kilkenny Cat Laughs, Waterford Harvest Festival, Body & Soul, Electric Picnic and Vodafone Comedy Festival.

Deirdre's contribution to Dear Ireland can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/Owu9uvduEXs?t=6555>

It would be helpful to maybe watch it in advance of Tuesday.

Phillip McMahon

Phillip is a playwright and director based in Dublin. Writing credits include *Come On Home*, *Town Is Dead*, *Alice In Funderland*, *Pineapple*, *Elevator*, *Investment Potential*, *All Over Town* and *Danny & Chantelle (still here)*. Directing credits include *Dublin Oldschool* by Emmet Kirwan, *Not A Funny Word* by Tara Flynn and *Money* by Peter Daly. He has made and toured a number of smash hit shows with long time collaborator, drag superstar Panti, and was co-producer and co-writer on Conor Horgan's esteemed documentary *The Queen of Ireland*. His work has shown at the Abbey Theatre Dublin, National Theatre UK, Irish Arts Center New York, Traverse Edinburgh, across Australia, Europe, Canada and beyond.

Phillip is co-founder and co-director of cultural renegades THISISPOPBABY, wherein he was co-creator and co-curator of the *THISISPOPBABY POPTOPIA* performance venue at Electric Picnic Music and Arts Festival, *Queer Notions* cross arts festival, *WERK Performance/Art/Club*, *Where We Live* festival of performance and ideas and *RIOT*, the international smash hit show.

He is a former member of Dublin Youth Theatre and National Youth Theatre, he was Writer In Association at the Abbey Theatre 2009/10, Dublin, and is currently Artistic Associate at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, London.

Phillip's contribution to Dear Ireland can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/3ZmgAy0fhcl>

It would be helpful to maybe watch it in advance of Tuesday.

Alan King (AK): Welcome everyone. I'm delighted to welcome Phillip McMahon and Deirdre Molloy today to talk about their experience of creating work as part of the 'Dear Ireland' project with The Abbey Theatre. <https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/dear-ireland/>

I've emailed everyone Phillip and Deirdre's biogs so you can see their extensive experience working in theatre in Ireland and also working within youth theatre. So I think we'll just kick off. Phillip could you start by telling everyone a bit about the 'Dear Ireland' project.

Phillip McMahon (PMcM): Phillip explained that *the Abbey commissioned 50 writers to each write a monologue and nominate one actor to perform the piece and self-tape it from wherever they were isolating. The Abbey then planned to share the work on their YouTube channel over 4 days at the end of April. Phillip spoke about how the 'Dear Ireland' project was The Abbey's way of generating an initial artistic response to COVID-19 from the theatre sector, a way of continuing work and a way to continue paying artists. He described some hesitancy about getting involved in the project because of the monologue structure and speaking about COVID-19, isolation etc. He said that the 'Dear Ireland' project was "galvanising artists*

and audiences so any reluctance I might have had over the monologue format was kind of swayed so it was really nice”.

AK: Deirdre, how did you get involved in this project?

Deirdre Molly (DM): The way it worked was they commissioned the 50 writers and each writer chose an actor. I think they guided some of the writers towards particular actors but in my case, Felicia ‘Felispeaks’ Olusanya who is an incredible Nigerian Irish poet and spoken word artist... She and I had worked together. I had directed a show that she had created with her artistic partner called ‘Boychild’ which was like a new type of theatre we created which we called ‘Spoken Word Theatre’. So because we had worked together on that, and possibly because I’m the only actor she knows, she chose me and she wrote the piece explicitly for me and each of the writers were writing specifically for an actor. So I got an email from my agent saying Felicia is writing you a piece and we’ll send on more details on the process as we get it. So the main contact in the Abbey was the casting director, Sarah and that was the process.

AK: Phillip, as the writer, creator, what did your process involve?

PMcM: I was a little bit reluctant at the start because the idea of being a part of 50 monologues felt kind of full on. I suppose we’re all so used to working in live events, how do you suddenly transpose that to an online form? With that in mind, I wanted to make something that felt entirely true to the theatre. I was less interested in things that could be edited or... I wanted a clear frame so that we could protect the performance so that you could probably be drawn in, in some way to kind of experience what you experience in the theatre.

So I set myself the challenge of writing a 3 act play within this monologue format. So I resource that I find very useful is this book- Playwriting by Stephen Jeffreys. It’s really good. There’s a chapter in there on structure and I kind of landed on ‘Could I create a 3-Act play in a monologue that was 9 minutes’. So that kind of became the fun challenge. I had worked with Caoilfhionn Dunne about 10 years ago on a play called ‘Pineapple’ and so her voice came into my head straight away. In my work, I’m often interested in marginalised voices, queer voices, people who live on the fringes of society. And so... I’d heard a radio report that morning about somebody who’d had their wedding cancelled and I was thinking of all the weddings that had been cancelled across the country and kind of... with all of these things in mind I kind of decided to tell a story about a lesbian couple who had had their wedding cancelled but the set-up really is that we actually think they’re in isolation for much longer. It’s presented as a video diary and the twist is that we think they’re in lockdown but actually it’s a wedding diary that she’s been forced to keep by her partner for over a year.

AK: *What were the things that you felt were important to communicate in the piece?*

PMcM: For me, the most important thing was to tell a fully rounded story in 9 minutes. So I wasn't interested in a mood piece or something that felt terribly poetic. I was interested in bringing the audience on a journey from the start to the middle and end... and for that to feel like a complete journey. I suppose in the work that I make, often the first question I ask myself is what effect do we want to have on the audience? Then I thought what do I want? I want to laugh and I don't want to be reminded about isolation. I want to feel like there's some hope. So the monologue is future looking and imagines what the future might look like and so for me it was about communicating all of those things and offering some sort of salve or hope to its audience.

AK: *I thought it was interesting that the virus was a backdrop rather than being central to the plot. It was more of a human story about someone being forced into a decision to make someone else happy.*

PMcM: I know what's going on in my living room. I've got a partner and a dog here. I was kind of imagining what was going on in other living rooms around the country. Of course, now not for everybody, but there are also huge positives to what's happening about the forced pause, people taking the time to reflect, people are baking, you know people are taking the time to do things they don't usually do. So I wanted to use the piece to imagine what's happening for somebody else in lockdown.

AK: *Deirdre, as a performer, what did the collaborative process look like and practically how did you make the piece?*

DM: One of the massive missing pieces in it for me was collaboration. Because making theatre is collaborative. It's a group of people in a room together creating something with different thoughts and different voices. Although I am a director myself, as an actor I really need a director and I found not having that very difficult. How we're going to continue to make work without being in the same room together is quite a scary prospect for me. For me, the process was... I got the email saying I was going to be doing one of these things. I got the script from Felicia and she had written what was essentially a really epic poem. I spent like 24 hours going 'How am I going to make this into a piece of theatre? How am I going to do this?' and then I just said 'Look it's a poem. Tell the poem.' Your job as an actor is to be true to the writing and what the writer wants to say. Felicia is essentially a poet, so I just said right, I'm just going to say the poem and say it as best as I can. So I did have a session with Andrea Ainsworth, who's The Abbey's Voice Director and who I've worked with on numerous occasions. Her thinking is always about how you deliver text because she's a voice director, but she always has really good thoughts and ideas. Without her guidance and the sessions I had with her, I think I would have found it really tough to do it.

AK: *The piece was framed as a personal prayer in some ways, wasn't it? On a technical note, what was your camera and lighting set-up and how many takes did you do? Was their feedback from anybody else involved in the project? Did you have that sort of iterative process?*

DM: The Abbey did the project in 3 stages as the staff there were working across all 50 projects. I was in the first stage and we had to have a draft in the Thursday before Easter weekend and then we had to have the final piece in the Tuesday after Easter weekend. I have 2 units in this lockdown because I'm also in my parent's house as well as my own house. I decided to use their house to record it in. I picked a room where the lighting was the same throughout the day because it's south facing and I knew if I needed to do a load of takes that the lighting wouldn't change that much so - that was just a technical decision. You're technical manager and designer and everybody in this process. It was also quite important to me to have a set. I didn't just want to be against a blank wall, so I decided to do it on an unmade bed to give it a sense of isolation and the lockdown. And then I draped some scarves on it to give a sense of the tri-colour because of the 'Dear Ireland' title. I set up the camera. My brother has a zoom mic which happened to be in my parent's house which was brilliant. I recorded it on my phone and that was massively challenging. I only thought afterwards that I should have covered it over. You can see yourself throughout the process and I found that hugely distracting. I only realised when I watched the final take that my head was turning slowly away from the camera because I was finding watching myself really distracting. So I recorded them simultaneously on my phone and my zoom mic and my brother linked them up. The Abbey were delighted with that because there was quite a few of them that didn't have great sound quality - so to have that as a technical tool was really handy.

AK: *Phillip, as the creator, did you just hand the piece over to Caoilfhionn and let her take it from there or did you give notes or how did that work for you?*

PMcM: The Abbey didn't engage any directors. So there was certainly a gap there. For me choosing the actor... part of it was about who can I be sure will be able to take this on themselves and work a camera. Because there was no equipment and no directors offered to the actors. So it was a massive ask for the actors. I had worked with Caoilfhionn 10 years ago. We don't know each other personally very well and I haven't really seen her in 10 years. But I chose her because we had grown up in the same area and had many of the same experiences and she had been fantastic in my play. So it was really nice to use the opportunity to get back in a room together. So, I kind of did just hand it over to Caoilfhionn. She came back with a couple of takes and we had a 30 minute zoom chat about it. She ran with it and I was cool with that.

DM: We had to send a draft to The Abbey but that was really for them to see that it was technically ok. That you could see our faces and hear our voices. There was no feedback on performance on the draft. Which again, as I said...

I mean there are some actors that would love that but I found it challenging. I need other voices to help the performance. So the feedback was 'Yes the lighting is great', 'You need to bring the zoom mic down a bit' and that was kind of it. So that was somewhat challenging.

Tracy Ferguson (Youth Theatre Ireland): *We spoke a lot in previous #YouthTheatreTuesday zoom sessions about different ways to play with mics and using brush handles as a stand for cameras etc. Is there anything that you would have done differently technically?*

DM: I would have covered over the phone so I didn't have to see myself, that would have been the main thing. I'd leave the camera part uncovered and cover over the screen of the phone so I didn't have to watch myself. Also, my flatmate had a little tripod so I was lucky enough to have one of those. But as you say, you can figure out what you need and make it work in a situation like that. The only thing I would have done differently was that I would have done it in my own house. I thought I would get it done in 2 or 3 takes but it actually took about 4 hours and my parents were suffering a lockdown within a lockdown as my poor mother put it afterwards. So I think that's a massive thing. You need to think about your venue and think about the people around you in a personal way. If this piece that I'm creating needs absolute silence in order to work and be professional then I need to think about the people around me and what I'm putting them through. Very few people are going to have the option of a completely silent household to record in. Also you might have to think about clever ways in which noise doesn't matter. I did about 5 takes that I was happy with but in those 5 takes a garda helicopter went overhead, a neighbour started mowing his lawn, a neighbour started playing basketball, my father sneezed twice and they're more like a roar than a sneeze. All these things were happening and by the end I was shattered and quite cross. It's funny, that affected my performance as well by the end. There were sections of the text that were quite angry and sections that were quite upset but it became more... tired as I went on. Ultimately, I think that worked better because the words spoke for themselves then as opposed to it being about my performance. It was a very dense piece.

AK: *Phillip, how do you think we might carry this type of work forward with young people? Do you have any thought on that?*

PMcM: One thing I thought about the 'Dear Ireland' project, was that there was a real challenge there with how technology was used. Certainly for me, I was determined to do something that felt theatrical with an assumed audience. So spoiler for anybody who hasn't seen it, but she's speaking to her unborn child in it. Even though we are the audience, there's an assumed audience there. But technically, there was one in the series by Zhu Yi, a Chinese artist, that had a really fun use of technology. The actor was being visited by her future self and so on the screen you could see the iPhone image of herself. And that felt the most advanced in a way, even though it was super simple and I kept thinking that if we just put this in the hands of young people we might get a much more advanced response.

I just wonder is there a way of... that rather than it coming from us, the oldies or the leaders, how do we create something that's new using the knowledge of people who've grown up entirely with the internet and technology? The other thing that I thought is that we mustn't expect everyone to be writers. You'll all know from your own groups that there will be various degrees of literacy or interest or people are literally not used to writing. But one thing that I've found over the years is that people can talk and that often what they say can be more interesting than what they write. Perhaps there is a way to advance this kind of work by setting tasks like keeping voice diaries in character or something like that. Perhaps what we could do in a youth theatre context is maybe engage a really good editor let's say and feed the content to them from the young people -whatever that might be. It could be video content, or news clippings or voice content. That perhaps there's a way to create plays that are digital that actually feel really alive and fresh and authentic to young people's voices.

What is important to note [*in the Dear Ireland pieces which used technology in an interesting way*] is that there were editors credited. So in the same way that we mustn't expect everyone to be writers, we can't expect all of you guys as leaders to be video editors. So it's just identifying in your own constituency the person who can build these things for you that might be integral to an online or digital strategy for a youth theatre.

AK: *We've been speaking about how now is the time maybe to focus less on the performative work and more on the other areas so things like editing and sound which are by their nature solo pursuits. Finding the people in your groups who have these skills that you can work with is important. What do you think were the limitations of this format?*

DM: I saw an article from an American writer / actor who was basically saying 'Just stop making theatre'. Theatre is all about audience engagement and that energy between the performer and the audience. We can't do that here so just stop making theatre. Are we doing the right thing by making 'Dear Ireland'? But this isn't a replacement for theatre, it's just something we can do in the meantime. We have to continue to create and we do have to continue to engage the young people in the youth theatres.

I think Philly's point about handing over the work to the young people in the youth theatre... I had exactly the same thought. They live way more in a virtual world. They are more used to it than we are. I'm on the board of Dublin Youth Theatre and I know the virtual workshops are going quite well. I know a lot of people of our generation who are teaching drama online are finding it tough but any students I know who are studying online are absolutely loving it. So there is that gap between us where the sensible thing in this scenario is to hand it back over to them and see how they would like to create work in this virtual world we find ourselves in.

AK: *Phillip, where do you see theatre and performance going in the next 6 to 12 months?*

PMcM: I don't know to be honest. I think that given the recent announcement that people may be able to open theatres from August or September. I think there's a new piece of information to come about whether theatres will take that up given that they'll have to practice social distancing. So The Abbey have done an exercise in the main auditorium that with social distancing they could have an audience of something like 47. The Gate have done a similar exercise and I think their audience would be something like 38 to 40. So it'll be interesting to see whether anybody will take that up. Will The Fringe go ahead? Will the Dublin Theatre Festival go ahead? My instinct is no, they won't, and that theatres will re-open in January or something like that. What's happened in the last while... I think we all saw in the first 2 weeks of lock down is that people went to cram work online, right? Here's everything we've ever done online. And it just became this overload of content. I think there's been a few things that have been really successful. I think one of them is The National Theatre Live. The barrier to the National Theatre's work is often location and for some of us, ticket price. So therefore, everybody getting to see that work feels very special and really good. And then a lot of stuff is just getting lost. Other than 'here's live performances we have filmed', I think that there will be some interesting projects online. I think we are an old-fashioned medium. I don't think resources or time have been put into any sort of digital training or strategies so anything that we do... I say we but some of you may be technical wizards... but certainly I think that all of our energies have been put into live performance. We all know that from the one or two live things we get to do a year, so much goes into that, that even recording it becomes cost prohibitive, you know? It'll be interesting to see how our funding bodes deal with that and also what we can take from the cultural leaders in our main institutions and how they'll lead us.

DM: I don't think it will be financially feasible for theatre to go ahead with social distancing. If we do have to be 2 metres apart in a theatre, then it's not feasible to make theatre. So much in The Fringe is based on the income of the box office so if that is quartered, then it's not possible to make theatre. But in terms of things that are working online, I've been engaging with the music end of things. Paul Noonan from Bell X1 streams a kids show live from Facebook on a Friday afternoon which is essentially, him, his guitar, his piano and his kids on kazoos and he's just doing requests for people. He's engaging constantly with his audience who are messaging and sending comments and it's really lovely to watch. Is there a way to make some form of theatre like this that has that form of live engagement? How do we have that symbiotic energy with the audience in the stuff that we're making online?

AK: Myself and Rhona (Youth Theatre Ireland) have done some digging around for resources for the COVID 19 page on our website. One of my areas of interest is digital youth work and there's a lot of toolboxes there with apps and tools to use. Rhona has done some research around theatre resources so there's links to the Dear Ireland project as well as links for companies in the UK who are making work specifically for the online space, so do have a look at that. <https://tinyurl.com/yc8a88zt>

At this point, the 'Dear Ireland' discussion concluded and the participants were divided into Breakout to re-focus on the work of participating youth theatre leaders.

TOPIC FOR SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT SESSIONS: How might you take this digital work forward with your group?

AK: People are coming back to us now from their breakout groups so we'll get a little bit of feedback on how they're getting on. How are you Killian? Killian works with Complex Youth Theatre in Dublin City Centre and I'm just going to throw the spotlight on you for a second. You guys in Complex YT are going to make something inspired by Dear Ireland. Is that correct?

Killian Kirwan (Complex YT): We were very inspired. We do zoom workshops with the young people anyway. They were watching 'Dear Ireland' and we realised that a young person's perspective wasn't featured in the programme and they really wanted to present their own voices. So we're trying our best to facilitate that. So they're all writing one and giving it to somebody else and I'm going to be stuck at home editing for 3 weeks, but that's ok! I'll learn on the job. I'm learning everything on the job at the moment with this pandemic.

AK: We'll throw the mics open if anyone wants to talk about their discussions in the breakout rooms?

Deirdre Molloy: In my group, Cathal from Drogheda was talking about his young people saying they just want to have the craic and hang out together-which is a huge part of what youth theatre is. It's not necessarily about creating actors or creating theatre. It's about giving young people an amazing experience of life through the arts. Aideen from Making Waves YT was saying they've been doing writing exercises with their group and Ollie from Waterford Youth Arts was talking about doing technical set-ups and live-streaming and stuff like that. We were just coming to the question, can you do stuff that isn't performance based? CAD has become available for free online, so can you teach people how to do a lighting plot? Can you focus on writing?

Christina Matthews (Droichead YT): We were chatting about how they don't want to make art. Some of them do! I have maybe 5 or 6 at any one time and we've got 4 different groups. I've been offering them - do you

want to do a monologue, do you want to write something, do you want to create our existing projects? Some have opted into that and we've been working with some of them on solo projects, which is great especially for the younger ones who don't get a lot of my attention sometimes. We're thinking about how can you film something and, on film, what are the things that make a difference. Like eyes! Where your eyes are looking can make a big difference in how you're telling a story.

The smaller details that you'll lose onstage. That's been useful for us to think about... hair, costumes, colours, background but I would say that I have 6 from one group opting into making art at the moment out of a group of about 29. That's my biggest thing at the moment... workshops and games are grand for now but when we start looking at the summer, do we start making art again? And if they don't all want to? That's what I'm hearing there as well from the other youth theatres that were in my breakout group. They don't want to do it. At the beginning they were all "Let's come online" but now I've had 6 or 7 members say 'I hate the internet. I'll be back when we're in the room again.' It's hard because if we get back in September, I think that would be really magical. That's hard for them to hear. It's just challenging. I'm torn because I want to make stuff, the fact that I don't know how and the fact that most of them don't want to.

Geraldine (Playacting YT): Interesting to hear this Christina, we are experiencing similar. Yet they turn up each week.

Catherine Sheridan (Roscommon Co. YT): Are people going to run over summer?

AK: I think that some groups are working over the summer and some groups are not. People might be sticking to what their usual plan is but if they're not we'd love to hear from them.

Maggie Kilcoyne (Carrick-on-Shannon YT): I think we are going to finish up in the next week or so and use the time to plan and let the young people process but they can get in touch whenever they need too.

Christina (Droichead YT): In terms of summer, youth theatre is a core part of my income over the summer as other projects run out, so I'm definitely going to try! Normally we do a 10 week term, and 2 weeklong summer camps with showcases, definitely will do a re-think on how all might run

Anna Galligan (Kilkenny YT): I've got quite a wide range of people. I do get good turn-out on zoom but there's the fundamentals of what youth theatre is and that sort of thing... I've had huge thoughts about this over the past couple of weeks. Basically, we run a 40 minute zoom session. It's about exercises that look at the absurdity of the situation, of us being in 'tiles' etc. Really for some people it's about meeting up and having that space... the zoom time is about fun, chats, coming up with different things. And then alongside that we're running a project called 'What's his Name'.

We're not in a position to meet new people so basically they're being asked to create somebody who we will get to know bit by bit. So they get one instruction every week. They have to trust that the project will go somewhere. The unknowns are freaking people out and this project is a complete unknown for them too. But I know where it's going. At the end, they'll have a developed person, a developed place and a developed activity. At the end, they'll put these 3 things together and they'll have a choice of what art-form they'll put it out in. They can get involved or not-involved, they can try drawing or writing... That's the way we're working. I would love to hear from people if they have a group thing that they feel can work that isn't writing. I want everyone to have the choice to join in if they wish and I think me choosing an art-form might get rid of people.

AK: I think you hit the nail on the head there Anna. It's the perfect time to discover new arts forms or maybe to bring your passion into the group... to let young people choose.

Anna Galligan (Kilkenny YT): I'm hoping this will be a kick-off for a devising project when we're all back together.

AK: I think using this as a material generating time could be really productive.

Catherine Sheridan (Roscommon Co. YT): I have a core group of 6 who come every week and the rest of them are just bombarded academically. Surprisingly for me, it's a lot of the newbies who are coming along. It's brilliant because they're the ones who need a lot of the nurturing at the moment as they're quite young and it's all big and scary for them. I gave them an exercise where they had to collect random objects and then from that, they had to create a scene which used all the random objects and they had to perform them. Then I asked them to go back to title them and give them a blurb to explain what it was about. So from that a project called 'Fetch It' has been born. They're writing scenes. So for homework, they had to write 2 opening scenes which came from the objects they found. They dropbox them to me and they send them to assigned people to read. So we do readings, we chat about what we've done, we edit and now they're going to write the next couple of scenes this week. So the hope is that at the end, we'll have 6 new plays by young people and that I'll be setting them different tasks along the way. It's really nice and they've been loving it.

Trina McCann (PoD YT): Thanks Catherine that's really helpful. I find it's my newbies that are turning up each week too!

AK: Thanks again Phillip and Deirdre for taking part and responding. Thanks for being so generous with your time. Thanks everyone for taking part!

Other comments / resources etc from Participant Chat

Phillip McMahon mentioned 2 writing resources he found useful and gave these links:

Simon Stephens: A Working Diary <https://tinyurl.com/ybnoonmy>

Playwriting : Structure, Character, How and What to Write by Stephen Jeffreys <https://tinyurl.com/y8ne27jn>

Paul Higgins (Backstage YT): Will the Dear Ireland monologues be made available to others?

Phillip McMahon: @Paul not sure actually. Worth asking the Abbey. Happy to send my text to anyone who would like to read it.

Ollie Breslin (Waterford Youth Arts): Re. Editors surely the challenge is to make a live online theatre experience rather than filmed pieces with editors?

Phillip McMahon: @Ollie - a healthy mix of both might be good. Live is such a massive task and assumes we have audiences that will unite en masse for one live event.

Maggie Kilcoyne (Carrick-on-Shannon YT): Punchdrunk in the UK doing great work too in a digital space. <https://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/>

Ollie Breslin (Waterford Youth Arts): A great idea I have heard is about a Mexican Soap which goes out live on Facebook and the audience influences each day how the story goes through their texts etc. Having the audience influence the story ensures a huge interest from viewers

Christina (Droichead YT): Shirley, Maggie Trina here is the Juliet monologue we were talking about there- thinking about eye focus, backgrounds, costume, hair , lighting etc.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=669750220479612>

Abbey Theatre's *Dear Ireland* available here

<https://tinyurl.com/ydbaweks>

Complex Youth Theatre's #YoungVoices can be found over on Facebook

<https://tinyurl.com/y889ca7a>

Notes taken by **Rhona Dunnett**, Youth Theatre Ireland. *Additional information by Alan King from Youth Theatre Ireland.*