Playing For Life
A Youth Theatre Practice Symposium

Speakers, Presenters & Workshops



Eoghan Doyle
(He/Him)

Launch of Youth Theatre Ireland's new Strategic Plan 2026-2030

Learn about the organisation's objectives for the upcoming five years.

Eoghan Doyle is Director of Youth Theatre Ireland and a passionate advocate for the transformative role that theatre and the arts can play in young people's lives. Through his leadership of the national development organisation for youth theatre, he works to ensure that young people across Ireland have opportunities to participate in ambitious, inclusive and high-quality youth theatre.

Eoghan's experience spans youth arts, theatre, programme development and organisational leadership. His work brings together young people, youth theatre practitioners, artists, organisations and partners to strengthen youth theatre practice and support a vibrant national youth theatre community.

A central focus of Eoghan's work is creating the conditions in which young people can develop their creativity, confidence and sense of belonging, while ensuring that their voices and experiences are genuinely reflected in the arts. He is committed to widening access to youth theatre and recognising its value both as an art form and as a unique space for young people to collaborate, experiment and express themselves.

As Director of Youth Theatre Ireland, Eoghan leads the organisation's strategic development, advocacy, partnerships and national programmes, championing youth theatre within Ireland's arts and youth sectors.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND





Rachel Doolin & Donna O'Keeney

(She/Her) **(She/Her)**

Graffiti BEAG – Creating Space for the Magic in Everyday

What happens when adults stop managing play and start joining in? Drawing on Graffiti's BEAG Early Years Arts Programme, we'll share some simple ideas about play, creativity and being present, and explore what young children can teach us about following curiosity, making space and having a bit more fun.

Rachel Doolin is Director of Graffiti BEAG Early Years Arts Programme, a multidisciplinary initiative delivering high-quality participatory arts experiences for children aged 0–3 since 2010. BEAG centres curiosity, care, and co-creation, offering artist-led experiences that nurture early development through sensory and creative exploration. The programme works closely with educators and early years professionals to embed creativity into daily routines, supporting children's social, emotional, and sensory development.

Donna O'Keeney is an artist, facilitator and experienced drama practitioner who has been part of Team Graffiti since 2011. Her work foregrounds access, care and playful creativity, ensuring every young person can participate meaningfully and be seen within the work.

Donna devises and delivers a range of Creative Learning programmes for Graffiti, including professional development workshops for teachers and practitioners who want to develop a more inclusive approach to their work with children and young people. Donna's role as Inclusion Officer means she works across all of our Youth Theatre groups, and she is also the lead artist of Activate Space, our dedicated Youth Theatre group for young people with disabilities and complex needs.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND



Catherine Sheridan
(She/Her)

What If? Making Room for Wonder

What if curiosity led the way? Drawing on youth theatre practice, Catherine Sheridan explores how play, imagination and shared discovery shape teaching, learning and theatre-making. How can we support young people's ideas, keep wonder alive and honour a simple ethos: leave someone better than you find them?

Catherine Sheridan is a drama facilitator, theatre director, playwright and arts education practitioner. Founder and Artistic Director of Roscommon County Youth Theatre and Director of Drama Works Ireland, she brings almost thirty years' involvement in youth theatre, beginning with Dublin Youth Theatre.

She has directed and produced almost fifty productions, spanning classics, contemporary plays and original writing, including If I Was in the GPO We Would Have Won and Open Your Mouth. Her practice combines artistic ambition with a commitment to young people's voice, imagination and creative agency, alongside professional learning for teachers, artists and facilitators.

Catherine trained with Anne Bogart and SITI Company, and with Frantic Assembly. She has taught Viewpoints at NUI Galway, lectures in drama education at Mary Immaculate College, and holds an MA in Drama and Performance from UCD. Her national roles include Creative Clusters trainer and facilitator, Creative Associate, and TAP+ tutor, alongside BLAST, I Am Creative and Oide's Play in a Day. A former Youth Theatre Ireland Board member, she facilitates and mentors with the organisation.

Curiosity, play and thoughtful artistic challenge underpin her approach, guided by the ethos,"leave someone better than you find them." Catherine seeks to create opportunities for people to discover their capabilities, contribute their ideas and experience the pleasure of making theatre together.



Dominic Campbell
(He/Him)

Playing For All of Your Life

If making theatre sets you up for a life time of curiosity and collaboration, how can making theatre in older age nurture or maintain human values over generations?

Dominic Campbell is a Cultural Producer, serial creator of arts interventions. Co-founder of Creative Aging International, he inaugurated Irish Hospice Foundation's Art and Cultural Engagement programme, and is developing ArtsandBrain.com and Creative Brain Week to equitably exchange knowledge between artists, scientists, activists and health makers around the world. A contributing author to the Lancet Global Collection on Arts and Health, he was formerly artistic director of St Patrick's Festival, and Bealtaine, Ireland's celebration of old age.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
TU DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Workshop 1:
What If? Making Room for Wonder
Facilitated by Catherine Sheridan

What happens when we follow our curiosity and ask, “What if?” Join me for a playful, practical exploration of imagination and collective theatre-making. We’ll begin with simple movement, everyday gestures and imaginative prompts, discovering what happens when we put our ideas together. There’ll be humour, surprise and the pleasure of shaping a short piece of theatre. You’ll help choose the direction and explore different ways to participate. We’ll consider what helps people connect, take creative risks and want to keep creating. Bring your curiosity and give your own imagination some time to play.

What to Expect?

Expect to move, notice, laugh and make theatre together. The challenge is to stay with an idea before deciding what it means, and let someone else’s offer change yours. You’ll take away practical ways into devising, questions for your own facilitation and discoveries to develop with your group.

Who’s it For?

For youth theatre practitioners, facilitators, theatre-makers, directors, artists and educators curious about play, imagination, collaborative theatre-making. Expect active exploration as an artist and learner, with time to consider your own methodology. No physical theatre experience is needed. Activities will vary from seated to standing with flexible roles and opportunities to observe.



Workshop 2:
Permission to Play
Facilitated by Rachel Doolin (She/Her) & Donna O'Keeney (She/Her)

Permission to Play is a hands-on workshop led by artists from Graffiti's BEAG Early Years Arts Programme. Drawing on BEAG's sensory-led practice, participants are invited to reconnect with their own creativity through materials, movement and imagination, exploring what happens when we give ourselves permission to play.

What to Expect?

Expect to get stuck in! We'll play with simple materials, explore sensory activities and try out some of the ideas that shape BEAG's practice. There's no right way to do any of it. Come ready to play, experiment, notice what happens and, most importantly, have some fun.

Who's it For?

This workshop is for youth theatre practitioners, artists and facilitators interested in play, creativity and sensory-led practice. It's hands-on, so expect to join in, experiment and play. No particular arts skills or experience are needed, just a willingness to be curious and give things a go.





OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
TU DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Workshop 3:
Sound Play: Making Audio Performance Together

Facilitated by Dr. Ciara L. Murphy (She/Her) (TU Dublin, Conservatoire) & Dr. Brian Keegan (He/Him) (TU Dublin, Creative Media)

In this hands-on workshop, participants play with sound as a creative tool for performance. Working together, we will build a soundscape, then perform and record a short script. Open to artists, educators and youth theatre practitioners, no experience is needed, just curiosity and a willingness to play with voice and sound.

What to Expect?
You will experiment with voice, found objects and simple recording tools, build a layered soundscape as a group, then perform and record a short script together. No technical skills are required, and everyone will leave with an experience of recording and new ideas to use in their own practice.

Who's it For?
Artists, educators and youth theatre practitioners, no experience is needed, just curiosity and a willingness to play with voice and sound.

Dr. Ciara L. Murphy is Lecturer in Drama, teaching on the B.A. (Hons) in Drama (Performance) programme at the TU Dublin Conservatoire.Ciara completed her PhD in Drama, Theatre, and Performance in 2020 at the University of Galway.

Her monograph Performing Social Change on the Island of Ireland: From Republic to Pandemic was published by Routledge in 2023 and she has published extensively on modern and contemporary Irish performance practice. You can view her full publication profile here.

Ciara is currently the Vice President of the Irish Society of Theatre Research (ISTR) and the Co-Convenor of the International Federation of Theatre Research Performance in Public Spaces Working Group.

Ciara has worked extensively on research that informs Irish arts policy and practice. She is currently the Lead Researcher for the national Safe to Create project which aims to impact change on the culture and practices of the arts and creative sectors in Ireland to provide safer working conditions for all workers.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
TU DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND





Dr. Brian Keegan

Dr. Ciara L. Murphy

With a background in contemporary music composition, sound design and linguistics, **Dr. Brian Keegan** has composed contemporary classical music for live performance and has collaborated with artists in the areas of dance, film and theatre.

Brian has also composed music for the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, members of National Symphony Orchestra Ireland and ensembles including Concorde, ConTempo and the Donegal Camerata Quartet. His contemporary classical music has featured on RTÉ Lyric FM and has been played in the National Concert Hall, the National Gallery of Ireland, the Hugh Lane Gallery, New Jersey, Milan, Mexico and the Centre Culturel Irlandais Paris. His compositions have been recognised with awards from Germany's DAAD and with the François de Roubaix music composition award.

Brian's music for screen includes feature-length dramas, documentaries and numerous short films.

Brian holds PhDs in Music Composition and in Linguistics. He has presented academic papers in a number of venues including the University of Limerick, Trinity College Dublin, at the Karol Lipinski Academy of Music, Wrocław, Poland, at the European Association for Music in Schools in Vilnius, Lithuania and at the Max Planck Institute in Frankfurt, Germany.

This workshop is supported by The School of Media and the TU Dublin Conservatoire.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
TU DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Workshop 4:
Point. Click. Play.
Interactive Theatre with Barry & Cathal
Facilitated by Barry Morgan (He/Him), & Cathal Thornton (He/Him), with Donal Beecher (He/Him)

Picture a character in a play, except this time, the audience controls what happens. Guiding them through puzzles, exploring their surroundings and making decisions that shape the story.

This workshop will bring together theatre and computer games, where participants will first experience a short interactive performance before creating their own five-minute theatrical adventure.

Through play and experimentation, we'll explore how characters, storytelling, improvisation and problem-solving can come together to create a performance unlike any other.

What to Expect?
Expect plenty of play, creativity and problem-solving! Participants will experience the excitement of controlling a live performance before taking on the challenge themselves. They'll experiment with storytelling, puzzles and improvisation, discovering how to bring a world to life then hand over control to an audience!

Who's it For?
Anyone and everyone!
If you're curious about theatre, gaming, interactive performance – brilliant!
If you've never picked up a controller in your life – brilliant!
Whether you're a young person, theatre-maker, facilitator, student or academic, there's something for you here. Just show up ready to play, collaborate, and embrace the unexpected.

Tailtiu Theatre was founded by **Barry Morgan** and **Cathal Thornton** with a focus of creating socially engaged, interactive art. Since 2019 their work has highlighted the importance of creativity in the community.

Based in Drogheda, they have worked with a wide range of groups including young people in Direct Provision, Men's Sheds, youth theatres and schools, always with a focus on unlocking what the individual can bring and how it could help the community thrive.

They work through a number of styles having created interactive theatre, guided audio trails and live online performances. Their most recent work "The Ripple Effect" took place on Culture Night 2026 and was a blend of Playback and Forum Theatre, dedicated to celebrating their hometown and working with the audience to find a way to make things better.

Donal is a lecturer and researcher in the School of Media, Technological University Dublin where he lectures Writing for Screen, Digital Storytelling and Narrative Design. He studied Drama at Trinity College Dublin and holds a Masters degree in Creative and Media Education from The Centre of Excellence for Media Practice (CEMP), The Media School, Bournemouth University U.K.



Barry Morgan



Cathal Thornton



Donal Beecher

Other Events

Making Connections Workshop
Friday 5-6.30pm

In this fun, engaging workshop the emphasis is on connection. Through a series of exercises, tasks and reflections you will get to know the other delegates and the Youth Theatre Ireland team just a little bit better. The aim is to sow the seeds for longer conversations and bigger collaborations.

Social Gathering and Quiz at Generator Hostel
(Alcohol Free Event)
Friday 7- 9pm

Join us for a fun, light-hearted quiz hosted by Youth Theatre Ireland's trivia setters. It's a great opportunity to mingle, meet fellow delegates, and put your knowledge to the test, with prizes to be won.

Youth Theatre Ireland AGM
Black Box Theatre
Saturday 9.30am-10.30am

The Youth Theatre Ireland AGM will take place at 9.30am on Saturday 14th November. The AGM is not a mandatory part of the Symposium, and is exclusive to individuals, organisations and youth theatres who are paid up members of Youth Theatre Ireland. If you have any questions or queries regarding the AGM or membership please contact eoghan@youththeatre.ie

Saturday Sessions
Saturday 1.30-2.40pm

These two parallel sessions will be an opportunity to be part of the conversation or to use your own voice for critical engagement.These are the perfect sessions to tune back in after lunch. Choose just one of two sessions. Each will last approximately 1 hour.

Session A: Fireside Chat -Players At Life
Hosted by Phil Kingston (He/Him)



How has play become a lifelong practice for the panellists? Is it still a path of imagination, creativity and connection? Has it evolved for them? Do you have to work hard to keep it alive and specifically how have you done this?

Join Phil Kingston in conversation with Eoghan Flanagan Healy, Michelle Read and Darren Yorke, as they discuss lifelong play and creativity.

What to Expect?

An honest account of how to stay spontaneous and creative, what your future (or present) looks like,

Who is the Session For?

Anyone interested in play, creativity, and a maintaining a lifelong practice.

Phil Kingston started his working career as an actor and writer for stage, tv and radio. He took a break for ten years and worked as a storyteller in primary schools in Manchester and training teachers on the use of drama in the classroom. On arriving in Ireland 21 years ago he worked as a performer in Project, the Abbey and touring as well as writing for the Fringe and 'Fair City'. For the last 15 years he has been Community and Education Manager at the Abbey Theatre with a particular interest in facilitation.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
TU DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Eoghan is an Actor and Theatre-maker, he is currently a final-year student in TU Dublin's BA (Hons) Drama (Performance).

He has been a part of youth theatre and amateur dramatics since he was a teenager. He was a part of Droichead Youth Theatre and The National Youth Theatre of 2023. He then joined Bridging The Gap Theatre after leaving school where he has collaborated with many like-minded people from all walks of life. Eoghan holds the idea of 'Playing For Life' close and is delighted to be a part of this years symposium.



Eoghan Flanagan Healy (He/Him)

Michelle is a writer and theatre maker with a background in comedy.
Her plays are known for their wit, emotional depth and inventive theatricality, often exploring female perspectives, identity, memory and the shifting borderlines between fiction and lived experience.

In 2021, her comedy drama Bang! was part of the Dublin Theatre Festival at Smock Alley. From 2021 to 2024 she toured her one-woman show On A House Like A Fire, which is about memory and aging, and was created with composer Brian Keegan. In 2024 she wrote the large-scale ensemble comedy The Oasis for the Gaiety School of Acting (Project). In the same year Michelle collaborated with the Dundrum Elders and director Andrea Scott to blend biography with community voices in The Somewhat Imagined, Partly Historical, True Story of the Forgotten Irish Playwright, Teresa Deevy (Mill Theatre).



Michelle Read (She/Her)

Awards include a Stewart Parker/BBC NI Drama Award, a Hugh Leonard new play award, an Ondas Spanish broadcast award, and an Edinburgh Fringe First. Michelle's plays Game Over and The Oasis both featured in Youth Theatre Ireland's Playshare.

Michelle is also very proud to be a founder member and regular player with the Dublin Comedy Improv.

Darren Yorke is a Playmaker. Specialising in improvisation, he makes spontaneous works that feel like play and actively engage audiences of all ages as co-creators.

From Longford, he holds a BA in Drama & Theatre Studies from Trinity College Dublin and trained with Vancouver TheatreSports. Returning home in 2017, he founded Grand Stretch, an improvisation-led community theatre practice rooted in Keith Johnstone's Impro methodology and Ireland's leading member of the International TheatreSports Institute.



Darren Yorke (He/Him)

Since 2021, he has co-created award-winning work with a collective now established as Tally Ho, including Boss Rob (Judges' Choice Award, Dublin Fringe 2024) and Fancy Dan (touring 2027), both shaped through child-participative process. As Devising Director, he has created six pieces with BeLonG To Youth Services at the Abbey Theatre.

Current work includes Novel Ideas, his solo improvised novel-writing show for Dublin Fringe 2026. Next year, he is set to be Artistic Director of Aisling Children's Arts Festival.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND



Session B:
Long Table: Life in 2030 and beyond – where do we want to be?
Facilitated by Dr. Ali FitzGibbon (She/Her)
Saturday 1.30pm- 2.40pm

There is a plan for youth theatre on the island of Ireland going all the way to 2030. It's about the future then right? So what do we want that future to look like? Everyone is invited to join a conversation where we talk about what we want for youth theatre by and in 2030 and beyond.

Facilitated by Ali FitzGibbon and using the Long Table approach designed by Split Britches, this session is open to all to attend, join, listen or step up to take a seat at the table where the only item on the menu is conversation.

What to Expect?
This is an open session. People can come and go, step up to take a seat and join the chat or sit back and listen to what others have to say (or do both). The topic is the future - this may be exciting and a bit challenging. If it feels scary it might feel comforting to hear what others say.

The session will look like a long table in the middle of the room with 12 chairs. Around it will be other chairs. Once the session starts anyone with something to discuss, ask, say can step up to the table, speak, talk to someone else at the table, draw and write. Like any dinner table there are some rules (etiquette) but mostly about respect and inclusion.

Who is the Session For?
Anyone interested in talking about or thinking about the future of youth theatre on the Island (whether they are still involved then or not). Noone is forced to speak or participate but anyone can.

Dr Ali FitzGibbon is a researcher on ethics, decision-making and leadership in cultural production and management based in the School of Arts, English & Languages at Queen's University Belfast. She focuses on the role of artists and creative freelancers. Her work has been widely published and her PhD was shortlisted for the international ENCATC Award in 2020. She has extensive experience as an international producer, programmer and cultural consultant particularly in youth arts and festivals spanning 25+ years. This included coordinating some of the first National Connections Festivals at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast; managing Replay Theatre Company and leading Young at Art from 2003 to 2016. She is Co-Director of the Cultural Policy Observatory Ireland.

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Other Events



Emerging Voices Panel
Saturday 2pm-3.45pm Room EQ006
Chaired by Lara Coady (She/Her)

Join members of our Emerging Voices programme as they reflect on their Symposium Experience.

Emerging Voices is a group of senior youth theatres members aged 18 and over who are participating in the Symposium for the first time. Though a formal application process, they have been selected to experience the Youth Theatre Practice Symposium as individual artists, theatre makers and youth theatre members.

Mentored over two days by theatre maker Lara Coady, this panel is drawn from senior members from Youth Theatre Ireland's affiliated youth theatres.

This lively conversation promises to bring candour, humour and keen observation as they discuss Finding Your Authentic Voice.

Lara Coady is a director, theatre-maker, and facilitator originating from Kildare, Ireland. Her practice spans new writing, youth arts, and immersive multidisciplinary performance. She has created and directed original works for Irish festivals and venues, toured internationally as an Associate Director, and collaborated with leading organisations across Ireland.

In addition to her artistic practice, Lara has co-curated the 2025 National Lasta Festival for Townhall Theatre Galway. She continues to work as a Young Curator with Backstage Theatre Longford, focusing on developing access for rural and young adult audiences. She holds a First-Class B.A. in Drama and Theatre Studies from Trinity College Dublin, a PgDip in Cultural Event Management from IADT, and is completing an MFA in Theatre Directing at The Lir Academy.

She is an alumni and founding member of Explore Youth Theatre, and has participated in Youth Theatre Ireland programmes such as Youth Critics and the National Youth Theatre. These early experiences continue to shape her passion for youth arts and her commitment to widening arts engagement. She continues to work as a drama facilitator and frequently serves as Welfare Officer with Youth Theatre Ireland.

Playshare Showcase

Saturday 4pm -5.30

Black Box Theatre

Playshare is Youth Theatre Ireland's literary resource for young performers. It currently contains over 120 plays for young performers that have been written by playwrights, and youth theatres alike.

Every year, we highlight this amazing collection by bringing our youth theatres to our annual Symposium to perform extracts from some of the new plays we will be adding to the collection.

The Playshare event is always one of the highlights of the Youth Theatre Ireland calendar, as it celebrates youth theatre practice and brings young people to the heart of the Symposium.

Join us and cast of youth theatre members as they come together to present their skills, their craft, and their joy for youth theatre.

Droichead Youth Theatre performing The Wrong Jumper by Sam Whelan
Explore Youth Theatreperforming Going Nuts Part 2 -The Nutmaggedon devised by Explore YT.

Hosted by Rebecca Feely from Youth Theatre Ireland.







Rebecca Feely (She/Her)

OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
DUBLIN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Playing For Life – A Youth Theatre Practice Symposium

TU Dublin, East Quad, Grangegorman Campus, Dublin 7
November 13th and 14th 2026.

Youth Theatre Ireland in partnership with TU Dublin School of Media, School of Social Sciences, Law and Education, and the TU Dublin Conservatoire .

Programme Curated by:
Alan King, Sarah Fitzgibbon, Dr. Mary Ann Bolger
Playshare Co-ordiantor: Rebecca Feely
Administrative support: Katie Meehan
Technical Support: Eamon Fox, Ellie Henry

Youth Theatre Ireland Staff
Eoghan Doyle - Director
Alan King - Deputy Director
Dave Kelly - National Training Co-ordinator
Rebecca Feely - National Programme Co-ordinator
Barry Morgan - Special Projects Officer
Katie Meehan - Administrator
Cathal Thornton - Child Protection and Wellbeing Officer

Youth Theatre Ireland is supported by the Arts Council and the Department of Education and Youth.