

Back in the Room – A Youth Theatre Practice Symposium (2021)

Speakers, Presenters & Workshops

Keynote Address

Mark O'Brien

Executive Director / Co-Director - Abbey Theatre, Amharclann Na Mainistreach



Mark studied at University College Dublin, graduating with a Master's degree in English Literature. He has had over 25 years' experience in the theatre and wider culture sectors, as a leader, facilitator, actor, sound designer, administrator, and theatre director. He has also led, directed, and developed work in the youth theatre sector, and with Team Educational Theatre Company.

Mark was previously Director of Axis Arts Centre Ballymun. Over ten years, he developed Axis into an organisation and space of local, national and international renown that created, facilitated and produced new and significant work across theatre, arts development and engagement contexts. Mark led the organisation through two years of mentorship on the New Stream programme with the Devos Institute, at the University of Maryland and Business to Arts and completed a postgraduate diploma in Innovation and Social Enterprise at the Ryan Academy.

(Re)Creating Our Space: Introducing the Youth Theatre Ireland Wellbeing Programme

Katie Martin

Wellbeing Officer - Youth Theatre Ireland

Katie Martin worked for Youth Theatre Ireland as Administrator and later General Manager from 2001 - 2018. In that time, she also fulfilled the role of Designated Person for Welfare and Child Protection and has delivered child protection training all around Ireland. She was a volunteer youth theatre leader with Tallaght Youth Theatre for 7 years. Having witnessed first-hand the transformative power of youth theatre, she is a passionate believer in its importance.



Since leaving Youth Theatre Ireland she has worked as an editor, writer and social justice advocate. Her poems have been published in a number of anthologies, magazines and journals both in Ireland and abroad. Katie has also pursued her interest in mental health and wellbeing and has participated in a range of training and courses to gather a tool kit of strategies and approaches.

Youth Theatre, Real Talk

Trina McCann Artistic Director - Pod Youth Theatre



Trina McCann is an Actor, Facilitator and Theatre Maker. Graduating with a B.A in Theatre Performance in 2008 her practise is collaborative and ensemble based. Dance and physical theatre inspire her work. She has been a youth theatre facilitator for twelve years with Ramor Young Players now known as Pod Youth Theatre, based in Ramor Theatre Virginia. She has worked with various groups of young people in Cavan, Monaghan and Meath in that time. Trina set up Joy Youth Theatre in Maudabawn, Cootehill in 2017 and is running drama workshops in various locations. She has performed in many professional productions most famously, the hit show 'The Night Joe Dolan's Car Broke Down' written by Padraic McIntyre, touring for over a decade, selling out The Olympia Theatre.

My Catalyst

Aoife Murphy

Member - Explore Youth Theatre

Born in Portland, Oregon, Aoife moved to Ireland at six months old with her parents and was raised in Maynooth, County Kildare. Although she joined drama classes at an early age, they never considered being a part of drama and theatre until she took part in her secondary school's production of the musical 'Grease' in Transition Year and fell in love with performing.

They joined Explore Youth Theatre in Leixlip, County Kildare at the beginning of 2020 and have participated in many programmes run by Youth Theatre Ireland such as Young Critics 2020, the National Festival of Youth Theatres 2020 and Youth Theatre Ireland's Drama Facilitation training course. She is currently doing a B.A. in Theatre and Drama Studies at the Cork School of Music in Union Quay, Ballintemple.



Workshops

Workshop 1

(Re)Creating Our Space

Facilitated by Katie Martin

Youth theatre leaders/facilitators are the beating heart of youth theatre. It is their dedication, and generosity that allows young people to experience the many benefits of youth theatre participation. We have faced an unprecedented level of challenge during the pandemic, as we all grappled with finding ways to continue the work of youth theatre, under very difficult circumstances.

This workshop will give youth theatre practitioners space to reflect on their own wellbeing and examine how we can sustain our own energies. It will explore how we re-establish the safe space of youth theatre with a sense of renewal, hope and purpose. Strategies and tools will be presented to help us re-vitalise and re-focus as we move back into the physical youth theatre space.



Workshop 2

Intimacy Practice & Working with Young Performers

Facilitated by Robbie Taylor Hunt

Intimacy can take a range of forms, and what is considered intimate can vary for everyone. Intimacy can include portraying: best friends hugging, a romantic hand-hold, familial cuddling, physical theatre, dancing, medical scenes, and more. Run by a certified Intimacy Director & Coordinator, this workshop will equip participants with some tools for navigating intimacy when working with young people, flag some considerations for navigating sensitive content, and explain the methodology behind consent-based creativity.



Robbie Taylor Hunt (he/him) is an Intimacy Director & Coordinator, trained and certified by Intimacy for Stage and Screen (ISS). He's now the ISS Training Coordinator, and organised a series of talks on Intimacy & Minors earlier this year. He's undertaken Practical Accredited Regulations Training for working with children in the entertainment industry. He has run youth theatre workshops and directed young companies for ten years, including Russell Actors (London).

Robbie has worked as an Intimacy Coordinator on television productions for Netflix, the BBC, Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Channel4 and ITV, and a number of independent films and short films. He has been the Intimacy Director for live performances, recently Very Special Guest Star (Omnibus Theatre, dir. Rikki Beadle-Blair), Foxes (Theatre503, dir. James Hillier), and An Enemy of the People (Creatives in Schools, dir. Eleanor Bishop).

He has co-facilitated the introduction of Intimacy practice into the curriculum of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), and run Intimacy workshops at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA), Mountview, Carnegie Mellon University, Drama Studio London, Victoria University Wellington, Long Cloud Youth Theatre, BATS Theatre and Cambridge University. He is certified in Adult Mental Health First Aid and has undertaken certified courses with High Speed Training in Unconscious Bias, Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Harassment, and LGBTQ+ Awareness.

Workshop 3

Curiosity, Imagination, Creativity and Future Thinking

Facilitated by Dave Kelly

Sometimes the future arrives well before we would have ever expected it. In the past, we associated the word *Zoom* with a speedy, energetic, and fun workshop game.

That changed almost two years ago. *Zoom*, a videotelephony and online chat service, seemed to arrive from a perceived distant future.

To keep our workshops challenging, fun, and engaging in this new online world, we all had to adapt very quickly to get our heads around and understand this very new reality.

We leaned on each other, our creative skills, and our willingness to try new things. So, what next?

This in-person workshop will encourage participants to reignite their imagination, playfulness, and creativity. To chat, dream and imagine what Youth Theatre might look like in the future.



Dave Kelly is the National Training Co-ordinator with Youth Theatre Ireland. He has led the development and delivery of *Artstrain*, Youth Theatre Ireland's full time drama facilitation course for 16 years. He currently coordinates and teaches on the part time drama facilitation course. He is the current Artistic Director of Dublin Youth Theatre. He has worked directly with young people in youth projects facilitating drama workshops and various projects for over 25 years. He has also facilitated projects for many Irish theatre companies including Calipo, Graffiti, Upstate, TEAM, the Civic Theatre in Tallaght and the Abbey Theatre's Outreach and Education Department. He has a diploma in Arts, Drama and Theatre Studies from N.U.I Maynooth.

Workshop 4

Freeing The Natural Voice – The Voicework of Kristin Linklater

Facilitated by Bernadette Cronin

When we are facilitating others' – young people's – process, it can be easy to forget about ourselves, to forget to attend to how we use our own voices, which can result in strain. This workshop will open up a space for youth theatre practitioners to connect through a selection of exercises from the Linklater progression to their own voices. We will begin to identify our habitual patterns of holding tension in the body and work with the sigh of relief and gravity to release that tension and free the voice. Please bring a short text, a favourite poem or monologue – maximum 10 lines – to work with. We will also do a little bit of drawing, so bring your own crayons or colouring pencils if you prefer to use your own. I look forward to meeting you.



Bernadette Cronin is an actor, theatre-maker, lecturer, and founder member of Gaitkrash Theatre Company www.gaitkrash.com, a collaborative of artists who make performance work at the intersection between theatre, sound art and visual art. Recent performance projects by Gaitkrash include an Irish tour of Impossible Object to the '...is theatre' international festival, Alicante August 2021, Prometheus Now (Cork Midsummer Festival, 2021), and a filmed version of her translation/theatre adaptation Killing Stella (May 2021).

<https://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/events/event/24370>

Bernadette teaches voice, adapting and devising, text, and actor training in the Department of Theatre at University College Cork. She is a designated Linklater voice teacher, a qualified yoga instructor, holds a PhD (contemporary post-dramatic theatre) from the University of Exeter, a Diploma in Translation (English/German) from City University London, and a Diploma in Acting from LAMDA. She publishes in the areas of adaptation, theatre practice, and voice, is currently working on a monograph on the voice work of Kristin Linklater for the Routledge Practitioner Series, and an edited collection for Methuen Drama Intercultural Processes, Practices, and Perspectives: Co-creating playing 'the maids, arising out of Gaitkrash's international collaboration – Ireland, Wales, Korea, Singapore – Playing' the Maids', a multi-modal, intercultural devised performance piece inspired by Jean Genet's classic The Maids.

For Bernadette's last publication, *Adaptation Considered as a Collaborative Art: Process and Practice* see: <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783030251604>

Other Workshops

Word Surge

Facilitated by Colm Keegan

A creative writing workshop for youth theatre members exploring the themes of the symposium and writing for performance. A selection of spoken word pieces responding to the themes of the symposium will be presented at the end of the symposium.

Colm Keegan is a writer and poet from Dublin, Ireland. He has been shortlisted four times for the Hennessy New Irish Writing Award, for both poetry and fiction and won the All Ireland Poetry Slam for his spoken word. His first book "Don't Go There" was released in 2012 to critical acclaim. His latest collection "Randomer" is out now and available from Salmon poetry.



He was a co-founder and board member of Lingo, Ireland's first Spoken Word festival. In 2014 was awarded a residency in the Lexlcon, Ireland's largest public library. He has developed numerous creative writing projects for schools and colleges across the country. He is a creative writing teacher and co-founder of the Inklings Project, a writing initiative for young writers. He was the writer in residence for Carlow College St Patricks in 2019. He also developed and co-ordinates South Dublin Epic for SDCC arts office.

He co-wrote "Three Men Talking About Things They Kinda Know About" – which toured Ireland and sold out in Bristol, London and Paris. His debut full-length play "For Saoirse" was commissioned by the Axis Theatre and shortlisted for the Fishamble New Writing award. "Something Worth Saying," a piece written for the Abbey Theatre's Dear Ireland project in 2020 was called 'exquisite and devastating' by reviewer Emer O' Kelly.

Other Events

Roundtables:

Challenging Content When Working With Young People

A series of discussions around themes of representation, depictions of violence, intimacy and age appropriate language.

Facilitated by Vyon Bonenfant, Head of Dept. of Theatre, UCC

Yvon Bonenfant, PhD joined UCC Theatre as Head of Department in September 2018. Yvon's unusual and dynamic background emerged from exploring the unusual qualities of the human voice in performance, and the unusual qualities of the human body on stage. Originally from Canada, by way of the US and UK, he studied voice in many forms, live and performance art, theatre, experimental music composition, and collaboration in digital art-making, and he has worked with choreographers and dancers, visual and design artists, and research scientists to produce a wide array of performance and installation experiences, which, in recent years, have reached numbers into the hundreds of thousands per year. He also explores the role of the voice and body in performance in his academic writing and was a laureate of the Wellcome Trust Large Arts Awards.

Youth Theatre on Film

A selection of films, music videos, sketches, short documentaries and trailers for work made by youth theatres since March 2020.

Curated by Alan King, Deputy Director, Youth Theatre Ireland

Alan was appointed Deputy Director of Youth Theatre Ireland in September. He supports the strategic development of Youth Theatre Ireland and leads on youth theatre research and development.

Alan held the position of Youth Theatre Officer at Youth Theatre Ireland from 2010- 21. In this role, he supported the sustained artistic development of youth theatres through the development of resources, training, support, and advice for established and developing youth theatres in Ireland. Notable successes included the development and innovation of the Young Critics Programme, building and curating the Playshare collection, and producing the National Youth Theatre from 2015 to 2020.

His current areas of interest are in Digital Learning, Design Thinking and Digital Youth Work He graduated with First Class Honours from the inaugural NUI Certificate in Digital Creativity in Youth Settings - Level 8 in 2019 and was awarded a full Artist and Youth Work Residency Grant from the Arts Council & NYCI in 2020 & 2021. He is

currently working with Explore Youth Theatre in Leixlip, Co. Kildare on an on-going basis

Funding Clinic

Director of Youth Theatre Ireland Eoghan Doyle will give an overview of funding schemes available to those working in youth theatre.

Eoghan is responsible for the strategic and operational leadership of Youth Theatre Ireland. He previously served as a board member from 2007 to 2011 and as Acting Director from 2018 to 2019. In his role as Assistant County Arts Officer in Kildare County Council (2007-2020), he spearheaded a range of supports for youth theatres in the county including annual funding and professional development supports, the establishment of the award-winning Kildare Young Filmmakers, and writing County Kildare's first youth arts strategy. Eoghan trained as an actor in DIT's Conservatory of Music and Drama before undertaking Artstrain, Youth Theatre Ireland's Drama Facilitation Programme. He was Artistic Director of Clondalkin Youth Theatre and was Irish Animateur at the European Children's Theatre Encounter in 2005. Eoghan is a co-founder of WarTank Productions and has produced several films funded through the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's Sound and Vision Programme.

Scenario Colloquium

With Peter Lutzker - The Art of Foreign Language Teaching in a Digital Age

The Colloquium Series, supported by Ireland's *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, was launched on 27 June 2020 and is a great opportunity for colleagues to showcase their research and enter into a dialogue with colleagues from different parts of the world.

The Colloquium is a place to explore the global field of Performative Teaching, Learning and Research. The colloquium has a special focus on developing new practice and research - what area are practitioners exploring, where is there new interest developing, how can we build both practitioner support and research networks to develop and deepen the field?

The Art of Foreign Language Teaching: Improvisation and Drama in Teacher Development and Language Learning was first published in 2007. After exploring the origins and development of the concept of teaching as an art, the focus in the first part was on a qualitative study of in-service teaching programs designed to enhance the artistry of foreign language teachers through theatre clowning workshops. In the second part, the focus was on an action research study based on the experiences of

a 10th grade class during an EFL drama project which took place over five months at a Steiner/Waldorf School in Germany. In the end, the book tried to draw these two threads together in considering the unique developmental potentials of artistic processes in foreign language teaching and learning.

Peter Lutzker studied music, literature, linguistics and the didactics of foreign language teaching in the United States and Germany. After first working as an orchestra musician, he then taught music and English at Steiner/Waldorf Schools in Germany for 25 years. During this period, he also taught pre-service and in-service courses for EFL teachers in Germany and other European countries. In 2010 he became a Professor for Waldorf/Steiner Education at the Freie Hochschule Stuttgart (Waldorf Teachers College). He has also been an Honorary Professor at the National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan. He has published widely in German and English on the sensory perception of language, drama and literature in language learning, creative writing and developing artistry in teaching.