

TYA Ireland

– the national centre in Ireland of International ASSITEJ



Issue: 1, Winter 2008-09

TYA IRELAND

TYA Ireland (formerly ASSITEJ Ireland) is the national association representing and promoting professional organisations and individual artists whose work primarily focuses on engaging Irish children and young people through theatre. TYA Ireland provides a crucial link between members, the arts sector, the wider community and government.

Mission Statement:

To provide access to high quality professional performing arts experiences to all children and young people in Ireland.

Aims:

- To create a Forum for the Sector.
- To increase the value / profile of the work.
- To promote and foster training and development opportunities for practitioners in the sector.
- To have an International Dimension.

TYA Ireland Committee:

Muireann Ahern, Emelie FitzGibbon, Philip Hardy (Chair), Emer McGowan, Lali Morris.

Members are listed on the webpage below. We welcome and encourage new members from within the sector and from supporters.

Membership application forms are available from:

TYA Ireland, c/o Barnstorm Theatre Company, Church Lane, Kilkenny.

T: 056 7751266
E: assitej.ireland@barnstorm.ie
W: www.barnstorm.ie/assitej.php

TYA Ireland was re-constituted in 2007 after a number of years in dormancy, and is the national association representing and promoting professional organisations and individual artists whose work primarily focuses on engaging Irish children and young people through theatre.

TYA - A Gathering

One of the first actions by the committee of ASSITEJ Ireland was 'TYA - A Gathering', an event that was designed to bring together practitioners and policy makers in the field of theatre for young audiences to present, to listen and to discuss issues of interest to the sector in Ireland. It was hosted by ASSITEJ Ireland and included performances, forums, presentations and panel discussions with national and international guests, all of which, it was hoped would boost the sector and help it both to maximise its potential and to broaden its horizons.

Forum One addressed 'International Perspective and Influences - how international perspectives can enrich our work' and the guest speaker was Kim Peter Kovac, Director of Children's and Family Programs, The Kennedy Centre, Washington, USA.

Forum Two looked at 'Development of a Sector through National Agencies - how an umbrella body can foster relationships'. The guest speaker here was Tony Reekie,

Director of Imagine in Scotland, an organisation which has done exciting work in fostering connections between companies, venues and festivals.

The third Forum examined 'The Position of TYA in Ireland Today'.

There were performances and presentations from Barnstorm, Branar, TEAM, Cups & Crowns, and Graffiti Theatre Companies.

'TYA - A Gathering' was a stimulating and packed two days during the mid-term break in October, that provided an opportunity for all interested parties to engage and have opinions heard in a supportive atmosphere of others in the same field. There are already plans to hold a similar event in 2009.

'TYA - A Gathering' was supported by:



On behalf of the executive committee of TYA Ireland may I wish all our members and colleagues the very best for Christmas. Let's look forward to an exciting and productive New Year - hopefully a 'funded' 2009!

Special thanks to Fíona Ní Chinnéide who has created the TYA Ireland newsletter.

Philip Hardy, Chair

Executive Committee

The Committee met seven times throughout 2008. Emelie FitzGibbon and Muireann Ahern were co-opted on to the Committee at the first meeting. Through the meetings the Committee discussed the TYA Ireland constitution, membership and what developments they could undertake in the coming year and into the future.

Membership now stands at 16 and, although this is a good start for the organisation, it is hoped that we can now build on this number.

The Committee's main action for the year was the organisation of 'TYA - A Gathering' in Cork, which brought together delegates from Ireland and the UK, and which was grant-aided by the Arts Council and Culture Ireland. Graffiti hosted this first event in its beautiful premises in Blackpool - a vote of thanks was passed to Emelie and all involved in Cork.

Finances

The Gathering in Cork cost just over €7,000 which was covered by grants, registration fees and members/delegates paying for their own accommodation. At the moment there is little in the TYA Ireland account and subscription to ASSITEJ International is due in January 2009. The committee will need to examine ways of raising an annual source of funding for the administration of TYA Ireland.

Actions and Projects

It has been decided to make 'The Gathering' an annual event – already Draíocht in Blanchardstown has offered to host the event in 2009.

Networking and sharing of ideas were suggested as key elements as well as practical actions such as TYA Ireland bringing people to Ireland to facilitate workshops.

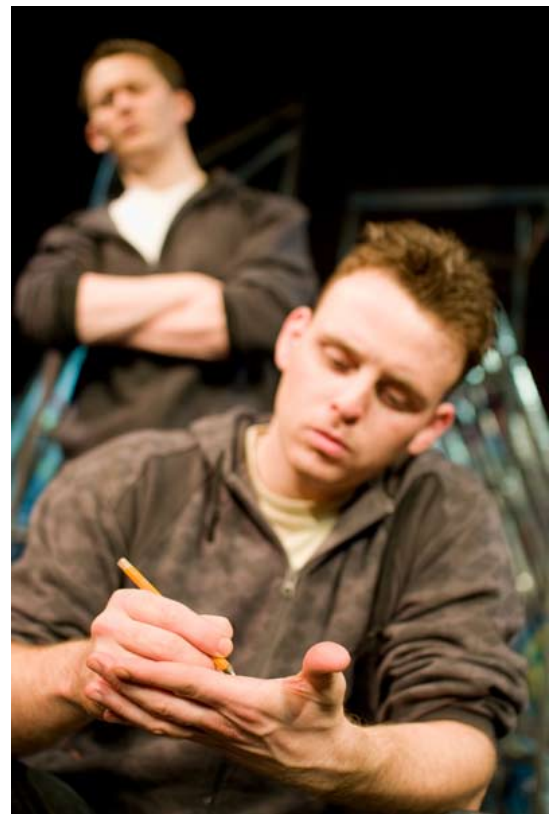
It was felt that a database of scripts would be important to develop. ITI has a script database but work for children/young people isn't easily accessed on same.

The TYA Ireland constitution is not yet finished. When it has reached final draft stage it will be forwarded to the membership for their input and feedback.

Name Change

At a recent meeting of the committee and following a recommendation from members at the AGM, it was agreed to change the name of the Irish centre from ASSITEJ Ireland to **TYA Ireland**. TYA (Theatre for Young Audiences) is used more and more throughout the world and other centres are now using the acronym e.g. TYA USA, TYA UK.

TYA UK has recently adopted a new structure by dividing into 4 organisations representing the different jurisdictions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It was felt that TYA UK was unwieldy because of its membership and geographical size. This may provide opportunities for TYA Ireland to partner/ collaborate with one or more of the new constituencies! We will keep you posted on developments.



Above: Shane Casey and Shane Falvey in Graffiti Theatre Company's *A Day in the Life of a Pencil* (photo: Life Studio, Cork).

Below: Paul Curley as Archie in Barnstorm's production of *Big Sister, Little Brother* by Mike Kenny (photo: Dylan Vaughan).



Púca Puppets

Púca Puppets opened their new shadow show in September 2008. Written by poet Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, it features original music and sound-scapes by Slavek Kwi and Colm Ó Snodaigh of Kíla. Inspired by Seal people or Selkie stories, *Róisín agus an Rón* (Róisín and the Seal) and its after-show discussion were enjoyed by over 2,000 children and their parents. Further touring is planned for next year. Meanwhile two new shows are in preparation alongside workshops and residencies in schools and other venues.

See Púca's page under production companies at www.irishtheatre-online.com or contact: pucapuppets@eircom.net



Left: Púca Puppet's *Róisín agus an Rón*.

Infant Imaginings

Infant Imaginings is a research & development project for parents and babies created by Helene Hugel, puppeteer, performer, and arts in health practitioner. Infant Imaginings explored the use of the performing arts with parents and babies to promote well-being. In collaboration with musician Jonathan Wilson, Helene facilitated exploratory sessions in a variety of health care contexts over a period of 3-4 months, working with parents and children aged 3 months – 2 years. The outcome was an interactive, intimate, work-in-progress performance for a very small audience.

A forum to discuss the value of this work was held in October at Tallaght Community Arts. For a report on the forum and its outcomes, see www.tallaght-arts.ie. A blog documenting the project's process with photos can be viewed on www.practice.ie (under projects, Infant Imaginings).

In partnership with Tallaght Community Arts, Helene is exploring with the HSE and other childcare agencies how this pioneering project can be furthered to produce a fully developed piece. Helene is also establishing a partnership with a school of psychology in a university to provide evidence-based research on the value of such work. She is also developing a new performing arts in health company for children, called Helium.

For more info, contact Helene at: helenehugel@ireland.com

Graffiti Theatre Company

Graffiti Theatre Company begins its 25th year programme with *The Lost Ones*, a new production of their 2005 commission from US playwright, Laurie Brooks. A gripping action-filled play, *The Lost Ones* is at the centre of an educational theatre programme which explores relationships, emotions and courage. The set, built as a found object installation, wraps the audience (11–12 year olds) in the same post-apocalyptic space as the damaged children of the title. *The Lost Ones* tours schools in Cork and plays in the Graffiti Theatre during February and March.

The Graffiti Outreach Team of teaching artists has a packed schedule of workshops in schools during that period, while the two Youth Theatres are in constant workshop mode. Physically Phishy Youth Theatre (10–14 years) plan a closed production of a devised piece in March and Activate Youth Theatre (14–22 years), following the success of their devised *Debutantes Cabaret*, are moving into scenes from existing scripts which they intend to showcase in the spring.

Professional guests are always welcome to any of our activities – but please give us advance notice!

For more info, visit www.graffiti.ie or tel: 021 – 4397111 or email: graffiti@eircom.net

The Ark

The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children, is delighted to present the world premiere of *The Giant Blue Hand*. This new theatre production for children is written by acclaimed playwright Marina Carr and directed by Selina Cartmell.

The Giant Blue Hand has been commissioned by The Ark with a top creative team, which includes Muireann Ahern (Producer for The Ark); Monica Frawley (Set Design); Gaby Rooney (Costume Design); John Comiskey (Lighting Design); Denis Clohessy (Music Design); Carl Kennedy (Sound Design) and Ella Clarke (Choreography). The cast includes Cindy Cummings, Catherine Walker and Don Wycherley.

Join us in this adventure where two young boys will encounter a mysterious, terrifying giant blue hand and “children must be braver than adults if they are ever to recover those they love.”

Following on from the sell-out success of *Beware of the Storybook Wolves* in 2008, The Ark is excited to present another world premiere theatre production which is suitable for ages 7+ and their families. Performances run from 10 Feb – 22 March 2009.

For more information visit: www.ark.ie



Above: *The Remarkable Rocket* by Oscar Wilde coming to Draíocht, February 2009.

Draíocht

January to March 2009 will see family performances offered at Draíocht, including: *Dick Whittington & his Cat* from the Coolmine Panto Group (Main Auditorium, 3 – 10 Jan) ; *The Remarkable Rocket* and *The Happy Prince* - a double bill of two of Oscar Wilde's greatest stories from Bewley's Café Theatre on Tour, featuring Michael James Ford (14 – 15 Feb) ; and *SeaShoreShow* - multi-instrumentalists Nico Brown and Martin Brunsden invite families with children aged 4-12 to dive into the sea with them for a participatory hour of songs, games, and stories. *SeaShoreShow* has been a huge hit from Fair Head to Mizen Head, and Nico and Martin are just back from touring with this show in Australia. (21 - 22 March)

Spréacha 2009

Spréacha 2009, Fingal's International Arts Festival for Children, takes place 8 - 14 June 2009. Spréacha is Draíocht's annual week long international arts festival for children aged 3 to 12 years. Each year companies from all over the world are invited to perform, with events programmed in and out of school time. Spréacha is presented by Draíocht in partnership with Fingal County Council. A full colour brochure will be available from mid- March 2009. Contact Draíocht to be added to the Spréacha Mailing List and get your brochure posted to you! Tel: 01-8852622.

Children & Youth Arts

A series of Family Days will take place at Draíocht Galleries - 'Love is in the air' on 14 Feb and 'Collage' on 21 March – which will see artists work with children. The activities are designed for children from 5-10 years, though younger and older siblings are welcome.

Primary School Workshops, aimed at 1st – 3rd class, will take place 2 – 5 March. These will include a facilitated visit to Ross McDonnell's exhibition, 'the new brilliant' and accompanying workshop looking at colour through painting.

For full details, visit www.draiocht.ie

Barnstorm Theatre Company

Ensemble Company of Actors

Barnstorm has attempted to develop a permanent company of actors for some time now. In 2008 Barnstorm approached the Arts Council with a proposal to push forward with this innovative plan and received backing for any radical decisions to make it happen!

The core company will be initiated through engaging actors for one year from July 2009. The actors will train with the company and guest artist-tutors while producing shows, devising with writer and composer, and working with the Outreach Department.

As the economic downturn has already caused cutbacks in the arts sector, the downside of this project is that Barnstorm will present its Spring Children's Theatre production in the Watergate Theatre only. This means that for the first time in 15 years the company will not embark on a national tour of all main-house venues.

Spring Children's Theatre Production

Boy With a Suitcase by Mike Kenny (8-12 years) depicts the story of a 12 year old war refugee, who undertakes a long journey to find asylum in another country with nothing but a suitcase containing few belongings, and the many stories his family has told him throughout his childhood. Naz's journey throws a spotlight on the real dangers faced by children in other parts of the world beyond the relative security of life in Ireland.

Audience-led Story Development

Create a Story is a new project involving primary schools in Kilkenny and county, offered by Barnstorm in partnership with Poetry Ireland's Writers in Schools Project. The project will involve audiences - children, young people, their parents and teachers - in the creation of a play for and about themselves. In Phase I, a number of writers will be engaged as Artists-in-Residence to run a series of workshops in participating schools (Spring 2009). Phase II will see the resulting material form the basis of devising with Barnstorm's company of actors, musicians, playwright, dramaturge, and director (Autumn 2009). The play will be devised and produced from the material, and ultimately presented to audiences both locally and on national tour in 2010.

Barnstorm's Outreach Department

The Junior Kilkenny Youth Theatre (10-12 year olds) recently created *Dirty Beasts* - three short plays devised from the Roald Dahl poems; the KYT juniors will prepare to take over Kilkenny with Spring Street Theatre! Meanwhile, KYT members (13-18 year olds) are in the process of choosing their full length script for production in 2009, with public performances in The Barn. Also coming up for KYT in early 2009 are theatre visits, theatre exchange, a mentorship programme, and theatre design workshops.

Other ongoing Barnstorm outreach projects include: the Children's Review Panel; Adult Drama Clubs; and its work with TASK (Training, Access & Support Kilkenny).

For more details, see: www.barnstorm.ie

RoolaBoola

RoolaBoola Children's Arts Festival is an 8-day festival that takes place annually at the Linenhall Arts Centre, Castlebar, in the week leading up to, and including the October Bank Holiday weekend.

The 2008 festival included NIE's *The End of Everything Ever*, hot off the boards from Baboró - a huge hit - and Shona Reppe's theatrical gem *Olga Volt*. Other highlights of the festival included Lyngo Theatre's *Hansel and Gretel* and La Società della Civetta's *Droplets*. It was wonderful to be able to include two top-notch Irish productions in the 2008 festival programme: Cahoots NI's inimitable *The Flea Pit* and *Fables, Tales and Tattlers* from Theatre Lovett in association with Pavilion Theatre.

We were delighted to secure RTÉ Supporting the Arts support for a radio advertisement; Radio 1's The Arts Show also did a 15-minute piece about the festival. However, the challenge remains to get appropriate recognition from arts correspondents and theatre critics writing for the national papers.

Programming for the 2009 festival has already begun. We are always keen to hear from theatre companies devising work for younger audiences and appreciate recommendations from those working within this sector.

For information and contact details, see www.thelinenhall.com

Monkeyshine Theatre

Monkeyshine creates theatre experiences for audiences of all ages. We aim to create original and innovative theatre by telling stories and celebrating humanity; we strive to challenge and stimulate both ourselves and our audience.

The company, led by artistic director Kareen Pennefather, works as an ever-changing ensemble of performers, musicians, artists and technicians. We are passionate about our multi-disciplined creative process and as a team we are continually sharing and developing skills. We tour our work nationally and internationally to theatre spaces as well as more unconventional venues.

In 2009 Monkeyshine will be touring a new show, *Wall Paper Girl*, as well as *The Magic Map* and our site specific piece, *Alice*. We are also excited to launch our first participatory project, The Connections Project, which is supported by Social entrepreneurs Ireland.

For more details, visit www.monkeyshinetheatre.com

Theatre Lovett

Theatre Lovett staged two productions for young audiences in Autumn 2008: *A Man in Half* written by Francis Kay, directed by Muireann Ahern, performed as part of Fizzfest, the Helix's Annual Arts Festival for Young People; and *Fables, Tales and Tattlers*, with Louis Lovett and Jill Murphy, performed as part of the Flip Flop festival, followed by a national tour. Both shows were met with critical acclaim. We are currently developing new work for 2009.

Fibín Teoranta

Fibín Teoranta aims to prove that Irish language theatre can be attractive and appealing to a young sophisticated audience, and that drama "as Gaeilge" can adequately deal with the complexities of modern society; coupled with this aim is a desire to produce inventive and ground-breaking theatre for young people.

To date Fibín have produced 10 shows for children, including their current production *An Cearrbhach Mac Cába & Fiche Bliain ag Fás*, and have performed to over 100,000 children. From humble beginnings five years ago, Fibín has grown into a vibrant and energetic company with 4 full time staff and around 17 part time workers.

The company have participated in many of the country's leading Arts Festivals including the Baboró International Children's Festival, the World Culture Festival in Dun Laoghaire and The Errigal Arts Festival in Donegal and enjoyed huge success at the Electric Picnic earlier this year.

Fibín have also worked with people with special needs and learning difficulties, discovering that puppets are an extraordinary resource in which to help people develop communication and personal skills. Similarly, Fibín's puppetry and highly-visual style has broken barriers in terms of the Irish language and altered the general perception of the Irish language arts.

For more information, visit: www.fibin.com

Below: Jill Murphy and Louis Lovett in *Fables, Tales and Tattlers* by Theatre Lovett.



Branar

Autumn 2008 has been quite a busy time for Branar. For the first time in our short history we had two shows on the road at the same time: *Aistear Ailbí* and *Na Síoga agus An Gréasaí*.

Aistear Ailbí by Marc Mac Lochlainn is aimed at 7-10 year olds. Branar tells this story with original music, unusual instruments, magical masks and wonderful puppets. It is unique in that it is performed in its own little marquee that is erected indoors and has its own seating and lighting. It can hold 60 children at a time.

This autumn, Branar performed *Ailbí* at: Sonas children's arts festival, Louisburg; Lollipop children's festival, Roscommon; Feile an Fhómhar, Carlow; Leanbh children's arts festival, Drogheda; Aisling children's arts festival, Longford.

Branar has just returned from a 5 week tour of schools in Dublin with *Na Síoga agus An Gréasaí*, also performed at this year's 'TYA – A Gathering' in Cork. We performed in 23 schools to over 2,000 children. Two dates in Derry followed, and all are back home now for a well-deserved rest!

We have had 4 programmes running in both primary and secondary schools in Galway since September, including 'Togra an Prionsa Beag' – a drama programme based on the book *An Prionsa Beag*, multi-lingual and multi-arts focused. Children are encouraged to use any language they know to add colour to the various planets that the prince visits. The work is carried out over six workshops, with each workshop documented by the children by using various art forms (3rd and 4th class.)

Upcoming productions

Na Síoga will go on tour in primary schools in Galway from 26 January 2009, and work will begin on *An Sean Fhear Uaigneach* by Barbro Lindgren in January 2009. Bjarne Sandborg of Teatre Refleksion (Denmark) will travel to work with Branar in May 2009 with the show due to go up in July. We are very excited about the prospects of working closely with such a world renowned director as Bjarne!

For more details, visit www.branar.ie

Baboró

The 2008 Baboró International Arts Festival for Children is over and was a fantastic success!

Baboró International Arts Festival for Children is recognised as the leading Irish arts festival devoted exclusively to children. It is the premier festival of its kind in Ireland and celebrates 12 years of presenting a multidisciplinary arts festival to thousands of children in the West of Ireland.

The dates for next year are 12th-18th October 2009.

For more info, see: www.baboro.ie



Above: Branar's *Na Síoga agus An Gréasaí*.

Below: Christmas Greetings from everyone at Baboró!



What is ASSITEJ?

ASSITEJ is a World Theatre Network of THEATRE for CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE

ASSITEJ was established in 1965 by a global alliance of professional theatre for children and young people. Today, ASSITEJ links thousands of theatres, organizations and individuals through national centres in more than 70 countries.

The secretariat is based in Zagreb, Croatia.

For more information about ASSITEJ, including its mission statement, activities and resources, visit: www.assitej.org

ASSITEJ Book 2008/09

ASSITEJ International is proud to announce The ASSITEJ Book 2008/2009 which will focus on international theatre festivals for children and young people. Theatre festivals from all around the world will be included and different aspects of festival organization will be highlighted in the book. This is a great opportunity for all of you, both as organizers of festivals or theatre producers, to promote your theatre and your festival in this unique international theatre publication.

The ASSITEJ Book 2008/2009 will be promoted worldwide on the occasion and as part of the celebration of the Theatre for Children World Day, 20th March 2009. ASSITEJ International offers you the opportunity to advertise your festival or your company in The ASSITEJ Book 2008/2009.

To advertise your festival, pre-order copies or for more information, contact TYA Ireland: assitej.ireland@barnstorm.ie

International Association of Theatre
for Children and Young People



The next edition of the TYA - Ireland newsletter is due Spring 2009. The deadline for inclusions is 13th March 2009. Please send all your news and images to: assitej.ireland@barnstorm.ie

Visions of Future, Visions of Theatre 2009

The 5th International festival of theatre and culture for the early years takes place 28th February - 8th March 2009. The festival will feature 52 shows by 10 Italian companies and 9 European companies. Ten will be shows for children from 0 to 3 years, fourteen will be for children aged 3 to 6.

This year, special section will be dedicated to Denmark, offering a window on Danish theatre for children and its artistic, cultural and educational experiences. There will also be a series of seminars on the theme of "Art and culture in education for the early years" focussing on Denmark, Cameroon, Austria and Israel. Other seminars include 'Round-Trip Journeys - journeys through music, art and philosophy... to rediscover childhood and approach it as if it was the first time' and 'Poetry and Early Years'.

Conference on Theatre for the Very Young

ASSITEJ International, in cooperation with Testoni Ragazzi/ La Baracca Theater and with ITYARN (International Theater for Young Audiences Research Network) is organising a Conference on Theatre for the Very Young to take place in Bologna, March 4th and 5th 2009, within the framework of the Visioni di Futuro, Visioni di Teatro festival.

The Forum - which will involve artists and researchers from all over the world - is an important opportunity to take stock of a rapidly growing phenomenon and its future challenges.

Call for papers

The conference aims to bring researchers and practitioners together in a series of forums to foster communication and discuss the role of theory in practice and practice in theory. The conference will include plenary sessions, seminars, and discussion, as well as performances. Invitations to participate include accommodation and meals for the days of the conference.

Proposals should focus on the theme of the conference, offering critical perspectives on theatre for very young children age 0-6 years old. Proposals should focus on one of two age groups: A. children 0-3 years old or B. children age 3-6. 500 word proposals should be sent by 31st December 2008 to:

Ivica Simic, Secretary General Assitej International
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Manon van de Water, Chair ITYARN
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