

IN2

## Arts, Young People and Opportunity

### In this issue...

Funding Opportunities for Youth Arts

Second Wave Youth Arts Centre in London

Cadmus Community Music initiative

Certificate in Youth Arts course

Poetry anthology by young people in Galway and Mayo



Overall Winner of the National Traveller Art Exhibition 2004  
organised by the National Association of Traveller Centres

'7 Heads' – Mahon Traveller Boys Group, Cork – Under 12s



National  
**YOUTH  
ARTS**  
Programme

  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Youth Arts Officer  
National Youth Arts Programme

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Special thanks is extended to the contributors, writers, interviewees, photographers and all those who contributed their time and energies to this edition of in2.

### Published by

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National Youth Council of Ireland,  
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Dublin 2.

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ISSN 1393-869X

in2 is published by National Youth Arts Programme, an initiative of the National Youth Council of Ireland and supported by the Arts Council and the Department of Education and Science (Youth Affairs Section). The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those held by any of the three agencies.

## Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Opportunities:</b> Artist in Youth Work Residencies	<b>2</b>
<b>Dance:</b> Innovative Youth Dance Company Makes Shapes in Limerick City	<b>3</b>
<b>Creative Writing:</b> Poetry anthology by young people in Galway and Mayo	<b>7</b>
<b>Music:</b> Cadmus Community Music initiative, Dublin	<b>9</b>
<b>Drama:</b> A collaboration between the National Association for Youth Drama and the Outreach/Education Department of the Abbey Theatre	<b>13</b>
<b>Vision:</b> Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Creative Youth Partnerships initiative	<b>15</b>
<b>Meeting Ground:</b> New Young Europeans project with Ográ Chorcaí in Cork	<b>17</b>
<b>International:</b> Second Wave Youth Arts Centre in London	<b>19</b>
<b>Moving On:</b> Certificate in Youth Arts course	<b>21</b>
<b>Visual Arts:</b> Art Making as Child's Play	<b>23</b>
<b>Resources:</b> Youth Arts Website	<b>26</b>
<b>Damburst and Dreams:</b> Interview with students on the Learning through Arts secondary school programme at Larkin Community College, Dublin	<b>27</b>

Welcome to the sixth edition of in2, the youth arts publication of the National Youth Arts Programme.

Since the last issue of in2, Orlaith MacBride, the former Youth Arts Officer at the National Youth Arts Programme has moved on to a new position as Director of the National Association for Youth Drama. I would like to thank Orlaith for all the work she has done to pave my way as the new Youth Arts Officer here at the National Youth Arts Programme. Her tireless work, particularly in developing the National Youth Arts Programme Strategic Plan 2003–2006 and the NUI Certificate in Youth Arts, have raised the bar for youth arts in Ireland, providing a framework for its future development and professional accreditation for practitioners already in the field. Thanks are also due to the many youth and community workers, artists and arts administrators who contributed to these pieces of work and to the progress of the NYAP over the years: I look forward to meeting and working with you throughout my time here.

If this edition of in2 has a common theme, it could be called *Arts, Young People and Opportunity: Making the Connections*. Youth Arts as a practice has existed for over ten years in Ireland, and while much progress has been made in promoting the value of the arts as a tool for personal and social development, activity still remains largely youth worker-led, under-resourced and thus often sporadic and unsustainable. Projects and practitioners are often operating in isolation, with no sense of a wider movement. Youth workers struggle to deliver projects within their organisation, without connecting with local artists and arts organisations that could support and inform their work. Equally, the arts community is often unaware of youth arts or unsure how it connects with their own practice.

It is time for Youth Arts to move on from being a peripheral, largely recreational element of youth work practice. Youth Arts can offer young people real opportunities to develop as individuals, to take their place as constructive citizens in society, and to progress to an attainable future as an artist if that is their desire. Connections can be made between the arts experience in a youth work context, and the wider experience – at school, in arts centres, museums, theatres, and in third level education and the work place. Opportunities can be created for young people to move between these experiences, and progress towards real, long-term outcomes in their lives. Learning through the arts in a non-

formal context could be re-evaluated and methods found to accredit this as valid learning, offering young people alternative routes into further education or career opportunities. Equally challenging – particularly for those of us from an art college-educated background – Youth Arts forces us to redefine what art is, who can make it and where it is placed in the wider culture. But making these many connections is not a challenge for already over-burdened individual youth workers and youth arts workers alone, it is a challenge that must be accepted by the arts and educational sectors at every level, if it is to be achieved.

Many of the articles chosen for this edition of in2 reflect on, or engage with this theme in some way. Youth Arts is seen, not as a separate activity, limited to a particular context, but as being connected to, and expressive of, the life of a young person in its entirety. Nurturing and strengthening those connections can only serve to improve the opportunities open to young people, in moving towards a productive, satisfying and creative adult life.

I hope you'll take inspiration from this edition of in2, and be encouraged to begin – or continue – strengthening those connections in your own work.

Margot Kenny  
Youth Arts Officer

# Artist in Youth Work Residencies

New funding for youth arts will be available to youth organisations from Autumn 2004. The Artist in Youth Work Residency scheme is offered by the Arts Council as a means of extending and enhancing opportunities for young people to experience the arts in the informal educational sector.

This pilot scheme will fund three residencies in 2004:

- Digital Media
- Creative Writing
- Music Composition

In a departure from usual practice, each residency will come with a recognised professional artist already attached. Details of the artist for each residency will be announced shortly. Each artist has been chosen based on both their professional ability and their interest in working with young people. Youth organisations, or consortiums of small organisations, are invited to apply for the residency of their choice. Up to €8000 is available for each residency.

## What is a Residency?

The Artist in Youth Work Residency scheme will enable youth organisations to bring an artist into their organisation, to work with a group of young people on an art project, over a fixed period of time. Residencies can be between 6 weeks and 6 months in duration, to be negotiated between the artist and the host group. Contact hours within the time period of the residency can also be negotiated, depending on the nature of the Residency.

This could be a wonderful opportunity for a group of young people who have already been working within one of the three art forms available, to progress their skills and experience of that art form. It could just as easily be a chance for a group of young people who have never had the opportunity to experience youth arts, to be introduced to the possibilities under the guidance of a skilled professional artist.

The aims of the Residency scheme are:

- To encourage artistic collaboration between professional artists and young people
- To offer young people the opportunity to work with and learn from practitioners of excellence in their field
- To offer artists the opportunity to enrich their own professional practice through the contextual experience of working with young people
- To offer young people who have had some basic informal experience of the arts an opportunity to advance their knowledge, skills and experience
- To place young people as equal collaborators with the artist and youth worker throughout the process
- To develop opportunities for young people to experience Music, Creative Writing or Digital Media within youth work settings

Both youth organisations with previous experience working through the arts, and those new to this approach, are welcome to submit applications for funding.

Applicant organisations are expected to secure matching funds (including in-kind funding), and to provide both the venue and administrative support for the residency. Artists are generally expected to work in partnership with a youth worker as part of the Residency with the participant group.


Further details on the scheme, funding criteria and application forms are available by contacting the Youth Arts Officer at

**National Youth Arts Programme**  
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**3 Montague Street**  
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**Tel: 01 478 4122**  
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**Email: arts@nyci.ie**

Dance

# Innovative Youth Dance Company Makes Shapes in Limerick City



**"Dance is one of the most fundamental ways in which a human being can express themselves", says Tanya Lowe, Director of the Limerick Youth Dance Company and Dance teacher with Daghdha Dance Company.**

In the new Limerick Youth Services building on Lower Glentworth Street in Limerick's City centre the Limerick Youth Dance Company meet every Wednesday evening for two hours of training, rehearsing and well, dancing. Dressed in pink off the shoulder tops or brightly coloured tracksuits, low baggy trousers or hipster jeans these girls are having fun. The dancing they do is an energetic mix of hip-hop and contemporary with other modern motifs thrown in. Confident, lively and excited the girls work through simple routines and sequences, each bringing their own unique style to the movements. 🇮🇪

Catriona, aged 13 had never really danced before, "I really like the exercise and meeting people in class", she says. Edel (14) is from Limerick's city centre and is eagerly excited about the Youth Dance Company, "I learned new dance moves and got to make a duet... I would like to become a dancer when I leave school". Kirsten aged 15 has always been interested in dance but says before she joined Limerick Youth Dance Company she didn't know much about technique, "now I can do more steps and make dances myself".

Daghdha Dance Company, the Limerick based professional contemporary dance company, set up the Limerick Youth Dance Company in September last year in conjunction with Limerick Youth Services. Designed to meet the need for creative dance expression for young people in the city centre, the company meets once weekly for a two-hour session directed by Daghdha's Ms Lowe. Daghdha strongly subsidises the Youth Dance Company with members paying only a nominal weekly fee. Daghdha Dance Company is funded by the Arts Council / An Comhairle Ealaíon.

"Dance can play an enormous role in the lives of young people both as a means of expression and more importantly as a tool in the holistic development of the individual", says Ms Lowe. "Daghdha set up the Limerick Youth Dance Company to provide a supportive and comfortable environment for young people to communicate their thoughts, feelings, ideas and emotions through dance."

The members of Limerick Youth Dance Company are aged between twelve and sixteen. The group were primarily recruited through Limerick Youth Service youth clubs and projects located throughout the city and its suburbs. The nine members, all girls, come from a cross-section of communities in Limerick and surrounding areas representing a democratic mix of young people.

Catherina Barrett, Youth Worker with Limerick Youth Services and liaison officer for the Limerick Youth Dance Company, is very positive about the benefits of the dance classes and the interaction of the young people. "Dance is a great leveller", says Ms Barrett, "people of all ages and backgrounds have the ability to dance once they are nurtured and given the opportunity. The Limerick Youth Dance Company give the young people the chance to express themselves through dance in an environment which is safe and allows them to experiment."

Each session follows a similar structure; Tanya begins with a series of warm-up exercises and dance sequences. The class then learn a new Hip-Hop or Contemporary piece and rehearse the routine they learned the previous week. During the two hours Tanya also works with the students on any particular series of movements that they have difficulty with and encourages them to create their own sequences by working in pairs choreographing their own variations to particular dances.

"The initial focus of the classes was on equipping the young people with a dance vocabulary, teaching them movements and expressions from contemporary and hip-hop dancing", says Tanya. "Other dance principles, such as improvisation, contact work and choreography, have been progressively introduced during the year", she said.



The teenagers are very relaxed and forthcoming during the session, and seem eager to share new routines or sequences they have put together themselves. Commenting on this comfortable environment Tanya said, "the open structure of the class means that in each session, while new pieces are learnt and older dances rehearsed, students are also given the space and support to experiment with new movements and to present their work to each other. This has helped them build up real confidence in themselves and in each other."

So what's next for the Limerick Youth Dance Company? Daghdha has organised a weeklong summer school in July for the members of the Limerick Youth Dance Company, where they will learn a new piece choreographed for them by Tanya Lowe. The Company will perform the new choreography in the Youth Dance Festival in Dun Laoghaire next autumn. This will be the first public performance for the girls and they are understandably nervous and excited. But Daghdha and Tanya have more plans for them.

Gravity and Grace, Daghdha's cutting edge performance series performed in their new home in St John's Church, Limerick City in December, is a week-end of performances and installations. Last year's Gravity and Grace was an acknowledged success, presenting work from Daghdha's Michael Klein, Ballet Frankfurt dancers and Riverdance star Colin Dunne. This year the 'Gravity and Grace' programme will include a presentation by the Limerick Youth Dance Company. "The girls will be interacting with professional dancers and performing their work in Daghdha's new home. This will be a really exciting opportunity for them and is giving us something to work towards", said Tanya.

Both Limerick Youth Services and Daghdha Dance Company are keen to grow the Limerick Youth Dance Company. "These classes have taught the young people to appreciate dance and to feel more comfortable and confident in the movement of their own bodies", says Ms Barrett of Limerick Youth Services. "I would definitely like more young people to get involved, and we are now particularly encouraging boys or people who have been excluded from dance because of financial or other constraints to become members of the Limerick Youth Dance Company".

Commenting on the importance of the Limerick Youth Dance Company to Daghdha, Michael Klein, Daghdha's Artistic Director says, "The Limerick Youth Dance Company is crucial to Daghdha's Education policy. We are very committed to this programme, making dance real for young people and creating an environment where people who might not otherwise have any interaction with contemporary dance are actively, and positively, engaging with dance".

The Limerick Youth Dance Company plans to expand next year. "This first year has been something of an experiment", says Ms Lowe, "to gauge what level of interest is out there and how young people respond to the structure of a Youth Dance Company". Judging by the enthusiasm of the current members of the company, expansion should not be a problem and the Limerick Youth Dance Company should have little difficulty in attracting more young people who want to explore dance.

Roisin Kinsella  
General Manager  
Daghdha Dance Company  
University of Limerick Campus  
Limerick

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## Fizz – Poetry of Resistance and Challenge

A poetry anthology written by young people attending community-based adolescent support programmes run by the Western Health Board and/or Foróige.

Edited by Rita Ann Higgins, Sheila McDonnell and Pat Dolan.

A little over a year ago, young people involved in Community Based Adolescent Support Programmes in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon were invited to submit poems they had written themselves. The poet Rita Ann Higgins, who has a keen interest in working with community groups, facilitated several workshops in both Galway and Mayo. During the workshops, the young people received guidance and direction from Rita Ann. The workshops were a great success, partly due to Rita Ann's expertise and her friendly approach, as well as the genuine interest of the young people in poetry and their commitment to the project.

After each workshop, the young people were asked to write some more material at home in their own time about any aspect of their lives that inspired them. There was no specific theme. The young people were free to let their imaginations run. Finally, the work was collected, poems selected and edited and published as a book. The book, which is supported by the Higher Diploma/Masters in Family Support Studies, Department of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway, was launched as part of the Cúirt International Book Festival on 21st April at the Town Hall Theatre in Galway. All those who contributed to the book attended the launch with their parents and friends, where they had the opportunity to read their own poetry in front of others and receive praise and recognition from the community for their efforts.

**Sheila McDonnell**

Westport Neighbourhood Youth Project  
Co. Mayo

### Front Row

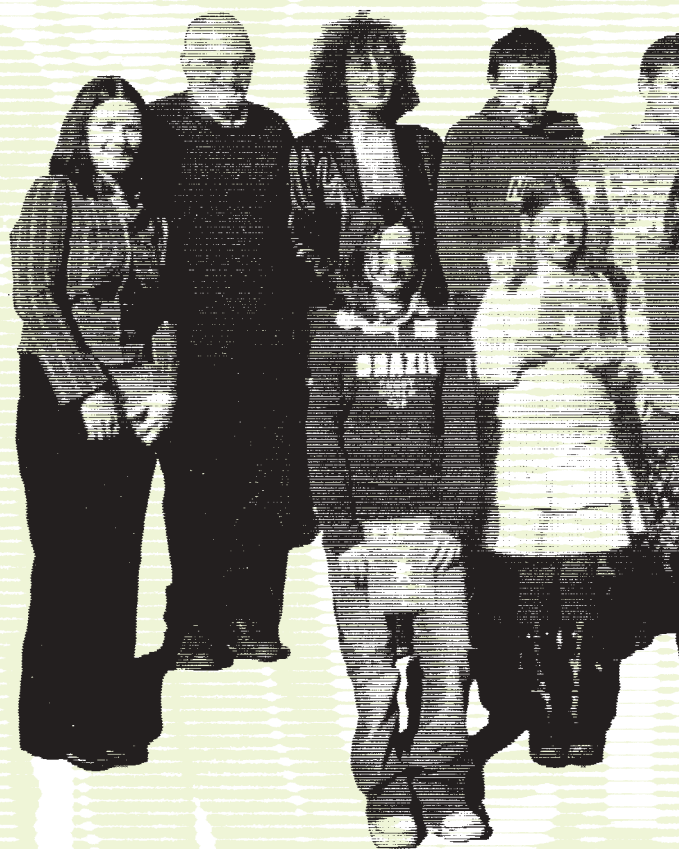
Left to right: Clodagh Cox, Niamh Murray, Katie Monaghan, Teresa Browne, Leanne Kilgannon, Charlotte Hussey, Mary-Louise Brennan, Caoilfhionn Harkin and Hannah Butt.

### Back Row

Left to right: Sheila McDonnell, Pat Dolan, Rita Ann Higgins, Keith Walshe, Paul Hoban, Patrick Mitchell, Lisa Healy, Karen Kelly, Catherine Mc Donagh and Chris Curtain (NUI Galway)

Excerpt from the Introduction by  
Rita Ann Higgins;

'The inherent quality of this anthology differs somewhat from the norm because of the absolute honesty and integrity of the poems. No theme was suggested, there was no desire to make links and nicely round off loose ends. There was however a hope to hear the voices of the young people involved and more importantly let those voices be heard.'



## JET FLYER

By Charlotte Hussey (16)

Come on Patsy  
Don't let us down  
Going to the airport to  
The beach or the town.

Knock airport planes fly over  
America and England  
Watch them disappear  
Into the clouds

Swimming by the sea  
On a cold Winter's day  
Big waves in control  
Me and Brian almost swept away

Sundays in the town of Sligo  
Singing in the Gospel Choir

Chow Mein, Chicken Curry and Sweet and Sour  
Chinese good with chop sticks


Go Karting in Castlebar  
43 m.p.h.  
Crashing into Brian  
Lost in Attynas  
No map or compass  
To get back

Active and Busy  
Cleaning and Cooking  
Basketball, soccer  
Rugby and swimming.

New wife, new car  
New house, new job  
New challenge  
New places, new people  
As we both move on

I shall not forget you Brian  
Good friends forever  
You and me.



A photograph of two young women playing violins, overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The woman on the left is looking down at her instrument, while the woman on the right is looking towards the camera. Both are wearing dark clothing. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a practice room or rehearsal space.

In 2000, Orla Moloney conducted preliminary research on behalf of Dublin City Council to gain a snapshot of community music practice and ascertain the views of practitioners regarding the blocks to its development. Concurrent with this process, the Arts Council of Ireland and Dublin City Council Arts Office were exploring potential for strategic partnership between the two agencies. In considering common areas of interest, they identified community music as an area which was underdeveloped and poorly understood. They agreed to support a two-year research project which would set out to explore music in community contexts. This project was named CADMUS. John Lalor reports.

In 2001 a development group was formed with representatives from the initiating partner agencies; Music Network, Federation of Music Collectives, CREATE and City of Dublin Youth Services Board. They finalised the principle aims of Cadmus: to raise the profile of music as an art form in community contexts and to support the development of community music practice. Cadmus was to achieve these aims by focusing on these key areas:

- Profiling music as an art form in three different community contexts, exploring the needs and interests of those communities, and documenting and disseminating the learning through a process of Action Research.
- Identifying and developing links with key community and arts development agencies which might support future practice
- Identifying best practice within current community music practise and exploring new models for further development
- Creating opportunities for networking among music practitioners by developing a series of workshops and seminars, which would explore and invigorate current music practice

The Development Group sought applications from community projects and organisations who wished to be involved. Short-listing of musicians was largely based on the needs of the short-listed participating groups, with the musicians being judged against their ability to respond to the needs of those groups. The selection criteria for musicians that were developed were:

1. Compatibility with aims of the project and short-listed groups.
2. Experience/understanding of facilitation of developmental processes.
3. Ability to plan a programme of work.
4. Breadth of musical expertise.

## Research in action

The approach adopted by Cadmus is known as Action Research. In practical terms, Action Research takes place where people are involved in a social or work situation which they feel needs to be investigated or improved. They devise and implement a plan to tackle the issue in question. They then meet to see if their plan of action worked. This meeting will then decide on the next course of action. Another cycle of planning, action and reflection occurs and the process continues in this cyclical form until the original issue has been resolved. It is democratic as it includes all the actors in a given situation. It acknowledges the individual worth of those actors and can be liberating and empowering for all stakeholders. As an approach, it complements some of the key principles that underpin a lot of community arts practice. It helped Cadmus because an approach was needed which would:

- Be applicable to diverse community settings and be flexible to adapt to the range of values and stakeholders.
- Allow the work to be rigorously recorded.
- Contain a continuous reflective, evaluative element to ensure the quality of the work.
- Facilitate the professional development of the music practitioners.

In reality, the levels of engagement in the research work by the project stakeholders varied from site to site. The research process was incorporated into the work of the project from its earliest stages. In practical terms the research involved the following:

- Minutes of all meetings.
- Session plans, reports and reflective journals kept by the musicians.
- Observation notes kept by the coordinator from regular visits to each site.
- Regular reflective sessions with the participants.
- Minidisk and video recordings of certain sessions and performances on each site.
- Minidisk, video and written records of workshops which were attended by the key stakeholders.

The three projects chosen by the group to participate in Cadmus were The Rialto Day Care Centre, The Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR) and The Finglas Concert and Marching Band. Two workshops took place in late July 2002 that introduced potential musicians to the representatives of the three chosen sites. Arising from these workshops and subsequent meetings of Cadmus personnel, a team of musicians was selected to work in the three areas. Two of these featured young people: The Finglas Concert and Marching Band and The Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR)

# CADMUS Community Music Programme

## The Finglas Concert and Marching Band

The Finglas Concert and Marching Band consists of over 70 young people from the area who meet each week to study and rehearse music which is predominantly drawn from the brass and reed band tradition. The management applied to Cadmus hoping to develop a small ensemble of players from within the band to explore new musical avenues, which in time might serve to strengthen the work of the whole band.

The two musicians employed by Cadmus to work in Finglas, Paul Roe and Terry Clancy, had wide experiences of traditional concert, brass and classical settings. Both had completed the M.A. in Community Music at the University of Limerick and had been working in the informal music arena for some time.

They began working with 14 participants ranging in age from 12 to 18 years, 2 boys and 12 girls, in October 2002. These members had been selected by the band's musical director Kevin McCahey on the basis of their interest in participating in a new musical venture. Each week the Cadmus musicians visited the group to conduct a two hour session. The initial stages of the project involved exploring a number of different group and musical approaches, in an attempt to arrive at a format with which they were comfortable. The musicians facilitated the group both as a team and individually. Terry Clancy concentrated on broadening the experiences of the group by introducing them to musical pieces from outside the brass band canon. He concentrated on interpretation, technique and development of ensemble playing skills. Paul Roe focused on composition and improvisation and eventually worked on creating an original piece of music, the Finglas Fanfare. The majority of this work took place towards the latter stages of the project by which time the group had developed a musical confidence and understanding. Both approaches were featured in an end of project public performance in Finglas in December 2003.

The members of the ensemble participated in the decision making and evaluation strands of the work. Different artistic and group exercises were conducted to facilitate this process. Cadmus operated in Finglas in a situation that was neither a formal music education setting nor a typical youth work model. As such it is difficult to extract learning from the project that might have relevance to the usual youth work settings. However, some of the experiences may be applicable.

- The importance of establishing and maintaining clear communication lines between all the stakeholders.
- Both the management and the group members cited the participative aspect of the process as a rewarding and effective way of working which contributed to their enjoyment and understanding.
- With regard to the musicians, the key learning to emerge from the work were the understandings about joint facilitative approaches and the positive and negative elements of long term projects. The length of the project was unusual, at 16 months. This required continuous planning and reflection, which was demanding. It also facilitated numerous approaches, both musical and facilitative, which could be safely attempted and evaluated.



## Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR)

The Ballymun Regional Youth Resource or BRYR works with the young people in the area through a number of arts, sports and social activities. BRYR was working with a number of existing music groups and they wanted to use Cadmus to develop the potential of those groups in year one, hoping to inform their music development strategy in year two.

The first sessions in Ballymun, during October 2002, focused on developing the group through musical activity. The aim of this series of sessions was to match the skills in the group with those of the musicians with a decision to be made as to the best combination to take the project forward.

It was decided that two musicians, John Lalor and Paul Roe, would visit BRYR one evening a week for two hours for the duration of the project and BRYR assigned a youth arts worker, Maggie O'Keeffe, to support the group. The initial group in Ballymun consisted of 18 teenagers – 4 girls and 14 boys – who had not worked together previously. The work concentrated on establishing the musical skill base of the group. This was done by song structure analysis, rhythm and vocal exercises and small group composition. Participants were invited to bring in their own favourite pieces of music and to discuss and analyse their choices.

For the composition element of each session people were given photographs to interpret musically in small groups. They would then be asked to perform these pieces to the larger group. These exercises enhanced their performing, analysis and song-writing skills.

The rhythm exercises used body percussion, found objects and traditional percussion instruments. These exercises were important in establishing the skill base in one of the key building blocks of musical expression, rhythm. These exercises soon filtered into the composition parts of the sessions.

As the project progressed, problems began to emerge regarding the consistency of attendance of the participants and their application when they were present. Numerous feedback sessions were held to look at the progress and to devise plans to deal with problems. It emerged that the issues contributing to the attendance difficulties were beyond the scope of the youth arts worker or musicians to deal with.

The initial group in Ballymun participated in a small series of open mic performances in BRYR in mid 2003. The project stopped in June and when it resumed in September, it did so with a small number of the original members. A meeting with BRYR management led to Cadmus recruiting new members from one of BRYR's other projects. Dean Scurry, the youth worker with this project proved to be an important catalyst in revitalising the project in Ballymun. This smaller group was focused and familiar with musical terms and techniques. Work began on writing and recording a series of original songs. This stage saw the group forming itself into a conventional musical group. Each of the six members was responsible for one instrument. The sessions focused on writing and rehearsing ideas and themes that were devised by the group members. These sessions were characterised by high energy and musical creativity. A number of the group's songs were recorded in February 2004.

## Learning from the Cadmus project in Ballymun

- From the youth worker's perspective working with two other facilitators opened up new possibilities, introduced new skills, enabled people to deal more effectively with changes in group energy and provided a challenge for everyone
- The project highlighted the need to listen to young people; to tap in to their energies and respect their learning styles, to access musicians who can relate to young people in this way and for youth workers to be open to challenging themselves
- The need for more time to get more deeply into the meaning of the music made: the art in the art work
- The need to build an environment that is open and non judgemental
- The need to explore the potential for peer learning and peer assessment
- The need to embrace uncertainty
- No musician can be an expert in all music genres. Often, young people are way ahead in terms of their knowledge of developments in a particular music genre
- A distrust of product is a false argument when discussing music – it is made to be performed and good production values should be applied
- Theory needs to be tested many times to make good practice
- Young people themselves are often the ones who are left out of these discussions
- They are also the ones who take the biggest risks in arts projects – they are the ones who may end up feeling let down if the project does not work

During the course of its work Cadmus encountered and interacted with a broad range of places, people, experiences and cultures. It did not ignore the realities of culture, experience and practice in each of its contexts as it tried to open up the possibilities for musical expression.

The project attempted to value and mark an engagement with an art form and to celebrate that engagement in ways that had meaning for all those involved.

Cadmus makes a modest claim to have done this.

## RATIONALE

NAYD as the umbrella organisation for youth theatre and drama in Ireland is committed to developing partnerships with other key cultural and artistic organisations in Ireland to inform the work of youth theatre and to promote the contribution that young people and youth theatre make to theatre in Ireland.

NAYD's relationship with the Abbey Theatre has developed over the last number of years through a partnership with the Outreach/Education Department. This relationship has evolved and progressed through practice, with each project informing and shaping the direction of the next. Previous successful collaborations include:

- i) Stage it; writers project (1997)
- ii) Abbey Links; director's project (1998)
- iii) Acquis; technician's project (2000-2001)
- iv) Nextus: evolving project (2003)

Each of these projects sought to make available the assets and resources of the Abbey Theatre to the needs and interests of young people and youth

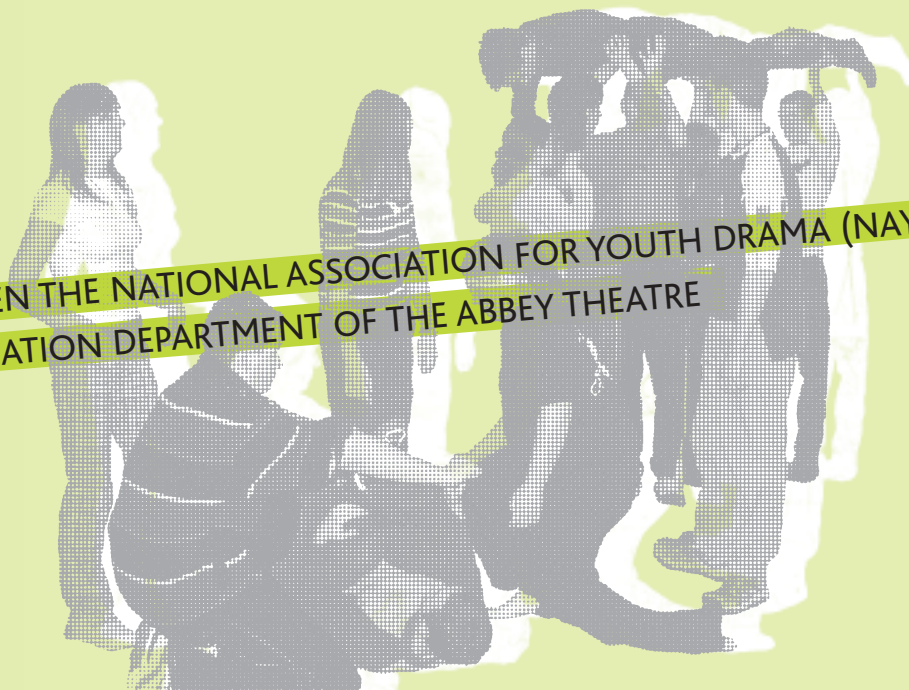
theatre directors from a variety of youth theatres both in Dublin and outside. They also sought to support NAYD's aims of promoting good quality practice artistically and the social development of participants.

In 2003, NAYD and the Abbey developed NEXTUS, a project with nine youth theatres around the country. As a result of the project these youth theatres have now developed their own relationship with the Abbey. The next stage of NEXTUS will take place during the abbeyonehundred year. In celebrating the contribution the Abbey has made to Irish cultural life over the last one hundred year, this project realises the potential contribution that young people and youth theatre can make to the Abbey in the next stage of its development as well as building a framework nationally that showcases abbeyonehundred through NAYD and its members.

The current project builds on NEXTUS and will take place during 2004.

# NEXTUS

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR YOUTH DRAMA (NAYD)  
AND THE OUTREACH/EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF THE ABBEY THEATRE



## THE PROJECT

Three playwrights Peter Sheridan, Christian O' Reilly and Hilary Fannin were commissioned in January 2004 as the first stage in the project to write three one-act plays for youth theatre. The playwrights worked with members of NAYD's Youth Theatre Members' Forum in devising workshops led by facilitators from NAYD.

Fifteen youth theatres from all over Ireland are participating in this on-going project. They are: Dublin Youth Theatre, Blanchardstown Youth Theatre, Activate Youth Theatre, Cryptic Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre, Clondalkin Youth Theatre, Youthopia Youth Theatre, Rainbow Factory Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre, Mayo Youth Theatre, Droichead Youth Theatre, Roscommon County Youth Theatre, Roundabout Youth Theatre, Waterford Youth Drama and Cabinteely Youth Theatre.

The playwrights developed scripts that were presented to fifteen youth theatre directors in May 2004. The directors spent a weekend working with Writer and Director, Gerry Stembridge and Commissioning Manager of the National Theatre, Jocelyn Clarke, exploring and interrogating each script. As part of the process, feedback from the directors was funneled back to the writers in developing the final drafts of the scripts.

The youth theatre directors will then decide on a script that they will produce with their youth theatre in the Autumn. In September 2004, Gerry Stembridge, as mentor director will meet with the youth theatre leaders again in a pre-production workshop.

The plays will be performed two weekends in regional festivals in Roscommon Theatre and the Granary Theatre in Cork in October 2004. These events will provide an opportunity for youth theatres to showcase their work, scripts written specifically by Irish writers for youth theatre, and celebrate one hundred years of the Abbey theatre. The events will involve not only the performances of the different plays but a series of workshops for leaders and young people delivered by professional theatre practitioners.

In November 2004, NAYD and the Education /Outreach Department of the Abbey Theatre will play host to youth theatres from all over Ireland coming together to celebrate youth theatre as part of the abbeyonehundred celebrations.

This day will involve a variety of workshops available to young people as well as launching the published plays. The joint publication of the three scripts by the Abbey and NAYD, is the part of the building up of a canon of youth theatre plays published in partnership by both organisations.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This project builds on a successful partnership between the National Theatre and the National organisation responsible for the development of youth drama and youth theatre in Ireland. The development of quality artistic experiences for our young people, developing the standards of practice of youth theatre directors and creating a body of work written by Irish writers for youth theatres will all emerge from this current collaboration. Future developments may include a development and refinement of this project following evaluation.

The most critical aspect of this project is the understanding of the contribution that youth theatre makes to theatre in Ireland. Young people involved in youth theatre now may become theatre practitioners and critical audiences in the future. But what they contribute now as active participants contributing to the development of theatre as an art form, engaging and making theatre and learning through theatre to understand and frame their own vision of the world is immeasurable.

Successful projects such as this showcase youth theatre beyond the sector, dispel pre-defined notions of youth theatre and offer people an insight into rich world made possible only by young people.

*For further information on this project or on youth theatre in Ireland, contact:*

**Orlaith McBride**

Director

National Association for Youth Drama

info@nayd.ie

www.youthdrama.ie

*For further information on Outreach/Education at the Abbey Theatre contact:*

**Jean O'Dwyer**

Outreach2@abbeytheatre.ie

## Joe Kelly, Arts Development of the Northern Ireland Arts Council provides an overview of Northern Ireland's Creative Youth Partnerships initiative.

Creative Youth Partnerships (CYP) is a three-year scheme beginning in April this year, with the aim of creating, developing and sustaining arts programmes, activities and initiatives for children and young people throughout Northern Ireland.

It will provide more opportunities for children and young people to participate in the arts within the formal education sector, the nonformal sector and in the context of community and voluntary groups and organisations.

CYP has been developed over the last year by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, the Department of Education and the Education & Library Boards. They have been supported and advised by a regional consortium including, among others, representatives of artists, arts organisations, youth organisations, FE colleges and the Education & Training Inspectorate.

As well as increasing the numbers of children and young people taking part in the arts, the scheme aims to integrate the work of artists and arts organisations with what already exists in schools, youth clubs and youth and community groups.

The different programmes encourage artists and arts organisations, teachers and youth workers, to consider how the arts can be used





to support and enhance the learning and personal and social development of children and young people.

While the focus on developing a skill such as playing a musical instrument, acting or dancing are still central to creative expression, the concepts of creative thinking, participation, team building and identity are now finding wide acceptance as children and young people forge their own routes into arts practice. For many youth organisations, their core principles of participation, understanding and the acceptance of the values and beliefs of others can be realised through working with artists and arts organisations.

Programming for the scheme falls into two strands. Firstly, there is a CYP web site database of programmes and activities linking youth organisations to short term projects with artists and arts organisations. These programmes will enable youth organisations, schools and colleges to select individual artists and professional arts organisations to deliver a combination of pre-prepared and individually-tailored arts activities.

Secondly, local Action Zone programmes will deliver longer-term local partnership projects. A new CYP Development Officer will be employed in each of the five Action Zones (Education & Library Boards) to promote the arts and facilitate the programmes.

Many artists and arts organisations have developed excellent practice in combining traditional arts with the use of digital technology. In visual arts, this includes animation and moving image; and, in music, improvisation, composition, mixing and DJ-ing. Other art forms include dance, drama, crafts, creative writing, storytelling, public art and traditional Ulster and Irish arts.

The programmes are offered in a variety of formats and are often combined during the delivery of a programme. Many take the form of workshops in which the work of the programme can either be performed or exhibited. The artists and arts organisations have all been assessed on their experience and expertise in working with children and young people. Youth leaders and teachers are encouraged to discuss the needs of their group with the artists in order to maximise the benefit of the programme.

CYP has developed its own codes of practice in relation to programme delivery and child protection. All the artists and arts organisations must comply with these codes which are published on the web site. Additionally, all artists working with the children and young people have undergone pre-employment checks through the Education and Library Boards.

Application forms and programme guidance, as well as contact information for the CYP Development Officers in your area, are available on the site. The web site address is [www.cypni.org](http://www.cypni.org) and can also be accessed through the Arts Council's web site [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org).

#### Creative Youth Partnerships Development Officers:

South Eastern Education & Library Board:  
Alberta Park  
048 90449830  
[seelb@cypni.org](mailto:seelb@cypni.org)

Southern Education & Library Board:  
Fionnuala Walsh  
048 38314465  
[selb@cypni.org](mailto:selb@cypni.org)

Belfast Education & Library Board:  
Julianne McCormick  
048 90564267  
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North Eastern Education & Library Board:  
Gillian Hallam  
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Western Education & Library Board:  
Geraldine O'Reilly  
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*This article originally appeared in the March 2004 issue of Inform All, the magazine for the Northern Ireland Youth Sector*

# NEW YOUNG EUROPEANS

New Young Europeans is an anti-racist initiative funded by the British Council for the European Capitals of Culture. (As always, Cork is ahead of the posse since we will not be a Capital of Culture until 2005). The British Council approached the City of Culture 2005 office in Cork for help with the event. They in turn contacted Ógra Chorcaí Ltd.

New Young Europeans is a powerful and effective anti-racist arts project involving young people from European Capitals of Culture. Its aims were to highlight the similarities in the aspirations and dreams of young immigrants and native Corkonians and also to help understand where young people are coming from.

6 young people from Cork City and 7 young immigrants living in Cork came together to spearhead the project. They were Yvonne and Niamh, two delegates from Dail na nOg; Ian and Lynda, two 3rd level students; Tony representing the Travelling Community; Shane who represented young people 'out of school'; Cally and Miguel from Angola; Ibrahim from Somalia; Keith and Robbie from Kenya; Rita from Latvia and Woodrow from Nigeria. All, except Niamh, are members of Ógra Chorcaí Youth Clubs and Projects.

Penny Rae, co-ordinator of the project from the British Council, interviewed each of the young people about their hopes and dreams for the future. Carl Cordonnier, a professional photographer from France, took photos of each young person – some

in a location which had a special significance for them. The venues ranged from a camogie pitch, to a curragh on the River Lee and up a tree! (Tony being a tree doctor).

There was an anxious wait until just after Christmas when the group saw the photographs and testimonials for the first time. Everyone was stunned by the quality of the photographs and testimonials, they were beautiful. They captured the very 'essence' of the young people. The work was to be hung at Easter for 6 weeks with the official launch to take place on Friday the 16th of April. The launch was to take place in the G.P.O. and the format being the responsibility of the young people, they now began work in earnest. They met once a week from January to Easter. Most significantly they changed the name of the Project to 'Eurica – a Work in Progress' (Eurica a combination of Europe and Africa).



On the night of the launch the young people greeted everyone in their own language: English, Irish, Portuguese, Angolan, Somali, Yoruba, Swaheli, Latvian and Russian! Yvonne and Shane then introduced the project. Ian, Rita, Ruth and Robbie presented an anti-racist drama that included a bus and the Newcastle football team! Cally and Migual, who 18 months previously needed interpreters, wrote and delivered a very powerful speech on the U.N. Charter of Human Rights. Woodrow and Romeo wrote and performed a rap.

A representative of the British Council and John Kennedy of the 2005 Office in Cork, paid tribute to the dedication and skill of the young people.

The work is still in progress, a second performance to an audience of 500 was held during Ógra Chorcaí's 'Tops of the Clubs' and it is hoped to make a CD of Woodrow's rap. One very sad

event has marred this project. Recently Cally, who is now 18, was sent from Cork to Dublin to begin his phase of independent living. Everyone who took part admired his skill and commitment to the project. We all miss him. A copy of his speech is available from Ógra Chorcaí to anyone who would like it.

The effects of the project were immediate; conflict between staff and non-nationals in the G.P.O. has been reduced. No-one who has seen the photographs and read the testimonials has been left unmoved and attitudes to non-nationals have been changed.

**JUNE BARRY**

Ógra Chorcaí  
20 St Patrick's Hill  
Cork  
Tel: 021 450 2112

## **More about the New Young Europeans initiative:**

Run by the British Council in Brussels, New Young Europeans is an ongoing project working with young people in cities across Europe, some of whom are refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world.

New Young Europeans gives the young people involved a chance to talk about their experiences of living in Europe and their dreams and aspirations for the future. These testimonies are exhibited alongside photographic portraits by Carl Cordonnier. Exhibition curator Lucile Bertrand responds imaginatively to the architecture and space of each exhibition venue and incorporates new images as the project grows. The result is a dynamic, evolving exhibition. The photos and testimonial panels are exhibited so that it is not immediately obvious who is an asylum seeker and who is not. The aim is to emphasise positive, hopeful images of young people who are the same in many ways, despite their different histories.

In each city, the British Council works with local partners to respond to issues particular to that city. Seminars, debates and events around the exhibitions give the participants the opportunity to meet leading policy-makers and academics to discuss issues that concern them.

Project Director: Penny Rae

Photographer: Carl Cordonnier - DAILYLIFE at <http://www.dailylife.fr/>

Exhibition Curator: Lucile Bertrand

For more information about New Young Europeans, please contact Julia Rawlins at [nye@britishcouncil.be](mailto:nye@britishcouncil.be)  
Website: [www.newyoungeuropeans.net](http://www.newyoungeuropeans.net)

Presented in Cork in partnership with Cork 2005  
Website: [www.cork2005.ie](http://www.cork2005.ie)

**Photographs:**  
Carl Cordonnier, DAILYLIFE France.



FIRST IN A SERIES LOOKING AT YOUTH ARTS PRACTICE OUTSIDE IRELAND.

IN MARCH THIS YEAR, THE NYAP YOUTH ARTS OFFICER VISITED SECOND WAVE YOUTH ARTS CENTRE, IN DEPTFORD, SOUTH LONDON, TO MEET WITH JUDITH DOVE, CO-ORDINATOR OF VOLUNTEERS AT THE CENTRE. JUDITH HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE NYAP, SEEKING TO MAKE LINKS WITH YOUTH ARTS GROUPS IN IRELAND.

## SECOND WAVE CENTRE FOR YOUTH ARTS

Second Wave is an impressive facility, housed in a dedicated building. At present, the focus is on performance arts, but there are plans to expand into visual arts and other creative activities as the Centre has recently expanded its premises. Second Wave involves young people in all aspects of the work, from planning, producing, writing, performing, to evaluating and training other young people. For twenty years, it has been delivering high quality, creative programmes to young people who are under-represented in higher education, the arts and cultural industries. In recent years, the Arts and the Learning City programme has partnered Second Wave with Goldsmiths College, University of London, to create an innovative pilot programme called Young Artists in a Changing World, exploring and developing a community-based approach to widening access to learning, and accrediting non-formal learning.

Judith explains how Second Wave works, and describes her personal experience there, firstly as a young participant, then later as a volunteer, and finally as Volunteer Co-ordinator at the Centre.

Second Wave Centre for Youth Arts, Deptford, London, was established by a group of local young women in 1982. Second Wave works with young people who are interested in the arts. We offer varied provision for young people aged between 13 and 24 years.

Second Wave creates access to achievement for young people whose talents and skills are under represented in the arts and in higher education. Second Wave's approach focuses on originality, seeing young people as artists – the creators or primary makers of their own art. Young People may develop pieces of performance e.g. rap, street dance, singing, acting or a fusion of different art forms. Second Wave also places a strong emphasis on young people as leaders, supporting peer learning and peer education.

For young people, participation in youth arts opens up new avenues of opportunity, progression and inspiration in a context of learning designed to respond to their real interests. It is this active involvement in youth arts that fosters creative problem solving, analytic thinking, imagination, collaborative skills, judgement, vision and decision-making. *"In youth arts, you are actively involved in making something as a young artist. You are not simply learning about the arts. This means seizing every opportunity, taking risks and inspiring change."* (Comment from Second wave participant.)

Young people's lives are complex and many demands are made on their time, thus Second Wave's programme is designed to be responsive to the needs of young people. The majority of its programme takes place in the evenings, on weekends and in the holidays.

Second Wave has been successful in attracting young people from a variety of backgrounds and responding to the needs of those who have been let down by mainstream education.

Last summer saw the creation of 'Urban Tales' a play devised by young people. This devised play was about family, relationships, futures and most importantly Hip-Hop. This summer Second Wave will be staging the 'Urban Arts Fest' – a celebration of original performance material created by young people at Second Wave. As with all Second Wave events young people will be involved in all areas of performance, production and event co-ordination. Many of these young people will work towards the Millennium Volunteer Award of Excellence and other forms of accreditation.

Second Wave works in partnerships with a range of agencies including Goldsmiths University and the Pupil Referral Units in both the London boroughs of Greenwich and Lewisham. The aim of this work is primarily to widen participation and offer progression.

Second Wave has also established links with America in particular with the American academic Shirley Brice Heath who describes the work of youth arts centres as: a border zone between life on the streets and life in mainstream institutions of education and employment... a safe place to practise and reflect on what it means to survive... to balance individual interests and group goals.



Second Wave continues to have an innovative role in nurturing the career of young performers, playwrights, songwriters, musicians, producers and educators. Second Wave has been particularly successful in the training of workshop leaders and youth arts practitioners. Many of the current and previous staff teams are former members of Second Wave.

I first became involved in Second Wave when I was 13, as a member of the Youth Theatre. This experience was significant in my decision to develop a meaningful career in the arts. I was later involved as a volunteer, which gave me the opportunity to develop the appropriate skills to work in a community context. After completing a degree in Theatre at Bretton Hall, University of Leeds, I began working with the arts in community contexts and in January 2003, I came to work at Second Wave as the Volunteer Co-ordinator. The skills that I learnt at Second Wave as a participant, volunteer and member of staff have informed my practice and that of others at Second Wave and in my freelance work. I also began the MA in Cross-Sectoral and Community Arts at Goldsmiths University. Through Higher Education I have come to realise the innovative nature of Second Wave's approach and thinking.

Respect for young people as creators and a focus on originality is central to the way that Second Wave works. Young people play a vital role in our way of working; peer learning and leadership has proven to be powerful and effective in developing positive learning environments for all.

Second Wave is dedicated to supporting young people in defining art on their terms and giving young people the confidence to challenge the world that they live in.

I strongly believe that practitioners must open up their practice, the decision-making process and the notion of leadership. For me it's time that the arts world opened up and started asking what can young people do for the arts.

**Judith Dove**  
Volunteers Co-ordinator/Tutor

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FIRST IN A REGULAR SERIES REPORTING ON THIRD LEVEL COURSES RELEVANT TO YOUTH ARTS.

# NUI Certificate in Youth Arts

THE PILOT NUI CERTIFICATE IN YOUTH ARTS COURSE, DEVELOPED BY THE NATIONAL YOUTH ARTS PROGRAMME IN ASSOCIATION WITH NUI MAYNOOTH, IS COMING TOWARDS COMPLETION. THIS PIONEERING COURSE, THE FIRST ACCREDITED COURSE IN IRELAND TO FOCUS SPECIFICALLY ON YOUTH ARTS, WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF THE CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION. IT BEGAN IN SEPTEMBER 2003 AND WILL CONTINUE TO SEPTEMBER 2004, FOLLOWING WHICH A NEW ROUND OF THE COURSE WILL BEGIN. THE COURSE WILL CONTINUE TO BE OFFERED ANNUALLY TO YOUTH WORKERS, ARTISTS, ARTS ADMINISTRATORS. AN EVALUATION OF THE PILOT IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY AND WILL BE PUBLISHED LATER IN THE YEAR.

THE COURSE CONSISTS OF EIGHT MODULES, COMBINING BOTH THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ELEMENTS. TWENTY PARTICIPANTS DRAWN FROM A VARIETY OF YOUTH WORK AND COMMUNITY ARTS BACKGROUNDS AROUND THE COUNTRY HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS IN YOUTH ARTS THINKING AND PRACTICE DURING THE PILOT. TWO OF THOSE PARTICIPANTS GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON THIS EXPERIENCE.

CATHERINE KELLY

Arts Officer, Westmeath County Council

My main motivation in applying for the Certificate in Youth Arts was to gain a greater understanding and knowledge of the context of youth arts practice in Ireland. As Arts Officer for Westmeath County Council, I had just completed writing the first Westmeath Arts Plan, outlining the strategic development of the arts in Westmeath, when I originally applied for the course. One of our main objectives was to establish a county youth theatre and to develop a youth arts policy within the organisation, by creating a model of good practise to coincide with its formation.

Module Five of the Certificate in Youth Arts in particular provided me with the incentive and expertise to design and deliver this type of youth arts model. I wanted to cultivate an understanding of the deep impact the arts have on the lives of young people, while reflecting and further enhancing national policy.

The module on creative and social education emphasised the importance of developing an inclusive structure, offering continuous arts programming, presenting existing, new and experimental work by young people, and providing an outlet for artistic expression through any chosen art form.

The youth arts practice module heightened my awareness of the artistic talent and creative energy that exists among youth groups that would not have had an opportunity or a tradition of engaging in the arts. Discussion with youth arts practitioners during our site visits to the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the LAF Project showed me that involvement in youth arts not only stimulates creativity and self-expression, but also entices young people to participate in the arts and build audiences for the future.

This course provided me with the knowledge I originally lacked in relation to youth arts methodologies. It assisted me to develop a series of training sessions, arts appreciation courses and master classes in various art forms, with well-established arts practitioners, geared specifically towards a youth audience. The inclusive and developmental approach to youth arts practice as facilitated in the course strengthened the position of youth arts within my organisation, through capacity building and the formation of partnerships.





#### RACHAEL LONG

formerly Assistant Co-ordinator,  
School Street After School Service, Dublin 8  
currently Youth Work Officer, NYCI

As a former Assistant Co-ordinator of an After Schools Service, I took part in the Youth Arts certificate course to enhance my professional skills in relation to youth arts practice and also to explore and refine my own capabilities. Though I had always had a deep appreciation of the arts and their value in young people's lives, I also wanted to highlight these issues in my organisation, as there was a definite lack of appreciation or understanding there.

Taking part in this course has been a very rewarding and enjoyable experience. It has increased my knowledge, ability and therefore confidence in working with young people. I met a lot of interesting, warm and funny people and I feel that the nature of the course and the methods used enabled us to become quite close as a group. Though some participants had previous arts experience, there were also those of us who were relatively new to the arts. However, the course seemed to bridge all gaps between our levels of experience and we soon found that we all had valuable contributions to make.

Although the course was fun, it was also very demanding and required a great deal of commitment and hard work, especially for those of us who hadn't been at this level of education for some time, if indeed at all. During those difficult times, combining a full-time job with course assignments requiring a lot of research, it was the contact I made with my fellow students that helped me to stay calm and focused and not 'alone'. Sharing ideas and understanding of the tasks at hand and even just having a supportive 'ear' at the end of a phone line, helped us all come through and do well in our assignments. The links we forged between each other proved to be as valuable as the practical knowledge we gained from our tutors.

We are now (June) involved in planning our individual arts projects and many of us have teamed up, combining our expertise in order to learn from and support each other through the final lap of this course. The benefits of the course for me were the vast knowledge and high expectations of our tutors, the encouragement to overcome challenges, the progression from self-doubt to pride on completion of those challenges, and finally gaining the knowledge and confidence to raise awareness of and interest in youth arts at a local and national level. For the future, I also have close links with a wide variety of professional youth arts practitioners (like myself), whom I can call on for support in times to come.



For further information on the course and details of the application procedure, please see our website at [www.youtharts.ie](http://www.youtharts.ie) or contact the Youth Arts Officer at 01-478 4122.



'Vessel'  
Nessa Behan



'Disguise'  
Colmán Stanley

# Art making as child's play

## By Nessa Behan,

### Conceptual / Performance Artist & Art Facilitator.

To introduce myself, I will outline the winding path which lead to my current work as an artist and art facilitator. In 1996, I graduated with a National Diploma in Fine Art and Design from The Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). To gain employment, I studied video production in GMIT and went on to work in Production Design for the television industry for three years. I found that designing for TV did not offer me the scope to express myself in the way I needed. I downsized to prepare for working as a full time artist and worked part time for The Sculptors' Society of Ireland for two years. It was during this time that I identified a social need to work with people. In 2002, I approached my daughter's school, Gaelscoil Lios na nÓg, a primary school in Ranelagh, Dublin 6, about an after-school workshop. The Principal Áine Ní Shíthigh was very open to the idea, as the school fosters cultural education. We therefore agreed that I could offer a weekly after-school art workshop to the pupils. Numbers were limited to 10 children per workshop, boys and girls aged from 8 to 11 years old. Workshops are paid for by parents and the children decide if they want to attend. It is important to note that the workshop is self-elective, it can only function if the children want to participate. In 2004, after I had begun working with children from the school, I took The Higher Diploma in Community Arts and Education at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), to learn more about participatory arts practise.

I use the term art workshop and not art class. One of the workshop objectives is to engage in experiential learning. It is argued that art cannot be taught and that the artist learns from the experience of working with the art materials. I do not hold all the answers, the group and I can learn together in a collaborative process.

If art cannot be taught, the space in which to learn can be facilitated. For an artwork to develop, experimentation is necessary. There is a process of trial and error involved in the artist's attempt to successfully make the transition from what is in his/her head, to an art piece. Helen O Donoghue, Head of the Education and Community Department at The Irish Museum of Modern Art, makes a comparison between the process of experimentation in art making and a child playing.<sup>1</sup> I believe play occurs in the methodologies of experimentation. The artist is testing the properties of an art material, to see how it can be manipulated to serve his/her message. Young children are open to experimenting with art materials, they enjoy playing with paint and clay, and it is in this process that the learning occurs.

An effective catalyst to engage children with an art project is to tap into their natural inclination to play. I adopted this method in Disguise, an art project I conducted during the after-school workshop at Gaelscoil Lios na nÓg. Disguise took place over the course of 10 weeks. A workshop of 1 hour and 15 minutes took place each week, from February to April 2004. Disguise was a dressing up project; I adapted the theme from a conceptual performance piece I was working on entitled Vessel, in which I wear a costume, (*please see image*). The link between the two projects was an attempt to answer a research question on The Higher Diploma in Community Arts and Education at NCAD, which asked 'how can I integrate what I see as two practices – a studio practice and a collaborative practice – into one holistic practice?'

In Vessel I am describing the frustration I have felt by being unable to express myself verbally. My inner feelings were compartmentalised from my outer appearance. In the piece, I am wearing a crinoline. I lift the skirt above my head; the conical shape becomes a megaphone, which enables me to speak. I believe there is a universal human need to be heard, to tell one's own story. Your story is like the blood in your veins, it is who you are. In facilitating an art workshop, a forum is created where people can express their stories.

It is important to write out the aims and objectives of a project before beginning, if only for yourself. This will clarify the purpose of the workshop and guide the activity. It is also a means of evaluating the workshop afterwards. The aims and objective of Disguise were:

#### AIMS

- To learn through play.
- To engage in experiential learning.
- To encourage autonomous thinking.

#### OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the group to performance art by inventing a character on paper and then bringing it to life in costume.
- For the children to have an empowering experience.

#### THE METHODOLOGIES

- To invent a fantasy character by writing a character profile.
- To design a detailed costume for the character.
- For the child to make the costume and to wear it.
- To play in character with friends in the workshop.
- To act out a short scene in character with a group.

## VISUAL STIMULUS

It is important to provide visual references for children, otherwise their main references will be from television, their primary cultural influence. If the child has no visual references it is like trying to write without any letters. Art is a visual language, the story is told in images. The visual stimulus for Disguise included:

- A tour to The Way We Wore at The National Museum of Decorative Arts, a display of 250 years of Irish clothing and jewellery.
- Discussion of visual artists who use costume in their work, such as Cindy Sherman and Alice Maher.
- Study of traditional dress from around the world and Celtic jewellery.

Art materials are also a source of stimulus. We had a roll of blue lamé fabric which when stretched out shone like light reflected on water. The children were immediately attracted to this. It became turbans and togas and ball gowns. After the experimental stage with the fabric, which was like playing in a dressing up box, I asked the children to develop their own designs on paper. They were stimulated to design by physically experiencing the possibilities of the fabric.

I think in this project, '*unconditional positive regard*' as identified by Carl Rogers', The Humanist Psychologist in 1969, was effective. I encountered differing levels of confidence in the children. I believe confidence in art making comes from experience. To begin the learner must be encouraged, so that they can move forward and grow to think autonomously.

The role of belonging became apparent in the Disguise project. For the final performance I allowed the children to form their own groups. The groups of established friends gave more confident performances as they felt a sense of belonging with their friends. The friends were safely able to argue and disagree about creative decisions. I was involved in facilitating these negotiations.

Ownership is empowering. I think it is essential that the children feel a sense of ownership of their own work; if this is the case then the children have engaged with the project both intellectually and emotionally. I had decided I was not going to make the costumes for the children. My aim was for the children to think through creative problems themselves. I provided safety pins instead of needles and thread; the children were able to wrap the material around themselves in various forms e.g. for a wraparound dress. The children actually made the clothes, so they were truly their own.

One of the aims of the primary schools visual art curriculum is:

*'To enable the child to have enjoyable and purposeful experiences of different art media and to have opportunities to explore, experiment, imagine, design, invent and communicate with different art materials.'*  
Primary School Curriculum, Visual Arts, 1999.<sup>3</sup>

To allow the processes outlined in the visual art curriculum to take place, a level of risk is taken by the art facilitator. The prescriptive methodologies of colouring inside photocopied pages found in primary schools today limit the children's creativity. In art making there is an intuitive process that must be given space to develop. There is an organic growth as the artist explores a concept. Art making itself is a series of risks; one must make the mark before it can be assessed. There is so much latent creativity inside children, let them draw their own lines and see how beautifully expressive they are.

The final performance of Disguise was not the focus of the project. The children's personal development was the focus. I facilitated a space for the children to play in their characters, engaging in a creative process which involved shouting, jumping and sword fights. The following week I drew the group back to a more structured session with an achievable task, for example designing accessories for the costume. I maintained a balance between facilitating a space to play or experiment and producing a product. Some artists believe an artwork is never finished. The product is simply choosing a point in the process in which to stop and present what has been done. There should be no pressure to adapt the product to a prescribed standard. Process and product are not mutually exclusive. Niall O Baoill, Cultural and Arts Co-ordinator of Fatima Mansions said, "*If the process is good then the product will be good*".<sup>4</sup>

In evaluating Disguise, I can state that the aims and objectives were met. We embarked on an adventure together and we learned a lot along the way. The question now is how does the workshop continue to develop? Is it my personal responsibility to run the art workshop, to ensure that children have access to a quality art experience? I work independently of the school, I am not connected to any organisation – this is a lot of responsibility for one person. I would be interested in working more closely with a school or organisation and including the teachers and youth workers in a collaborative learning process. If children are to develop creatively, an experimental space needs to be provided for them in which to express themselves in an atmosphere of trust and belonging. I think it is fundamental that all children have an expressive outlet. I believe to reach the aims and objectives of The Department of Education's Visual Arts Curriculum, there needs to be input from artists, parents, teachers, youth workers and state bodies, all working together towards the common goal. Then all Irish children could have access to a quality art experience.

## References

1. O Donoghue, H. (2002) *From speech, Information Day for The Artist's Panel, Irish Museum of Modern Art.*
2. Rogers, C. (1969) *Freedom to Learn. Columbus, Ohio: C.E.*
3. Primary School Curriculum, Visual Arts. (1999)  
*Published by The Stationery Office. The Department of Education and Science.*
4. O Baoill, N. (2004) *From speech, Information Day Fatima Mansions for NCAD Community Arts Students.*

## New Youth Arts Website:

The National Youth Arts Programme has recently redesigned its website at [www.youtharts.ie](http://www.youtharts.ie)

The new Youth Arts website is an interactive resource for all those involved with youth arts in Ireland. You can use the site to

- send us news and information relating to youth arts in Ireland
- find out about youth arts opportunities and activities around the country
- showcase work your group has created
- engage in discussion with other on themes relating to youth arts
- subscribe to our weekly email bulletin
- download practical resources
- find links to useful youth and arts organisations, as well as youth arts sites from around the world

### New features include

#### Online youth arts directory:

This will hold contact details and information on practitioners in specific art forms who work with young people, arts organisations who offer resources and programmes for young people, dedicated youth art organisations, funding sources, venues etc. The directory aims to make it easier for youth workers and artists to link up with each other and to access resources for youth arts.

#### Bulletin board:

The bulletin board provides a space where individuals and groups can raise and discuss issues relating to youth arts.

#### News:

As an extension of the email bulletin currently sent weekly, this section will highlight upcoming events, opportunities, workshops etc. Information for the news section can be submitted for inclusion via the website or by email.

#### Showcase:

Excellent youth arts initiatives and projects are often happening around the country, but nobody outside the local area gets to see or hear about them. Help us change this by sending in reports, photographs or other material documenting youth arts projects your group has completed that you think others should know about.

This could include training initiatives, music, dance and theatrical productions, art exhibitions, public sculptures or murals, design work, creative writing publications, crafts, etc. The site will showcase a different project every week, and retain a searchable archive of past showcases.

#### Downloads:

All publications produced by the National Youth Arts Programme, or in partnership with other organisations, will be available in a downloadable format from the website, including

- All available issues of in2
- Creating Magic – a guide to developing arts-based practices with young people
- Arts in their Lives – a document stating NYC's policy on youth arts
- National Youth Arts Programme Strategic Plan 2003-2006
- Another View – a guide to using video with young people
- All future publications

These will be available as PDFs and, where possible, as Word documents.

#### Online Learning:

The website will be used as a resource for participants in National Youth Arts Programme training initiatives, including the NUI Certificate in Youth Arts. Participants will be able to access course materials, assignments and timetables from a special password-protected section of the site.

[www.youtharts.ie](http://www.youtharts.ie)



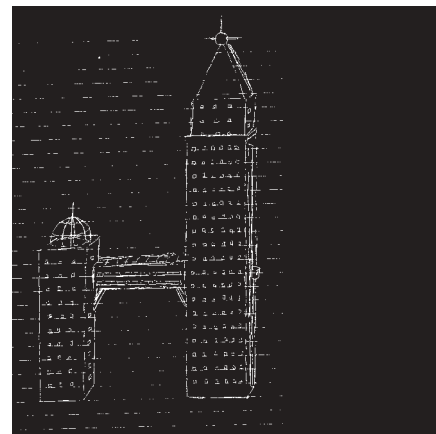
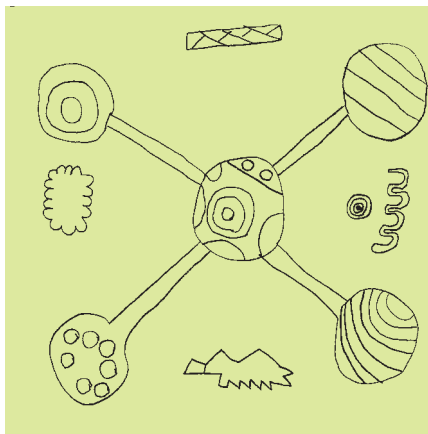
# DAMBURST AND DREAMS:

## Learning through the Arts

Larkin Community College, in the north inner city of Dublin, has this year begun a unique and innovative approach to education at second level. Students, for the first time, have the option of undertaking the three-year Junior Cycle via the school's new Learning through the Arts Programme. First year students in this years' Class 102 competed at auditions to win places on this Scholarship programme, which focuses on Drama, Dance, Music and Visual Arts, as well as delivering other subjects taken as part of the curriculum – e.g. Maths, Geography, English – using Arts methodologies. The school is the only one in Ireland to offer such a programme.

But why offer a dedicated Learning through the Arts Programme? Surely not all students in the class will want to pursue a career in the arts? What else has it got to offer in educational terms? The Arts have played a central role at Larkin Community College since it opened; this programme has grown out of those years of engaging with artists, arts institutions and cultural centres, and the evaluation of how engaging with the arts has benefited students. The school has found that engaging with the Arts Programme

- enables students to creatively construct and criticise their world
- provides students with specific arts skills thereby informing and supporting other educational skills
- enhances the personal, social and cultural aspects of students' and teachers' lives
- creates special working relationships with teachers and students and other school staff
- empowers social discourse and change in the classroom, the school and the wider community
- enables students to voice their opinions about the curriculum and broadly about the ethos of the school



Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting Class 102, to speak with them and the Arts Programme co-ordinator at the school, Máire O'Higgins, about their experience so far of taking part in this creative and dynamic programme.

While Larkin Community College has traditionally served the local community in this part of the inner city, Class 102 is unusual in that students travel from all over the city to take part in the Programme. The school welcomes this social and cultural mix, seeing benefits for students in learning with children from varied backgrounds. Jenny explains how she came to take part in the programme: *"We heard about it through our Primary School. Leaflets were sent around... we got an application form... then we had to come in for an audition, a half an hour of each subject... a few people got called back... then at the end of all that we got a letter to say that we'd got it."*

Many of the class show a particular aptitude for one of the four art forms at the centre of the Programme. For students such as these, *"the art programme is also an opportunity to show off what you're good at...to show how talented you are and let everyone know...that you have a talent."*

Liam, acknowledged by staff as a gifted artist, says of art at his previous school *"all we'd do is sit down and draw. But now when you go home, you're given projects and stuff to do. It pushes it all out of you...we did a project on castles. If it had been in a normal school I never would have did it... because I couldn't be bothered... but because it was part of our grades... it pushes you to do stuff."*

As part of the curriculum, the class makes frequent visits to arts institutions and other places of educational interest, informing the work done within the school. Projects the class has completed include one based on the theme 'The City'. Shauna explains *"We did paintings in art about Dublin City. Beforehand we had to do an information sheet. We had to make pictures of the good and the bad around us and write what we thought Dublin was like."* This project was then linked with a project called 'Imagine' which the class where privileged to work on with Yoko Ono – an internationally respected conceptual artist in her 'other' life — who was in Dublin to promote Amnesty International's campaign against domestic violence. *"When we did the Imagine project, we went around and took pictures of the city and things we thought could be made better,*

*and things that were being made better."*

Students are encouraged to question and comment on what they see, and to develop a critical cultural awareness and sense of ownership of their city.

The class has also used an art project to learn more about mathematical concepts. This has involved artist Yola Bartoli working in partnership with the maths teacher in the classroom.

*"We used the U2 building (winner of the recent architectural competition to design a high-rise building on the former site of the band U2's recording studios) as an example; we examined it and then we designed our own building using maths".* This project interfaced with the study of volume in Maths class and linked with the running theme of 'The City'. Working this way allows students to make connections between the different subjects that they take in secondary school, providing a more seamless transition from the primary school experience of working with one teacher on many different subjects. The programme also helps teachers to make connections, exploring how they can work together to find creative ways to link subjects. This approach is not without its' challenges, as not all teachers are comfortable working in partnership, or through using the arts.



While some of the group is committed to pursuing a career in their chosen art form, some can see other benefits to taking part. Naomi says, *"It's helping my grades. When I came, I wasn't really good. But... I started getting better and better... I'm starting to listen more, I pay more attention."* Some, who have definite non-art related ambitions, are less certain. Shannon knows that she wants to become a nurse, but Science is not one of the subjects students can take currently as part of the Programme. She is worried that *"we will not be able to pick up Science in fifth year if we haven't even done the Junior year"* and that the time spent on visits outside the school is impinging on their curriculum work in school. Máire admits *"It's a real dilemma on the Arts Programme. In order to offer the arts properly, you have to eliminate certain subjects."* However, it is something that is under review, as is everything at this stage of the programme, and Science may well be offered as a subject choice in future years. Máire points out to the group that this is one of the beauties of being part of the programme at the beginning; there is room for flexibility and discussion, in order to arrive at a structure and content that best serves the needs of the students.

In many ways, the Learning through the Arts Programme has parallels with the best of non-formal education, in that it responds to the individual needs of students and allows them to have a role, to an extent, in their own learning plan. Time spent off-campus, engaging with cultural and artistic institutions and practitioners, hones their social skills and their ability to move with confidence through society. The boundaries between in-school and out-of-school learning become moveable. These links between formal and non-formal education could be pursued in more depth, offering a richer, more integrated and more autonomous educational experience for young people, particularly those alienated from or let down by the current educational system. Larkin Community College's Learning through the Arts Programme shows what is possible – perhaps other schools and arts institutions will be inspired to explore these possibilities too.

**Margot Kenny**

The costs of establishing the Learning through the Arts Programme 2003/4 were met by donations from the ESB and the imaginative use of resources by the City of Dublin VEC. A four-year action plan (2005–2008) called *Damburst and Dreams* will provide a practical but visionary framework for tackling the challenges of good educational provision in this city centre secondary school in the future. In order to raise sufficient funds to implement the plan, the school will rely on private fund-raising. The action plan, and a more detailed description of how the programme is structured, is available from the Arts Co-ordinator at

Larkin Community College  
Champions Avenue  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 8741913  
Fax: 01 8749127  
Email: [arts@lcc.cdvec.ie](mailto:arts@lcc.cdvec.ie)  
Website: <http://www.larkincommunitycollege.ie>

TUNE IN2 THE NEXT ISSUE

- Do you have something to say on youth arts?
- Have you been involved in youth arts project that we can profile in in2?
- Are there any particular issues or themes in2 should examine in future editions?

Or, if you just want to respond, challenge, debate or generally comment on any of the articles or opinions expressed in this issue, then contact us at: in2@nyci.ie

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