



An Grianán Theatre
Presents

A SENSE OF MEMORY



A SENSE OF MEMORY

A REMINISCENCE ARTS PROJECT

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We are indebted to the participant and community groups who fully entered into the spirit of the project, who were generous with their time and their stories. They allowed us to take their life experiences and share them with others, so that we could make a meaningful and creative project which goes some way to building a more positive and inclusive society in our community.

Patricia McBride
Director, An Grianán Theatre

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SPRING
2012

SUMMER
2012

AUTUMN
2012

WINTER
2012

SPRING
2013

Preface

'A Sense of Memory' Project is based on two simple words:

“ I remember... ”

These two words have the power to transform, reconcile and reunite all of us and through them we may glimpse the universal in our personal histories and stories. Two words through which we can share those moments from our collective pasts and by doing so discover the commonplace that unites rather than divides. Undoubtedly these two words will become “I mind” in the accent and dialect of many people in the Northwest of Ireland clearly showing the legacy of the Ulster-Scots influence.

With this project An Grianán Theatre's key objective was to create an intergenerational arts project embracing a theatre production and a visual arts exhibition based on the theories of Pam Schweitzer's reminiscence practice and

which makes a positive contribution to the process of peace and reconciliation in the border areas of Donegal, Tyrone and Derry.

Through using stimuli we ran a programme of workshops with community groups. Research in the area of olfactory perception and memory by Professor Maria Larsson, an associate professor of psychology at Stockholm University, describes the power of smell serving as:

“...an almost magical time machine, with potential for treating dementia, depression and the grim fog of age.”

Of course smell isn't the only sense that can take us to long forgotten places: taste is a function of smell and is just as powerful, music and noise can be very evocative and the look and feel of objects can sometimes trigger memories too. It is often a combination of sensations that can cause us to remember.

The play 'On the Camel's Hump' and exhibition were based on the memories collected from the community groups and were themed around the legacy of the textile industry, the railway and the show bands. The project had three distinct phases including collection of material, creation of the art works and presentation.

Phase 1 : Harvest

Through a process of interviews and workshops with community groups we gathered the reminiscences of older people. A diverse range of participants including individuals from ethnic minorities and those with intellectual disabilities were included in the workshops. During this process we used trained reminiscence facilitators to work with the groups over a period of several weeks. The workshops and interviews were recorded for use in the second stage of the project.

Phase 2 : Treasure

This involved the collation and digital archiving of the stories gathered including the transcription of all the workshop recordings where the sound quality allowed. This material was used to create the script for the theatre production 'On the Camel's Hump' written by Guy Lejeune. Elements of the digital recordings archive were also used in the multi media exhibition of which Kate Brown was Curator.

Phase 3 : Share

The final phase involved the development and rehearsal of the professional theatre production which toured back into the community workshop spaces but also to shared spaces including community venues and schools. The play incorporates the reminiscence stories with elements of song, music and humour. The tour to the school venues was particularly important in the project as we wanted to share the stories and experiences of the older generation with the younger generation so that they could witness

those experiences in order to provoke understanding and dialogue between the traditions and generations.

A total of **thirty-four reminiscence workshops and twenty-four performances** of the play were delivered in the community in cross border and cross community settings. The exhibition was on display for over a month in An Grianán Theatre and elements of the exhibition toured out with each of the performances.

Feedback from participants and attendees of the events was very positive and we feel confident that we have achieved our aims in delivering a high quality arts project which contributes to a peaceful and inclusive society.

The project has led to better relationships between communities through the process of shared experience and shared memories. In addition, we have left a legacy of understanding with participants, attendees and observers of the project which promotes an anti-sectarian, anti-racist and anti-ageist ethos in our communities.

Along each phase we were indebted to the help and support of the creative individuals who contributed to the delivery and success of the project.

Many thanks to our project partners and their representatives, Alexey Janes of Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland who provided the training for our facilitators, Mark McCollum from Voice of Older People and John Kerr, Alley Theatre. Thanks to all the personnel involved in every aspect of the project, the team in the Donegal Peace Office especially Anne McElchar and Seamus Hopkins, Fiona Lafferty in Derry City Council Museum Services and a very special mention for Pat Mulkeen, a wonderfully creative and sensitive facilitator on the project who sadly passed away in May 2013.

Patricia McBride
Director, An Grianán Theatre



Back row from left: Eoghan MacGhiolla Bhrighde, Joe Brennan, Mary Faughnan, Danielle Roelofsen. Middle row from left: Patricia McBride (Director, An Grianán Theatre), Nora Kavanagh, Phil Dalton, Joanne Quigley, Guy Barriscale. Front row from left: Kate Brown, Fionn Robinson, Aoife Toner, Andrew Galvin, Susie Lamb.



From left: Maeve Sweeney, Sean Donegan.

Introduction

For minutes it seemed, I stood, fixed to the ground. I was sweating and my head spun, almost nauseous. Yellowed photograph albums, conversations, radio programmes, Jeyes fluid, Mint Imperials, grilled bacon, the noise of a gas fire and the bells of the ITV ten o'clock news from years past... all of this in a second or less. The only thing I can compare it too is the burst of the unexpected sun through an aeroplane window—the sort of light that blinds and stuns your senses. This was no Proustian Madeleine biscuit, this was a moment's glimpse of a 3D IMAX, Dolby surround sound movie on a quiet Sunday afternoon in my garden in Donegal.

I'm a keen gardener. I have no real space in Donegal but on the acre or so in Leitrim I have an orchard and rows of veg and my bees. At home in Donegal I have to make do with a few pots of tomatoes and herbs on the deck. I'm quite good with tomatoes, my first ever job was picking them in a nursery in Leicestershire where I grew up. If you've ever done it you'll know it's pretty unpleasant in the greenhouses. The heat is uncomfortable, the tomatoes stain your fingers black and the smell of the leaves is pungent and pernicious.

Despite these memories I still grow a few tomato plants each year. I tend them and occasionally I get one that ripens, in spite of the weather—the green ones become chutney for Christmas presents. So one day, three years ago, I was checking my tomatoes' progress in the greyness of a Donegal summer's day and my hand brushed the leaves of the plant. The familiar smell transported me back to my childhood as smells sometimes do—we've all experienced that moment when we catch the scent of our Grandmother's perfume or the smell of home. What intrigued me on this particular day was not that I was transported but the where and when. Granddad Wagstaff would sit in a deckchair in his greenhouse with the door open. On either side of him would be two lines of impressive tomato plants, four or five feet tall, trained on string and bamboo. He would listen to the radio and trumpet along to tunes he knew. I suppose it was Radio Two or Four, I was too young to pay much attention. He

always wore a cardigan, even in the summer and in one pocket was a handful of Mint Imperials. I would visit him to call him down for lunch or his tea. The greenhouse smelt of the tomato plants, the Mint Imperials and Jeyes fluid.

Granny Wag didn't have a fridge. She had a pantry with a metal grill instead of glass in the window. The pantry was lined with shelves from floor to ceiling. There were tins of fruit and vegetables, soup and Bird's Custard, jars of Marmite and Bovril, bottles of Camp Coffee. There was a stack of plates, not a single one matched any other. There was a cardboard tray, one half filled with eggs and the other half with Granddad's tomatoes. The shelves were covered in a tartan oilcloth the colour of Battenberg Cake. In the middle of the floor was a top-loading washing machine that was always in the way. In that singular moment the smell of tomato leaves took me back to being 6, 7, maybe 8 years old and the summers I spent staying with my Grandma and Granddad in Warwickshire. That the smell and the memory simply skipped my tomato-picking job completely was quite startling. From that experience I started to explore the nature of memory. I became fascinated with what we remember but also how we remember. Some of my research was unexpected and some of the more personal memories were very painful.

My interest in memory and reminiscence led me to an organisation in Belfast called Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland (RNNI). They are specialists in the relatively new area of Reminiscence practice. Through them I had the amazing opportunity to spend a day training with Pam Schweitzer, one of the leading practitioners of Reminiscence Theatre work in the world. Pam founded Age Exchange Theatre Company and is a gifted facilitator and teacher. This coupled with my own research and experiences, I developed an idea for a reminiscence project. In partnership with An Grianán Theatre in Letterkenny, we created 'A Sense of Memory'.

Guy Barriscale
Project Creator



SPRING 2012

It was during a Reminiscence Theatre workshop in Belfast in September 2010 that I first heard about plans for the 'A Sense of Memory' project. The Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland (RNNI) has always been an enthusiastic advocate for creative reminiscence work and was happy to be a named partner in the original Peace III funding application. It was my privilege to deliver a two day accredited training course in Reminiscence and Life Story work at An Grianán Theatre in mid 2012. The participants were community arts workers who had been selected to facilitate reminiscence sessions as part of the project. From the first exercise I knew this team already understood that this project was about much more than just asking people to talk about the past.

They understood that reminiscence work is actually about promoting communication, building relationships, valuing people through their memories, and seeing people's lived experience as a resource that can benefit us in the here and now. They also understood that all of our memories have an emotional attachment and as a result reminiscence work requires a sensitive and supportive approach. 'On The Camel's Hump' is the outworking of a most impressive and far reaching reminiscence initiative. On behalf of RNNI, I would like to congratulate everyone that has contributed to it along the way. The project truly embodies a favourite saying regarding reminiscence work:

“
Everyone has
a story to tell,
if only someone would ask, if
only someone would listen.
”

Alexey Janes
Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland

WORKSHOPS

The workshop phase of the project followed the routes of the railways of the Northwest of Ireland and working with groups of older people on both sides of the border we gathered stories and reminiscences of work life and home, the linen industry and the showbands and the memories of a different place and pace of life.

We heard stories of smuggling from one side of the border to the other and in both directions; we heard stories of the characters such as Ghandi from Strabane, who had no legs and pushed himself around on a wheeled cart; Johnny the Darkie, the Indian gentleman who sold clothes door to door; Crazy Eddie, who stopped the mail train from Strabane by jumping on the tracks and holding his hands up. We heard stories of emigration and the Foyle pilots and merchant seamen, of farming and harvests, of good times and hard times.

While not designed to be a therapeutic exercise, the project has had some extraordinary benefits and not just for the participants. The facilitators have all come away with moments of wonder and delight as well as an appreciation of the wealth of stories and histories that the ordinary people of the Northwest own.

For me, one moment in particular stands out. I was working with a group in Strabane. We were drawing maps of where we lived when we were children. It's a lovely exercise to do, starting with your own house and adding details as you remember them.

One lady, Elsie, was sitting very quietly and her paper sheet was blank. As trained facilitators, we are very aware that some memories might be painful and that a quiet participant might need some support.

I sat down beside Elsie and asked her whether she was ok and whether there was anything that might be upsetting her. She shook her head and said she was fine but that she just couldn't remember anything about the house where she had lived as a child. I asked whether she remembered the colour... no. I asked whether she remembered the windows... no. I asked whether she remembered the garden...

“

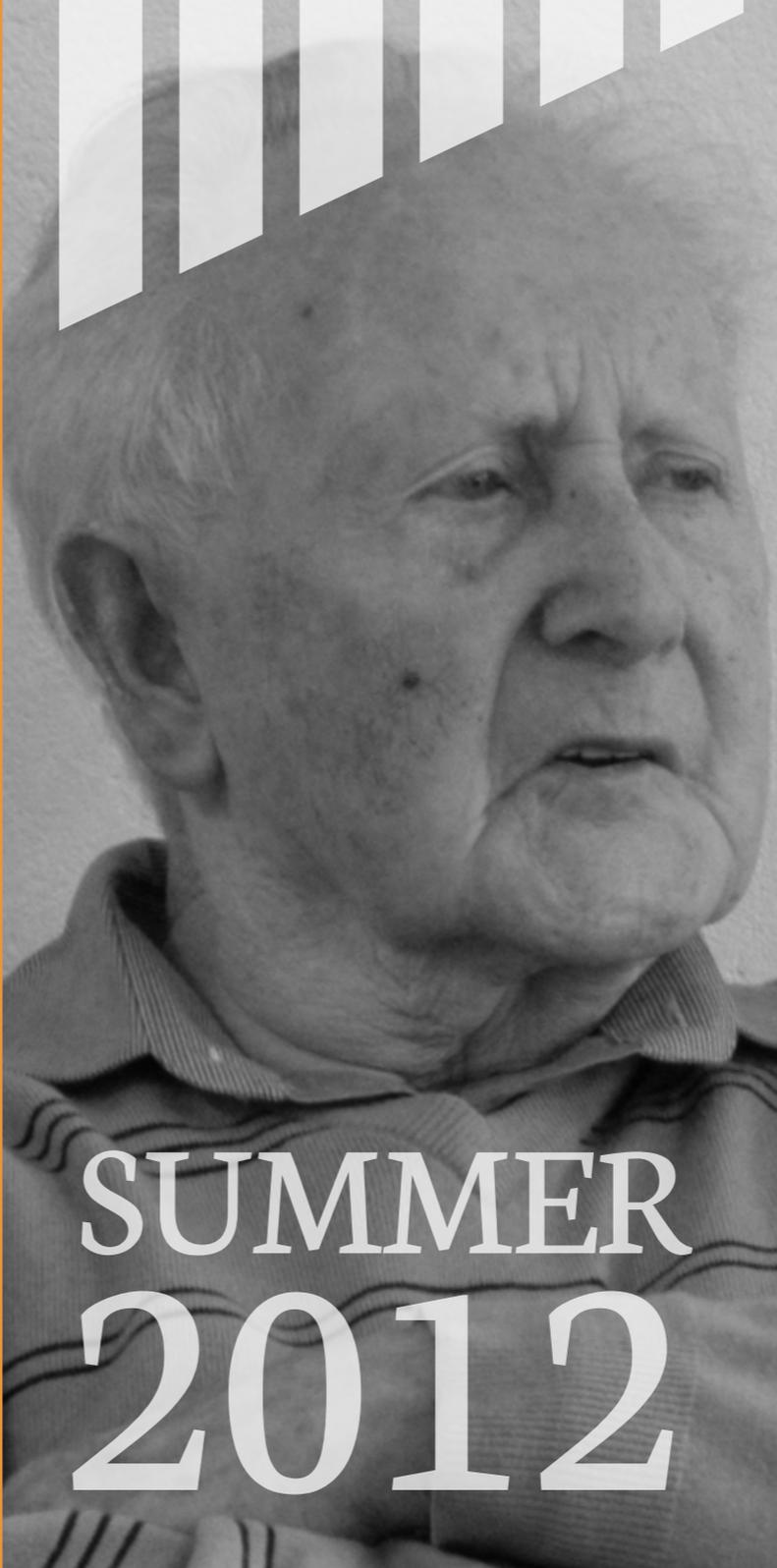
There were two walnut trees... two walnut trees... one is still there, it is!

”

Ten minutes later Elsie's map was covered in barns, roads, hedges, fields, animals and trees. She'd remembered the cottage and its windows; she'd remembered the view and the spring well; she'd remembered things that she hadn't thought of for 50 or more years and the smile on her face was wider than I have ever seen.

The process of reminiscence is so powerful and has such extraordinary benefits for people of all ages, just ask Elsie.

Guy Barriscale



SUMMER 2012





WORKSHOPS

As facilitators, we worked in pairs to deliver the reminiscence workshops. We kept written records, contemporaneous video and audio recordings of the workshops.

The groups enjoyed using the memory boxes, which contained themed items from the past, for example Schooldays, Home Life, A Trip to the Beach. The fact that they were able to see, feel and smell the various items helped them relate more to their own past.

It enabled them to reveal things about their childhood, the significant people and times in their lives. It was an excellent tool for encouraging conversation and everyone was keen to contribute.

In total, we delivered thirty-four creative reminiscence workshops.

The Luncheon Club, St Johnston and Carrigans Family Resource Centre

The Friday Group, Volt House, Raphoe Cumann Cairdeas, Falcarragh

Bessie Bell Court, Newtownstewart

Derg Valley Care Luncheon Club, Castleterg

Ionad Naomh Padraig, Dobhar

Moville Active Retirement Group, Serenity House, Moville

Sion Mills Community Association, Sion Mills

Strabane and District Women Together Group, Strabane

Abbey Court Residents, Kilmacrennan

Eoghan MacGhiolla Bhrighde

“

In total, we delivered thirty-four creative reminiscence workshops.

”

WORKSHOPS

I have worked on a number of Reminiscence Projects in the past and have always enjoyed working with older people and hearing their stories. As a storyteller I'm naturally drawn to listening to people's stories, to enjoy being wrapped in the warmth of memories, journeying with the older people into a past that is still alive and vibrant in their minds. It has always been a privilege to be given an insight into their memories and stories. So when I saw the 'A Sense of Memory' Project was looking for facilitators I was immediately interested.

My role in the 'A Sense of Memory' Project was as a facilitator with groups of older people. As a facilitator I see my role as creating a space where the participants can

shine. I am there to create an atmosphere of trust and respect for each other and for the work being undertaken. I am there to encourage and guide where needed.

With the Project I had the pleasure of co-facilitating with a group of great people. Co-facilitation opens up possibilities that are not there when working alone. There is a sharing of responsibilities which allows for greater creativity and a combining of skills.

During the process we used objects to evoke and stimulate memories. More often than not it didn't take much to set the ball rolling and once stories started to flow they triggered memories for other people and the journey was underway

without knowing where it would take or lead us to. But it always brought us to places we were glad to visit and often reluctant to return from.

My role in this was to listen to the stories being shared, sometimes to probe deeper, to encourage or to clarify some information. I believe the facilitator should fade somewhat into the background and allow the participants the space to create and weave their own stories.

The thing that always stays with me as a facilitator is the people that I meet and the stories they share. It is a real privilege to be trusted by people who share their stories with you, sometimes very intimate stories that they have not shared very often, if at all, with other people.

Joe Brennan



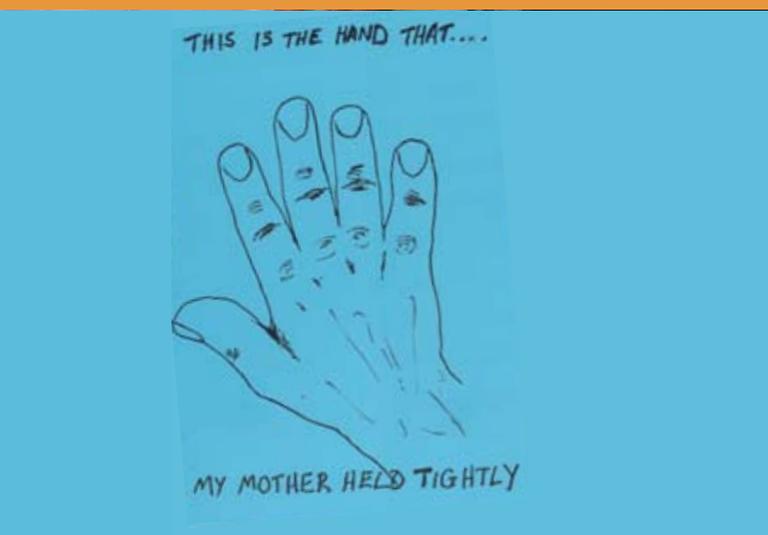


“

The artists - facilitators had a wide range of props and community arts approaches which encouraged, cajoled, inspired and touched the participants, bringing out such a richness and diversity of stories, life experiences and wonderful memories.

”

Mary Crossan, Centre Co-ordinator St Johnston and Carrigans Family Resource Centre



“

The workshops were very interesting and everyone in the group enjoyed them very much. They gave me and Elizabeth an opportunity to tell our story of how we first met years ago and it brought back many happy memories for us.

”

Cass Pierce, Workshop Participant, Sion Mills Community Association



“

When that memory box was opened, it really took us back and made people talk. It has brought us together as a group and we know more about each other now. I listened to the memories of the other women and I learned a lot from their stories.

”

Bell Hogg, Chairperson Strabane and District Women Together

Having previously worked in a care home for older people, I was always intrigued by their stories and experiences. Back then it was a huge part of my job just to chat with the residents and this was a wonderful experience for both the older people and for me.

'A Sense Of Memory' Project allowed me to take this experience a step further. To reminisce by finding things that triggered particular memories through the use of objects, music and smells. These memories and stories sparked wonderful moments of laughter, sadness, joy in the groups that I worked with and they will live long in my own memory.

It was an amazing experience to witness the telling of stories and the emotions that were evoked. I felt that I was trusted and welcomed by all the groups I worked with on this project. I did not count on how much I was to learn from the older people socially or historically. It was a real education and the building of bonds was fantastic.

Nora Kavanagh

I felt really excited and honoured to hear such a variety of stories from the older people during our workshops. I grew up in the Netherlands in the seventies and eighties and some stories I heard from mid-twentieth century Ireland seemed to belong to a different world, and it was wonderful to have a little look in.

I expected to connect and learn more about the local history and I did. I loved listening to peoples stories and also sharing my music on lyre and flute. Really my highlights were as many as the people I listened to. It was great to work together with the other facilitators, and I really appreciated each individual's style and personality.

I especially want to mention my fellow facilitator Pat who sadly passed away in May 2013. She was so full of life. We were co-facilitating at a workshop where she did such a wonderful dance of Shoe the Donkey. She will be missed by all.

Danielle Roelofsen



I remember....

there was such a willingness to share memories from many of the older people that I met. And what I really loved about working with our groups was that this willingness to share was matched with an enthusiasm to explore the memories using creative means. Not all of the memories were shared verbally.

We did a quiet drawing exercise with the Bessie Bell residents in Newtownstewart, whereby the older people drew the outline of their hand on a sheet of coloured paper, decorating it and sharing with the group through their artwork what their hands had achieved in their lifetime. One lady confessed that she hadn't drawn in more than seventy years, not since she was a child. But she did not hesitate to fill her page with colour and drawings and achievements and to pass it to her friend when she had finished showing off her creation.

With more physically active residents and with very little encouragement needed, they dramatised stories of their school day antics using the sequencing of remembered visual images of characters, places and objects in the absence of dialogue.

We played together, danced, sang, dressed up, chatted. We listened to one another, drew, wrote, photographed, recorded. We drank mugs of sweet tea, ate iced buns, slurped all kinds of soup.

“

We shared stories, shared memories and shared a little slice of what life was like for people living in the Northwest spanning nine decades.

”

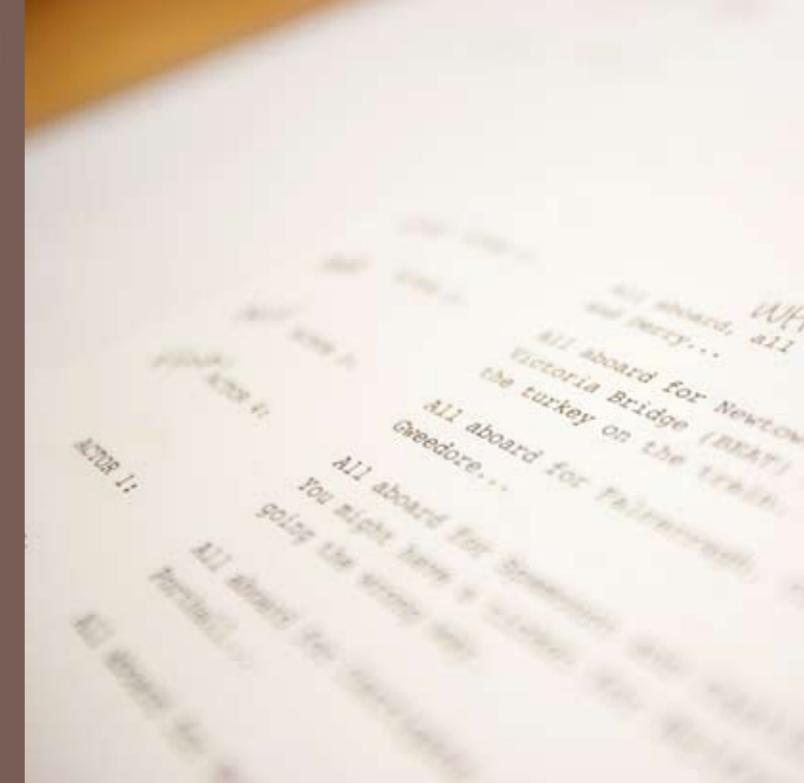
Kate Brown

“

Having collected the stories my job was to create a theatre piece, giving a flavour of the reminiscences. 'On the Camel's Hump' came from the people we worked with. It is their story, their play. The delight of the audiences in recognising their particular stories is matched by the delight that I have experienced in bringing the show back to the wonderful people who allowed us into their lives and their pasts.

”

Guy Barriscale



“

...It was like a time machine bringing us right back to when they were young...

”

My first impression of the script was that it was fun and fast with lots of opportunity for physical imagery and wonderful true-to-life dialogue - lifted from the transcripts of real conversations. It had a nice, simple theatrical framing device of the train and the train crash.

There were however lots of different locations such as the school house and the factory to also create. I knew that these would have to be created quickly and fluidly from the actor's use of their bodies with minimal props, chairs and sound effects. There are dozens of different characters in the play, but all played by just four actors - so each actor would have to create lots of different people and make each person very detailed and clearly different.

Artistic choices in the theatre are made quickly and continuously at each rehearsal. A lot of the decisions come from the actors themselves. For me, directing is about the Director getting out of the way and letting the actors work, rather than having choices made for them.

In saying that, some of the main choices I made as Director included, a very simple set with four

chairs and a backdrop and simple costumes with each actor wearing the same costume throughout the play. This was important because I wanted character changes that would be created in the voice and the body of the actor rather than through costume. Props would be mimed and there would be a mixture of live and recorded music.

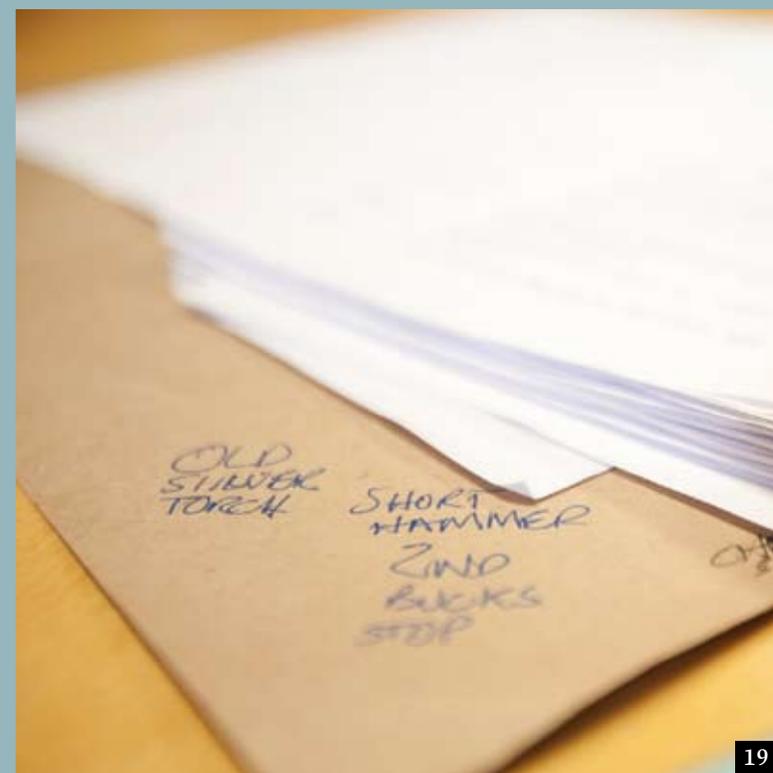
The piece was very much an ensemble piece with the four actors really having to be connected to each other and almost breathing together and being aware of each other. I took them through lots of exercises to develop their connections.

The play text was based on recorded memories from older people but it seemed important to me that the actors played their own ages, so the audience were seeing the older people as younger versions of themselves. It was like a time machine bringing us right back to when they were young.

Sean Donegan



WINTER
2012



REHEARSALS

The audition was held as a workshop, which meant that we did a lot of work as a group as well as being required to do our individual pieces.

Part of the requirement was that we had to tell a short story, so I chose to tell a true story about my grandfather. It was a relatively small group of actors at the audition workshop, but the standard was very high and I left fairly sure that the show would be a success but that I wouldn't be involved.

This was my first experience of full time rehearsals. My first realisation was how much is involved physically. Three yoga warm ups a day, five days a week really take their toll on a not very fit or stretchy person. I really got to understand how important the physical, vocal and mental preparation is for acting.

Guy's input was always helpful during rehearsals as he was able to give us an insight into the individuals who told the stories that we were working on.

“ That direct connection between us and the stories was invaluable. ”

Fionn Robinson



With 'On the Camel's Hump' – from auditioning, to rehearsals, to touring Sean guided us seamlessly, enabling us as actors to creatively connect to who we were and the stories we were telling.

Sean also empowered us to bond as a group to work, support and get the best out of ourselves and each other and it was great to work with Susie, Fionn and Andrew.

When the work is fun and it's fun to work – that's hard to beat.

Aoife Toner



SPRING 2013





I am having an off day. I feel like I have two left feet and nothing seems to sound right. Somewhere in the back of my mind I remember this, the feeling that I'm making a mess of a role and then I remember that it always happens, usually during week two of rehearsals and it is the point of failure before something changes. It's like a necessary crossroads I come to every time I undertake a part, or anything creative.

As if Sean, our Director reads my mind he gives us the afternoon off. My daughter is happy because it means we can go for an adventure in this new county so different from the lush, flat, river woven fields of Kilkenny where I live. Trying to make it sound exciting, I had told her I am working at the top of Ireland. "Will I be able to touch the sky?" she asks, when I tell her she can visit on her holidays.

The first sunny day of the year it seems, we drive to An Grianán Aileach. I've been told you can see three counties from it. I talk little but rest my eyes on the passing countryside, the exotic to me these hedges and fields. I feel myself unwind as we drive up the narrow road to the ring fort, its grey spine arching from the hill. My daughter skips from the car to the entrance and runs around the lower stone ridge, then the higher one. I know she has the skill of a goat but I choose not to look to preserve my nerves.

I sit on the top ledge, breathless from the climb and look down over the three counties, a sweep of unfamiliar heathers and an air so sweet and soft I feel my lungs surrender to it. Without trying, I think of the tapestry of stories I am weaving and re-telling on the stage and I have an aerial view of some of the places these stories come from. I take it in, the colours, smells and underneath that a feeling, like a quiet whisper I can't quite put into words.

I know that I am walking through the crossroads and that the next day in rehearsals it will be better. After two weeks in Donegal, I have begun to arrive into some of the places introduced to me by Guy in his writing and I'm starting to get a physical sense of some of the characters I represent and the Northwest landscape that has shaped them. For me and for today, a beginning is good enough.

My daughter reaches the top. She opens her arms, stretching them upwards: "Look mammy, I can nearly touch the sky."

Susie Lamb
(Excerpt from Actor's Journal)



Guy, after chatting to Sean, asked me to choreograph the music link pieces for 'On The Camel's Hump'. Not being from the area, I hadn't a clue what the Camel's Hump was! Sean and I chatted about the themes and after listening to me rattle on a while, he figured that I had the 'gist' of it, and gave me a script and a cd of the music.

At home, I read the script and immediately connected with many of the stories especially the ones relating to the Border, having been reared within a stone's throw, literally, of the Belleek-Ballyshannon border.

I danced around my kitchen for a while; writing down sequences that I thought would work and then met the cast the next day for rehearsals. After that it was easy and I certainly enjoyed introducing them to the different types of dance from the rigid style of the Donegal jive to the more flamboyant American jive.

Because I come from a contemporary dance background, I really enjoyed directing the Washing Scene and in particular matching the character of the dance with each of the individual characters.

After suggesting a few changes to the music choices with Guy, I had one more rehearsal with the four talented and enthusiastic actors and was very satisfied with the connections between the movement and the story when I attended the dress rehearsal.

Phil Dalton



As Production Designer, my job is to make space and characters visually real. I find and add the little details that convey the personality and circumstance of the character through their clothing, as was the case with little Charlie's waistcoat for example.

What a gem of a story, from the women's group in Strabane, about a mother making the children's clothes from old Odlum's flour sacks. We had to make it with the branding of Heart's Delight embroidered on the back! Each of the vintage buttons on the waistcoat is different, as if his mother had used what she had to hand.

The costumes also had to be practical. The actors do a lot of movement and dancing. It's a very physical piece. Though true to the time period, pencil skirts were definitely not an option for either Mary or Minnie. Shoes had to have low heels.

I'm particularly happy with the unity that the little thread of red through each of the costumes gives to our four train passengers: Charlie's braces, Mary's buttons, Johnnie's tie and handkerchief and Minnie's belt. It's a small thing but it subtly ties them together.

The train carriage was kept very simple and minimal. The stories and memories of the four people are the main focus of the play, so the set had to easily recede to allow their tales to come to life.

Joanne Quigley

ON TOUR

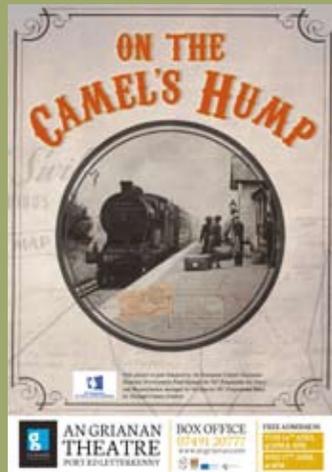
As I entered An Grianán Theatre on Tuesday the 16th of April 2013 to see 'On the Camel's Hump' I didn't know what to expect. The performance I was about to see was going to be the result of our endeavours twelve months previously.

The play begins with a train journey and immediately I am taken back to a workshop in Newtownstewart where we lined up chairs and took an imaginary trip on a train to the beach. It was a great day out and we hadn't even left the building.

As I sat through 'On The Camel's Hump', performed brilliantly and energetically by the actors, my mind kept drifting back to the people who shared their memories with us and the journeys they took us on.

I felt so privileged that the older people in the groups that I had visited back in the summer of 2012 had shared their memories with me and entrusted me with them.

Eoghan MacGiolla Bhrighde



Twenty-four shows over eight weeks... Guy's scripting of the stories and the rapturous response after each staging says it all for me, but it was Guy's beautifully worded introductions to each show and his commitment to each performance, which made each show as special as the next.

For me as an actress, the stories of the past that we told on stage breathed new life in the present when we performed up close and personal for groups and communities. It was while on tour that conversations, reminiscences and joyous stories of the past came to the fore triggered by our performances.

“ Twinkling eyes and smiling faces were beautiful to see. A Sense of Memory was a privilege to be part of. ”

Aoife Toner





During the tour the routine was pretty much the same everywhere – even though the venues varied greatly in size. We arrived an hour in advance of the show, usually arriving with little or no idea of what the venue was going to be like.

We started usually by having a look at the performance space – whether it be a theatre, a library, a sports hall, or a common room – and making any adjustments to certain scenes to make them work in the space. There is a lot of set movement and dancing in the show and so it was important for us always to figure out how we were going to work in a new space. Then we changed into our (sometimes smelly) costumes and began to warm up.

Each actor took charge of their own warm up, doing whatever physical and vocal exercises they preferred, and then we ran lines until we got our Beginners Call. On the days we were lucky enough to have time, we mingled with the audiences afterwards, very encouraged by their reactions and how energised by the show they were.

“ One of the performances that really sticks in my memory was the one in Volt House in Raphoe. ”

It was in a large prefab, and it was a rowdy crowd made up of older people who had just had their tea. There was something about the performance and the audience reaction that made me feel like we'd really struck a chord with them. They laughed so hard at the comic bits that I found it hard to keep a straight face myself, but you could hear a pin drop during the more heartfelt moments. I was blown away by how warm and friendly everyone was to us afterwards.

Fionn Robinson

A deeply affecting part of the process for me has been the chance to bring the show to elders' groups in care and rest homes throughout the Northwest. The experience of being part of a show that very clearly spoke to and for these groups was a delight, and one I will not soon forget.

I remember often trying not to get lost in watching the audience's faces as we performed, for there is something very special that happens when people see their own stories and shared history brought to life on the stage.

Such a pleasure it has been to be a part of this project. All involved have worked with wit and determination to honour these stories and the people who told them. This is a testament to the joy and beauty of our shared heritage.

Andrew Galvin



I had a wonderful team around me as is always the case at An Grianán. I felt that people were taking care of their jobs with huge energy and imagination and professionalism.

“ I'm really proud of what we did. ”

Sean Donegan



EXHIBITION

In my role as Graphic Designer for 'A Sense of Memory', I was inspired to create beautiful supporting visuals for the project. My fundamental objective was to determine the most effective, engaging and appropriate methods of communicating the stories collected by the facilitators. They were so rich in imagery and intimate narratives from people's own lives, I felt quite a responsibility to reflect these treasured stories in a manner that was both respectful and authentic.

with Kate Brown (Exhibition Curator), established what would be the most successful methods of telling the stories, through a visual and interactive environment. The exhibition, which ran in conjunction with the play, 'On The Camel's Hump', relied heavily on the emotional, sensory response the viewer will naturally have as they engage with the exhibition.

This brief was an exciting challenge for me as a Designer. My role in the project was to design visuals for an exhibition, poster and supporting publication. A vintage yet clean and contemporary aesthetic, was used consistently throughout all the material I produced. There was a strong emphasis on large-scale typographic quotes, vintage photography and block colours, all inspired from old railway posters and photographs from the 1950's.

Although the exhibition was a collection of memories from a bygone era, it was never meant to be a historical, fact based experience, but rather storytelling in a three dimensional space. It was important that it was accessible to the audience, many of whom contributed to the contents of the exhibition.

It gave me great satisfaction to see these people in particular, engage and interact with the space we created through the memories they so generously shared with us.

I approached the exhibition design process by building an interpretive plan for a series of stands. I, along

Mary Faughnan





I was conscious that the exhibition needed to reach an intergenerational audience and therefore I used universal themes from the real life stories that I heard during the creative reminiscence workshops as a source of inspiration for the overall narrative of the exhibition. Yes, the memories are from the past but they very much resonate in the present - leaving school, work life, the social scene, travel and emigration, falling in love.

The dramatic, live form of 'On the Camel's Hump' by its nature is essentially evanescent. By creating the exhibition in addition to the play, I believe that we gave a permanency to the memories that we borrowed. The memories shared through the medium of the exhibition became three dimensional, mirroring the design of the space itself.

The created spaces within the exhibition allowed the memories to take a tangible form, whereby they engaged the senses of the Visitor, inviting her to interact with the exhibition and drawing her into the remembered world of the Teller. In some instances the exhibition gave an opportunity for the Visitor to hear the voice of the Teller and meet him or her through the digital archive. Above all the exhibition was designed to be fun to engage with and to encourage social interaction, to spark conversation and trigger memories.

Everyone who visited the exhibition was given an opportunity to respond to their experience by writing their fondest memory as 'a snapshot frozen in time.' The memories that were shared represent the cross-generation of visitors that we had:

Christmas: The whole family (dogs included) put on Christmas hats and tea towels on their heads to look like the Nativity and then we played a family game of 'Just Dance' on the Wii. I'll never forget about it! Aoife x

A group of girls, 6 and 7 year olds sitting on a picnic blanket in the sun eating melting chocolate Easter eggs. Surrounded by tall tress and bluebells. Cavan, 1982.

My fav memory was me 1st night @ Ink. (B.J) xxx

Memories of Steam Trains. Run on steam train from Moyle-Newtowncunningham, to Sallybrook, to my grannies. It was very exciting. Shaun McMenamin.

Also as part of the exhibition experience, the Visitor could play music from a 1950's vintage record collection. Among the albums was 'Favourite Classic Children's Rhymes and Songs.' The Project puts me in mind of the old English nursery rhyme from that record, This Is the House That Jack Built.

It's a cumulative tale of how one happening can lead to another. And so it is for me, this is the house that we built. A treasure house of sorts, that began with Guy's sense of a memory. From there, many people myself included joined An Grianán on this year long adventure of wanting to contribute to a more peaceful and inclusive society, where stories are listened to and valued and shared. And I believe that we absolutely achieved that aim. But the crux of it is, the nursery rhyme isn't about Jack and it's not about the house that he built.



“ It's a story about how other people are linked to the house; it's a tale about the visitors, it's a story about you. ”

Kate Brown
May 2013



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