

Goodwill Irish Forum Theatre

Empowering young people through dramatic arts and intercultural experience



G.I.F.T. – Goodwill Irish Forum Theatre was set up through an Interreg bi-lateral project in July 2001, between the Carlow County Arts office and Theatr Fforwm Cymru.

Mission Statement

To advance the education of the public in Ireland and especially young people, in the promotion and protection of good health in particular by participation in drama associated visual and performing arts and intercultural exchanges. The aim is the empowerment of young people through the dramatic arts and intercultural experience.

Directors:

Artistic Director: Aaron Camps

Directors: Garth O'Malley, Kieran Fitzgerald, Eoin Murphy, Siobhan Byrne, Connie Byrne Hyland

Support:

The Goodwill Irish Forum Theatre is a “chapter” of Rehearsal For Reality and is supported by Theatr Fforwm Cymru. G.I.F.T. is also affiliated to the “Drums for Peace” Network and the European Network of Cultural Youthworkers.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Youth Arts Leadership Training	2001-2005
Workshops in acting and directing	2001-2005
7 Youth Exchanges in Wales, Ireland, Portugal, Denmark, Lithuania	2002-2005
Public Performances Street & Stage	2004
Conference “Network for the Disability Database”	2004
Conference “Democracy Commission” Liberty Hall, Dublin	2004
European Forum Theatre Training for Trainers	2003
Short film “Uranium Skies”	2003
Performance in Educational video “Lifeskills for Teenagers”	2003
Performance Tour of South East Ireland and Wales	2001



International Youth Exchanges Forum Theatre

Drama

Video

Film

Stage

Lighting

Drumming

Dance



G.I.F.T.

Goodwill Cottage, Knockbower, Nurney, Carlow. Contact: 087 6788015



G.I.F.T. Drama

Theatre/drama techniques predominantly influenced by the work of Augusto Boal. (The overall name of this body of work is called “*Theatre of the Oppressed.*”) The techniques within this body of work are always participative and include:

- **Games**

We find them invaluable as ice-breakers, for team building and encouraging co-operation, for increasing sensitivity of the senses, for kinaesthetic development, co-ordination, sequencing, etc.

- **Forum Theatre**

This type of theatre is used to highlight problems, so that “spectactors” can think of solutions. It is a way of dealing with external oppression e.g. bullying or any other type of damaging behaviour. It is the epitome of experiential learning, summed in the old adage, **I look and I see, I hear and I know, I do and I understand**. It is also the technique that we have found stimulates the most empathy.

- **Image Theatre**

This technique speaks for itself. It facilitates non-verbal expression. It works well with all ages and particularly with people who find it difficult to articulate emotions or experiences. It encourages understanding of body language and is summed up in the saying “a picture paints a thousands words”

- **Cops in the Head**

A technique for identifying and dealing with negative “put-down” self talk. The chance to recognise these “voices”, where they come from and the damage that they cause. The chance to turn up the volume on positive self-talk.

Theatre in Education Projects

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

W.B. Yeats

“Learning... that reflective activity which enables the learner to draw upon previous experience, to understand and evaluate the present, so as to shape future action and formulate new knowledge.”

*“Learning makes sense: re-creating education for a changing future.”- **J. Abbott***

G.I.F.T. Projects provide personal development skills based on techniques from the theatre world, to empower participants to deal with personal and emotional issues they struggle with on a daily basis in their learning.

Aims

"Without emotions, there can be no joy, no motivation, no values. Emotions are very powerful tools for learning".

This quote from the Times Educational Supplement is very close to our hearts and in line with the philosophy of **G.I.F.T.** However, we would also add that some emotions are very powerful blocks to learning.

What is also evident is that many young people lack some basic understanding of some of the potential negative behaviour patterns surrounding them. The most



obvious being peer pressure, particularly the subtler and far more pervasive form whereby "I" adapt my behaviour (often not to my advantage) in order to be accepted and belong to the group. "English is impossible... Irish food is..."

Theatre/drama is the perfect tool to learn ways to manage the emotions that may be hindering learning.

Our approach is very much the "no handout" approach, we make each workshop as experiential as possible embracing the do review, learn and apply cycle of learning. Lessons are also designed to be enjoyable, which, by the response from pupils, they evidently are.

What is theatre-based learning?

Theatre engages our hearts and minds with unique immediacy.

Participants are stimulated to think and act in new ways. Rather than learning from the book, people have tried and tested and retried the newly found skill within the safe environment of the project- before adopting it on return to their daily lives.

ACT → **REFLECT** → **AWARENESS** → **CHANGE** →

People **ACT** and experience different behaviours and their effects:

- they **REFLECT** on what this change means for them and to others;
- this brings an **AWARENESS** of their individual and group behaviour;
- from which a **CHANGE** occurs;
- being empowered to choose and adopt different behaviours and then **ACT**
- which they **REFLECT** upon....and so forth

The benefits every project brings are:

1. Technology for creative thinking
2. Fun and ability to use it to improve morale
3. Empowerment- enabling people to understand and act on their personal and social values regarding issues which affect their lives
4. Insight, awareness and respect for the differences in other personal values
5. Performing skills
6. Development work on Emotional Intelligence

"School is a crucible and a defining experience. A child's sense of self-worth depends substantially on his or her ability to achieve in school."

'Emotional Intelligence' - Dr. David Hamburg

"Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – this is not easy."

- Aristotle

Contracts

We find it essential to start each session with an agreed contract. This is done to clarify boundaries, work out what is acceptable behaviour and what is not and most



importantly to create a **safe space**. Feeling safe is imperative if people are going to work with emotions. Ideally the contract will include points such as:

- The importance of listening to one person at a time.
- Taking care of yourself and others, both physically and emotionally. Being kind, no put downs or name-calling.
- Confidentiality. No telling tales about what people have said.
- Respect others, including acceptance of diversity etc.
- Be honest.
- Take personal responsibility.
- Own your own statements. Don't generalize, stereotype or make sweeping statements, e.g. "All boys are..."

Sessions times are negotiable and depend upon the time constraints of participants and facilitators.

G.I.F.T. TRAINERS

Aaron O'Malley Camps – *Project leader, facilitator*

Educated from Trinidad to Tullow, Aaron holds a BA in Psychology and Philosophy from University College Dublin. He has an extensive background in residential socialwork with both young people and children, with training and experience in Family therapy, Drama therapy and a diploma in counselling.

He has worked with the Trinidad and Tobago Tent Theatre as a performer with responsibilities toward set, stage management, script and directing. Using his training in carnival theatre and group therapy he has designed and facilitated team building and training workshops for socialwork teams of the Health Boards and of the voluntary sector both in England and Ireland. More recently he was employed by the Carlow County Youth Theatre as the Youth Drama development worker to establish, co-ordinate and train four youth theatres in Co. Carlow.

Ian O'Malley- *Facilitator*

Ian has a BA Hons Degree in History and English Literature, and an MA in Irish Writing from Maynooth University. He has nine years experience in EFL, working with students of many different cultural backgrounds from European to Asian to African, agegroups from young teenagers to top level executives, and all levels of English. He is currently Academic Director of Studies in Kenilworth Language Institute. He has lived and worked abroad in Barcelona, Madrid and most recently in Rome where he taught in the Italian parliament. He is a registered ACELS examiner for the TIE exam.

He has taught film and wrote the script for a documentary on Oscar Wilde. He has performed in national drama festival competitions with Maynooth Drama Society and the Little Theatre, Carlow. With G.I.F.T. he has participated in street theatre and foreign youth exchanges. Most recently he facilitated and led 'Forum Theatre in the classroom' with large groups of foreign teenagers studying in Dublin for the summer.



Background: Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed

The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) was developed by Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal during the 1950's and 1960's. In an effort to transform theatre from the "monologue" of traditional performance into a "dialogue" between audience and stage, Boal experimented with many kinds of interactive theatre. His explorations were based on the assumption that dialogue is the common, healthy dynamic between all humans, that all human beings desire and are capable of dialogue, and that when a dialogue becomes a monologue, oppression ensues. Theatre then becomes an extraordinary tool for transforming monologue into dialogue.

* **Image Theatre** uses the human body as a tool of representing feelings, ideas, and relationships. Through sculpting others or using our own body to demonstrate a body position, participants create anything from one-person to large-group image sculptures that reflect the sculptor's impression of a situation or oppression.

* **Forum Theatre:** In Forum Theatre a group in tandem with a professional facilitator (known as the 'joker') creates and develops a performance around issues that are of prime importance to their particular group. Using the Greek terms "protagonist" and "antagonist," Forum Theatre seeks to show a person (the protagonist) who is trying to deal with an oppression and failing because of the resistance of one or more obstacles (the antagonists).

The joker then says to the audience we will do this again, and if you would do something different than what the protagonist (not the antagonists) is doing, stand up and yell stop. The protagonist will then sit down and the audience member is invited forward to show their solution of the moment. Once the intervention is performed, the audience invariably applauds, and the joker invites the audience to discuss the proposed solution, and to offer even more solutions.

Forum Theatre is referred to in many different ways including Theatre for Living, Theatre of Provocation, Theatre for Change, Theatre of Liberation, Theatre of the Oppressed and Democracy Theatre. Recognized by the United Nations through UNESCO as an official "tool for social change", Forum Theatre is an enormously beneficial and useful bank of innovative techniques.