

ANNA NEWELL + LIME TREE THEATRE | BELLTABLE + ST GABRIEL'S PROJECT
2024



Reflection Document



Table of Contents

<i>Our Aims</i>	3
<i>The Project Team</i>	5
<i>Project Structure</i>	6
<i>Summary of Observations</i>	8
<i>Participants’ Reflections</i>	11
At a Glance	11
Testimonials from St Gabriel’s Staff and Teachers:	12
<i>Artists’ Reflections</i>	16
At a Glance	16
Artist Surveys	17
<i>Artists’ Reflections Starting the Pilot</i>	19
Before the Process: Letter Sample 1	19
Before The Process: Letter Sample 2:	20
Reflections After the Process	21
After the Process: Letter Sample 1	21
After the Process: Letter Sample 2	22
After the Process: Letter Sample 3	23
<i>Our Vision</i>	24
The Benefits of Our Project	24
Towards the Future	25
<i>Our Team Biographies</i>	26
Anna Newell: Project Facilitator	26
Lime Tree Theatre Belltable: Venue Partner and Producer	27
St. Gabriel’s Foundation: Participating Partner	28
Participating Artists:	29

Our Aims



The aim of this project was to create more opportunities for children with complex needs to experience and participate in arts activities. We wanted to ensure that this audience is included in the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable programming, and to offer whatever appropriate support is required to ensure that these young people can avail of valuable arts experiences. Arts activities can offer significant benefits to participants, including opportunities for communication and expression, sensory integration, as well as social and peer interaction.

The project promoted active engagement and participation in cultural activity for children with complex needs which has the potential to bring about transformative change. The project placed a strong focus on inclusion, providing opportunities for participation of a marginalised communities of young people who are often excluded. The project offered an uplifting element to these children's lives. It project bridged a gap, especially for those children who have never experienced similar participatory and interactive bespoke arts activities before.

This pilot project aimed to embolden and enable more artists to work with this particular audience. We wanted to continue to build on Anna Newell's unique relationship with St Gabriel's Special School, and to also build upon the relationship that both Anna Newell and

St. Gabriel's have with the Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable. (LTTB). We want to build a growing pool of artists local to Limerick who, as Anna Newell put it, 'are excited to work with this particular audience... as excited about working with this audience as I am.' Our hope was that more artists, supported by LTTB can gain expertise creating work for and engaging with this audience, so that they can present work regularly at St. Gabriel's.

Our participating artists were selected based on those who had some experience in this area and an expressed intention to extend this experience into the future. The four artists selected had a range of qualities in terms of age, artforms and levels of experience. Of additional value and insight was drawn from the fact that one of the artists is autistic and so brought her lived experience to the project.

It was made clear at the outset that the artists were not trying to 'create a show' in this time or to run workshops with 'outcomes' with the students at St Gabriel's, but rather, through this project, to explore how these artists could create and perform work for children with complex needs, guided closely by Anna Newell's unique skill and expertise.

It is important to note the existence of these aims within the larger context of the LTTB's strategic priorities, which include using a focused outreach approach to broaden and deepen community engagement in partnership with key partners, to explore collaboration opportunities with educational institutions, to invite participation from the wider community enabling access to creative self-expression and to facilitate opportunities for creative encounters for families, children and young people. The LTTB's vision is to create a welcoming environment and enable a wide range of audiences to encounter creativity and new ideas. The LTTB strives to be a vibrant, guiding cultural light, a pivotal working space for artists and a compelling destination for audiences.

This artist training initiative exists within the LTTB's core values, and their ambition to enable participation in arts activities - broadening and deepening engagement with both artists and audiences. The LTTB works together with its partners to co-create experiences that enrich the lives of artists and their audiences. It celebrates and support diverse traditions and cultures, enabling inclusive self-expression among its communities.

The Project Team



Anna Newell: Project Facilitator

Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable : Producing Partner/Venue Lead

St. Gabriel's Foundation: Partner Organisation

Limerick Children and Young People's Services Committee: Funder

Gillian Fenton: Development and Marketing Manager with Lime Tree Theatre/Project Supervisor

Tríona Walsh: Participating Artist

Fiona Linanne: Participating Artist

Eleanor O'Brien: Participating Artist

Mitzi Smishkewych Kosovske: Participating Artist

Project Structure



The structure of the pilot project was as follows:

DAY 1: Observation Day

Monday 14th October

A day of observation in the school. Artists observed a full day of activity at St. Gabriel's. The idea of starting with this day was so that the artists could best explore the world of the school and of the pupils before thinking of anything else. As Anna had indicated, this day proved invaluable for the artists, some of whom were new to this work and these audiences. Guided by Anna, this day 'set the tone,' and encouraged our 'temporary community' of artists to always put the child (or young person) at the very centre of the process. This encouraged the pilot to be extremely participative and child led.

DAY 2: Workshop Day 1

Tuesday 15 October 9.30am – 12 and 1-3pm

This is a one-day workshop at Belltable with the team of four artists under the guidance of Anna Newell. It was a general introduction to Anna's work and to how she works with this audience. It was also an opportunity to chat and was also an important session for sharing very practical information. It was a 'getting to know you' session and also an opportunity for this 'tiny community' of artists to start to work as a team.

DAY 3: Workshop Day 2

Tuesday 5th November 10am-1pm and 2-4pm

This was another one-day workshop at Belltable with the team of four artists and Anna Newell, preparing for the residency at St Gabriel's. This involved a significant amount of discussion and exploration of the workshop content for the residency.

Three Day Residency at St. Gabriel's

Tuesday 12th, Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th November

The residency was the vital, central element of this project. The residency involved three consecutive days of as Anna noted:

'The 3-day residency is similar to how I start making a new show myself... which I always do in residency in a school and in creative consultation with the staff and pupils of that school.'

These three days at St Gabriel's represented three full school days. The artists presented short informal workshop/performance sessions (between 10 and 20 minutes) in classrooms across St. Gabriel's. These sessions were designed to 'feel like an informal show rather than a participatory workshop.' Each day also involved an artist debrief and reflection in the afternoon and, on Tuesday and Wednesday, preparatory sessions for the following day of activities.

The Performance

For each session, Anna and the artists provided a brief introduction before beginning. These sessions were designed to be informal, with emphasis on vocal work, object exploration and music. These sessions, as with so much of Anna's work for this audience, were designed so that there was 'no right way' for the children and young people to respond. As Anna noted 'some might get hands on, others might want to observe from a distance – and if any of them choose not to engage at all, that's absolutely their prerogative...It'll feel like an informal show rather than a participatory workshop with instructions and, as usual, we'll encourage staff to not verbally scaffold the experience.'

The performances were all about 'reading and responding to the young people, and nuancing our short session moment by moment' - in response to each individual. The children and young people provided the artists with invaluable and essential training through the experience of completing these sessions.

Our aim for this residency was that, by the end of the three days, the four artists would have found working with this audience as exciting an artistic space as Anna does - and for the four artists to have started to find out if/how they would like to continue this work.

Summary of Observations



Inclusion and Participation

- The project's emphasis on inclusion and the centrality of the child's experience was of paramount importance to the participating artists, from the outset and throughout.
- Every class remarked at the high levels of engagement amongst the children and young people during the performance.
- There was universal praise from the staff and teachers at St. Gabriel's for the project's inherent value and its importance to the participating children and young people.
- There were many observations from the teachers and staff, as well as from the participating artists, emphasising the inclusive nature of the project and how the child's experience was at the centre of the approach at all times.

School Observations

- Responses from the children and young people in the room, coupled with the positive testimonials from staff afterwards, indicated the child's experience of the performance as a highly enjoyable one - and reflective of quite a joyful happening.

- Several teachers remarked at the high levels of engagement from their pupils, and many suggested that the workshop/performance could have been longer. The artists (and Anna Newell) expressed the opinion that the duration of the workshop, while at times could have been slightly longer, was generally appropriate, with several suggesting that one shouldn't keep the performance going 'until the audience loses interest', but rather that it should end while the children are still engaged.
- The staff and teachers observed the high artistic quality of the workshops, how well designed they were, and appreciated the fusion of music, singing, touch and prop work.
- 100% of St. Gabriel's staff and teachers who were surveyed indicated that this project was a valuable experience for their pupils, that they would welcome the project back and would like to see the project resourced for more regular engagements across the school year.
- The teachers (and the artists) appreciated the 'range of offers' available in the piece – through the use of touch, music, singing, prop work and percussion etc. and the ability to move fluidly between these cues.
- The teachers suggested that they would like to experience the workshop as participants, and there was enthusiasm about a potential CPD course in the future.

Project Facilitation

- There was unanimous admiration for Anna Newell, particularly amongst the staff and teachers of St. Gabriel's, for her skill, care and attention to detail. There was praise for her approach and for her steadfast determination of delivering outstanding artistic experiences.
- There was also great admiration amongst the participating artists for Anna's approach and guidance throughout the process.

Artist Observations

- There was enormous enthusiasm amongst the artists for the project to continue and to be expanded.

- There was enthusiasm amongst the artists to lead a session/workshop. There was enthusiasm amongst the artists to develop a new performance/workshop, to tour it to the school and to be part of the Lime Tree Theatre's 'Bualadh Bos Festival' in the future.
- There was enthusiasm amongst the artists to explore how their individual artform could be more central to the process/presentation of the performance.
- There was enthusiasm amongst the artists to continue to meet up themselves, in a bespoke manner, in an attempt to maintain a 'community of artists' interested in this work.
- Some of the trepidation that was felt amongst the artists dissipated once they started 'doing' the work in the room.
- There was so much room to deviate from the 'framework' of the performance – through micro-interactions, following cues, following a connection in a 'one on one' interaction – and passing this connection on to another artist.
- There was an appreciation amongst the artists of the incredible diversity within even one class with children with complex needs. Anna recalled Tim Webb's observation, that 'within a PMLD group, there is more diversity than within the entire stalls of the National Theatre.'
- The participating artists felt that they were being pushed 'out of their comfort zone' in a positive way– with composers becoming performers, actors feeling like playwrights etc. Anna observed how she enjoyed her role within the performance, having become more accustomed to directing and producing projects recently.

Participants' Reflections

Our priority in this reflection is to document the feelings and responses of the participating children young people. In order to gather this information, we asked the staff of St. Gabriel's to convey their responses.

At a Glance

Each staff member was asked, on behalf of their class, for three words to describe their experience of the workshop, here are the most frequent words that came up:



Testimonials from St Gabriel's Staff and Teachers:



Testimonial 1:

I feel this was a very valuable experience. It was very enjoyable and captivating for my students.

Some of our students just don't like touch they love visuals and sounds.

It was an amazing treat for our little ones as most events are centred on the older students juniors can be forgotten and I believe feel the early the inclusion begins, the better.

I would recommend this project for the future.

Testimonial 2:

Yes, I felt this experience was very valuable...

To be honest, I felt this workshop could have gone on all day – I was surprised by how connected the class were...

They had such amazing eye contact. Intensive contact.

I could sense they were about to kick off because it was over! I think they would have liked the sessions to go on longer.

There was one boy in my class... he seemed to be having the time of his life!

Thank you, when are you coming back?



Testimonial 3:

I felt this was a really valuable experience, yes.

I would recommend this for the future, and I hope you come back.

The performance could have gone on even longer – they were so engaged. I was surprised that they stayed in focus.

I think the artist did a great job with the props... they were good at regulating the props.

Testimonial 4:

They [the child participants] seemed to love the music especially.

All the artists had great control – and were able to say ‘no’ playfully.

They were so in tune with the children. One of the artists could sense that some of the pupils needed different responses. All our pupils are different and they need a range of responses. One of the boys needed touch – and the artist could sense that.

I loved your cues – and how you switched tactics to keep the pupils engaged. You switched from objects to lights to singing. It was excellent.

It’s a really valuable experience yes, I hope you can continue with this project.



Testimonial 5:

I loved the performance...

It takes a lot to get X [child's name] going...he really responded on his own terms and ye allowed that to happen.

I was surprised how well it worked.

Brilliant, thank you so much.

Testimonial 6:

It was so peaceful...

I was particularly impressed with Y's [child's name] responses... we never get feedback like that from her. It was amazing.

Is there a way of continuing this program? It would be great to have you here with us every week.

The children loved the music... the whole thing was great. Such care and enthusiasm.

Yes – I think it's a really valuable experience... of course.



Testimonial 7

I would love to experience that workshop with my fellow teachers. Are you doing a CPD? I think it would be a really good idea.

It was like a sound bath. I loved it.

It worked on two levels – visually and with the music...

I loved the one on one work – when the artists were working one on one with individual children. Wow... it was fantastic.

Even little Z [Child's name] being brought back in to the group, she was included. They were all included.

No it wasn't too long, I wouldn't change a thing.

Testimonial 8

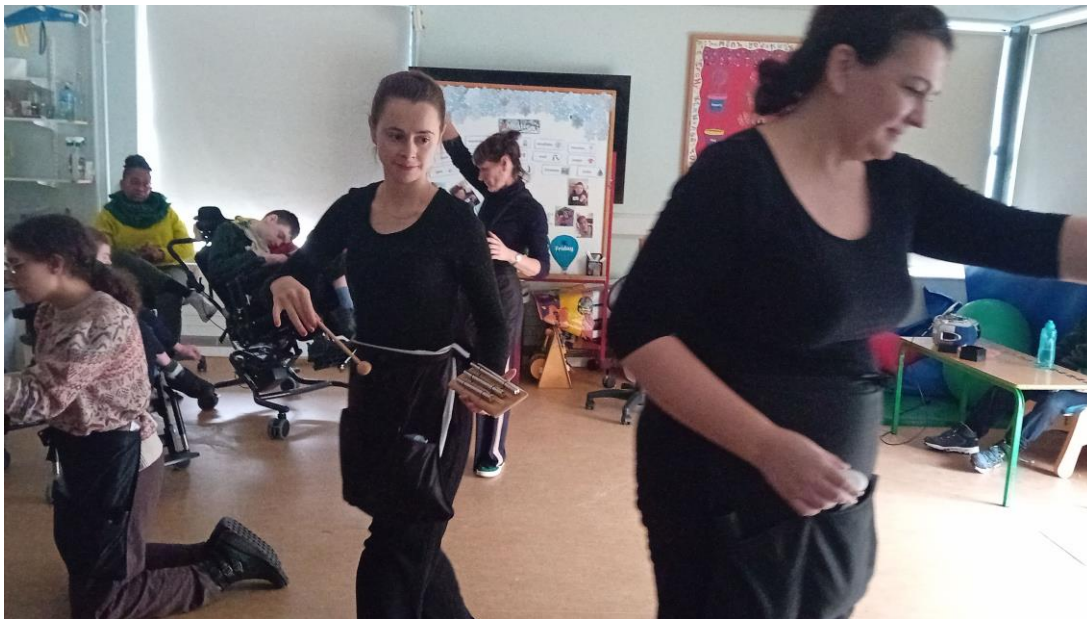
I would like to thank you for the wonderful, amazing workshops that took place at our school St. Gabriel's School.

It was a wonderful time and watching the reactions of our students to music, touch, singing.

Our students love music, singing, it was all an extraordinary art school that brought smiles, positive emotions, peace.

We need more of you and regularly, if possible. You are doing great and we really appreciate your time and commitment. Thank you so much.

Artists' Reflections



At a Glance

Each artist was asked after each workshop, for words to describe their experience:



Artist Surveys

Participant:

Triona Walsh:

What do you consider your primary artform?

Opera Singer

Why did you participate in this project?

I jumped at the opportunity to devise theatre. I work with children a lot and I have learned so much from them. I find working with children to be joyful and freeing, and I took advantage of an opportunity to learn from someone who has incredible experience and insight. I'm so glad I took the risk.

What did you expect?

I expected to meet some new and interesting colleagues and other than that I wasn't sure what to expect.

Was there anything that surprised you?

I was surprised at how intensely emotional it was. Not in a negative sense – but looking at the holistic experience of the audience, within their daily routine. We don't normally factor that in when considering an audience.

Participant :

Fiona Linanne

What do you consider your primary art form?

Music/Sound/Composition/Tom Foolery

Why did you participate in this project?

As a practitioner who works regularly in the arts and education sphere I was interested in exploring creating work for an audience, and particularly this audience, and exploring how one might tackle that work.

Was there anything that surprised you?

I expected my skills as a composer former musician to be drawn on more where it was more focused on building performance and improvisation skills in this very specialized environment I found observing and his process and methods and those of the other artists in the room very interesting.

While I'm unsure if I would move into this field as a performer, I am curious and interested in exploring the devising aspects of this work. I think being part of the show was a very effective method for exploring this but not necessarily where I usually place or find myself.

Participant:

Eleanor O'Brien

What do you consider your primary artform?

Actor. Film/TV/Theatre.

Why did you choose to do this project?

I was interested in creating theatre for young people and devising with other creatives. Anna's work looked so beautiful and different to the theatre that I have seen for young people, which also intrigued me. I feel there are certain people who are not catered for when it comes to the arts, and seeing Anna's had such a high standard for young people really made me want to engage with her work.

What did you expect from this program?

Initially I thought the program would be like working in a play or show. But Anna's work is so centered around the audience that it felt so different to what I've done before. The question of presence, connection and beauty were at the forefront of the work we all made, which I feel is incredible.

This program should be expanded. I feel it would be an idea to have the participants lead a session or show. I think funding is necessary to create a finished show to have for the Bualadh Bos festival or a show to tour in Limerick.

Participant:

Mitzi Smishkewych Kosovske

What do you consider to be your primary artform:

Writer, Artist, Filmmaker

Why did you participate in this project?

I've always loved engaging with kids and other disabled people. I'm really passionate about artist advocacy and inclusivity for disability in art and performance, so when I heard about the opportunity to do a mentorship that surrounded creating performances for children with complex needs, I was really eager to be a part of it.

Was there anything that surprised you?

It's a wonderful surprise to see how the care and support for the kids at St. Gabriel's is so individualised to all of their needs. A lot of schools wouldn't cater to the unique needs of disabled students and so it isolates them but in this school it's amazing to see that kind of support wouldn't even be a question.

I think of course when it's all over, you want to redo all of your mistakes, but I think I learned the most from my mistakes and taking risks, learning from the kids and understanding their boundaries

Artists' Reflections Starting the Pilot

Each artist was offered an opportunity to write a letter to themselves, documenting their hopes, thoughts and their reflections as they began this pilot.

Before the Process: Letter Sample 1

“I have yet to be granted the opportunity to observe other disabled people and their unique way of expressing themselves and communicating their own needs.”

As I begin the artist mentorship program one of the things I am most eager to expand on is my knowledge and experience on inclusivity through art and working with people with complex needs.

As a disabled person I can understand through my perspective what it is like to use art movement and creativity to express my needs and emotions, but I have yet to be granted the opportunity to observe other disabled people and their unique way of expressing and communicating their own needs. I've observed a large stigma placed upon disabled people including myself in society about our limitations and capabilities to express ourselves and communicate but just like no one's neurotypical or able-bodied person expresses themselves in the exact same way neither do disabled people.

I think that art in its variety of forms it's such an incredible tool of communication going beyond the depths of just a verbal level and one of the things I admire greatly about Anna's work is the immense focus on nonverbal communication. It's our first path of expression when we are born: how we observe and how we communicate with others, before we have words.

This type of communication gives nonspeaking children, whether they are babies or older, an opportunity to express something wonderful that they have in mind; a language that we often lack the patience to understand, and so we throw out assumptions that they just understand or communicate because they are just babies or they are disabled.

I've always wanted to connect with others, make them feel understood, seen, validated and so one thing I'm always nervous about is whether or not I can achieve that, because it's so important to me, and I want to make a meaningful impact and not merely think “what can I get from this” but “what can I give to this how can I help?”

Finally, I am so grateful to be a part of this project, with the hopes that my perspective and awareness on communication and inclusion in the arts will grow, and that this project itself will bring forth more inclusivity in the arts, validating nonverbal people as an audience, rather than disregarding them.

Mitzi Smishkewych Kosovske

Before The Process: Letter Sample 2:

“Can I switch the judgement and analysis off?”

I have a number of concerns as I head into this mentorship:

- Am I able to improvise enough?
- Will I be able to let go enough to really see the engagement and the connection of the students?
- I am always apprehensive when I enter a new school... I always feel a little off balance between being an observer and taking charge.
- Will I be too similar to the other artists to create a collaborative piece?
- Can I switch the judgement and analysis off?
- Will we achieve anything worthwhile in three days?

Triona Walsh.

Reflections After the Process



After the Process: Letter Sample 1

“...catering to how each individual child experiences art, creativity and life.”

One of the things I wrote about in my letter was about inclusion and theatre and performance.

This project with Anna was about making something for the young people with complex needs, how they perceive things, through their mental lens.

In my letter, I spoke of a sort of lack of inclusivity within Irish and performance, not only is stigma that disabled people can't enjoy it, but that art is made and if disabled people can't understand it, then it's their problem, rather than stepping into their world like we've been trying to do at St. Gabriel's, and creating something with how they experience art.

I sometimes felt in the past as a disabled person that things weren't always created for me and the rest of the disabled community, and so my greatest take away from this experience is this school doing exactly that.

It is catering to how each individual child experiences art , creativity and life.

Mitzi Smishkewych Kosovske

After the Process: Letter Sample 2



“The concept that we are just trying to ‘bring something beautiful into the audience’ does resonate...”

Highly amused at my before letter.

I remember being quite bothered and a bit grumpy when I was writing it, but my first sentence was feeling open minded and curious and this really is how I felt throughout the process.

I did have concerns about meeting demands outside of the room, (ie. the time and space I had set aside for the project) but actually those concerns were unfounded.

I felt like what has worked what was asked of us was respectful of our time and space.

I am still fiercely curious as I wrote in my letter while questioning the line between art and music therapy, but the concept that we are just trying to ‘bring something beautiful into the audience’ does resonate

Where to from here?

Fiona Linnane

After the Process: Letter Sample 3

“Subtleties of body language is a mutual aspect to communication - like a dual carriageway...Balance is key. A balance between how you move, when you move and why you move.”

I have reflected a lot during the process...I hope I didn't talk too much.

I realized that I found much more satisfaction in observing the responses and the young people who had more complex abilities to reveal their engagement.

I was much more interested in creating an effect which may influence visual attention or moving to hear a sound or notice small changes.

I realise that I take up a lot of space in a room and being 'small' like someone else needs consideration disappearing due to self-consciousness is not the answer as it changes the energy in the room.

Subtleties of body language is a mutual aspect to communication - like a dual carriageway

Balance is key. A balance between how you move, when you move and why you move.

This is all part of the improvisation process. I don't have a problem with improvisation I have a problem and I think I'm doing it wrong but it's not possible to do it wrong if you are using observation respect and good judgment. The question for me is how to be the artist maintain the magic of an artistic experience as opposed to just creating an interesting or lovely activity to fill a space in a day.

Triona Walsh

Our Vision



The following is a summary of the vision behind the Lime Tree Theatre's strategic approach to this project, and the goals of supervisor Gillian Fenton.

The Benefits of Our Project

The benefits of this project are numerous. We believe that culture has a crucial role to play in the development of children's lives, that the arts has a crucial role to play in the creation of an authentic sense of place and self. Our project demonstrates a distinct expertise in participatory and inclusive approaches to creative and artistic work for children with complex needs.

Our project promotes active engagement and participation in cultural activity – which has the potential to bring about transformative change. Our project places a strong focus on social inclusion, providing opportunities for participation by marginalised communities and social groups at risk of exclusion.

Our project offers an uplifting element to these children's lives. This project bridges a gap, especially for those children who have never attended arts activities before.

Towards the Future

What we were trying to achieve was to create a community of artists here in Limerick to be trained in the really specific expertise of the work that Anna Newell does, to work with children with complex needs, delivering the best possible artistic experience for the participating children.

In that vein Lime Tree Theatre has funded a few development days for two of the project participants explore what they want to create with this audience in mind.

Immediate Objectives

- We wanted to train artists here in Limerick and for Anna to 'translate' her skills to local artists, so that these artists could go and work with students in St. Gabriel's. An immediate goal is to capitalize on the success of this project identify a funding stream to continue with these specific artists and these specific workshop/performances.

Strategic Objectives

- The Lime Tree Theatre's longer-term goal is to identify a strategic funding stream to graduate from the pilot phase of this program to an expanded 'phase 1' level, involving more artists and longer-term engagements and who in turn will be able to train up new artists themselves.

The Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable have supported Anna Newell's work for the past number of years. This project, and its continuation, would allow more frequent engagement with this particular audience, and enable local artists to produce their own events, without relying on Anna Newell's presence in Limerick.

Our Team Biographies

Anna Newell: Project Facilitator



Anna is one of Ireland's leading theatre makers for young audiences, creating unique theatre adventures for babies, early years and children/young people with complex needs.

Anna has been making theatre adventures for people of all ages since 1989 and her Early Years work has been seen on 5 continents.

She introduced theatre for children with Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties into Ireland, helped start baby theatre in South Africa and created the world's first Baby Day. She was a finalist for the International Ellen Stewart Award for 'theatre makers whose work has had a major impact on children/young people'. She received one of the inaugural Tonic Theatre Awards for 'game-changing women who are transforming theatre and the performing arts'.

Previously - Artistic Director, Replay Theatre Co, Artistic Director CETL(NI): The Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts, Queens, and Associate Director, Dundee Rep. Relocated to south of Ireland in 2016 to establish a freelance practice with a strong focus on making work for babies and children with complex needs.

The shows are informed and inspired by their audiences at every stage of their creation and have human connection at their very heart. Anna lives in Bray, Ireland.

Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable: Venue Partner and Producer



The Lime Tree Theatre is a state-of-the-art 510 seat theatre, situated on the campus of Mary Immaculate College in Limerick city centre. Through its funding from the Arts Council of Ireland and the local authority, as well as other important independent grants and awards it ensures that audiences in Limerick have access to the best local, national, and international performing arts, as well as grassroots community and school performances. Lime Tree Theatre is the host of the Bualadh Bos Children's Festival.

In the heart of Limerick city, the 220 seat Belltable venue hosts work of a smaller scale with specific emphasis on contemporary theatre. We also screen film under our IFI@Belltable programme. Belltable has been managed by the Lime Tree Theatre since January 2016. Owned by Limerick City & County Council, the venue is under the management of the Lime Tree Theatre via a Service Level Agreement with LC&CC.

The Belltable:Connect initiative supports professional development of theatre artists through masterclasses, workshops and Artists in Residence programmes. Through the Belltable Hub, we provide space to local artists to create, develop and rehearse their work. This mentorship initiative is funded by the Arts Council of Ireland.



St. Gabriel's Foundation was founded in 1961. It is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity and is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors.

St. Gabriel's provides services to children with disabilities and their families through two Children's Disability Network Teams (Treehouse and South City), Hydrotherapy, Orthotics and a purpose-built state of the art Children's Respite House in Mungret.

Both hydrotherapy and orthotics are community based services available to the public. They are essential services that support people's health and well-being and have a positive impact on people's overall quality of life.

A newly developed regional children's respite service providing overnight and short-term respite breaks for children with physical disabilities and complex medical needs was recently opened in a specially designed purpose built 6-bedroom facility at Mungret.

St. Gabriel's Special School is situated on the Dooradoyle campus and provides education for children age 4-18 years.

Participating Artists:

Mitzi Smishkewych Kosovske



Mitzi Smishkewych Kosovske is a neurodivergent screenwriter and artist passionate about autism advocacy. She is currently fundraising for *Picture Girl*, a short film about a nonverbal autistic teenage girl named Sadie and her story of finding love and expression. This film explores hidden disabilities and representation of autistic women on screen. Mitzi is currently supported by the 2024 Limerick Grants Under the Arts Act Funding.

Tríona Walsh



Irish born Soprano, Tríona Walsh, is a recitalist and concert soloist. Her practice centres around collaborating with other artists – sharing ideas and devising new works of contemporary music and Opera. In 2019, as part of Opera Workshop Limerick's production, *Abandoned*, she created the role of Woman One in Fiona Linnane's chamber opera, *Off Tuskar*. She also appeared in the company's productions; *The Countess' Salon* at No 1 Pery Square, *Opera, What the Fuss?* At the Irish World Music Academy, and the touring show *The Trouble with Virtue*. One of the highlights of her work with Opera Workshop Limerick was the 2019 collaboration with Hands in Harmony Deaf Community Choir. In 2020, Tríona participated in the first phase of an Arts Council funded Research and Development project entitled *No 2 Pery Square*; a collaborative project between the Opera Workshop Ensemble and composer Fiona Linnane. Due to restrictions and complications relating to COVID19, the project made a dramatic and exciting pivot, reinventing itself as an Operatic short film. Phase two of this project was completed in March 2022 with a fully staged production and recording of the Opera. During this production, Tríona created the role of Sophia Vanderkist. During 2024, Tríona covered the role of Mrs Rose O'Riordan in the company's production of *The Ballybruff Triloggy*, with libretto by Shirley Keane and composed by Luke Byrne.

In 2022, Tríona was invited to join Limerick New Music Ensemble as a soloist. She composed her first pieces for solo voice - *Consilium I* and *Consilium II* - which were premiered as part of the Limerick Early Music Festival in 2023. She was awarded Arts Council of Ireland Agility Awards - Music by Arts Council Ireland in 2022 and 2023 providing her with the opportunity to explore, in collaboration with Dr Kosovske, the song repertoire of women composers. This culminated in the performance of *A Woman's Life and Love* in 2024. In 2023, Tríona was the recipient of the Individual Arts Bursary by Limerick City and County Council for a project focusing on Bel Canto Technique.

Tríona collaborated with composer, Fiona Linnane on *Cogarnach* in 2023. This was a collaborative musical work, responding to the Crawford Art Gallery's building, architecture and history. *Cogarnach* was presented as part of *Building as Witness* which was supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2012-2023.

Previous Opera Roles have included: Contessa in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Euridice in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, First Lady in Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Cretan Woman in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, Javotte in Massenet's *Manon* and Violetta in Act II of Verdi's *La Traviata*. She has also performed in productions of *Street Scene* (Kurt Weil), *Candide* (Bernstein), *Carmen* (Bizet), *Elijah* (Mendelssohn), *Tales of Hoffmann* (Offenbach), *Così fan Tutte* (Mozart), *Manon* (Massenet), *The Threepenny Opera* (Kurt Weill), and Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*.

Fiona Linnane



Fiona Linnane is a composer based in the West of Ireland. She is director of Limerick New Music Ensemble and represented by the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin. Linnane's current compositional practice centres around use of text and includes opera, art song and featuring spoken word. Recent projects include: *Banned* – an opera exploring the censorship of Irish writer Kate O'Brien in the mid 20th century (Opera Workshop, funded by Arts Council of Ireland Opera Projects Strand 1); *Cogarnach* – A Building as Witness project at Crawford Art Gallery Cork with soprano Triona Walsh and the Youth ensembles of the Cork ETB School of Music; *Mrs Cousins (née Gillespie)* – Commissioned by Roscommon County Council for the King House Piano Commission 2023 and *Would Be Poetess* – Commissioned by violinist Larissa

O'Grady funded by ACI Commissions Award. She was awarded Arts Council of Ireland Bursaries in 2020 and 2022 and an Agility Award in 2021.

In 2021 Linnane was commissioned to compose the opera *No.2 Pery Square* — a site responsive work devised in collaboration with, and commissioned by, the Limerick-based opera production company Opera Workshop (ACI Opera Commissions 2020). In 2024 she was commissioned by Opera Workshop again, to research an opera exploring the censorship of Irish writer Kate O'Brien with the working title of *Banned* (ACI Opera Projects Strand 1 2023). The work of Kate O'Brien has been a feature of Linnane's work since 2011 when she began composing her song cycle *Songs from Kate O'Brien*. The cycle consists of 12 songs – four for soprano, four for contralto and four for baritone – based on poems by Mary Coll depicting characters from O'Brien's novels at pivotal moments in their development. The Limerick City and County Council awarded her with Individual Arts Bursaries in 2018 and 2019 for work in opera and art song, including the addition of the four songs for soprano to the Kate O'Brien cycle.

Work for choir includes *Bog Wish* and *Peat* based on poems by Eileen Casey (2022); *Clean Air* – a setting of a speech by young climate activist Saoirse Exton (supported by an Arts Council of Ireland Music Bursary in 2022) and *Flutter fossil fox* – a collection of 2 part choral works for children's choir (2013) published by Cailino Publishers.

Eleanor O'Brien



Eleanor O'Brien is a theatre and film actress from Limerick, Ireland. She recently filmed the role Shelia O'Neill in 'The Last Right' alongside Colm Meaney, written and directed by Aoife Crehan for Deadpan Pictures. Her television credits include playing Harmony Collins in Ireland's favourite soap opera 'Fair City'. Other achievements include Best Irish Short at Galway Film Festival 2018 for the Film *Brestfriends* where she played supporting role Edel. Theatre awards include Limerick Fringe Emerging artists Award in 2017 for 'Play on Words' written by Niall Carmody which received 4 stars from the Scotsman in Edinburgh Fringe. Eleanor plays the lead role Emily Blast in new series 'Blasts from the Past' for RTÉ Young People's Dept directed by Hugh Farley for Firebrand Productions and has appeared in three Lime Tree Theatre pantomimes, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Aladdin* and *Rapunzel*. She is a passionate artist always looking to collaborate with other creative artists in the industry who share my passion and love for the arts.