

# SOLE PURPOSE PRODUCTIONS

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 17 – MARCH 18



# Chairperson's Welcome & Overview

Sole Purpose Productions celebrated its 21st anniversary in 2018 and what a celebration it was! Our Artistic Director has worked tirelessly and led the company through another successful year, despite the increased strain placed on the theatre and performance industry as a whole.

I was honoured to take over the role of Chairperson in 2017/18 from Jim Doherty, who has stayed on the Board in the capacity of Secretary. With our new Board being in operation for a year we have been extremely impressed by the work that has been produced.

The creative output has included Patricia visiting and facilitating workshops in Seattle in May/June 2017 designed to help young people address depression and suicide. This followed a successful Irish national tour of *Blinkered*, which the students of Roosevelt High School, Seattle attended when they were on a school trip to Derry in 2016.

*Every Move You Make* had a successful tour of local schools and community centres. This work has proved urgent and timely in the wake of the **#MeToo** movement, whose origins began in October 2017. If anything it has showed us the significance of the message being produced in the current discussions of gender politics and equality.

The Sole Roots Theatre Lab Project in November 2017 was a brilliant showcase for those in the community who are underrepresented. There was laughter, sadness, tears and passion brought to the stage by people with disabilities and/or a mental health condition. The ten week project developed new writing which was presented at a Rehearsed Reading event on 15th November to a very responsive audience.

February 2018 saw the 21 Years Festival of Theatre for Social Change which was filled with riveting content celebrating the

work of Sole Purpose as well as showcasing theatre companies with a similar ethos and passion. This was a hugely successful event that has created, and cemented, longstanding creative relationships.

Following on from the successful Sharek Project and Marhaba Project working with Syrian refugees in 2016/17, Patricia is continuing and developing this relationship with the Syrian community by acknowledging the two year anniversary of refugees arriving in Northern Ireland with The Sadaakah - Friendship Day Project later this year.

2018 represents 100 years of women's right to vote, 50 years of the Civil Rights Movement and 21 years of Sole Purpose. Thank you to all our funders, partners and supporters who have contributed to the success of 2017/18.

**Dr Lisa Fitzpatrick, Chairperson**



***Sole Purpose Productions is a multi award winning professional theatre company that exists to use imagination to investigate and illuminate social and public issues. We aim to produce new theatre that contributes to social change, explores the dynamics of human relationships and promotes good relations. We bring art to the heart of the social, economic and creative life of communities locally, nationally and internationally.***

# Artistic Director's Reflections on 21 Years

It is with great pride that we complete 21 years of Sole Purpose Productions which was celebrated in our Festival of Theatre for Social Change in February 2018. I was thrilled to have the pleasure of hosting some fantastic theatre companies including Red Ladder Theatre Company, Smashing Times and Collective Encounters. These companies have a common denominator with us – to use the imagination to investigate and illuminate social and public issues.

It is without question that the support and collaboration Sole Purpose has received over the years from those in the creative industries; social activists; audience members; partner organisations; board members; sponsors and funders - has contributed hugely to the position that we are in today. It is thanks to them that we have come this far. The arts can have a meaningful social impact on communities and individuals and the scope of our outreach has ranged from small rural community centres in Northern Ireland and Ireland to work in San Francisco, New York and Seattle. No matter the size of the audience our goal has always been clear: to offer the stage to those whose story has not yet been told and to investigate the society we live in.

The work is wide and varied, it has reached many audiences and touched many people in many ways. It has raised awareness of issues that affect people's lives, issues that are important and relevant. I would like to thank all the people and organisations that have supported our work over the past 21 years. Thank you to Derry City and Strabane District Council who have been a constant supporter of our work and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland who have been our core funders for 20 years. Thank you to our Board of Directors for their endless support. Thank you to all the partner organisations, too many to name, that have worked with us and made the work possible. Thank you to all the actors, writers, technicians and designers who have brought their creative insight and professionalism to the work. And a huge thank you to the audiences that come to see our work and the people that take part in our workshops, we couldn't do it without you.

**Patricia Byrne, Artistic Director.**



*"Sole Purpose Productions has earned an almost peerless reputation in Northern Ireland over the last 21 years for producing dynamic and challenging theatre that is unafraid to confront the most challenging issues of our times. Domestic violence, abuse of the elderly, addiction, human trafficking, gender politics, mental health - all heavyweight material that has been tackled with the deftest of touches. Theirs is the kind of art that helps us to understand the world around us, asks us to walk in another person's shoes, compels us to confront our prejudices and preconceptions. This is theatre with a strong sense of social responsibility, which resonates beyond mainstream theatre audiences to the heart of the local community. As principal funder for the past two decades, the Arts Council is proud to be associated with Sole Purpose's achievement and we welcome this opportunity to join them in celebrating 21 years of creating high-quality, socially-engaged, professional theatre."*

**Roisín McDonough, Chief Executive,  
Arts Council of Northern Ireland**





# Staff & Board Biographies



## **Patricia Byrne - Artistic Director and Co-Founder**

Artistic Director and Co-Founder  
Patricia is a producer, director and writer. She has written seven plays for the company including the most recent *Blinkered* which toured Ireland in early 2017 to great acclaim. She has produced and managed many productions which have toured extensively throughout Ireland and the UK, and have been staged in the USA.



## **Caoimhe Mc Nulty - Administrator and Festival Co-ordinator**

Caoimhe is a Stage and Production Manager working on various stage productions and tours, festivals, TV/shorts productions and arts administration since returning to Derry in 2013 for the UK City of Culture. She has been a receiver of the Technical Theatre Bursary in Production Management from Theatre NI. She has also been on the Board of Foyle Pride Festival for the past 3 years.



## **Jim Doherty - Secretary**

Jim has a background in 'live' arts and worked at the ICA in London for 12 years. He has worked with Foyle Pride and the Foyle Film Festival, and coordinated the political and historical programme for the Gasyard Feile until 2012.



## **Dr Lisa Fitzpatrick - Chairperson**

Lisa is a Senior Lecturer in Drama at Ulster University at Magee, and a founding member of the Irish Society for Theatre Research. Her research focuses on violence in performance, women's writing, and feminism in Ireland. Her current work is on the performance of rape on stage. She teaches Irish Theatre and North American Theatre.



## **Ciara O'Connell - Vice Chair**

Ciara is a senior solicitor at the firm of Caldwell & Robinson wherein she is head of Civil Litigation. Ciara obtained her degree in Law and Politics at the Ulster University and completed her legal training at the College of Law in Chester. Ciara practised as a Solicitor in England at international firm, Hill Dickinson LLP for a number of years before seeking dual qualification and returning to her native Derry.



## **Maureen McLaughlin - Treasurer**

Maureen is an industrial professional with over 20 years' experience in manufacturing; most recently as Operations Director of Diamond Corrugated. Maureen has a wealth of experience in all aspects of running and managing successful organisations and has a strong sales and marketing focus. She has a lifelong passion for the arts.

## Blinkered in Seattle and New York

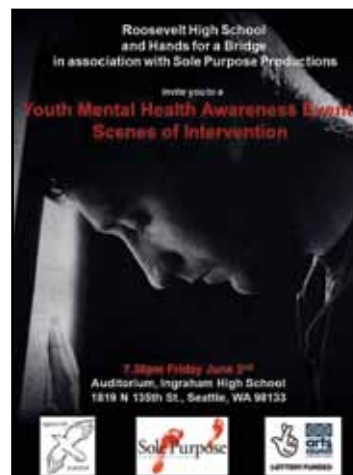
In 2016 a group of teachers and pupils from Roosevelt High School in Seattle saw a performance of *Blinkered* at The Derry Playhouse. They were on an exchange trip with Oakgrove Integrated College in Derry.

The performance had a profound impact on them. They had lost two of their peers to suicide in the previous year. After the performance the students and their teachers sat and talked about how they felt for the first time. When they returned to Seattle they began to develop student lead mental health programmes.

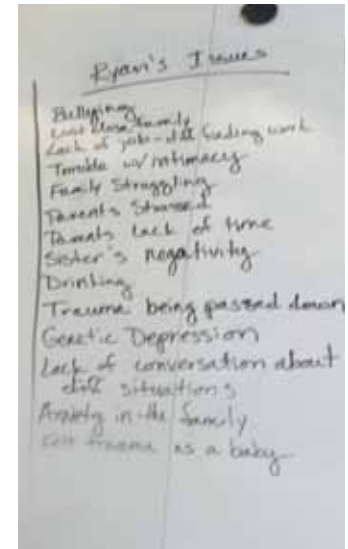
Patricia was invited to do workshops in Roosevelt High School in Seattle on the themes explored in *Blinkered*. In May/June 2017, with the support of an Arts Council of Northern Ireland Artist International Development Award, she spent four weeks

in Seattle and New York. She worked with 180 students in Roosevelt High School to explore the issues and develop 'Scenes of Intervention', which explored ways to talk about suicide and mental health. The scenes were presented at a Youth Mental Health Awareness event at Ingraham High School in Seattle.

The project also involved meeting with groups in Seattle and New York who may be interested in developing work with the production of *Blinkered*. These were very productive meetings, Sole Purpose will be presenting *Blinkered* at Origin Theatre's 1st Irish Festival in New York in January 2019, in partnership with the New York Irish Centre and the New York Department of Education.



*"The actors/students and the audience were very engaged in the event. It was very impressive that the students were so comfortable and willing to take on such heavy subject matter and were able to perform that material on stage. I think the project was extremely important and very impactful for all involved."* **Nancy Schubb, Mental Health Therapist, Neighborcare Health, Seattle**



*"It taught me how to deal with domestic abuse; the play was very informative showing the signs and impact that domestic violence can have on a person. It was also funny and entertaining as well as frightening."* **Pupil**

*"From a professional view point it was great for me to see first-hand how drama can be used in such a powerful way to get those really strong messages across to our young people."*  
**Fiona Crossan NSPCC**





# Every Move You Make



We received a request from Breffni Integrated at the Realtog Centre in Cavan for a drama piece which deals with abusive relationships. We have a long history of working with Breffni Integrated, they have booked many of our productions.

We had produced *Every Move You Make* by Patricia Byrne in 2012, when it toured locally. It was performed by Gemma Walker and directed by Nicky Harley. This play explores abusive relationships among



young people. It was written in consultation with NSPCC, Youth Action NI and pupils at Oakgrove Integrated College.

In response to this request we did a remount of *Every Move You Make* in October 2017. It was superbly performed by Aoibh Johnson, a recent graduate of Theatre Studies at Ulster University at Magee.

The play tells the story of Jenni, who is approaching her 16th birthday. Her new boyfriend,



Jamie, will be at her party. He is so nice, he is interested in everything she does, but things take a turn and Jenni isn't so sure anymore.

The play was performed at the Realtog Centre in Cavan, Thornhill College in Derry and St Mary's College in Limavady. Each performance was followed by a Q+A with the actor and writer and representatives from Tearmann DVS, NSPCC and Foyle Women's Aid.



With the birth and development of the **#metoo** movement coinciding with the timing of this production, the messages being portrayed are more pertinent than ever. The post show Q&A sessions started an important conversation for the youth that attended, as well as allowed an avenue for them to speak confidently about their own experiences in a safe environment.



*"The Sole Roots Rehearsed Readings really was a fantastic event. Really personal and powerful stuff. Congratulations to Sole Purpose and everyone involved."*

**Helen Ferguson,  
Western Trust HSCNI**

### ***Audience Responses...***

*"Powerful, honest, personal presentations with humour, sincerity and honesty – each one unique and very moving"*

*"Authentic, beautiful & poignant."*

# Sole Roots Theatre Lab Project & Rehearsed Readings

The Sole Roots Project was an 11 session programme running from September to November 2017, which generated writing for the stage from adults with barriers to access due to disability and / or a mental health condition. The material developed explored themes of disability and mental health from the participants' own experiences. The project also supported skills development, health and wellbeing, communication skills, confidence and recovery through creative expression.

The new scripts were presented at a Rehearsed Reading event on 15th November in The Playhouse. It was a great evening with some very poignant and thought provoking writing. Eight scripts were developed which covered subjects such as: the experience of a deaf child being left out of conversations in 'I'll Tell You Later'; going to see a psychiatrist who isn't listening

in 'The Appointment'; a verbally abusive father in 'Chocolate'; a gambling addiction in 'The Running Man'; a story about depression in 'What Happened?'; experiences of being in an asylum in 'Psykotiky' and a monologue entitled 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling' which is a stream of consciousness on the life and times of Ireland and was made into a short film.

The performers were a mix of participants and professional actors. The workshops were facilitated and directed by Shauna Kelpie, and coordinated by Patricia Byrne. The actors who were involved in the readings were John Mulkeen, Pat Lynch, Sorcha Shanahan, Muire McCallion and Abby Oliveira.

The Occupational Therapist at the Western Health and Social Services Trust (WHSST), Helen Ferguson, and the Access and Inclusion Officer at Derry City



and Strabane District Council, Louise Boyce, were consulted and endorsed this project. Interested participants from the WHSST identifying with mental health difficulties were consulted

in shaping and establishing the need for this project. It was supported by the Santander Foundation Discovery Grant. The event was BSL and ISL interpreted.

# Sole Purpose 21 Years Festival of Theatre for Social Change

In 2018 Sole Purpose Productions reached its 21st year! To celebrate this milestone we held the Sole Purpose 21 Years Festival of Theatre for Social Change, the first of its kind in Ireland, North or South. The festival coincided with the annual United Nations World Day of Social Justice on 20th February. To celebrate with us we brought together high profile theatre companies from across the UK and Ireland. These included Red Ladder Theatre Company, Collective Encounters and Smashing Times.

The festival opened with the launch of our 21 Years Exhibition which had on display a huge variety of material depicting all of our productions over the years including rehearsal photographs, set pieces, costumes and props, posters, script excerpts, artistic notes, music scores and programmes, and the first documents about the setting up of the company. Ahhh memories!

Guest theatre companies presented their work including: Leeds' based Red Ladder Theatre Company, who are celebrating 50 years this year, they presented *The Life and Soul* by Chris O'Connor, a short play about Jim, a young football mad lad who is the life of the party experiencing mental health issues, performed superbly by Richard Galloway, it moved and delighted audiences in local community centres and pubs; Sarah Thornton, the Artistic Director of Liverpool based Collective Encounters, facilitated a Masterclass on Theatre for Social Change, aimed at actors, facilitators & activists and exploring the challenges of making theatre for social change whilst considering the ethical processes; Dublin based Smashing Times Theatre Company finished their European tour by bringing *The Woman is Present: Women's Stories of WWII* by Deirdre Kinahan, Fiona Bawn Thompson, Mary Moynihan and Paul Kennedy, the play is a re-imagining of



the lives of women affected by war exploring the concepts of bravery, sacrifice, love, protest and the refusal to conform in a time of unspeakable horrors.

This performance was followed by a debate which asked the question 'Is there a future for theatre for social change?'. The debate was chaired by Dave Duggan. The panel included

Sarah Thornton (Collective Encounters), Patricia Byrne (Sole Purpose), Mary Moynihan (Smashing Times), Niamh Flanagan (Theatre NI) and Rod Dixon (Red Ladder). It was a lively debate which raised important questions on the necessity of theatre with a social impact for the health and well being of our communities and the society we live in.





We staged our own *Every Move You Make*, a play exploring abusive relationships among young people. It was beautifully performed by Aoibh Johnson, and followed by a Q+A with the writer, actor and Fiona Crossan (NSPCC) and John O'Hagan (Foyle Women's Aid).



The Sole Purpose Rehearsed Readings event looked back over our 21 years with actors reading scenes from some of the plays, representatives of partner organisations talking about the social impact of the work and academics who have written papers on the work of Sole Purpose.



*"We were delighted to be a part of the Sole Purpose Productions 21 year festival of Theatre For Social Change. In today's climate we feel that this type of event is not only desirable it is essential. It was a wonderful experience for the company to meet artists from all over the UK who are creating socially engaged theatre. We believe collaboration is the future for the arts and so to be given the opportunity to listen to and share ways of working and ideas was invaluable. We would like to thank Sole Purpose Productions for this experience and hope we will work together again."*

***Freda Manweiler, Company Manager  
Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company***



In the first half Dave Duggan (Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director 1997 - 2008) gave a presentation about the setting up of Sole Purpose and the early years. In the second half Patricia Byrne (Artistic Director) gave a presentation about the later years to the present day.

Guest speakers included: Dr Eva Urban (Senior Research Fellow, The Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University Belfast), Maureen Hetherington (Coordinator, The Junction), Jean Hegarty (Bloody Sunday Trust), Jonathan Burgess (Artistic Director of Blue Eagle Productions), Dr Lisa Fitzpatrick

(Senior Lecturer in Drama, Ulster University), Fadl Mustapha (Coordinator Refugee Support Donegal County Council), Eimear Willis (Health and Wellbeing Officer The Rainbow Project), Jennifer Clifford (Affirm NI), Greta McTague (Head of Drama, St Cecilia's College) and John McQuaide (Co-Ordinator, HNC Health and Social Care, North West Regional College). The readers were John Mulkeen, Sorcha Shanahan, Micheal Johnston, Glen Dagda and Jennifer Clifford.

This was a very informative and entertaining evening which showed the magnitude of the work of Sole Purpose over the 21

years, the diverse and important social issues we have dealt with and the vast expanse of partner organisations that we have developed work with. The social impact of the work was evident in the testimonies given by the partner organisations and the academics.

Rod Dixon, Artistic Director of Red Ladder, facilitated a Special Theatre Lab. We have been running Theatre Labs for 18 years and couldn't have a festival without one! In this Theatre Lab participants came with script extracts dealing with themes of social change. The scripts were acted out and workshopped by local professional actors John Mulkeen, Dessie Gallagher,

Muire McCallion, Gemma Walker and Red Ladder actor Richard Galloway. It was a truly creative day and the writers left buzzing with new ideas for development.

On the final night we had the closing party at the legenderry Sandinos Bar, beautifully decorated by Helen Quigley, where we let our hair down and moved to the tunes of Lost Soul Presents!

We are very grateful to our festival supporters: Derry City and Strabane District Council, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Theatre NI, People Before Profit, Void and Foyle Pride Festival.

*"It was a great honour to be invited to bring our one man show *The Life and Soul to the Sole Purpose* 21 Years Festival. We were delighted by the absolutely brilliant tour of community venues across Derry Londonderry. The festival provided a perfect platform for theatre makers who aspire to making provocative theatre to share their practice and platform their work."*

**Rod Dixon, Artistic Director,  
Red Ladder Theatre Company**

*"The festival was excellent. It was a wonderful opportunity to come together with like minded practitioners and explore ideas. In terms of profile for *Collective Encounters* it was a great opportunity and we very much hope that some collaborations may arise from it."*

**Sarah Thornton, Artistic Director,  
Collective Encounters**

*"From the start I was gripped by the actors performance. He also had great interaction with the audience. Altogether brilliant." -*

***The Life & Soul audience member***







# Work April 2017 - March 2018

## May/June 2017

Patricia Byrne in Roosevelt High School, Seattle with *Blinkered* Workshops  
Performance of *Scenes of Intervention* in Ingraham High School, Seattle  
Development meetings in Seattle and New York

## September - November 2017

Sole Roots Theatre Lab Project and Rehearsed Readings at The Derry Playhouse

## October 2017

*Every Move You Make:*  
The Realtog Centre Cavan  
Thornhill College Derry  
St Mary's High school Limavady

## February 2018

Sole Purpose 21 Years Festival of Theatre for Social Change  
Sole Purpose 21 Years Exhibition  
Red Ladder Theatre Company: The Life and Soul  
Collective Encounters Theatre for Social Change Workshop  
Sole Purpose 21 Years Rehearsed Readings  
Festival Theatre Lab with Rod Dixon  
Smashing Times Theatre Company: The Woman is Present: Women's Stories  
WWII  
Debate: Theatre for Social Change

Photography by Martin McKeown and Gav Connolly

## Past Productions

### By Patricia Byrne

*Blinkered*  
Every Move You Make  
A Wee Taste  
Don't Say A Word  
See No Evil  
Camden Tales  
Under The Carpet

### By Dave Duggan

Riders to the Road  
AH6905  
The Recruiting Office  
Scenes from an Inquiry  
Waiting.....  
Without the Walls  
The Shopper and the Boy

### By other writers

The House by Edie Shillue  
Life and Love: Lesbian Style by Hilary McCollum  
Pits and Perverts by Micheal Kerrigan, script developed by Patricia Byrne  
The Maidens' City: A Herstory of the Walled City by Anne Crilly  
Galatea by Lawrence Aronovitch  
Clouds on a Mountain Road by Orna Akad  
Did You Come by Boat? By Elly Omondi Odhiambo and Patricia Byrne  
The Shadowmen by Debbie Caulfield and Rea Curran



# We are truly grateful to our funders, supporters, sponsors and partners:

Our Core funders: Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Our Programme Funders:

Derry City & Strabane District Council Community Festival Fund

ACNI Artist International Development Fund

ACNI Development Fund

Santander Foundation Discovery Grant  
Theatre NI

Sponsors:

Void Gallery

People Before Profit

Foyle Pride Festival

Sandinos Cafe Bar

E+I Engineering

Mr and Mrs Eamon Tierney

Our partners this year:

Red Ladder Theatre Company

Collective Encounters

Smashing Times Theatre and Film Company

Breifni Intergrated Ltd

Hands for a Bridge Programme

Roosevelt High School

Foyle Community Work Programme

The Derry Playhouse

## We could be thanking you too!

As a non profit organisation and a charity, Sole Purpose Productions depends on grants, sponsorship and donations to make our work possible. If you would like to support us in our work, either through in-kind sponsorship which could include providing transport or accommodation for tours, or by direct financial help, we would be delighted to have a chat about how we can make that happen!

Call us on 028 7127 9918 or  
email [solepurpose@mac.com](mailto:solepurpose@mac.com)

**support us**



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Financial statements are available on request.

