

Sole Purpose Productions

A young man with light brown hair and blue eyes is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He has a surprised or excited expression on his face. He is wearing a brown knit beanie and a red and black plaid shirt over a grey t-shirt. The background is blurred, showing a blue wall on the left and a dark, indistinct shape on the right.

Annual Report

April 15 - March 16



Sole Purpose Productions
is a 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.

Welcome to Sole Purpose Productions' annual report for 2015 – 2016. It has been yet another incredibly busy year for this small and dedicated organisation. One of the highlights of this year's programme was *Blinkered*, by Patricia Byrne. The subject of mental health and suicide is not an easy one to approach but this production managed to deal with it in such a sensitive and moving way. Patricia's research into the topic was thorough and respectful and the writing and acting provoked a highly emotional response from audiences. As did another emotive production, *The House* by Edie Shillue, produced in association with No More Traffik, looking at the distressing issue of human trafficking and how local communities can work to tackle it.

Life and Love: Lesbian Style by Hilary McCollum was back for another rip roaring performance at Foyle Pride and I was delighted to see *For The Love of Comrades* (aka *Pits and Perverts*) by Micheál Kerrigan with script developed by Patricia Byrne heading to San Francisco, what an achievement for this stand out play.

Throughout the year, Sole Purpose has continued to provide support to new and developing writers through the Theatre Lab programme which this year has included talented facilitators such as Paula McFetridge, Zoe Seaton, Lawrence Aronovitch and Lisa Fitzpatrick.

Well done to Patricia and Nicola, and the actors and production teams who have worked so hard to produce a programme of work that is consistently of such a high standard and which is meaningful and relevant to today's society. Thank you to the funders who make the work possible and to my fellow board members, Jim Doherty and Pauline McClenaghan, for their support and assistance throughout this year.

Maoliosa Boyle, Chairperson



Patricia Byrne is Artistic Director of Sole Purpose. She is a producer, director, writer and performer. She has written seven plays for the company including *Don't Say A Word* which was nominated for an Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award. She has produced and managed many productions which have toured extensively throughout Ireland and the UK.

Nicola Schnurr is the Administrator for Sole Purpose. She has been working with Arts organisations in Edinburgh and in Derry Londonderry for over 20 years and has a wealth of experience in all aspects of Arts Management.



Maoliosa Boyle is the Chairperson of Sole Purpose and Director of the Void Gallery. As well as managing the success that is Void, she has also exhibited her own work extensively in Ireland and further afield and has created stage installations for contemporary dance and theatre productions.



Jim Doherty is Vice Chairperson for Sole Purpose. He has a background in 'live' arts and worked at the ICA 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 Pauline McClenaghan is Treasurer of Sole Purpose and the Executive Director of the Lifestart Foundation. Her professional interests include social inclusion and education. She is very interested in how theatre can address social issues.





The House

written by Edie Shillue

produced and directed by Patricia Byrne

"The curtains are always drawn and they twitch every day at about noon. I can see a girl's face and she's looking out like she wants to know where the hell she is. I've never seen a face look so lost."

An old house on a city street appears to be abandoned, but is in fact lived in by a group of women, not from here. No one in the area notices the new occupants. Marie, a community volunteer, watches a young woman who stands staring out one window at the same time each day. Can Marie get anyone to listen to her worries about what is going on in the house?

Presented by Sole Purpose Productions, in association with No More Traffik, **The House** is a short piece that looks at the issue of human trafficking which toured to community venues in May 2015. Written by Edie Shillue and produced/directed by Patricia Byrne, each performance was followed by an interactive theatre workshop and discussion facilitated by Patricia and Edie with members of No More Traffik. The play was first performed in March 2014 as a rehearsed reading and, accompanied by the workshop, proved to be an enlightening, invigorating and informative event which explored the actions we could take to tackle human trafficking.

The House was performed by Carmel McCafferty, Nicky Harley, Abby Oliveira, Carleen Melaugh and Asya Zuyeva. The tour was made possible by funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Small Grants Programme. It was performed in The Gasyard Centre, The Women's Centre in Derry, Strathfoyle Library, Old Library Trust Creggan, The Derry Playhouse, Pilots Row Community Centre, Clooney Hall Centre, St Columb's Park House, Eglinton Community Centre, Shaftesbury Community Centre in Belfast, The Barron Hall in Glengormley and the Regional Cultural Centre in Letterkenny.

"Thought provoking and accurate portrayal of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. The workshop following was beneficial to all who participated and helped clear up many of the myths that exist around this subject and its criminality."

Inspector Terrence McKenna PSNI

*"The performance and workshop of **The House** by Edie Shillue was fantastic today at Shaftesbury Community and Recreation Centre. Thank you for answering so many of our questions about human trafficking"*

AnnMarie White, Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group

"What a delivery! So thought provoking although I found it quite disturbing at times. The message and impact were enormous"

Audience feedback



"Short, punchy, well acted play that got to the heart of a very distressing issue backed up by workshop and discussion that enabled deeper insights of a complex situation"

Audience feedback

Thanks to Donna McFeely, Emma Johnston, Helen Henderson and Gemma Brown from No More Traffik for all their support on the tour of **The House**.



Blinkered

written by Patricia Byrne
directed by Shauna Kelpie

"Do you ever feel alone? Like really alone? Like nobody gets you?"

Behind the music, the closed door, inside the mind of a young man, there is a darkness, a heaviness that will not go away. This is a story about Ryan. You may not know him but you may know someone like him.

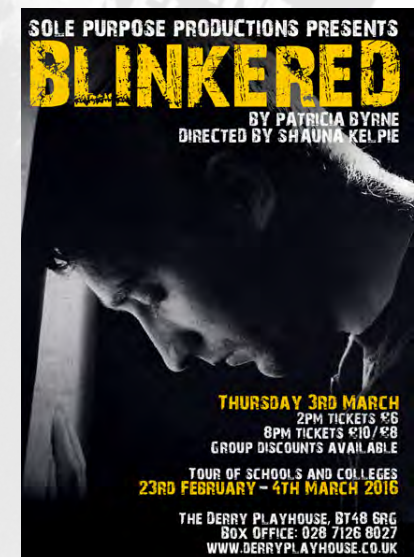
Blinkered is a new production which toured in February/March 2016. Written and produced by Patricia Byrne and directed by Shauna Kelpie, it is an insightful and poignant play exploring issues around depression and suicide in young people. It was developed in consultation with Siobhan O'Neill, Professor of Mental Health Sciences (Ulster University), Bridie Sheridan (Youthlife), Conor McCafferty (Zest NI) and Barry McGale (WHSCT). It toured to eight schools and colleges in the North West and The Derry Playhouse for twelve performances. The cast comprised of Patrick McBrearty, Katie Patton, Anne Gallagher and Pat Lynch.

Each performance was followed by an interactive theatre workshop with professional counsellors in attendance. During this workshop the audience were asked to identify scenarios during the play where someone could have done or said something to change the outcome. These workshops proved to be a powerful way to discuss very difficult issues. The Samaritans were present at all performances to provide information about their services. In addition, AWARE NI, a leading mental health and depression charity, offered follow up workshops for schools based on their Mood Matters programme.

The play and workshops took place in St Columb's College, Strabane Academy, St Josephs High School, Thornhill College, St Cecilia's College, Oakgrove College, St Mary's College Limavady and the North West Regional College.

"Blinkered was a powerful piece of theatre which encouraged students to reflect on the issue of suicide. The performance offers hope in the face of a serious problem affecting this community. It allowed people to explore, often for the first time, the possibility that ordinary people's simple interventions can make a difference which can literally save a life."

John Harkin, Vice Principal, Oakgrove Integrated College



A school group on an exchange trip to Derry from Roosevelt High School in Seattle were invited to a performance in The Playhouse. One of their school friends had died by suicide the previous year. The play had a profound effect on them. Anita Utke, a teacher with the school, commented....

*"Words cannot describe the impact that **Blinkered** had on me. As someone who rarely ever cries, I felt myself struggling to hold myself together. I witnessed the raw, tangible emotions and the powerful realism of a play that hit far too close to home. We are now hoping to use what we saw and learned from your play and workshop and bring it to our own school in the hopes of spreading awareness and dialogue."*

Patricia Byrne was invited to go to Roosevelt High School in Seattle and conduct workshops around the issues raised in **Blinkered** and to connect with other venues and organisations that would be interested in developing this work. The Northern Ireland Bureau in New York are also interested in promoting this production in the USA. Patricia will travel to Seattle and New York in May/June 2017 to develop these international links with the support of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Artist International Development Fund. This is a great opportunity to be able to raise the

*"**Blinkered** is an excellent reflection of the challenges young adults face and the darkness they experience and a very powerful display of the guilt experienced by family members"*

Phil Hughes, Assistant Director of Mental Health,



"I learned to open up about your feelings more, especially if you suffer from mental health issues like myself."

Student

"It was very real. It was also incredibly emotional and moving."

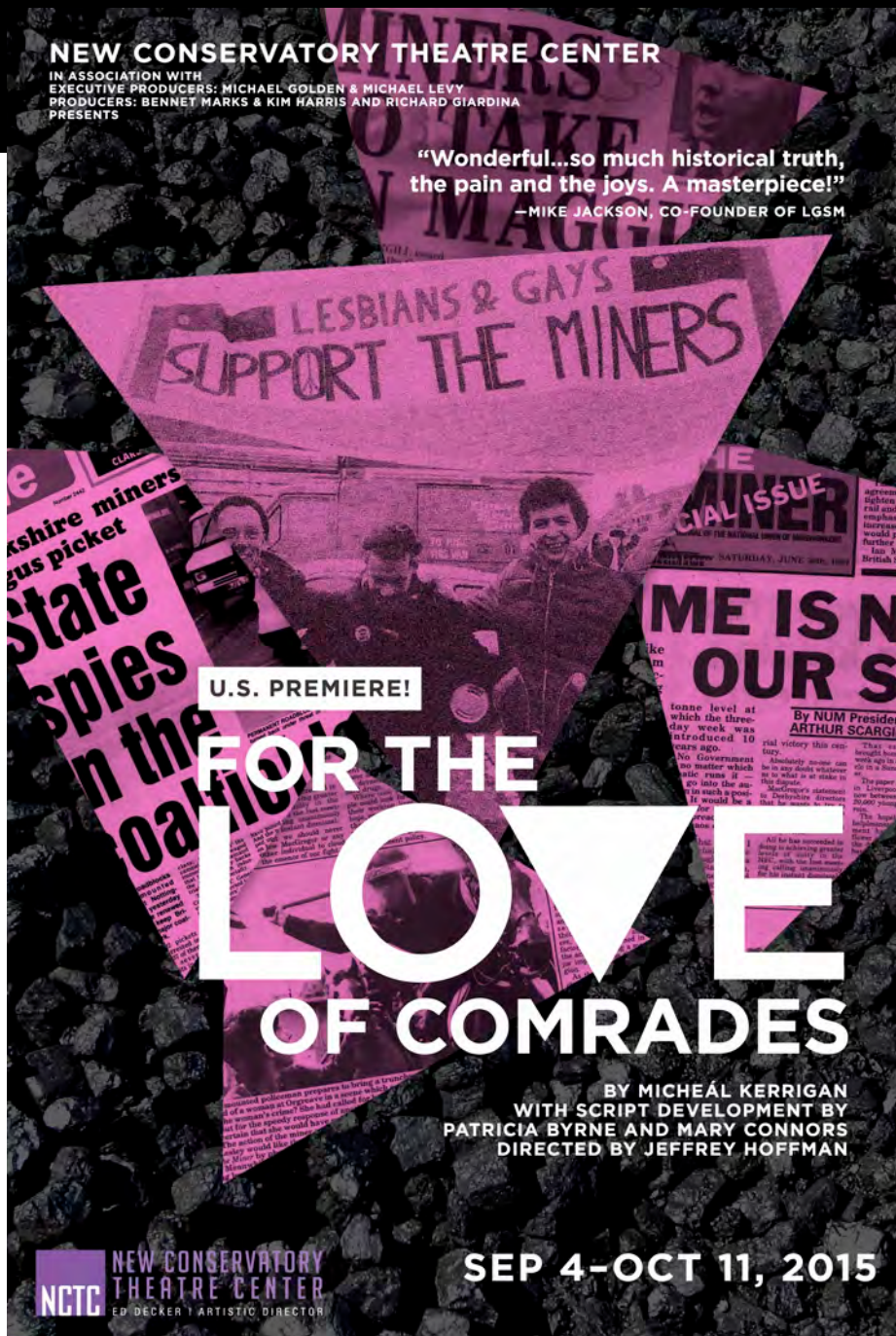
Student

"I learned that taking your own life may not always be the solution no matter how much you are hurting."

Student

"It was so realistic, it made me think about the importance of life."

Student



For The Love of Comrades

by Micheál Kerrigan, script developed by Patricia Byrne

When *Pits and Perverts* was performed in The Derry Playhouse in August 2014, Richard Giardina was in the audience. He was on holiday in Ireland from San Francisco where he is on the Board of the New Conservatory Theatre Centre (NCTC). He was so inspired by what he saw that on his return to San Francisco he spoke to Ed Decker, Artistic Director of the NCTC and recommended he bring the play there for their 2015 Autumn programme. As a result, *For The Love of Comrades* opened their Autumn season where it ran for five weeks from 4th September 2015. The name of the play was changed from *Pits and Perverts* because the word 'pits' would not transfer well to the USA as it is not a recognised works for 'mines'.

Patricia Byrne and Micheál Kerrigan travelled to San Francisco for the opening night supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Travel Awards Scheme. They attended dress rehearsals and previews and were invited to be special guests at a post show Q&A event, after a sold out performance. The entire run was highly successful with excellent reactions from the audiences and glowing reviews.

Jim Doherty, Board member of Sole Purpose and members of Foyle Pride also travelled to San Francisco to join in the celebrations.

"It was a pleasure indeed to host Micheál Kerrigan and Patricia Byrne at the New Conservatory Theatre Centre for the US premiere of *For The Love of Comrades*. The opportunity to have their guidance on the play as we worked through the previews in San Francisco was invaluable and has lent an extra measure of authenticity to the experience for our audiences. The opening night of the play was sensational and the production continues to play to packed houses. This has been a most memorable and highly successful collaboration."

Ed Decker, New Conservatory Theatre Centre

"*For The Love of Comrades* is an enthralling production with a splendid cast and perceptive direction by Jeffrey Hoffman. First-time playwright Micheál Kerrigan, with script developed by Patricia Byrne, has written a beautiful play with convincing dialogue between the gay persons and the straight coal miners. This should play in other gay theatres in this country and possibly Off-Broadway."

Richard Conneme, Talkin' Broadway, Regional News and Reviews

"*For the Love of Comrades* is a gift to any audience that witnesses this slice of history on the New Conservatory stage. Courage, caring and camaraderie lead everyday people - gay and straight, working class small town blokes and educated city dwellers - to break down invisible but very real barriers and to build solid bridges between two disparate communities that remain solid and strong, even until this day."

Theatre Eddy's



Life and Love: Lesbian Style

by Hilary McCollum

produced and directed by Patricia Byrne

Life and Love: Lesbian Style by Hilary McCollum was performed in The Derry Playhouse on the 28th August 2015 as part of the Foyle Pride Programme. Hilary developed the piece through the Sole Purpose LGBT Theatre Lab programme. It was first performed as a rehearsed reading in August 2013. Since then, this dynamic piece has gone from strength to strength. Drawing on interviews with lesbian and bi women as well as the writer's own life, the play is about the lives and loves of women who love women – ranging from romance to role models, coming out to breaking up, bereavement to bejazzling. Produced and directed by Patricia Byrne, *Life and Love: Lesbian Style* was performed at the International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival in May 2014 where it won the Eva Gore Booth Award for Best Female Performance at the Festival Gala evening, as well as being nominated for the Oscar Wilde award for Best New Writing. In July 2014, there was a sell-out performance at the Black Box Belfast followed by another performance as part of the WOW Festival in The Derry Playhouse in November. We were delighted to remount the production in 2015 with the original cast members - Abby Oliveira, Claire Dooher, Mel Bradley and Michelle Wiggins - as part of the vibrant Foyle Pride Programme.



"This play from Derry does exactly what it says on the tin. It's about Lesbians and it has style. Sole Purpose Productions presents verbatim theatre with the voices, tears, laughter and integrity of the interviewed women, sensitively collated by writer Hilary McCollum into a captivating weave of women's loves today. This is a powerful diverse ensemble of gutsy women whose respectful empathy for their diverse subjects shines through in what is a celebratory revelation of lesbian life and love."

Review from The International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival

Paris on the Foyle

Written and performed by Debbie Caulfield

Produced and directed by Patricia Byrne

Suzanne and Dan are storytellers with a unique perspective. They are watchers over Lough Foyle, border people in a border region. They watch and store memories for later, for fire time. The border shifts along on the tides, which rush past Magilligan Point at the end of the the Lough, a red map line on moving water.

Paris on the Foyle is a one woman show that blends humour, poetry and music into stories from the end of the Lough. First performed in 2005, the play was revived in 2015 to support and encourage the members of Healthy Ageing Network in Derry (HAND) to explore their creativity and value their experiences and memories.

Paris on the Foyle was performed in Eglinton Community Hall on three evenings from 10th December to 12th December. The production was supported by The Healthy Ageing Network in Derry, Rural Area Partnership in Derry and The Honourable The Irish Society.

Audience responses:

"A really amazing production, with all the different stories and traditions and people woven together into a wonderful tapestry."

"Brilliant! Great story. Beautifully told. I enjoyed every minute."





Theatre Lab

Theatre Lab continues to go from strength to strength, year on year, since it began in 2000. It is a scriptwriting workshop where writers of all levels can bring pieces they are working on and see them 'stood up' by professional actors. The facilitators are drama practitioners who give feedback and suggestions which help the writers move forward with their work.

This year we held two open labs and two for people writing on LGBT themes. The first open lab was held on 13th June and was facilitated by Zoe Seaton, Artistic Director of Big Telly Theatre Company and Patricia Byrne. Four writers attended and four professional actors worked on the script. Zoe utilised her unique and quirky style to bring the pieces to life, the participants benefitted enormously. The second open lab was held on 21st November and was facilitated by Paula McFetridge, Artistic Director with Kabosh Theatre Company and Patricia Byrne. Four writers attended and they gained invaluable insight into their work.

Two LGBT Theatre Labs were held in July 2015 and March 2016. The LGBT Lab offers a safe space for people working on LGBT themes to explore their ideas freely. At the lab in July we were delighted to be joined by guest facilitator Lawrence Aronovitch. We first worked with Canadian writer Lawrence in 2011 when we produced his play, *Galatea*. Four writers submitted work for this lab and four people came along to try out acting. The second LGBT lab took place on 13th March 2016 and was facilitated by Patricia Byrne and Lisa Fitzpatrick, Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of Ulster at Magee. There were five writers in attendance at this lab with a variety of scripts.

"I came armed with a script that was little more than a jumping-off point. In the hands of Zoe and the talented actors one of my scenes in particular came to life. Zoe unlocked the play for me, gave me a feel for the strength and weaknesses of my characters and made me think differently of writing for theatre. This has inspired me to write more."

Kathryn Baird

"Without question the July 2015 Theatre Lab was a resounding success, bringing together members of the local LGBT community who presented their works in progress on a variety of themes. Over and above the artistic value of their work, the emotional impact of the participants' stories moved me deeply, and it was very clear to me the value of providing a forum that enables these voices to be heard."

Lawrence Aronovitch, writer and guest facilitator.

"The lab gave me the confidence to continue writing. I found the critical evaluation extremely useful as I was not sure where to go with my first draft. Paula's feedback was insightful and delivered practical advice. I found the feedback from the actors and the other writers very, very helpful. I am working on my play with a new energy."

Michelle Moloney

Arabic language and culture with Sole Purpose Productions!

تَعَلَّم اللغة العربية مع "سول بربس" للإنتاج

In early March 2016, Sole Purpose began a series of workshops for all those who want to welcome refugees to our city and for theatre makers interested in working with refugees. The workshops offered tuition in conversational Arabic and learning about Arabic culture. The Beginners Spoken Arabic workshops ran from Wednesday 16th March for eight weeks.

The workshops are facilitated by Jo Bird, a Co-operative Business Adviser and a member of Jewish Voice for Peace, she learned to speak Arabic on study tours of Palestine/Israel. She was assisted by Fadl Mustapha who is a Palestinian refugee from Lebanon and now lives in Donegal. Members of the recently arrived Syrian community also attended workshops to teach us some of their language and culture. In order to continue this project we applied to, and were successful in securing funding from, Derry City and Strabane District Council's Good Relations Fund. This funding will enable us to run another series of workshops in September 2016, which will include the production of multi-lingual resources.



Behind the scenes...

None of our work would be possible without our dedicated production team and crew members. These talented individuals work tirelessly to ensure every scene in each performance appears seamless. This year those people included:

Fiona McLaughlin, Stage Manager and Sound Technician. She has worked extensively with The Derry Playhouse and was the Stage Manager for the tour of *Blinkered*

Phil Rudduck, Set Designer and Artist who has worked on carnivals, film sets and theatre productions. He built the set for *Blinkered*

Helen Quigley, a highly talented Costume Designer and Set Dresser. She has worked on many productions with Sole Purpose and designed the costumes for *Blinkered*

Niall Cranney is the Technical Manager at An Grianan Theatre in Letterkenny. He has worked on many productions with Sole Purpose. He was the Lighting Designer for *Blinkered*

Mik O'Connell is a Sound Engineer and Producer. A Creative Media Trainer at The Nerve Centre, Mik worked on Sound Design on *Blinkered*

Noel Hamilton builds sets for the Millennium Forum and other local theatre companies. He built the set for *Blinkered* and many other handyman jobs

Adrian Wall is a Technician at An Grianan. He worked with Niall on lighting and sound for *Blinkered*

Shá Gillespie was the Chair of Foyle Pride for many years and works with the North West Carnival Initiative. She drove the van and worked on get ins for the tour of *The House*



Activity

April 2015 to March 2016

May 2015	The House by Edie Shillue at The Gasyard, The Women's Centre, Strathfoyle Library, Old Library Trust Creggan, The Derry Playhouse, Pilots Row Community Centre, St Columb's Park House, Eglinton Community Centre, Regional Cultural Centre Letterkenny, Shaftesbury Community Centre Belfast, Barron Hall Glengormley and Clooney Hall Waterside
June 2015	Theatre Lab with Patricia Byrne and Zoe Seaton
July 2015	LGBT Theatre Lab with Patricia Byrne and Lawrence Aronovitch
August 2015	Life and Love: Lesbian Style by Hilary McCollum at The Derry Playhouse for Foyle Pride
Sept/Oct 2015	For the Love of Comrades by Micheál Kerrigan script developed by Patricia Byrne at The New Conservatory Theatre Centre, San Francisco
November 2015	Theatre Lab with Patricia Byrne and Paula McFetridge
December 2015	Paris on the Foyle by Debbie Caulfield at Eglinton Community Centre
Feb/Mar 2016	Blinkered by Patricia Byrne at Strabane Academy, St Columb's College, St Josephs High School, Thornhill College, St Cecilia's College, Oakgrove Integrated College, St Mary's Limavady, The Derry Playhouse and the NWRC
March 2016	LGBT Theatre Lab with Patricia Byrne and Lisa Fitzpatrick Arabic Language and Culture Workshops facilitated by Jo Bird and Fadl Mustapha

Past Productions

By Patricia Byrne

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

By Dave Duggan

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

By other writers

Galatea
by Lawrence Aronovitch
The Maidens' City: A Herstory of the Walled City
by Anne Crilly
Clouds on a Mountain Road
by Orna Akad
Did You Come By Boat?
by Elly Omondi Odhiambo
& Patricia Byrne
The Shadowmen
by Debbie Caulfield & Réa Curran

Thank you

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Derry City and Strabane District Council
Brendan McMenamin , Oonagh McGillion and Sue Divin

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The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Derry City Council Legacy Programme,
The Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland, Derry City and Strabane District Council

The Playhouse

Thank you to all the staff at The Playhouse for their continued support

Development of Blinkered

Prof Siobhan O'Neill, Conor McCafferty, Bridie Sheridan, Wendy McCloskey, Barry McGale,
Cassie Riggs, Samaritans, Mel Bradley, Maura and Harry Sharkey, Rev David Latimer,
and Sophie Graber

Photography

Images throughout by Gavan Connolly , Patricia Byrne and Max Beer

As a non profit organisation and a charity, Sole Purpose Productions relies on grants, sponsorship and donations to make our work possible. If you would like to support us in this work, either through sponsorship or by direct financial help, please call us on 028 7127 9918 or email solepurpose@mac.com. Thank you!

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Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSratha Báin
Derry Cittie & Strábane
Districk Council

