

**AN ÁIT INA BHFUIL T'ANAM IS
ANN A THÓGAS DO CHOSA TÚ
(YOUR FEET WILL ALWAYS TAKE
YOU TO THE PLACE OF YOUR
SOUL): A STUDY OF
TRANSFORMATION THROUGH
INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING
IN A COUNTY KERRY
COMMUNITY**

Vol 11

ANNE KENNELLY MA Ed

EDUCATION DOCTORATE 2013

**AN ÁIT INA BHFUIL T'ANAM IS ANN A THÓGAS DO CHOSA
TÚ (YOUR FEET WILL ALWAYS TAKE YOU TO THE PLACE
OF YOUR SOUL): A STUDY OF TRANSFORMATION
THROUGH INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING IN A COUNTY
KERRY COMMUNITY**

Vol 11

ANNE KENNELLY MA Ed

EDUCATION DOCTORATE

**NUI Maynooth
Faculty of Social Sciences**

**Education Department
Head of Department: Dr Pádraig Hogan
Department of Adult and Community Education
Head of Department: Josephine Finn**

Supervisor: Dr Anne B Ryan

Month Year: August 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vol 11

	Pages
Chapter 11: Performance 6: ‘Cé tusa istigh?’ (Who are you, inside?)	1
Chapter 12: Further Illuminations	69
Chapter 13: My own personal illumination	87
Part 3 Reflections on Journey	95
Chapter 14: Reflecting on the Illuminations – Implications for Education	96
Epilogue: The eagle as a symbol for our times	115
Bibliography	118
Appendix 1 Dvd of performance of ‘Tabhair Dom do Lámh’ (Give me your Hand), programme notes, learner reflections, letters of response from the public and press cuttings.	125
Appendix 2 Dvd of performance of ‘Cos, cos eile.. (One step, then another step..), programme notes learner reflections and press cuttings.	140
Appendix 3 Dvd of performance of ‘Súile le Solas’ (Eyes with light), programme notes, learner reflections and press cuttings.	153
Appendix 4 Dvd and Cd of performance of ‘Deir mé, Deir tú... (I say, You say..), programme notes and press cutting.	171
Appendix 5 Dvd of performane of ‘Súil Isteach’ (Insight Out) programme notes and ‘Kerryman’ press cuttings.	176

Appendix 6	Dvd of mask-making process, dvd of performance of ‘Cé tusa istigh?(Who are you, inside?), programme notes, learner reflections and press cutting.	180
Appendix 7	Needs assessment of learners in ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project.	194
Appendix 8	Image: ‘Mandorla - Place of Transformation’.	197

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PERFORMANCE SIX: ‘CÉ TUSA ISTIGH?’ (WHO ARE YOU, INSIDE?)

INTRODUCTION

Meeting the self through mask

Following the evaluation of ‘Insight Out’, the fifth phase of the project, during which the learners invited the audience to become aware of what it means to be blind through experiencing parts of the presentation in the darkness, they began to talk about the parts of their ‘selves’ they had yet to explore and reveal to themselves and others. From these discussions, the idea of using masks to facilitate this process was born. The learners decided that this, the sixth phase of the project, would be called: ‘Cé tusa istigh?’ – Who are you, inside? and that the mask-making workshops would begin in September 2005.

Unfortunately, this was not to be. Work began on the building of disability bathrooms in the school, for the learners, in early September, with the result that the project could not begin until October as their classroom was being used to store building materials. This caused much upset as the learners became very frustrated and began to worry that their work would never go ahead. However, there was great joy on October 25th. when we met to discuss the group contract, the process, the type of masks (half or full) they would make, and any concerns they had regarding the process.

The Learners

The group, at this time, comprised eight learners, three of whom were blind from birth, aged 34 years, 33years, and 23 years, three men who became blind in middle years, aged 67 years, 55 years, and 60 years, one man who was visually impaired, aged 50 years, and another man, aged 40 years, who was at that time visually

impaired, but, progressively losing his sight. All, with the exception of two learners, aged 60 and 67 years, had other disabilities. Four learners had been part of the programme since the beginning, with three learners joining four years previously and one learner joining in 2005.

This chapter comprises three sections, illuminating: (A) Making the masks, (B) Living the experiences expressed in the masks through performance and (C) The archetypes and motifs of the personal mythmaking process in the performance of ‘Cé tusa istigh?’ (Who are you, inside?). A dvd of the mask-making process, a dvd of the performance, and a programme and press cutting relating to the performance are included in Appendix Six.

SECTION (A)

Making the Masks

Masks conceal and masks reveal. They replace one reality with another. Cooper (1978) states that in sacred plays, masks portray the supernatural powers and forces of the deities represented. In ordinary plays, “they symbolize the inner characteristics which may normally be hidden by the outward personality” (p. 104). In this, the sixth stage of the journey, the learners made and used masks to conceal the faces they present to the world each day, and to reveal aspects of their hidden selves within.

Week 1:

(A) In today’s sessions, the group drew up their contract, articulated and typed the aims of their project and decided on the type of mask they would make. We also discussed and explored the materials – plaster of Paris bandages, water and Vaseline, and made masks for Learner Five and Learner 1. At this stage, what Atkinson (1995) describes as the **first archetype** of **Separation**, was activated. Knill (2005) refers to this as entry to ‘devotional space’. The **first motif** of this **archetype**, **The Call to Adventure** is obvious as the group begins to experience what Atkinson (1995) describes as “a new phase of life unfolding”. Atkinson believes that at this point,

people “can either go with it or hold on to the familiar world” (p. 88) and the learners have chosen the former.

The Group Contract

Prior to beginning this stage of the project, I had begun training as an art therapist. I explained my position as a trainee art therapist to the learners, requested their permission to use their work for an art therapy presentation, reassuring them that pseudonyms would be used and confidentiality maintained. They did not want their identities concealed, stating that recognition of who they were, and what they articulated, was an important issue for them in terms of their empowerment, so they were rightfully identified in that particular presentation. They intended seeking publicity in the local press and radio for their performance involving the masks, prior to the proposed staging of the work in May 2006.

The following is the **contract** drawn up by the learners:

1. The weekly schedule for the mask-making will be as follows:
Tuesdays and Wednesdays
11.00am – 12 noon
1.30pm-2.30pm.
2. There will be a commitment to attendance and time.
3. Issues of a confidential nature will not be discussed outside the group.
4. Problems arising will be discussed with the project co-ordinator.
5. The mask-making project will run from October 25th. to December 7th.
2005, with an estimated time for the performance of the final work in early
May 2006.

Aims of the mask-making project

Liebmann (1986) states that: “It is important to be clear about (at least some of)

your aims and goals” (p. 30). Here, the group discussed these in-depth, both in this session and when they first decided on the theme for the performance, and articulated them as follows:

1. To know our own and each other’s faces.
2. To discover and explore other aspects of our ‘selves’
3. To reveal these new aspects of our ‘selves’ through the masks.
4. To join with our ‘witnesses’ from the National Folk Theatre in presenting theatrically, an expanded view of these sides of our ‘selves’, through the masks.
5. To present our work on stage and in so doing, to challenge the audience to look at other sides of their ‘selves’.

Types of masks to be made

Having entered this unknown realm, the learners needed to make decisions regarding the type of masks they would make. At this point, they experience the **second motif** of this archetype, that of **Assistance**. Having discussed whether they would make half or full masks, they felt guided in their choices and they articulated their decisions and reasons, as follows:

Learner 1: *“I want to be mysterious, like the ‘Phantom of the Opera’. I need a half mask because of breathing difficulties”.*

Learner 2: *“I’d like a full mask with my mouth and eyes exposed”.*

Learner 3: *“I’d like a mask from my eyebrows down, because this part of my face reveals the most about me. I would like my mouth and my eyes exposed”.*

Learner 4: *“I’d like a half mask for comfort”.*

Learner 5: *“I’ll make a half mask to reveal another side of me, and I’ll leave the other half free to show who I am now”.*

Learner 6: *“I’d like a half mask because it’s easier to talk with it and I’d have breathing issues”.*

Learner 7: *“I’d prefer a half mask because it would be easier to talk with it”.*

Learner 8: *“I’d like a half mask because it would be easier to work with it”.*

Materials

Following the discussion on the type of mask, we explored the materials. None of the learners had experience of using Plaster of Paris to make masks. The only familiarity they had with this material related to its use in medicine on broken and fractured limbs. Two learners felt quite apprehensive about using it on their faces. To alleviate their anxieties, I cut some strips of the material and handed them around to everyone to feel them. Then I wet them and handed them around again. I put some on my hand, allowed it to harden and then handed that around. I also explained how using Vaseline allowed the hardened material to come off easily. This created an ease and an understanding for the group. At this point, the group faced the **third motif** of the first archetype, **The Initial Challenge**. Making masks on each other’s faces when people have little, or are without sight, is daunting. But, as they proceed with the task, the danger fades for them. Learner 5 articulates this in his reflection below, stating that it was strange at first, but that it became more comfortable as the process continued.

As the learners’ fitness class was cancelled, we had an extra session between 12 noon and 1.00pm and so we made masks on Learners 5 and 1 that day, following with Learners 7 and 8 the next day. The format for the process was that each person has a mask made on them, and they also help to make the masks on the faces of the others.

Learner 5



Having the mask made on my face

It was strange at first, but I got used to the idea. It was a very nice feeling to feel the shape of my face. It was the first time I had done this. What I learned from having the mask made is that there's a part of me inside and outside. It feels square shaped. I didn't expect this size. I thought it would be smaller because it's only a half mask. It's bigger than I thought. It was very good to have the class come over and make and feel it on my face. I knew I could trust everyone and it was nice to have them know my face.

Making masks on others

It gave me a nice feeling to make the mask on other people's faces. I learned that all their faces had different shapes. This was a new learning for me. I was learning about the inside and the outside part of them. This allowed me to get to know them better.

Learner 1



(Learner 7 making mask on Learner 1)

Having the mask made on my face

There was a feeling of excitement, wondering what it would be like. Would it turn out the way I thought it would? It felt mysterious. There was a mystery

about it. As the shell was hardening around my face, I could feel the heaviness of it. Yet the heaviness didn't go right into my inner consciousness, it was a physical heaviness, not an emotional one. When I saw it when it was taken off, I felt a sensation of anticipation at trying it on when it would be fully set. When I tried it on, funnily enough, the heaviness was gone from it.

Making masks on others

It felt good to be participating in the mask making on the faces of the others in the group. I felt the cold, clammy feeling of the plaster of Paris, the stickiness, it seemed messy, but it wasn't that messy. It was child-like, like going back to childhood, playing with messy, gooey stuff. I could feel the plaster taking shape on another person's face. There was a lot of trusting in letting me touch their faces. There was a very relaxed atmosphere while we were doing it – we were laughing, joking, there was no insecurity or feeling of being uptight. It felt very free. It was more like a play-group than a class.

Learner 7



Having the mask made on my face

It felt very strange. I thought I was dead when I felt it first. It felt so stiff. It's what it must be like being in a coffin. I wasn't frightened by it. It was just a strange feeling. I thought I mightn't be able to talk with it. It's very different now today when I put it on. I don't feel I am dead. I can talk with it.

Making masks on others

I feel I got to know the others. It was my first time feeling other people's faces as well as my own. It felt OK because they were feeling mine also. I got used to doing this. It was a good experience. I wouldn't do it if it was a bad experience.

Learner 8



(Learners 7 and 1 making mask on Learner 8)

Having the mask made on my face

I thought it could not be done. I was inquisitive to see how it would turn out. I thought my mask should be bigger than what it was. Maybe this is because I'm not used to looking in a mirror. I felt the coolness of the material when it was going on. I never thought it would turn out like this. There was a nice feeling on my face afterwards.

Making masks on others

I never thought all the small pieces that were cut would make it turn out as it did. It was strange not to talk as the mask was being made. I felt we shouldn't talk as the mask was being made as it would be out of shape. There was a lot of trust in doing it. The mask to us, is the same as a photograph to a sighted person.

WEEK 2

Learner 6



Having the mask made on my face

I felt tense at first. I didn't know what to expect. My face is bigger than I thought it would be. It's very round. It's a new way for me to know myself. I feel it's showing the inside of me through the shape. I didn't know what I looked like.

Making masks on others

I found it relaxing. It gave me the concept that everyone's face is different. I kind of knew this, but, I didn't know how different because I wouldn't ask someone if I could feel their face. There was a lot of trust. There is even greater trust now. I know everyone's features. I still have the feel of them in my hands. I have enjoyed the good humour and fun of the workshops.

Learner 4



(Learner 6 making the mask on Learner 4)

Having the mask made on my face:

I was curious to see how it would come out, to see if it would be anything like me. It was like a different person being born. It was a very pleasant feeling having it made. It was a dampish feeling at the beginning and as it went on and hardened I felt it taking shape and that it was about to be born. It was like meeting somebody for the first time that you would have heard about. I was curious to see what he would be like, and how he will progress will be interesting. He will progress as our drama grows and as we introduce our thoughts into the drama. He will show himself then.

Making masks on others:

I was interested to see what they would be like and to see their reactions to them. A lot of people were quiet when we were putting the material on their faces. I could see they were thinking about what was happening for them. It was another step in our relationships that we allowed each other to make masks on our faces. It showed a lot of trust.

WEEK 3

Learner 2



(Learner 1 making the mask on Learner 2)

Having the mask made on my face

I felt I was definitely going to hide something. I liked the feeling of it being made on my face. When I put the mask on later, I felt that I was hiding a part of myself, and showing a part of myself. The part that is showing is the part that I would rarely show.

Making masks on others

I felt I was blending with my hands into their facial expressions and structures. From now on, in our drama work, the masks will come to life.

Learner 3



Having the mask made on my face

It was a strange and intruding experience at first. I found a new part of me being extended. I was wondering what the new L. would look like. I thought of this as an extension of the inside and outside of me. I found that there was going to be another me to deal with. It was different to anything I'd ever done. I was going to understand what my face felt from the inside and outside from feeling the mask. It was a strange feeling being unmasked and finding myself, through my mask, on the table. When I took off my mask I had a sense of being naked and uncovered. It was a funny feeling locating and finding myself on the table. It sent a shiver through me. There was another 'me' around. It was fun too, mixed with a tinge of curiosity.

Making masks on others

It was an unusual experience to put my hands on the face of a person I never saw. Each person was so individual – so different, yet so the same. I found it a bit unusual that I was getting to know them through a mask. I found it a rewarding experience.

WEEK 4

This week's work involved putting all the masks on a table (with names on the inside) and inviting the group members to find their own mask. This was a very interesting exercise, which took some time, as in addition to finding their own masks, there was a lot of curiosity regarding the identities of the other masks they picked up. Learners 7, 5 and 6 found theirs very quickly, while others took longer.

Then when everyone was seated, we began a 'focusing' (p. 43) technique, developed by Gendlin (2003). He defines 'focusing' as: "a process in which you make contact with a special kind of internal bodily awareness. I call this awareness a felt sense" (p. 10). The learners were familiar with this focusing technique, as we had worked with it in our weekly personal development sessions. I guided the learners through a process of putting all their concerns outside of themselves and emptying their minds of everything. When this state was reached, I invited them to put on their masks and become aware of their feelings. The following are their responses:

Learner 5

"Sadness about the fact that days can seem black. Resentment and anger. Grey skies and black clouds".

Learner 1

"A feeling of serenity and tranquillity. I was going into an inner sanctuary of peace. Escapism. Fantasy. I was unburdened from the world".

Learner 7

“A sense of death which is frightening sometimes”.

Learner 8

“When I put on my mask I feel the brightness in my life”.

Learner 6

“Happiness and hope. I’m good compared to others”.

Learner 4

“Frustration. Reaction to being misunderstood. When people see me, they see me like themselves. They don’t take into consideration that I don’t recognise them, that I don’t know them until the last minute”.

Learner 2

“Anger – over losing my sight. Angry at not seeing my children grow up”.

Learner 3

“Shyness, sadness coupled with remoteness. At the back of my mind, I’m shy. I’m trying to mask that and show a different side of my life because the sadness at my loss won’t be restored”.

WEEKS 5 and 6

The work for these two final weeks involved exploring how the masks should be decorated to reflect these feelings, and then decorating them. This is how they envisaged this process, and the results they produced:

Learner 5



Sadness is what I feel when I put on my mask. Sadness at the way the world is today. It seems like a dangerous place as there is discrimination and injustice. I want to put black on the forehead for this. I want red on the cheeks to show my anger at being misunderstood. I want pieces of thick red card stuck on between my nose and my cheeks to show my resentment. The paint and the paper will distinguish between these two emotions.

Learner 1



I want to make it look like fun, relaxed. There's green on the forehead, showing relaxation, being back to nature, the grass. The pink cheeks are for happiness. The black stripes are to make a challenge, like war paint, but not threatening, the coloured stripes are to calm down the black and to give a sense that there's no danger. I didn't put much red – just a little to give balance to the other colours and to highlight the happy feeling. It's the same idea with the designs (yellow, blue, green) on the sides of the cheeks – like a rainbow. They're shapes to make it fun. I am going to put a cloud, in white spongy material over the forehead to indicate nature. I want to put on some shells to show the fun I have at the beach.

Learner 7



I want to show my fear of losing people when they die. You are alone when you are dead. I'm very conscious of how upset people are when someone dies. I want black on the left and right hand side, on the cheek bones, nose and forehead. I want to put two circles on the cheek bones, pictures of Our Lord and Our Lady, from Mass Cards.

Learner 8



I'd like blue on my forehead to show the brightness in my life. I'd like red on my cheeks to show the anger I feel sometimes. I'd like yellow on my nose to show more brightness and orange on the bridge of my nose for the same reason.

Learner 6



Happiness is what comes through for me when I put on my mask. I want to have a bright colour like yellow or orange on the cheeks.

Learner 4



I want black and white in my mask to show my frustration at being misunderstood. I also want to show the part of me that is not frustrated.

Learner 2



I want red around my eyes and purple on my cheeks and nose to show my anger at losing my sight and not seeing my children grow up. I would like orange, yellow and green on my forehead to show a hopeful side of me.

Learner 3



I would like a heavy red on my forehead and a lighter red down my nose to show my shyness. I'd like green at the top of my forehead to show my dreams. Grey on my cheeks, getting darker as it goes out to the sides, becoming black. I'd like blue on my chin to show hope, and lines of hope, in white, going from the bottom of my face to my brain.

Having decorated their masks to express their deepest innermost feelings, they find themselves in a period of withdrawal, reflecting on the situations in life where they experience these feelings. This time represents the **fourth motif** of the first archetype, that of **Retreat**.

Personal Reflections on the mask-making process

In creating and using masks to conceal the faces they present to the world each day, and reveal the side they conceal – the inner self, the learners connected with an ancient tradition still carried on in North and West Kerry today – ‘Lá and Dreoilín’ (The Day of the Wren). Though now on the wane, the tradition of hunting the wren was common throughout Ireland on St. Stephen’s Day. There is a lot of speculation as to the origins of the tradition. One story tells of how the wren is blamed for the betraying of the Christian martyr, St. Stephen, when he was in hiding, by making noises and this is the reason for hunting him down on St. Stephen’s Day. Another story relates of how a plan by Irish soldiers to ambush a Viking soldier’s camp was foiled when a bunch of wrens pecked on the Viking soldier’s drums and woke them up just in time for the plan to fail. People dress up in old clothes and paint their faces, wear masks and straw hats and travel from door to door singing, dancing and playing music as they re-enact the tradition. The transformation of the outward image of self allows the ancient, deeper inner self to come into being. Just as the sounds the wrenboys made on their bodhráns (drums made from goat skin) alerted the community to their arrival, so too, the sounds made by the learners as they tapped their canes on the theatre stage alerted the audience to the fact, as one learner stated, that they had a very important story to tell. This performance enabled the expression and healing of, the deepest part of self, for them.

What did I do to enhance constructive group learning in this situation?

Generally, I was conscious of being what Hyland Moon (2002) refers to as the carrier of the ‘spirit’ of the studio (p. 71), and that the learners would need to experience our work space as a place that had, “anticipated their arrival” (p. 94). In this particular context, creating an atmosphere of ease, relaxation and fun was important as the learners needed to feel ‘free’ to explore and express feelings and ideas in a process

that was important to them. This was also important, in order to facilitate the making of masks on each other's faces because of the intimate nature of this work. Using what Kramer (2000) describes as my 'Third Hand' (p. 47), to help the members to complete the work to their satisfaction, contributed both to the 'process' involved, and the 'products' produced. Kramer (2000) defines this 'Third Hand' as a hand "that helps the creative process along without being intrusive, without distorting meaning or imposing pictorial ideas or preferences alien to the client" (p. 48). Witnessing their experiences as they worked, and reflecting on my responses to the process each day, contributed to the learning experiences, overall.

I think that my intervention on the first day, when Learners 6 and 7 expressed anxiety in relation to having Plaster of Paris harden on their faces contributed to constructive learning for both of them, and also for others who may have had similar feelings, but were reluctant to voice their concerns. Inviting all the learners to feel the material at the stages of dryness, wetness and in its hardened form, 'levelled the playing pitch', in that it consolidated the belief that they were all starting from the same experience of using the material, for mask-making.

I intervened here, as I knew from working with Learners 6 and 7 that their life experiences were limited, and that their fears needed to be alleviated in order to facilitate participation. Failure to do this, in both their cases, would have led to withdrawal. Providing them with a tactile experience, in addition to a verbal account of the process, seemed the most appropriate way of doing this, because of their lack of sight. It also reinforced the idea for them, and for the others, that difficulties can be overcome through accepting the challenge of confronting them.

Using Gendlin's (2003) 'focusing' (p. 10) technique facilitated the process of connection with their masks. Their responses to the experience were deeply moving. There was total silence as each person spoke, and a palpable sense of respect for what was being articulated. Having previously used this technique in personal development sessions with the learners, I felt that it would be a useful tool in this process.

Concrete examples of how the use of art materials facilitated learning within this Group

In this situation, facilitating the group to use plaster of Paris bandages to make masks on each other's faces, provided members with a way of knowing themselves, their physical faces and expressions, and each other's. It was the first time, those who were blind from birth, were able to examine their faces 'objectively', the first time they had a concept of its shape and size. Learner 5 observed: *"It feels square shaped. I didn't expect this size. It's bigger than I thought"*. Learner 6 believed that: *"I know everyone's features. I still have the feel of them in my hands"*. This learning was ongoing for them as they planned to expand the masks through drama. This is reflected in Learner 4's comment: *"It was like a different person being born. How he will progress will be interesting"*, and in that of Learner 2: *"From now on, in our drama work, the masks will come to life"*.

Developing their awareness of their emotional responses to colour was also important for the learners and connected with the explorations they had undertaken in in phase 3 of the project, 'Súile le Solas' (Eyes with Light). Different colours evoked different emotional responses, for them. Here, the emotions evoked through wearing the masks, dictated different colour choices when decorating them. Learner 5, for example, said: *"I want red on the cheeks to show my anger..."*, while Learner 1 wanted: *"green on the forehead showing relaxation, being back to nature"*, and *"the pink cheeks are for happiness"*. In contrast to Learner 5, red, for Learner 3 was to *"show my shyness"*, and in contrast to Learner 1, green for him, was *"to show my dreams"*. Developing this awareness was an important learning experience for them, for me as an art therapist, and for the public experiencing their work.

What might I have done differently in relation to the process?

I think that at the point where the learners decided on the type of mask they would make – half or full, I could have provided them with the experience of trying on different masks e.g. – Halloween masks, cheap plastic masks, masks I could have borrowed from the theatre. I can't help but wonder if this would have given them the

confidence to make full masks. Learner 2 changed his mind about making a full mask, opting for a half one, in the belief that it would give him greater freedom to speak. Learner 3, even though he made a fuller mask, still opted to expose his eyes and mouth. I wonder if the experience of feeling full masks, including eyes and mouth closed in, with tiny slits to breathe, would have prompted them to think that by making full masks, they would know their own, and each other's faces, more fully? As they expressed a wish to make masks again in the future, this is something I believed we could explore again.

I felt more central to the process involved in these workshops, than in any other. This was due, I believe, to the fact that I was the sole 'holder of the space', which facilitated the creation of the masks by the learners. Holding this space for the learners was central to the completion of their masks. So too, was my role in providing a 'Third Hand' for them as they worked. My training in art therapy heightened my awareness of these roles. It also provided me with the skills needed to facilitate the learners' expressions of their experiences of the process. This too, was the first time I facilitated workshops in art, without the support of an artist and this heightened my awareness of being central to the process, for the learners.

Is there an art intervention that might have been helpful?

I think that buying some cheap, full masks with mouth and eyes, inviting the group to play and have fun with them, assume the roles of various characters through them and to paint and decorate them, could have been a useful step in this process.

Examples of how I applied creative thinking to the use of art media

There are other media that could have been used to make the masks. I suggested plaster of Paris bandages, because I believed that applying the strips of bandage would provide the group with a sensitive means of coming to know their own, and each other's faces. Its usefulness in achieving this is articulated by Learner 2.: *"I felt I was blending with my hands into their facial expressions and structures"*.

Suggesting to the group that they paint with their hands if they were not comfortable with brushes, made painting possible for those who had never painted. Also, mentioning the possibility of adding sand to the paint, to give texture when dry, provided the option of a tactile experience of the painted surfaces, for anyone requiring this.

As the drama progressed and they decided on further decoration of the masks, having a range of tactile materials such as shells, threads, different thickness of paper, materials of varying textures contributed to expanding their masks to the fullest potential of their imaginations, as did the use of the other expressive therapies of movement, music and sound.

Section (B)

Living the experiences through performance

Drama workshops

The learners explored the expression of the emotions reflected in their masks through shapes, rhythms, movement, and sound in their drama workshops, which ran concurrently with the mask-making project.

These workshops were conducted weekly while the mask-making was in progress, so that members would have the necessary skills to explore their masks through other media, when they were completed. The following is a brief outline of one of these workshops.

Outline of Drama Workshop

Date: 16th. November, 2005.

Time: 1.30-3.00pm.

Present: Eight Learners, Artistic Director of Siamsa Tíre, Self

Warm-up: Isolation of body parts: Drop head forward, hands relaxed; bring up head, tilt backwards; back to neutral, down. Movement of head, shoulders, knees, hands.

Emotions:

(a) Hands: Show emotions of relaxation, shyness, confidence, fussiness, calmness and anger in your hands.

(b) Whole Body: Show anger, shyness, confidence, fussiness, calmness, relaxation.

Sounds:

Create sounds of anger, shyness, confidence, relaxation, fussiness, calmness and anger.

Activity: Group divided in two. One group sounding emotions explored above, other group acting them. Alternate activities.

Rhythm Work:

Explore the essence of who you want to be rhythmically and create rhythms for the following emotions:

Happiness (123, 123, 123, 123)

Anger (12, 123, 12, 1234)

Fussiness (1234, 1234, 1234, 1)

Confidence (1234 and 1234 – marching tune)

Shyness (12345, 12345 stop 12345)

Nervousness (Constant beat)

Calmness (Recurring circular movement of hand on bodhran)

Songs signifying various emotions

Happiness: 'The Spanish Lady'

Sadness: 'Ar Éirinn ní neosfad cé hí'

Suggested theme tune for performance: 'Éamonn an Chnoic'



(Drama Workshop)

In January, following the completion of the masks, the group began to explore situations in life where they were conscious of the feelings they had portrayed in their masks. The following is an outline of the final session in this part of the work:

Drama Workshop. 1st. March 2006.

Present: Eight Learners, Artistic Director of Siamsa Tíre, Self

Work on further developing the personalities of the masks. Here, the learners called out words and images that came to mind, as they spoke through their masks.

Learner 3: *“Remoteness. Silence, after Mass, - village, people talking, Church bells, Click, click of women in a hurry, sound of doors banging/closing, “Hello there, didn’t see you for a while”, Sound of money being put on a table. I’m standing, looking*

questioningly, while all this is happening. Distant voices. Moving through the crowds, silently. Evening of Festival – 15th. August. Loud speaker in background. Feeling – Was I really alone on the street? Was I taller or smaller than anyone else? Do I stand out hugely in this group? Song, merriment. Backing away. TK humming ‘The streets of London’ – building on TK’s sound with other instruments. More up-beat music for festival.”

Learner 4: *“I see myself in a natural setting, walking with the dog. I’m looking down at Smerwick Harbour. Sounds of nature around me – birds, sheep, sea, gulls, crows. Lively, happy music for this. I associate the frustration I feel with the town. Sounds of building work going on, people not having time for each other – they tend to walk by you. I’m looking at them wondering who they are, but, still not wanting to talk to them, to avoid frustration and further annoyance. Wouldn’t like to be a laughing stock. Self-protection. Music here – slower and less happy.”*

Learner 5: *“I’ll situate myself in a school. The sound of corporal punishment. Lonely sounds. Counting every day. Wondering when I could go home. Sounds of kids running, shouting. The sound of the Braille machine. Hopelessness, sadness, boredom. I relate this experience to the violence in the world, discrimination, dismissiveness of people. There’s a sense of blindness towards people’s needs. Music – ‘The Lonesome Boatman’ or ‘Port na bPúcaí’.”*

Learner 8: *“I’ll situate myself in the family home. I hear them all talking around me and the birds outside. I hear the washing machine, the kettle boiling, the radio or TV in the background. Affection from my family – goodnight kisses. I haven’t told the family I feel like that about them inside. It would be nice to show them that. A little bit of annoyance when things go against me balanced out with being cared for. Music – ‘Don’t worry, be happy’.”*

Learner 7: *“I felt I was in heaven when I put on my mask. Holy God had called me. I was in some strange sort of world. The angels and saints and Holy Mary were in heaven with me. The people on earth were saying prayers for me and singing the ‘Ave Maria’. I felt lost in heaven. I wished I was on earth again. I don’t want to lose people. I want to be on earth with the people I know. Music for heaven – ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’ or ‘Sweet Heart of Jesus’. Music for earth – ‘Companions on the Journey’, ‘Someone so Special’, ‘Between Worlds’.”*

Learner 6: *“Situation – Walking through Tralee on my way to class. I’m feeling happy, pleasant. I’m hearing traffic, people, dogs here and there, trees blowing in the wind. I’m having a mobility lesson, the trainer is with me. I have a sense of independence and happiness at being able to do it on my own. It makes me feel the same as everyone else. (Music from Siamsa Tíre – National Folk Theatre, show).”*

Learner 2: *“Situations: (1) Family home – anger at not seeing family growing up. Sounds – kids coming and going; sleepless – worrying about them out late. (2) Bar – changing scene, moving to happiness, to a way of coping with it. Experience of happiness, friendliness, companionship in bar. Sounds – racing, matches, talking. Music – ‘Raglan Road’, ‘The Boys from Barr na Sráide’.”*

Learner 1: *“Situation – Sea-side. Sitting on a bench listening to children playing, listening to music. The sea of tranquillity – hearing waves softly lapping on sand. I can’t now run around with the kids because of my failing eyesight. I’m pacing myself, walking with more care. Feelings – happiness. Kids contributing to uplifted spirit/feeling. Music: ‘Meditation’ by Massenet. Movement – light, gentle, fun.”*

Opening Scene: Searching/Moving with canes – rhythm 1, 123. Creating expectation. Cé tusa istigh? Removing canes. Into imagination – shapes – free movement. Masks and individual pieces.

The learners began to expand their masks more fully in collaboration with their sighted ‘witnesses’ in their performance work which they began with members of Siamsa Tíre in April 2006.



(Learners 4, 3, 7 and 5 during rehearsals at the theatre, on May 3rd.)



(The learners, with two of their ‘witnesses’ – during rehearsals at the theatre, on May 3rd.)

SECTION (C)

How the performance of ‘Cé tusa istigh?’ (Who are you, inside?) illuminates the Archetypes and Motifs of Personal Mythmaking and the Rites of Restoration

A dvd of this performance, programme details and learner reflections can be found in Appendix 6. The musicians open the performance with a female singer singing the theme song chosen by the learners, ‘Éamon an Chnoic’ (DVD 6 – S1) below.



DVD 6 – S1

This scene opens with the curtain lifting and the learners are seen, beating out rhythms with their white canes, and in the words of Learner 3:

For the first time since I went blind, I found a new use for my white cane. We tapped out the rhythms of our show with our canes, alerting the minds of the audience to the message we were going to bring.

(DVD 6 – S2) below.

Atkinson’s (1995) **second archetype** of **Initiation** comes to the fore for the learners as they prepare to present their experiences to an audience. This corresponds to Knill’s (2005) entry to ‘liminal’ space. In the foreground of the stage, the eight masks created by the learners wait to be claimed by their creators, and voice given through them.



DVD 6 – S2

As the learners begin to move forward on stage, tapping their white canes for guidance, they are faced with the **first motif** of the **second archetype, Greater Challenges** (DVD 6 – S3) below. Learner 3 expresses his feelings at that time, in his later reflection:

As I stood on the stage that day, something within me brought fear to my soul. The fear was that at long last I was going to expose my true self to the wider audience.

There are difficult struggles ahead, to be overcome so that these important stories can be told, and heard.



DVD 6 – S3

As they stand on stage, beating out rhythms with their canes, three witnesses, drawn by the sound of their rhythmic announcement, approach them in wonderment, from the audience (DVD 6 – S4) below. The **second motif** of this archetype, **Further Assistance** is apparent at this point as the witnesses, begin to feel and see into their world, mirroring their expressions of their deeper selves.



DVD 6 – S4

The witnesses move through the learners, still in awe of what they are witnessing, and seeking to understand them (DVD 6 – S5) below.



DVD 6 – S5

Picking up on the rhythms created by the learners, the witnesses begin to communicate with them through dance (DVD 6 – S6) below.



DVD 6 – S6

As the learners continue to beat out rhythms with their canes, the witnesses ask: “Cé tusa istigh? (Who are you, inside?). The learners also begin asking the same question. At this point, the witnesses remove the canes from the learners (DVD6 – S7) below.



DVD 6 – S7

The witnesses store the canes at the back of the stage, for use later. The musicians begin to play the theme song, ‘Mise Éamon an Chnoic’, and the learners, free of their canes now, are guided inwards, through the song. The witnesses, moving through them, mirror their movements and begin to forge deeper connections with them (DVD 6 – S8) below.



DVD 6 – S8

The witnesses guide the learners to seats at the back of the stage (DVD 6 – S9) below.



DVD 6 – S9

Two witnesses then move one column forward on stage, while Learner 1 moves into position to re-inhabit his mask. As they do so, the third witness reaches for his mask at the front of the stage (DVD 6 – S10) below. As Learner 1 and his fellow learners move through these experiences, there is a sense of having personal values and standards tested, highlighting the **third motif** of **Temptation**. But, as the journey through each experience begins, and progresses for them, the learners become clearer of what their true standards are. Learner 6, in his reflection, speaks of his apprehension at the start of the project, and how this changed as the work progressed:

I feel more respect for the others because I know them so much better now. I'm in a different place now than I was before the show. I always felt I was missing out because I couldn't see facial expressions, but now I know the others faces through my hands.



DVD 6 – S10

Learner 1's mask reveals:

The fun and joy of childhood. A feeling of serenity and tranquillity. I'm going into an inner sanctuary of peace. Escapism. Fantasy.

(DVD 6 – S11) below.



DVD 6 – S11

The mask is held up to the learner's face, before being placed on the column behind. (This procedure is repeated for each of the learners). The learner's mask comes to life as he begins to express the feelings it holds for him (DVD 6 – S12) below.

I found making the mask strange at first, but, as it was being made, I felt I was exposing something in myself that I didn't think was there and would be able to reveal. Being with the others as they made theirs, comparing their thoughts to mine, I saw some similarities. There was a lot of sadness and exclusion in the masks. Mine was about escapism, going back to the past, to childhood. I felt free of all worries and that I was back as a child again. I loved all the colours I put on it. I felt there wasn't enough colour in it even though I'd put on all I could.



DVD 6 – S12

The learner is back in childhood, playing with the other children. But, it is difficult, as his eyesight is failing (DVD 6 – S13) below.

Doing it through drama and dance expanded my own thoughts and feelings and for all the others also. Moving with the dancers really brought out the feelings I want to give to the audience.



DVD 6 – S13

Playing ‘Ring a Ring a Rosie’ with the others, and supported by the other learners chanting the rhyme for him, the learner moves to a quiet spot to reflect on his true situation. A recorded voice-over, hears him reflect: *“I can’t move around with the kids now, due to my failing eyesight. I’m pacing myself, walking with more care”* (DVD 6 – S14) below.



DVD 6 – S14

One witness removes the learner's mask from the column, hands it to him (DVD 6 – S15) below. He reflects on his experience:

This performance was an expansion of all the other work we've done and was very thought provoking for everyone. We've done so much and each year you realize there's more show.

His words highlight the circular nature of the work. There is a continual unfolding of the journey.



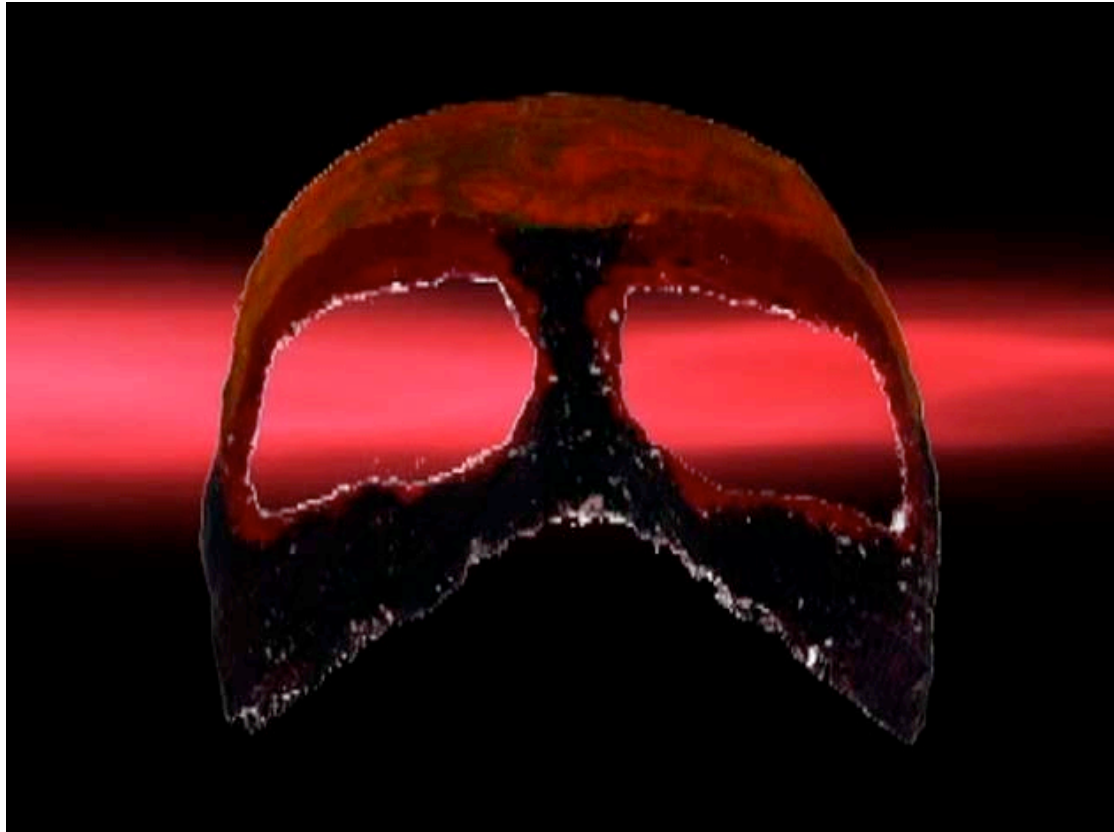
DVD 6 – S15

A second witness reaches for Learner 2's mask and the third witness leads him forward, on stage. (This routine coupled with that of picking up the mask and placing it on the column, obtains for all eight learners).

Learner 2's mask reveals:

Anger over losing my sight. Anger at not seeing my children grow up.

(DVD 6 – S16) below.



DVD 6 – S16

The learner's mask is hung on the column by a witness (DVD 6 – S17) below.



DVD 6 – S17

Seated, the learner speaks through his mask, as his daughters run in and out, calling to him. One says: “See you, Dad”. As she leaves, he repeats her words, reflecting out loud: *“Why me? They’re growing up fast. People tell me they’re very beautiful, just like their Dad”*. He continues his reflections as he sings ‘Raglan Road’, a poem composed by Irish poet, Patrick Kavanagh. As he begins the second verse, Learner 1 comes forward and hands him a pint of stout, and the other learners call out their encouragement to him: *‘Come on, J.’; ‘Good man, J.’* (DVD 6 – S18) below.



DVD 6 – S18

As his mask is taken down, he is led back to his seat by one witness, while a second witness picks up the third mask. This learner later reported that his performance was a very healing experience for his family as it communicated to them his deep feelings regarding his sight loss. Learner 3 is guided to centre stage.

Learner 3's mask reveals:

Shyness, sadness coupled with remoteness. At the back of my mind I'm shy. I'm trying to mask that and show a different side of my life, because the sadness at my loss won't be restored.

(DVD 6 – S19) below.

His later reflection expands on these feelings:

Ever since I went blind, I tried to hide from my own mind, the things that caused me great worry. Part of my mind held the strange moments in my life, close to the surface, ready for recall. I lived life and tried to hold back on the dark sides of my own personality. In short, I was becoming more and more a stranger to myself. Even my wife and my very closest friends were unaware of this great change. Hidden flashes from past experiences sometimes surfaced at the strangest of moments. This could happen walking the road, in church, or worst of all, in my deep dreams. I knew that it was particularly soul destroying and damaging for me. Trying to brush it aside when in the company of friends made me change my personality. I would automatically change the subject to a more frivolous story. Unable to recognise the features of another human being also left me unaware of their thinking. At this point in time, I like to feel sculptures and other works of art that would remind me of past events. That sense of remoteness was worst when I realized that I would never again recognise the faces of my friends, or my own vision, in a mirror.



DVD 6 – S19

His mask is hung on the column (DVD 6 – S20) below.



DVD 6 – S20

Through his mask, the learner takes us back to a time he attended a festival in his local village. He is feeling isolated, not recognising sounds or conversations, and calls out to those nearby (DVD 6 – S21 below).

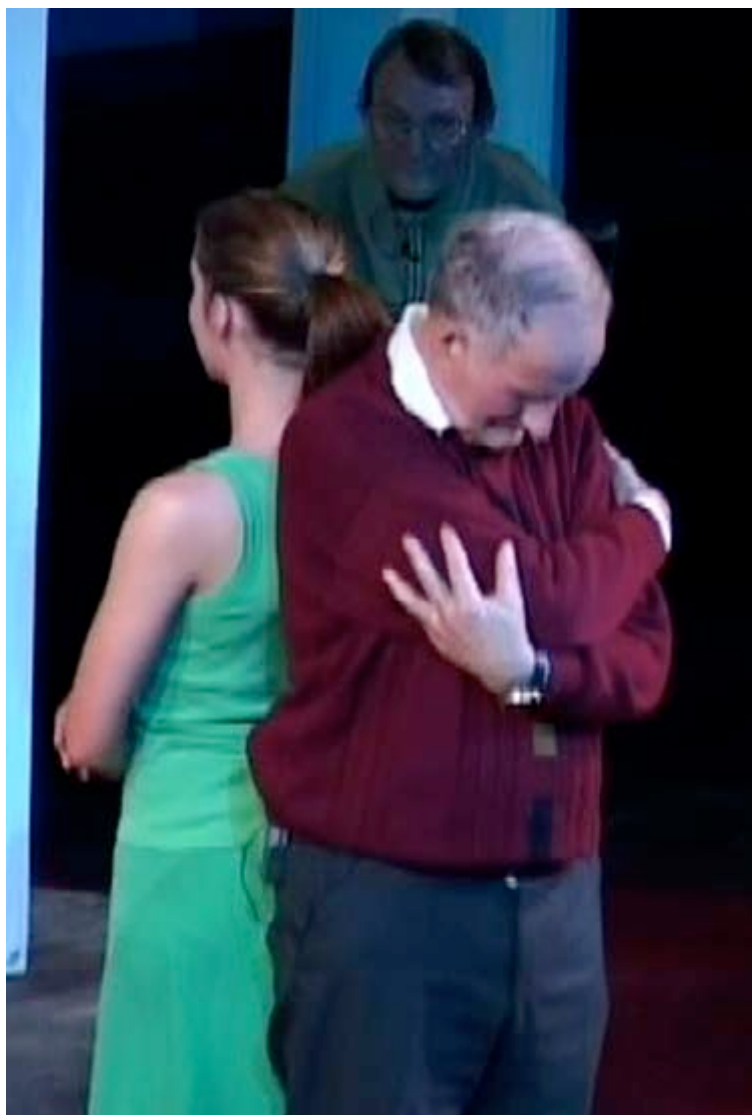


DVD 6 – S21

His recorded voice-over reveals his thoughts:

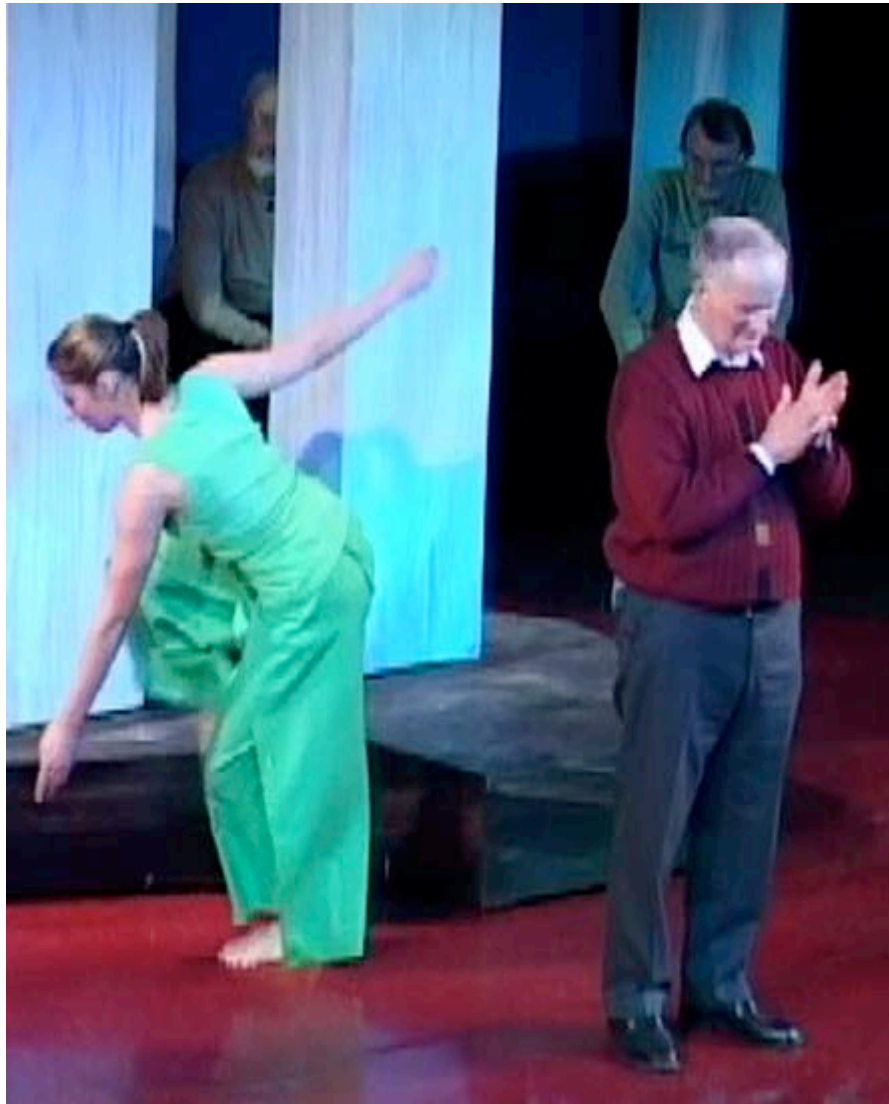
Why do I feel so alone, when everyone around is so happy? I know its festival time by the sound of music in the streets and the singing coming from the pubs. Why do I feel so remote when everyone seems so happy? I feel sad because I cannot know the voices of my friends above those of the strangers in town for the night. I shouldn't feel this sense of loss because I'm in my own town, but I could be anywhere in the world tonight.

As the song, 'The Streets of London', is hummed by the other learners and two lines which stand out for their poignancy – “*So how can you tell me you're lonely, And say for you that the sun don't shine*”- are sung by one learner, a witness stands back to back with the learner, connecting to his loneliness and isolation (DVD 6 – S22) below.



DVD 6 – S22

Having made the connection, she dances and expresses his feelings of loneliness (DVD 6 – S23 and S24) below.



DVD 6 – S23



DVD 6 – S24

Having connected with and expressed his feelings, she reconnects with him. Revealing his inner self through the mask has been a healing experience for the learner, as his reflection illustrates:

But as the show progressed and the other students started to tell their stories, a certain sense of pride broke within my heart. For I knew now that the people in the audience would understand me and I would understand myself. I can truly and honestly say that in those few minutes that I performed on the stage, all that great sense of hidden fear started to vanish. Over the six years of participating in the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project, I've grown in confidence with each phase. But, the one thing that had remained in my mind until our performance day this year, was that awful sense of sadness, isolation and remoteness. Having revealed my inner thoughts and cleansed my mind of these feelings, I now feel a much happier and freer person.

The ritual of taking down this learner's mask and picking up the next one, that of Learner 4, follows.

Learner 4's mask reveals:

(DVD 6 – S25) below

Frustration at being misunderstood. When people see me, they see me like themselves. They don't take into consideration that I don't recognise them, that I don't know them until the last minute.



DVD 6 – S25

The learner's mask is held up to his face and placed on the column behind him (DVD 6 – S26) below. He reflects on his process:

We were standing up for ourselves. Nobody was on stage who didn't want to be there. We had that much courage in ourselves. We were able to stand up and say what we wanted to say. We felt we had the stage to ourselves and that people were there to listen to what we had to say. It was important for me to have people in the audience whom I deal with from day to day. My mother was there and she would have learned from my experience. It was important for her and our neighbour to see what my weaknesses were in comparison to the others. Both of them would have spoken to other members of the family about what they learned. The fact that we made masks and that they were all different, I knew it would be very personal and I felt I was putting myself out in the open. It helped to do this through a mask even though I knew that people would see me as me, but doing it through a mask helped me to do it more honestly. I felt I was going to be stronger inside in me by showing this.

It was going to be my feelings and experiences so it was important to be as truthful as I could express myself.



DVD 6 – S26

The sounds of birds are heard in the background as the witnesses shape-shift into features of the natural world. The learner moves among the witnesses, who have now transfigured into trees and bushes, connecting with them. Suddenly, the environment changes, the loud sounds of drills are heard and the witnesses now shape-shift into machines. This noise assaults his peaceful existence (DVD 6 – S27) below.



DVD 6 – S27

He tries to shut out the noise, and allows his mask to speak what it reveals, through his recorded voice-over, saying:

I feel frustrated at being misunderstood. When people see me, they see me like themselves. They don't take into consideration that I don't recognise them, that I don't know them until the last minute.

His final reflection on his process, highlights his transformation:

I was the last to start to express myself in sessions, so I had time to see how deep the others were expressing themselves. It was easy then when I knew where I had to go because all of this was new to us. Doing this made me more confident because I felt I had something to say and that people listened to me. I think from this that everyone is entitled to live their own life and the fact that we expressed our individual, honest beliefs, hopefully, people will have learned a bit about us.

I wasn't able to express myself and tell people how I was feeling, but by doing this project, I went deep into my inner feelings and I expressed myself as honestly as I could, because it was to my benefit to do so, and to the benefit of those around me who want to understand me but can't. This was a way of expressing my feelings about myself, about my disability. I felt I grew up when I was doing this project. I felt I understood myself a lot better and the same is

true of the rest of the lads. The fact that we went on stage to perform and tell people how we felt meant we had nothing to hide, but something to show them, and that we had something to offer to them. Feeling that I grew up is like having a clear head. This means – now you see it, now it's up to you to understand us, if you want.

The ritual of changing the mask continues and Learner 5's mask is placed on the column.

Learner 5's mask reveals:

(DVD 6 – S28) below.

Sadness is what I feel when I put on my mask. Sadness at the way the world is today. I feel my anger at being misunderstood.



DVD 6 – S28

The learner sits at the base of the column, which has now become the space of his childhood experiences at school. The witnesses, kneeling nearby, become extensions of these experiences. The learner chants his mathematical table for the teacher: “*one and one is two, two and two is four, three and three is six, four and four is eight, five and five is nine*”. He is slapped as punishment for this error, is asked to repeat the table, and punished again when the mistake is repeated (DVD 6 – S29) below.



DVD 6 – S29

The witnesses express his hurt, holding the pain close to them. The learner reflects on this hurt, heard as a voice over: “*When will school be over? When will I be back home? When will it end? Will it be forever? Two weeks to the holidays. I can’t wait*”. He plays the tune, ‘The Lonesome Boatman’ on his mouth-organ, to express the loneliness of his situation. The witnesses move near him to support him.

His transformation through this process is evident in his reflection:

I feel very different now because my sadness has been brought out through my mask. I have been allowed to look into myself in a way that I didn’t before. This was good for me because it showed me my inner feelings. Before I put on the mask I hadn’t a sense of who was inside because of all the things that happened over the years and also it made me more aware of myself. I hadn’t ever known who I was inside until I put on that mask. The feeling I showed is a feeling I don’t show very often because its my inner feelings. It’s easier to show them now that I’ve done the show. It has given me a sense of confidence and the courage to become aware that these feelings are there. It’s been important for me to express these feelings through colour. This was important

because I had an interest in colours even though I've never seen them and it has helped me to regain that interest.

Hearing the others in the group talk through their masks showed me that others had inner feelings and that I wasn't alone. It helped me to open up these feelings and to understand myself and it helped me to accept that these feelings were there when I heard everyone else. My family weren't aware that I had these feelings until my mother saw the show. I think she got to understand me better through the show.

The ritual of changing the masks begins again.

Learner 6's mask reveals:

(DVD 6 – S30) below

Happiness and hope. I'm good compared to others.

Making his mask has developed his trust in others and a sense of deep belonging:

I was apprehensive when I first started this project. When I felt the first mask being made on the other person, I felt the barrier lifting, I began to trust, and thought this could be fun. What really impressed me was the team spirit. Being part of the group was great because I used to always feel when growing up, that I didn't belong, but when making the masks and doing the performance, I felt I really belonged.



DVD 6 – S30

As the learner's mask is hung on the column, he prepares to communicate his appreciation of having the opportunity to participate in mobility training as a step towards personal independence. He is guided through this training by the witnesses. As he pauses at a crossing, his voice-over communicates his fears: *“Is it safe to be here? Will I make it across the road before the traffic starts? Thank God I've got good hearing”*. (DVD 6 – S31) below.



DVD 6 – S31

A witness continues to guide him: “Turn right at the Sports Complex – 5,6, 7,8”.
With the lesson now completed, its time to celebrate the enjoyment of achievement
(DVD 6 – S32) below.



DVD 6 – S32

His reflection highlights his personal transformation:

This year's project for me was one of the best ever because I was more prepared for it personally. Being so much part of the group has really boosted my confidence and I enjoy working more with other people now. It helped me to learn to trust people more. Trusting people to put their hands on my face, without being able to see them, was a big thing for me. I'm glad I did it and I would do it again.

Showing my personality through the mask gave my classmates and the public a chance to know me better. This was important because the public often have incorrect perceptions about people who are blind. They don't speak to us as individuals. They see the white cane and don't see the person.

I feel I know the others in the group better. I grew up with T. and I never knew he felt that angry about the way he was treated. J. who always seems so bright and bubbly – I didn't realize he felt so down about not seeing his daughters grow up.

I feel more respect for the others because I know them so much better now. I'm in a different place now than I was before the show. I always felt I was missing out because I couldn't see facial expressions, but now I know the others faces through my hands.

For me, after it all, there is a great sense of hope and an inner peace. It was nice when people came up to me after the show and talked to me. Doing this work creates public awareness about blindness.

The ritual of changing the masks continues, as a witness picks up and thoughtfully connects with Learner 7's mask (DVD 6 – S33) below.



DVD 6 – S33

Learner 7's mask reveals:

(DVD 6 – S34) below

A sense of death which is frightening sometimes.



DVD 6 – S34

As the learner's mask is placed on the column, he says, in Irish: "Brón ar an mbás 'sé dubh mo chroí-se, Leagann sé úr agus críon le chéile" (How sad death is, it blackens my heart. It wipes out young and old alike). This was a very difficult, but transformative experience for this learner:

Putting on my mask reminded me of being a baby in my mother's arms, for my grandmother's funeral. That was very emotional. It was hard to express the feelings of everybody afterwards. I know it was very emotional for everybody.

The witnesses shape-shift to angels to accompany him on his exploration of death (DVD 6 - S35) below.



DVD 6 – S35

The angels move around him as he begins to sing ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’ (DVD 6 – S36 and S37) below. *“It was good that I had to learn my hymn and show the audience what I was about”.*



DVD 6 – S36



DVD 6 – S37

The witnesses kneel at his graveside, grieving for him (DVD 6 – S38) below.



DVD 6 – S38

As one witness supports him, he is joined by the other witnesses and the learners in the singing of the second verse of the hymn (DVD 6 – S39) below.



DVD 6 – S39

The audience, obviously moved by his revelations, applaud. Having come through the experience, he reflects on a new reality:

When Anne put the mask on me it was the same as being laid out in a coffin. It's what I felt. It was so tough. It was hard going. It was the fact that I couldn't get out of where I was in the coffin. When the mask was taken off I felt better. It was something like getting a sense of the Lord that made me feel better, and that's why I sang "The Lord is my Shepherd". When I was brought forward on the stage the day of the show and when I began to sing, I felt I was resurrected again. It was really good to hear the feelings of the others in the group. It was very emotional.

The ritual of changing the mask concludes with Learner 8's mask (DVD 6 – S40) below.

Learner 8's mask reveals:

DVD 6 – S40 below

When I put on my mask I feel the brightness of life.



DVD 6 – S40

The learner's mask is held up to his face before being placed on the column behind him (DVD 6 - S41) below. He is ready to express his happiness with and appreciation of his family:

Making the masks was unusual. I felt I was holding a photo of myself when I had finished mine. It was nice to feel the image of myself in my hands because I have been visually impaired for so long. My mask showed my happiness with my family. It was a good experience to show this on stage to others.



DVD 6 – S41

As the sound of the soap opera, ‘Coronation Street’ is heard the witnesses, who have now shape-shifted to his daughters, sit and discuss the programme with him (DVD 6 – S42) below.



DVD 6 – S42

A voice-over of his thoughts, communicates his appreciation of them: *“Amn’t I lucky they’re so good. They’re always there for me. I’d be lost without them”*. As the programme concludes, he dances with them to a recording of the song he has chosen, “Don’t worry, be happy”.

There is a deep joy for him in expressing his feelings to his family who were present and to others, as his reflection illustrates:

Making the mask helped me to realise how happy I feel with my family. My family were delighted with my part in the performance and with how I presented my joy in them. I feel I am more able and I have more courage since I did it. Hearing the others present their masks showed me how much courage they have also. I have more faith in myself now when I’m doing something and I’m more positive as well.

I was very proud of the Braille writing on my mask. I had written my wife's and children's names in Braille and stuck them to the mask. It made them very close to me on stage when I was working with my mask and I think this brought me closer to the audience because it gave them an understanding of how much we can communicate through Braille.

I liked using different colours in the mask to show my feelings because it showed how much I'm still aware of colour since I had sight. I'm glad I made a half mask. I think it would be more frightening to make a full one as I would be covered up more. The mask was showing what I felt inside, but I liked the idea of having part of the outside showing too.

As the learner takes his mask and returns to join the other learners, the witnesses take up three white canes and begin beating them to the rhythm of the words they are chanting - 'Cé tusa istigh?'. The learners rise from their seats, and holding out their masks towards the audience join in this chant with the witnesses. The **fourth motif** of **Renewal and Rebirth** is apparent here. They have now completed their journey and shared their experiences with the audience. Learner 5, on behalf of the learners, invites the audience to reflect on their own inner landscapes: "So, who are you, inside?". They bow to the audience who respond with a standing ovation. They are now in the world of what Atkinson (1995) terms, the **third archetype, Return**. Knill (2005) refers to this stage as the 'exit'. They demonstrate that they have moved through the **first motif** of this archetype, **Responsibility Accepted or Denied**, through their desire to give something back for what they have been given. The invitation to the audience to explore their inner worlds is extended in the spirit of recognising that though this will be a difficult journey for them, it will be an enriching one. Having completed this phase of their journey, they enter the **second motif** of **Living Consciously**. They have reached a stage of greater consciousness of life. They recognise that they are interdependent with others, they are at peace for now, but they know that they are in a process whereby they are always 'becoming'. One learner's reflection highlights this: "Each year you think you're finished, but then you discover there's more to come".

Performance

The group presented their performance at the National Folk Theatre on May 23rd. 2006, to a capacity audience. Following the performance, they brought their masks

to the foyer where they met and spoke with members of the audience about their experiences.

Audience reaction was positive and affirming with patrons sharing with the group their feelings of being deeply moved by it. One patron's comment summarised the experience for a number of people: "This year, the performance put it back on me and made me think about myself and how I feel inside."

Group reflections on, and evaluations of, the performance

The learners planned to share their reflections on the performance, following its presentation to the public on the 23rd of May, 2006. However, due to timetabling problems this was postponed until September when the group would return to class following the summer recess. As the learners enjoyed talking and discussing matters, evaluations usually took the form of a discussion, brainstorming the positive aspects of the project and those that could have been done differently, and also individual interviews regarding the personal value of the process involved. This year, in addition to this, we had planned to do an installation where the members would make a piece of art, or bring a found object, which reflected their sense of 'self', following the project. It was intended to make the installation in the personal development room, and as each member brought their piece to the space, they would be invited to speak, sing, play music instrumentally or from cd, speak a poem, and then with art materials, make a 'feeling' shape on a large sheet of paper. However, again due to timetabling problems, this did not happen for them.

The learners put together their individual reflections on the process and they have been included in the commentary on the performances, above.

Personal reflections on the performance

Waller, (2002) outlines nine curative factors which are considered to be the advantages of interactive group work. Through my own personal reflection on this process, and through evaluating the reflections of the learners, I believe that all nine of these factors are relevant to them. They involve the following:

(1)the giving and sharing of information, (2) the installation of hope, (3)members helping each other, (4) discovering others have the same problem, (5)“catharsis, (6) learning how to interact with others, (7) group cohesiveness, (8) interpersonal learning and (9) a small group acting as a reconstruction of the family.

(Waller, 2002, p. 35 – 36).

In this phase, the learners developed their individual performance pieces, but also acted as a chorus, supporting each other’s presentations through clapping, singing, chanting and speaking. From the first phase of the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project, ‘Tabhair dom do Lámh’ (Give me your Hand) their awareness of their strength as a group was growing through working and creating together. During the first phase, one learner reflected on the confidence he was gaining in having a better future, as a result of this process:

It’s possible because I have interacted with blind people who have suffered more than me – their courage has had a great influence on my well-being. In future, blind people must move into this type of training.

Making masks, drew on what Malchiodi (2002) refers to in chapter three as our capacity to use imagination to construct tangible visual images (p. 3). This process gave the learners the opportunities of realising their aims of knowing their own and each other’s faces through their masks, of connecting with and physically constructing an aspect of the inner self and communicating this part of self to family, friends and community. In doing this, they developed a deeper trust in each other and deepened their growing bond with the community. Allen (1995) states: “Art making is a way to explore our imagination and to begin to allow it to be more flexible, to learn how to see more options” (p. 4). In exploring and communicating this inner aspect of their individual stories through multiple art forms, the learners opened themselves and their community to the multiple meanings and possibilities that exist in life for all of us.

This chapter illuminates the experiences of the learners as they journeyed through their sixth pilgrimage of personal myth-making. Without being aware of it, this was the final stage in their journey. In a re-structuring of their learning programme, drama was omitted from the timetable. During each of their six performances in the ‘Hidden

Voices from the Dark' project, Atkinson's (1995) definition of shaping a personal myth, that of separation, initiation, return, was given life through the learners' enactment of this process in their own lives, through Knill's (2005) theory of intermodal expressive arts. Cajete (1994) states that in indigenous communities, "everyone was an artist" (p. 149). In these performances, the learners became artists creating images of their inner lives. Cajete (1994) believes that:

In each process of creation, there must be an initiation, purification, death and rebirth of the artist through focused creative work. In working, reworking and suffering into being a work of art, the artist is creating and recreating himself. It is in a metaphoric sense, a matter of life, death and rebirth.

(Cajete, 1994, p. 149).

The project had ended, but the process of creating and re-creating the 'self' continued for the learners and began to manifest in daily life. These manifestations are illuminated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 12

FURTHER ILLUMINATIONS

Introduction

O'Donohue (1999) states: "When your soul awakens, your destiny becomes urgent with creativity" (p. 111). Following the ending of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project, five learners spoke of a need to continue with personal exploration through the medium of art. The process of what Cajete (2000) describes as creating and re-creating the self was continuing for them. The following is an illumination of the experiences of three of these learners.

Learner 3

"Smaointe Cinn mÓige – talamh naofa, uisce coiseartha" (Thoughts of my youth – sacred ground, holy water)

Date: 23rd. April, 2008.

Material: Clay



Content:

My first memories of life are when I walked the roads near my own home, with my grandfather, in the town of Kilgarvan. It was he that introduced me to the fields, the wild life and all the strange happenings that made up his wonderful world. As a boy, I did not realise the influence of my grandfather on our family.

It was on one of these trips of a lifetime, that I went first to the holy well in Coolard. We journeyed there on that day and the happy memory of it still lingers deeply in my mind.

“Smaointe Cinn mÓige – Talamh Naofa, Uisce Coisceartha” – that’s what I’m going to call this piece. In my art, through my hands, I am going to describe some of the feelings that took place on that lovely afternoon, so long ago now.

The centre piece depicts the crucifix overlooking the holy well. On the right is the fallen symbol of Paganism, which is a Celtic Cross. The outer part of the ring depicts the influence the sun had on our ancestors who worshipped it greatly. They were very earthy people and worshipped fire, water, sun and earth. I believe these earthy, pagan people were looking for a true God and found it in the elements. The centre piece is a young boy kneeling with his hands joined. Seated on the well near him is an older man with his hand extended and his index finger pointing upwards. Near the well is a little upturned drinking cup, which signifies that both have drunk the water from the holy well. Standing nearby, is a big tree with a bird on top. This signifies the beauty of the wild life that exists all around this remote and lovely, holy place. Leading away from the well is a path with a Standing Stone. Coming forward on the path is a person, kneeling with outstretched hands, coming forward in hope at this holy well.

On that day, my grandfather instructed me on how to pray and to respect the water in the well, which he termed, “the water of life”. He said that if the world was without water for three weeks, then life would not exist as we knew it on this planet. “This, my boy, must surely be the greatest miracle of all”. Then he called me forth and asked me to look into the well and there in the clear water that day, I saw a boy smiling up at me. It was indeed, my own reflection. I dropped a little stone and my reflection disappeared and my grandfather pointed to an emerging bubble of air from the bottom of the well, which seemed to break.

He told me that long ago, his grandfather too had shown him this bubble of water from the well. As the ripples calmed, I looked back in again, a smiling boy back reflecting in that holy water. I was truly mesmerised. That day with my grandfather, I will single out as one of the most inspiring days I’ve ever had in my life. As I grew into manhood, the memories soon started to fade, but

re-appeared at a certain time every year. As my life changed, I drifted more and more back into visiting this holy well.

Here, I would hope, in my mind to talk to the boy for a little while and hear his voice from the past. Sometimes, the boy visited me and I became that little boy during deep meditation, and I would speak to him and he would talk to me as if he had become the man that grown up, within my mind. I knew I was searching for something lost, somewhere, in a part of my own life. I know I will always have to go back there and listen to that boy and dream and think of him becoming the man who is now myself.

He has a great influence on me and I love the little conversations I have with him, because he is the boy that grew into the man that I am today. That journey on that morning, so long ago, with my grandfather, has inspired in me a kindness and a love of all things beautiful.

On May Eve, I leave here and pray here with everyone that ever visited this well. As my sight faded, and I entered into the world of complete darkness, I prayed all the more. It was here, while praying in the quietness of twilight, I am sure I heard those wonderful words that have helped me all my life – “You will never go blind L., because through the eyes of your friends you will always see.”

I was talking about this from dreamtime. I wouldn't remember it when I left the room. This is a moment in time.

Art Work: “Smaointe Cinn mÓige – talamh naofa, uisce coiseartha”

Date: 15th. May, 2008.

Materials: Paints, paper.



Content:

The grey is the road for passers-by. The little stone piers in brown, is the entrance to the grounds of the holy well. It is the month of May so the place is colourful. On the right hand side is a green fence that borders this lovely place. The yellow on top of the fence are the beautiful wild furze bushes that adorn this remarkable place. To the left there is a dark green foliage, signifying the growth and beauty of the month of May which is a special time to visit this well.

Approaching the path, is a dark person, moving towards a white path which leads directly to the well. The white on the path is a sign of hope. The dark that surrounds the well, is the dark stone that protects the water. Seated to the left is the grey form of my grandfather, with his hands outstretched, instructing the boy in brown, who's kneeling and praying and listening to his words of wisdom.

All around the path, I have painted green, to signify that this place keeps my memory forever green. The tall tree to the left is painted white as a sign of hope. The blue bird perched on top, signifies for me, eternity. Therefore, I

have painted the heavens blue and to signify that it is still earthly, I have put in little white clouds.

22nd. May, 2008. – Further Reflection.

It was necessary for me to work in clay because it helps me to understand and get very close to nature. As I worked on the clay, my thoughts drifted slowly to some very happy days in my childhood. The inspiration came very slowly at first, but gathered momentum very quickly when I found myself building a protective wall around a holy well. I was conscious that at this time the water in this well was a very earthly and spiritual experience for me. Earthly, because it is the source of life, and spiritually, it captured my imagination about all that was good and beautiful about this world. The well is the depth of my mind, spirit, soul and the unknown part of myself.

Spirituality is very important to me for my existence. And I feel something in water that brings that true meaning to my mind and soul. Something here connects me to something that I cannot understand. It may be the thirst of life and the hope for existence that makes me understand that the greater part of my body is made up of water. Maybe it's the stillness, the ebb and flow of this water that arouses a deeper spirit and a greater sense of hope within me. I know, as I walk in silence around this well and drink from its source that I am renewing powerful energy within myself. I have an unusual feeling within this silence that attracts me towards this place, that I cannot at times, really understand. I'm not usually alone here, but my soul and my mind are totally unaware of the existence of everything and everyone else. Finally, I drink from the well – its coolness and its energy usually concludes this deep meditation. I'm always calmer, happier and very satisfied having visited and re-visited this unusual source of earthly energy.

When I move to paint, the picture is more easily found in my mind. But, the experience is less deeply felt than when I'm working in the clay. They are really two different experiences for me, altogether. When I'm working through this, in the clay, I'm more conscious of my feelings and the image isn't as clear. But, in the paint it is a brighter picture, with all the colour of the place and I'm slower in getting into the meditative state than when I'm working in clay. Part of the clay work is that I sometimes sprinkle the clay with water to make it more pliable and that's very significant for me.

When I'm working in the clay, I am physically in the well, and I'm feeling the water on my body. There was no thought of a sense of time as I worked in the clay and this is very important for me because I was there more in reality with nature and the spiritual experiences as I built it. No other thoughts entered my mind and nothing could have distracted me as I worked on the clay.

I believe that if I had never been to the holy well with my grandfather, something from my past life would have helped me to construct a similar image. What I'm trying to say here to you is that it was in my psyche from my

people before me. I believe that when I visit this place that I inherit the thoughts and the same soul searching that my ancestors must have experienced in many past generations. Why, I ask myself, is this so? Simply, because I'm truly aware of their presence all around at this holy well. Time has no meaning in this place. There's no sense of a loss, because all around me has a deep sense of spirituality. Even though I am sometimes very lonely here, I feel very happy about this because without being able to experience sadness and loneliness, I would never be able to understand fully the true meaning of life.

Unusually, it seemed, that having drunk the water and listened to my soul speaking, I became very aware that for some reason I was looking north. I had a mug of water in my hand and as I looked North, I found a strange pull in my mind. I thought for a long time and I listened but I could not hear any sounds. I was happy with this experience so I turned half circle and looked south. Again, the same feelings. There was something stirring within my soul. I did not know what it was, but I was very happy. I looked east, and for a few moments, in my mind, I saw the rising sun. There was no need for me to see it, but spiritually, it was there. Finally, I looked west. Again, I drank water from the mug and this time I lifted my head more towards the heavens. I was lost there for a little time. I thought to myself, what a lovely experience, and before I finally drank from the mug, I turned full circle. This brought a gentle conclusion to my profound experience. Now, symbolically, I again drank water from the mug, and as I placed it near the well, I said to myself, "That is that". Slowly, I walked away from the well. I didn't leave any memories behind there, I took them with me.

From now on, having done this work, I'll go to the well with more understanding. It's like having a painting locked in a vault. Unlocking the picture and the experience has given me an understanding of what has been there all my life, but not been aware of it. It enhances my understanding of life and of my spirituality. It's like the source of blood – you don't see it until you cut yourself. It's like a great violinist who never plays music, until one day he catches a violin and plays a tune.

Some people believe this should remain unexplored, but for me, it has brought up beautiful and loving memories. I was all my life loving this experience and not knowing why – now I do.

It is lovely for me to be doing this work, in the lovely month of May, when I always go to the well. The quietness of this room as we work, bears a remarkable resemblance to the place I go to at the holy well. If we had done this work in January, I wonder if we would have got from it, what we are now getting in May?

27th. May, 2008. (After putting finishing touches to painting)

The cross above the holy well is a great symbol in my life. It signifies my deep belief and understanding of my Christian values. I understood this since the first day my mother held my hands, as a boy, to make the sign of the cross on my body. I'm surprised today that I found this exercise so difficult to repeat. This was because I wasn't looking at myself – I was doing it in reverse – making it outwards on the paper, instead of inwards on my body. In life, crosses had always a great significance for me. The little beast of burden, the donkey, which I was so familiar with, carried it on his back. Many of the older people in my area told me that this was bestowed on him as a sign that he carried Jesus on his back.

In my journey through life, even at a very tender age, I had to make a decision at a crossroads whether to go straight on or turn left or right. Many people in my life had to also carry the burden of their cross – another significant part of my life. Great leaders sometimes say that we are at the crossroads of decision.

Learner 5

Art Work: 'I can'

Date: 9th. October, 2007.

Material: Clay



(Pic1a)



(Pic1b) Left Side



(Pic1c) Right Side

Content: *The first feeling on the left is anger and the second on the left is sadness. The first on the right is happiness and the second is confidence. The third feeling on the left is a feeling of worthlessness and the third feeling on the right is joy. The fourth feeling on the right is confidence and the fourth on the left is emptiness. The fifth on the right is a feeling of "I can and I will" and the fifth on the left is a feeling of frustration. The sixth on the right is a feeling that people have become more aware of how I feel. The sixth on the left is a feeling of not being listened to. The seventh on the left is a sense of loneliness, while the seventh on the right is the feeling that its great to be involved in all the things I do. The eighth on the right is a feeling of determination and the eighth on the left is a feeling of a lack of confidence from the way I was treated. This has since changed since I started on this course. The ninth on the right is a sense of encouragement.*

So, I have nine feelings on the right and eight on the left. The part in the middle is like a divide. The divide divides the feelings of happiness and sadness. The difference with this divide is that there's no wall and there's more happiness than sadness. It's an interface where these feelings are facing each other but happiness is winning the battle. There's a sense that joy has at long last started to triumph over all these feelings. And, as this is happening, I can feel all these sad barriers coming down, slowly but surely. And the shape of these feelings is like Northern Ireland because it had a troubled past before and now things that no one thought possible are happening, such as Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams meeting and working together.

Well, I never thought I'd be able to open up my feelings until the mask project. I never thought the feelings of sadness were inside and I never thought that art or mime were possible for me. When I started these things, finding my feelings surprised me.

My art today is like two inner communities because of the way they are interfaced. It's a feeling of relief to see them like this and I'm confident with almost everything and the sense of 'I can't' has collapsed and is replaced by the feeling of 'I can'. And, I have this feeling that I'm going to give it a go and if I fail, what about it?

The shapes I've made are feelings that are round and they're opened. They're no longer closed. They're out in the open for once and for all and this has allowed me to feel at peace in myself.

Art Work: 'I can'

Date: 10th. October, 2007.

Material: Paint

The learner painted his feelings of confidence and peace in this session and arranged them as captured in (Pic 1a) below.



(Pic 1a)

Learner 4

Art Work: “Bóithrín na Smaointe” (“My place of thoughts and feelings”)

Date: 16th. October, 2007.

Materials: Clay.



(Pic 1a)



(Pic 1b)



(Pic 1c)



Pic 1d

Content:

Well, this is about me liking to go into a corner in the garden, in the open air, to think about things. There is an even pathway into the corner – tá se mín – it is even, and the rest is all ups and downs, mixings and gatherings. I would call this “Bóithrín na Smaointe” – my place of thoughts and feelings. This is a place that’s easy enough to go to now. Sometimes, I might come out of there with the same things on my mind, but it’s still an important place to go to, because even though everything is not sorted, I know I will get relief at some time.

I was going to “Bóithrín na Smaointe” without knowing it before my mask, and maybe, not recognising the answers. Making the mask brought out awareness when I had to look into my depth and doing this today takes me back into the place of depth. I go down the road of “Bóithrín na Smaointe” regularly.

Art Work: (Pic 2a) ‘An Cúl Dorcha’ (‘The Dark Background’)

Date: 23rd. October, 2007.

Materials: Clay, Paint.



(Pic 2a)

Content:

Well, this piece here is a continuation of the piece we did the last day, where I'm at the bottom of the garden again. There's an imaginary wall built around my corner, where I'm sitting and thinking, and it feels very smooth inside here, which represents how safe I feel in this spot, thinking all the different thoughts in my head at the moment. The top is uneven, not on purpose, but as it happens, it represents the good things and the bad things I can be thinking, the high and the low. If I could paint it, the inside would be yellow and the outside would be blue. I like blue. I think that blue would be the easiest colour I could recognise and it's my happiest colour. I'm happiest with it. There doesn't seem to be any gate or door here so that I can jump out when I'm happy, so I'll make a small opening now through which I can enter and exit. I'm looking to the future from the corner where my feelings are and I'm not afraid of it. I might not like it. I don't know.

Art Work: (Pic 2B) 'An Cúl Dorcha' ('The Dark Background')

Date: 25th. October, 2007.

Materials: Paint.



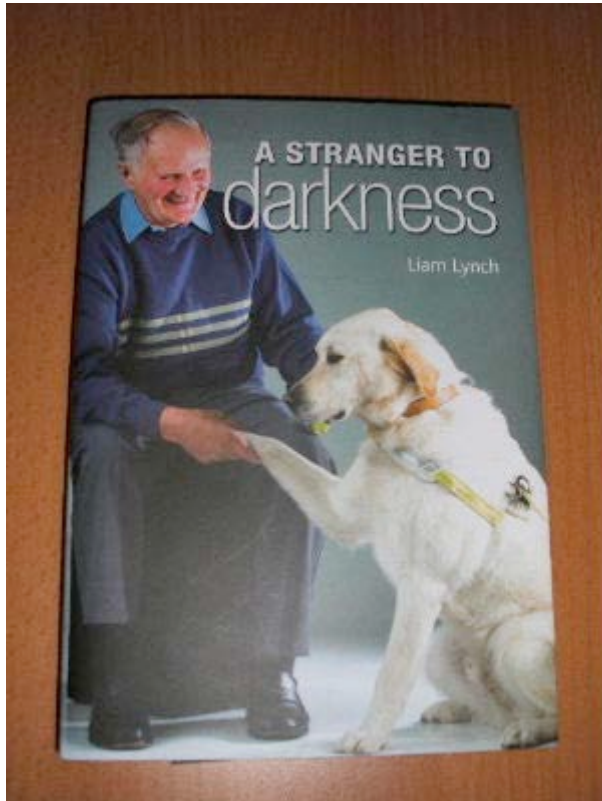
(Pic 2h)

Content:

This is turned so that the end of the path is facing west. It's my corner of solitude, where I like to spend some private time. I can be working in the garden and I'll always go down to that little spot and spend time thinking about my life, thinking about the past and my sense of direction and what I believe in. As I get older, I believe in God and the after-life more, and try to be honest – honest with myself, and the people around me. The path going in is veering towards the dark patch, which would be the negative side, or dull side of my life. And, I'd be walking in towards it, in a crooked line, and eventually, I'd walk away from it, until I come to the far end and I'm looking out towards the brightness and that's where I find where I see the good things in my life, the good memories, the effects that a good family life seem to have on me. My parents gave good example and we're turning out alright. I'm giving good example by living my life as honest as I can judge it to be, I suppose. And then, I go out and carry on in the garden. This place is my time of thought.

Other stories illuminated

In December 2006, Learner 3 launched his autobiography, which he called ‘A Stranger to Darkness’ (pictured below), in his local community hall.



He began writing it in 2000, in response to a class project on personal story. His aim was to write his story, publish it and in the process, raise €40,000 – the cost of a guide dog - for the Irish Guide Dogs or the Blind, to convey his gratitude for the gift of the guide dog he received from them. Following the launch in his local area, he devised an itinerary for a promotional tour inside and outside the county, raising €55,000 for the organisation. Today, despite serious health setbacks in the interim, he enjoys a position as a motivational speaker.

Learner 4 retired from the programme to return home and care for his mother. Learner 3 continues in further education. Other learners, who participated at various stages in the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project, have joined in community

choirs, musical and drama groups, participated in further education and training programmes, one has released three recordings of songs on cd and married. They speak of having greater visibility and connection in the community.

Journeying onwards in the face of obstacles

The learners' educational programme was terminated in 2011. This was a cause of great heartbreak for them. O'Donohue (1999) states that: "When a well awakens in the mind, new possibilities begin to flow" (p. 116 – 117). Six members of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project, in addition to four newer members of the educational programme have formed a new, drop-in educational and recreational centre, to meet their needs in life and learning. This is a new phase in their personal myths and their creative response to the ending of their programme is opening the door to further transformation for them. Cajete (1994) states:

Our individual personal mythology forms a dynamic *web* that *informs* the very essence of our lives. Awareness of the influence of our personal mythology on the unfolding process of our living is an essential part of self-knowledge.

(Cajete, 1994, p. 117)

As I journeyed with the learners, my own personal mythology began to seek expression. The learners frequently referred to the fact that: "*what is good is that you are on the journey with us*". Through expressing an understanding of their experiences, it was clear that this was a journey that was familiar to me, too. I was very mindful of the fact that as their guide and 'anam chara', I needed to walk with them as they journeyed, but that aspects of my own journey needed to be expressed on a parallel path to theirs. Training in art therapy opened up the pathway to expression of my own sacred story and part of this is shared in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 13

MY OWN PERSONAL ILLUMINATION

Introduction

Phase six of the project, ‘Cé tusa istigh? (Who are you, inside?)’, was the first phase that I journeyed through with the learners, with the benefit of art therapy training. Atkinson (1995), McAdams (1993) and Kenyon and Randall (1997) have all pointed out in chapter three that our stories connect to other stories and our lives to other lives. As we travelled together through the inner landscape, both the learners and I were aware that our journeys were interconnected. One learner remarked: “*What’s good is that you’re on the journey with us*”. This was re-iterated frequently by the learners throughout the life of the project.

Illumination of Loss

The point of deepest connection with the learners, for me, was that of loss and my own image making brought this to the fore. The first image that emerged from my unconscious, in my own image making, was (pic 1) below, ‘My spirit coming forth’, my call to inner journey. The bird, when present in my images, always represents my soul.



(Pic 1)

During the work on ‘Cé tusa istigh? (Who are you, inside?), the wound, in the shape of the mandorla, began to emerge, (Pic 2) below, “Wounds are never silent, they long to heal”. As outlined in chapter two, the almond shaped mandorla is described by Walker (1988) and Cooper (1978) as a feminine genital symbol, a gateway and feminine creative force, also symbolising as Cooper (1978) states: “a manifestation of the spiritual or soul principle” (p. 104).



(Pic 2) ‘Wounds are never silent, they long to heal’

The wound of grief was large, open, deep and raw, for me.

This image was followed by images (3) and (4) following, below.



(Pic 3)



(Pic 4)

I was aware that there were greater depths of pain to reach and I felt compelled to move from the medium of paint, to clay. I found clay to be a difficult medium to work with, as it always evoked a strong, emotional experience for me and I avoided its use as much as possible. I had previously left work unfinished in this medium, for

a considerable time, because of this difficulty. Now, I felt drawn to work through my feelings in clay. Moon (2010) states that clay can foster transformation. “It can serve as a repository for intense feelings or as a means for reparation through reconstruction” (p. 17). I felt that I would create an image of my soul that would be big and strong, but as I struggled to make it so, I saw that as it was emerging, it was revealing something different, (pics. 5 and 6) below. The clay resisted my efforts to create an image of my soul that was different to its battered, grief-state. In the shape of the mandorla, the open wound of my soul emerged, holding the souls of those dearest to me, who were lost to me, through death and illness, from early childhood, to that present time. ‘Flying with Wounds’ came to mind, as a title for the image. I realised that flight would be impossible for my battered soul, without support and so the stick provides for that. But, the stick is embedded in a patch of grass, also in the shape of a mandorla, with flowers growing around its edges, the place where wounds begin to heal. Cooper (1978) states that flowers, opening and expanding from the centre outwards, as they are in images (5) and (6) depict “development in manifestation” (p. 70). Also, from a Celtic perspective, he explains, they represent, ‘the soul; the sun; spiritual flowering’ (p. 70). For me, they represented the possibilities of a healing of my wounds and an ability to fly with greater ease.



(Pic 5) ('Flying with Wounds 1' – with the souls of those lost to me, held within the wound).



(Pic 6) ('Flying with Wounds 2' – with the souls of those lost to me, outside the wound, freeing us all to heal).

Expressing my grief through art provided me with a channel that gave visual exteriority to my devastation within. It enabled me to 'shape shift' between the worlds of the interior and exterior. It shaped my internal pain into a concrete, palpably real

form and provided a container for its expression. The act of shifting or expressing contained a power of release for me, as did its cycle of shaping, forming, analysing, re-visualising, re-shaping, re-forming. Pain, hurt, grief and trauma engulf us when we experience them. It is difficult to integrate them into life. I need not have been so alone with my grief, but even with an adequate vocabulary relevant to my age and education, I could not communicate the pain of my life to others. Experience of grief is an embodied one. It can be difficult to communicate this verbally. Art extended language for me, thus enabling me to communicate the pain of my grief, deeply and truthfully. This experience brought me truly to the place where I could feel a deep connection between my own sacred story and those of the learners.

Perhaps it is fitting that this part of the study, illuminating the sacred journey of the learners as expressed in the Hidden Voices from the Dark project, should end with the illumination of my own journey. The journey began through my response to the voices of place whispering: 'Hidden voices from the dark, integrate and interact', across what poet Sigerson Clifford refers to as the 'half-door' of my mind. It is a journey that formed a web of connection for us, with our deepest selves, each other, nature and the community. It transformed the process of learning for the learners and all of us connected to their journey. The implications of this learning process for education are discussed in chapter fourteen in the next section.

Part 3
Reflections on Journey

Chapter 14

Reflecting on the Illuminations: Insights for Education

Introduction

The key findings resulting from the journey of the learners and their implications for education are discussed in this chapter. Through following the sequence of the illuminations of the six performances of the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project, the further illuminations of the learners and my own personal illuminations, these findings are identified, listed and discussed, in that order. The research questions, theoretical framework and methodology for the study, are also re-called. The limitations of the study are discussed and suggestions made for further studies.

‘Re-calling’/‘Re-membering’ the study

The aim of this indigenous, arts-based, heuristic, participatory research study is two-fold: (1) To explore how opening the soul through creative expression enables transformation of personal myth or sacred story, and (2) How this process of personal transformation can also transform learning. This transformative process was illuminated through the journey of the learners, outlined in Part Two. Two theorists provided the conceptual framework for the study. Atkinson’s (1995) framework of personal mythmaking, that of separation, initiation, return, captured the process of each stage of the learner’s inner journey. Knill’s (2005) theory of intermodal expressive arts gave life to Atkinson’s framework, as the learners enacted the various stages of their journey, in public. A heuristic research process, made visible the internal frame of reference of the experiencing persons, the learners. Expressive arts enabled the fullest expression of these experiences, while the deep engagement of the learners with the inner self, each other, indigenous ways of knowing and being, Siamsa Tíre performers and staff, the audiences, the wider community through media coverage and with me, their guide, ensured that the journey was participatory.

The study highlights the following achievements: Transformation of the sense of ‘self’ for the learners; discovery of an ‘indigenous self’, experiencing inner healing; developing voice; connecting deeply with place and nature; co-constructing knowledge with the community; engagement with formal education and with larger institutions in the community; my own personal transformation; creation of an ‘indigenous postmodern’ way of knowing.

The originality of the study is an achievement and is obvious in the following four ways. Firstly, in its groundedness in County Kerry and in the interweaving of personal and community learning in that place. Though situated in and connected to Kerry, it is important to recognise that the project has a much wider significance. The learners were aware that they were educating the community through sharing their processes of personal transformation with them, in performances. This was reflected in the community’s responses following the performances. I too, was learning from them, as I journeyed with them. Their journey was creating a parallel process of transformation for those who journeyed with them.

Secondly, this study is filling a gap in our knowledge of how transformation takes place, through expressive arts. Very rarely, as far as I can ascertain, has it been investigated how transformation takes place through the arts, and this study is filling that gap. I’ve chosen to not just theorise about this, but to show how this happens, through the illuminations in chapters six to twelve. The highlights of this transformative process became apparent right from the beginning of the devising and rehearsal process for the first performance, ‘Tabhair dom do Lámh’ (Give Me Your Hand), with learners reflecting experiences of personal change and growth. This process, for the learners, highlights the importance of starting with the inner journey and connecting this with the outer world. Every journey begins with a step, and going through each stage – starting out, stopping at certain points between each performance, gave time for reflection and integration of new experiences and knowledge into life, and also provided guidance for the next stage of journey. This created a cycle of beginning, renewal, ending and beginning again.

Thirdly, beginning this process in collaboration with Siamsa Tíre, provided a connection with indigenous knowledge and opened up possibilities for taking this

knowledge forward and using it in new ways, in living and learning. Tracing this process right from the first workshop to the end of the project, and then highlighting this journey in the illuminations (chapters six to eleven), gave birth to the idea of the indigenous postmodern. This makes not only a theoretical contribution to knowledge, but also shows what it looks like.

Finally, the originality of the study is evident in the way FETAC educational modules were subverted by firstly ensuring that the needs of the learners were met through the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project, and then, the required learning outcomes of the FETAC modules, met, where possible, through the learning experienced during the project.

Overview of Key Findings

This process of journey transformed the sense of ‘self’ for the learners, for me, for audiences, for all involved, though the primary focus of the study is on those officially designated the ‘learners’, in the study. In this era, which Spretnak (1999) describes as ‘hypermodern’ (p. 8), she advocates connecting to the ‘processual’ self of what she terms, ‘Ecological Postmodernism’ (p. 73), where we reconnect with our larger context of earth, cosmos and the “sacred whole” (p. 66). In these circumstances, I believe it is important to ask who this ‘self’ is. For the learners, connecting to ‘dúchas’, what Ní Dhomhnaill (2005) defines as our ‘genetic heritage’ (p. 97), enabled a conscientization of the indigenous self. Conscientization is the process of developing a critical awareness of one’s social reality through reflection and action. Action is fundamental to the process because it is through action that reality is changed. Anna Freire (2007) highlights the importance of this for her father, Paulo Freire, in his poem, as follows:

Our different discourse
-our action-word will be spoken
by our whole bodies:
our hands, our feet, our reflections.

Developing consciousness of the indigenous self was an embodied experience for the learners. This was awakened in them through participating in the work of Siamsa Tíre – The National Folk Theatre. Using traditional implements, listening to and beating out the rhythms of traditional tunes, and singing traditional songs, all connected them to this way of being in the world. Moving out into space from the point of rest of a chair, re-echoed the way of the older dancers, who needed the support of chairs to dance and transmit the legacy of dance steps composed by the North Kerry, journeyman dance master, Jeremiah Molyneaux. In doing so, their feet found the feet of these dancers and carried forward their beautiful steps into a new space and a new life. Through these steps they found the freedom to move more confidently in space. The tradition was moving through them in a new way and they were transforming through this process.

Re-membering experiences of pilgrimages to holy wells, through memory, research, dialogue with others, re-visiting the well, re-connected the learners with an ancient healing process, still living on today. Re-enacting this ritual through performance was a deeply moving experience for them, and for the public. As they, in turn, transfigured into the symbols of the well for each other, the healing of self and other became an embodied experience for them, as did the discovery and celebration of their gifts and talents.

Learners developed voice through the process of journey. By voice, I mean, not the ability to merely vocalise, but the ability to speak the truth of one's heart and soul. Starting with the language or voice of Irish folk theatre, that of Irish music, song, dance, mime and movement, their own individual and collective voices began to emerge, and blend with these other forms of expression. Connecting with the voice of the 18th. century Irish poet, Raifteirí, who was sightless, they joined in his experience of living life through the light of his heart, to find a pathway for themselves, to this place. This led them to a discovery of their deep communion with the earth and nature. From this place of connection with Raifteirí, they created a bridge to contemporary Kerry poet and writer, Paddy Kennelly, with whom they collaborated to write and speak the poems born of their own experiences.

They developed awareness of the connection between inner and outer dialogue during the fifth performance, ‘Súil Isteach’ (Insight Out). This exploration created an awareness of the importance of their inner dialogue with the environment, in order to navigate through it safely. We all do this to an extent, but perhaps there is greater dependency on this, without sight. Perhaps too, a new awareness of this connection and dependency might deepen this relationship for us. One learner speaks of “*briars tearing his hands and clothes*” as he walks to his local village with his guide dog (Chapter Ten). His words, for me, find connection with the thoughts of Irish poet, Seán Ó Riordán, who uses the voice of the elements to convey the bleakness of his soul, in his poem, ‘Sos’ (meaning pause, interval, rest) and translated here:

As a bush under the howling and scraping of the wind
my soul is bending this night
neither to the east nor to the west do I find shelter
because each thought is like a hole in my head
through which the wind screams without a break.

For the sixth and final phase of their journey, ‘Cé tusa istigh? (Who are you, inside?), they used masks to conceal the faces they present to the world each day, and reveal the side they conceal – the inner self. In doing so, they connected with an ancient tradition, still carried on in North and West Kerry to this day – Lá an Dreoilín (The Day of the Wren). This tradition is described in more detail in chapter eleven. Just as the sounds the wrenboys made on their bodhráns alerted the community to the arrival of the wrenboys, so too, the sounds made by the learners as they tapped their canes on the theatre stage alerted the audience to the fact, as one learner stated, that they had a very important story to tell. This, the final phase of their journey, enabled the expression and healing of, the deepest part of self, for them.

Art provided the learners with what Cajete (1994) describes as, “a way of seeing, of being, and of becoming” (p. 153). One learner, quoted in chapter six, spoke of seeing his life out in front of him, in the art and drama, and knowing exactly what to do. He also described how this process made “the future seem possible more than before”. As the learners enacted this process of becoming, on stage, in public, audiences were drawn into their process, and also into their own. A member of the public remarked on this, following the sixth phase of the project, ‘Cé tusa istigh?’ (Who are you,

inside?). The process for the learners was one of learning and teaching. A cycle of learning, teaching, responding and affirming was created between the learners and the community, highlighting the importance of public witness of performance.

The process of personal mythmaking, through expressive arts, transformed learning and knowing for the learners. Exploring their inner worlds creatively in rehearsals and performances opened up other possibilities in life, for them. It also provided the space to explore these possibilities and make them part of life. They were apprehensive about engaging with learning at the beginning of their education programme. This began to transform for them, as their confidence developed through the various phases of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project. They were amazed to discover that their personal learning on the project could be incorporated into FETAC modules. When the learning outcomes remaining to be achieved were outlined to them, they believed this was possible, as their experiences on the project convinced them of this. They undertook health related fitness, outdoor pursuits and food and cookery programmes with other institutions and FETAC modules in a range of subjects as outlined in chapter five.

When the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project finished in 2006, five men asked to continue the process of inner exploration, through art and story. The project had finished, but their process of transformation had not. This is a key finding as it demonstrates the richness of the process for them and its value to their lives, beyond the project. The process experienced by three of the men, is illuminated in chapter twelve.

This process of ongoing transformation is further evident when the learners educational programme ended in 2011. Six learners who participated in the project, along with four learners who joined the educational programme when the project had ended, started their own learning and support group, in the town. They have organised computer, art and physical fitness classes for their group and others who have joined them and are planning to broaden the subject range of classes and also organise a social and recreational programme. This finding highlights their ability not only to continue their transformative learning experiences, but also their empowerment to provide them autonomously for their own benefit and that of others.

I transformed my sense of ‘self’ while walking with the learners, as guide and ‘anam chara’, through their journey on the project. Preparing for each performance brought challenges, but each one also began to open up a vista of possibilities for personal and professional change. In 2005, I could no longer ignore the ‘call’ to explore further the connections between art and personal transformation. I knew I wanted to continue working in this way with people, so I began training as an art therapist. This journey challenged and transformed my sense of ‘self’ at a deep, personal level. It also opened up new channels of work with people, for me. This is explored in chapter thirteen. This is a significant finding as it is one that I had not imagined when I began the project in 1998 and it highlights how in sharing our sacred journeys of transformation, we open a similar path for others.

Cajete (1994) states that living through myth means

learning to live a life of relationships to ourselves, other people, and the world based on appreciation, understanding, and guidance from our inner spirit and our wealth of ancestral and cultural traditions.

(Cajete, 1994, p. 116).

The Irish seanfhocal (proverb), ‘Is ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine’ (people live in each others’ shadow), refers to the shadow not as the dark part of the ‘self’, but to shadow as shelter or protection. We are never alone. The shadow of the ‘other’ protects us. Participating in each phase of the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project was a process of transformation for the learners. Through deeply felt connections with the voices, customs and traditions of the past and present, they became more connected to the deepest parts of ‘self’, to each other, to community, to larger institutions, and to processes, especially that of education, and are able to take their knowledge forward into a future that is not overly restricted by the hypermodern and medicalised view of sight loss. This study is focused on the value of going back to indigenous ways of knowing and being, through the work of Siamsa Tíre (The National Folk Theatre) and showing how this ancient knowledge can be used to transform both the present time, and our vision for the future. This approach builds on a past and creates a future that is rooted in this past. But, it is not a retreat into the

past – it is taking ancient knowledge forward in new ways. The skills honed in Siamsa Tíre, which took their inspiration from folk practices now almost unknown and therefore, obsolete, enabled the learners to give artistic expression to the stories of their lives. ‘Folk’ allows that which is hidden to reveal itself through song, dance and performance. The journey of transformation for the learners began through connection with its richness. I have always wanted to highlight the potential of folk theatre as a transformative tool and the contribution of the thesis is that it shows how folk theatre can be a living thing. The learners tapped into its well of resources for all learning and in doing so, created resources for all learners. This experience of filtering the knowledge and experiences of the present through an embodied understanding of our indigenati, poses a genuine challenge to the alienation and disconnectedness of modernity and creates the possibility of an indigenous postmodern.

Implications for Education

The transformative power of the learners’ journey highlights three important implications for education.

Curriculum

Too often, learning is a disembodied experience. Here, it begins with the deepest part of the learner. Connecting to self through expressive arts, as embodied in the work of Siamsa Tíre, dissolved limitations, apprehension and awkwardness in relation to undertaking FETAC modules, for the learners. This approach allowed learners to develop their own curriculum. They transferred the skills they used to develop themselves personally - the hero’s journey, that of separation, initiation, return, to their learning material. A learner’s response when asked why engagement with expressive arts work enabled learning, illustrates this: *“We take it in and do the same thing with it (learning material) that we do in our shows”*. The whole idea of learning is that one takes material and makes it relevant for life. One doesn’t separate self from curriculum. They integrate in this project. It’s symbiotic, as opposed to

having it imposed on them. Their biographies craft the curriculum. It's not just material development. It's starting from the psycho-spiritual. This finds a parallel in McIntosh's (2008) model for community development. Here, they co-construct learning from that inner place. This is generally said in learning theory, but in practice, seems rarely tried. This approach subverts curriculum as we understand, develop, design and employ it. We see curriculum very narrowly. This approach shows layers to curriculum that can be explored. It is important to point out that the idea of subversion is significant here as the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project took place within an institutional setting. The project was imaginative and transformative and outside of an institutional context, it would not need to be subversive, it would be accepted for what it is.

As a teacher on this programme, I watched in amazement as the learners transformed what I thought was going to be so difficult for them because of what they had articulated prior to starting their learning journey. Their engagement with the learning material seemed so natural. This was because they were embodying it, living it. They were the curriculum. They developed it and brought it to life. For example, three of the aims of the FETAC Level 4 Communications module, undertaken by a number of the learners, include, the ability to "explore the breadth of communicative forms", "develop the skills and confidence necessary to convey and interpret meaning effectively, in writing, visually and verbally", and to "develop interpersonal skills and qualities such as self-confidence, assertiveness, empathy and consideration" (p. 3). These aims are intended to develop self, but they do not start in the self, as connected to the pre-self, as experienced by the learners through the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project. The content of Unit 2 of the module, included below, shows how the approach to this knowledge is created from the outside, and is not originating from the inside and moving out:

Unit 2 Non-Verbal and Visual Communication

The learner should be able to:

2.1 demonstrate an awareness of non-verbal communication such as proximity, orientation, head nods, gesture, non-verbal aspects of speech, eye and body contact, posture, appearance, colour, facial expression, environment etc.

2.2 identify and critically analyse examples of non-verbal interpersonal communication

2.3 convey a message using non-verbal communication

2.4 prepare and use visual aids to communicate a message

2.5 interpret and evaluate images e.g. photos, diagrams, charts, maps, graphics, advertisements, pop videos, logos.

The content demonstrates frontal knowledge, that which is shown in front of one. The learner is dependent on the teacher to be the motivator. The teacher is the director of how these learning outcomes will be achieved. In contrast to this approach, in the learners' FETAC programme, these learning outcomes were met through phase three of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project, entitled 'Súile le Solas' (Eyes with Light). It needs to be stated that some of these outcomes of 2.1 and 2.5, such as facial expression, head nods, eye contact, use of diagrams and charts were not applicable to the learners, due to their visual impairments. But, outside of these exclusions, the outcomes outlined in 2.1 were met during the workshops and performance. Those of 2.2, were achieved through use of sound, music, and song. Conveying a message using non-verbal communication, as outlined in 2.3 was met through their large artwork and their interaction with it, during performance. The outcome outlined in 2.4 of preparing and using visual aids to communicate a message was achieved through the individual pieces of art work made by each learner and attached to the larger work. When the work was completed, each learner, individually, explored and interpreted the images created by the other learners, placed on the large Ogham shaped frame, thus meeting the outcome outlined in 2.5. Meeting the learning outcomes in this way, involved connection with the deep 'self' for the learners and learning was an embodied experience for them. This is highlighted in the images, video clips and commentary on the workshops and performance, outlined in chapter five. This outcome poses a question: Do we stay outside FETAC, or do we continue to subvert and meet the FETAC learning outcomes in this way? I have reflected deeply on this and I answer my question with another one: Maybe curriculum always needs to be subverted? This study highlights that doing so transformed learning for the learners. In this way, pedagogy becomes the subversion of curriculum in line with one's personal evolution at any particular point.

Teacher Education

The knowledge that has emerged from the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project has significant implications for teacher education. In my experience of teacher training, we are not advised that we need to connect to our inner world and integrate what is dark within us, with the light. Not having this experience, we are often disturbed, even traumatised, through experiences of classroom confrontation and emotion. We don’t know where to go with these disturbances. Only through understanding our ‘selves’ can we appreciate where learners might be coming from in these situations. Knowing our own weaknesses at these moments can prevent, or at least minimize, damage to our own sense of ‘self’. Examination of a current prospectus for teacher education in Ireland, highlights the emphasis on the skills required to teach. A student’s testimonial illustrates how teaching practice, for him, provides an excellent opportunity to apply theories and activities covered in lectures, to “a real classroom setting”. He is conscious of being the ‘knower’ and motivator of learning in the classroom. Knowledge is viewed as something outside of one, that can be applied. This is a modernist approach to teaching, which emphasises the importance of knowing. From this view-point, learning is about accumulating knowledge and knowledge is something that we can be certain of. This represents a de-personalised approach to teaching. He is removed from the journey of learning with the learners.

In the same prospectus, education of teachers highlights required study of pedagogy modules designed to equip students with the skills and competencies to teach all subjects in the Primary School curriculum. The history, philosophy, psychology and sociology of education are also required study. This approach alone, does not connect with the self and move out, and with, the learner. This continues the modernist perspective where one can acquire all the knowledge and skills to be a teacher. But, being uncertain, anxious, fearful, are part of teaching also, and more importantly, part of being human. Postmodern thought questions the certainty of modernism and allows for uncertainty and human limitation, as well as potential. The indigenous postmodern goes deeper, in that it begins with connection to the deepest part of ‘self’, and to the layers of knowing embodied in that ‘self’. Thus, knowledge of our darkness is welcomed as much as that of our light. It creates a model of education that connects to the fullness of being human, for both learner and teacher.

Assessment

The most important assessment in the indigenous postmodern approach is the learners' own assessment of themselves – how they have grown, discovered things they have connected to. One learner's reflection highlights this:

In order to understand my educational experience and my journey you would have to walk a mile with me to get through all the things that happened from the time I came in and my hands shook. One would have to be there to see it. I was experiencing something that came very slowly into my life.

His comments point to the fact that education is about much more than achieving a certificate for a module. It is a long process that doesn't end when one receives a certificate. It is also a process that cannot be fully captured and contained in any assessment model. The learning and assessment undertaken as part of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project did not negate the structured FETAC learning and outcomes for the learners. They weren't mutually exclusive. Both approaches were valued by the learners, who in addition to acknowledging their personal growth through connecting with the deep 'self' through expressive arts, were proud to receive FETAC certification in the modules they completed. I wonder if we had the FETAC qualifications only, would they have led to transformative personal development? This is possibly a question for another study.

Working from this 'Indigenous Post-Modern' paradigm in education, connects the person to the real 'self', to the environment, to the community, and beyond. Learners move into this connection from the point of pre-existing and original 'self'. Evolving from this point, we are less likely to lose touch with our indigenati. Everything we engage with as learners, such as new technology, is filtered through this frame of conscious existence. As the learners demonstrate, we keep that which fits with a sense of a deeply connected 'self' and let go of that which is superfluous to that way of being in the world. It is a process of evolution that protects against the disconnectedness of modernism.

Reflection on Methodology

The conceptual framework and expressive arts-based, heuristic methodology provided me with the truest way I could find, to fully illuminate the transformative journey of the learners, in this study. Atkinson's (1995) blue-print for the personal myth or sacred story, that of Separation, Initiation, Return, provided a way to understand the sacred journey of the learners. It also provided the understanding that this pattern of journey is one that, once ended, could begin all over again. Knill's (2005) theory of intermodal expressive arts, provided a place where this pattern could be explored and lived out, creatively. The lived experience of this pattern by the learners, was made visible through a heuristic research process, which was fulfilled through a wide range of media, including art, drama, music, dance, movement, a cd and dvd of performances, and both informal verbal and written reflections. This methodology was very useful in tracing the individual journeys of transformation, for the learners.

But, the co-constructing of knowledge between the learners and the community is a key finding of this study. While the community learning is not explored in the study, it is worth considering how well the methodology used to trace the journey of transformation of the learners, would serve this purpose. This methodology was a painstaking process, involving a parallel process of journey for the guide/researcher. This was suited to the study of the learners as their numbers were small, but it may not be as applicable, in this very personalised way, to a study of community.

During the course of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project, I had from time to time, considered a way to facilitate a broader community response than that provided through discussions following performances and casual encounters in the street. I envisaged a process of 'aesthetic response' as a solution. For example, following a performance, the community would be invited to respond to the work, through drama, music, song, art, poetry, written reflections. Time would be given to create the responses. These responses could then be performed, with the learners responding aesthetically in performance, to them. Through this, a cycle of conversation about journey could begin and continue, involving various community organisations, such as drama, musical and art groups, schools, adult education programmes, retirement

homes and clubs, to name but a few. So many of these groups operate in isolation from each other and this could open up a way for meaningful conversations and connections. The arts would provide multivocal ways to have these conversations. As discussed in Chapter Four, Leavy (2009) believes that arts-based practices encourage dialogue, which is critical to creating understanding, and that they do so in ways which draw forth more emotional responses (p. 14). These responses could be further amplified through involvement of local radio and newspapers. Technology too, through use of YouTube, could draw responses from a wider community. It was not possible for me to undertake this task, due to lack of resources and teaching responsibilities.

This process would also address the principal limitation of this study, that of excluding the stories of learning experienced by community, family and the Siamsa Tíre company, throughout the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’, project. These stories, as well as my own story, could be facilitated within this process of ‘aesthetic response’, though they could also be effectively explored through narrative inquiry.

Limitations of the study

This study is principally limited, due to the extent of the data involved in the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project. Each one of the six performances, individually, would provide enough data for a study. The individual journeys of the learners and the theme of each performance could be explored in greater depth in this way. I was uncertain whether to include one, or all six performances, in this study, but decided on the latter as I believe that showing the continuity of the performances gives a validity to the study. This was not a ‘once only’ experience, but a longer journey that gave greater visibility to the process of transformation for the learners.

In limiting the study to the journey of the learners, other stories, outlined in the above methodological reflection section, are merely glimpsed, and not illuminated. Where these glimpses are visible, we begin to see the potential for other stories of transformation. For example, a learner reflects, following the first performance, ‘Tabhair dom do Lámh’ (Give me your Hand), that the performance had a wonderful

effect on the families. Also, following the fifth performance, ‘Súil Isteach’ (Insight Out), one woman who worked in the school attended by the learners, spoke of not realising how hard it was, without sight. My own parallel journey of transformation is limited also to the sharing of the aspect I experienced during the mask-making process and sixth performance, ‘Cé tusa istigh?’ (Who are you, inside?).

But, the journey of transformation began with the learners. Through their process, those of us who journeyed with them began to open to our own potential for transformation. There are limitations in all studies. The journey of the learners is rightfully the primary focus in this study. The limitations in this study can be counted among the many possibilities for further studies, explored below.

Further Studies

The other stories of the project, as yet untold and described in chapter four could form the basis for future studies. So too, individually, could each of the six performances of the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project. An interesting follow-on study could arise from undertaking the same project in an urban setting. It would be interesting to discover what the journey would illuminate for learners in this setting, as they would not have the experience of a shared background of place and culture. Their backgrounds would be multicultural and more diverse. The element of ancestral connection and ‘dúchas’, described by Ní Dhomhnaill (2005) as ‘genetic heritage’ (p. 97), present in the ‘Hidden Voices from the Dark’ project, would not apply as strongly. The learners were rooted in ‘place’ for generations. In urban settings, this largely, would not be the case. So, the question of time in a study like this would be important, as one would expect the sense of connectedness to place to be different, depending on the length of time lived there. It would pose the question: “Is the indigenous postmodern possible in all settings, or only where there is connection to the indigenous?” The study would need to be carried out in the same format as this one, in order to be true to the spirit of this research.

It would be interesting also to work in this way with conflicted communities and with mixed groups, for example, native Irish and new Irish citizens from other cultures,

now part of our communities and to experience how this approach could help people to transcend their differences. The study illuminates the transformative power of this work in creating a sense of connection and belonging and it would be important to experience its results in these settings.

From my experiences on the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project, I believe that a study of this nature cannot take be undertaken in a detached way, by a researcher. It requires a 'feeling into' and a connection with elements in the place, and allowing oneself to be directed by those elements, towards that which needs to be drawn together, in community. This belief could be explored in a study. Could a teacher work with learners, using the same project plan, taking a more detached position, and achieve the same outcomes? I undertook this work in a deeply connected way and I travelled and grew into it as the journey progressed. The outcome of the project depended as much on my development as that of the learners.

There is room for autoethnographic studies among researchers undertaking similar projects. I have illuminated an aspect of my own journey in this study in Chapter Thirteen. As the study is focused on the journey of the learners, this could not be explored in greater detail here. The aspect illuminated, highlights my parallel journey with that of the learners. An ethnographic study on the role of the researcher is also relevant here. If a researcher researched the researchers of these studies, what would they discover? One of the primary sources of ethnographic data is that of participant observation. This represents the dual role of the ethnographer, that of participant in the life of the setting, while also maintaining a position as observer. This could provide interesting perspectives in terms of researchers approaching the research from connected and more distant positions.

In relation to the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project, it could be useful, in the future, to re-connect with the learners again, and explore with them, the ongoing influences of the project on their lives. There is evidence, in their efforts to set up their own learning programme, that the transformation is ongoing for them. Reflecting on developments with these learners, and also with the learners who were part of the project, but who have graduated from the learning programme prior to its

ending, could provide further insights into the process of transformation initiated by the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project.

And finally, through the lens of Jung's theory of 'active imagination', the individual stories of healing for the learners could be further illuminated. Jung developed an on-going relationship with his creativity as a means of healing his own inner turmoil and pain. He called this therapeutic method 'active imagination', and he believed that it was a natural process, which could go on over many years, rather than a technique to be mastered. 'Healing' was an important part of the project for the learners and could be given greater illumination through their individual stories.

Concluding Thoughts

This study was truly inspired by the journey of the learners on the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project. The project was conceived of, as a 'once off' performance, which would be transformative for both the learners and the community. Following the performance, it was clear from the learners that they had started on a journey, which would continue. Their journey through the six performances of the project were truly transformative for them, for me and for the community, who witnessed its unfolding. This was something that I could not ignore and hence, this study. I found it difficult to portray this level and extent of human transformation in the study. Each time I re-experienced the performances through the DVDs and CD, I experienced deeper layers of feeling and connection.

Working through the process of writing the study has magnified the achievements of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project for me, especially in terms of the human development and connection experienced by all of us who were part of it. It has also heightened my awareness of its implications for education. Reflecting on this at a deeper level was a new experience for me, as my focus has always been its potential for human evolution. It has illuminated for me the need to ensure that learning begins from the 'indigenous self' of the learner and the need to create a model of education that connects to the fullness of being human for both teacher and learner. It has enabled me to see how the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' project created these

perspectives and also the possibility of an indigenous postmodern model, for living and learning, for all. It has rooted me more deeply in this way of being, in my living, learning, teaching and therapy work.

The mandorla, the almond-shaped segment formed through the overlap of two circles, is the holding symbol for this study. It represents the space where the different, often opposing aspects of life, can be experienced. In the study, it provided a place to hold the banished parts of our lives – connections to our indigenous selves, to community, to place, to earth, side by side with our ‘modernist’ selves. It is a creative place, which enabled reconciliation and re-connection between these aspects of our lives. It created a synthesis from which the indigenous postmodern emerged. The image of the mandorla below, illustrates the fullness and connectedness of this experience (cf. Appendix 8). It overflows with possibilities.



‘Mandorla – Place of Transformation’

A new paradigm of an indigenous postmodern is not the end, but the beginning of another journey. This hope is perfectly expressed in the words of Kerry poet, Brendan Kennelly, in his poem, 'Begin', in Astley (2002, p. 60):

Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
that always seems about to give in
something that will not acknowledge conclusion
insists that we forever begin.

EPILOGUE

White-tailed eagles were once a common sight in Ireland, mainly along the western coastline. They vanished from the landscape after being shot and poisoned in the nineteenth century. Fifteen white-tailed eagle chicks were flown from Norway to Ireland in June 2007, in the first stage of a five-year programme to reintroduce them to the Irish countryside. International researchers and experts found the peninsulas and bays of Kerry to be areas particularly suited to the white-tailed eagle. The chicks were reared in Killarney National Park, County Kerry, before being released into the Irish countryside. This reintroduction programme hopes to see the eagles return to their former territories along the coastlines, and inland to isolated lakes and bogs.



Downloaded from the internet 13th. January, 2013.

<http://www.lakehotelkillarney.com/wildlife#!prettyPhoto/0/>

These magnificent birds are now a powerful and inspiring presence in the local countryside. They can be seen near the lower and upper lakes in Killarney and also in the Black Valley area of the county. They have also been sighted in counties Clare, Mayo and Donegal. Cooper (1978) states that the eagle is a symbol of ascension, inspiration, release from bondage, victory.

Thought to be able to fly to the sun and gaze unwaveringly upon it and to identify with it, the eagle represents the spiritual principle in man which is able to soar heavenwards.

(Cooper, 1978, p. 58).

Shepherd (2002) states that,

in Celtic folklore eagles were said to be long-lived because of their powers of rejuvenation. They were thought to fly up to the sun and scorch their feathers, falling into a sea or a lake to emerge as young birds.

(Shepherd, 2002, p. 196).

The eagle is an important symbol for this study. It represents the transformation experienced by the learners, through their release from the bondage of learning and living through technical and rational ways of being and knowing, exclusively, which is a modernist perspective. Through connection with their imaginations, they journeyed downwards with soul, ascended with spirit, and found spaces to live lives of greater wholeness through connection with self, each other, landscape, past generations and present communities.

Matthews (1991) states that eagles appear throughout the Celtic tradition and “they carry the qualities of swiftness, keen sight and magic” (p. 62). Flying and swooping high and low, through the Irish landscape, their powerful presence is a reminder of the importance of connection with what Ní Dhomhnaill (2005) refers to as our ‘dúchas’ or ‘genetic heritage’ (p. 97) which, as this study illustrates, can enable us to take ancient wisdom forward in new ways to meet the challenges of the times we live in and the future we create as a result of our response to those challenges. Matthews (1991) states that in the Irish text, ‘The Voyage of Maelduin’, “an ancient eagle

renews itself in a lake, an act representative of the renewal of wisdom in every generation” (p.62).

These white-tailed eagles are a dynamic symbol for the renewal of wisdom in our hyper-modern times as well as being an important addition to our ecosystem. But, the controlling force of modernity appears to be re-surfacing and their survival among us is being threatened again. They are under attack and their powerful symbolic presence among us is a fragile one. A number of them have been poisoned, despite the fact that legislation banning the use of poisons has been introduced in this country.

Matthews (1991) believes that the eagle “becomes a powerful ally when venturing into fresh territory” (p. 62). I complete this study against a backdrop of a world very slowly coming to realise that much of what we have lost needs to be reclaimed and made part of our living. The return of the white-tailed eagle is timely. Its survival is vital, as a symbol of renewal of wisdom and an assurance of more imaginative possibilities for our human evolution. In Matthews (2007, p.209-210), Arthur O’Shaughnessy (1844-1881), a British poet of Irish descent, points out the powerful part we play in our evolution, in these lines from his Ode:

We are the music-makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams;
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abram, D. (2010). *Becoming animal: An earthly cosmology*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Allen, P. (1995). *Art is a way of knowing*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Allen, R.E. (1991). *The concise Oxford dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective (2003). *Expressive arts therapy: Creative process in art and life*. Boone: Parkway Publishers, Inc.
- Armstrong, K. (2005). *A short history of myth*. Edinburgh: Canongate.
- Astley, N. (2002). *Staying alive: Real poems for unreal times*. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books Ltd. (Brendan Kennelly's poem, 'Begin').
- Atkins, S. & Suggs, M. (2005). *Picking clean the bones*. Boone: Parkway Publishers Inc. (Poem by Sally Atkins, 'Chaos Theory').
- Atkins, S. (2012). Where are the five chapters?: Challenges and opportunities in mentoring students with art-based dissertations. *Journal of Applied Arts & Health* 3(1), 59-66.
- Atkinson, R. (1995). *The gift of stories*. Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey.
- Bartlett, S. (2009). *The mythology bible*. London: Godsfield Press.
- Berger, J. (1977). *Ways of seeing*. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc.
- Bohan, H. & Kennedy, G. (1999). *Are we forgetting something?* Dublin: Veritas Publications.
- Brown, S. & Vaughan, C. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. New York: Avery.
- Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Colorado: Kivaki Press.
- Cajete, G. (2000). *Native science: Natural laws of interdependence*. Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers.
- Campbell, J. (1993). *The hero with a thousand faces*. London: Fontana Press.
- Campbell, J. (2004). *Pathways to bliss: Mythology and personal transformation*. Novato: New World Library.

- Camphill Communities Ireland (2009). *Living in Camphill*.
www.redboxdesign.ie
- Capra, F. (1983). *The turning point*. London: Flamingo.
- Cirlot, J.E. (2002). *A dictionary of symbols*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Cooper, J.C. (1978). *An illustrated encyclopaedia of traditional symbols*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.
- Delyth, J. (2008). *Celtic folk soul: Art, myth and symbol*. Oregon: Amber Lotus Publishing.
- Ellenberger, H.F. (1970). *The discovery of the unconscious: The history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry*. U.S.A.: Basic Books.
- Estrella, K. (2005). Expressive therapy: An integrated arts approach. In Malchiodi, C.A. (ed). *Expressive therapies* (pp. 183-206). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Ferrini, V. (2004). *The whole song: Selected poems*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Finuge Heritage Survey & ANCO (1986). *A Span Across Time: Finuge: A Folk History*.
- Fitzmaurice, G. (2000). *The Kerry anthology*. Dublin: Marino Books, an imprint of Mercier Press.
- Frank, A.W. (1995). *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness, and ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Freire, P. (2007). *Daring to dream: Toward a pedagogy of the unfinished*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Gablik, S. (1991). *The reenchancement of art*. New York: Thames and Hudson Inc.
- Gendlin, E.T. (2003). *Focusing: How to gain direct access to your body's knowledge*. London: Rider.
- Goodman, A. (2003). *Now what?: Developing our future: Understanding our place in the unfolding universe*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Gorelick, K. (2005). Poetry Therapy. In Malchiodi, C.A. (ed). *Expressive Therapies* (pp. 117-140). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Healy, E. (2001). *In search of Ireland's holy wells*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press.
- Hederman, M. P. (1999). *Kissing the dark: Connecting with the unconscious*. Dublin: Veritas Publications.
- Hederman, M.P. (2001). *The haunted inkwell*. Dublin: The Columba Press.
- Hederman, M.P. (2007). *Symbolism: The glory of escutcheoned doors*. Dublin: Veritas.
- Hillman, J. (1989). *A blue fire*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Hussey, P. (2004). Notes for imaginers. In Ryan, A. & Walsh, T. (eds). *Unsettling the Horses: Interrogating Adult Education Perspectives* (p. 15). Mace: Maynooth Adult and Community Education.
- Hyland Moon, C. (2002). *Studio art therapy: Cultivating the artist identity in the art therapist*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hyland Moon, C. (2010). *Materials & media in art therapy: Critical understandings of diverse artistic vocabularies*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, R. A. (1986). *Inner work*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Johnson, R.A. (1990). *Femininity lost and regained*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers.
- Johnson, R.A. (1991). *Owning your own shadow: Understanding the dark side of the psyche*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Jung, C.G. (1964). *Man and his symbols*. London:Aldus Books.
- Kearney, R. (2002). *On stories*. London and New York:Routledge.
- Kennelly, B. (1991). *The book of Judas*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books Ltd.
- Kennelly, B. (2004). *Familiar strangers*. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books Ltd.
- Kenyon G. and Randall W.L. (1997). *Restorying our lives: Personal growth through autobiographical reflection*. Connecticut: Praeger.
- Klegge, G. (1999). *Sight Unseen*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Knill, P.J., Levine, E.G., and Levine S.K. (2005). *Principles and practice of expressive arts therapy*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Knill, P.J., Barba, H.N., and Fuchs, M.N. (2004). *Minstrels of soul: Intermodal expressive therapy*. Toronto: EGS Press.
- Kramer, E. (2000). *Art as therapy: Collected papers*. Edited by Lani Elaine Gerity. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kumar, S. (2002). *You are therefore I am: A declaration of dependence*. Devon: Green Books.
- Lambert, J. (1993). *Wise women of the dreamtime: Aboriginal tales of the ancestral powers*. Vermont: Inner Traditions International.
- Leavy, P. (2009). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1978). *Myth and meaning*. London: Routledge.
- Levine, S. (1992). *Poiesis: The language of psychology and the speech of the soul*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Liebmann, M. (1986). *Art therapy for groups: A handbook of themes and exercises*. London and New York: Routledge.
- London, P. (1989). *No more secondhand art: Awakening the artist within*. Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications Inc.
- MacEowen, F. (2002). *The mist-filled path: Celtic wisdom for exiles, wanderers, and seekers*. Novato: New World Library.
- MacEowen, F. (2007). *The Celtic way of seeing: Meditations on the Irish spirit wheel*. Novato: New World Library.
- Malchiodi, C. (2002). *The soul's palette: Drawing on art's transformative powers for health and well-being*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc.
- Malchiodi, C. (2005). *Expressive therapies*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Matthews, J. (2001). *The Celtic shaman: A practical guide*. London: The Random House Group Limited.
- Matthews, J. (2007). *The book of Celtic verse*. London: Watkins Publishing. (Arthur O'Shaughnessy's poem, 'Ode').
- May, R. (1991). *The cry for myth*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- McAdams, D.P. (1993). *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- McIntosh, A. (2008). *Rekindling community*. Devon: Green Books Ltd.

- McNiff, S. (1981). *The arts and psychotherapy*. Illinois: Charles C Thomas.
- McNiff, S. (1989). *Depth psychology of art*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.
- McNiff, S. (1992). *Art as medicine*. Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications Inc.
- McNiff, S. (1998). *Trust the process: An artist's guide to letting go*. Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications Inc.
- McNiff, S. (2003). *Creating with others*. Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications Inc.
- McNiff, S. (2004). *Art heals*. Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications Inc.
- McNiff, S. (2009). *Integrating the arts in therapy: History, theory, and practice*. Illinois: Charles C Thomas Publisher, Ltd.
- Mehl-Madrona, L. (2005). *Coyote wisdom: The power of story in healing*. Vermont: Bear & Company.
- Mehl-Madrona, L. (2007). *Narrative medicine: The use of history and story in the healing process*. Vermont: Bear & Company.
- Mellon, N. (1992). *Storytelling and the art of imagination*. Cambridge: Yellow Moon Press.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates (2000). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Miller, J.P. (2000). *Education and the soul: Toward a spiritual curriculum*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Moore, T. (1992). *Care of the soul*. London: Judy Piatkus (Publishers) Ltd.
- Moore, T. (1996). *The Re-enchantment of everyday life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Moore, T. (2000). *Original self: Living with paradox and originality*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Moriarty, J. (1994). *Dreamtime*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press Ltd.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

- Ní Dhomhnaill, N. (2005). *Selected essays*. Dublin: New Island.
- O'Connor, U. (1981). *Irish tales and sagas*. London: Granada Publishing.
- Ó Cruaíoch, G. (2003). *The book of the cailleach: Stories of the wise-woman healer*. Cork: Cork University Press.
- Ó Donnchadha, G. (2004). *St. Brendan of Kerry, the navigator: His life and voyages*. Dublin: Open Air.
- O'Donohue, J. (1999). *Anam cara*. London: Bantam Books.
- O'Donohue, J. (1998). *Eternal echoes*. London: Bantam Press.
- O'Donohue, J. (2003). *Divine beauty*. London: Bantam Press.
- Ó Luineacháin, D. & Ó Siochfhradha, M. (2005). *Foclóir Gaeilge/Béarla-Béarla/Gaeilge*. Baile Átha Cliath: An Comhlacht Oideachais agus Cló Talbóid.
- O'Neill, E. (2005). *Holding flames: Women illuminating knowledge of s/Self transformation*. Unpublished PhD dissertation – University of Toronto.
- Ó Riordáin, S. (1986). *Eireaball spideoige*. Dublin: Sáirséal – Ó Marcaigh.
- O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- O'Sullivan, E., Morrell, A. & O'Connor, M.A. (2002). *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning*. New York: Palgrave.
- Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Pinkola Estés, C. (1993). *The gift of story: A wise tale about what is enough*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Plotkin, B. (2003). *Soulcraft: Crossing into the mysteries of nature and psyche*. California: New World Library.
- Price, B. (2008). *Celtic myths*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials.
- Rogers, N. (2000). *The creative connection: Expressive arts as healing*. Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.
- Romanyshyn, R. D. (2007). *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind*. New Orleans: Spring Journal, Inc.
- Spivak, G.C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (eds.). *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 24-32). London: Macmillan.

Spretnak, C. (1999). *The resurgence of the real: Body, nature and place in a hypermodern world*. New York: Routledge.

Smyth, W.J. (1985). Explorations of place. In Lee, J. (ed). *Ireland: Towards a sense of place* (pp. 1-20). Cork: Cork University Press.

Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction.

Van Gennep, A. (2004). *The rites of passage*. London and New York: Routledge.

Vanier, J. (1995). *The heart of L'Arche*. Toronto: Novalis.

Waller, D. (1993). *Group interactive art therapy: Its use in training and treatment*. Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Whelan, D. (2006). *Ever ancient ever new: Celtic spirituality in the 21st century*. Dublin: The Columba Press.

Winnicott, D.W. (2005). *Playing and reality*. London: Routledge.

Yeats, W.B. (1990). *Collected poems*. London, Arrow Books Ltd.

Zipperlen H. & O'Brien J. *Cultivating thinking hearts: Letters from the lifesharing safeguards project*. Retrieved February March 2013, from <http://thechp.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/ThinkHrts.pdf>

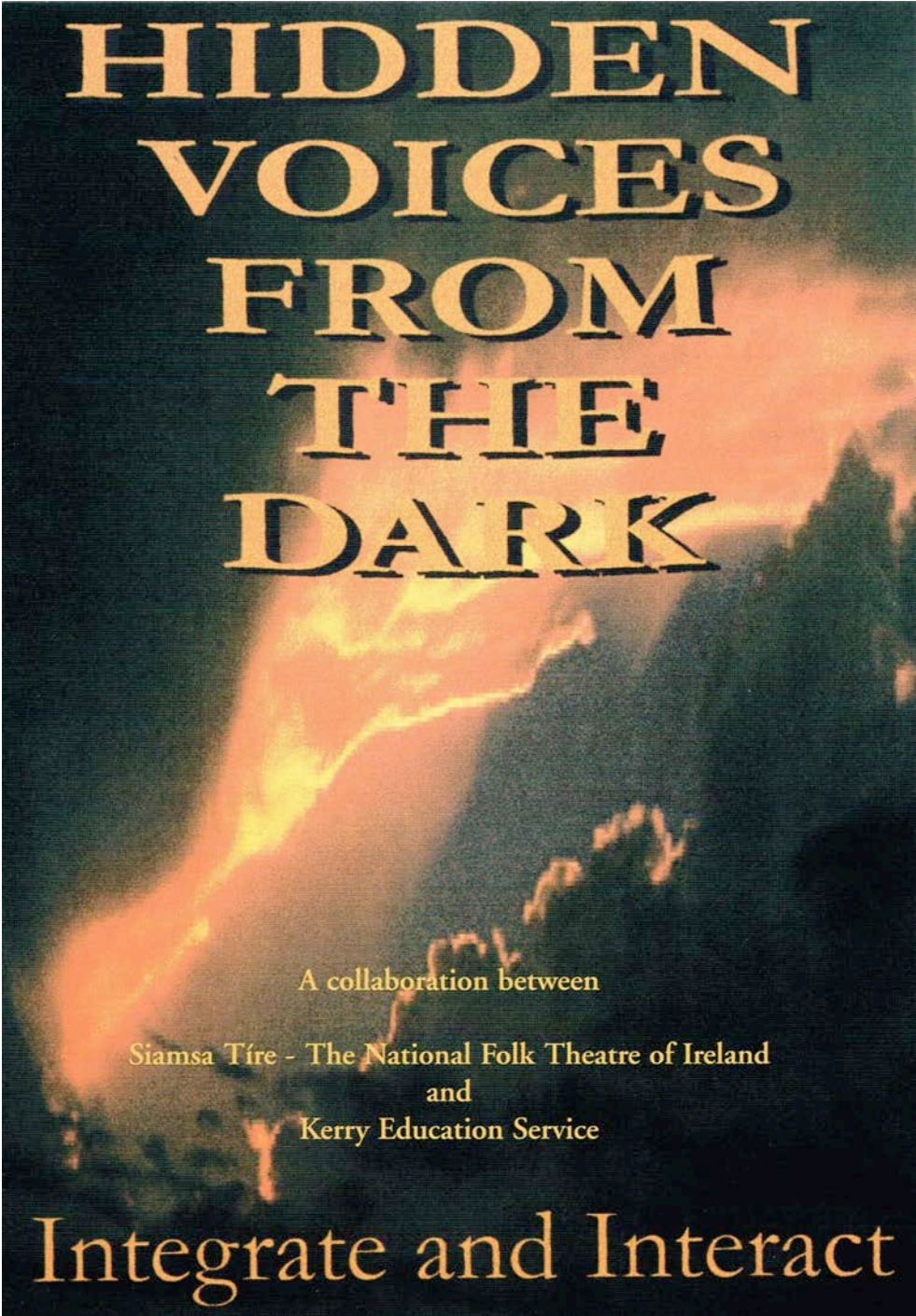
Kerry Literary and Cultural Centre. *The river Feale: From source to sea (DVD)*. Produced by: Provista.

Masterclass entitled: 'Improving our Companionship with Stories' on June 10th. 2010, at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, by Prof. Arthur W. Frank, of the University of Calgary. Professor Frank is a medical sociologist and author of 'The Wounded Storyteller' (1995). This masterclass followed on from Professor Frank's seminar at the university on June 9th. entitled, 'Spirit in a place of Strangers'. These events were organised by the NUIM Centre for Transformative Narrative Inquiry.

Appendix 1



1. Tabhair Dom Do Lámh DVD



HIDDEN VOICES FROM THE DARK

A collaboration between

Siamsa Tíre - The National Folk Theatre of Ireland
and
Kerry Education Service

Integrate and Interact

'Hidden Voices from the Dark' Project

Progress Report on Course Participants in Siamsa Tíre Workshop Nos. 1 -3
(13th., 15th & 20th. July, 1999).

Course Co-Ordinator/Tutor

Tutor Assessment:

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Acquired skills taught easily. Performance of new skills excellent. Very perceptive. Confident. Uninhibited.

Self-Assessment:

"The workshops are great. I'm really enjoying them. They're very helpful for rhythm, for dancing - I feel I'm getting the knack of it and I'd like to do more of it. I'm happy with my performance - if I get nothing else but the ability to waltz, I'll be happy".

Learner 1

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Acquired skills taught, easily. Performance of new skills excellent. Uninhibited.

Self-Assessment

"I'm enjoying this course. I had a different opinion of the Siamsa Tíre company - I thought they might be stuffy, but they're absolutely great. The rhythm work is great, its helping my guitar playing. I find the movement work very helpful, I feel very confident with it. I'm very interested and motivated".

Learner 2

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Acquired skills taught, easily. Performance of new skills, excellent. Feedback showed perceptiveness, understanding: "I thought the music used to portray the decline of the corncrake was very moving and effective". Uninhibited. Confident.

Self-Assessment

"I find this great, for these reasons: Before, when I came to Siamsa Tíre, I was in the audience, apart from the group - now, I'm part of them; I find the hand and leg co-ordination work great; the moving around to the sound of the bodhrán is very helpful; and working with our own group of blind people is great - we've never been together as a group like this before".

Learner 3

Tutor assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Acquired new skills taught, easily. Performance of new skills, excellent. Orientation and awareness, very good. Uninhibited.

Self-Assessment

"I find the choreography work great. The fact that there's participation in something on stage - which I haven't done since my accident - is great. Maybe we could do this

for Writers Week next year. They've been asking me to go back and join them for ages and maybe now I will"

Learner 4

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Acquired new skills taught, easily. Performance of new skills, excellent. Very perceptive, responsive - "I could easily visualise the story of The Corncrake piece". Excellent feedback to questions. Uninhibited.

Self-Assessment

"This work is very good, very interesting. The enthusiasm of everyone is great - the enthusiasm of your group is marvellous - they want to experience things as we do. I feel very motivated. The movement work is very good. Now, can I ask you some questions?"

Learner 5

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Performance of skills taught, with use of one hand only, very good. Uninhibited. Very open and responsive - "This has done more for me than doctors have been able to do for years".

Self-Assessment

"I find this work very relaxing, very therapeutic. I find the talking very helpful. I feel very motivated and eager to come to the workshops. I've been going down-hill since 1982. I hit rock bottom. And then I had a stroke in 1990. Between the workshops and the computers, I feel I'm up at the top again".

Learner 6

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Acquired new skills taught - found rhythm work difficult at first. Absent from Workshop No. 3, due to illness.

Self-Assessment

"I find this very enjoyable. I think I'm improving a bit. I'm not sure, but, I think I'll be able to get through it".

Learner 7

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Acquired new skills taught, except for co-ordination work, very easily. Highly perceptive and responsive. Excellent at feedback and questioning. Very articulate. Uninhibited. Confident.

Self-Assessment

"I find the workshops great, especially learning the new songs and the rhythm work. The movement work is very good too - it helps my balance. I hope it doesn't end. Can we do more in the winter?"

Learner 8

Tutor Assessment

Absent for Workshop No. 1, due to family bereavement. Attended Workshop No. 2 - participation, focus, and application excellent. Acquired skills taught easily. Telephoned tutors to say he was dropping out of series - did not give an explanation.

Learner 9

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - very good. Acquired new skills taught, easily. Confident. Uninhibited. Absent from Workshop No. 3 due to hospital visit.

Self-Assessment

"I feel great in myself after the workshops. I feel much better. I'm in better form. The movement work is great, its helping my balance, and my walking".

'Hidden Voices from the Dark' Project

Progress Report on Course Participants in Siamsa Tíre Workshop Nos. 4 -7 (July 22nd, 27th, 29th, Aug 3rd. & Performance on Aug. 4th., 1999).

Evaluations undertaken on Tues. Aug. 10th. following the general 'brainstorming' and discussion session between the participants and their Siamsa Tíre partners, for the programme.

Course Co-Ordinator/Tutor

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Confident, uninhibited. Significant improvement in rhythm work. Concentration - excellent.

Self-Assessment

"I found it excellent to have the one partner. The "one-to-one" is very important. The support from our partners, in such an unobtrusive way, is great - they made us laugh at ourselves. The whole programme was kept so low-key, there was no pressure. I was shocked at the audience response. There was no patronising. After the performance, I felt a little down - I thought: Is this the end? All of my trainees would give a firmer commitment to my course if they thought there was more of this - it has given them a lift. It helped my mobility skills. It will help social participation - that will be no problem now - if I go to a function, I'll be able to go out dancing".

Learner 1

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, concentration, participation, application - excellent. Uninhibited. Confident. Acquired new skills taught.

Self-Assessment

"I think now that I feel much more confident at the end of it. I feel now that I'd have no problem getting up on stage. I feel that I'm walking better - a lot more confident. It has helped my sense of space - I used to go freaking in a strange environment, whereas now my confidence has improved and awful lot in this regard".

Learner 2

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, concentration, participation, application - excellent. Confident. Uninhibited. Acquired new skills taught, easily.

Self-Assessment

"This has given me a new confidence in life - a direction that the future is possible more than before. Its possible because I have interacted with blind people who have suffered more than me - their courage has had a great influence on my well-being. In future, blind people must move into this type of training. As a blind person, I feel its a wonderful exercise in mobility. Space is a problem for us - we have no horizons - these workshops helped that. The strongest feeling of all - it makes me proud to have lost my sight and to have gained this confidence. I am very proud of being blind now, and being up on the stage the last day has taken away a barrier from the front of our faces. You should ask our families how this affected them - it had a wonderful effect.

Learner 3

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, concentration, participation, application - excellent. Movement and spatial skills very good - very graceful. Confident. Absorbed. Uninhibited. Acquired new skills taught, easily.

Self-Assessment

"We got to know each other, because otherwise we wouldn't meet. It has made me much more confident - it would make me do more with Writers Week. I feel now that I'd be able for it and would have something to offer. I think it has made people aware that disability does not equal mental handicap. It has made them see us a little differently now. It was very, very enjoyable".

Learner 4

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, concentration, participation, application - excellent. Movement - good - a good sense of rhythm. Significant improvement in posture. Confident. Uninhibited.

Self-Assessment

"I found Workshops 1 - 3 slower. In Workshops 4 - 6 I got more of an idea of what to do performance wise. It became more creative, more challenging. I felt my posture improved - I do it out of here (pointing to chest) - I feel more proud. Before I was hunched - I was a blind person. I always knew I wanted to sing. This has made me more confident in expressing it. It definitely makes me more confident. It has changed my opinion of working with sighted people. Before I found it negative and patronising. This hasn't been like that".

Learner 5

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, concentration, participation, application - excellent. Unavoidable absence from Workshops on 22nd. and 27th. Unable to learn skills missed, due to lack of time. Re-integrated very well into performance piece, assuming a new role.

Self-Assessment

"I feel really tip-top. I found myself very good during rehearsals on stage. It was very special. The show was fantastic. Something clicked in me during the show - I didn't half belt the bodhrán! For 8 years I have never been as happy as the time I've spent here. It has made me do things - exercises - that doctors couldn't get me to do. The main thing we got from all of ye - there was something flowing from ye - warmth - which made us react. We came from a very low ebb. It was so important for us. There was a bond there and it was growing as time went on. What I got out of it, money couldn't buy anywhere".

Learner 6

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation - excellent. Mobility - improved. Needs more work on co-ordination. Confident.

Self-Assessment

"After 3 sessions I felt I had improved - my mobility was better. I had more confidence moving around. I have more confidence about going out socially. I was

very confident when it came to the performance. I felt there was a huge improvement in me during the last couple of workshops. I take no notice of going up on a stage now - I'd go up no problem now. I feel better in myself - more confident moving around. I thought I was useless before - only good for listening to the radio. Now I think I'm more useful, that I can do more. My family are very proud of me now - they thought I wouldn't be able to do it. But, with a bit of help, its amazing what you can do".

Learner 7

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, participation, concentration - excellent. Mobility - improved. Needs more work on co-ordination. Confident. Uninhibited.

Self-Assessment

"I feel I improved. I was not a bit nervous for the performance, I was looking forward to it. My posture is much better. I found the lunge exercise and the dancing and the heel and toe very good, and I'm very good at it now. My confidence has improved very much. I feel it. I was looking forward to the show so much. I would like to do more of it. I'm more secure in space around me. I've enjoyed singing and also the fact that we got into the newspapers - that was a big boost - and having our photos in the papers. Another boost was the standing ovation. There were lots of people telling us about our photos in the paper".

Learner 9

Tutor Assessment

Motivation, focus, application, commitment, participation - excellent. Mobility - improved. Confidence improved. Uninhibited.

Self-Assessment

"My mobility improved. I have more confidence in myself. I feel in better form. I'm much more relaxed. Actually, I'm leaving NTDI so that I can finish Toddy's course, because there are more advantages in his course - there's work experience, and you can do your Leaving Cert. and get a job".

Hidden Voices From the Dark is a cross-cultural piece of heritage in the making

Damhsa to the beat of a different drum



Oliver Hurley (left in white) of Siamsa Tíre, Tralee, with Sabrina McKiernan; Honor Hurley of Siamsa Tíre and Toddy Carey from Listowel who are taking part in The Hidden Voice of the Dark.

Anne Lucey finds an eye-opening new concept taking shape at the Siamsa Tíre theatre in Tralee

Participants are aged between 20 and 60 and are drawn from a new braille and IT course, developed by the Kerry Education Service in conjunction with the NRB. The workshop is the first of its kind ever in Kerry.

For each of the rehearsals, Siamsa musicians (Nicky McAuliffe, Tríona Hayes and Aine Murray) and Siamsa dancers (Honor Hurley, Jonathan Kelliher, Justin Walsh, Bláthnaid Nolan, Geraldine Hurley, Des Hurley, Anne Herbert, Charlotte Tansley, Dearbhla O'Sullivan and Seamus O'Connor) are to hand. What has emerged is a rare interaction between sighted and sightless in Kerry. It is a true exchange between two cultures says Anne Kennedy. The term "culture" is used advisedly.

"The visually impaired are not other nationality, but it is still a different culture. And we are both groups learning hugely from the process."

ALL movement begins from a point of rest," Anne Kennedy, public relations manager of Siamsa Tíre, observes. It is an enlightened — one is tempted to say paradoxical — observation. But it is also the corner stone, material base, the concrete foundation of Siamsa Tíre.

The National Folk Theatre in Tralee was built upon old men dancing with the support of chairs. "The point of rest, the chair, is essential to Siamsa. The traditional dancers with the distinctive North Kerry Molyneux steps were old and infirm, and needed chairs to support them when they handed on the steps. It was out of these steps supported by rest that Siamsa was born," Anne Kennedy explains. And while a chair would appear to limit dance, it has actually contributed to the communication of a distinctive dance culture, Anne elaborates.

Twenty five years on that distinctive chair-dance culture is yet again the foundation of a new departure at Siamsa Tíre: a programme for the visually impaired whose first step is a wonderful, dare one say spectacular, show of song, dance and music on Wednesday next. The programme is called Hidden Voices from the Dark. It is a partnership between Siamsa members and eight members of Kerry's visually impaired community.

The workshops with the visually impaired began in the theatre in July under dance master Oliver Hurley. The

element of cultural isolation stems from the blindness of the sighted community towards the visually impaired. "A lot of the difficulties are because of the way we sighted people have constituted life and are inflexible about changing things to accommodate other people," Anne Kennedy says.

Siamsa members have closed their eyes at the beginning of rehearsals just to understand what it is like to be visually impaired. The rewards have been huge, there is great good-humour and there is a rare understanding of each other.

Liam Lynch from Knocknagoshel, who is visually impaired, says the Siamsa project has brought for the blind community in Kerry together for the first time ever. "I am working for the first time with members of the blind community in Kerry as a unit," Liam says. "I was never involved in music before. It has opened up a whole new di-

mension. I am absolutely delighted and looking forward to the stage show."

Rehearsals in a live theatre with a professional company have been a valuable educational tool also for the visually impaired. Their sense of space and confidence has developed. Dancing in the dark, but with the willing guides of Siamsa and following an inner rhythm, has been a tremendous boost and has produced some memorable results. Although she can't see herself, Máiréad O'Carroll, for example, shows astonishing grace in her movements.

"Our confidence has grown. We don't know yet what is going to come out of it — but it will be good," says Liam Lynch. Many of the visually impaired were once sighted, it has to be remembered. Accidents or illness has deprived them of their sight, in some cases as recently as three years ago.

The Siamsa collaboration may be the

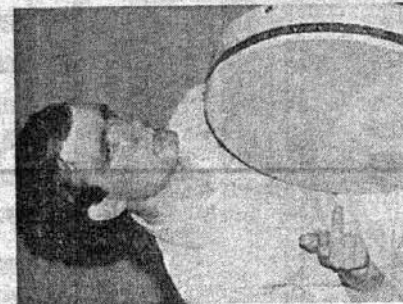
education. She has just completed a masters in education in which she specialised in inclusive education. In turn, inclusiveness is what a national folk theatre like Siamsa is all about, Anne says. "It is so important for the theatre to be inclusive of all of the psyche of the people of Ireland."

Siamsa's summer shows, Sean agus Nua and Fadó, Fadó remain popular. A great success this year is Clann Lár, Siamsa's newest show based on the Children of Lár. "It's going down a bomb. The tour guides love it. The Irish, of course, respond well to it — who wouldn't know the story are absolutely thrilled." Artistic Director John Sheahan remarks: "But the new one this summer, and the big one to watch out for is Tabhair Dom do Lámh, the fruit of the Hidden Voices from the Dark which opens on this Wednesday."

Unusual stage production for Samhlaíocht

AN UNUSUAL and highly successful stage production, which came about as a result of a collaboration between Siamsa Tíre and the Kerry Education Service, is to be performed once again during the Samhlaíocht Chiarraí Easter Arts Festival next week.

Tabhair dom do lámh featured eight Kerry people participating in a unique Kerry Education Service project, entitled *Hidden Voices in the*



Tom Brosnan of Killorglin on stage with *Tabhair dom do lámh*.

along with their tutor, Toddy Carey, took part in the programme over a period of four weeks. The project was conceived by Anne Kennelly, formerly of Siamsa Tíre, and was also co-ordinated by her along with Oliver Hurley and the Siamsa Tíre professional company.

Using the humble chair as a starting point, the production allowed the visually challenged participants to learn how space and movement can be used to create a means of communication.

Earlier this month, Knocknagoshel man Liam Lynch, who was a partici-

participant on the *Braille and Information Technology* course, presented a scroll on behalf of the group to Anne Kennelly, Martin Whelan and Oliver Hurley of Siamsa Tíre. Mr Lynch said this gesture was in appreciation of the work undertaken by Siamsa Tíre on the *Tabhair dom do lámh* production.

It was announced at the presentation that a repeat performance of the show will be presented at Siamsa on Tuesday, April 25 at 2.30pm.



Teddy Curtin of Scartaglin on stage at Siamsa Tíre.

By Deirdre Walsh

Dark.

The participants on this project are students from the *Braille and Information Technology Course by Distance Learning*. The course, which was developed by the KES in conjunction with the National Rehabilitation Board, aims to prepare its students for further education and training.

The eight participants,

FENIT.

5-7-'99.

Dear Anne,

Congratulations
again and thank you for
your vision in bringing
this 'Tabhair Dom Do Lámh'
project to a moving
conclusion.

May this idea
grow into greater things.

Collette (Nurse Kenny)



6 August 1999

Norma Foley, U.D.C.

St. Josephs Guest House,
2, Staughtons Row,
Tralee, Co. Kerry.

Tel : 066-21174.

*Ms. Ann Kennelly,
Siamsa Tire,
Tralee,
Co Kerry.*

Dear Ann,

Sincere congratulations on your marvellous achievement with "Hidden voices from the dark" on Wednesday afternoon last. It was a tremendous performance both uplifting and all inspiring. I congratulate you on your vision and enthusiasm for the project. Well done indeed.

Yours sincerely,

Norma Foley

*Norma Foley,
Cathaoirleach,
Tralee UDC.*

Ballyard,

August 4, 99.

Dear Anne:

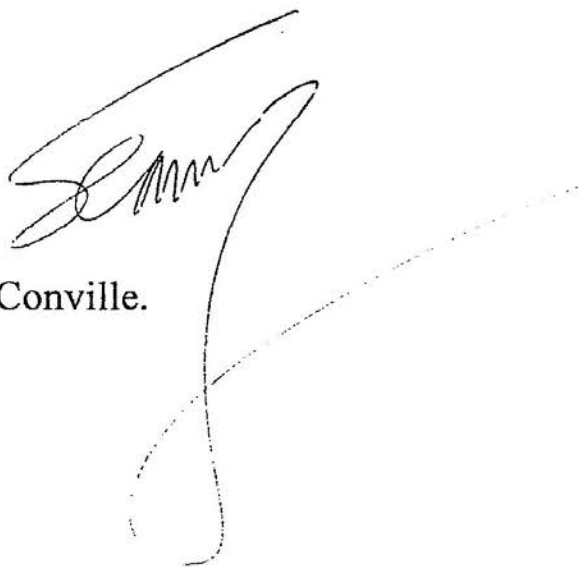
Siamsa has given me many exciting experiences over the past 30 years or more. But few of them could compare with the one you inspired today.

My immediate reaction after the opening scene was that it was sensational. And if that is what it did to me what did it do for all who participated in the show and for those connected with the sight impaired performers.

It was a wonderful and emotional experience. And may it be just a start of something new and exciting in the life of ST.

May the Lord continue to bless and inspire that 'head of yours!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Seamus McConville', written in black ink. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Seamus McConville.

Siamsa tíre



Tra Li
Co. Chiarrai
Eire
Fon: 066-23055
Fax: 066-27276

Tralee
Co. Kerry
Ireland
Fon: 066-23055
Fax: 066-27276

Artistic Director
John Sheehan
Manager
Martin Whelan

August 4, 1999

Dear Anne:

The triumph of the **Hidden Voices** performance was no accident. The spirit of empowerment and accomplishment was palpable to the audience and the ovation they gave to the performers indicates the degree of appreciation that your work generated.

It was both impressive and moving, like some proverbial miracle, where the impossible occurred right before our eyes. The care and commitment that was so generously and lovingly bestowed by yourself and the performing company created the extraordinary support which, in turn, inspired the confidence and enthusiasm of those who might not have risked such activity.

While I'm sure a jewel has been added to your heavenly crown, you have also contributed riches to the flesh and blood hearts of the participants and observers of this splendid project.

Congratulations, and well done!

Directors: Robert Buckley, Chairman; Sean Ahern; Most. Rev. Donal Caird; Brid Dukes; Hugh Friel; Séamus McConville; Séamus Mac Gearailt; Joseph McGarry; Lisbeth Mulcahy; Christopher Fitz-Simon, Secretary.

Appendix 2



2. Cos, Cos Eile DVD



'HIDDEN VOICES FROM THE DARK'

Intergrate and Interact

Phase 2

A collaboration between

**Kerry Educational
Service**

(Co. Kerry VEC)

And

Siamsa Tíre

The National Folk
Theatre of Ireland

Learner 1

Interview following Workshop No. 3 on Tuesday, July 18th. 2000.

“I find the workshops beneficial, especially the work on emotions. They made me look at things in a different way. You can do things in a different way – not always verbally. I know now that I can look angry even though I don’t always say so. I’m more aware of my body language. I found doing the research very good, very positive – I was blocked before it. I didn’t know how to research. I found today very spiritual. I could feel the ‘down’ feeling – a sense of loss in the movement, that was very strong. I loved the music, the tunes. The chants were very spiritual when we were standing in a circle – very haunting. I like the idea of having our own space and making our own steps. I like the ‘clumping’ – when we’re all grouped in together – it gives a sense of a crowd – we’re all as one – coming to the Well with our own individual needs”.

Interview following Workshop No. 8 and performance on Friday, August 4th. 2000.

“I enjoyed the earlier workshops very much, especially the research. I found doing hand movements, voice, solo, difficult – I had the audience in my mind, so I didn’t sing at that point as I felt overloaded. Not having to sing was so much better – I could concentrate on one thing. I wonder did I put too much into the research, and not enough into the performance? I wonder did I get the balance right for me and I think I got it right in the end. I was very relaxed and calm before and during the show. It was a good learning experience because I know now what it feels like to be challenged. I never experienced that before, and the fact that I coped is definitely great – it was hard, but well worth it. Its worth it now. This will help me in other situations”.

Learner 2

Interview following Workshop No. 3 on Tuesday, July 18th. 2000.

“At first when I heard what the project was about I was apprehensive. I didn’t know what to expect. So far, I find the workshops very enjoyable. They are helping me – I’m feeling more confident. I used to have a bad feeling that I might bang into something in front of me – now I just say to myself: ‘If it happens, it happens’. I find the work on the emotions very interesting – you learn a lot about yourself personally. This is important for me in the line of work I want to pursue”.

Interview following Workshop No. 8 and Performance on Friday, August 4th. 2000.

“When we got to Workshop No. 4, I got used to the movements. When we got to Workshops Nos. 5 and 6, there was no problem. I was a bit nervous the day of the show, but, it went very well for me. Once I got up on the stage the feeling was unreal. It was a very positive experience. What I really liked was the ‘gifts’ – I felt it gave the audience an idea of the person and what we were like. This was very healing for me – I felt depressed one day when I came in – and I felt great at the end of the session, so it helped. It was great to be treated like a normal human being. Everyone was very positive. I’m looking forward to the next show”.

Learner 3

Interview following Workshop No. 3 on Tuesday, July 18th. 2000.

“I’m enjoying the work very much. I find the workshops helpful because we’re building on last year and it’s a journey of healing. Its healing for me, I always feel good after each workshop. I feel better in myself. I feel happier and I always look forward to the next one. I find that the work on the emotions says a lot about me. For example, if I’m sad in life, I have my head down and the best example I gave today was going to Knock Shrine and feeling sad and feeling uplifted after I’d said the prayers”.

Interview on August 8th., following Workshop No. 8 and performance on Friday, August 4th. 2000.

“I thought the workshops were very challenging and enjoyable at the same time. A lot of people didn’t know what to expect. I also found the speech by Barney O’Reilly interesting, especially when he said we were learning for life. This year was a healing experience in that it was about a holy well. This was very good, because we were able to show what emotions people could carry. It was good too because the show was full of our ideas. Another interesting and helpful part was doing the ‘1,2,3,4,5,6,7’s’. Learning the Irish song was helpful too because it helps us to pick up the Irish. It built on last year’s show. I think its very useful to do a show at the end of the workshops. Its very enjoyable. It’s the end of the journey of healing that we’ve been on. It gives us a chance to show the public what we can do – that’s very important – they think we can’t do things because we can’t see. This proves we can. You get the sense of “we can, and we will”. I hope we do another one next year. We are certainly learning for life”.

Learner 4

Interview following Workshop No. 3 on Tuesday, July 18th. 2000.

“I feel that the group work and the listening to instructions has improved my listening skills and that can be used in other walks of life. I find the dancing and movement parts helpful for my mobility. And I sincerely think that we may have found a new way for improving balance and co-ordination for people with blindness. I found the part of working and designing special images very helpful – a lot of thought had to go into it. I found the experience of kneeling and being guided around brought a sense of reality to our work – I had the same experience of actually being at a well. The relaxation therapy, the control over the muscles of our body, I found most helpful and relaxing, and I will take that into my every day life.

I found the work on my emotions excellent because it gives me the idea that when I feel negative I can change that to a positive in life. I feel that because of the quickness of the change in emotions I experienced in the exercises in the workshops.

I found the ‘Presentation of Research Day’, listening to the other participants presenting their research – great. I felt part of a team that had achieved our goal for our new show. And during this, I felt a lot of emotion.

It brought back a lot of happy memories for me. And I too was very pleased at seeing a good response from the youngest to the oldest person in the group in our experience of discovering the many customs surrounding holy wells.

Basically, during the journey to-day I felt and knew that I was on a path of hope with the other blind members of our group. I found the fact that we walked in a chain, touching the person in front who was helping me along, and I found a great strength in my own back when the person behind me touched me and I was helping him on”.

Interview on Tuesday, August 8th. following Workshop No. 8 and performance on Friday, August 4th. 2000.

“As a learning experience I learned how to concentrate and pay attention. Part of the learning process for me was doing the research, keeping a personal learning journal, evaluating the progress we were making, getting to understand working with blind people and sighted people. The preparation of my mind to go on stage, making sure that I understood correctly what the show was all about. This learning process will help me in my personal life to understand and prepare myself to achieve personal goals. I found it very useful to learn to respond to instructions.

I was a little apprehensive that healing would take place as part of a show instead of at a holy place. The most important part of the healing happened at the start of the programme when I presented the results of my research. I was shocked when I was asked to be the first to present my research – I spoke what I thought were the free thoughts of my mind. I was absolutely amazed when I got a round of applause and that there were tears in many eyes when I completed my presentation. There was confidence in myself and in my mind from that minute on and I think this was a great start to the healing process for me. The healing continued in listening to others research and hearing their dedication to the show. I knew we were together in something good and good could only come out of it.

The journey where we reached up in exaltation and down in adoration, where blind people put hands on blind people leading each other on, was very powerful and healing for me. The young and old, their bodies forming a shape of a holy well, the kneeling down, making a powerful Sign of the Cross was very healing – you’ve no idea Anne. Drinking the pure water, taking up a stone and making the Sign of the Cross on a human being representing Jesus Christ was very emotional and healing. I stood before crosses before, but this time, the cross was human – that was very emotional. The tying of the knot to release the pain from my mind and the minds of my friends – I prayed at that time – that was healing for me.

The recognising of the gifts within me was beautiful. There was life and hope in that expression. I think differently about myself now – I am stronger, more positive, I don’t despair as easily. I got no “black downs” this week-end and I was expecting to. I found the formation of the three rings on stage to be very spiritual and uplifting – very healing.

The celebration dance and happiness at the end was wonderful. The final part – where I was able to face about 300 people with a smile on my face, confidence in my heart, brought down the curtains on a very beautiful day for me. One of my friends said to me afterwards: ‘I would love to have done and have achieved what you achieved on the stage of Siamsa Tire today, Liam’.

I think it is very important to do a show at the end of the workshops – there is no point and no finality without a show. You learn from each workshop – but you complete the jigsaw with a show.

I think that it raised public awareness of visual impairment more than booklets printed or radio programmes broadcast on the subject. I think people are now beginning to understand and listen to us when we say that blindness is not the terrible disability it was in the past”.

Learner 5

Interview following Workshop No. 3 on Tuesday, July 18th. 2000.

“ I’m finding the workshops better this year than last year because my mobility is better this year than last year, due to last year’s workshops and the mobility work I’ve done at the training centre. Up to then, my only mobility work was around at home.

I find the talking I have to do at the workshops very helpful. I’m thinking of ideas more and I have much more to say and I know more.

I find the work on the emotions very good – it will help me in life – I feel away better inside me and my memory is better too.

I also found the research work very helpful – I had no interest in that kind of thing before, but, it was great to put the book on the scanner and find out about things. Writing the research was a great help with the spellings too”.

Interview on Tuesday, August 8th. following Workshop No. 8 and performance on Friday, August 3rd. 2000.

“I found everything away easier this time. I found the moving around on the stage easier. I found the dancing OK – I was never good at it the best day ever!! But, I found myself more independent. I found that my self-confidence and mobility improved a lot. This was a healing journey for me – I feel so happy after it because I was able to do something.

I think it is a very good idea to put a show together at the end of the workshops. You learn how to put things together, especially with the research.

I think it was a very good exercise. I think the public are more aware of what we can do – they were inclined to ignore us before. Before, they thought we could only listen to the radio. I would like to do another show because I’d get to know more people in Siamsa Tire and I’d be more confident after it. And it would be good for my mobility”.

Learner 6

Interview following Workshop No. 3 on Tuesday, July 18th. 2000.

“There is a lot of difference between last year and this year. It is giving me more confidence this year.

I found the work on emotions very good and very useful. It will be helpful in life.

I found doing the research difficult at first, but I enjoyed it when I got used to it. We need far less help with movement from the Siamsa Tire group this year and that’s good. We also know the Siamsa Tire group better this year”.

Interview on Tuesday, August 8th. following Workshop No. 8 and performance on Friday, August 4th. 2000.

“I found everything overall – great. Once everything came together – the lights, the music, it was great – it was a lot easier to work. I found having the one partner very good.

I found it a healing journey for me. The last seven months have been very difficult. But since I came down to the workshops, it has lifted me a lot. It has done wonders for me. I can feel it. I haven’t felt this good in myself for ages. I’d like to perform it again. The friends I’ve made here are great – we have friends outside of class now – we often meet the lads here for lunch. Friends like that are very important.

The important part is the way I’ve come out of myself after the last seven months”.

Course Co-Ordinator & Tutor

“I found the workshops a great challenge – I had to put more work into the workshops this year. I think if there wasn’t a performance at the end we wouldn’t be motivated, whereas I didn’t do the research, when we split up for the workshops, it was Helen and I who put the Cross shape together.

I think my self-confidence improved – all the skills we learned, the emotional aspect – were all a lot easier. I found no pressure, only challenge, and this was positive.

I think it was a good idea to change partners during the workshops – they showed me different skills. Last year, this might have thrown me – not so, this year.

If there is going to be another performance, I would hope it would be sooner rather than later.

I would be very strong on performance. Individual workshops in dance, singing, movement, prior to the workshops would be very helpful”.



Jonathan Kelliher, Banemore, and Michael Long, Currow, practising their dance movement.



Aine Murray and Sabrina McKiernan, Tralee, acting in 'Hidden Voices from the Dark.'

Visually impaired reveal their hidden voices in new Siamsa Tíre show

By Deirdre Walsh

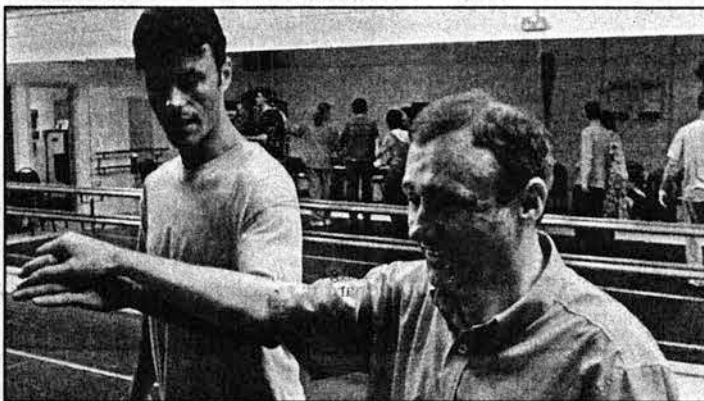
WHEN a group of seven visually impaired Kerry people take to the stage at Siamsa Tíre on August 4 next to star in their latest production, entitled *Cos, Cos Eile*, they will be bringing to a climax one of the most unusual and innovative projects undertaken in the county in many years.

The seven performers are all participants in a workshop programme run by the Kerry Education Service, entitled 'Hidden Voices from the Dark'. Over a period of four weeks, the participants have been working with the performers from Siamsa Tíre to put together a unique show, using dance, movement and music.

But as one of the performers, Knocknagoshel man Liam Lynch explained, neither he nor his colleagues are newcomers to the stage.

"We came together before, last year, and did a show called *Tabhair Dom do Lámh* and it went so well that we decided we would continue and do another show," he said. "One of the themes of the show is holy wells, and we've all been researching holy wells in our own areas as part of the project."

Sabrina McKiernan, who is from Tralee, is one



Liam Lynch and David Kearney (right) practising for 'Hidden Voices.'

of the workshop participants involved in the show. A talented singer, she hasn't allowed her visual impairment to stand in her way.

"This is my second show and I really enjoyed it. I love dancing and singing. I performed before with the Tralee Musical Society, singing a Whitney Houston song," she said.

Helen Lyne from Ardfert travels in and out from Tralee most days to take part in rehearsals for the 'big day' on August 4. She said she found the workshop programme very helpful — it has given her

great confidence, especially the opportunity to perform on stage, she said.

The other visually impaired participants in the show are Michael Long from Currow; Ted Curtin from Scartaglin; Mairead Carroll from Listowel and Tom Brosnan from Killorglin.

The co-ordinator of the 'Hidden Voices from the Dark' series of workshops is Toddy Carey from Listowel. He explained that the workshop also involves a braille and information technology programme for the visually impaired, which is run by the Kerry

Education Service in conjunction with FÁS and Siamsa Tíre.

"We have people of all ages on the course, from age 20 to about 60. It has been very successful since it started up two years ago, and in September we will have 13 people starting the course again," he said.

"Working on this show and learning dance and general stage presence has been very beneficial for everyone. We have gained an immeasurable amount of confidence from it," he said.

Siamsa's Artistic Director Oliver Hurley, who is

also involved in the forthcoming performance, said the project has had surprising benefits for the sighted Siamsa performers in the show as well. He explained that at the outset, each of the Siamsa performers was paired with one of the visually impaired performers.

"They gelled together amazingly well and they have created something very unique with this show," he said. "We have learned a huge amount from the people on the workshop. Drama is all about getting inside yourself and they can create fantastic shapes and images using choreography."

One person who always had great faith in this particular project was Anne Kennelly, the project co-ordinator and course tutor. Anne got the idea for the show while completing a Masters in 'Developing Inclusive Curricular'.

"We would like to invite members of the public to come to see the show at Siamsa on August 4 at 1.15pm," she said. "This project has opened up a whole new world for the people doing the workshop. Not only has it brought out their hidden talents, but it has shown that people with disabilities can become included and involved in all aspects of life."



THEEVENTSTHEEVENTSTHEEVENTSTHEEVENTSTHEEV

Healing theme in drama given by truly a gifted cast

A group of blind people produced wonderful images with their bodies on stage, writes **Anne Lucey**



Hidden talent: some of the cast of *Hidden Voices from the Dark*, at Siamsa Tire, Tralee.

Picture: Don MacMonagle

THE first thing which struck Oliver Hurley, the new artistic director of Siamsa Tire, when he worked with a group of blind people on a once-off performance at Siamsa last week was the group's ability to create images.

"Many have been blind since birth and yet when asked to express joy, grief, or sadness, they created the most beautiful images with their bodies," says Oliver Hurley, former Dance Master and now Artistic Director with Siamsa Tire.

Those images were created instinctively, without any direction from Oliver or the Siamsa professional cast.

This was the second unique performance — not to coin a contradiction — to take place by the group of visually impaired in the National Folk Theatre in Tralee.

The once-off performance this year was researched, rehearsed and put together by the group who are studying together under the direction of the Kerry Education Services in Tralee. It was an altogether more polished, more confident performance, than that of 1999.

"The reason is the group researched the story themselves, from beginning to end," said co-ordinator Anne Kennelly.

Before a packed house of 300, Cos, Cos Eile told the tale of healing in dance and chant. All healing begins with a first step. All dance begins with a first step.

The eight members of Kerry's blind community were partnered by professional dancers from Siamsa Tire, the National Folk Theatre. "The healing is not of course a restoration of sight, but recognising how gifted they are as people and a cel-

bration of those gifts. Listening is a gift. Walking is a gift. And certainly dancing is a gift," said Anne.

Anne has been on secondment from Siamsa specifically to work with the Kerry Education Service on the project. The visually impaired performers are all students of the pilot Braille and Information Technology programme being run by the Kerry Education Service, with support from Fás.

But the opportunity to dance, learn chant and music from the members of the Siamsa Tire Folk Theatre is very much part of the hi-tech course. And the eight rehearsed and researched the self-development module *Hidden Voices from the Dark* for four weeks.

"It is a vital module for us. It gives us confidence in spatial skills. It gives us the confidence to dance," says Toddy Carey, a participant who is also a tutor on the Braille and IT course.

Last week's performance at Siamsa revolved around the traditional Pattern Day or local saint's day at the holy well. It used the three symbols of cross, tree and well.

And as such it built on the ancient links between healing and holy.

The students themselves carried out the research. For Helen Lyne and Teddy Curtin the opportunity to learn about their

tradition has been by far the most enjoyable aspect. But the professional dancers at Siamsa have learned something too. They have seen for themselves how confidence grows and had all of that first joy reawakened.

Jim Enright of the Kerry Education Service now hopes to extend the two-year IT and Braille course to three years. The modules on the course included Internet and e-mail skills, scanning, word-processing and key board skills and the ability to read newspapers.

"Other education services are looking at this course. I think the main thing is to use what resources there are in the community."

"The use of Siamsa is a perfect example of availing of local resources in courses which involve personal independent units."

The performers of Cos, Cos Eile were: Toddy Carey, Teddy Curtin, Liam Lynch, Máiréad O'Carroll, Sabrina McKierman, Michael Long, Thomas Brosnan and Helen Lyne. They were accompanied by Honor Hurley, Anne O'Donnell, Justin Walsh and Jonathan Kelliher. The musicians were Tom Hanatin, Triona Hayes, Aine Murray and Michael Collins.

Appendix 3



3. Suile le Solas DVD

Hidden Voices from The Dark

**Integrate and interact
Phase 3**

**‘Súile le Solas’
(Eyes with Light)**

A collaboration between

Kerry Education Service
(Co. Kerry VEC),

Des Dillon (College Artist),
and
Siamsa Tíre -
The National Folk Theatre of
Ireland

at
Siamsa Tíre Theatre, Tralee
8th November 2001,
at 1.15pm



Learner 1

Evaluation of 'Suile le Solas' (Eyes with Light) project

I thought the idea of Eyes with Light was excellent. I didn't know if I could join in as I had the use of only one hand and then Anne told me it would be good to do it. And it was great to do it because I had seen colours at one stage.

I thought it was great the way everyone made their own collage and put it on the big collage. I thought it was great the way the men had to make their own things too, even the sewing. And I thought Tom was marvellous the way he made the sound of the sea with a bodhran.

I made a heather. I chose to do this because I used to love to climb and walk in the mountains, but I can't do that now. It reminded me of climbing Mangerton mountain, where we climbed into the mist. I made my heather with wool and tweed and then I painted the heather a purple colour. I also helped to paint the sand for the bottom of the piece, and I also painted some of the rocks. I never thought I would be able to do that with only one hand.

When Anne took me around to feel the collage when it was finished I thought it was wonderful what blind people can do, especially those who have never seen. When I had finished feeling it, in my imagination I could hear the water trickling down to the sea. I could imagine everything.

It was wonderful to go to Siamsa Tire and be part of the show, because I knew that I could take a small part in it, and I was very happy with that part.

At rehearsal, when I had to take the dark cloths of darkness and drop them to the ground, I felt that I was really part of the show. I felt that I was important – taking part made me feel important – its great not to be left out. And it is great to see sighted and visually impaired people working together.

During the performance, I concentrated very hard on what was going on, and I knew exactly when they were going to approach me with the dark cloths. I wasn't nervous. I was delighted that the audience could see what I could do, and there was a huge crowd there. I could feel that. It felt really great to hear the applause at the end. I could feel the tears in my eyes with the joy I felt.

I have no negative thoughts about the project, it felt perfect for me. I think that we should continue to get together every year and do something and when other visually impaired people join the class, we should get them to take part too.

Learner 2

Evaluation of ‘Suile le Solas’ (Eyes with Light) Project

The theme of the poem ‘Mise Raifteiri’ which is about living life by the light of my heart, for me, means being in touch with nature, through the way I live at home.

Putting this idea into a collage with the group made me feel that my best would be accepted. Nobody was going to say this was bad. I thought that my piece – the boat was going to be a disaster, but, it took shape, and suddenly it was part of the exhibition, and this happened without too much effort. It felt good to make the currach, it wasn’t perfect, but when it was placed in the big collage it looked right.

I learned that it was good to have people to work with – I wouldn’t have been able to do the art on my own, but I was able to, with others. I would take part in another group activity involving art if I thought the team leader was really into it as this one was.

I felt that I was in “safe hands” doing the rehearsal work. I felt that my mistakes would not be an issue. People were confident that the performance would be good. This gave me confidence in myself. I really enjoyed the rehearsals. I really looked forward to coming in each day. I liked being part of a bigger group and the fact that I made new friends.

The performance was great. I felt very comfortable about it. I didn’t feel nervous about it, or under pressure. It felt nice to do the performance in front of a big crowd of people. It was great to hear the applause at the end – it was for everybody who took part, and it was great to be part of the group. I was delighted at the end to have been asked to be part of it.

The performance showed me that I could take part in a play. It made me confident. It made me realise that taking part was more important than the mistakes I make. Everybody in the audience seemed to enjoy it and they looked on us as ordinary people like themselves. They didn’t make any exceptions. The children, in particular, seemed to be watching every step we took in awe, and it was as if the play was real for them. I felt that they really took part with us, as we were performing.

I really enjoyed the performance and when I heard that there may be another performance, I wouldn’t deny the audience the chance to see the play again if it were possible. I’m glad for all of us that we were able to show that we are able to do it, but, we couldn’t have done it without others. I feel a great sense of achievement.

Learner 3

Evaluation of 'Suile le Solas' (Eyes with Light) Project

When I heard the theme of the project, living life with the light of my heart, it meant for me that I didn't have to see with my eyes, but I could feel things in my heart and see them in my own way.

Putting these feelings into the collage work made me try to visualise and feel what the different colours meant to me. I always do this every season, I think of the brightness of summer, yellow and gold for the autumn, dull grey for the winter and green for growth in the spring. Doing the collage made me achieve something I thought I could never achieve. I always wanted to make things but I thought that I couldn't do it, that I would be no good at it. None of the group had done anything like this before and it was great to be able to achieve this work together as a group. When the piece was finished I went around it and tried to visualise what it was like by feeling each piece with my fingers. I worked on doing the tree bark with James and it was lovely to work on this together because we both share an interest in nature and the environment.

When Des, the artist, came in first we made different shapes with different materials and this helped a lot when we came to make the collage. I think the piece we made is great, it is our own, we made it ourselves, and this is good because it shows that we can work as a group, doing different things together.

I think we were very much in charge during the workshops in Siamsa this year, because we were the ones who put them together, and it was us who explained to the sighted performers what colour and nature were like for us. They didn't know this until we explained it. This made me feel that I had power in the world, and it does show people that you don't have to be able to see to understand about colour and the world.

When we were doing the different exercises during the workshops I felt very good, I felt I was achieving something. For example, doing exercises on emotions like anger, calmness, happiness, sadness, I felt that I never really understood them until I went through the exercises that made me really feel them. This was a great feeling, it made me feel good in myself and I learned a lot about myself doing this.

Putting the show together was great. It was something new and I was nervous at the start, because for the other shows I always had a partner from Siamsa to work with but this time I had to do a lot on my own. But this felt great as time went on because it made me realise for the first time how independent I could be. I was always depending on others for hints and for help but now I do a lot more on my own because I know that I can depend on myself.

On the day of the show, all the fear and nervousness went. I felt relaxed and I was looking forward to doing the show for the audience. My concentration was very good during the show, I knew exactly what I had to do and I had been worried that I might forget, but I was delighted with myself. I felt really great when we were doing it, I felt that it was another thing that we had achieved, and the applause was great, because I knew that they understood where we were coming from and what we were trying to say. I also felt that they respected us and that they were glad that we were part of life like they are.

Learner 4

Evaluation of ‘Suile le Solas’ (Eyes with Light) Project

I felt very good doing the collage. This is because we conveyed our thoughts on to the collage. I never thought it would turn out so good. I think it is a fantastic piece, because its our thoughts in a picture. The highlight for me was having my own piece in it, which is the waterfall.

Its wonderful to touch it and to feel all those thoughts in such a small area. It gives a feeling of togetherness. Its great to see my thought in a picture.

Everything fell into place when we did the show. It was great to do the rehearsal work for the show. You could feel that everyone was finding their place during rehearsals. I felt a bit anxious at rehearsal before the show, hoping that everything would fall into place for us. We were very happy doing the show – all our colleagues were doing their pieces, and it was great.

I felt very happy during the performance and I wished it went on for another couple of hours. It felt very good to be taking the dark cloths from my colleagues during the performance because I knew the audience were then beginning to see the collage.

It was very important for me to take part in the performance, and to be part of the group. If I didn't, I would have felt useless. It was very important for me to take part because I have multiple disabilities, and might not have been included. It was great for me to be part of it – it made me feel great. In most cases, with my situation, people wouldn't have bothered to include me. But, this makes me feel that I matter and it feels good to know this.

It was great to meet everyone after the show – everyone coming to talk to us and congratulate us. I'm now looking forward to the next show!!

Learner 5

Evaluation of ‘Suile le Solas’ (Eyes with Light) Project

The theme of ‘Suile le Solas’ which is, living life by the light of my heart, for me, means: as a person who once had sight, it re-awakened a dormant part of my brain to see once again the countryside that I enjoyed in my youth, the movement of animals and wild-life, and almost the picture of life on the beautiful face of another human being.

The idea of this being made into a collage in the shape of an Ogham Stone and the contribution of other students in the class, their views of what they had seen, and for the blind who had never seen, through our collective ideas made up a wonderful picture of a living world. The picture was all the more complete when each student made an individual piece and, for me, making a rolling stone and a wheat garden, meant that my contribution blended in perfectly with those of the other students to complete the picture of a living life.

Handling the materials for the collage showed me the great use I had of my hands, and having completed the wheat garden and rolling stone, I believe that I could work with more and more materials and create images of other scenes from my sighted years. Having handled the materials, I felt a renewal of the feeling of life into my hands once more – a wonderful feeling indeed. Working on it, at the start, seemed a bit ambitious, but, as I succeeded, it was a sheer delight as my task was completed. I have feared failure since I went blind, but working on this project with my fellow students has given me great confidence and I believe that, from conversations with the other students, they had the same experience.

Life as I know it, starts in the morning with the sun and ends in the evening with the sunset, and that’s what I felt with this collage.

The idea of taking this collage to the Siamsa Tire group and giving them an insight into our world, so that both worlds – the world of the sighted and the visually impaired, could express this idea in a drama, dance, music and mime, breathed life into our collage work. It gave meaning to our project.

I felt that having worked on the collage piece, that we had a certain advantage over the Siamsa Tire group in the workshops. I was pleased that during the very early parts of the workshop, that each student and I, confidently explained the meaning of our work and the show that we were about to produce. It was very new to me to have to describe colour because I have known colour in my sighted years which are only a memory now. But I can certainly say that at the end of these workshops I now truly know the difference between red and black, and that's for sure.

Colour in the inner eye of a blind person is a wonderful image and I am privileged to have experienced it, delighted that this project has re-inforced this beautiful part of life back into my mind's eye. It is a bit emotional for me to write about this, but the feeling is truly wonderful.

Movement is a very special part of my life and I was confident of my ability to move through crowded streets and country-side, but, until I participated in these workshops, I was almost unaware that there was great movement all around me. Participating in the workshops has broadened my horizons and has given me a better insight that we share with every other person a moving, expanding world. When I will go to the sea-side again and hear the laughter of children, the rolling of the ocean, the cries of the sea-birds, I now know that I am no longer living in a still and static world, everything is moving all around me and I am part of it. Before this, I thought that only I moved and that everything else stood still. And if this project has done anything for me, it has broadened my horizons, and I am back again living in the real world.

I listened on the radio and TV to the horrors of Sept. 11th. and the terrible consequences for the people as a result of this terrible tragedy. The scene we simulated, in workshop, of the plane crashing into the Twin Towers, one student standing with his arms outstretched, simulating the plane, just about to crash into the towers, we searching in the rubble for the dead, renewed the emotional feelings I have for tragedies, and even for love. This emotional experience has helped me greatly to understand my myself and my emotional responses and responsibilities in life. Sharing these experiences with sighted people and seeing them having the same emotions, gives me to understand that the loss of my eyesight does not mean that I do not have a common bond with sighted people.

For half an hour before the performance was due to begin, I felt a groundswell of emotion in my being. I had feelings of great courage and anxiety, but, then I heard my friend and class-mate, Tom Brosnan, starting off, on his own, playing 'Ana Chuan' on his mouth-organ and my pride and my confidence came straight to the fore. Placing my hands on another blind student and starting to walk on to the stage in the chain, was a wonderful support, and now the game was on, and all fear was

gone, let your heart and soul go, Liam, you have twenty minutes to win the hearts and open the minds of the audience. I felt as light as a bird in the air and each part of the performance came to me with a sense of ease so that I did not have to think of what I was doing. I was truly enjoying myself.

As I started to perform on the day, I recalled to my mind the words of my late brother, Padraig, during our first performance, 'Tabhair Dom Do Lamh', when he said with pride and tears in his eyes: 'That's my brother Liam, that's performing'. The tears came almost to my eyes, I held back because an old proverb came to my mind: 'Whatever happens, the show must go on'. All through the show, I heard my brother's voice saying: 'That's my brother, Liam', and when we took our bow at the end of the show, I said aloud, but it could not be heard in the surge of applause: 'This one was for you, Paddy'.

I have participated in the three 'Hidden Voices' shows and each experience is a complete renewal of confidence, still a challenge, but, with my experience, I am now looking forward to taking part in a new project next year. I feel the benefits of taking part in these shows is wonderful for me, personally. I am the only unsighted person in my extended family, and having the family come to these performances has created an even deeper bond, and understanding between me and them.

At one stage, they all felt sorry for me because I lost my sight, this has now turned to a sense of pride, as they all say, I've become more a colourful personality and their sorrow for me has now turned to admiration. I've even heard my own nephews and nieces of a new generation, say that they have taken an inspiration from my work and from my way of life. I certainly believe that this would not have happened without my participation in the Braille & IT programme, but especially in these shows, where they can see me participate in real life. One of them in particular, my niece, told me that when she feels down in life, all she has to do to help her is to think of what I have achieved. It gives me a wonderful feeling to know that I, through my participation, can be of help to them.

I also feel that I can participate better with them socially now when I go out to have a pint and a sing-song with them. I have now joined their way of life and can discuss mobile phones, theatre and the wonderful world of computers and the internet with them. My social and communication skills have improved immensely and this has helped me to keep in contact with my many friends and relations around the world.

Learner 6

Evaluation of 'Suile le Solas' (Eyes with Light) Project

The idea for this year's performance was inspired by the poem *Mise Raifteiri* by the blind poet Raifteiri. This was discussed by the group and the feeling was a sense of inner light even though physically there was no light. I personally found people's sense of light and colour fascinating especially those who had never seen. This was amazing in comparison to those who had seen for a lot of their life.

We started with a two day workshop with artist Des Dillon from Clonmel. He brought some of his work with him and I found art in the form of collage very sensory in comparison to other forms of art. The concept of our group project was discussed and a broad outline of our work was formed. This whole concept was enlarged upon during his next workshop of five days. Here people translated their feelings about emotions and colour into practical work. A lot of the group felt closely involved with aspects of nature but for me it is interaction with other people. This was expressed by making two hands which were then interlinked on the collage. We had great fun doing this and we all learned to sew again. No excuse now not to the darning.

I felt that this year people got much more involved in verbalising their ideas and they told the Siamsa Tire group what they wanted and felt rather being told. This was very evident in feelings of what colour portrayed to them. This was mainly about feeling the colour emotionally.

The performance itself was much more visual and open to interpretation by the audience. As a result of this feedback was intense and all was enhanced by performing in the smaller area of the foyer.

Finally I think that over the last three years people have lost their inhibitions and are now interacting on a much wider scale than before. As part of the group this is very evident in everyday situations and has been a great success.

Learner 7

Evaluation of 'Suile le Solas' (Eyes with Light) Project

At first, I knew nothing about collage, but I found it easy to do it and very, very enjoyable. The piece I made, which was grass, was very interesting to do. I didn't find the time passing while I did it. I was delighted to find that I could cut the threads at different lengths and that I could use the scissors. It felt like a mat when I had finished. I didn't think it would feel so well. When the collage was finished, I found it very enjoyable to go around it and feel everybody's work. It is amazing what you can achieve with a small bit of help. The different textures were very good and that was important to me. It was very interesting to do it as part of a group.

I found the rehearsals hard at the start. I found it hard to concentrate on the colours, but, I got used to this quickly, and I found it good, it gave me a great understanding of how I feel colour. I found I did a lot more individual work in this year's project, than in the other years. I was delighted to see how independent I was. I didn't think I could be as independent as that. I found it very good for my mobility and I felt very confident at the end.

I felt great the day of the performance. We got into it very quickly. It was great to do it in front of such a big crowd of people. I felt very proud of myself when I heard the applause. I never believed that I could do this in front of such a big crowd of people. I would feel very confident about doing another show. It was very good to work with a sighted group because they're learning from us too – they're more confident working with us now than they were at the start. It is very good to do a public performance to let the public see what we can do, and that we are able to perform on a stage and make things with our hands, and that we are able to understand colour.

I learnt a lot about myself during this project. I found out that I can do things that I never thought I could, without my sight, and that my mobility is better than I thought it could be. I also found out that I prefer to work with other people than on my own, because they have other ideas to mine and its good to hear those.

Learner 8

Evaluation of ‘Suile le Solas’ (Eyes with Light) Project

The workshops made me relax a lot more. I was able to move around a lot better on my own this year, on stage. This was my favourite of the three shows we did – I felt more involved.

All the collage work was our own, it was very much our own piece. I felt very happy doing the collage work and the performance. At first I was very nervous about doing the collage, but, as I got to know how to do it, I found I really enjoyed it. The buzz from doing the performance is something else. It made me feel that life is what you make it. I was feeling very emotional the morning of the performance, and possibly a little bit down because of recent events in my life, but, when I got out there to do the piece it vanished.

What I really liked in the show this year was the soundscape – it was so peaceful. Also, a friend passed a comment which I thought was very good – “The performance shows that being blind is a disability only if you let it be a disability”. At first, I had reservations about having the performance in the foyer, but I was wrong, it worked very well there and many people said they preferred it in the foyer. Maybe the video will be better too because the performance was in the foyer.

I liked the way the newspapers portrayed it – there was no such thing as pitying the poor blind people – I hate that. I think the performance was fabulous, it was amazing, I really, really enjoyed it. I would like to do it again.

What I liked about this year’s performance is that it made me feel so calm. I learned a lot about myself – that I can do it if I want to. I’ve also learned that I could be good at playing traditional music, and I also thought that a professional musician might not be patient working with me – but I discovered that this wasn’t so – he was very patient. I have learnt how to “lighten up” – I’ve become a lot more relaxed. It also helped me to see that even if I feel down, I can still achieve what I set out to do.

Learner 9

Evaluation of 'Suile le Solas' (Eyes with Light) Project

The 'Eyes with Light' idea was like our inner eye seeing the world, and seeing it in a different way to the way people without visual impairment see it, and that was through the colours. When you are miming it, it causes you to think more about what the colours mean.

For me, blue meant bright and black meant dark, and white meant cleanliness. And what green did – it reminded me of the grass and the saying 'the green, green grass of home', and red reminded me of danger and anger. And then brown, even though we didn't include it in the show, reminded me of the leaves falling. The minor chords in the 'Loinnir na Gealai' song gave me a sad feeling. The major chord in the tune we used at the end of the show gave a celebratory and happy feeling. I liked the human chain we made because that's a sign of peace. This human chain was very appropriate because of what happened at the World Trade Centre. It reminded me that Irish people have a love of the sound of the sea, because of the way they've taken Britain to the Tribunal in Germany regarding the law of the sea.

During the workshops, I felt great enjoyment. The piece of art made a big difference. I used a small bodhran and made it into the sound of the sea, and the sun, for this piece. I painted the sand, sea, and rocks on one side of the bodhran and this was very important to me. I used ball-bearings in the bodhran and covered it in, to create the sound of the sea. I experimented with this sound, and when I created this sound it reminded me that the sea is really there, for example, making the sound soft after saying the colour 'white' and after saying the 'red' colour, making the sea sound rough.

When we did the red music for the sea that gave me the feeling that there was a storm at sea. And then the drone, I liked that because it was also a sign that the sea was there.

I loved the tune used for Liam Lynch's piece, where he was cutting the corn, it had a lovely swing beat. I liked where Toddy was doing the fishing because it was lovely and slow because fishing seems very slow to me and it takes a while to catch the fish. I liked the green music because it gave us a sign that we were really beginning to grow. I feel that we were growing inside in us, there is inside growth, because we are

developing skills, learning Irish songs – I thought Irish songs would be impossible – also miming because people think that blind people can't mime, but, I absolutely disagree with this, and I feel that we have shown that we can, in the last 3 shows, they have all been good but this year's was really special, because it was really our show. This is because we each made a piece and we came up with the images in the show. I liked the quietness at the end of 'Ana Chuan' because it felt that it was going to be really dark, like it is in the winter.

I feel I am growing inside because I have more self-confidence, I am getting to know more people and make more friends and I would like 'Hidden Voices' to continue. I also feel that life is not as dark for me as people think it is. Doing the show and feeling the colours made me feel closer to people.

I was looking forward to doing the performance, and as well as that I also really enjoyed all the workshops. I was feeling great as I walked out on the stage, I wasn't a bit nervous, I was very happy with the sounds. I was performing near my mother during the show and this was a very happy feeling for me, it gave me a warm feeling.

I wasn't able to play my bodhran during the piece because Honor couldn't find it and having my family there helped me to overcome this problem. I was very disappointed about the bodhran, I would have liked it, but it didn't stop me going ahead with the show. I also felt a warm feeling when people wished us the best of luck. I felt that my concerns were really listened to during the workshops.

I had a very happy and warm feeling after the performance. I really liked the music and the fact that there were more musicians in the performance. I also liked the fact that my suggestion that the drone be in 'D minor' was listened to because it suited 'Ana Chuan'.

I would like to do the show again. I'm very glad I did it, it gave me good feelings about myself. I was delighted to see so many people there, because it let them know what life is like for us.



Eyes with Light, ready to go onstage at Siamsa Tíre. Included in the group are Teddy Curtin, Ann O'Donnell, Mike Murphy, Toddy Cary, Tom Brosnan, Tom Hanafin and Mairead Carroll.

Eyes with Light reflect a new view of the world

By Eileen Lane

SIAMSA Tíre is the venue for a spectacular performance by a group of visually impaired people, on Thursday, November 8.

All members of the group are participants in the Braille and Information Technology Course run by the Kerry Education Service. The course entails four modules, and the performance at Siamsa Tíre is part of the 'Personal Independence' and 'Culture' sections of the programme.

The performance is the third phase of the 'Hidden Voices From The Dark' project, organised by the Siamsa Tíre Performing Company and the Kerry Education Service in association with collage artist Des Dillon. It is designed to encourage the blind to integrate and interact with society.

The theme of this year's performance is 'Súile le Solas' (Eyes with Light). The inspiration for the theme comes from a poem written by blind eighteenth-century poet Antaine O'Raiíteirí, who wrote about his eyes having no light but how the light of his heart helped him to face the world.

Anne Kennelly of the Kerry Education Service is the co-ordinator of this performance. She explained that the group has played on this poem to find their own theme for

their display.

"The members of the Braille and Information Technology course have turned this poem around and want to show that all is not dark for them. They have worked on a collage piece with Des Dillon and want to show the world that they can see with their 'inner eye'.

"Through their performance they show that just because they are blind, everything is not just black and white to them. The group has their own experience of colour and they express this through the performance," explained Anne.

The group of eleven performers hail from all parts of Kerry and have been attending a series of workshops to prepare for this concert.

"There were no scripts involved," Anne Kennelly explained. "All the work was created in workshops and each member expresses their own experience of colour and their surroundings."

The performance begins with the cast responding to different colours. Each member expresses what they imagine various colours look like, and this they demonstrate through voice and movement.

The main body of the performance incorporates a piece of collage which was designed by all the performers with the assistance of Des Dillon, and features the different things which are close to the hearts of the per-

formers.

Under the direction of Siamsa Tíre's Artistic Director Oliver Hurlley, the performers use movement and mime to create the scenes and sounds of the sea and the land. Throughout this section, the different pieces of the collage are revealed and the performers use their voices to create the sounds of nature.

The final piece of the performance depicts the cast rejoicing as they feel the sun shining down on them.

The cast of 'Súile le Solas' are Toddy Carey, who is the programme co-ordinator and tutor from Listowel, Tom Brosnan, Killorglin, Leo Crosby, Killorglin, Teddy Curtin, Scartaglin, James Fitzgerald, Killarney, Ann Healy, Tralee, Michael Long, Currow, Liam Lynch, Knocknagoshel, Helen Lyne, Ardfert, Mairead O'Carroll, Listowel and Aodán O'Conchúir, Dingle.

While this is a busy time for all performers as showtime draws near, it is an even more hectic period for two of the group members, Helen Lyne and James Fitzgerald. They met when they joined the course last year and are to wed one week after the performance at Siamsa Tíre.

'Súile le Solas' will take place at Siamsa Tíre at 1.15pm on November 8 and admission is free of charge.

Visually impaired performance lauded

By Eileen Lane

MEMBERS of the Braille and Information Technology Course which is run by the Kerry Education Service in Tralee attracted a large gathering to Siamsa Tire on Thursday last with their performance of *Stille le Solas*.

All of the participants are visually-impaired and they were actively involved in organising the show which portrays that despite their blindness, that they are aware of colour and of their surroundings.

Stille le Solas contributes to the Personal Independence and Culture modules of the Braille and Information Technology Programme and it helps the members to develop their spatial, movement, communica-

tion and sensory skills. Over three hundred people turned out at Siamsa Tire to watch this spectacular performance and according to Anne Kennelly who coordinated the show, the performers were not phased by the large crowd.

"The foyer was absolutely packed and the performers were wonderful. They were totally un-selfconscious and very professional. The show helped the audience to understand that all is not dark for visually-impaired people. It made people realise that blind people are aware of colour and of their surroundings."

"There were many school children present on the day and they were really impressed with the show."

"The fact that the performers are visually-impaired was not an issue. The show achieved its objective and that was to give people an understanding of how differently-abled people experience the world," explained Anne.

A special collage piece was also revealed during the performance. Each participant contributed their own special piece and they were put together into a colourful arrangement with the help of collage artist Des Dillon from Clonmel.

Members of the audience availed of the opportunity to examine and touch the collage piece and it made people aware that colour is a reality for those who are visually-impaired.

According to Anne Kennelly, *Stille le Solas*

helped to bring out the confidence of the performers.

"This was a huge chance for the performers to express their feelings and how they see colour. The performers see with their inner eye and the show expressed that. The show also helped to teach sighted people about colour, light, joy and nature."

"I am extremely proud of all the performers and the strength of the richness inside them shone through," admitted Anne.

The performers at Siamsa were Toddy Carey, Listowel, Tom Brosnan, Killorglin, Leo Crosby, Killorglin, Teddy Curtin, Scarraig, James Fitzgerald, Killarney, Ann Healy, Tralee, Michael Long, Currow, Liam Lynch,

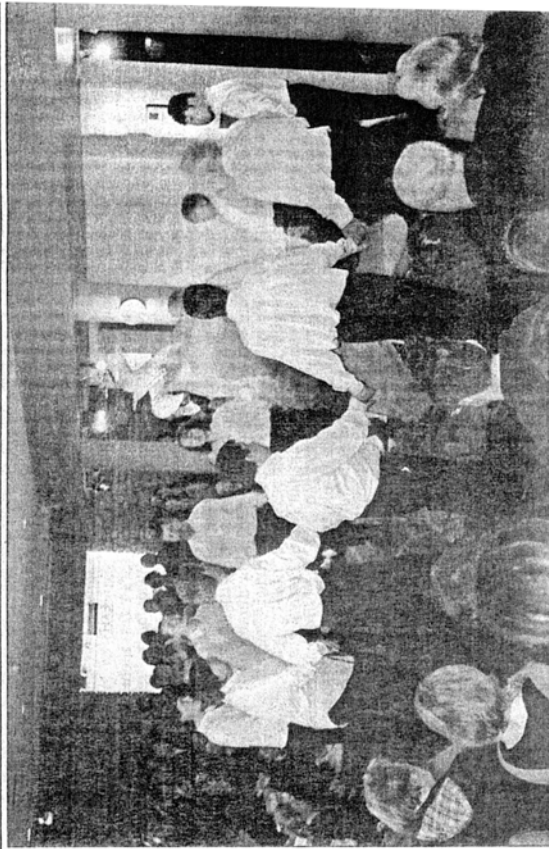
Knocknagoshel, Helen Lyne, Ardfer, Malread O'Carroll, Listowel and Aodán O'Conchúir, Dingle.

The cast were under the direction of Siamsa's artistic director Oliver Hurley and they were also joined in the performance by members of the Siamsa Tire Theatre group.

Stille le Solas was such a success that there have been many requests to stage it again.

"We hope to put on the show again in the near future and all the members are absolutely delighted with that prospect."

"Both the cast and the audience enjoyed themselves and it is a wonderful way of showing sighted people how visually-impaired people view the world," said Anne.



A scene from the *Eyes with Blind* at Siamsa on Thursday where a large attendance turned out to witness the unique show. *Pic: John Clear*

Appendix 4



4. Deir Mé, Deir Tú DVD



Hidden Voices from the Dark CD

HIDDEN VOICES FROM THE DARK

Integrate and Interact



*“Deir mé, Deir tíu...
I say, You Say...”*



Siamsa audience given impressive insight to the life of the visually impaired

By Eileen Lane

A LARGE audience was given an insight into the world of the visually impaired at Siamsa Tíre on Tuesday afternoon last as members of the Braille and Information Technology Programme run by the Kerry Education Service in Tralee gave a performance of music and poetry entitled *Deir mé, Deir tú, I say, You say* in the theatre.

This performance is the fourth phase of their *Hidden Voices From The Dark* programme which was introduced in 1999 with the view to integrating people with different abilities.

The performers on Tuesday included Toddy Carey, Stephen Lane, Ed O'Connor, Joan Anne Brosnan, (programme tutors) Tom Brosnan, Teddy Curtin, Helen Fitzgerald, James Fitzgerald, Michael Long, Liam Lynch, Kevin O'Brien and Aodán Chonchúir.

The theme of this phase is 'togetherness', according to Anne Kennelly who developed *Hidden Voices From The Dark*.

The music for the performance was composed by programme member Tom Brosnan along with Siamsa's Musical Director Tom Hanafin.

"The stimulus used to create this composition, entitled *The Unknown Journey* was the sound from the Braille machine brailleing the theme word 'togetherness,' explained Anne

Kennelly.

A series of poems was also included in Tuesday's performance and they were composed by seven members of the programme under the direction of author Paddy Kennelly.

A CD of the poetry and a booklet has been produced as part of the project and Anne Kennelly insists that it helps the visually impaired to make a statement.

"The group packed the theatre and they received a standing ovation at the end. Many of the literacy tools used by the group, including the Braille machines and adaptive computer programmes, were on the stage during the performance and this gave sighted people a better understanding of the performers who cannot see.

"This show was their voice and in this, the European Year of the Disabled, their voice must be heard," said Anne.

She added that the performance helped to bring both the sighted and visually impaired together.

The group worked with Siamsa's artistic director Oliver Hurley and musicians Noel McAuliffe and Leonard Casey also took part in the show.

"This fourth phase of *Hidden Voices of the Dark* helped to explore issues such as difference, sameness, togetherness, prejudice and vision.

"The performers did very well and can be proud of themselves," said Anne Kennelly.

Hidden Voices from the Dark project performers at Siamsa Tíre on Tuesday. . . Front from left; Tom Brosnan, Paddy Kennelly, Guest; James Fitzgerald; Michael Long; Teddy Curtin, and Liam Lynch. back from left, Aodán O'Conchuir; Kevin O'Brien; Leonard Casey; Noel McAuliffe; Tom Hanafin; Joan Ann Brosnan; Stephen Lane; Toddy Cary; Helen Fitzgerald, and Ann Kennelly, Co-Ordinator.

Pic: Kevin Coleman

Appendix 5



5. Súil Inteach DVD

HIDDEN VOICES FROM THE DARK

Integrate and Interact

Phase 5

'Súil Isteach' (Insight Out)



A COLLABORATION BETWEEN

Kerry Education Service – The VEC in Kerry
and
Siamsa Tíre – The National Folk Theatre of Ireland

at Siamsa Tíre Theatre, Tralee
Monday, 6th. December 2004

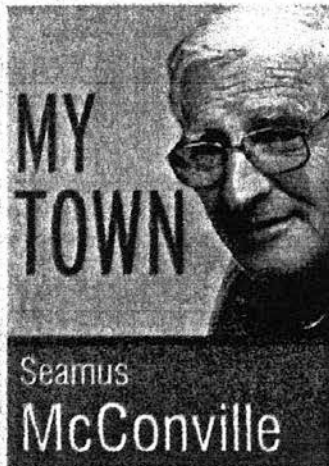
Blindness takes centre stage...

WHAT IS it like to be blind? Thankfully, most of us don't know. Regretfully, most of us never go out of our way to find out.

I was in the Siamsa Theatre some days ago to hear visually impaired people themselves give some answers to the question.

They were participating in a stage performance aimed at raising our awareness of what life is like without sight. It was a lunchtime performance and the fact that nearly 200 people squeezed it in during their lunchbreak is a sign of an awareness breakthrough.

The participants are involved in a community arts project called Hidden



Voices from the Dark, which is a collaboration between Kerry Education Service (KES) and Siamsa Tire.

Project leader and tutor is Anne Kennelly, a Finuge lady who was Martin

Whelan's right-hand woman during the growing years of Siamsa and who is now attached to the KES at their Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) in Moyderwell.

Last week's production was called Súil Isteach (Insight Out) and was the fifth performance under the project.

Most of the participants had been involved in previous such productions and it was interesting to observe how they had grown in self-confidence.

As well as using dialogue, they used sound and visual aids to give their audience an insight into their lives as they go about their daily routine of dressing, working, walking, shopping or gardening. Their dialogue was as much an education

for the audience as it was an entertainment. We heard the sound of squelching feet as a blind man walked through water-filled potholes in Tralee and we heard of Joan Ann Brosnan's nightmare negotiation of the town's footpaths on a day when the wheelie bins were left out for refuse collection.

Their message was one of challenge to the rest of us: a challenge to be aware of the obstacles to normal living that we unconsciously place in the way of others.

Súil Isteach was phase five of the programme and, now that this one is over, Anne Kennelly is hoping for phase six. Given the interest and enthusiasm of the KES and the Siamsa personnel involved, I know that it will happen.

Appendix 6



6. Cé Tusa Istigh: Making the Masks DVD



6. Cé Tusa Instigh: Performance DVD

HIDDEN VOICES FROM THE DARK

INTEGRATE AND INTERACT



PHASE 6

‘CÉ TUSA ISTIGH?’
(WHO ARE YOU INSIDE?)

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN

Kerry Education Service - The VEC in Kerry
and
Siamsa Tíre - The National Folk Theatre of Ireland

at Siamsa Tíre Theatre, Tralee.
Tuesday 23rd, May 2006 at 1.15pm

The learners put together their individual reflections on the process and they are as follows:

Learner 3

“Ever since I went blind, I tried to hide from my own mind, the things that caused me great worry. Part of my mind held the strange moments in my life, close to the surface, ready for recall. I lived life and tried to hold back on the dark sides of my own personality. In short, I was becoming more and more a stranger to myself. Even my wife and my very closest friends were unaware of this great change. Hidden flashes from past experiences sometimes surfaced at the strangest of moments. This could happen walking the road, in church, or worst of all, in my deep dreams. I knew that it was particularly very soul destroying and damaging for me. Trying to brush it aside when in the company of friends made me change my personality. I would automatically change the subject to a more frivolous story. Unable to recognize the features of another human being also left me unaware of their thinking. At this point in time, I liked to feel sculptures or works of art that would remind me of past events.

That sense of remoteness was worst when I realized that I would never again recognize the faces of my friends, or my own vision, in a mirror. I will never forget the day when our tutor, Anne Kennelly, told us we could make moulds of our own faces. Most of the men in our group had completed their moulds sooner than I. Through these images, and to my great delight, I began to recognize the faces of my classmates. With the help of the others I completed my own mask. It was very rewarding for me the day I recognized the mask of my own face from the masks of the others, on the table. In short, my eyes were being opened in the real sense, into a very strange and unusual world. This was the first part of the preparations for our performance of ‘Cé tusa istigh?’ (Who are you inside?).

The first change for me was that I began to recognize the kernel of my real problem which was my sense of isolation and remoteness. I knew that I would have to reach deep into my heart and my soul to put meaning and a clearer expression on my mask. To really understand myself, I had to walk back into my memory, walk the streets of my local village and experience my feelings. With this work completed, I brought my ideas to class and shared them with my other classmates. Their individual stories differed from mine and their experiences in life differed somewhat from what was tormenting me. However, when I listened to my classmates and heard their stories, a fuller picture of the life of a blind person began to form. All the parts of our unusual experiences began to mingle and we knew we had a very important story to tell.

The great change in my mind commenced when I began to reveal myself clearly to my tutor and the class. This, I believed, was the foundation for me gaining new strength and composure. I remember clearly when I used to hide my thoughts from my friends and tell a frivolous story. Now, I was telling the truth and seeing myself as I had never done before. This indeed, was hard work, but my God, was it worthwhile?

The next major task for me, and my fellow students, was to work out how we would communicate these feelings to the public. We worked together for months preparing and bringing our show together. This involved for all of us identifying a situation in life where these feeling came to the fore, developing that situation to the point where it could convey our messages to the audience.

For the first time since I went blind, I found a new use for my white cane! We tapped out the rhythms of our show with our canes, alerting the minds of the audience to the

message we were going to bring. As I stood on the stage that day, something within me brought fear to my soul. The fear was that at long last I was going to expose my true self to the wider audience.

But, as the show progressed and the other students started to tell their stories, a certain sense of pride broke within my heart. For I now know that the people in the audience would understand me and I would understand myself. I can truly and honestly say that in those few minutes that I performed on the stage, all that great sense of hidden fear started to vanish.

Over the six years of participating in the ‘Hidden Voices From the Dark’ project, I’ve grown in confidence with each phase. But, the one thing that had remained in my mind until our performance day this year, was that awful sense of sadness, isolation and remoteness. Having revealed my inner thoughts and cleansed my mind of these feelings, I now feel a much happier and freer person.”

Learner 1

“I found making the mask strange at first, but, as it was being made, I felt I was exposing something in myself that I didn’t think was there and would be able to reveal. Being with the others as they made theirs, comparing their thoughts to mine, I saw some similarities. There was a lot of sadness and exclusion in the masks. Mine was about escapism, going back to the past, to childhood. I felt free of all worries and that I was back as a child again. I loved all the colours I put on it. I felt there wasn’t enough colour in it even though I’d put on all I could. Doing it through drama and dance expanded my own thoughts and feelings and for all the others also. Moving with the dancers really brought out the feelings I want to give to the audience. The

songs that we used really brought out what we were feeling. The way “The Streets of London” was used for Liam’s piece made me think – Is that what he’s really feeling, out there all alone in the darkness? It was very thought provoking. This performance was an expansion of all the other work we’ve done and was very thought provoking for everyone. We’ve done so much and each year you realize there’s more there to show. Having listened to the group, it changes how I feel about them. Do I feel as lonely as Liam? I feel that we’re even closer as a group, knowing what we all feel. You never know what’s inside you until you start tapping on it. Through our drama, we’re educating the audience, in steps or phases, with each production we do.”

Learner 7

“Putting on my mask reminded me of being a baby in my mother’s arms, at the graveyard, for my grandmother’s funeral. That was very emotional. It was hard to express the feelings of everybody afterwards. I know it was emotional for everybody. It was good that I had to learn my hymn and show the audience what I was about.

When Anne put the mask on me it was the same as being laid out in a coffin. It’s what I felt. It was so tough. It was hard going. It was the fact that I couldn’t get out of where I was in the coffin. When the mask was taken off I felt better. It was something like getting a sense of the Lord that made me feel better, and that’s why I sang “The Lord is my Shepherd”. When I was brought forward on the stage the day of the show and when I began to sing, I felt I was resurrected again. It was really good to hear the feelings of the others in the group. It was very emotional.”

Learner 6

“I was apprehensive when I first started this project. When I felt the first mask being made on the other person, I felt the barrier lifting, I began to trust, and thought, this could be fun. What really impressed me was the team spirit. Being part of the group was great because I used to always feel when growing up, that I didn’t belong, but when making the masks and doing the performance, I felt I really belonged.

This year’s project for me was one of the best ever because I was more prepared for it personally. Being so much part of the group has really boosted my confidence and I enjoy working more with other people now. It helped me to learn to trust people more. Trusting people to put their hands on my face, without being able to see them, was a big thing for me. I’m glad I did it and I would do it again.

Showing my personality through the mask gave my classmates and the public a chance to know me better. This was important because the public often have incorrect perceptions about people who are blind. They don’t speak to us as individuals. They see the white cane and don’t see the person.

I feel I know the others in the group better. I grew up with Tom and I never knew he felt that angry about the way he was treated. John L. who always seems so bright and bubbly – I didn’t realize he felt so down about not seeing his daughters grow up.

I feel more respect for the others because I know them so much better now. I’m in a different place now than I was before the show. I always felt I was missing out because I couldn’t see facial expressions, but now I know the others faces through my hands.

For me, after it all, there is a great sense of hope and an inner peace. It was nice when

people came up to me after the show and talked to me. Doing this work creates public awareness about blindness.”

Learner 5

“I feel very different now because my sadness has been brought out through my mask. I have been allowed to look into myself in a way that I didn’t before. This was good for me because it showed me my inner feelings. Before I put on the mask I hadn’t a sense of who was inside because of all the things that happened over the years and also it made me more aware of myself. I hadn’t ever known who I was inside until I put on that mask. The feeling I showed is a feeling I don’t show very often because its my inner feelings. It’s easier to show them now that I’ve done the show. It has given me a sense of confidence and the courage to become aware that these feelings are there. It’s been important for me to express these feelings through colour. This was important because I had an interest in colours even though I’ve never seen them and it has helped me to regain that interest.

Hearing the others in the group talk through their masks showed me that others had inner feelings and that I wasn’t alone. It helped me to open up these feelings and to understand myself and it helped me to accept that these feelings were there when I heard everyone else. My family weren’t aware that I had these feelings until my mother saw the show. I think she got to understand me better through the show”.

Learner 4

“We were standing up for ourselves. Nobody was on stage who didn’t want to be there. We had that much courage in ourselves. We were able to stand up and say

what we wanted to say. We felt we had the stage to ourselves and that people were there to listen to what we had to say. It was important for me to have people in the audience whom I deal with from day to day. My mother was there and she would have learned from my experience. It was important for her and our neighbour to see what my weaknesses were in comparison to the others. Both of them would have spoken to other members of the family about what they learned.

The fact that we made masks and that they were all different, I knew it would be very personal and I felt I was putting myself out in the open. It helped to do this through a mask even though I knew that people would see me as me, but doing it through a mask helped me to do it more honestly. I felt I was going to be stronger inside in me by showing this. It was going to be my feelings and experiences so it was important to be as truthful as I could express myself.

I was the last to start to express myself in sessions, so I had time to see how deep the others were expressing themselves. It was easy then when I knew where I had to go because all of this was new to us. Doing this made me more confident because I felt I had something to say and that people listened to me. I think from this that everyone is entitled to live their own life and the fact that we expressed our individual, honest beliefs, hopefully, people will have learned a bit about us.

I wasn't able to express myself and tell people how I was feeling, but by doing this project, I went deep into my inner feelings and I expressed myself as honestly as I could, because it was to my benefit to do so, and to the benefit of those around me who want to understand me but can't. This was a way of expressing my feelings about myself, about my disability.

I felt I grew up when I was doing this project. I felt I understood myself a lot better and the same is true of the rest of the lads. The fact that we went on stage to perform and tell people how we felt meant we had nothing to hide, but something to show them, and that we had something to offer to them. Feeling that I grew up is like having a clear head. This means – now you see it, now it's up to you to understand us, if you want”.

Learner 8

“Making the masks was unusual. I felt I was holding a photo of myself when I had finished mine. It was nice to feel the image of myself in my hands because I have been visually impaired for so long. My mask showed my happiness with my family. It was a good experience to show this on stage to others. Making the mask helped me to realise how happy I feel with my family. My family were delighted with my part in the performance and with how I presented my joy in them. I feel I am more able and I have more courage since I did it. Hearing the others present their masks showed me how much courage they have also. I have more faith in myself now when I'm doing something and I'm more positive as well.

I was very proud of the Braille writing on my mask. I had written my wife's and children's names in Braille and stuck them to the mask. It made them very close to me on stage when I was working with my mask and I think this brought me closer to the audience because it gave them an understanding of how much we can communicate through Braille.

I liked using different colours in the mask to show my feelings because it showed how much I'm still aware of colour since I had sight. I'm glad I made a half mask. I think it would be more frightening to make a full one as I would be covered up more. The mask was showing what I felt inside, but I liked the idea of having part of the outside showing too."

Unmasking the 'Hidden Voices From The Dark'

By DEIRDRE WALSH

IF you happen to be around Tralee on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 23, be sure to call in to Siamsa Tire for the latest performance in the highly successful 'Hidden Voices From The Dark' project, which promises to be one of the best in the series so far.

Entitled 'Cé tusa istigh?', this unusual and exciting performance features the talents of participants in the Braille and Information Technology Programme, which is run by the Kerry Education Service. Each year, they collaborate with the Siamsa Tire Performing Company to put on a new show, and this will be the sixth in the series.

The aim of this phase is to explore an aspect of the 'self' through masks.

Eight members of the IT/Braille group began a six-week mask-making project under the direction of their tutor, Anne Kennelly, last November. At the end of the course, the group painted and decorated the

masks to reveal aspects of the 'self' that they felt were hidden from others.

In the forthcoming performance, three members of the Siamsa Tire Professional company join with them to witness and develop these revelations through drama, music and movement.

The eight participating members of the IT/Braille group are Liam Lynch from Knocknagoshel, Michael Long and Teddy Curtin from Scartaglin, Tom Brosnan from Killorglin, Kevin O'Brien from Killarney, James Fitzgerald from Ardferit, John L. Moriarty from Fenit and Aodán Ó Conchúir from Ballyferriter.

Their 'witnesses' from the performing company are Adrienne Heaslip, Jackie O'Mahony and Michelle Griffin, all from Tralee.

The production was co-directed by Oliver Hurley of Siamsa and Anne Kennelly, while Siamsa's Musical Director Tom Hanafin provided musical direction.

The show will be presented at Siamsa Tire at 1.15pm and admission is free.



The IT Braille Group rehearsing for the show 'Cé Tussa Istigh?' at Siamsa Tire. At back are: Michelle Griffin, Adrian Heaslip and Jackie O'Mahoney. In front are: Liam Lynch, Michael Long, Aodán Ó Conchúir, James Fitzgerald, Kevin O'Brien, Tom Brosnan, John L. Moriarty and Teddy Curtin. Photo by Manuela Dei Grandi



John L. Moriarty and Michael Long, from the IT Braille Group rehearsing for the show 'Cé Tussa Istigh?' at Siamsa Tire. Photo by Manuela Dei Grandi



Kevin O'Brien, Teddy Curtin and James Fitzgerald, from the IT Braille Group getting ready for the show 'Cé Tussa Istigh?'. Photo by Manuela Dei Grandi

Appendix 7

'Hidden Voices from the Dark' Project

Needs assessment of project participants

Learner 1 (Age: 24)

Needs to develop spatial skills, confidence and independence skills. Needs opportunities to develop and express his talent in music. Needs to integrate more socially, in a supportive environment, in order to develop personally.

Learner 2 (Age: 60)

Needs an outlet to express his many talents, especially those related to the Irish tradition. Needs to "feel part" of things where his contribution will be taken seriously and valued, and opportunities which may provide long-term opportunity for participation.

Learner 3 (Age: mid-forties)

Needs to re-develop confidence skills. Eager to engage in opportunities to participate in activities which would help to re-develop these skills.

Learner 4 (Age: early twenties)

Needs to develop confidence in stating needs, especially in group or 'authority' situations. Also needs to develop spatial skills, and awareness of good posture. Needs opportunities to develop her musical talents professionally, which will further her aim of integration into full-time further education, work and social life.

(Age: mid-forties) Course Co-Ordinator/Tutor

Needs to develop confidence in public speaking, and skills in addressing meetings. Would like to develop co-ordination and sense of rhythm required to learn dance.

Learner 5 (Age : 60)

Needs to re-develop confidence and independence skills within his new and unfamiliar limitations of visual impairment. Feels that these needs could be met through involvement in activities with others - particularly those relating to matters of heritage and tradition. Also needs to develop spatial and mobility skills.

Learner 6 (Age: mid-forties)

Needs to develop confidence and independence skills. Also needs opportunities to interact with others. Spatial and movement skills need development.

Learner 7 (Age: mid-twenties)

Needs opportunities to develop independence outside own environment. Also needs to develop confidence, postural and spatial skills. Needs an outlet to express his musical talents.

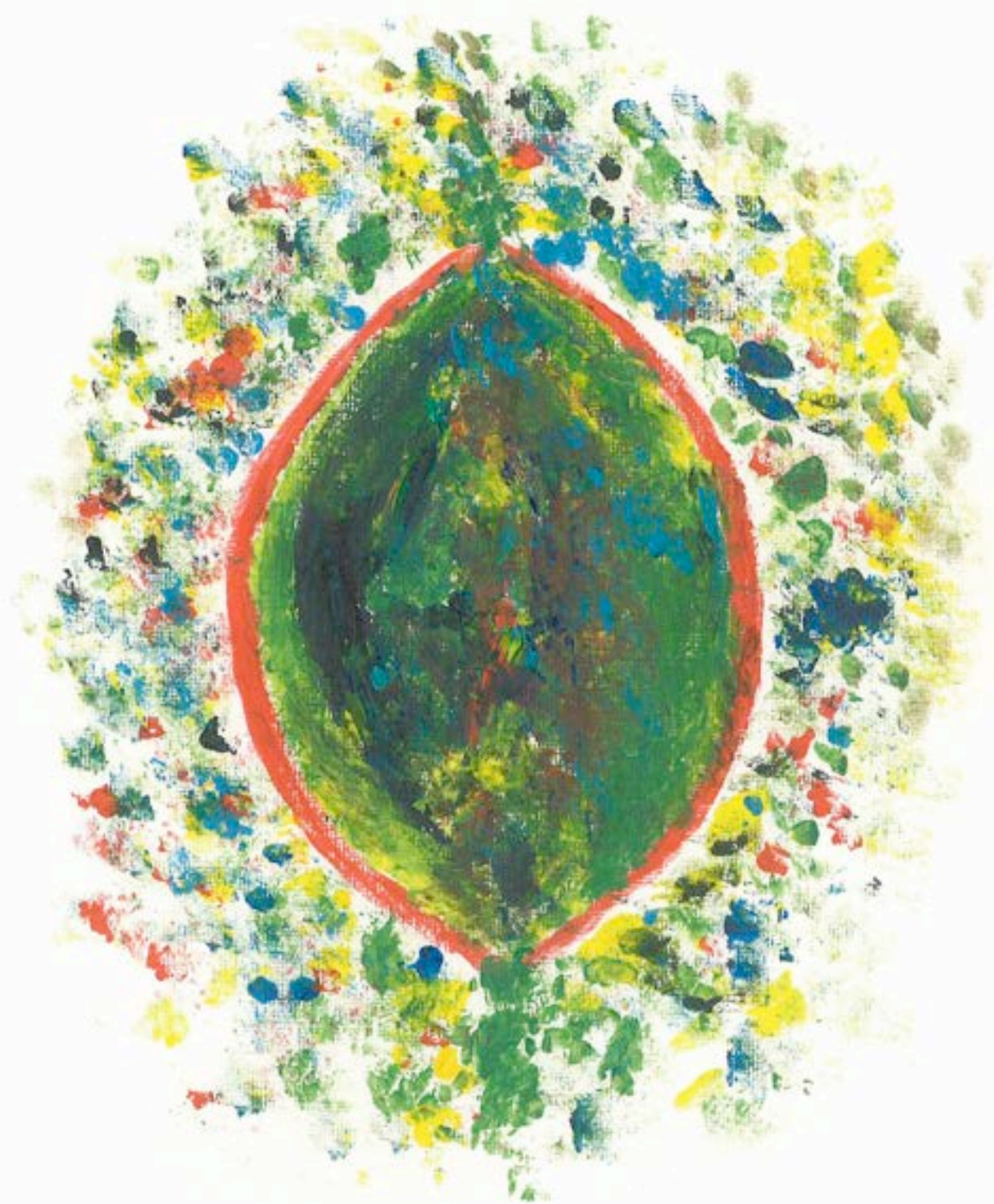
Learner 8 (Age: early fifties)

Needs to re-develop independence, confidence and spatial skills within his new limitations of visual impairment. Needs opportunities to engage in activities with others which will fulfil his need to participate in society.

Learner 9 (Age: *late thirties*)

Needs to develop confidence, postural and movement skills. Needs opportunities to participate in group activities, and to acquire skills which will open up greater opportunities in life.

Appendix 8



Mandala-Place of Transformation
26/1/13