



**PRESS RELEASE**

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

**PLAYHOUSE LAUNCHES AMBITIOUS TRUTH RECOVERY ARTS PROJECT**

**Art that allows reflection, active dialogue on consequences of conflict, and techniques to engage with painful memories...**

The Playhouse in Derry / Londonderry has launched an ambitious £679,000 EU PEACE IV funded project to create a new truth recovery arts initiative.

The cross-border 'Theatre Peace Building Academy' will work with representatives from interface and highly segregated areas (e.g. Tigers Bay, Belfast), historical atrocities (e.g. Monaghan Bombings), victims and survivors (e.g. relatives of those killed or injured) and public sector (e.g. PSNI).

Theatre will be used as a tool to explore community relations issues in a safe and accessible environment, promoting healing and reconciliation in a liberating, healing and transformative way.

The PEACE IV Programme is an EU funded Programme designed to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border region. It is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

The project, launched at The Playhouse on Tuesday 26 June, will recruit eight local artists and a range of national / international artists, with significant experience of utilising arts activity in conflict areas/ areas of social breakdown throughout the world.

An estimated 76 cross-community participants will be reached, and four touring Multi Media Theatre productions will be created and eight creative art projects (through Local Projects). An estimated 4,000 people will attend the Multi Media Theatre productions / Creative art events created.



The Playhouse will work in partnership with Holywell Trust, Thomas D'Arcy McGee Foundation and Queens University Belfast to deliver the two and a half year project.

Playwright, trained oral archivist, theatre producer, director and facilitator Jo Egan is the first of four Socially Engaged Theatre Practitioners for the project. Jo's six month residency will culminate in a theatre production at The Playhouse in November 2018 and she will be working in and around the North West of Ireland region.

Theatre and film director, writer and producer Robert Rae's six month residency will begin in September 2018 and end in March 2019 and will be based in South Armagh and Border counties. Robert's work will be concerned thematically with the tragedies that occurred in the South Armagh and Border counties region in the darkest days of The Troubles.

Pauline Ross, Founder & Artistic Director at The Playhouse said: **“Previous work delivered by The Playhouse in our Theatre of Witness project has demonstrated that art can be an exceptional catalyst. It can be deeply transformational, meaningful and purposeful, it can create positive community relations, bring about attitudinal and behavioural change, and create enduring friendships among people from significantly diverse backgrounds.**

**“This work will also develop wider meaningful creative collaboration, work which aids the delivery and impact of quality Arts & Peace Building work, as well as enhancing the Local Artists' creative practice.”**

Speaking at the launch Gina McIntyre, the CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body said: **“One of the core objectives of the EU's PEACE IV Programme is to promote positive relations between people from all backgrounds and cultures. This project will have a profound impact in fostering greater levels of understanding and reconciliation, on both sides of the border, using creativity as the medium. It will draw upon the skills of internationally-renowned artists with extensive experience in the use of drama and art to help heal divided communities emerging out of conflict.”**

Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Executive Office and the Department for Rural and Community Development.



More information about the project is available from [www.theatreandpeacebuilding.co.uk](http://www.theatreandpeacebuilding.co.uk).

- ENDS.

#### **Notes for the editor:**

#### **SEUPB**

- **The Special EU Programmes Body** is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society.
- The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.
- The PEACE IV Programme has a value of €270 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu)

#### **The Playhouse**

- The Playhouse is an Award Winning Theatre based in Derry~ Londonderry and was established by Pauline Ross in 1992 with a grant of just £300. Since then it has grown to become one of Ireland's leading Award Winning multi-disciplinary Community Art Resource Centres based on a neutral site with the city centre. It is a self-help, grass roots, bottom-up community development project which is people centre with charitable status. With a remit to simply "Make arts accessible to all", The Playhouse works to deliver arts, education and community based cross community work to a wide range of participants, customers and service users and provide a



platform for new and emerging arts, actors and theatre students to engage with a working theatre.

The Playhouse is core funded by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland and Derry City and Strabane District Council. [www.derryplayhouse.co.uk](http://www.derryplayhouse.co.uk)

- Playwright, trained oral archivist, theatre producer, director and facilitator **Jo Egan** was selected as the first of four Socially Engaged Theatre Practitioners for the project. Jo's six month residency will culminate in a theatre production at The Playhouse in November 2018. Jo will be working in and around the North West of Ireland region. Jo is a professionally produced playwright, trained oral archivist, theatre producer, director and facilitator. She is the Artistic Director of Macha Productions, a theatre company dedicated to the democratisation of theatre creation and participation
- **Robert Rae** is a theatre and film director, writer and producer. His professional career began in 1982 working with John McGrath and 7:84 Theatre Company England. From 1986 – 1996 he worked as freelance director, writer and producer with small and middle scale touring companies and on a number of large scale community plays. From 1996 to 2014 Robert was Artistic Director & Chief Executive of Theatre Workshop Scotland. He directed two feature films and numerous professional and community shows, his preferred way of working placing the people whose story is being told at the heart of the creative process. Robert's residency will be based in South Armagh and Border counties. His six month residency will begin in September 2018 and end in March 2019. Robert will be working in and around the South Armagh region. Robert's work will be concerned thematically with the tragedies that occurred in the South Armagh and Border counties region in the darkest days of The Troubles.