

## Little John Nee Residency Final Report

March 2011

To seek out opportunities for having fun and to share in a new experience were the two overriding reasons why participants chose to take part in Little John's workshops as part of the residency. To this end the workshops delivered; with 92 per cent of participants surveyed stating that the workshops met their expectations. It is through his relaxed and humorous style of facilitation that Little John creates a safe and playful environment whereby issues illuminated for an audience through his stage work can be discussed and explored in greater depth with members of the same audience during follow-up workshop sessions.

"I thought it would be very formal but [it] proved to be welcoming, encouraging and inspirational."

- Workshop Participant

It became very apparent at the beginning of the residency that the most valuable model of working for both Little John and participating groups was for groups to firstly attend the stage show and subsequently take part in the after show workshop. This was beneficial for several reasons: Groups were familiar with the storyline of the show and could therefore have informed discussions with Little John about the characters for example and the inspiration for his work. It also allowed groups an opportunity to decide, having seen the show if delving deeper into the concerns and dilemmas faced by the fictional characters was something that they would want to explore in workshop. Two older peoples groups opted out of an after show workshop having seen *The Mental* because they felt mental health was not an area that they were comfortable discussing. In comparison, the community workers from the Donegal Travellers Project were inspired to create their own piece of theatre about mental health having seen *The Mental*.

Two of the aims of the residency were to deepen the participant's understanding of the elements that go into creating theatre as well as creating a doorway to accessing their own creativity. The workshop sessions successfully created a

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1 The Little John Nee Residency is supported by PEACE III Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by Donegal County Council.

platform whereby inquisitive participants directly questioned Little John, the actor about his performance style, his ability to remember lines; Little John, the writer about the inspiration for his characters and the creative stimuli for his story lines.

“An insight into using local history to create plays. Interesting look at story-telling in performance.”

–  
Workshop Participant

“It was very fun. Also I found that it stimulated ideas and opened my eyes to different ways of looking at theatre.”

– Workshop Participant

The sharing of stories is a creative process. Little John, the facilitator has the ability to gently engage with and draw from people their stories so that they can access the creative seanachie within themselves, the same 21st century seanachie as Little John describes himself as being. During workshops, story sharing led to a greater understanding of our shared history, as participants nodded in agreement, laughed in recognition and sighed in the knowledge of a shared understanding. Incidents for example were remembered of women who were sent away because they ‘suffered from their nerves’ and neighbours curtains twitching. Participants received notebooks and pens and were encouraged to write down their stories because as John explained they are valuable and should therefore be recorded.

“Knowledge that our past is important to young people.”

“We have some good stories to share.”

“Stimulation of precious memories.”

“An idea about Irish culture.”

– Workshop Participants

Affirming the connectedness between those who took part in the workshops was something of importance to Little John. It was also something of importance to participants, as many commented that this was one of the things to be celebrated from their workshop experience.

“Group integration and participation.”

“Meeting kindred spirits...”

“Getting to work with each other in creative ways.”

### **Continuing Developmental Theatre Work**

The thirteen mental health clients who took part in the September storytelling workshop in Falcarragh are continuing to workshop with Little John to create a group theatre piece. This will be a devised piece of promenade or installation theatre, with each participant assuming an active role in its creation. The aim is to create a doorway for participants to access their own creativity and to have fun which in turn will have a positive effect on well-being. The Solas theatre piece will be performed for public audiences to highlight the work of the residency and also to bring to the fore issues affecting mental health clients.

The series of workshops scheduled for the teenage group in Annagry were postponed due to personal circumstances and unfortunately rescheduling was not a viable option as the community group leader chose to then cancel the proposed programme. This workshop time was however allocated to the Donegal Travellers Project.

Twelve community workers from The Donegal Travellers Project worked with Little John in February and are developing, through a series of further drama workshops, a performance piece. The aim of the process work with Little John is to create and rehearse a piece of theatre that can be performed by the group within chosen communities in order to raise awareness of mental health issues affecting members of the Traveller Community.

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## Theatre Attendees

There were many groups who attended the performances of The Derry Boat, The Mental and Rural Electric who also availed of the outreach workshop programme as part of the residency and these are detailed below. However there were community groups who for various reasons, such as timetabling could only attend the performances. So that an overall picture can be painted of those who took part in the residency it is important to also note these groups, namely: The Castleberg Craft Group, Castleberg (20); The Women's Urney Two O'Clock Club, Strabane (8); The University of the Third Age, Derry (24); The Grange Quilters, Strabane (8); The Silver Brook Mill Active Age Retirement Group, Strabane (16); The Reader's Club, Strabane (4).

## Summary Workshop Profile January 2011 – March 2011

### Workshop 1

Location: Senior Citizens Lunch Club, Community Centre, Maghery, Dungloe

Date: Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2011

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 26

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Mental

### Workshop 2

Location: Stranorlar Friday Club, St Mary's Parish Hall, Stranorlar

Date: Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 18

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Mental

### Workshop 3

Location: Artists Master Class, An Grianan Theatre, Letterkenny

Date: Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 15

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

### Workshop 4

Location: Artists Master Class, The Alley Arts Centre, Strabane

Date: Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 8

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

### Workshop 5

Location: Donegal Travellers Project, Donegal County Museum, Letterkenny

Date: Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011

Profile: Community Workers for Donegal Travellers Project

Number of participants: 12

Workshop: A workshop exploring how to use theatre for community development linked to The Mental and the exhibition of St. Conals.

### Workshop 6

Location: University of the Third Age, Strabane

Date: Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2011

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 8

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Derry Boat

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**Workshop 7**

Location: Storytelling Master Class, University of Ulster, Derry

Date: Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: Performing Arts Students

Number of participants: 11

Workshop: A workshop exploring the use of storytelling in performance for Theatre students linked to The Derry Boat

**Workshop 8**

Location: Artists Master Class, The Waterside Theatre, Derry

Date: Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 1

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

**Workshop 9**

Location: Artists Master Class, An Grianan Theatre, Letterkenny

Date: Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 15

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

**Workshop Programme September 2010 – March 2011**Total Workshops: 17<sup>1</sup>**Total Participants: 223**Workshop 1

Location: Port na Failte: Intercultural Resource Centre, Port House, Letterkenny

Date: Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2010

Profile: Male Asylum Seekers aged 15yrs – 25yrs

Number of participants: 8

Workshop: The story of a name and sketches from The Derry Boat

Workshop 2

Location: Solas Centre, Main Street, Falcarragh

Date: Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010

Profile: Mental Health clients, male and female aged 20yrs+

Number of participants: 13

Workshop: Fictional story creation, improvisation and songs from The Derry Boat

Workshop 3

Location: Senior Citizens Lunch Club, Community Day Centre, Cloghan

Date: Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2010

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 29

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Derry Boat

Workshop 4

Location: The Friday Club, The Volt House, Raphoe

Date: Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010

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<sup>1</sup> This number excludes the series of additional workshops currently taking place with Solas and the Donegal Travellers Project.

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 10

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Derry Boat

#### Workshop 5

Location: The Over 65's Club, Community Centre, Milford

Date: Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 22

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Derry Boat

#### Workshop 6

Location: Artists Master Class, Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny

Date: Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 5

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

#### Workshop 7

Location: Senior Citizens Lunch Club, Community Centre, Maghery, Dungloe

Date: Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 26

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Derry Boat

#### Workshop 8

Location: Senior Citizens Lunch Club, St. Johnston Family Resource Centre

Date: Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010

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Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 11

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Derry Boat

#### Workshop 9

Location: Senior Citizens Lunch Club, Community Centre, Maghery, Dungloe

Date: Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2011

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 26

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Mental

#### Workshop 10

Location: Stranorlar Friday Club, St Mary's Parish Hall, Stranorlar

Date: Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 18

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Mental

#### Workshop 11

Location: Artists Master Class, An Grianan Theatre, Letterkenny

Date: Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 15

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

#### Workshop 12

Location: Artists Master Class, The Alley Arts Centre, Strabane

Date: Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 8

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

### Workshop 13

Location: Donegal Travellers Project, Donegal County Museum, Letterkenny

Date: Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011

Profile: Community Workers for Donegal Travellers Project

Number of participants: 12

Workshop: A workshop exploring how to use theatre for community development linked to The Mental and the exhibition of St. Conals.

### Workshop 14

Location: University of the Third Age, Strabane

Date: Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2011

Profile: Older People

Number of participants: 8

Workshop: The power of stories, story sharing and songs from The Derry Boat

### Workshop 15

Location: Storytelling Master Class, University of Ulster, Derry

Date: Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: Performing Arts Students

Number of participants: 11

Workshop: A workshop exploring the use of storytelling in performance for Theatre students linked to The Derry Boat

**Workshop 16**

Location: Artists Master Class, The Waterside Theatre, Derry

Date: Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants: 1

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters

**Workshop 17**

Location: Artists Master Class, An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny

Date: Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Profile: People with an interest in stage craft

Number of participants:

Workshop: A workshop exploring the creative interests of artists – performers and scriptwriters