

Title:	Building empathy, understanding & reconciliation between Protestant / Catholic, Unionist / Nationalist
Target Group	Artists, facilitators & community group leaders & members who work in the field of good community relations and peace building
Numbers of Participants	Up to 20
Date / Time	Day 1: 10 am – 7pm, Day 2: 5pm – 8.30pm
Short Description	
<p>The Playhouse is a Community Arts Centre, based in Derry Londonderry in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>We firmly believe and recognise the contribution that Arts Education and Theatre work in particular can contribute in making Northern Ireland a more tolerant and inclusive peaceful society.</p> <p>Since its inception in 1988 the Playhouse strives to operate within a mission statement to make the arts accessible to all especially to those individuals and communities marginalised and on the periphery of society. Art and artists can help amplify the voices of the unheard, can help build bridges across difference and act as a balm to help heal pain, suffering and the wounds of violence. In the post-conflict situation that Northern Ireland is currently in, how to deal with the legacy of the past is one of the most fundamental questions and areas of work that Theatre and the Arts must address. As Leo Tolstoy states, <i>‘Art should cause violence to be set aside and it is only art that can accomplish this.’</i></p> <p>During the violence of what has become called ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland over 3,500 people lost their lives. Statistics gathered in a study <i>‘The Cost of The Troubles’</i> by academic Marie Smith calculated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7000 lost a child 14,000 lost a grandchild 3000 lost a husband 10,000 children lost a parent 15,000 lost a brother or sister <p>Losses experienced most in mainly poor communities 40,000 victims and survivors The wounded and dead were mostly men with the higher number under 25 years of age.</p> <p>The workshops that were delivered as part of the ARTID Project demonstrated, in very</p>	

practical ways, how arts can help build empathy and understanding that will contribute to the current peace process in Northern Ireland. These workshops can transfer to other countries that are experiencing community relations tensions.

This type of work began before any cease fire or the subsequent Good Friday Agreement of 1998. In Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the world that have long histories of conflict between two cultures, traditions, tribes, religion or ideologies, the 'us' and 'them' the 'we're right' or 'they're wrong' is deeply rooted in collective mind sets. Both sides of any conflict or war have their own stories and both are often in denial of the 'other' story. The first casualty of war is truth. There is not one truth but many truths and each side see themselves as the 'victim' and the 'other side' as the 'enemy'.

Through the use of theatre and The Arts individuals and communities can, within a safe environment, share and learn from each other by listening deeply to the 'other's' stories and realise that difference can be productive, and not let cultural / religious differences keep them in conflict.

By engaging in Arts Education adults can discover their own creativity and their own voice whilst gaining new perspectives into solving difficult social and cultural issues. In many Playhouse Peace building projects single identity work must first be undertaken to help establish and develop a cultural identity that enables people to be confident in who they are and what their cultural identity is before engaging with the 'other' community. Empathy and trust are essential in trying to reconcile conflict situations.

The Arts can act agents for both healing and truth seeking by using testimonies to offer a bridge of mutual respect. A bridge to cross and encounter each other. This is the realm that The Playhouse Theatre of Witness project and other Interface Projects work within and it is this work and others that will be the focus and exploration of our ARTID symposium.

The Playhouse's ARTID workshops were specifically designed for this type of excavation and exploration of past and present. They included a workshop on 'Understanding the Other' - an extended story telling session where each group member in turn relates their story. The listeners follow up with questions and comments to identify connections between the personal narrative and the society in which it took place. The group discovers the cultural implications of each story and finish with whole group discussion, sharing and reflection.

The Theatre of Witness Workshop was divided up into three segments including one involving the group in a series of experiential exercises that gave an opportunity to access and express personal story through writing, sharing, group process and physicalization. The Theatre of Witness workshop concluded with an introduction to the Theatre of Witness Production, with fathers who had been on the front lines of The Troubles and adult children of the next generation living with the legacy of the past.

Finally a visual art workshop included the group exploring local cultural / political symbols through photography and discussing their meaning and impact. As this discussion developed the group was asked to discuss colours and symbols and how they can have a direct connection to identity and culture. The group were then be asked to create a symbol that directly represents / best reflects their identity. Options as to which medium they want to use to create their images were given.

The Problems addressed by the action

The Playhouse works in partnership with community organisations, young adults at risk, women's groups and community relations projects to deliver Peace and Reconciliation projects. Working with grass roots organisations we hope to foster reconciliation and understanding that emerges organically at local level. Only by understanding our commonalities can we better communicate and grow both as individuals and as a society.

In his Reconciliation Workbook, 2008, peace mediator / negotiator and Director of The Peace and Reconciliation Group, Mr. Michael Doherty in his foreword states the problems facing those who work in Peace Building in Northern Ireland.

'Political institutions alone will not build the peace. Through ongoing antagonistic behaviour, we give tacit permission for others to behave in a non-tolerant manner and thus prejudice, sectarianism and discrimination, together with cultural and structural violence, permeates all levels of society and contributes to perpetuating the cycle of innate prejudice and discrimination practice that has helped to shape our mistrust of each other on this island. It will take a long time to change mindsets and behavioural patterns that we have grown up with and lived by.'

Currently Northern Ireland is in a peace process since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. But the signing of an agreement does not in itself make the Peace. Peace has to be built step by step, trust and respect has to be nurtured, and reconciliation between the two main cultural traditions Unionism / Nationalism has to be reached at grass roots level. Peace has to be built from the bottom up within communities that suffered the most during the thirty year conflict. Politicians sign peace accords but it is people who make the process happen.

Sectarianism and racism still deeply divide our communities. Peace walls are being built higher. The war may be over but Peace and Reconciliation on the ground is still not a reality. With 94% of public housing and 96% of education provision being segregated there is little chance of one side meeting the other. These are some of the problems addressed in our work.

For cross community interaction to happen, safe neutral environments must be found. The Playhouse is one such safe space. Since reconciliation almost always requires the telling and re-telling of stories, we explore how Theatre and the Arts can assist the telling of these stories, and how they can be used to help build a culture of peace, promote cultural understanding and the humanizing of the 'other'.

Theatre and drama has become a natural tool for the sake of recovery in conflict and post conflict areas. It acts as a form of catharsis by providing audiences with the opportunity to re-think established ideals and roots of hatred. This type of theatre and drama is the art of excavation and exploration and finds strength in the sharing and listening. Allowing enemies to hear each others stories assists them in becoming more mature and understanding. Through theatre and the arts we can listen to the pain and hurt on all sides and begin to unpick the complexities of the past and its legacy.

As a community arts organisation, The Playhouse must continue to explore new ways of dealing with the past without inflaming the conflict in the present. This is another problem area that needs delicate handling and delivery when we, through the medium of art, attempt to expand our definitions of each other. Definitions that both bind and blind us.

The problems facing arts educators and facilitators is how can we help build our craft and art across difference and divide to help build bridges to reconciliation when reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict is so sensitive and controversial. In Northern Ireland as in other Countries in conflict or post conflict situation there are no road maps to peace. Peace is not a one way street and everyone has a role to play. Art should be central to helping our communities into reconciliation and healing. The capacity of art to emphasize deepens the capacity to heal. The power of music, film, theatre, and dance has a well documented history of being able to move hearts and minds to action.

In conclusion the main problem facing our work in using the arts to help heal the past and assist our two divided communities to come together to share their stories and listen to the stories of the 'other' is centuries of hatred and mistrust. A shared history that is full of war, conflict and memories some of which are very recent. To add to this we now have a generation of young adults and children who want to start the conflict all over again and older activists who for them the 'War' is not over. The break up of former paramilitary organisation into smaller dissident splinter groups, regularly the focus of media attention, moves security once again high up on the agenda for change from war to peace.

The Aims of the Action

Cynthia Cohen, Brandies University, Boston in her book, Theatre of Co-Existence states that there are seven areas in which art and theatre can help build reconciliation and healing. The work of the Playhouse's Art Education Projects aspire to meet these and in the following exercises we will demonstrate how and why we use the different art forms selected to achieve the desired outcomes.

1. Telling Stories
2. Mourning Losses
3. Re-humanizing of the other
4. creating empathy with the suffering of the enemy
5. addressing injustices [there can be no peace without justice]
6. letting go of bitterness and hate
7. Imaging a better future.

Other areas where we hope we can make a difference through applying arts education in Peace building are in;

1. Personal growth, self esteem and confidence building
2. Social cohesion
3. Better understanding
4. Community development
5. Knowledge of the others cultural traditions
6. Improved communication skill
7. Social change

Within our workshops we hope to highlight and demonstrate how we achieve our aims. Our methodology is that which Paulo Freire describes as, '*no one educates someone, no one is educated by itself, human beings are educated in communion.*' While teaching, the teacher also learns.

The outcomes of these workshops will demonstrate how, through the medium of theatre and the arts, we can explore new ways of letting people talk and discuss the past and the present. Helping to recover memory, helping us to understand and help build empathy.

Noble Peace Prize winner, Nelson Mandela is someone who believes and understands the power of art. He has stated: '*Artists work in a range that crosses the scale of human emotions from anger to zeal to love to sorrow. Such works demand the viewers attention they challenge our beliefs and values. They remind us of past errors but they speak of hope for the future.*'

The art forms we use are Theatre, the visual arts and music. Why these three? Because theatre is a natural tool for telling stories, that will enable others to understand what happened. Northern Ireland has a long history of mural painting in public walls specifically within ghettoised communities at the forefront of The Troubles. Through exploring the imagery within these murals, the group will expose their messages and myths to the wider world. Within the two main traditions / religions, music plays an important role in defining cultural identity. The music workshop will explore and experiment with these musical traditions using indigenous instruments with musicians steeped in the cultural heritage of both Irish Traditional and Ulster Scots, and both workshops will highlight where these two traditions cross over from one to the other and back again.

The overall aim of all the artistic exercises is to explore each others traditions, myth, legend, symbols and identities in a fun and creative way within a space that is safe and neutral.

The outcomes of these exercise will hopefully include;

1. A greater awareness of the others stories and cultural traditions
2. Help make things better
3. Enrich each others learning
4. Influence each other
5. Change some attitudes
6. Promote greater understanding and tolerance
7. Help influence change for the better
8. Provide a space where conflict and bitterness can be exposed and engaged, non-violently and constructively.
9. Build skills within the fields of the different art forms
10. Create a pathway for further learning and exploration

Program

Day 1

Time	Topics
10am	Welcome & Introductions
10am – 12pm	Visual Arts Workshop – Symbols Culture & Perceptions
12pm – 1pm	Break
1pm – 3.30pm	Theatre of Witness – Drama Project
3.30pm – 4pm	Break
4pm – 6pm	Visual Arts Workshop – Symbols Culture & Perceptions
6pm – 7pm	Break
7pm – 8.30pm	Theatre of Witness Documentary Film & Discussion

Day 2

Time	Topics
5pm – 6.30 pm	Understanding The Other – Drama Workshop
6.30am – 7pm	Break
7pm – 8.30pm	Understanding The Other – Drama Workshop

Program Details

Item	Visual Arts Workshop – Symbols Culture & Perceptions
Starting Time	10am – 12pm
Duration	2 hours
Topic	Symbols Culture & Perceptions & Symbols, Identity & Murals
Method used	Photography,
Description of Activity	<p>First Exercise – Photography</p> <p>Participants were asked to complete a photography exercise which asked them to address their opinion on social, physical, historical, political and economic aspects of the city.</p> <p>Each person is given a disposable camera, and asked to photograph a number of images from the city in which they live. It is useful to visit areas that strongly reflect aspects of community conflict.</p> <p>Participants are asked to take photographs of images representing diversity, conflict, hope, community, home, prosperity, religion, sadness, fear, confusion, joy and fun.</p> <p>Participants also take a photograph of themselves, so that, when each camera's photographs are developed, it is easy to identify who the photographs belong to.</p>
Expected Outcome	Photographs that will be used in later workshops.
Materials	Cameras

Item	Drama – Theatre of Witness
Starting Time	1pm – 3.30pm and 7pm – 8.30pm
Duration	4 hours
Topic	How theatre can be used to bear witness to the injustices of war and conflict.
Method used	Video, storytelling, drama, writing, sharing, group building and physical theatre.
Description of Activity	<p>First Exercise: Introduction to the Theatre of Witness methodology.</p> <p>Introduction: “Theatre of Witness”, a unique form of performance developed by artistic director Teya Sepinuck from USA, which gives voice to those who have been marginalized, forgotten or are invisible in society. Performed in spoken word, song, music and imagery by the people who have actually experienced the stories they voice, “Theatre of Witness” brings diverse audiences together to collectively bear witness to our shared human condition and to give a face and heart to issues of suffering, inequality and justice.</p> <p>The finished productions performed by the people themselves in prisons, theatres, schools, community centres and at conferences create safe public forums for audiences to move beyond entrenched positions and ideologies towards understanding and healing.</p> <p>The Introduction looks at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of participants is theatre of witness working with • What type of artistic methods does it use, • What impact has it had • Is it art or therapy? • How is it being used in Northern Ireland? <p>Second Exercise: Viewing of previous Theatre of Witness projects filmed in USA</p> <p>Films: All of Teya’s Theatre of Witness projects have been documented on film, and these films give powerful insight of the methods used, and the results gained from using Theatre of Witness methods.</p> <p>During this workshop two excerpts from two films were viewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Living with Life</i> – men serving life sentences in the USA. • <i>Raising our Voice</i> - former perpetrators and survivors of domestic abuse.

Third Exercise: Putting Theatre of Witness into action

These Hands:

Have the participants sit in a circle (try to have no more than 10 to a circle), and take a moment to rub their hands together and then observe them. Then while the participants keep their gaze on their hands, give them the directions. Each person will say "These hands..." and fill in the blank. Give examples such as: "These hands have rocked my babies."

"These hands have hurt people." "These hands are getting old." Instruct participants to keep their gaze on their own hands and follow each other in clockwise circle fairly quickly, with no time to think or censor answers. The circle should be completed a minimum of 4 or 5 times with participants listening to each other while keeping their gaze on their own hands.

Invite one participant to sing a soothing song, and have other participants each sit opposite a partner. With eyes closed for the whole exercise, participants begin with hands touching their partner's hands. Keeping silent, as the music continues, partners let their hands dance together while staying in contact with their partner. Movement can become big or small, the most important thing is to 'listen' through touch. When the music is complete, give partners an opportunity to discuss the experience.

Fourth Exercise: Putting Theatre of Witness into action

Chair – Each participant is given a chair, and spends approximately 10 minutes observing it's shape, weight, texture, markings etc. and how it moves. Then taking another 10-15 minutes, each participant writes about the chair in the first person, i.e. as if they were the chair.

Participants share the stories in pairs, before adding physical actions to the stories, i.e. acting out the stories. Participants then share the stories to the whole group.

Fifth Exercise: Seeing the work in progress of the Northern Ireland Theatre of Witness Project

Participants viewed a documentary film that outlined the development of a year long Theatre of Witness project in Northern Ireland that shows how Theatre of Witness worked with victims and survivors of The Troubles including former members of Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries, a former RUC & current PSNI Officer, the daughter of a serving RUC / PSNI Officer, the son of a murdered Sinn Fein Councillor, and relatives / children of people severely affected by the Troubles.

During 2009, this group devised, rehearsed and performed their full length performance piece *We Carried Your Secrets*, based on their own experiences of the Troubles and acted by themselves. The play toured throughout Northern Ireland, and audience reaction was overwhelmingly positive.

The documentary showed participants how Theatre of Witness has been used, and the kind of results that have been obtained from its delivery.

	The documentary was followed by a discussion between audience members and cast members.
Expected Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of power of theatre to help heal & create greater understanding & empathy.• To also create greater tolerance of identity and difference.
Materials	Voice, Body, Video, Writing

Item	Visual Arts Workshop – Symbols Culture & Perceptions
Starting Time	4pm – 6pm
Duration	2 hours
Topic	Symbols Culture & Perceptions & Symbols, Identity & Murals
Method used	Photography, Discussion, Painting, Stencilling
Description of Activity	<p>This workshop is designed in two parts each with a specific aim.</p> <p>Part one will challenge the participants to address their perceptions of the city in which they live, and its conflict and culture through photography.</p> <p>The second part will encourage them to take a more personal approach and delve into their own identity and explore specific elements, then using shape, colour and form to design a symbol that directly represents their identity.</p> <p>First Exercise: Discussion / Collage - Symbols, Culture and Perceptions</p> <p>The group meet in one group to view each other's pictures and discuss the photographs.</p> <p>When this discussion is complete the group are asked to create a collage, cutting the photos, to create a picture of the city in which the photos were taken. In addition to the photos, participants are allowed to use images from magazines in their collages.</p> <p>When the collages are complete participants are asked to form groups of around 5 people to discuss their artwork through the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you feel your images/pictures give an accurate portrayal of the city after the information you have received over the past few days? 2. Of all those symbols that represent each community, which ones really represent 'religion' as such and which are about nation or politics? 3. Do you feel your perception of the city has changed since arriving/ participating in the activities? <p>Second Exercise: Painting - Identity and Symbols</p> <p>A short introduction explained what symbols are – i.e. a way of communicating without using words, or by using an absolute minimum of words.</p> <p>There was a discussion of how symbols can range in meaning from a very clear message to a much more complex and ambiguous meaning. It was also discussed that the same symbol can mean different things to different community groups and individuals. Symbols, with the context of</p>

	<p>community conflict, can be welcoming or threatening to different people.</p> <p>The group discussed many of the symbols from the photographs and collages, and asked to identify and explain them. An opportunity was provided to discuss any symbols that they have experienced and want to discuss.</p> <p>The discussion developed and the group were asked to discuss colours and symbols and how they can have a direct connection to identity and culture e.g. clothes/ football shirts, crests and logos.</p> <p>The group were then asked to create a symbol that directly represents/ best reflects their own identity.</p> <p>The group painted a symbol onto a canvas which was displayed as part of a temporary installation for all the group to see. This installation provoked further informal discussions between the participants.</p>
Expected Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed collages and canvases. • Meaningful discussion & debate on themes of identity and difference.
Materials	Cameras, paints, Spray paint, Card, Craft knives, Brushes.

Item	Understanding The Other – Drama Workshop
Starting Time	5pm – 8.30pm
Duration	3 hours 30 mins
Topic	Understanding the Other
Method used	Drama Games Discussion Role Play
Description of Activity	<p>First Exercise: Warm Up Activities: Establishing The Group</p> <p>Initial Identity Sculpt: To find out who everyone knows. Stand closest to the people you know...far away from people you don't know. Make visible what relationships & contracts already exist in the group. This will establish a number of groups within the room. The next stage may be to allow people the opportunity to move so that all relationships are clarified. The facilitator asks each group to verbalise what the relationship is within the sub-group. The overall aim is to introduce people to each other.</p> <p>Ritual Dumping: Participants form pairs. Each person tells his or her partner of something that is 'on their mind' at that moment. These are usually distracting thoughts and memories. Each person then helps the other to get rid of or temporarily 'park' these thoughts using a short mimed performance. For example a participant may be worrying about childcare arrangements, The exercise is to help participants to stop thinking about these thoughts for the duration of the workshop so that they can fully engage with the workshop and other participants.</p> <p>Who Else: A circle is formed. One at a time participants go into the circle and verbalise an issue they have strong feelings about. For example: Who else in the room hates cold weather. Then all those in agreement that they also hate cold weather, joins that person in the middle of the circle. Those who are in complete agreement should stand very close or touching the person, those who only slightly agree should stand further away.</p> <p>Second Exercise: Story Telling Practice:</p> <p>Reminds Me: Participants are given an object from a collection of mixed everyday objects by the workshop facilitator. Participants walk around the room, and when they meet another person, each person swaps objects with each other, and tells a personal story / anecdote based on the stimulus from that object they have been given. After each story the objects are taken back. Stories are to be short, and pairs regularly change.</p>

	<p>Third Exercise: Understanding The Other – Drama Workshop</p> <p>Extended Story Telling in Groups: From a large pile of assorted objects participants select one which reminds them of a personal anecdote or story. Participants form into mixed cultural groups of five or six. Each in turn relates their story. The listeners follow up with questions and comments to identify connections between the personal narrative and the society in which it took place. The group will discover the cultural implications of each story. Each group choose a story which best epitomises the personal / societal connection. Each group presents their chosen story in a series of narrated tableaux. That is while the narrator tells the story, the rest of the group form a series of up to four physical images to illustrate the key moments in the narration.</p> <p>Whole group discussion, sharing, reflections. The group as a whole discussed the Extended Storytelling exercise, including identifying societal values that the original group may not have realised were implicit in the story. Participants were able to comparing the values of different cultures that were identified.</p>
<p>Expected Outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding & Empathy with people from different communities, cultures & backgrounds. • Development of listening skills • Discovering the cultural implications of each story that is shared • An awareness of the personal / societal connections
<p>Materials</p>	<p>People, Good sized room & assorted objects</p>