
Graffiti Theatre CLG

Annual General Meeting May 2017

The Land Is Not Settled

The land is not yet settled
After our years of pandemonium.
This time it is almost too late
To sing with full heart a parting hymn,
Or indulge in the usual fickle
Humour of things. It is too late

To bolt the door of Ireland.
A penny candle struggles in the wind,
A corpse from the West rises
To face me. What was a house now stands
As a ghost from the assizes.
Believe me, I tried to understand

All the signals we received from Berlin.
Little did they know, in our autonomous
Region all the gold was gorse,
And all investment was storytelling.
Blackbirds in the oak trees are trembling still
Where all our demons hurriedly went in.

Thomas McCarthy, 2016

I wished to start this AGM with ART, and how better than that poem by Tomas McCarthy, the poet who wrote the inspiring official application that won for Cork City the nomination as Capital of Culture back in 2005. His book of poems PANDEMONIUM was written in the wake of Ireland's 2008 economic collapse.

It is appropriate because after all, it is for the benefit of ART that we are all here. And, we have all witnessed these past years as this valiant little Theatre Company, its Staff, its Management, it's Board have prevailed and triumphed in the adversity of that pandemonium.

Graffiti Theatre Company is not in the The Business of Business. It is in the Business of Art, the Business of Theatre. However, as the audited accounts (that we have approved today) reveal that this organisation certainly makes an Art of Business, an Art of Administration & Best Practices.

The fiscal & financial performance executed in 2016 is truly remarkable.

Despite falling revenues from Box Office, Schools & Grant reductions the Executive of this organisation has made tough decisions & savvy strategies to reduce cost of productions, sourced new income and all the while maintaining an exemplary high output of high quality Theatre and Theatre experiences for young audiences.

To quote the Auditors: “The principal activity of the company is staging educational theatre productions and drama workshops. Commissioning and producing educational theatre dealing with early years and youth centred issues.

The company has continued to improve turnover during the financial year. The directors have indicated their intention to capitalise on industry shifts by continuing to focus their operations accordingly.”

This year Graffiti Theatre Company became a CLG ~ **company limited by guarantee** and accordingly, these are the first financial statements to be prepared under the Financial Reporting Standards.

Also, this year the Board & Executive undertook the onerous task of applying the full rigours of the **Governance Code**.

However, as with the process of the becoming a CLG, the process has been made to seem effortless by the exquisite efficiency of our General Manager; Jennifer McDonnell.

Jennifer, I know my fellow directors will want to join me in thanking you for all your brilliant work in this landmark year for Graffiti Theatre Co.

The ART of Graffiti Theatre.

Each year I receive from Jennifer, our General Manager a report of the activities & theatre productions that GTC has engaged in. I have attached this document and would urge all my fellow Directors to read it through and to realise the extensive and epic achievements of this Theatre Company, and to be proud to have been in some small way associated with these Artists and Producers.

It is all so detailed and every element is important, please do read it through in detail.

[See document: **Graffiti Theatre Company’s Activities 2017 productions** and work in progress]

Graffiti’s commitment is strong as ever in commissioning & publishing new work by playwrights. As too are the ever ongoing and outreach workshops To Schools, DEIS & Communities.

It is little wonder with such prolific output and such diversity of projects & associates that Graffiti Theatre enjoys a great reputation & recognition locally, nationally & international. Graffiti’s expertise is much valued by policy makers & educationalists,

Graffiti continues to be a role model for all Arts Organisations and we increase our working associations year on year: Abbey Theatre, Cork Midsummer Festival, Fighting Words, etc.

People & The Dance of Time.

Yes, time dances on and none of us can sit out the dance. This is my 4th chairman's address, 4th and final. As this AGM concludes there will be a new Chairperson to enjoy the absolute privilege & pleasure to take on this role. It is like being in the front row seat of a most excellent play and I am most grateful to all of you for your stellar performances with the Executive & Staff in the starring roles and me & my fellow directors as the cameos. I thank also Ger Fitzgibbon & Paul Hudson previous chairmen from whom I learned much and who continue to be great champions of Graffiti Theatre. I am delighted that this Board will soon have two new excellent Directors and look forward to welcoming both Julie Kelleher & Ray Boland at our next Board Meeting.

By far the most vital and essential role to the core purpose of this theatre company is that of Artistic Director. And while we all know Emelie's Artistic Swansong is many years and plays down the line it is of little surprise that the founder of this theatre company has already set in motion the transition of the lead role for a new Artistic Director and she steps side-of-stage into the supporting role of Artistic Advisor and Company CEO.

There is a slow moving beautiful dance that has and is allowing significant changes in this organisation to occur naturally. Last year we saw the sublime stewardship of Activate Theatre pass from the very great Ger O'Neill to the theatre-impassioned fellow, Niall Cleary. Niall has been active in the role now for over a year and his energy & enthusiasm for his work impresses all who meet him: his work colleagues, young artists & theatre makers and the many friends & associates of GTC.

It is little wonder that Emelie has identified Niall as the natural choice for Artistic Director to succeed her long & brilliant tenure. The Board fully endorsed the Executive's decision to offer Niall the role and we are delighted that he has accepted the role. We congratulate him and we wish him as much success as his predecessor although that is a very tall order.

The exemplary reputation & recognition this Theatre Company enjoys both locally, nationally & internationally is due to Emelie's artistic vision, hard work & good heart.

No other person deserves to step out, alone from behind the curtain and accept the applause of the rapturous audience, that audience being students, parents, actors, set designers, sound engineers, theatre lovers, teachers... all who have engaged with and experienced her work over these many years. Emelie Fitzgibbon takes a bow as Artistic Director of Graffiti Theatre and gracefully exits the stage, but thankfully only for a costume change.

Yes, the future looks good and the dance continues.

While Graffiti Theatre Company must still face the vagaries of uncertainty of Arts & Education funding & some national policy makers that seem to think a new logo is a valid alternative to properly resourced and hardworking artistic community, nonetheless, Graffiti Theatre is as well set as any organisation can be, our finances are sound, our artistic vision is clear and we have a stellar cast of players.

In the years ahead and no doubt there will be ups and downs, we know we can trust our Artists to inspire and inform us. And, very importantly, our Artists know they can trust Graffiti Theatre CLG to do the business!

As the poem goes....

“ in our autonomous
Region all the gold was gorse,
And all investment was storytelling.”

Andrew Desmond
Chairperson Graffiti Theatre Company 2012~2017