*The Dréimire Project helps address many of the difficulties encountered by young Irish people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic and diverse communities, and under-represented social groups, in accessing affordable performance training at FE and third level.*

[Dréimire – n. Gaeilge. Ladder. A way to access imagined spaces and overcome real obstacles]

**Introduction**

The process of auditioning for a place at a recognised drama school is quite arduous. Some schools can have between 3,500 and 6,000 young people aged 17 to 25 (approximately) audition for one of 16 (or 27) places on their BA in Acting. The major institutions attract applicants from all over the world.

The applicants must negotiate the application process of the college and of UCAS and perhaps the CAO. Fees are required for each stage.

An applicant must prepare at least two, and usually 4 or 5, contrasting monologues from classical and contemporary plays in English. They should know the plays well and be comfortable performing the monologues in front of a panel from the institution. They may also be asked to sing a prepared song at this stage, if not at a later stage.

In order to stand a reasonable chance, it would help if they had experience of performing, of being in a collaborative theatre-making workshop, and a love of live theatre. They should also, crucially, have a good understanding of Shakespearean and classical verse.

If they succeed in getting an invitation to return for a second round (called a ‘call-back’) they will again perform their monologues for a panel and be able to respond to direction at ease. They will also be interviewed about their background in theatre, their reasons for applying, and their interest in acting. Here they may also be required to participate in a group workshop of improvisation and devising.

Should they pass this round they are offered a third call back. Here they will usually have to prepare two new monologues and perform them as before, along with an interview.

In some cases, a fourth and even a fifth round is required, where the applicant is additionally required to take part in advanced workshops.

Finally, they may be offered a place.

Throughout they will need to fly to London or travel to Dublin, find accommodation if necessary, and support themselves while auditioning or attending call-backs.

If they get a place, they should understand the grant and loan systems both here and in the UK, and apply in a timely fashion for them.

Like most students, they will need to find accommodation while attending college.

**A: THE NEED FOR THIS PROJECT**

It is very difficult for young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds to access training in performance. They cannot afford the cost of:

- joining a youth theatre

- individual audition preparation

- audition application fees

- flights and accommodation for multiple auditions.

Underprivileged young people are usually not able to afford the cost of preparing and applying for Further Education and Third Level in this sector. They will need intensive audition preparation, assistance with technology use (if auditions are done online), and assistance with travel (if they are face-to-face).

Many young people who would like to audition for third level acting courses do not have digital equipment to access current audition procedures. Others have no personal space to work on monologues or audition preparation. Most have limited or no support accessing online forms, SUSI grants, UCAS forms, and online preparation. While there are a small number in the direct provision system who would like to be performers, it is difficult for them to access training without committed support. Those from DEIS schools and youth projects need continuous support from us to help them access this training for these careers.

**B: WHAT IS INVOLVED IN DRĒIMIRE**

Crooked House applied to the Arts Council of Ireland under their Project Fund in the Young People, Children and Education department. We were successful in winning an award to fund the DréimireProject in 2020.

The DréimireProject will offer intensive support to 20 young people from low socio-economic backgrounds, from ethnic minorities, diverse and immigrant backgrounds, to audition for performance courses at third level and further education in Ireland and in the UK.

We have partnered with The Lir Academy in Dublin to provide some of the programme.

The support for young people will be in the form of some of the following depending on the needs of the applicant:

* One-to-one coaching in monologue preparation, application processing and planning
* Assistance with travel costs (including flights, if necessary) to audition locations
* Assistance with technical support (WIFI and filming) for online auditions
* Administrative guidance with CAO, UCAS and other portals for access to applications
* Group sessions with experts in the field on preparing for third level/FE, auditioning, and future careers
* Access to English language sessions for those who need it
* Access to youth theatre involvement (in productions of classical plays, contemporary plays, and devised plays) for those who live close to a youth theatre
* Individual mentoring and support to assist in making choices, dealing with potential rejection, maintaining motivation, and having a manageable long-term plan.

We will create and upload 15 films from webinar material during the programme. These will be made freely available on our website.

**C: HOW DO I TAKE PART?**

Young people are invited to apply for this project from youth theatres in Ireland, migration and asylum support organisations, DEIS schools, youth clubs and projects in Ireland. You can do so by completing the online Google Docs form here: <https://forms.gle/xxs7dPUwHzvPMicp8>

Crooked House will also liaise with organisations who have direct contact with applicable young people, inviting them to nominate eligible participants who will be interviewed by us as part of the selection process.

For those young people who are not yet ready to audition, but who would like to, we will offer a preparatory path – with access to a youth theatre, and preparation for PLC Performing Arts Courses.

More intensive preparation will be offered to those who are emotionally ready, who have the required level of English, and who have some experience of acting or of participating in drama.

The project will offer blended learning methods. One-to-one work will be carried out by weekly, one-hour Zoom sessions, with occasional in-person sessions where safety and distance allow. Group sessions will ideally be held in person, where distance and safety allow. There will be regular interaction using email, WhatsApp and other media, and there will be webinars on various aspects of auditioning.

**D: TIMEFRAME**

1st November – 10th December 2020:

(1) Information and liaison with youth services, DEIS schools in Kildare, migrant and asylum support groups, Youth Theatre Ireland, and other organisations in order to recruit young people to the project

(2) Hiring artists and personnel to deliver audition coaching and workshops, preparation of contracts in accordance with Arts Council best practice on payment of artists.

10th December – 7th January 2021:

Interview and select 20 participants for the programme.

7th January 2021 – 29th January 2021:

Induction, preparation, initial meetings and planning the programme with participants

1st February – 30th April 2021:

Preparation, monologue work, group work, application to colleges and PLCs, scheduling flights and travel.

1st May – 31st July 2021:

Continuation of above along with preparation for third level or progression with those who have been offered places.

1st August – 30th September 2021:

Liaison with access support services at third level and FE colleges to support the transition of young people into college.

1st October – 30th November 2021:

Monitoring participants. Preparation of a report evaluating this pilot project (with interviews, impact assessments, and recommendations).

**E: PROJECT CONTENT**

(1) Initial assessment

Participants will be assessed and advised regarding the pathway to follow.

Pathway One

* + - Access to and participation in a youth theatre
    - Taking part in group sessions of voicework, improvisation and movement
    - Shakespearean Scene study
    - Application to PLC and FE courses and programmes in Ireland

Pathway Two

* + - Selection of appropriate monologues and one-to-one work on preparation
    - Taking part in group sessions of voicework, improvisation and movement
    - Participating in a production of a Shakespearean play or in Shakespearean scene studies
    - Application to third level actor training programmes in Ireland and the UK.

(2) In-person group sessions

There will be weekly Saturday afternoon sessions for groups of individuals adhering to COVID-19 precautions and guidelines. Most will be in Newbridge. Travel assistance will be available for those who can get to Newbridge via public transport. There may be an alternative online programme at this time for those who cannot travel. The in-person programme will offer:

2.00pm – 3.30pm: Movement workshop

3.30pm – 3.45pm: Break

3.45pm – 5.00pm Voice workshop

5.00pm – 5.30pm: Break

5.30pm – 7.00pm Improvisation and collaborative devising workshop

They will run from 9th January – 31st May 2021 (15 sessions)

(3) In-person group sessions in The Lir Academy, Dublin

There will ideally be 4 of these, arranged with The Lir, and consisting of monologue support work, between 9th January – 31st May 2021.

(4) All participants will be encouraged to take part in their local youth theatre where possible. This is important because we believe that having experience of creating theatre in a collaborative environment is crucial to gaining a place at third level actor training. Youth Theatres offer the best place for young people to develop their skills in the area of performing, and in building confidence in theatre-making. Most young people who obtain places in actor training colleges have spent considerable time with their local youth theatre.

In addition, this project offers support for youth theatres to recruit and engage members from low socioeconomic and diverse backgrounds. We propose to pay the fees of eligible young people that the youth theatre recruits. The fees range from €50 to €250 per annum. Details of where to find a youth theatre can be found here: <http://www.youththeatre.ie/youth-theatre/find-a-theatre/>

(5) Participants who are not engaged with Shakespeare in their local youth theatre will be encouraged to take part in directed short scenes from Shakespeare as part of the programme.

This element of the programme is essential, in our view. Since almost all actor training programmes require applicants to perform classical monologues, participants will need to have a solid understanding of how those speeches work, where they fit in the context of a play, and how such verse speaking can be made relevant to contemporary audiences. Taking part in a full production, or selected scenes, demystifies the often-challenging process of acting Shakespeare. It allows participants a lead-in period of several months to get to know the play and the method of acting. This is especially needed if the participants are from migrant backgrounds where English is not their native language. In such cases we have additional supports as part of the project (one-to-one assistance) where young people can come to understand the language and how to use it.

(6) Those who cannot take part in a Shakespearean production will be offered online scene-study in pairs or small groups, using video conferencing. There will be one of these sessions per week for one hour delivered by a tutor from January 11th – May 31st.

(7) Individual online one-to-one sessions

Each participant on Pathway Two will have one session per week with a tutor who will help them select appropriate monologues. The tutor will give feedback, help the participant investigate the context and setting of the piece, and coach the participant in approaches to performing the monologue.

There will be 8 sessions per participant offered between 9th January and 31st May.

For participants working on call-backs extra sessions will be added if needed.

(8) Webinar and online sessions on logistics

All participants will have one webinar session per fortnight on application procedures, reviewing college admission requirements, understanding college syllabi and curricula, UCAS and college forms, making Personal Statements, managing SUSI and Student Finance, preparing for interviews, etc.

These will be run from 4th January – 30th June (15 sessions)

The webinars will be filmed and made into stand-alone videos to be uploaded on our website and available for free to any future applicant to third level acting courses.

They will be up to 30 minutes each. They will be edited from material delivered online during the webinar sessions, and also include additional footage and material specially made for them.

**Webinar / Film Content**

1. Becoming an Actor – the roles, job opportunities, conditions of employment, and types of work an actor does.

2. Drama Schools – what happens here / where they are / introduce 5 in detail.

3. Monologues. Choosing appropriate monologues for your age and gender and preparing them.

4. Speaking classical verse – pointers, explanations, and demonstrations.

5. Joining a youth theatre / the importance of improvisation and devising in collaborative theatre-making spaces / where to find youth theatres / Youth Theatre Ireland

6. Application 1: UCAS, CAO and individual college admission requirements / writing Personal Statements and filling in application forms.

7. Application 2: talking about your theatre experience / why you want to be an actor / reviewing theatre / sharing your motivation.

8. Working on contemporary monologues / where to find ones / choosing appropriate ones.

8. Monologue Case Study 1: working on selected classical monologues (1 male and 1 female)

9. Monologue Case Study 2: working on selected contemporary monologues (pending rights/permission) – 1 male and 1 female.

10. Audition Day – mind set, approach, warm up, dealing with nerves. What to expect from panellists.

11. Dealing with possible rejection and disappointment / good mental health /how to move on / planning for the future.

12. Student finance and grants / SUSI / living in London or away from home.

13. Being in Drama School – making the most out it.

14. Preparing for next year – planning audition material.

15. Selection of classical monologues to choose from / suggestions for speeches from contemporary Irish plays.

(9) Guest talks and Q&A sessions

These will be online. Past members of Kildare Youth Theatre who either are in, or have graduated from RADA, LAMDA, Central, Guildhall, Bristol Old Vic, Drama Centre and others will talk about the realities of living and studying acting in London/Bristol.

There will be 8 of these sessions (each will be recorded to use again).

(10) Additional supports

We need to make space for additional, and as-of-yet unrecognised supports that students may have. These will emerge from the participants.

**F: BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE**

*Actor Coaching and working with young people*

Crooked House Theatre Company has run Kildare Youth Theatre since 1996. In this time, we have offered a programme called Young Actors’ School on Saturday afternoons for aspiring applicants to third level and FE programmes in actor-training. The programme consists of weekly scheduled classes in Movement, Voicework and Improvisation. It is complimented by weekly one-to-one sessions on Monday and Tuesday evenings with participants on monologue preparation.

The programme runs from September to April each year. It is free to members of the youth theatre, using the expertise of Peter Hussey, the Artistic Director, for monologue work. Guest artists are paid to assist in the delivery of Saturday sessions.

Due to capacity there is an upper limit of 8 applicants from the youth theatre who can take part each year.

To date, we have been successful in helping young people gain places at RADA, LAMDA, Guildhall, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and Bristol Old Vic in the UK. A place was also offered by The Lir in Dublin to an applicant.

Others have been offered places on FE programmes in Dublin and in DIT. Applicants have been supported in auditioning successfully for places on UCD’s Ad Astra programme and with NUIG.

With this experience we are now able to offer the programme to a wider community, and to include more of those young people who cannot afford to audition for college places. We will continue to promote the viability of such a career path to groups of young people for whom the idea of going to third level, let alone of attending an actor-training programme, is simply not part of their cultural or social expectation. We have found that information and dialogue with parents and guardians is key to this process. Inviting young people who have been successful in their auditions to come and talk to groups of aspiring applicants has also been hugely influential.

Having a thorough knowledge of grant systems and state supports for students both in Ireland and in the UK is essential.

*Working with refugees and migrants*

Crooked House has worked with young migrants and refugees since 2005. Some of these projects include *Safe Home* in 2007 where we brought together 50 young Irish, Italian and migrant young people in Newbridge to share experiences of having to leave home. The project used theatre to tell stories and to urge audiences to help foster a climate where migrants could find welcome in Ireland.

More recently, in 2018, we developed a European theatre project called *Supplicants,* inspired by the ancient Greek drama. We ran the project in Newbridge and in Athens with 30 young Irish, Greek and Spanish teenagers along with 20 refugees and asylum seekers living in Athens. Using theatre, we made representation to the Irish and Greek ministries with responsibility for integration and reception, highlighting the plight of migrants across the Mediterranean.

In 2019 we received Department of Justice funding to run *The Room,* an integration project using theatre with young migrants and asylum seekers in Ireland, along with community groups active in County Kildare. The project aimed to integrate the residents of two reception centres with these community groups in the region.

*Creating online arts educational material*

From 2018 to 2020 Crooked House developed a project called *Drama for Youth Work.* It was in collaboration with two of our EU partners: Teatro On&Off in Spain and BiondekBuhne in Austria. Together we made 45 videos and a book about how youth workers can use drama and theatre material in their youth work. We created and uploaded the materials for free use across Europe. The project was funded by Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ programme.

The full project and all the material can be seen at [www.dramaforyouthwork.eu](http://www.dramaforyouthwork.eu)

**G: TUTORS AND TEAM**

The project will be co-ordinated by Peter Hussey, Artistic Director of Crooked House and Kildare Youth Theatre.

Core audition coaches are Rob Salmon, former Associate Director of the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich, and Georgina Kakoudaki, former pedagogical director of the Lyceum at Epidaurus.

Other tutors will be employed who are experienced in coaching young people in audition and monologue work and will understand the logistics of applying for places in college.

We hope to employ theatre-makers from diverse and ethnic backgrounds in order to (a) inspire young people from similar backgrounds by their experience, and (b) provide income support for the artists.

We will also employ emerging artists who have graduated or who have gained detailed experience in working with both young people and with actors. We feel that they are often at a very delicate stage in their career then and need the extra support such a project will give.

Appendix A

ON BARRIERS TO ACTOR TRAINING

*Would-be actors from low-income homes are being shut out of the profession, say campaigners*

*Maria Coelho and*[*Michael Savage*](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/michael-savage)*,* *The Guardian* (2018)

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/apr/08/too-privileged-drama-schools-urged-cut-audition-fees>

*Poorer drama students face an uphill struggle, with funding cuts and rising fees.*

[Vanessa Thorpe](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/vanessathorpe), Arts and Media Correspondent*, The Guardian (2018)*

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jul/08/british-theatre-working-class-actors-waiting-in-the-wings>

*Only 10% of actors are working class*

Georgia Snow, The Stage

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/only-10-of-actors-are-working-class>

*Drama School is too expensive, and our culture will suffer because of it*

by Amy Worthington, *The National Student* (Nov 2016)

<https://www.thenationalstudent.com/Arts_and_Theatre/2016-11-01/is-actor-training-too-expensive-.html>

# *New study exposes ‘class ceiling’ that deters less privileged actors*

# [Vanessa Thorpe](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/vanessathorpe), Arts and Media Correspondent*, The Guardian*

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/feb/27/class-ceiling-working-class-actors-study>

*Working Class Creatives need Support. Here’s How*

Eve Simpson, *The Stage*

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/eve-simpson-working-class-creatives-need-support-heres-how>