

KILDARE YOUTH THEATRE

GENERAL INFORMATION



Kildare County Council
Comhairle Contae Chill Dara



General Information for Parents, Guardians and Members

Dear Parent or Guardian

Whether your young person is returning or starting out, we are very happy to welcome him/her to Kildare Youth Theatre (KYT) this year. KYT is run and managed by Crooked House Theatre Company, a professional not-for-profit voluntary theatre organisation with charitable status established in 1993 in Newbridge.

For your information, I would direct you to the website www.kildareyouththeatre.com where you can browse our history, past projects, young people's comments, workshop descriptions, films and photographs of what we do.

Workshops

The workshop is the basic unit of learning that we employ in the youth theatre. There is one every week for specific age ranges and abilities. Every participant, who is called a *member*, takes part on a voluntary basis in their weekly workshop. Here they socialise, learn performance skills, grow in confidence at a pace that suits them, and encounter young people their age from other schools and social backgrounds from across the county.

In addition, they make (or *devise*) short pieces of performances about issues explored by them in the workshop. The issues are ones they see as being relevant to their age: concerning identity, peer-groups, beliefs and values, sexuality, learning and education, futures, family, belonging, and gender. This is mostly why we ask that members are at least 11 before joining, as some of the issues may not be relevant or suitable to younger people.

The longer they have been members, the more specialist and skills-based the workshop becomes. The main social focus of workshops is to create a comfortable yet challenging learning space for the development of their personalities informed by broadly liberal values. By 'liberal' we mean tolerance, equality, social justice, compassion, and empathy. All workshops are designed to develop critical and independent thinkers who have skills in theatre performance. Some of these young people go on to have careers in performance, or the arts generally, or science, while others find their skills to be useful in entirely different walks of life.

Workshops for 2019 – 2020 are as follows:

- ARIEL workshop, for 11 to 13-year olds: Mondays, 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Facilitated by Vasiliki Psarra and Alice Fischer.
- TOUCHSTONE workshop, for 14 to 16-year olds: Tuesdays, 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Facilitated by Cian Ó Náraigh and Gandolfo Polito.
- CALIBAN workshop, for 17 to 19-year olds: Thursdays, 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Facilitated by Juan Escalona Corral and Alice Fischer.
- SENIOR ENSEMBLE: a performance company facilitated by Peter Hussey where members are at least 20 and under 25. Membership is limited to 20 and is by invitation only when a place becomes available. Fridays, from 7pm to 9pm.

Rehearsals

Your young person may decide simply to take part in the weekly workshop only, and that is fine. Most other members, though, also volunteer their time to take part in *rehearsals*. This is our second unit of learning. Rehearsals are for three types of performance: (1) Contemporary scripted plays; (2) A Shakespearean or classical play; (3) Devised play – one created from scratch by the group and the director.

Rehearsals are at weekends and school nights (up to 9pm at the latest). During mid-term breaks and holidays we usually have one or two of those days devoted to a rehearsal. However, for every single performance project there is a *Rehearsal Schedule* drawn up beforehand listing the times and dates the cast members are required to attend. It will also list which members of the cast are needed and when they are needed. *I would urge you to get a copy of this from your young person* so that you can plan their attendance over the months that the project is being rehearsed (and so that you can avoid any clashes of commitments where possible).

Performance projects planned, or underway, for 2019 – 2020 are:

- Wuthering Heights – adaptation of the classic novel, performed in Riverbank on 19th and 20th November 2019. Cast in July.
- Dungenese by Chris Thompson – a new play from the National Theatre (UK) Connections programme, performed in Riverbank on 27th – 29th March 2020. Auditions and casting in September/October.
- Queen’s County – devised performance by the Senior Ensemble, performed in Riverbank on 28th and 29th February 2020.
- One-act plays for young people – performed in June 2020 as part of June Fest. Auditions and casting in December 2020.
- Film projects – developed from May 2020 onwards.

Projects

Projects are the third major unit of learning used in Kildare Youth Theatre. Again, these are voluntary, and range from intensive week-long exchanges to six-week films. The type and number of projects vary each year. They depend often upon funding, and upon who asks us to do what.

For example, we have been asked by Trocaire to make a performance (for their annual conference) that created characters using stories from people in developing countries. Another example – we were asked to develop a short performance about the history and impact of adult education for Maynooth University’s 40th anniversary conference.

Other projects included making a short theatre piece that was filmed about teenagers who were effectively ‘pushed’ out of education.

Projects that depend on funding are those for which we apply annually. These are run by Erasmus Plus, the EU Commission’s fund for youth, and they are administered in Ireland by Leargas (see www.leargas.ie and http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm) They fund youth exchanges and other ‘mobility’ projects. Young people from our partner theatres in Europe come to Ireland and work with us for a week creating a project based on performance about certain issues. These exchanges usually happen in summer time or during holidays. In turn, our partners in Europe often invite us to go there with several young people (we don’t control the timing of these ones are sometimes they happen in term-time). The costs of exchanges are almost fully covered by the EU Erasmus+ programme.

Examples of recent exchanges:

- Kairos. A week-long exchange held in Newbridge in August 2019 involving 13 of our young people, plus 35 young people from Germany, Greece, Belgium and Spain. They worked with professional theatre-makers to explore how they feel about the rise of populism, and anti-democratic ideologies rising across Europe.
- Speechless. A week-long exchange held in Spain with 40 young people from EU countries exploring how we can positively combat hate speech.
- Logos. 10 day exchange held in Greece discussing democracy and using theatre to explore concepts of inclusion and tolerance.

Facebook

For better or worse, almost all our administrative-type correspondence these days is done on Facebook. For every workshop, rehearsal and project, we set up a 'closed' or a 'secret' group on Facebook and the cast/members/volunteers are all invited to join it. They need to be on Facebook first. (However, they can join as an alias just for the purposes of being in the Facebook group). In these groups, which are hidden from the public and are private, members can post articles, videos and other information that might be relevant to the research being carried out for the project or workshop; they will also receive online copies of scripts, rehearsal schedules and performance information to do with the work; and here too will be posted any announcements to do with the group.

Aside for these, there is a general, more public Facebook group for all KYT members and their parents (both past and present) in which we promote shows, and post audition opportunities we come across, and other theatre-related items. This is to be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/kildareyouththeatre/> and you are very welcome to join it.

Parental Involvement

As we are an open organisation, parents or guardians may also join the closed Facebook groups simply by emailing me (and adding Peter Hussey as a friend of yours on Facebook). It is up to each parent/guardian to decide for themselves whether they wish to do this or not (depending on the level you wish to monitor your young person's online activity). However, at a minimum, you should ask for copies of all scripts and rehearsal schedules, and any other 'Information' documents posted on Facebook about various projects.

Parents and carers are also very welcome to sit in at workshops, rehearsals and to become involved in projects. Some parents like to watch the dynamics at workshops; others have helped with running them (e.g. supporting young people with special learning needs); some have helped out during rehearsals (from supplying cup-cakes to typing up rehearsal notes – even providing transport for props). Many help out during exchanges, making dinners and helping with catering for the 50+ young people attending for the week. There are many ways to be involved and we welcome all of them. If you choose to sit in on a workshop, we ask that you attend no more than two, so that your young person does not become self-conscious of themselves while their parent/guardian is there.

It is very important to note, that in all cases where a parent or guardian chooses to sit in on workshops, or help with projects, he/she will need to be Garda vetted before he/she can attend. This should not put people off helping, as the process is not too complicated but it does take some time (approximately 6 weeks).

Volunteers

Kildare Youth Theatre is a voluntary project. That means that the adults there offer their time free to run it. Peter Hussey is the overall director (called the Artistic Director) – he facilitates the older groups and directs a number of the rehearsals.

Young Leaders are those who have been in the youth theatre for more than 4 years. They facilitate the younger groups and help integrate new members. The Young Leaders for 2019-2020 are Cian Ó Náraigh, Lauren Kelly and Colin Smyth.

Full-time volunteers are recruited through a programme of the EU – a section called the European Solidarity Corps. Each year we take on volunteers who have experience in theatre. They are usually aged between 20 and 30. This year we are delighted to welcome the following:

- Juan Escalona Corral from Logrono in Spain. He is an actor and director who has his own youth theatre in La Rioja.

- Gonzalo Martinez Ramiro from Madrid in Spain is a project administrator.
- Gandolfo Polito from Petralia in Sicily is a student of Cinema Studies and an actor.
- Alice Fischer from Florence in Italy is an actor and drama facilitator.

Vasiliki Psarra came to us as a volunteer from Athens. She is now our company administrator.

Shane Hickey Ó Mara is a young director from Limerick. He is directing Wuthering Heights and Dungeness.

Jenny Oleinik is a burlesque artist and trainee director who lives in Dublin. She is a ssistant director on a number of projects.

Anna Galligan is a youth theatre director who runs Kilkenny Youth Theatre. She helps us with support and training for the volunteers.

We also host students on placement from Maynooth University's Youth & Community Work courses.

Occasional volunteers include Brenda Walsh and Angela Geoghegan who keep our accounts and books in order. They visit once or twice a year.

The centre is not 'staffed' at regular hours. We only have time to be there for workshops, rehearsals and projects, which are almost all after 4pm on weekdays and after 10am on Saturdays and 1pm on Sundays. We never go past 9pm with workshops or rehearsals during school time.

We always try to be open and run workshops during Bank Holidays, mid-term breaks, and other holidays. So we do not follow the school terms.

Kildare Youth Theatre Members' Committee

That said, the centre would not run effectively if we didn't have a group of young leaders every year who are assisting with workshops, running small-scale events like Open Mic Nights, and learning to manage the project. They have keys to the building and are trained in Child Protection, Health and Safety, and through the year they learn about managing a project. They often supervise after 4pm for study sessions (where young people can come up from school and do their homework in one the rooms). They are elected by members voting, and they are supported by Crooked House. They have a large say in how the programmes and projects are run.

Fees & Registration

There are no fees to take part in any aspect of Kildare Youth Theatre. However, to take part in international exchanges abroad the family must ensure that the participant has a European Health Insurance Card, which is free. Here is a link to how you get it: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/ehic/ehic.html>

They must also take out travel insurance for their young person. All other costs of the trips are paid for.

Every parent/guardian fills out a Registration Form with their young person for each year. This is an important document as it is the only information we have about the young person – and so we know who to contact in case of an emergency. It is vital that you receive a Registration Form and send it back filled as soon as your young person starts with us. (For example, we may not know that they have asthma, and if they have an attack one evening, who do we contact?). Please ensure your email address is correct and can receive emails.

Garda Vetting and Child Protection

All volunteers over 18 and over are vetted through our Garda Vetting Consortium (which is Youth Theatre Ireland). This includes volunteers from abroad.

We have in place a Child Protection Policy which all volunteers understand.

Kildare Youth Theatre strives to prevent bullying of any kind. If you become aware of any such incident please contact us immediately. Peter Hussey is the Welfare Officer in the organisation.

Permission Letters

For many projects (like exchanges either at home or abroad) there are no costs except insurance – it's paid for by Erasmus+. For Connections we ask for the cost of transport from Newbridge to Belfast, and the cost of the hostel for your young person for the weekend of the Connections festival there. It is usually in April each year.

Other permissions we need are to have photos and film recording taken of your son/daughter. This is necessary because we promote our shows via photographs online; and we often make filmed recordings of pieces of theatre to show to a wider online audience. However, if you have concerns about images of your child going online then it is best to withhold permission (knowing that they might not, therefore, be able to take part in some productions that are to be filmed).

Artistic Ambition

Finally, the key principle underpinning all of our work is artistic ambition. That is, we aim to make theatre that is excellent, original, and thought-provoking. Happily, we have been successful in this. Our work is recognised across Europe, and we have won many awards nationally and abroad for the quality of our theatre. It is hard work, demands commitment, but pays off.

Most young people in KYT enjoy being there as a social project – like a sport or extra-curricular activity – they learn skills and build confidence while having fun and expanding their creative capacities. But a large minority have a greater interest. They want this to be their job later in life.

If your teenage son or daughter is interested in becoming an actor then there really is nowhere else s/he should be – it's actually that simple. Think of their youth theatre activity as one of their main Leaving Cert subjects: they need to spend time learning it (and it's as difficult as any combination of Irish or Maths or Physics subjects). They need to do 'homework' and they need to prepare for college at third level. We will help them, obviously. Our young people have gained entry into all the top courses in Ireland and London but only through hard work and support from parents. For young people like them, this is not a hobby: it's a career.

Audition Preparation

For those who would like to apply to third level colleges (either here or in the UK) for acting courses, Peter Hussey will spend time working on audition pieces with them. This consists of working on two classical and one modern monologue.

If you feel your young person would benefit from this please get in contact and we'll arrange it.

Funding and Costs

Kildare Youth Theatre costs approximately €75,000 per year to run. Most of this cost is accrued on international exchanges and on production of plays. Much of the cost is offset by grants from Erasmus+ for the international work. [Note that it takes a lot of time and resources to apply for these grants, and competition across Europe for them is high]. Rent, for example is €15,000 per year.

We receive €6,000 annually from Kildare County Council via its Arts Service. Other funding is applied for each year, and we are sometimes successful in drawing it down from The Arts Council and others.

If parents would like to organise and run fundraisers we'd be happy to assist.

Governance

Kildare Youth Theatre is run by Crooked House Theatre Company. Crooked House was founded in 1993 in Newbridge. It is a company limited by guarantee. We are a charity whose Registered Charity Number is 20143534.

The voluntary Board of Management has the following members:

- Ms Mary Doyle, Newbridge. Retired bank official.
- Ms Mary Linehan, Newbridge. Primary school teacher.
- Ms Angela Geoghegan, Kinvara. Accounting Technician.
- Mr Kieran Behan, Kilcullen. Secondary school teacher – art.
- Ms Orla Ui Neill, Kilcullen. Governance Consultant.
- Ms Evonne Boland, Newbridge. Community Activist.

Contact Details

Address:

Crooked House Theatre Company, 1 Main Street, Newbridge, County Kildare. W12 KV29.

We are located above Johnson's Bar (The Liffey Lounge) on Main Street, close to the bridge over the river Liffey. Entrance is through our own front door and up the stairs.

Telephone: Peter Hussey at 087 2759420

To contact Peter Hussey please email info@crookedhouse.ie

To contact volunteers:

crookedhousetheatrecompany@gmail.com

or kildareyouththeatre2012@gmail.com

There is also a contact form on our website: www.kildareyouththeatre.com

Watch videos of most of our work here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3bMAccraZXxV5FfT2O5fKw>