

Encore Productions Residency Round Up – February 2019.

February is the shortest month. And there's all the valentines cards to sort out! That didn't stop Encore Productions from having another jam packed month of drama and creativity!

'One love' was playing at Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin. We just couldn't get down but sent a good luck message and have arranged a workshop with the Blue Diamond gang later in the year. Can't wait.

We've been running workshops with social care students at DKIT for over ten years now – showing how drama games and exercises can be used in the social care setting to help people work together, have fun, feel great and express themselves. Dr Fiona Fearon who runs the course helped us out last year with some workshops and lectures on Brecht and Mother Courage so time to return the favour!

The workshops were split over two weeks (5th and 12th of March) and took place in the Black box theatre at DKIT with around 35 students taking part. The students loved it and we think quite a few of them would like to come to our centre for their work placements where they will get to put their newly acquired skills into practice.

Together with another ten service users from RehabCare Dundalk we attended 'Warrior of the Tain' by Quintessence theatre Company. At 11am on an ordinary Friday in Dundalk we were transported back to a mythic world of cattle raids and battles as they retold Ireland's Epic cycle – from Maeve's perspective. We were enthralled. So powerful, physical and brave. On the 12th of February Anna (director) and Fiona (Queen Maeve) then ran a workshop for us where we discovered our warrior scream, learned how to battle march and create a soundscape and created our own choreography of warrior moves. By the end the room was pretty hot and sweaty and filled with as much laughter as war cries but the focus and energy were harnessed and the results had a fierce power. It was amazing to see some of the process the ensemble had used to bring their piece to life and we hope to be able to bring more physicality and movement into 'Mother Courage' as a result. She's nothing if not a warrior after all. Thanks to Anna and Fiona and the rest of Quintessence and good luck as you move on to the next chapter in your story.

We had the enormous privilege of spending the 13th of February with Theatre and costume designer Alistair Livingstone. Alistair has been involved in making theatre since the 1970's and he has worked with everyone! He had us out of our shoes and onto the floor for some yoga before helping us begin to physically inhabit the journey made by Mother Courage and her children – dragging the cart through mud wind and rain into war. We really connected with this both physically and emotionally. A crucial step in the search for truth in our telling of the tale. In the afternoon we began to learn to look and to draw with our eyes closed – gaining a confidence that helped many of the group discover they could draw despite believing or being told they could not. We had a wonderful day with Alistair whose warmth and kindness also contained the wisdom of experience and allowed us to start to think of our character's actions and feelings and how this might influence what they might wear.

After all that there was just enough time to pack a bag and throw in a toothbrush before we headed over to the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester to see their production with an astounding Ensemble cast led by Julie Hesmondalagh. This up beat, in your face, modern adaptation was like a shot of adrenalin. No Protestants and Catholics – blues and reds instead...not set 400 years ago...set 60 years into the future. And an Ice cream van for a wagon!! We met the whole cast for half an hour after the show – paired up our actors with theirs and talked about the characters we were all trying to bring to life! They took us into the stage - a circular space with seating for the audience all around. We all posed for photos together and shared our thoughts about the play. We can't thank Julie and

the rest of the cast enough. We now know that we can do ANYTHING with this play – make it our own.

Before returning to Ireland we had a workshop with Nickie who is assistant director on the show. She answered all our questions about their process – finding out that we do a lot of the same things that the professionals do! She taught us a few new warm ups(which we'll be passing on to the pupils of St Brigid's in March) and used still images to help us think about some of the themes in the play. So much to think about!

In the last few days we have been thinking about colour, designing flags and writing poems about our character's back stories. Next – let's devise a script!