



**BLUE TEAPOT**  
**THEATRE COMPANY**  
**2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2015

## TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS

***Blue Teapot is a multi-award winning Theatre Company at the forefront of arts & disability in Ireland. We also run a Performing Arts School and two Outreach programmes for people with intellectual disabilities. Blue Teapot is committed to high quality theatre, training and the celebration of creativity.***

***Our mission is to effect positive change in public consciousness concerning people with intellectual disabilities through the medium of theatre, allowing our members inherent talent and creativity to speak for itself.***

## MESSAGE FROM CEO

I am delighted to present the **2015 Annual Report** for Blue Teapot Theatre Company and wish to acknowledge the considerable contribution made by everyone involved in the programme of activities and events throughout the year including actors, performing arts students, outreach participants, tutors, funders, volunteers and staff. I would personally like to give my sincere thanks to both Sonja Brodie and Danielle McDonnell for keeping the show on the road when I took a four month leave of absence.

Highlights of the year include two weeks dedicated to investigating the premise of *Hidden* a project I conceived that proposes the possibility that characters with an intellectual disability (ID) have always existed in renowned theatre literature but have never been played by actors with ID. In June 2015, with an integrated cast of 10 actors both with and without ID, we explored *Dancing at Lughnasa* by Brian Friel and *King Lear* by William Shakespeare. Discoveries that were made were truly exciting: the effect of casting an actor with an intellectual disability in a relevant role unashamedly challenged the dynamics of each play. It is a creative project that will definitely come to future fruition.

Another huge project realized was the filming of *Sanctuary*. Christian O'Reilly adapted his stage play, commissioned by Blue Teapot in 2012, into a screenplay. The Irish Film Board and The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland both committed to fund the film with Edwina Forkin of Zanzibar Films producing and Len Collin directing. Len had worked with the Blue Teapot actors previously in 2011 on a screenwriting project *84*. The film shoot commenced on 30<sup>th</sup> of November in time to capture the magic of Christmas in Galway.

To bring 2015 to a magical close a performance of *St Lucy's Day* was performed to a full house in Nuns Island Theatre by a large cast spanning three of Blue Teapots projects. Devised and directed by Rod Goodall it took place in Nuns Island Theatre and was capped off by a winter barbeque!

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The Performing Arts School students continued their training journey and in September progressed onto QQI Level 3 modules in their third and final year. Blue Teapot wishes to acknowledge the ongoing support of Michael Keady from the HSE and Fiona O’Loughlin in GRETB.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the services of Director Adrian Harney who retired from the Board in 2015. Adrian has been a loyal supporter of Blue Teapot Theatre Company for many years and his commitment to the development of the company is greatly appreciated. The Board welcomed new member John McHugo of Ability West.

The Board focused on developing a new Strategic Plan this year and continued to progress the adoption of The Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations. I would also like to express the Board’s appreciation and gratitude to all of our funders in particular to our major funding partners the Brothers of Charity Services Galway, Ability West and Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board and to all of the funders listed in the report. Without their continued support of Blue Teapot the great achievements and successes could not have happened.

## LOOKING AHEAD IN 2016

The filming of Sanctuary will continue into January and we impatiently await the world premiere! Edwina Forkin (producer at Zanzibar Films) intends to promote it in national and international film festivals and open it on general release in the autumn.

We will welcome the findings from our specially commissioned Social Return on Investment report, produced by *Quality Matters* which had a delayed delivery date and is now due early 2016.

Blue Teapot will produce new piece of theatre *Waiting for Elvis* adapted by Eileen Gibbons for the company from her original stage play of the same title.

The Galway bid for European Capital of Culture 2020 is wholeheartedly supported by Blue Teapot. It has been a privilege to be part of the conversation for reimagining our City of the Tribes into a place that proudly celebrates diversity across all cultural expressions. By actively engaging its citizens in the co-creation of a big vision for Galway the bid team has already facilitated pathways to manifesting a vibrant future for Galway.

**Petal Pilley**  
**CEO**  
**July 2016**

**We have four programme strands each offering a pathway to a fully realised creative life for people with intellectual disabilities:**

- **Blue Teapot Theatre Company** – We are the only professional, intellectually disabled acting ensemble that trains and performs at the highest level, on the main stages of Ireland’s leading arts festivals.
- **Performing Arts School** – an accredited provider in the West of Ireland of performing arts training with programmes leading to QQI awards at Level 3.
- **Bright Soul** – Our long standing Outreach programme (founded 1996), born as a simple creative outlet for adults with moderate intellectual disabilities. It maintains an ethos rooted in arts participation and social inclusion.
- **Sparkle** – Now an established Outreach project and fourth programme strand especially for teenagers with intellectual disabilities.

## PROGRAMME DELIVERY

***Throughout the year, a range of theatre and performing arts classes were provided across our programme strands:***

### **Blue Teapot Theatre Company (Teapots)**

- Weekly three day per week programme consisting of classes in Drama and Improvisation classes (Rod Goodall, Hillary Kavanagh, Orla McGovern), Creative Writing (Eileen Gibbons), Singing (Fiona O’Dea), Dance (Rachel Parry), Acting on camera (Len Collin), Media Studies (Heather Mackey), Stage & Film Make-Up Techniques (Hillary Kavanagh), Yoga (Paul Hardiman) and Anatomy of Comedy (Sonja Brodie).

### **Performing Arts School students (Teacups)**

- Weekly four day per week programme consisting of modules leading to QQI FETAC Level 3 minor awards – Art & Design (Charmian Goodall), Music (Emma Lohan), Drama (Rod Goodall), Event Participation (Dave Donovan), Puppetry (Charmian Goodall) & Drawing (Aine Lawless).
- Galway Adult Basic Education Services provided 2.5 tutor hours per week in literacy and IT classes to our learners every Monday.
- Other learning: Puppetry Performance (Jay Ryan), Yoga (Paul Hardiman), Creative Writing (Eileen Gibbons), Film Studies (Danielle McDonnell), Dance (Rachel Parry) and Media (Heather Mackey).



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## OUTREACH:

- **Bright Soul** held its annual ten week programmes (spring & autumn terms) run by tutors Danielle Leonard & Hillary Kavanagh and ably assisted by *Oonagh Hassett, Jakub Zamojski* and long term volunteer *Ronan Loughney*.
- **Sparkle:** Eight week drama programme for teenagers resulting from a direct response to demand from parents connected to the Galway branch of Downs Syndrome Ireland. 14 new participants partook in Saturday morning workshops led by Lisa Nugent & assisted by volunteer Cathal Ryan (NUIG student). The autumn term was tutored by Hillary Kavanagh, Cathal Ryan and Eileen Gibbons.

## PROJECTS AND EVENTS

### HIDDEN:

- Blue Teapot's Artistic Director Petal Pilley embarked on a two week exploration of two classic theatrical texts – *King Lear* (week one) and *Dancing At Lughnasa* (week two). This exploration involved Blue Teapot actors working alongside well known non-disabled actors in pivotal roles/ integral characters that could have been written as a person with an intellectual disability: The Fool from William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Rose from Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The ensemble explored the innate way casting an actor with an intellectual disability would impact the dynamics of these plays, uncovering a different experience of them and how this might impact both the actors and audience in unexpected ways.
- The integrated cast included those with a wealth of experience on stage & screen: Rod Goodall, Helen Gregg, Orla McGovern, Fred McCloskey, Hillary Kavanagh, Garrett Phillips and Tara Breathnach. Dramaturge & Literary Manager of Fishamble: New Play Company Gavin Kostick was engaged as part of this process.

### ST.LUCY'S DAY – Christmas performance

- Bright Soul & Performing Arts School cap another exceptional year for with a celebration of St. Lucy's Day (13th December) for an end of year Christmas Hooley, devised & directed by Rod Goodall, costumes by Charmian Goodall and music by Barry Duffy.
- With a performance held in Nuns Island Theatre, the principle cast were the PAS students supported by Bright Soul members and singer/actor Garrett Phillips.
- It was a full house, with over 100 audience members enjoying the spectacle.

## SANCTUARY – FEATURE FILM

NOVEMBER 2015 – JANUARY 2016

- Coming to a cinema near you (2016/7), the feature film version of *Sanctuary* began a 5 week shoot in Galway City. Funded by The Irish Film Board, Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and RTE, this is a feature film version of our original play by Christian O'Reilly. The film, also written by Christian, is directed by Len Collin, produced by Edwina Forkin (Zanzibar Films) and features the original Blue Teapot cast.

### National Award for Blue Teapot Volunteer.

- Blue Teapot's most long-term volunteer **Ronan Loughney** (of Connaught Rugby) was shortlisted for the Volunteer Ireland Award in the Arts, Culture & Media section. The awards ceremony was held in Dublin on 3rd December and we were thrilled that Ronan won his category. Ronan is the first professional sportsman ever to win a Volunteer Ireland national award. Ronan has been a stalwart of our Bright Soul project for a decade and we are indebted to him for his time, expertise and unwavering support of Blue Teapot.

## BUSINESS & FINANCE

In 2015, we welcomed **Bernie Harrigan** as our new independent management accountant to assist in areas of financial administration procedures, annual audit preparation and to work with staff on implementing protocols and administrative procedure on financial reporting to a range of stakeholders, funding and government bodies. **Figures Booking Services** continued to be outsourced Payroll and Revenue administration and **MK Brazil** continued to provide services for our annual audit.

- Statement of Financial Position with the Final Audited Accounts for 2015 from our independent auditors MK Brazil is included in this Annual Report.

### ***In our opinion the financial statements:***

- *Give a true and fair view, in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice in Ireland of the state of the company's affairs as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 and of its surplus for the year ended; and*
- *Have been properly prepared in accordance with the relevant financial reporting framework and, in particular, with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.*

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## STAFF & CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Personnel

- Danielle McDonnell was appointed maternity cover admin support from when administrator Kathy Murphy went on maternity leave in April.
- Knocknacarra District Community Scheme awarded Blue Teapot with a place for a community employment scheme worker. Jakub Zamojski joined us in June in the role of a caretaker/classroom assistant. Prior to his place on the scheme, Jakub had been on a Jobsbridge scheme (2013) and from in 2014, volunteered with Blue Teapot, dedicating many hours in the month to us.
- CEO Petal Pilley took a four month leave of absence from the middle of July to the end of November.

### Training

- Staff gained continuous professional development through ongoing training opportunities from Brothers of Charity Services Galway (BOCS) QED Department with Sonja Brodie and Danielle McDonnell attending training in client Record Keeping.
- *Volunteers also attended introductory training days facilitated by BOCS.*
- Galway County Council held a two day introductory course in Child Protection Training, aimed at people working in arts/culture environments which were attended by Sonja Brodie and Danielle McDonnell.
- *EmployAbility* assisted the company actors in personal financial matters relating to earnings from performances & associated work as theatre professionals.
- *QA Services* provide expertise to Blue Teapot's training department in matters concerning QQI (and our programmes leading to QQI FETAC awards).

## FUNDRAISING - EVENTS & DONORS IN 2015

***2015 was a year that once again depending on major fundraising targets in order to support an ambitious artistic programme, training and career progression of the company***

- Petal Pilley & Sean Conneally togged out on Christmas morning and in to the icy waters of Galway Bay to generate income from the annual **Christmas Swim**. This is an important fundraiser for us year on year and donations come mostly from the company actors, students & their families/connections.



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## FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

- Carol Graham, whose son Damien Graham is a student in the Performing Arts School, organized two separate **supermarket bag packing** weekends in October and November at SuperValu Ballybane and Dunnes Stores Eyre Square respectively.
- Many other individual donors gave their support, (some whom wished to remain private) through PayPal, attending our events or by organizing their own initiatives.
- Thank you to all the individual members of the public who supported the campaign and allowed for a brand new work to come to fruition in 2015 and in 2016.

## CORPORATE DONORS

### MEDTRONIC GALWAY - MISSION IN MOTION

- We were the nominated Irish charity for an annual international project MISSION IN MOTION which takes place with Medtronic whereby almost 50 Medtronic employees volunteered to spruce up areas of our premises including brand new storage in the art room, ventilation in the public bathrooms as well as interior and exterior painting. The value in kind was immense and Medtronic contributed €4000 (approx. €3,600) to enable specialist suppliers – plumbers, electricians etc. to carry out the work and for materials.
- Just one weekend was all it took to re-paint Blue Teapot Theatre exterior building, paint interior walls & ceilings, install shelving and storage in the art room, install extractor fans in the downstairs bathrooms and a rubber grip matting was laid on the entrance in to the theatre. Staff & some of the Teapots joined in the action and it made a significant impact on the premises. Members of community, i.e neighbouring shops & residents commented on what a good job was being done, and how it was helping the overall area

### ICE Cube and Tec Support

- In the first weekend of October, five members of the ICECube and TecSupport team braved the Killarney Adventure Race – in which they cycled, kayaked and ran a 27km course through the scenic Killarney Mountains and parklands. The highlight of the route was the infamous ‘cardiac steps’ – a long, steep, rocky climb up the side of Torc Mountain. Team members Brendan Cox), Melissa Johnston, Gavan O’ Brien, Gary Cox, and Liam Burke– trained for months in advance of the event in the company’s own on premise gym. Brendan Cox is the brother of Jennifer Cox, member of Blue Teapot Theatre Company.
- This endeavor brought in sponsorship raised at just over €3,000 and we are so grateful to everyone that supported them in their valiant efforts.

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Thank you to all the major stakeholders & public funders that supported our work in 2015

BROTHERS OF CHARITY SERVICES  
GALWAY



ABILITY WEST



GALWAY & ROSCOMMON EDUCATION &  
TRAINING BOARD



THE IRELAND FUNDS



HSE NATIONAL LOTTERY FUND



GALWAY CITY COUNCIL



ICECUBE & TECSUPPORT



GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL



MEDTRONIC



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## COMPANY INFORMATION

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CRO No: 471758  
CHY 18643  
CRA: 20071912

**CEO & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR** Petal Pilley

**CORE STAFF** Sonja Brodie, Kathy Murphy (maternity leave from April 2015),  
Danielle Leonard (maternity cover)  
Jakub Zamojski (Community Employment Scheme, June 2015)

**VOLUNTEERS** Ronan Loughney, Oonagh Hassett, Cathal Ryan, Mairead  
Folan, Mary Campbell

**TUTORS** Charmian Goodall, Rachel Parry ,Emma Lohan, Rod Goodall,  
Hillary Kavanagh, Heather Mackey, Aine Lawless, Dave  
Donovan, Orla McGovern, Jay Ryan, Eileen Gibbons, Fiona  
O’Dea, Danielle Leonard, Lisa Nugent, Len Collin, Paul  
Hardiman and Catherine Collins.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** Fiona Coffey (Chair), Sean Conneally (Secretary), Gerardine  
Lally, Siobhan Ni Ghadra, Carol Browne and John McHugo.  
*Adrian Harney retired March 2015*

**KEY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES** Bernie Harrigan (accountant),Heather Mackey PR, Figures  
Bookeeping (Payroll), MK Brazil Chartered Accountants, Jim  
Faulkner (electrician), Cathleen Hartnett (QA Services), Pauline  
O’Dwyer (EmployAbility) and Aoife Kelly (web & graphic  
design).