

EXAMPLE LANE'S LIST

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Morning Writers,

Some fantastic opportunities this week: **Channel 4's Screenwriting Programme** is open for applications, there's still time to submit for the **Arcola Theatre's PlayWROUGHT** programme and the **BBC Writersroom** is running a free workshop by application in December.

You could also get a job as a writer/dramaturg in digital theatre, enter a play to the **Scottish Short Play Award** or put a week aside in 2015 for phenomenal playwright **Kaite O'Reilly's highly tempting residential course** in Wales.

What Lane Learned this week (scroll to the bottom, folks) reflects on creative control - how does what you write on the page translate effectively to what ends up on the stage?

This also links in with some intriguing articles this week from **Jean St Clair**, **Kat Joyce** and **Joshua Conkel** about the collision of theatrical forms in devising, non-naturalistic storytelling and the use of visual vernacular language.

That's it. If you have an hour free between Wednesday and Saturday, pop down to Half Moon in Limehouse to see **my new play opening** before it goes off on tour.

David

LANE'S LIST INDEX #35

CONTENTS

Free Seminar for Freelancers: Setting up Community Theatre (**SOUTH WEST**)

Grants for the Arts Training and Surgery (**SOUTH WEST**)

Writing Radio Drama Workshops (**SOUTH WEST**)

Write Funny: Your Comedy Toolbox Workshop (**SOUTH WEST**)

The Writing Squad, Kernow (**SOUTH WEST**)

Fringe TheatreFest 2015: Site Specific Show Applications Open (**SOUTH WEST**)

Submissions Open for Theatre Scratch Night, Old Fire Station (**SOUTH EAST**)

Commission Opportunity for Writers, New Writing South (**SOUTH EAST**)

An Introduction to Playwriting: Chelsea Theatre (**LONDON**)

Free BBC / Ideas Tap Inspires Workshop and Feedback (**LONDON**)

Small Story, Big City: Submissions Open at Rich Mix (**LONDON**)

PlayWROUGHT New Writing Programme: Arcola (**LONDON**)

Pay Nothing, Play Anything: Stage Your Work at Etcetera Theatre (**LONDON**)

Writer/Dramaturg for Physical and Digital Storytelling (**LONDON / FRANCE**)

Associate Freelance Artists, The Dukes Centre of Creative Learning (**NORTH WEST**)

Free BBC Writersroom Masterclass: What is a Story? (**NORTH EAST**)

Cast / Right up Our Street Seek 15-min Plays from South Yorkshire (**NORTH EAST**)

The Scotland Short Play Award (**SCOTLAND**)

Writing for Theatre and Performance: A Strong, Arresting Voice (**WALES**)

INDUSTRY BLOGS and ARTICLES

Queer Collage Theatre: Joshua Conkel (*Exeunt*)

Making Language Visual - an Interview with Jean St Clair by Kaite O'Reilly (*Kaite O'Reilly Blog*)

Reconsidering the Author - Kat Joyce (*Exeunt*)

SOUTH WEST

Submission Opportunities

Fringe TheatreFest 2015: Site Specific Show Applications

This year we're inviting companies to submit applications for site-specific shows earlier than usual. This is in response to feedback from companies and should allow more time for the development of a show in conjunction with the venue and for the administrative work that companies might need to do in relation to securing permissions and licensing etc.

The on-line application form is now open and will remain so until Friday 31st October. Full details of how to apply are posted on the website: <http://www.theatrefest.co.uk>

Applications for performances in a regular venue will, as in previous years, open on January 1st and close on 23rd January. Details to follow in due course. The smaller space at the top of The Queen's Theatre (Room At The Top) will this year be treated a space in its own right (rather than a site-specific venue) and will be included in the regular application procedure opening on January 1st.

Less than 9 months to go!

Bill Buffery & Gill Nathanson

Fringe TheatreFest

www.theatrefest.co.uk

Workshops and Training

All Work and No Pay? Free Seminar for Freelancers

How to produce the community theatre of your dreams and earn a living too.

The next quarterly acta Foundation seminar will take place on **Friday 7 November, 1.30 - 4.30pm** at the acta centre, and will discuss partnerships & collaborations, developing project proposals and securing funding.

Come along to hear from our local panel of experts for some top tips about what has worked for them

- Beccy Thomas, Knowle West Media Centre, Programme Manager (Young People)
- Flora Toulson Clarke, experienced acta freelancer and former core team member

- Kat Quartermass, Voluntary Arts England
- Neil Beddow, acta Artistic Director (strategic planning & fundraising)

This is also your chance to ask acta what a company looks for as it develops its freelance team.

- Should I set up my own community theatre company or go freelance?
- What are the dos and don'ts of successful freelance working?
- How do I put together a project funding proposal?
- What makes a successful partnership?
- What are funding bodies interested in supporting?

Once again, all are welcome to come along to this free seminar (delivered with support from Arts Council England).

If possible, please let us know you will be attending by sending an email to info@acta-bristol.com or calling acta on 0117 9532448

GFA Training and Surgery with Philip Butterworth

24th November 2014, HFC Creative Hub

Grants for the Arts (GFA) is an Arts Council England funding stream that provides grants for a wide range of arts and creative projects. This session is for artists, practitioners and organisations who want to know more about GFA and explore if it could provide a source of funds for their creative ideas and projects.

This funding advice session will be run by Philip Butterworth, Lead Relationship Manager for Arts Council South West. Following a presentation in the morning there will then be an opportunity to have a 1-to-1 discussion with Philip about specific applications. These 1-to-1 sessions are limited and need to be booked as soon as possible.

For more information about Arts Council funding programmes visit artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-for-funding/

To book a place or for more information contact our Talent Development Manager, Kirsty Cotton: KirstyC@hallforcornwall.org.uk

Places are FREE but limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

The Writing Squad, Kernow

First session Sunday 19 October, 10 - 4 in Falmouth

The Writing Squad Kernow is a group of talented, enthusiastic, committed young writers aged between thirteen and nineteen from across Cornwall. The group is managed by KEAP and the lead writer is poet, playwright, short story writer and cultural creator Annamaria Murphy who works regularly for Kneehigh.

The aim of the group is to create an environment in which creative writing is the norm and where the young writers have the chance write in a variety of genres and work with a range of different writers.

Cost per session £10.

To book contact Amanda Harris 07712331421 amanda.harris@keap.org.uk

Writing Radio Drama Workshop

Saturday 25th October

10.30am - 4.30pm in Bristol Harbourside Conference Room

A chance to attend a small workshop led by highly respected BBC producer **Sara Davies** and winner of the Radio Academy Gold Award 2014 for her docudrama 'Mighty Beast'.

What makes good writing for a radio play differ from writing for stage or screen, and how do you hook in the listener? This is a day of instruction and inspiration with realistic information about opportunities.

Sara also offers a follow up invitation to submit short extracts of individual work for feedback.

Cost for the whole day workshop , welcome refreshments and Sara's feedback is £60.00

For Further Information contact: sweetbartley@hotmail.co.uk

Write Funny: Comedy Writing Workshop

with Paul Bassett Davies

Sunday 16th November, 10.30am - 4.30pm

Bristol Harbourside Conference Room

Paul Bassett Davies is a hugely experienced writer for screen (Magic Roundabout), radio, theatre & page, and he's worked with some of the biggest names in comedy.

He is also very well practiced in teaching exciting & instructive writing courses. Paul calls this workshop '**your basic comedy toolbox**'.

Cost including welcome refreshments is £60.00

For Further Information contact: sweetbartley@hotmail.co.uk

SOUTH EAST

Submission Opportunities

Theatre Scratch Night at the Old Fire Station

A collaboration between UnderConstruction and [The Old Fire Station](#). Arisen out of the desire to share ideas and new work with audiences, producers and other theatre makers in the city of Oxford, UnderConstruction has developed a monthly platform for artists, performers, writers and directors to share work in a theatre space. The night will usually consist of three pieces performed with feedback given immediately afterwards in a forum style with group discussion.

[Click here for our full Scratch website.](#)

Do you have an idea for a performance you want to try out?

Come and present up to 15 minutes of a work in progress in a supportive environment. This could be a movement piece, a script extract, or improvised theatre that you want to experiment with. If you have an idea you would like to try in front of an audience at the Theatre Scratch Night, please get in touch lizzy@underconstructiontheatre.com

We are still accepting applications for October and Spring 2015.

Writers and Artists Wanted (Paid)

Commission Opportunity for Writers, New Writing South

Contact: Sarah Edmonds creativelearning@newwritingsouth.com

DEADLINE TODAY!

Brighton & Hove Libraries Services in partnership with New Writing South wishes to commission four emerging writers to create new work that explores the theme How Individuals Make Society Change. Collaboration is a key element of this project and, as part of this, adult workshop participants will be responding to a brief identical to the commission given to four emerging writers.

The resulting adults work and the commissions will be presented as one installation at Jubilee Library for National Libraries Day on Saturday 7 February 2015 as part of a celebration event and shared with communities across the city.

How to apply:

Please send a CV, a statement about your initial ideas for this work and a sample of writing (up to 1000 words) or web links to any online projects you have been engaged in to:

creativelearning@newwritingsouth.com

Deadline: 5pm on 13 October

Note: please make sure any attachments do not have large file sizes. Please send links instead where possible.

[Download Commission Brief.pdf...](#)

LONDON

Submission Opportunities

PlayWROUGHT New Writing Programme (Arcola)

PlayWROUGHT #3

Deadline THIS WEDNESDAY!

*"The word **wright** is an archaic English term for a craftsman or builder. When combined with the word play, this indicates someone who has wrought words, themes, and other elements into a dramatic form... someone who crafts plays..."*

Arcola Theatre is pleased to launch a wonderful opportunity to develop and have a play performed as a rehearsed reading at Arcola. This will be part of the third instalment of our new writing programme, **PlayWROUGHT**. Following a successful first and second outing, **PlayWROUGH #3** will be open to any writer aged 18+. We are looking for unique voices that haven't been heard before.

PlayWROUGHT was born out of a frustration at not being able to work with as many new writers as we would like. We receive countless submissions from playwrights every year. Without a literary department and specific funding to develop new writing, we were unable to be as active as we would have liked to be, particularly in developing those plays which show real promise, but would benefit from time, space, support to be refined, and a platform to be showcased.

Unlike most other new writing initiatives, **PlayWROUGHT** is open to playwrights of all ages and experience. We read every play twice, and from this process, select a shortlist of 12 plays that we would like to help develop. Playwrights are provided with group and individual mentoring sessions with a dramaturg, as well as with the necessary R&D and rehearsal space.

Each playwright can either work with a team of actors and directors from their own creative networks, or Arcola will match them with teams from our networks. Each team is given £100 towards expenses. After the readings, we become advocates for our writers to help identify the best next steps for the work, making use of our established industry contacts.

[For more information please click here.](#)

Deadline for Applications: Wednesday 14th October

Small Story / Big City: Showcase Opportunity

Throughout 2015, Rich Mix is looking for emerging performers and companies to tell their stories of city life.

Rich Mix is located in the heart of East London, one of the most diverse and exciting parts of the city. It's seeking submissions for theatre and performance work that encapsulates the smallness and the bigness of city life. These showcases will happen once a month, mainly in its studio theatre, though submissions that respond to other spaces within the Rich Mix building and work across multiple art forms are accepted too. At least three individuals or groups will win this opportunity

Performances will take place once a month, on either a Friday or Saturday evening, starting in January 2015. Please note there will be no Small Story/Big City Showcase in August or December.

In order for your work to be considered, you must have been working in live performance for no more than four years. Work must be no longer than 90 minutes (excluding interval), however shorter works presented as part of a double or triple bill will be considered. Those with work in development, or new writing, are also encouraged to apply - Rich Mix is happy to hear from those with work at the very early stages of development, as well as those with completed works.

Your stories should be funny, poignant, hidden, silly and sad. They're tiny, they're personal, but they are somehow essential. Without them the city becomes that little bit smaller.

If your work is chosen, you will benefit from:

- Inclusion in Rich Mix's main artistic programme
- Ticket sale income on a box office split basis
- Inclusion in Rich Mix marketing materials
- Free performance space in Rich Mix's studio theatre, supported by a full technical and front of house team
- Free rehearsal space in Rich Mix's rehearsal room (at least 40 hours guaranteed, and more subject to availability and requirements)
- Expert support and advice from Rich Mix's creative team and selected partners
- The opportunity for your work to be seen by industry professionals and networking opportunities
- Guidance from Rich Mix on future performance opportunities

Having problems applying? Please read our quick [troubleshooting guide](#) before contacting us or leaving a comment - or for more information, visit our [help centre](#).

This brief closes on Monday 20 October 2014 at 5.00pm BST and is open to IdeasTap members aged 16 and over.

For more information on Ideas Tap and this particular brief please [click here](#).

Pay Nothing, Play Anything: Etcetera Theatre

In provision for the winter blues that is bound to settle at some point, we're holding our third JANUARY FESTIVAL to hopefully give that blues a good beating...performing arts style!

In line with the previous editions, the selected companies will get the opportunity to perform at the Etcetera FREE OF ANY HIRE FEE in exchange for a straight forward box office split.

Whether it's theatre, stand up, dance, cabaret or any combination of the above that rock your artists' boats, we'd love to hear from you and put together our most diverse line up yet!

The link to the application form is here:

<http://www.etceteratheatre.com/index.php?id=9>

The Etcetera Team

www.etceteratheatre.com

265 Camden High Street (above the Oxford Arms)

London, NW1 7BU

020 74824857

Workshops and Training

Channel 4 Screenwriting Course 2015: Open for Submissions

From Philip Shelley, Script Consultant:

I'm delighted to be able to announce that entries are now open for the 2015 Channel 4 screenwriting course, which will take place between January and June next year. The entry period runs until MONDAY NOV 3rd at 6pm.

All the information about how to enter is here -

<http://www.script-consultant.co.uk/channel-4-script-submit/>

Our brief for the course is to find 12 exciting, talented writers who are new to TV drama, to work with them on a new script, the hope being that they subsequently launch careers as TV dramatists.

Over the 4 years of the course we have worked with some brilliant writers, many of whom are now doing very well indeed. It's always very exciting for me and the other

script editors on the course when the course writers go onto be recognised in the industry and achieve success.

Initially we have the all-important task of choosing the 12 'best' scripts from the 1500 or so scripts submitted. This has obviously led me to think a lot about what makes the successful scripts stand out.

SO I've tried to come up with a list of factors that successful scripts have, in my opinion. And I hope this may be useful to you if you're considering entering for the 2015 course - and I very much hope that you are!

[For more information on application and to read Philip's tips please click here.](#)

Free BBC / Ideas Tap Writing Workshop (by application)

An opportunity for IdeasTap members to attend a writing workshop & receive script feedback.

Forty aspiring writers for screen, stage and radio will attend a practical, hands-on BBC Writersroom workshop at IdeasTap in London, taking place on Wednesday 17 December 2014.

The workshop will be held from 1pm till 6pm with a free lunch being served from 12pm for all attendees.

The workshop will be delivered by Henry R. Swindell, development executive for BBC Writersroom.

Following the workshop, attendees will be asked to upload scripts to their IdeasTap portfolio by the end of January, based on their learning at the workshop. All forty will receive a professional script report on their submitted work by the end of March.

To apply for this brief, you'll need to upload an original narrative script (for stage, radio or screen) to your IdeasTap portfolio. Your piece must be at least 15 minutes/pages long. The judges will look at this when evaluating your application.

The judges of this brief are looking for scriptwriters looking to develop their skills in writing for television and radio.

Applicants must be available to attend the workshop in London on Wednesday 17 December.

The winners of this brief will be announced on Monday 1 December.

[Please visit IdeasTap and find out how to apply](#)

Ideastap is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through

Arts Council England.

An Introduction to Playwriting: Chelsea Theatre

08 Jan, 2015 - 12 Mar, 2015

Want to write a play and see it on stage at Chelsea Theatre?

Chelsea Theatre are offering a free ten week playwriting course with Playwright and Producer Paul Kalburgi.

This course offers an introduction to the writers' craft, learning the skills and tricks to writing your own play. You'll cover each step of writing a play, from character development, to structure and to its professional application. Through weekly discussions and practical workshop sessions, the course will help you develop the script writing skills essential for the theatre. At the end of the course you'll see your play performed by actors in a special showcase.

Starts 8th January 2015

Thursdays 6.30 - 8.30pm

PLACES ARE LIMITED SO BOOK NOW!!

For more information and to book your place please contact Mercy on 0207 352 1967 or email mercy@chelseatheatre.org.uk

Writers and Artists Wanted (Paid)

Writer/Dramaturg for Physical and Digital Storytelling

Contact: Emma Forster info@mimbre.co.uk

Are a minute of sadness and a minute of joy really the same length?

Mimbre is an acrobatic theatre company, producing innovative and extraordinary performance work through strong imagery, visual poetry and emotional content. We explore how narratives can be driven by physical choreographies and how much can be said without words.

'Time flies', 'time froze', 'the longest minute of my life'. The feeling of time is relative, but we still try to measure it, schedule it and live it, using the nano-seconds, minutes and hours that we think define it. TIME will use the strength of dance and acrobatics to explore the absolute and relative nature of time, enhanced by film, photography and digital technologies to create an ever changing set that transports the story beyond the here and now.

We are looking for a collaborator (writer or dramaturge) interested in working with

our artistic team in the second development stage for our production - to bounce ideas and test concepts for a simple narrative structure to bind together the physical choreographies and visual explorations around the subject of Time. You will need to be available to join us in France between 23-29 November 2014.

The initial collaboration and input will be for the research and development. Depending on which direction the concept develops further consultancy involvement would then be considered for the final production which subject to fundraising will be produced between February- April 2015 and premiered spring/summer 2015.

The fee for the work in November is £1000 plus travel to France and accommodation. This would include meeting before and after the residency to discuss the project and debrief.

If you are interested in the role send us a brief history of other collaborations or examples of work that you think are relevant for this project with a brief summary of why you are interested in taking part and how you would approach the collaboration.

Please email to info@mimbre.co.uk by midday on 20th October. To discuss the role in more details please contact lina@mimbre.co.uk

NORTH WEST

Writers and Artists Wanted (Paid)

Associate Freelance Artists, The Dukes Centre of Creative Learning

Contact: Jay Walton jwalton@dukes-lancaster.org

The Dukes Theatre, Creative Learning Department is looking to expand its pool of freelancers to deliver an extensive range of arts participation projects. We are seeking expressions of interest from artists and practitioners with a particular focus and passion for; facilitating school and community-based workshops, theatre, music, digital arts, writing and film making. Maximum of 10 hours per week, £30 per hour.

The Dukes Creative Learning Department (CLD) has become recognised as one of the most successful creative participation programmes in the North West, being awarded 'Outstanding' by Arts Council England for the previous three years.

We have a proven record of producing innovative creative projects with thousands of young people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. These projects always combine process and product with have young peoples' creative development at their core.

The Dukes is the largest building-based professional producing theatre company in Lancashire with expertise in producing large-scale productions, both in-house and outside of our walls.

Please submit a CV plus a maximum of one side of A4 detailing your relevant skills and experience and why you are interested in working for The Dukes Theatre. Applicants will be invited for an informal interview if successful. Please note that all artists and practitioners must be based in the North West. Appointment is subject to a valid DBS.

For further information or to apply please send relevant information to Jay Walton, jwalton@dukes-lancaster.org

NORTH EAST

Submission Opportunities

Cast / Right Up Our Street Seek 15-Min Plays, South Yorkshire

Cast and [Right Up Our Street](#) have teamed up with the aim of getting to know new writers in South Yorkshire. We want to create lasting relationships with talented people who have stories to tell.

Following the success of our first two Script Slams, we are again opening submissions for a third slam, to be held on Wednesday 26 November 2014.

We want emerging writers from across the region to send us their 15 minute short plays that will be developed with us and then performed by a professional company of actors in a rehearsed reading. With our autumn masterclasses focussing on solo performance, for this script slam we are interested in, although not exclusively, monologues or one-performer short pieces. For larger cast pieces, we ask that you use no more than four characters.

We can only accept work written specifically for the stage (not TV, radio or film scripts) and writers must be resident in South Yorkshire. The script must not have been performed or had a public reading before. Applicants are limited to entering a maximum of two scripts per slam event.

Writers must be available to attend a meeting with the team at Cast on Monday 10 November where you'll meet with your director and discuss and develop ideas around the script and writing craft. You'll also be invited to attend rehearsals on the day of the performance.

If you have a piece you would like us to consider, please send it to us by email to gareth@castindoncaster.com or by post to Script Slam #3, c/o Gareth Morgan, Cast, Waterdale, Doncaster, DN1 3BU.

You must also complete the writers' submission form below and include that with your submission.

The **deadline for submissions is Friday 17 October at 4pm.**

If you have any questions or queries about Script Slam, please contact Gareth Morgan on gareth@castindoncaster.com

Workshops and Training

Free BBC Writersroom Screenwriting Tips Workshop

Learn invaluable tips on screenwriting.

Join Henry R Swindell (Development Producer, BBC Writersroom) who will provide you with some invaluable tips on screenwriting and answer any burning questions you might have.

This 2 hour seminar will use film and TV clips to clearly demonstrate the essential building blocks of storytelling and is for writers of all genres and experience. Henry will examine the universality of storytelling structure and help writers create a useful template for making sure their narrative is as strong as it can be BEFORE they start writing it.

You are asked to re-watch one of your favourite films before attending the lecture, as Henry will be going through questions using these films as a litmus test. (Please choose a mainstream film, as it helps if most of the group has a working knowledge of it - classics or box-office blockbusters tend to be most useful.)

Where: University of Sunderland, Cinema Room, Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, David Puttnam Media Centre, St Peters Campus, St Peter's Way, SR6 0DD

When: Weds 22nd Oct from 1pm-3pm

[Book your FREE tickets here.](#)

SCOTLAND

Awards and Competitions

The Scotland Short Play Award

Cumbernauld Theatre

Cumbernauld Theatre announces the launch of the inaugural Scotland Short Play

Award for 2015, a professional writing development award designed to engage both first-time and experienced writers across all literary forms to engage with writing for contemporary Theatre and Performance.

Cumbernauld Theatre welcomes submissions of new short plays (up to 15 minutes) from writers from all literary backgrounds and at all stages of their professional careers - whether you are a first time writer or have had worked produced internationally; whether you currently write fiction, novels, poems or films - the Award encourages submissions from playwrights and from writers who currently work in other literary forms and who may not yet have had the opportunity to engage with Theatre and Performance.

Short stories, radio plays and short-film projects have had significant success in the development of new and original writing while simultaneously encouraging new and diverse perspectives and voices both in print and on screen/on-line - yet despite its popularity with artists and audiences, it's a format that remains under explored in theatre/performance.

The Scotland Short Play Award encourages contemporary writing for Theatre/Performance and actively encourages risk and innovation in play-writing and performance writing forms, storytelling and theatre structure.

[For more information on application please click here.](#)

Deadline: Friday 16 January 2015

WALES

Workshops and Training

Writing for Theatre and Performance: A Strong, Arresting Voice

9 - 14 February 2015: Led by Kaite O'Reilly

From solo shows to dramatic speeches in multi-character plays, from Shakespeare's rules of rhetoric to Mamet's 'beware the puppy dog speech' - this course will take an in-depth study of the skills, approaches, aesthetics and practices that create dynamic, effective and effecting dialogue in performance writing.

The course will be highly intensive and for committed playwrights, offering a mix of theory and practice, practical workshops, sharing of work with mutual and critical support, and reading assignments set in advance.

We will consider:

- the different ways a story is told through dialogue - from contemporary solo

- performance pieces to reinventing ancient texts.
- point of view, back story, and how to create the world of the play through language.
- how to write credible, lively, engaging dialogue and reveal character and action through speech.
- how to manipulate pace and tempo-rhythm, create tension and sustain interest.

The skills and techniques explored will benefit all writers for performance, not just those engaged in solo shows, and ideally for those already with some experience in writing for theatre.

This is an advance notice. For those interested in this course, please contact Tŷ Newydd Writers' Centre at the address below.

Tŷ Newydd Writers' Centre, Llanystumdwy, Cricieth, Gwynedd, LL52 0LW

tynewydd@literaturewales.org

BLOG:

Kaite O'Reilly won The Ted Hughes Award for New Works in Poetry for her dramatic retelling of 'Persians', the oldest extant play in the Western theatrical canon, and produced by National Theatre Wales in their inaugural year. Other prizes include The Peggy Ramsay Award, M.E.N. best play and a finalist in the International Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. Awarded three Cultural Olympiad commissions in 2012, her montaged monologues 'In Water I'm Weightless' was produced by National Theatre Wales as part of the official festival celebrating the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics at South Bank Centre. 'The 9 Fridas' premiered at the Taipei Festival in 2014, and will transfer to Hong Kong in 2015. A Fellow at the international research centre 'Interweaving performance cultures' in Berlin, her work has been produced in eleven countries worldwide. www.kaiteoreilly.com

BLOGS, ARTICLES & INDUSTRY PRESS

Reconsidering the Author: Kat Joyce (Exeunt)

'Britain has undeniably produced - and continues to produce - a rich, complex and diverse canon of scripted works, and we owe much to the playwright-centred model which still remains, for better or worse, firmly at the heart of British theatre. However, by automatically and unquestioningly adopting the norms and values of a material system which places the playwright at the apex of the hierarchy, we make it difficult to recognise the breadth and potential of that diverse performance practice which rejects the model of sole authorship and the written word as recording methodology. If we fail to interrogate the ways in which literary biases and conventions still overhang theatre, we also risk failing to appreciate the full potential of the non-literary elements of theatrical performance.'

Making Language Visual - an Interview with Jean St Clair by Kaite O'Reilly (Kaite O'Reilly Blog)

'You look at the world within and find iconic BSL signs, gestures, facial expressions and movement to match the context. For example if I am to describe walking along the high road, I would describe the buildings, people walking past and to add human behaviour, little things that people may not notice but it is there. One way to use a comparison to V.V. is to watch cartoons, the set up is similar. Wide, medium and close up shots of particular objects or a bird. For the close up, I would describe or act like a bird with facial expression, with the medium close up, I would use my arms to move like wings and for the wide shot, I would use my hand to show the bird flying away into nothingness.'

Queer Collage Theatre: Joshua Conkel (Exeunt)

'He "mined memories from my childhood to use in that play, and some of those weren't even true - some were nightmares, some were remembered incorrectly." Together, they make a dark, frightening punk and Pop Art influenced piece that's "a kind of collage, cut and pasted into the frame of childrens' theatre." Conkel explains that "I'd wanted to write something for a while that was a bit Dadaist, where I could allow myself to be really loose and free with the writing and to go really wild without judging myself."



What Lane Learned #6

This week's learning is about WHY YOUR PLAY WILL NEVER LOOK 'JUST HOW YOU IMAGINED' AND WHY THAT'S OKAY:

I've lost count of the number of writers who've asked me the question 'how do I ensure it looks and sounds exactly as I imagined in my head?'

**Newsflash*.*

You can't and it never will.

Also, if you think you really *can* totally imagine something as multi-layered as theatre in your head, by simultaneously doing seven people's completely different creative jobs for them via the black and white marks you leave on a page, please tell me how you did it.

But if you're doing *your* job as writer well, it might just look and sound even *better* than you imagined. All those new choices you weren't expecting can be supporting your storytelling: deepening, enriching and layering nuance and meaning through the action you've carefully scored out in the form of spoken words, via costume, design, lighting, sound, music and movement (or at least some of these).

So what happens when you write a play where the boundary you've deliberately set yourself is that it could be performed with *no* set or lights or music, because the language is what shapes and drives the whole thing?

If you've deliberately imagined nothing, what are the costume, set, lighting and sound designer going to do?

If you're lucky, they'll do exactly what [set and costume designer Verity Quinn](#) has done on my new play FREE which [opens this week](#) at Half Moon Young People's Theatre before going out on a national tour.

*(I should be clear at this point that the script never states anywhere that the play **should** be performed without set, music, lights and so on: but writing it like that, for me, was about exercising the muscles of language as hard as I could without being able to fall back on something else doing the job for me).*

When Verity began talking us through her design on the first day of rehearsal, the language she used to describe the set was harmonising beautifully with the language of the play.

FREE is set mostly on rooftops in the Square Mile at night, and is about a landscape that is as alive as the free-running characters who run it.

Verity talked about opacity and translucence; the ethereal nature of sculptures in shadow that ghost in and out of our peripheral vision; the vanishing points of the horizon; the contradictions and tensions in the build materials she was using; an infinity floor that was flecked with broken symbols from an Arabic language subtly referencing one of the character's lineage - in short, she spoke my play back to me in her own language, translating it into the vocabulary of design - texture, surface, shape, image, dynamic.

The set allows all of these things to resonate with the words, never imposing and offering a multitude of options in performance. It is metaphorical, not photographic; it asks the audience to use their imaginations to complete the picture; it helps the actors inhabit a fluid theatrical world that breaks the rules of the real and in every single way, it echoes the universe I believe the play creates for itself through the words.

There's also lighting, original music and sound and a physical realisation of the story I didn't even know could happen.

In other words, if you truly concentrate hard enough on your own job, you can enter into a beautiful conversation with other theatrical languages. With any luck, the realisation of your work will become bolder than you ever could have imagined.

FREE is at [Half Moon Young People's Theatre](#) from 15 - 18 Oct and then on UK tour.

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