

The Hublic Sphere Season 2 Episode Three Show Notes

Creating Together: Before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic

By: Courtney Helen Grile



The SoloSIRENs Collective in rehearsal at The Civic. (photo courtesy of SoloSIRENs)

In this episode I spoke with Jenny Macdonald and Melody Chadamoyo about their work with the SoloSIRENs Collective based in Tallaght. The collective uses applied drama/theatre methods to generate dialogue and create pieces of theatre. We discussed *how* the collective worked together prior to the pandemic and talked about the transition into working solely in a Zoom setting: the implications around the work, challenges, insights, and how the relationships between participants, facilitators, and the work was altered.

Applied drama/theatre is an approach to art-making that embraces cultural learning, relationship-building, dialogue, and an array of drama/theatre forms. The idea of an “applied” drama is underscored by the notion that the artform has the ability to “address something beyond the form itself” (Ackroyd par. 2). Often, practitioners in the field of applied drama/theatre work in specific contexts outside of drama/theatre. For example, practices included under the heading of applied drama are: Drama in Education (DiE), Theatre for Development (TfD), Socially-engaged theatre, Process Drama, Drama Therapy, Community-engaged Theatre, Theatre for Social Change, Theatre for Social Justice, Drama in Healthcare, Prison Theatre, Playback Theatre, and Theatre of the Oppressed. Although the field of applied drama studies did not emerge until the 1990’s, the actual processes and ideals of applied drama (as we know it today) began to cultivate in the work of artists early in the twentieth century.



Rehearsal on Killiney Beach in December 2020 (photo courtesy of SoloSIRENs)

Relationship-building is a key element within drama/theatre. In a typical theatre process directors, actors, designers, and technicians (and more!) are brought together to rehearse and put up a show in (typically) a limited amount of time. In order to accomplish this feat and ensure maximum collaboration, theatre games and activities are employed to aid in community-building. This process is even more crucial in applied drama/theatre settings when there is often no script to work from and participants are not typically professional performers. These games and activities focus on getting all participants involved, working-together, stepping outside of their

comfort zone a bit, and having fun. This helps to build the kind of trust that is needed for engaging in this collaborative, creative process.

The SoloSIRENs Collective is a community-based theatre-making group in Tallaght comprised solely of women. Their website states: “Curated, directed and staffed entirely by a female team, we collectively share and express the challenges facing women in the arts and society today.” Led by founding director Jenny Macdonald, they use applied drama/theatre techniques to explore and investigate female-driven themes, leading to the creation of new plays and performances centred on those topics. Their first devised performance, *Falling*, premiered during the SoloSIRENs Festival at the Civic Theatre in December 2019. In June of 2021 they premiered their second devised performance, *Cessair*, at the Civic Theatre as well.

If you're interested in learning more about applied drama/theatre you might want to check out these books:

- *Applied Drama: the gift of theatre* by Helen Nicholson
- *Applied Theatre: Bewilderment and Beyond* by James Thompson.

To read more about the SoloSIRENs Collective and stay up-to-date on their upcoming projects, follow this link: <https://solosirens.info/>

For more information on Melody's work you can follow this link: <https://heartpassioninstitute.com/>

For more information on Courtney's work and to keep up with her latest projects you can follow this link: www.courtneyhelengrile.com

You can follow the SoloSIRENs Collective on Twitter @solosirens

You can follow Melody Chadamoyo on Twitter @MelodyChadamoyo

You can follow Courtney Helen Grile on Twitter @CourtneyHelen13