

Sanctuary Portfolio Overview



- Sanctuary is a film that deals with a number of important issues, and gives the opportunity for post screening discussions regarding Intellectual Disabilities and the law.
- This resource provides some useful information regarding the context of the films production including a transcribed interview with the films director, screenwriter and creative consultant.
- Contained within this resource is also a list of Arts and Theatre Companies listed by regions, which work with people who have Intellectual Disabilities.
- If you are planning a post screening Q and A, a post screening discussion, or an introduction then these contacts would make ideal panelists or guest speakers.



Sanctuary Programme Notes

Ireland/2016/89mins/15

CREDITS

Director : Len Collin
Screenplay : Christian O'Reilly
Producer : Edwina Forkin
Cinematography : Russell Gleeson
Editor : Julian Ulrichs
Music : Joseph Conlan
Production Design : Eleanor Wood
Creative Consultant: Petal Pilley

CAST

**Larry (Kieran Coppinger),
Sophie (Charlene Kelly),
Tom (Robert Doherty),
Andrew (Patrick Becker),
Alice (Valerie Egan),
William (Frank Butcher),
Matthew (Paul Connolly),
Sandy (Emer Macken),
Rita (Jennifer Cox), Peter
(Michael Hayes), Clare
(Karen Murphy)**

SANCTUARY REJECTS DISABILITY STEREOTYPES and sermons. This gently radical film illustrates the injustice of a since-overturned Irish law banning pre-marital sex for people with an intellectual disability. It still has a powerful message, though – about casting.

Until recently, people with an intellectual disability in Ireland were banned from having sex unless they were married. **Sanctuary** aims to show up the injustice of the law. Very worthy – but right-on sermonising this ain't. Thoughtful, nuanced and fun, it subverts received ideas about disability in its very approach to filmmaking.

Adapted from Christian O'Reilly's play of the same name, the film centres on a group of disabled people living in Galway. On a cinema outing, two of them – Larry (Kieran Coppinger) and Sophie (Charlene Kelly) – sneak off to a hotel for some intimacy, with the connivance of their carer Tom (Robert Doherty). Though acting out of sympathy, Tom knows that he has broken the law, and he spends the rest of the film performing damage control as his charges wander off unsupervised into the city.

The disabled characters are played by disabled actors, who also performed in the play as part of the Blue Teapot Theatre Company. The scenes between Larry and Sophie are intercut with witty vignettes in which their friends roam around Galway, discussing life, love and popcorn. The mundanity of their conversations is spiced with comedy (an offbeat pub scene brings to mind Roddy Doyle) and pathos (as when one character admits to suicidal thoughts). O'Reilly developed the script from discussions with his cast; this lends a clear ring of truth to the dialogue, and the actors, evidently at ease together, nail its emotional range.

There is something gently radical about this. Films about intellectual disability tend to focus on gifted individuals, presenting talent and handicap as two sides of a coin (the autism

documentary **Life, Animated** is a recent example). Or disabled characters serve to redeem others by imparting lessons in simplicity and emotional honesty – a spin on the trope of the 'Magical Negro', perhaps. At best, such films feature disabled actors (**The Eighth Day**). At worst, they call in showboating Hollywood stars to do the job (**Rain Man**). But **Sanctuary** conforms to no stereotype; it is about people wanting to lead ordinary lives on their own terms.

There are clichés: films on this subject are all too reliant on the narrative formula of the grand day out. But through this device, **Sanctuary** poignantly sketches the cloistered confines of the characters' lives: everyday objects are new to them, and their reference point for many things is television – *EastEnders* for sex, *Casualty* for medical emergencies (amusingly, O'Reilly has written for both shows). It also evokes the contradictory views of disability found across society – and even in some individuals. Though largely progressive, Tom admits that he cannot bear the thought of Larry and Sophie having sex.

The repeal of the law in March has taken the sting out of **Sanctuary's** political punch, but the film has another message for cinema. While disabled actors are generally held to low standards, experimental companies such as Blue Teapot are slowly changing perceptions in theatre. On this evidence, filmmakers ought to partner with them more often.

Alex Dudok de Wit | 28 December 2017 | *Sight and Sound*

EXTRACTS FROM CREATOR INTERVIEW

Extracts from interviews with Director Len Collin, Screenwriter Christian O'Reilly, and Blue Teapot Artistic Director/ Sanctuary Creative Consultant Petal Pilley.

LEN COLLIN: Mostly I have worked as a screenwriter for the last 30 years, working in television and film, in the UK and Irish film industry. I started off as an actor, I did that for quite a long while and still do a bit of acting every now and then, and in 2010 directed the web series Covies. I've done a few short films, but my association with this is effectively I've worked with Blue Teapot Theatre Company since about 2010/2011, working with the actors on film technique. So that's my association with Blue Teapot Theatre Company, which is run by Petal Pilley who really deserves the credit for the performances of the actors because she's effectively brought them up to speed over the last 10 years that she's been with Blue Teapot Theatre Company

PETAL PILLEY: Blue Teapot have been going since 1996 and it started as a charity, as a community arts project with the emphasis being on just trying to find a creative way to get people with intellectual disability involved in the community, and kind of pull them out of themselves through performance, which as everyone knows is a great way to express yourself.

LC: She also commissioned the play, Sanctuary, which Christian O'Reilly wrote and Petal basically steered Christian onto the subject matter as it were.

PP: Really, the idea for the commission came simply from being around the actors and being in their lives, and suddenly realising that they're *adult* actually, and they have the same urges, the same wants, the same needs that we do, but in order for them to fulfill that, there are a lot more barriers in the way.

CHRISTIAN O'REILLY: Petal Pilley, the Artistic Director of Blue Teapot Theatre Company gave me a phone call a couple of years ago and said she wanted to commission a stage play that explored relationships among people with intellectual disabilities. We met for coffee and she...I knew nothing about that world at all....and she started to explain that for adults with intellectual disabilities they don't have the opportunity to be together.

PP: They don't usually live on their own. They're either with parents, which means there's a natural boundary to having a relationship...

CO: ...sex before marriage is illegal in Ireland for people with intellectual disabilities...

PP: ...or they're in a care/group home situation, which is also very difficult. Never mind getting to a sexual relationship, but if you want to date for some people they have no capacity to travel on their own which means they would need to be chaperoned/accompanied. So it suddenly dawned on me that this was a whole different ball game.

CO: When I was invited to write it, I was fascinated and daunted. Fascinated because it was a world that I know nothing about and daunted for the same reason and there's always that sense of responsibility with a commission. Am I gonna make a mess of this or, you know, am I going to write about it authentically? Petal sort of reassured me, and she said 'look, come and get to know the actors'.

PP: I had a really good chat with and saw how he naturally interacted with the actors, he was the natural choice.

CO: So just to cut forward, the play was then revised, went into production, it was rehearsed and then finally it opened and we were overwhelmed by the reaction to it. People really loved it. The power of the play is much more to do with the power of the actors, and how unusual it is to see actors with intellectual disabilities on a stage, playing themselves, they were playing themselves in this play. And the success of the play was such, that Len Collin got the idea - he saw the play and he approached me with Petal afterwards and he said 'I think this could be a film'

Sanctuary Programme Notes

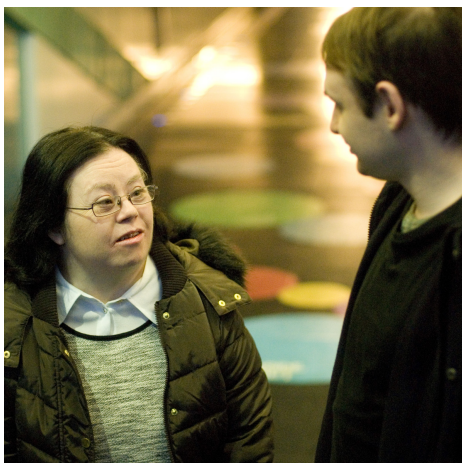
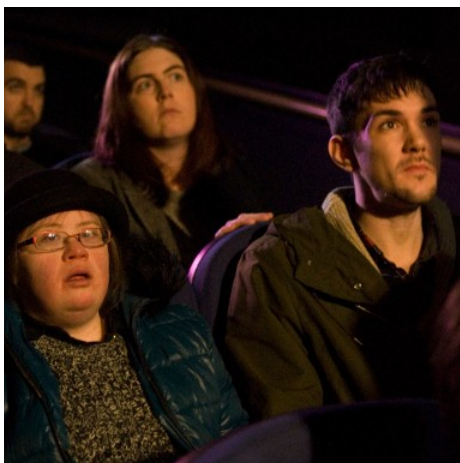
LC: I knew it was a film, I knew it was worthy of being made into a movie and we started that process probably in late 2012, I think it was.

CO: And so Len I started talking about how that might work, with Petal onboard and I began to work on the screenplay, to open it out and tell the story of the other characters who remain in the cinema.

LC: It's a fantastic script, very funny, very poignant – full of pathos.

PP: For me, observing both Christian and Len with the actors, they have what it takes, which is a natural connect and a natural enthusiasm and inspiration drawn from the actors creativity. Which isn't for everybody, but it certainly is for those two.

LC: I just hope the film makes a difference I guess, that when you meet or encounter someone with Downs, it's not so unusual. It's just another facet of life, in the same way that when we see someone who's missing a limb, we don't think of them as a lesser person, because they've lost part of their body, and we shouldn't think of anyone with an intellectual disability as a lesser person because they just maybe think a bit differently from the rest of us, or have to do things in a more round about way. They are well worth knowing and they can make a real contribution to society. So that's what I kind of, you know if you are talking about lofty aims, that's what I'd like, but basically I just want people to go and see the film and enjoy it for what it is. It's a great piece of work, it's a great piece of writing. Hopefully I've done my job as director in making it entertaining for the public and hopefully they will enjoy it. If the public enjoy it as much as I've enjoyed making it, then we've done our job.



Disability Theatre Companies List

EAST MIDLANDS

Embrace Arts

Embrace Arts is the University of Leicester's multi-use inclusive arts centre, with a history of promotion and encouragement of engagement in the arts by disabled people.

Website: <http://www.le.ac.uk/ad/racentre/index.html>
T: 0116 2522455

Purple Monkey Theatre Company

Purple Monkey Theatre Company is a newly formed company based in Nottingham which seeks to create theatre with and for disabled persons. Our co-founder (Glenn Edward Estes) is himself disabled and believes that all creative people and fans of said people deserve to be included in the arts.

Website: www.purplemonkeytheatre.com
T: 07731856542

Speakeasy Theatre Company

Speakeasy are a Theatre Company who specialise in working with disadvantaged groups in schools, youth theatre and disability settings. Speakeasy facilitate Leicester's Learning Disabled Theatre Company, Movers, who are resident at Embrace Arts.

Website: <http://www.speakeasytheatre.co.uk>
T: 0116 2836646

EASTERN

Actability

Actability is an inclusive performing arts organisation providing touring theatre and workshops in Herts and Essex with disabled and non-disabled adults

Website: <http://actability.mysite.orange.co.uk/>
T: 07984112289

ActOne ArtsBase

ActOne ArtsBase is a company/charity providing inclusive dance and performance training for disabled and non-disabled people. ActOne provides weekly dance sessions, a trainee programme for aspiring disabled dance professionals, inclusive nightclubs and a professional dance performance company that tours to audiences across Herts and the East.

Website: <http://www.artsbase.org.uk>
T: 01582 621947

Thalia Theatre Company

Inclusive Theatre Company for disabled adults and young people with physical and sensory impairments and learning difficulties. Thalia use physical theatre that focuses on the body as a tool for communication rather than the spoken word.

Website: <http://www.thaliatheatre.co.uk/>
T: 01603 630805

Disability Theatre Companies List

LONDON

Access all Areas

Access all Areas is an east London based theatre company for adults with learning disabilities. We run a weekly theatre project at Hoxton Hall, a multi-sensory storytelling project, accredited training and find opportunities to find paid work in television.

Website: <http://www.access-all-areas-uk.org>
0207 6136445

Act Too

Provide a range arts-based services for learning disabled people in the South London area, including the Baked Bean Theatre Company.

Website: <http://www.acttoo.com>
0208 9440024

Advocreate

Advocreate is a theatre workshop and community film making service for adults with learning disabilities and carers. We offer a range of creative approaches to develop self advocacy skills and can create drama, documentary, animation and information DVDs. We employ workshop assistants that have learning disabilities as co-facilitators.

Website: <http://www.advocreate.com>
0207 6136445

Amici Dance Theatre Company

Integrated dance theatre company that offer workshops, residencies and performances, usually creating a new production each year.

Website: <http://www.amicidance.org>
0208 9645060

CandoCo Dance Company

Inclusive dance company of physically disabled and non-disabled performers. CandoCo produce a yearly national tour and provide an extensive education programme, aiming to widen participation in dance.

Website: <http://www.candoco.co.uk>
020 7704 6845

Coral Dance Company

Professional learning disabled touring performance group who work collaboratively with non-disabled artists to create performance work which challenges people's perceptions of disability.

Website: <http://www.coral.org.uk>
T: 0207 0917113

Disability Theatre Companies List

Face Front Inclusive Theatre

Face Front creates original, ground-breaking Inclusive Theatre with a company of disabled and non disabled artists. The company produces professional entertaining and challenging multi-layered theatre through its Theatre In Schools, Participation and Mainstream programmes. Performances and workshops are carefully crafted to be accessible to all.

Website: <http://www.facefront.org/>
T: 0208 3503461

Graeae Theatre Company

Leading professional touring theatre company of disabled actors, run by disabled people.

Website: <http://www.graeae.org>
T: 0207 6136900

Strathcona Theatre Company

National touring theatre company of people with learning difficulties, who devise physical theatre pieces. Strathcona also run training courses for learning disabled people in the London area.

T: 020 7740 2440

NORTH EAST

Mind the Gap

Theatre company working with learning disabled actors providing a range of performance, training and development activity including national touring productions and accredited theatre training courses.

Website: <http://www.mind-the-gap.org.uk>
01274487390

No Limits Theatre Company

Professional touring company of actors with learning disabilities

Website: <http://www.nolimitstheatre.org.uk>
0191 4154966

Seven Stars Theatre Company

Seven stars - Northumberland's learning disabled theatre co create, devise and tour their own productions supported by Headway, through the Northern Rock Foundation. They aim to tour their work to the widest possible audiences. The stars are available for commissions, conferences, meetings and celebrations.

www.headwayarts.co.uk/about/seven-stars
T: 01670 351962

Shoot Your Mouth Off (SYMO)

Shoot Your Mouth Off (SYMO) is a production company specialising in high-quality work with disabled people. SYMO produces a vast range of work including dramas, documentaries, comedies, music videos, resource materials and much more.

Website: <http://www.symofilms.co.uk/>
07960 532554

Disability Theatre Companies List

The Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company

Learning disabled theatre company involved with a range of work from touring shows to forum theatre and educational videos.

Website: <http://www.thelawnmowers.co.uk>
T: 01914789200

The Twisting Ducks Theatre Company

The Twisting Ducks Theatre Company make entertaining, accessible and informative drama about issues that are important to us and other people with learning disabilities. We raise awareness about the rights of people with learning disabilities and the challenges they face.

Website: <http://www.thetwistingducks.co.uk/Site/Home.html>
T: 07925167775

NORTH WEST

DIY Theatre Company

DIY is an established Theatre Company of learning disabled performers. Our devised performances and educational projects challenge stereotypes, promote inclusion and celebrate creativity.

Website: <http://www.diytheatre.org.uk/>
T: 0161 2124984

Wicked Fish Theatre Company

An independent community-based ensemble theatre company of performers with learning difficulties based in Liverpool. (formerly Mockbeggar Theatre Company)

Website: <http://www.wickedfish.org.uk>
T: 0151 227 5177

SCOTLAND

Birds of Paradise Theatre Company

A professional touring theatre company producing adventurous and challenging work that places disability into the public arena.

Website: <http://www.boptheatre.co.uk>
T: 0141 5521725

Lung Ha's Theatre Company

Since 1984, Lung Ha's Theatre Company has been one of the leading professional Theatre Companies in Scotland providing opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to become actively involved in the performing arts.

Website: <http://www.lungha.com>
T: 0131 221 9568

Disability Theatre Companies List

SOUTH EAST

Fan Dance Theatre Company

Fan Dance Theatre Company is a collective of disabled and non-disabled performers who work together to produce unique performance pieces encompassing comedy, dance and acting.

Website: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fan-Dance-Theatre-Company/176619512441942>
T: 01273 695675

Jigsaw Theatre Company

Small touring company of professional disabled performers.

Website: <http://www.jigsawtheatre.org.uk>
T: 01296 632491

SOUTH WEST

All Stars Theatre

All Stars cast members are all adults with learning difficulties. Performing a minimum of two shows every year to the general public we, also like to show our support at as many local events as possible. This helps our members to see and be seen as useful members of their local community.

We also run workshops to act through every day situations that people face in their every day lives living in the community. Such as: - Returning goods to a shop, complaints to the council, dealing with verbal and physical abusive and how to report it. These are just a few of the subjects we have tackled!

Our aim is to help break down social barriers and improve peoples' lives by improving a sense of confidence and self belief.

Website: <https://allstarstheatrecompany.co.uk>
T: 01752 513862

Blue Apple Theatre

Blue Apple Theatre is a highly ambitious theatre company which brings all the benefits of taking part in theatre to adult performers with learning disabilities, and enables them to present high quality productions to the widest possible audiences.

Website: <http://www.blueappletheatre.hampshire.org.uk/>
T: 01962 827352

The Misfits Theatre Company

We are a theatre and social group led by people with learning difficulties. We are recognised for our role as providers of unique training solutions, working with both private businesses and the public sector. We aim to enable people with learning difficulties to be creative, have fun and reach their potential through participation, performance, volunteering and employment. We offer creative workshops for people with learning difficulties. We organise 'The Rhythm of the Night' discos for people with learning difficulties and their friends.

Website: <http://misfitstheatre.com/>
T: 07910962329

Disability Theatre Companies List

WALES

About Face Theatre Company

Founded in 1995 as part of ECHO, About Face Theatre Company is the only professional theatre company for people with learning disabilities in Herefordshire. Working to a high standard, the company aims to offer stimulating and original theatre that is both challenging and entertaining. Each show is the result of months of work and a personal creative journey for every member of the team.

Website: <http://www.aboutfacetheatre.org.uk>
T: 01568616301

Hijinx Theatre

Hijinx theatre company, based at Wales Millenium Centre, Cardiff, aspires to make it commonplace to see and hear actors with learning disabilities on stage, screen, and TV. Their actors join mainstream casts and are paid industry rates for their work. They perform at prestigious events such as Glastonbury and Edinburgh Festivals, and tour the UK and abroad. And through the wide exposure of mainstream audiences to the work of Hijinx actors the charity continuously challenges perceptions about those with learning disabilities and raises aspirations for the actors they support.

Through theatre Hijinx started to offer people with learning disabilities the freedom to express themselves creatively, work with others, and have goals to aspire to. They provide rigorous professional vocational training via the growing number of academies they're establishing around Wales, where students receive high quality training and do more to shape and mould their future.

Website: <http://www.hijinx.org.uk>
02920 300331

Side By Side Theatre Company

Side by Side was founded to give, 'adults with learning disabilities', the opportunity of developing and sharing with audiences their performing talents. Over the years all our performing members have benefited from working with such a wide-ranging group of people.

Website: <http://www.sidebysidetheatre.co.uk/>
01384 395 350

YORKSHIRE

Dark Horse Theatre

Dark Horse is a national touring theatre company which premieres new writing. An ensemble of learning disabled actors feature in our productions and exceptional non learning disabled actors from the broader industry are also cast in our tours.

The work is both vitally physical and text based, features original composed music and is always visually impactful. Appealing to a broad, general and adult audience, the company's work is always new, and has a reputation for surprise, innovation and the ability to reverse expectation in powerful and challenging ways, exploring stories and ideas which reflect the human condition to an audience.

Website: <http://www.darkhorsetheatre.co.uk>
T: 01484 484 441

Arts Disability Links



Disability Arts Online

<http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/home>



Hijinx

<http://www.hijinx.org.uk/about-us/>



Learning Disability Wales

<https://www.ldw.org.uk/>



Disability Arts Cymru

<http://www.disabilityartscymru.co.uk>



Blue Teapot

http://blueteapot.ie/our_performances/sanctuary-film/

CONTACT

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