



Senior Ensemble's 'Venetians' Supplementary Notes

Last edited 06/07/2020

Venetians – devised by the young people with Peter Hussey

Staged in Riverbank Arts centre on 28th January 2017.

Funded by a Young Ensembles Grant of €10,000 from The Arts Council

We wanted to make a theatre piece that explored how far we could push performance structures before they broke. We'd been used to devising using the logic of narrative, rounded characters, situations of interest, and elements of journey or quest. Our understanding of performance had been based on scripted plays that used these elements. For this project we explored territory that was unknown to us, using a structure that was episodic, employing verbatim material, and integrating non-narrative elements into the work. We believe we were very successful in testing this because we came away with the realisation that it was possible to also include a narrative element (the 'story' of Mark and his brother Jack) that served as a core around which the other elements revolved.

Unexpected and positive outcomes also occurred in the making of *Venetians*. We were lucky to have input from two young people on Erasmus placement with us and their experiences of being part of the 'Erasmus generation' was hugely influential in helping us consider the way Europe has become accessible to huge numbers of young Irish in ways it wasn't for our director, Peter Hussey, when he was our age. Beatrice, one of the EVS participants, had worked with migrants in Greece. Her close friend had photographed many of the migrants' experiences and he sent us his pictures. These formed a slide show at the end of the piece. Performed in silence they had a profound effect on everyone there.

The discussion with the audience after the performance was very engaged. We were surprised to see so many young people in the audience – especially young people who were not members of Kildare Youth Theatre. They were very vocal in identifying parts of the show that they resonated with. One or two of the older audience members asked us why we wanted to leave Ireland. It seemed the show had given them that overall impression – which was not our intention. But others there saw what we wanted to say – that we are exceptionally lucky in this part of north-west Europe and we have a place that is free from war and famine, which is often taken for granted.

A recording of the stage production is here: <https://vimeo.com/204987742>

Peter Hussey
Artistic Director