

I have always seen my working year at Theatr na nÓg with three specific times to reflect and refresh. Almost like I have three moments to make it back to shore after being out at sea. The first one is the beginning of the calendar year January 1st, the second being April, the beginning of the financial year, and the third September, the beginning of the school term. This year has been no different – if anything these three lines in the sand have been more distinct than ever.

In January at the start of 2020, I was formulating a plan for our investment Review. I had already begun refining and refocussing our purpose with conversations with our partners in the autumn of 2019. I was looking at re-evaluating our objective to ensure that we are benefitting our communities. It was an exciting time.

Then Stop. Batten down the hatches, as all the theatres closed.

I was once given advice by an accountant when faced with an emergency, never close up shop, keep working, keep going if you can.

So in April, we established a plan for Covid with 3 main priorities:- Support freelancers; venues and our school audience.

Each focus benefitted each other, and interestingly it was in line with our plan for our investment Review.

Since March we have produced 14 productions in Welsh, English, Bahasar - online and on radio. We are developing 6 new productions – Varying from online, radio, installation and live performances.

Now we see ourselves in September – the new school year wherein ordinary times we would have created a live theatre production for nigh on 5,000 school children. Instead, we have adapted.

Producing not one live theatre performance but three radio drama series for children, not only in our area but throughout Wales, and with the potential for broadcast in Scotland and on the World Service.

Covid has propelled us to adapt, to take risks, to try things out, to engage with diverse groups and new audiences. We have learnt and developed so much in the last 6 months. We have tested new ways of working, discussed our artistic output with diverse groups of people. Opened our eyes and our minds to what is possible. In a typical year, I doubt whether we would have had the time or possibly been bold enough to try. I believe it has put us on a stronger platform to look beyond the pandemic and deal with more significant challenges which lie ahead.

Although we may need a bigger boat.

I am incredibly grateful to the team at Theatr na nÓg, the staff and our committed board of trustees. To the venues who have supported our new plans. To our audiences who have continued to support us as we navigate uncharted seas together. And in particular to those fabulous freelancers who have buoyed us with wave after wave of brilliant and inventive ideas to take us forward.

Diolch o galon.

Geinor Styles

Artistic Director