# Brónagh Diamond harnesses humour and resilience in New Lodge youth theatre project



Brónagh Diamond, a writer and stand-up comedian hailing from west Belfast, is making commendable strides in the realm of youth theatre, weaving together hope and humour through her engaging work with local teenagers. Her latest project involves collaborating with young people from the New Lodge area to create a play that authentically reflects the essence of their experiences in modern-day Belfast.

Reflecting on her journey, Diamond recalls her time studying drama, during which she was eager to use theatre as a platform for change. This passion was somewhat put on hold as she embraced motherhood, navigating the challenges of early parenthood. Yet, when the opportunity arose to partner with Green Shoot Productions, she eagerly jumped back into her vocation, armed with renewed enthusiasm.

Diamond's recent workshops revealed a vibrant tapestry of voices among the youth, keen to articulate their lived realities. “Let’s be honest. For some, the mere thought of working with teenagers can evoke the same level of trepidation as trying to assemble flat-pack furniture without instructions,” she wrote. Yet, the initial trepidation was swiftly replaced by a warm welcome from a group of young people bursting with energy, wit, and an impressive grasp of societal issues. Their discussions fluctuated between profound topics, such as the impact of living near the peace lines, and humorous exchanges that highlighted their remarkable resilience.

This interplay of seriousness and levity is a hallmark of Northern Irish theatre, which often grapples with its complex legacy while finding ways to convey its narratives through laughter. This approach resonates with the experiences of other youth theatre groups, such as Brassneck Youth Arts. This group has made strides in removing barriers to arts access, recently participating in the National Theatre's Connections programme, which allows performing arts to echo the voices of young actors by spotlighting themes relevant to their lives, including grief and LGBTQIA+ issues.

Diamond's script for the New Lodge production was born out of these candid conversations, capturing the multifaceted identity of Belfast's youth. Central to the narrative is Jamie, a protagonist who embodies the contemporary adolescent experience in a society still healing from its troubled past, as alluded to by the lingering effects of the decades-long civil strife. The complex emotional landscape is familiar ground for contemporary playwrights, with figures like Lisa McGee using humour to address childhood trauma, illustrating how laughter can provide relief even amidst serious themes.

As Diamond explores themes of trauma and resilience in her play, she finds herself buoyed by the laughter and insights of the participating teens. Their ability to mix sharp humour with poignant observations serves as both a coping mechanism and a testament to their creative spirit. This reflects a larger movement within Northern Ireland, where engaged theatre has become a vital tool for reconciliation and healing, allowing different communities to share stories and foster understanding. The impacts of such initiatives resonate through performances that carry the weight of personal and collective histories, reaching audiences both locally and beyond.

Indeed, as Diamond reflects on the resilience and creativity of the young people of Belfast, she sees them not just as victims of their circumstances, but as spirited individuals capable of carving out their own narratives amidst the remnants of their inherited trauma. As the play approaches its debut, set to be performed at The MAC, Diamond's work underscores the transformative power of theatre—not only as a means of artistic expression but as a critical space for young voices to be heard and valued in an ever-evolving societal landscape.

In a world often dominated by challenging narratives, Diamond remains hopeful, asserting that humour and resilience will pave the way for a brighter future for the young people of Belfast. “Even though they may have inherited some trauma, they also have built into them the ability to conquer it,” she notes, linking their ongoing journey with the age-old belief in the healing power of storytelling.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/bronagh-diamond-stories-of-hope-and-humour-of-our-young-people-GVPWCAGOIZA6FDTM2WJZSVTETQ/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/belfast-youth-theatre-group-breaking-down-barriers-to-access-to-the-arts-WS73E5AXEVFZ7N4T3B52DE255A/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/bronagh-diamond-stories-of-hope-and-humour-of-our-young-people-GVPWCAGOIZA6FDTM2WJZSVTETQ/), [[4]](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/creative-writing-with-bronagh-diamond-tickets-1318639609569)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/bronagh-diamond-stories-of-hope-and-humour-of-our-young-people-GVPWCAGOIZA6FDTM2WJZSVTETQ/), [[3]](https://crescentarts.org/about/news/The-Crescent-Arts-Youth-Theatre-from-Belfast-selected-to-perform-new-play-at-National-Theatre-)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328783147_Making_Theatre_in_Northern_Ireland_Through_and_Beyond_the_Troubles), [[7]](https://www.academia.edu/71852264/Toward_the_Heart_and_Art_of_Peacebuilding_The_Role_of_Engaged_Theatre_in_Post_Conflict_Transition_in_Northern_Ireland)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/bronagh-diamond-stories-of-hope-and-humour-of-our-young-people-GVPWCAGOIZA6FDTM2WJZSVTETQ/), [[5]](https://belfastmedia.com/bringing-sensitive-subject-to-the-stage/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/opinion/bronagh-diamond-stories-of-hope-and-humour-of-our-young-people-GVPWCAGOIZA6FDTM2WJZSVTETQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/belfast-youth-theatre-group-breaking-down-barriers-to-access-to-the-arts-WS73E5AXEVFZ7N4T3B52DE255A/> - A Belfast youth theatre group, Brassneck Youth Arts, is breaking down barriers to access to the arts by participating in the National Theatre's Connections programme. Their performance of 'Normalised' by Amanda Verlaque, which deals with themes like grief and LGBTQIA+ issues, was staged at Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich and is set to transfer to the Lyric Theatre. Director Alison McCrudden highlights the importance of such programmes in providing young actors with a platform to be heard and to draw on their own experiences. The initiative aims to create and promote much-needed access to the arts for young people in the city.
3. <https://crescentarts.org/about/news/The-Crescent-Arts-Youth-Theatre-from-Belfast-selected-to-perform-new-play-at-National-Theatre-> - The Crescent Arts Youth Theatre from Belfast has been selected to perform 'Strangers Like Me', a new play by Ed Harris, at the National Theatre's Dorfman Theatre as part of the 2023 Connections Festival. The play, which explores themes of grief, masculinity, relationships, and friendship, was first performed at the Lyric Theatre Belfast. Andrea Grimason, group leader of The Crescent Arts Youth Theatre, expressed pride in the achievement, noting that the experience will inform and shape the futures of the young participants. The festival celebrates young talent with performances from ten companies representing youth across the UK.
4. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/creative-writing-with-bronagh-diamond-tickets-1318639609569> - A Creative Writing workshop led by Brónagh Diamond, a renowned comedian, writer, and teacher, is scheduled to take place at Kitsch Sisters Studio in Belfast. The workshop aims to inspire participants to unlock their inner storyteller through a series of writing exercises, techniques, and prompts. It is designed for both experienced writers and beginners, providing a supportive environment to explore different genres and styles of storytelling. The event is part of a five-week series, with sessions held on Tuesdays from May 27 to July 22, 2025.
5. <https://belfastmedia.com/bringing-sensitive-subject-to-the-stage/> - In February 2013, Brónagh Diamond, a West Belfast writer and director, staged 'Hang In There' at the Cultúrlann as part of Féile an Earraigh. The play addresses the sensitive issue of suicide, depicting the story of Coleen, who, after taking her own life, finds herself in an alternative existence. The production aims to open up conversations about suicide, a topic often considered taboo, and provides a comforting ending to a challenging narrative. The play was performed on March 15 and 16, 2013, at the Cultúrlann.
6. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328783147_Making_Theatre_in_Northern_Ireland_Through_and_Beyond_the_Troubles> - This article analyses the use of humour in Northern Irish theatre, particularly in the works of playwright Lisa McGee. It examines how McGee blends tragic and comic elements to depict the consequences of childhood trauma and the violence of the late Troubles. The study highlights the effectiveness of humour in addressing serious themes and its theatrical impact, drawing on existing research and an interview with McGee conducted in March 2023.
7. <https://www.academia.edu/71852264/Toward_the_Heart_and_Art_of_Peacebuilding_The_Role_of_Engaged_Theatre_in_Post_Conflict_Transition_in_Northern_Ireland> - This paper discusses the role of engaged theatre in post-conflict transition in Northern Ireland, focusing on initiatives supported by the European Union’s Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. It highlights the founding of Belfast’s Charabanc Theatre Company, a collaborative venture between actresses from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, aiming to help people 'imaginatively experience other points of view available in contemporary Ulster', especially those of women. The company produced works based on interviews with women and extensive research about elements of the Belfast community that had been relatively voiceless in the past.