



25 January 2014

Interview with:

**Fiona Bawn Thompson, Actor and Facilitator and Choreographer
The Memory Project, Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd**

Venue: Cavan

File No: ST0103 (File 1 of 4)

Start TC: 01:41:36:24

Q: Fiona maybe start with a little bit about where you grew up and your family

FIONA: [01:41:48:00] OK I was born in Craigavon ...Craigavon Area Hospital and I lived in Portadown for the 1st year of my life and then moved to Craigavon, and I, I've been living there ever since, for the past 30 plus years (laugh).... so that's basically where I grew up and Craigavon, Portadown, Lurgan are all very..... very central to a lot of Troubles and a lot of things that happened throughout the course of the Troubles. [01:42:11:15]

Q: Was there anything significant happen in your life to do with the Troubles?

FIONA: [01:42:17:09] Yeah...there was a few incidents that happened and a few things that I heard of ...of people that were quite close to me, but because I was young it was I was kind of sheltered away from it - there were 2 incidents that stood out particularly, one was when my school got blew up by a 2000lb bomb - the police station was beside my school, and when they blew up the police station and my school got blew up with it. And the reason why that annoyed me so much was because we were in the middle of a school play, and I was one of the main parts in the school play and I had my big solo song/piece and central character and.... of course we couldn't this was 3 days before the, the school play went on so the school play never went on [01:43:00:21] it was never shown and our school then.... of course after that then we were a little bit happy because our school was off for an extra week or two (laugh) after Christmas, or before Christmas, and then we got moved into mobiles, and it was ...it was sad in a way because there was a lot of memories and a lot of things within the school thatthat, that were obviously not there any more then, because it was blew up. [01:43:26:17]

Q: Were you anxious going back to school?

FIONA: [01:43:36:17] I wasn't really anxious going back to school no... now the bomb - I lived half a mile away from the school so..... it was a 2000lb bomb was pretty, was pretty drastic... our windows cracked and our dog, we went.. running outside, my daddy says to get out cos the house was shaking so we all went running outside and when we went outside we could hear the shrapnel - the whistles of the shrapnel overhead so my daddy said get inside [01:44:03:11] cos he thought the house was going to fall down, so we all had to run out, but when we went out there was just like missiles, we could hear things whistling over our head and falling so we went back into the house. And I was very anxious at the time, because my, my brother was over playing, playing pool in the local recreation centre and from where we lived at that time I could see the smoke coming up and I thought, I thought that my older brother had been blew up basically - I thought it was the recreation centreso...that was a very anxious time - I remember being completely distraught four about half an hour at least until....because then you didn't have mobile phones so no-one could ring, no-one knew where it was, and no-one knew what was happening. [01:44:41:07] so until I, until my brother was ok, then everything was ok after that really – y'know everything else was irrelevant because..... as long as everyone's ok, y'know material things can be replaced. [01:44:52:16]

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Q: Maybe you could talk about another incident?

FIONA: [01:45:04:07] The other incident was a little bit more serious, it involved the, the murder of 3 ... 3 young people and it was in the estate, quite close to where I lived, and I heard the shots the night before, but I didn't realize what had happened - it sounded like a bin lid closing so... didn't t take any heed but back in them days, if you heard any kind of a bang, it, it - regardless of what age you were - you kind of went - was that or was it this or was it that? You always... to me anyway, I was always on edge so I heard these, these shots, these bangs but wasn't too sure about it, until the next day that we found out that it, it was... 2 young girls and a young man had been murdered. [01:45:48:04] And they'd been quite brutally shot... and what sticks out in my mind most of all is that... when I was at my cousins house and we, we were looking and we seen... the local residents were cleaning up the ... the blood from the aftermath of it from the young man that was shot. And it stands out pretty vivid in my mind that kids were just playing around and there was just buckets full of soapy water and it was just..... they were sweeping this ... this blood away and I remember it just was something that ... it was like something you'd see on TV, on a film y'know you don't realize that things like

that happen so close to home. So I remember that always has big significance in my mind, and..... it's just one of those memories that obviously will.... will never leave you. [01:46:32:03] But I know that a lot of people at the same time would have had more... more drastic encounters and there was lots of young girls - there was a young girl got shotwell a few young girls got shot, around my age as well, so for me growing up it was always... I was... I was always anxious if I was out or if there, if there was a sound or if you were out by yourself or walking home... on a dark night y'knownowadays you'd be afraid of I don't know... different things... y'know but then, if I was walking from my friends house by myself at night I was always quite anxious about cars driving past and ...because you just didn't, you just didn't know ... [01:47:10:05]

Q: Do you know the reason the young people were shot?][

FIONA: [01:47:13:21] Because of their religionthat's it....they were.... the two young girls were only I think 16 & 17 so.....yeah it was just because of religion.

Q: Does that anxiety of then carry over to today?

FIONA: I don't know, the community I live in and just the country itself is.....it's, it's obviously at ...a lot.... at a better place than what it was years ago, but at the same time there's always a level of uncertainty, y'know there's always .. y'know you can't be sure that every things ok, or that things aren't going to happen or thing are going to happen [01:48:32:04] There's always just that level of uncertainty I would say rather than anxiousness, it's just an uncertainty. [01:48:37:20]

Q: What do you think about the games and exercises we use, or that are used and drama used to promote Peace building?

FIONA: [01:48:47:12] The games and exercises ... when, when you have the young people together to try and get young people to talk sometimes isis hard..... So the drama workshops helps to - you bring them to, to a more relaxed place y'know back to play and back to games and once they become comfortable in.... in the group and in the scenario, and comfortable with myself.... drama.... the exercises allow... allow the young people that outlet - to be able to to be able to express themselves creatively y'know, so a lot of the times you may have ... they may have things they've heard of, or they want to say but are afraid to say but through drama you've a certain.... You've, you've, well not a certain, but a bigger level of freedom, you're you can express yourself, you can tell stories quite openly and [01:49:37:21] it's usually within a safe environment, where everyone has the same level of sharing and understanding, and even with the group I worked with today, some of the stories were very personal and a lot of the ... a lot of the kids in the group or a lot of the young people in the group, got quite emotional by them, y'know and they're all best friends - they're all ... you can see ...maybe not... they're all very close friends and you could see that ... they, they hadn't realized that about each other before [01:50:06:12] because it hasn't been told before, and through

drama...and, and these exercises, they have ... they're able to have this voice to tell those things. [01:50:17:14]

Q: And is that important?

FIONA: Of course it is yeah.

Q: Why?

FIONA: [01:50:22:08] Why? Because a problem shared is a problem halved basically , y'know if ... if they're able to tell their stories then they're able to ... to have some recognition and understanding of ... of their stories and people then are able..... to, to see their perspective on things.... so it's about thatit's about that, that sharing the memories and about remembering and people acknowledging the fact and acknowledging each others stories and opinions and points of view, so ify'know it's, a lot a lot of people in the North have a..... y'know have, have a real grudge because no- one... no-one wants to hear about it anymore and if you're able to tell your story – if you're allowed to ... to have those memories then it's... it becomes a little bit more released, all that tension. [01:51:11:05]

Q: What role does music and dance play particularly with young people?

FIONA: [01:51:20:03] Music and dance is very current soy'know everyone has their ... Their pop stars and fans of....of different, different people and stuff, so I think music and dance is, is obviously a big thing that young people are interested in, so sometimes straight drama as well, whenever you ... whenever you can even merge them together it brings... it makes it more current, so that it's not just this is a memory that's in the past that we're acting out – it's... you're bringing it in to the future or you're bringing it in to the present time...and.....Dance is, dance I think in general is, is brilliant, it just has a completely different outlet of its own, and.... and the song ... y'know the group I was working with today as well - the girls were just singing on, on their break and you know to have that.....it's just another outlet (laugh) I don't know..... [01:52:15:10]

Q: Using dance and rap - does that reach a different audience?

FIONA: [01:52:27:10] Yeah I think it does becauseWell using dance and rap makes it ... makes the content more current and makes it more appealing to a young audience and... it gets them more involved then in it as opposed to straight drama - whenever you can integrate all those arts and, and make something more interesting, kids are obviously going to be more interested in something that's very current to them, and something that they're interested in ... [01:53:41:06] Well through rap, you know you have your, your current artists that... that would deliver messages through, through songs, through rap and ... and that...y'know kind of resonates more with the kids, kids remember words, remember lyrics of songs, remember words of raps and ... and they

do cling onto those ...much more y'know those are things that can stay with them so, buy putting it in that, in that format and delivering it to... to the young people as an audience its going to stay with them more, they're going to take more away from it than just a straighta straight drama piece [01:54:17:19]

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FIONA: Well like most other killings and murders in the North, it was to do with religion and unfortunately for the very most part it was the innocent people that got affected by that.... [01:54:51:13]

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Start TC: 01:54:54:06

FIONA: [01:55:26:11] There was a school I was working with in Belfast, and part of the ... sectarian... realization was that sectarianism occurs when you try to imply your views on other people - and everyone had accepted this, and everyone had said yes we, we're not sectarian at all, and everyone had, had agreed through all the exercises and ... and groups and get in to this group if you think this, and into this group if you think that - and everyone had agreed that everything was wrong until it came to nationality [01:55:54:14] and whenever we started talking about nationality, and in the North of course it's very... you could be British, you could be Irish and you can be Northern Irish - you've got a choice of 3 different nationalities that you can.... that you can choose from essentially so this group of, of..... this one particular ...child or young person in the group had....was completely adamant that everybody everybody was the same nationality as her, because they lived in this, in this country, and it was trying to get that... and it turned out that the rest of the class actually were saying to her but you can't - and she was completely unmoved by this because [01:56:35:11] she just didn't realize that... she couldn't, couldn't see that.... That she was trying to that this was her implying her opinions on other people y'know I says you're entitled to be that particular nationality ... other people are entitled to this nationality, and y'know we are entitled to be whatever, y'know whatever nationality you want to be, whatever you think, y'know that... that's the nature of where we live...and she just couldn't see past itjust really couldn't see past how... anyone ... could even consider being a different nationality at all, and y'know was, was very, very .. no, well just tell them because that's the way it should be because that's, that's what nationality we are....and.... it, it, this debate it went on for so long and.... had the rest of the class actually were just and they were all in the same area - they had to say, y'know to try and get her round and that, but at the very very start she'd agreed that sectarianism was... y'know ok you don't

imply your views on anybody else, everyone is entitled to their own opinion - until it came to that. [01:57:43:17] and then no-one was ... everyone was this and there was no... there was no let up from that it was this nationality and no other one in this country. So there were other incidents like that do occur and it's y'know I'm not to say that this, I didn't tell her she's wrong - no-one else told her ...y'know she was wrong but we were just trying to get her to realize that... y'know everyone has different views, everyone has different... and it's the same with ... with racism and religion and things like that, everyone has their own ...their own opinions and that's all to do with human rights and people are entitled to have those. [01:58:04:22]

Q: And do you think young people are more open now to look at diversity in all areas?
[01:58:15:01]

FIONA: Oh I do think so because even in the same school there was lots of things up about human rights and diversity and I mean it is – it's very much integrated into schools, I find that sports are being integrated more into schools, y'know some of the catholic schools play rugby, some of the protestant schools play Gaelic, whereas whenever I was growing up, it was, sports were very much segregated and now I can see it's more inclusive - even the likes of, of football teams that would be considered predominately protestant or predominately catholic are now being ... being integrated by different, different ones in the community because some of the kids now are, are thinking - now they're better than them ones so I'll go with them, y'know so they're moving towards now the more competitive element of it as opposed to that's a catholic team, I'll play for that, or that's a protestant team, I'll play for that. So in that sense, I do feel that you know more people are, are coming round in that way y'know.....
[01:59:10:10] And in the schools that is implied as well obviously.

END FILE: 01:59:40:20

End of Interview.