



Commedia of Errors

Annual Report

Period of Report

Start Date: 6 April 2022

End Date: 5 April 2023

Company Number: NI676327

Registered Charity Number: NIC108049

HMRC Number: NI00617

Organisational

Commedia of Errors is a Company Limited by Guarantee (NI676327) and Registered Charity (NIC108049) based in Northern Ireland. Producing and touring theatre since **adopting its constitution on 28/10/2014**. The company exists to: promote and develop the performing arts for the benefit of the public; encourage appreciation of and participation in performing arts activities and encourage and stimulate artistic creativity by the provision of artistic performances, training, support and facilities for artistic expression

Currently the company is focusing on bringing theatre to communities / demographics under-represented in traditional theatres and arts centres and is working to engage these audiences in theatre and the Arts in general.

Commedia of Errors is run **for the benefit of the public** to advance the Arts and for the advancement of Arts education.

Signed on behalf of the board by:

Staffing

Artistic Director – Benjamin Gould

Co-Creative – Clare McMahon

Assistant Producer – Megan Kelly

Board Members

Chair Person – Michael Weir

Secretary – David Gould

Treasurer – Neill Cauwood

Member – Sally Campton

Member – Fiona McAnespie

Member – Jenny Cooke OBE

Member – Mark Francos

Former Board Member (Left in year)

Member - Sally Visick

Company Address

17 Ulsterville Avenue, Belfast, BT9 7AS

Artistic Director's Statement

This year was an exciting time for the company. Emerging from the shadows of the pandemic, whilst fraught with risk and uncertainty, provided many great opportunities. Many of the covid restrictions had been removed, but financial risk and the possibilities of show cancellations due to Covid-19 still posed major concerns. As such we manoeuvred to deliver a 'safer' programme, through partnership, remodelling of projects and (in the early part of the year) a focus on Research and Development.

Supported by ACNI, we were afforded the opportunity to undertake two pieces of RnD, progressing some of our most exciting and challenging work to date. *Petra* – incorporating new technologies into theatre, utilising live streaming as a performance tool, and *North of the Island* which marks a new style of writing for Clare McMahon - an exciting new play built around a non-naturalistic style. Both were showcased to small audiences who were highly complimentary and excited by their experiences.

Moving into September, the company created *The Gap Year*, in association with the Lyric Theatre. This was a marked step up in scale, with a cast of six and full creative team. The production was a huge success creatively and commercially, showcasing the ability of our creatives and building the company brand. Enamoured audiences travelled from all over the province, with many watching the play multiple times. The show sold out its final week and played to almost 7,000 people, almost unheard of for a new play and certainly for a new writer on the mainstage. It marked a development and continuation of the company's treasured relationship with the Lyric and opened the door for future ambitions.

The company also undertook the development of *Rosebud* and the play's writer Rose Coogan in partnership with the Lyric Theatre. Rose was brought in under a Seed Contract, undertaking a bespoke development programme building their writing and industry skills as well as developing their play which we hope to bring to production in the coming years.

The year ended with a revival of *I Am Maura*, this time with actor Calla Hughes taking on the title role. The production opened at the Belfast Children's Festival before touring schools and ending with a short run at the Lyric's Naughton. The tour was a huge success, surpassing ticketing targets and receiving exceptional response from audiences and from the international delegates attending BCF.

Plays Aloud continued to go from strength to strength throughout the year and for the first time reached service users in every county in the province. Now in its sixth year, the programme is as vital as ever. Initially touring outdoors, with our own touring rig, as restrictions eased it was possible to return to indoor touring. Response from audiences and the schemes visited was phenomenal and it was great to have the chance to reconnect in-person.

Finally, *Dementia: Changing Perspectives* got the greenlight and received funding from Future Screens NI. Filmed in November, and edited in the following months, the final

product is a short but powerful film which we hope to utilise in the development of a larger programme going forward.

2022-2023 was an exceptionally busy year for us as an organisation. The groundwork we laid during the pandemic began to really bear fruit and as a result we were afforded a number of opportunities which we grasped with both hands. I am exceptionally proud of all that we achieved this year and believe it will put us in good stead for years to come.

Projects

The Gap Year



Audience Figures

Lyric Theatre Main Stage 6,823

Written by Co-Creative Clare McMahon and following development with the Fishamble and the Lyric Theatre's new playwrights programme The Gap Year was presented at the New York Origin festival in 2020, along with the Lyric Theatre's series of audio plays created during the pandemic.

In September 2022, the piece made its stage debut in collaboration with the Lyric Theatre, *The Gap Year* directed by Artistic Director Benjamin Gould. This marked the company's Main Stage debut moving from smaller scale studio shows to reaching an audience of over 6000+ during the course of the run. The show reached 6,823 audience members over 23 shows. The show was received with both critical and audience acclaim.

"We really enjoyed the Gap Year. Brilliantly written and acted. Would definitely recommend"
– Audience Feedback

Playwright Clare McMahon and director Benjamin Gould have created a masterpiece and I dare say this production will be entertaining audiences for years to come -Belfast Media

"Witty, warm and wise, The Gap Year shows again McMahon as a writer of potential and growing confidence and ability" – British Theatre Guide

I Am Maura

Audience Figures

MAC Shows -	105
School Shows -	297
Lyric Shows -	293
Total	695



2005. Maura is 15 and trying to find a boyfriend. Only she's surrounded by girls and is starting to think she might actually prefer them. Asking questions in school means awkward blushes and detention. Her only guidance is Martine McCutcheon's 'Perfect Moment' and her best mate Ali.

The production debuted at The Mac as part of Belfast's Children's Festival, before touring to St Louise's College, Northern Regional College, Hazelwood Integrated College and Ulidia Integrated College, finishing with four shows in the Lyric's Naughton Studio. The audience response was exceptional

"It was great to see the portrayal of the LGBTQ narrative. In most media they're preachy and performative. It was great to see something truthful and real." – **School student**

"I felt seen for the first time" – **School Student**

"Top theatre, get booking now." **Conor O'Neill – Culture Crush**



"I Am Maura captures the best and worst of being a teenager, and evokes memories of those (less than) halcyon days in secondary education." – **Alan Meban**

Plays Aloud

Outdoor Summer Tour - 361

Christmas Tour - 371

Total 732



After going online during the Pandemic, Plays Aloud finally made it back in person. In Spring, a trial outdoor tour with resident artist Geoff Hatt went on the road. This proved a success and made way for Plays Aloud first in person tour since 2019.

At Christmas, the programme finally made its way back into the living rooms of care homes across Northern Ireland, and met the milestone of reaching every county. As always, feedback was fantastic and everyone was thrilled to have Plays Aloud back inside.

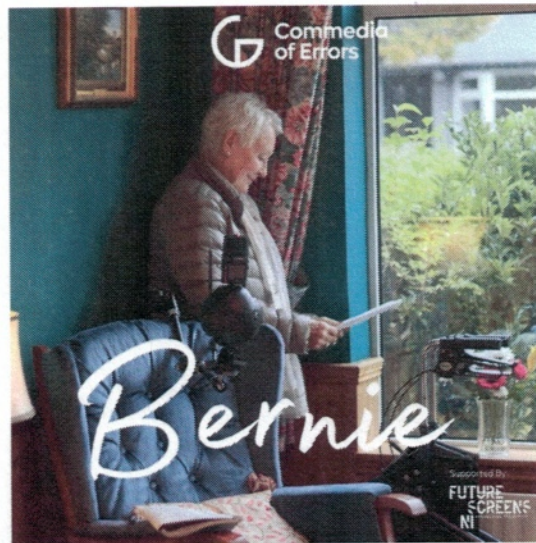
"As always, Plays Aloud were fantastic, enthusiastic and friendly and in no rush to leave!"

"Real lovely – feeling of positivity and happiness. All smiles"

"One resident engaged moment and tapping his toes – doesn't do this often"



Dementia: Changing Perspectives



In September 2022, we received funding from Future Screens NI to create a proof-of-concept VR film for our Dementia – Changing Perspectives which is a unique dementia awareness and empathy building programme that uses immersive technology to allow users to experience the lived experiences of those living with dementia. The film was made with a script by Clare McMahon based and directed by Benjamin Gould. Testing of the film began in May 2023 and feedback was very positive. When asked “Do you feel this, and similar experiences, are beneficial for formal and in-formal carers of those living with dementia?”, 100% of participants answered yes. When asked if experiencing Dementia through the film has had a positive impact, 76% of respondents said yes.

“I thought it was fantastic, we've done this for a long time, but it opened your eyes to something else” – Testing Participant

“Very relatable, it's nice for it to be normalised [I] felt very alone and slightly ashamed with the diagnoses because I didn't know anyone in the same situation - stuff like this helps with that” – Testing Participant

Rosebud



In 2022, the playwright and the play were co-commissioned under a development contract by the Lyric and Commedia of Errors, funded by ACNI, incorporating ongoing training for the playwright. During this time Commedia of Errors facilitated 6 personal development sessions with writing mentor Clare McMahon; ongoing feedback with director Benjamin Gould; 2 days workshopping with actor Caroline Curran; mentorship with trans theatre maker Pea Dineen and tickets to attend a variety of performances. This concluded in a reading hosted by the Lyric with an invited audience. Progress with the play has been very good and the playwright's skills and experience are developing. The play is at a high level and the audience response to a rehearsed reading of the play on 24th May was very positive

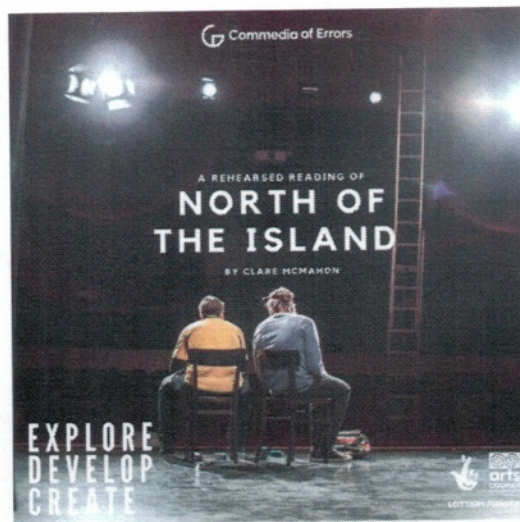
Petra Von Kant



In 2021, the company held a reading of the piece with 6 actors. With the support of ACNI, undertook a two-week research and development process, culminating in a small public sharing. The R&D process explored the juxtaposition of in-person and digital experience as a direct response to the time immediately after the Covid-19 lockdowns. Using multiple cameras, images from the cameras were live mixed by the Technical Director and broadcast through projection onto screens placed throughout the set. Captioning was also incorporated

into the images and the design. These images supplemented and challenged the live action, highlighting moments of great intimacy, challenging actors to betray their inner thoughts as they pose for the camera and offering otherwise unseen perspectives. The public sharing was attended by 20 creatives and feedback was gathered.

North of the Island



In March 2021, with the support of ACNI, Commedia of Errors commissioned Clare McMahon to write a new play as an artistic response to the centenary of 100 years of Northern Ireland. In April 2022, the company held 2 days of research and development of the text with four actors. Working with the actors unlocked new discussions and a better understanding of the world of the play allowing the playwright to further develop the work going forwards. In June 2022, the company held a rehearsed reading of the piece in Accidental Theatre for an audience of 20. Feedback from the reading was positive and production of the play is planned for 2024.

Financial Summary

From 6th of April 2022 to the 5th of April 2023 we generated a total income of **£136,162.41** and expended **£141,392.03**.

Our income sources are as indicated below –

We would like to give particular thanks to our funders – without whom our work would not have been possible.

Income sources

Income from Charitable Activities

- Performance Fees 17%
- Box Office Receipts 1%
- Workshops 1%

Grants

- Arts Council of Northern Ireland 40%
- DfC 19%
- Future Screens NI 17%
- Garfield Weston 9%
- Foyle Foundation 4%
- Allen Lane 4%
- Halifax Foundation 4%
- WG Edwards 1%
- Esmee Mitchell 1%

Company Expenditure

Support Costs

- Operational Staff 32.98%

Charitable Expenditure

- Freelancer Fees 56.03%
- Venue Hire 2.76%
- Marketing 2.70%
- Office 1.61%
- Travel 1.02%
- Miscellaneous 0.89%

• Set/Costume/Props	0.85%
• Insurance	0.82%
• Technical	0.34%

Declaration

These financial statements are for the current financial year ended **5 April 2023** and were approved by the Board of Directors on 29/8/2023 by:

Name: Sally Campton

Status: Chair, Board of Directors