

Blogpost 29 October 2020 #antainartists

Having one thing to focus on; developing, writing and discussing with someone was an invaluable experience though. I had a draft of a play that led to the offer of the residency itself and it was this that I focused on.

Paul Hayes, director of An Táin and a trained and experienced dramaturg (one who reads and helps improve stage plays) read each draft, provided notes and met with me weekly to discuss changes and how things might work. It was very helpful and really allowed me to look at my work through someone else's eyes, which is something that is needed in creating a written work, but impossible to do alone.

We went through several drafts of the play, An Táin organised a read through with professional actors, which was a great experience. We've since made an application for funding to properly produce and tour the work. Appendages crossed.

It's called Evacuation and it's about three German soldiers at the end of World War Two waiting for rescue. But it never comes. It's kind of like Waiting for Godot but with Nazis and because they're Nazis, things happen, bad things. I'm always trying to explore the darker side of human nature with my writing. I'm always trying to make the unrelatable and the unlikeable relatable and likeable. Hence Nazis, who are always always always portrayed the same way in any type of story. So, I wanted to try and make them more human.

I have a couple of German friends and yes, their grandparents were in the Hitler Youth or in the German Army, so technically they were Nazis. But my friends are normal people and surely their grandparents were as well. That was my starting point. I really like things that are roughly set in real time and are tight location wise, so that's also what I did. It's a day in the life of three soldiers desperate for rescue set in the kitchen of an abandoned French farmhouse. Why the kitchen? Because I'm Irish and that's where we gather.

The residency was a great experience, a good step in the right direction for my career, in a time when I thought the world was cancelled and nothing whatsoever was going to happen. I'm looking forward to what the future holds for me in the theatre world and how things go with this play.

Thanks for reading!

Conor McGinnity was An Táin Arts Centre's writer in residence. Conor will be in residence during July, August and September 2020. Follow his progress on @antainarts #antainartists