Fingal arts office was delighted to present the culmination of a very unique arts in health project – Aphasia Theatre Ireland on Friday 29th of March in Draíocht’s Studio Space, Blanchardstown. Aphasia Theatre Ireland is the brainchild of local artist and theatre maker Grainne Hallahan who has been supported through Fingal’s Public Art Programme Infrastructure 2018-2021 emerging artist programme and additionally the Arts Council’s Artist in the Community Scheme to develop a theatre company format that aims to include people who have been affected with Aphasia.

Aphasia is a condition that can affect an individual at any stage of life and relates to a person’s ability to communicate verbally, it can occur following stroke, acquired brain injury or degenerative brain conditions associated with dementia and the aging process.
condition is managed through the healthcare system through occupational therapy, but there are other routes to successful living with the condition as demonstrated through participation in the arts. Grainne Hallahan, would identify as an artist with a disability is committed to this vision that the lives of those affected with Aphasia can be greatly enhanced through theatre.

Grainne was supported to research an already established model, *Theatre Aphasique* in Montreal, Canada and returned with a greater focus to reach out to the local Aphasia community to engage with her and her team through a series of free and weekly workshops, located in Blanchardstown Library and Draiocht Studio Spaces and allowed all participants to find their voice through the different routes of song, movement and improvisation. As Artistic Director Grainne’s collaborators included Robbie Blake actor and voice instructor dance and movement specialist Jessie Keenan and acting and improvisation coach Aine Ni Laoighaire. The participants, Dublin 15 locals Brian Quinlan, Adele Hinze and Brian Brophy participated in the workshops and felt prepared enough following the weeks of workshops to present their own original theatre pieces as part of a very special evening to an audience comprised of family, and those involved in healthcare delivery. The original pieces, were beautiful and honest expressions of the realities of living with the condition, Brian Brophy’s *Brian’s Beckett* showed us a world where everything we take for granted was just out of his reach, Brian Quinlan’s *All Together Now* showed a man having a life of public communication until it was taken abruptly but for the memory of the enjoyment of music and Adele Hinze revealed her own love story through a self-written poem all met with a roaring response. The evening was wonderfully officiated by local councillor Ted Leddy, who referenced his own mother, who was present and living with the condition. Members of the Arts in Health organisations, *Waterford Healing Arts Trust* and *the Arts in Health Portal* were in attendance and were keen to showcase the initiative through their public platforms and the occupational therapists were amazed at how beneficial and supportive the process could be to patients in rehabilitation.

Public Art Co-ordinator with Fingal County Council, Caroline Cowley, explained the commitment to the developmental role of the arts service in supporting projects like Aphasia Theatre to test ground in Fingal, and continued “The impact of initiatives such as this can have a significant impact nationally and even internationally.”

**ENDS**

For further information contact Press@fingal.ie