

How did I get here?

Kaite O' Reilly: Fortune favours the brave, but chance favours the prepared mind

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Leading several lives

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I've often found in the UK that diversity is seen as an anomaly, a vulgar excess to be treated with suspicion. Phrases like 'Jack of all trades, master of none' damn the Renaissance wo/man. I know writers who have limited their careers and creativity by believing it's inappropriate to try something new, or that there are set patterns and processes to adhere to (if only they could decipher them), rather than inventing new ones.

Trust your own impulse

But it's difficult and daunting to initiate projects and career paths, especially when writers are often solitary figures in an industry that seems to work in mysterious ways. *How* to progress is a central question. I spent years expecting everything to suddenly become clear once I

had gained enough experience, but now I don't believe there is one route, method or direction. This is a territory that can't be definitively mapped. Yet when I look back over my own career, there is a logical pattern, an apparently designed trajectory, although my progress felt haphazard and peripatetic at the time. The only conclusion I can draw is the importance of being guided through the labyrinth by individual curiosity and passions. It is the only way to stop getting 'lost' or losing time in dead-end pursuits.

For example: I'm currently the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Creative Fellow at the Drama Department of Exeter University. With its focus on research through practice, it's one of the best gigs I've ever had. Apart from working with post-graduate students on the Playwriting and Script Development MA, my brief is to make my own work, exploring practically what I coin 'Alternative Dramaturgies informed by a d/Deaf and Disability Perspective'. I have recently formed a company, The Fingersmiths Limited, which is a bilingual performance group using spoken/projected English and theatricalised British Sign Language. We are currently making our first production, to be premiered in London later this year.

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What I wish I'd known when I was starting out

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Evolve, grow, keep asking questions, keep learning. Good writers work on their strengths, but great writers work on their weaknesses.

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Take up new challenges and try not to always play it safe – fortune favours the brave.

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Living well is the best revenge.

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Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellowships in the Creative and Performing Arts Scheme: Supports writers and other artists as research fellows within a higher education environment. www.ahrb.ac.uk

BBC writersroom

The BBC's online resource for writing for TV, radio and film featuring writers' guidelines, script archive, advice from writers and other

industry experts and free script formatting software.

www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom

Birmingham Rep

Leading national producing theatre company which has introduced a range of new and foreign plays to the British theatre repertoire. <http://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/>

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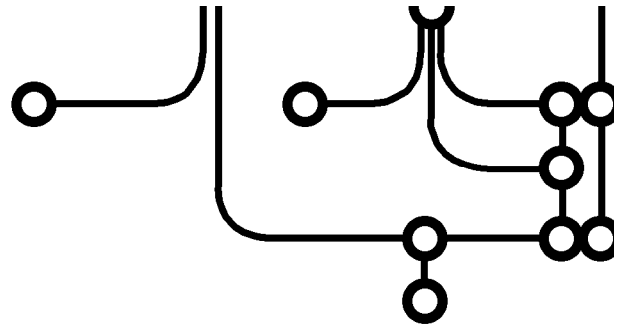
Shape
The country's leading disability arts organization which aims to improve access to the arts for deaf and disabled people whilst supporting deaf and disabled artists to challenge perceptions and promote deaf and disability culture.
<http://www.shapearts.org.uk/>

Soho Theatre Writers' Centre
Aims to discover and nurture new writers and awards. Services and programmes include script reading service, open access workshops, and Soho Young Writers. Publishes free monthly newsletter.
www.sohotheatre.com

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