

Leith Theatre Group – Not for Profit




In many ways 2011 has been the year of protest with people taking to the streets in countries as far flung as Greece, Tunisia, Egypt and the USA. Closer to home, we have observed [Unison campaigning against privatisation](#), [disabled groups rallying](#) and [Occupy Edinburgh](#) camping in the city. Among all this, one Leith-based theatre group has devised a unique way of getting their message across.

[ACTive INquiry](#) are undertaking a short tour of the Leith and Edinburgh area with their forum theatre project, *Not For Profit*. The Reporter caught up with the group at their latest performance at the Occupy Edinburgh camp in St Andrew Square to find out more about the concept.

The theme for the play is about the cuts currently taking place, and Gavin Crichton, the artistic director of the group, explained how they decided on this theme. Crichton said:- “Every year we do a piece of theatre around a particular issue that we feel is relevant – especially to the people of Leith. This year, the big thing that came up was the cuts and what was going to happen with them.

“People were scared and nervous, so we thought we had to create a piece of theatre around this so people can engage, think of alternatives and how to challenge them.”

The play itself centres on a young working class mother  called Mary who works for a call centre but dreams of being a creative writer. The play follows her story and looks at the various obstacles in her path due to the current economic climate. At the end of the performance audience members are invited onto the stage to take the part of Mary and show ways

which she could have acted differently to overcome problems.

This type of audience engagement is vital to the play's success. Crichton says:- "We use theatre to engage people with dialogue on issues that are important to them, and to think about how we can learn through theatre, and turn it into action out in the real world.

"It engages the audience, asks them to come on stage, try things out and asks questions of the audience rather than tell the audience how to think."

Certainly a number of the audience at St Andrew Square became involved with the performance. 'Duck' from Fife has been camping at the Occupy site for a month and he was very impressed with the piece. 'Duck' said:- "It was fantastic, brilliant, amazing. It brought out a big crowd and got people talking about important issues, everyone was joining in and getting involved."

✘ According to Crichton, the project is a work in progress.

The group collected contact details from audience members and plan to hold a public meeting at Leith Circle on 6 December 2011 at 7 pm to discuss the play and the possible next steps. Then, in the New Year, they plan to hold a number of workshops with the goal of putting on a new show involving members of the public next spring.

With the sheer number of marches, rallies and protests happening it takes something a bit different to stand out and ACTive INquiry may just have managed that.