

A Little Heart

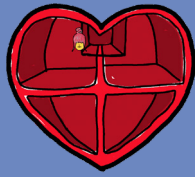
The musical

INFORMATION PACK

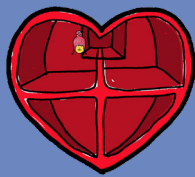


WRITTEN BY CILLIAN O DONNACHADHA MUSIC & LYRICS BY JOHN McLARNON

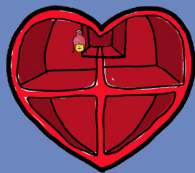
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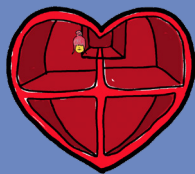
Concept



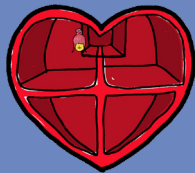
Aims & Objectives



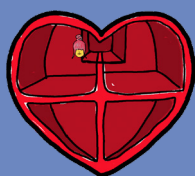
Target Audience



Synopsis



Characters



*Cast &
Production Team*

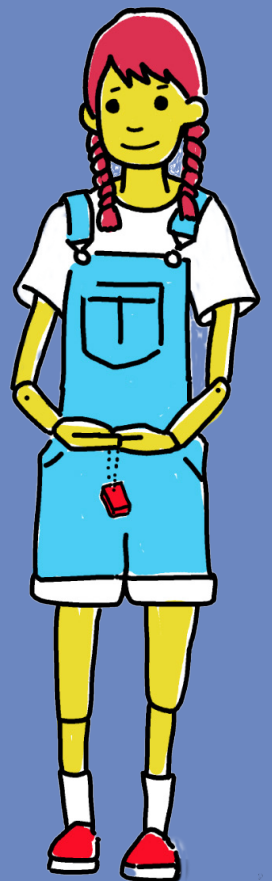
A Little Heart Concept



A Little Heart is an enthralling puppet musical of self-discovery and unconditional love. The heartfelt narrative follows the journey of 'Little Anna', a 10-year-old girl who has a hole in her heart. Withdrawn and isolated, Anna spends her days in her room, staring out of the window, watching the other children play. Anna would love to join them, but her heart won't let her.

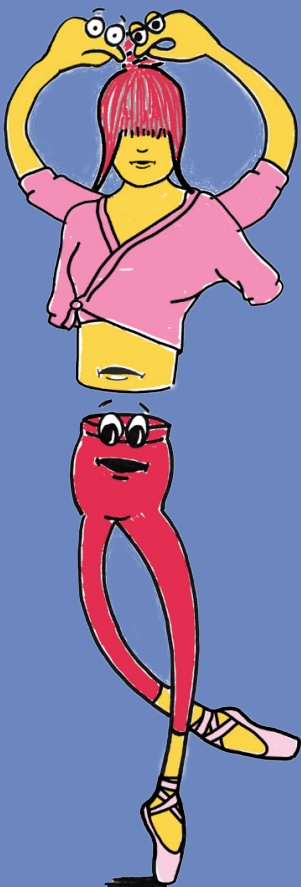
One evening Anna is woken by the sound of a strangely familiar tune coming from the music box in her room. Careful not to wake her Dad, she is drawn towards the enchanting box, from which the music is coming. Beaming through the cracks of the chest is a pulsing red light. Anna knows that she shouldn't open the box, she should just go back to bed. But sometimes we do things we shouldn't...

Captivating audiences with its humor, quick wit, and warmth, join little Anna and friends in this engaging tale of loss, connection, and love. After all, *a little heart goes a long way!*



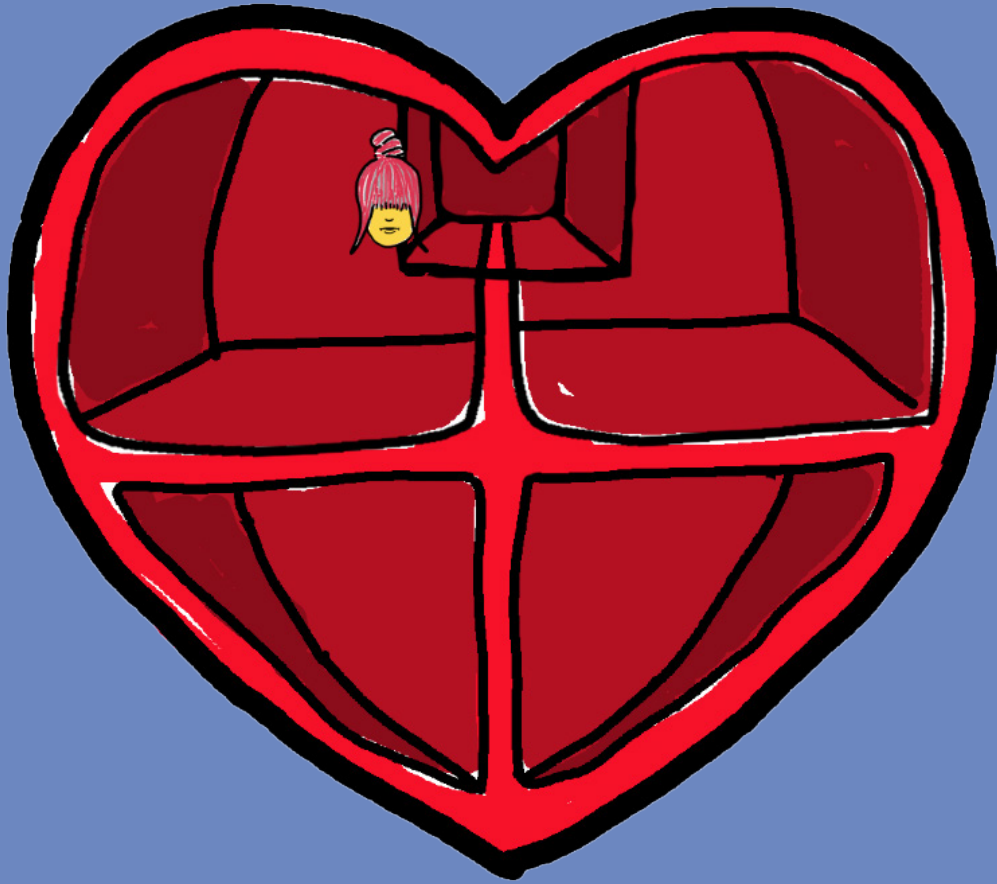
Aims & Objectives

The main objective of this *A Little Heart* is to present our young audience members and their parents/guardians with a thoughtful, impactful story, that will help them comprehend the emotional journey of depression or grief, by giving them a focal point reference to discuss their emotions, as well as a vocabulary to express themselves. The narrative will promote critical thinking and allow children to observe the difficult themes in a safe, supportive, and controlled environment. Through the medium of music and puppetry, *A Little Heart* provides a platform that aims to educate and empower children to discuss their feelings and recognise that they are not alone. If a parent/guardian can have an open conversation with their child about loss after seeing this play, we will have accomplished our objective.



Due to the sensitive nature of the piece, we have ensured that the topics have been accurately researched. Writer and Creator Cillian O Donnachadha has discussed the project with Trinity College's Ussher Associate Professor in Children's Literature, Co-Director of M.Phil. in Children's Literature Jane Carroll, as well as an assistant psychologist from the National Health Service of the United Kingdom Melissa Gillespie, to ensure that our production deals with the impactful subject in a delicate and caring manner.

Target Audience

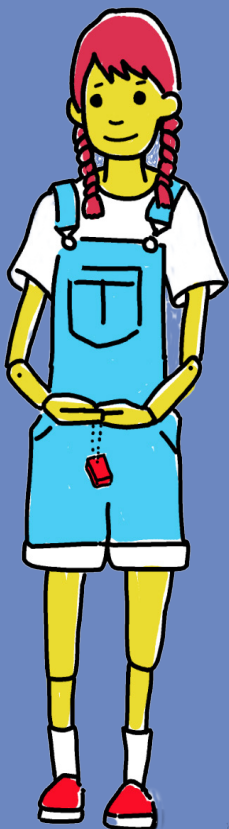


A Little Heart is suitable for children aged 7 years and older. However, this musical can be seen as a family show.

As the aims and objectives have stated, it is important that adults can relate to the theme of grief and mental health in the production in order to have the ability to open conversations with their child or students about said themes.

Synopsis

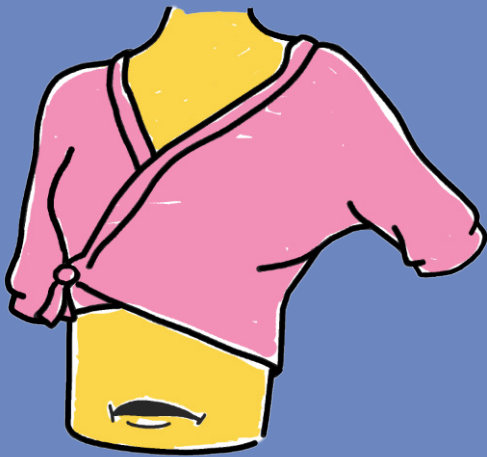
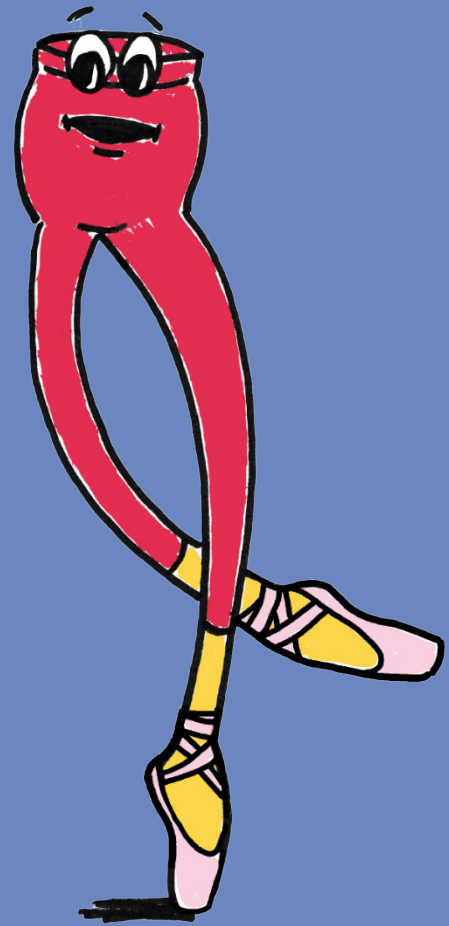
ANNA is 10 years old with a hole in her heart which causes her pain. She doesn't feel she can go outside and yet gets frustrated with not being able to play with her friends. She doesn't know why she feels this pain, or why she has a hole in her heart. Her mother CLARE, who was a dancer, passed away when Anna was very young and Anna barely remembers her. Her Dad JOE is a single parent and writer, who does everything he can to inspire and entertain his daughter. He tells her stories and reminds her that she can be brave and proud and if she doesn't feel well enough to go outside, she can go on adventures in her mind.



One evening, Anna hears her Mother's old music box playing a particular tune and it invokes a strange feeling inside her. With her dad asleep in the chair by her bed, she looks into the box and is pulled into another world.

Once in this new world, she notices that she has turned into a living marionette puppet and she has no idea who is pulling her strings.

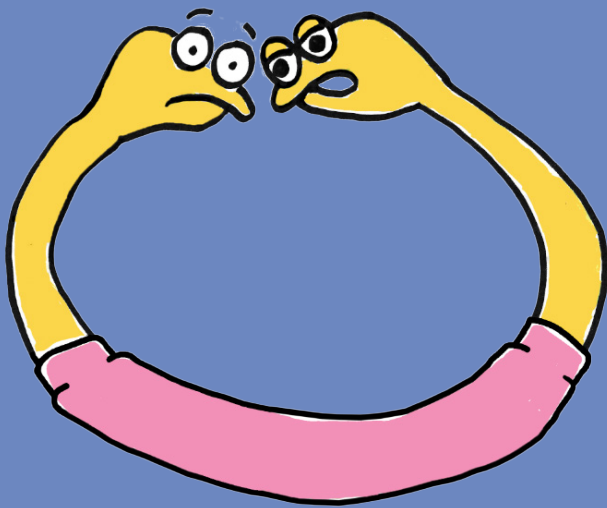
Seeking help, she finds DENNY, a peculiar looking character shaped like a supersized pelvis and legs. Denny denies all the realities around her. She believes that dark can be the brightest light of all. Anna reveals the pain in her heart when she hears the music box tune again. Denny suggests a solution. The best way to fix her pain problem is to ignore it. 'Ignore, ignore, ignore until it is no more'. Denny believes if Anna pretends the pain isn't there, everything will be fine. Anna takes this advice as she is pulled to another area in this strange new world.



Next Anna lands on ANGIE. Angie is a super-sized torso. Angie is agitated at Anna for walking all over her, and angry in general. Anna doesn't understand where her anger is coming from and asks Angie why she is so mad. Angie gets angry at Anna for questioning why she is angry. Remembering what Denny had advised, Anna suggests that Angie should just ignore the anger and it will go away.

This idea enrages Angie. Angie tells Anna that she knows about the pain in Anna's heart and has advice for her. Angie explains that sometimes you can just be angry and that is OK. She advises Anna that 'it's ok to be not ok'. She suggests she should get angry, and instead of ignoring it, Anna should accept it like any other emotion. Anna takes this advice and becomes angry, before being puppeted to a new area in this strange world.

Anna has been so fired up by her anger that she feels exhausted. The exhaustion leads to the pain in her chest growing. She breathes in deeply. She then sits down and suddenly feels overwhelmed. She closes her eyes. As she does, her Dad appears. He is sitting in the chair by her bed where she left him, but he is awake and holding the music box. Anna tries to go to him to talk but is being held back by the strings. Her Dad starts to talk. Although it seems like he is talking to her, he does not look at her and what he says doesn't seem to make complete sense. He says that he should have been woken up and he finds it hard to forgive that. He quietly exclaims 'you are never coming back'. Frustrated, Anna tries to go to him, but the strings keep her back. Dad disappears into the darkness. Anna opens her eyes in the same place she had initially sat down.

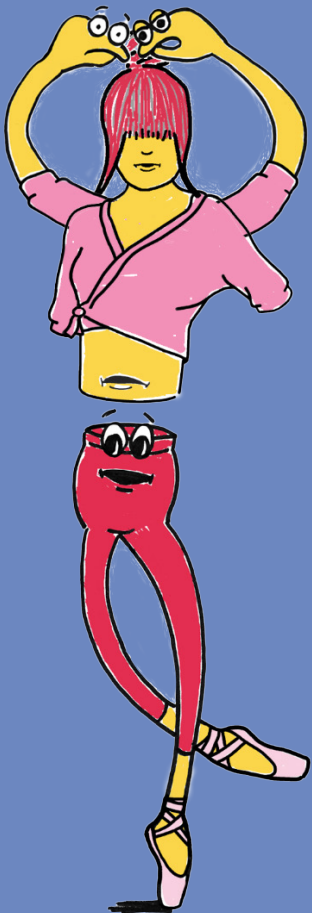


Suddenly Anna sees what looks like two supersized arms and hands having an argument, which leads to them being entangled in each other. This is GILLI and BARGO. Still angry, Anna separates them. Gilli feels awful for Anna having to help and apologises profusely. Bargo and Gilli mentioned that they know Anna but that she has changed.

Anna's pain in her heart grows stronger as she can still hear the music, and she tells them that she feels awful about leaving her Dad. They suggest that if she helps someone else, she will feel less guilty, after all, they say 'helping helps the helper'. They say if she does a selfless act, she will feel better and perhaps stop being in pain.

They suggest she helps their friend DEPRIS, who is usually happy and bubbly but of late has just been quietly hanging outside her window and not wanting to see or talk to anyone. Anna agrees. Surprisingly, the strings that are attached to her let her go to Depris.

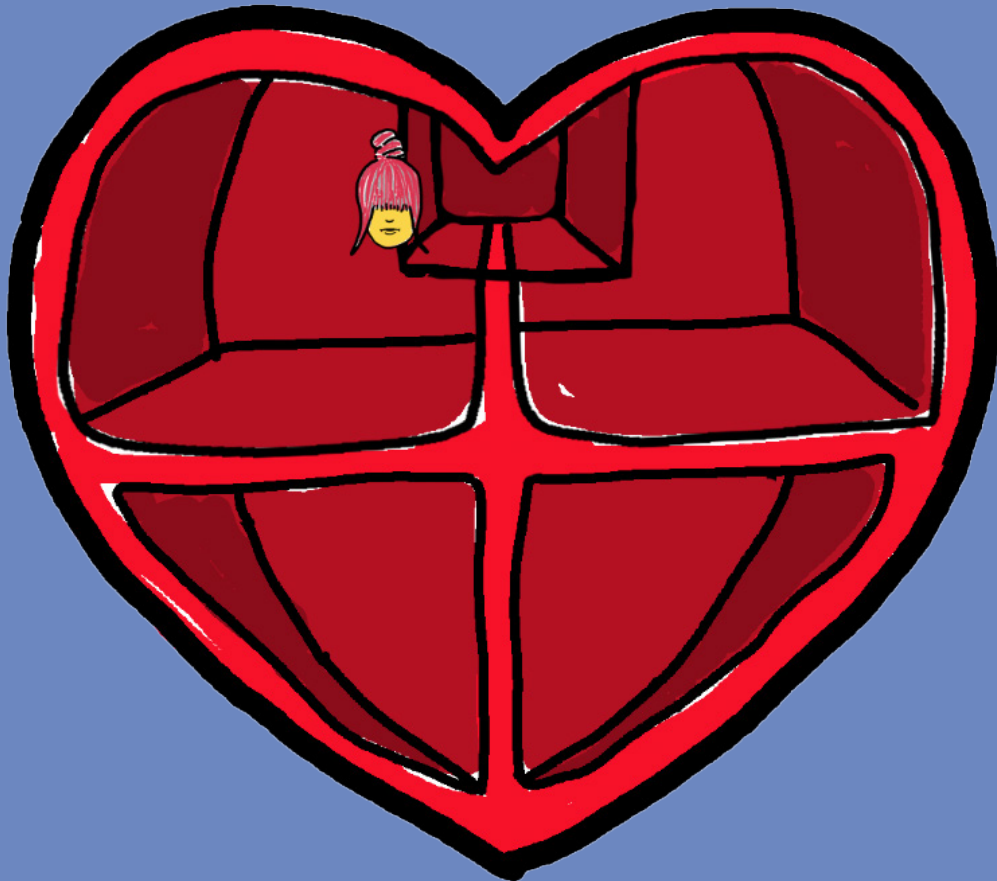
Depris is a supersized head with hair covering her eyes, that is floating in the air. She is clearly unhappy. Anna tries to cheer Depris up, but Depris does not want to be cheered up; she wants to be left alone. Anna understands this feeling. She has felt it many times before. Anna suddenly has an idea. She tells Depris that she will not talk to her and she will not bother her. Instead, she will lie down beside Depris quietly and if Depris wants to talk she can, but most importantly she doesn't have to, either way, Anna will be there when she needs her. Depris is thankful.



Anna lies down in the air beside her. As Anna is asleep, Denny, Angie, Gilli, Bargo and Depris combine to become a giant floating monster... Anna wakes up and becomes overwhelmed as the monster questions her. Anna then has a realisation. This monster is a manifestation of all of her emotions about her deceased Mam. She thinks of what her Dad said to her before she was in this world; she can be brave and proud.

She decides to confront the monster. And decides to forgive the monster, and in essence, forgive her mother for leaving. Once Anna does this, the emotions fall apart one-by-one and disappear and her real Mam appears to meet Anna.

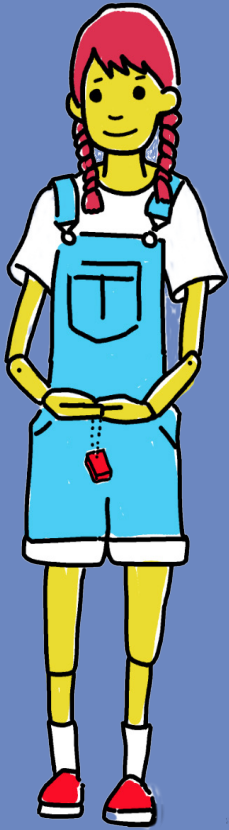
Her mother Clare apologises to Anna. She confesses that she couldn't bear to leave Anna and she stole a piece of Anna's Heart to remember Anna, when she died. She hands Anna back the piece of her heart. Anna takes it. Anna now has a choice to make.



She can keep the piece of her heart and stay with her Mam and get to know her, or she can give the piece of her heart back and return to her Dad. She decides to give the piece of her heart back to her Mam. Anna knows that she will still feel pain but now that she understands it better it won't hurt as bad. This is Anna accepting the death of her Mam. As soon as she does, Anna leaves the strange world and wakes up in her bed, her body back to normal, her heart pain dulled and her Dad asleep in a chair beside her.

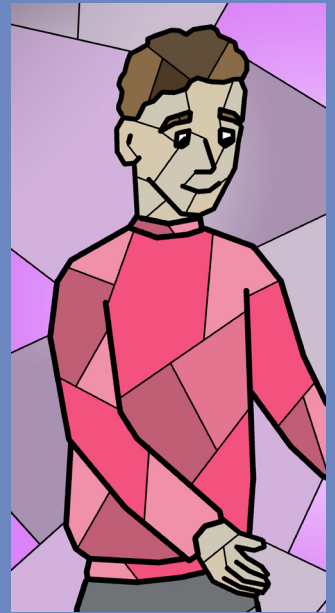
Illustration by Bill Daly

Characters

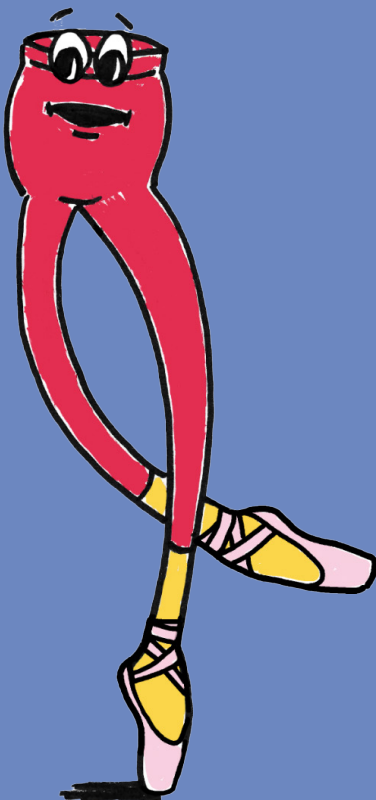


Anna

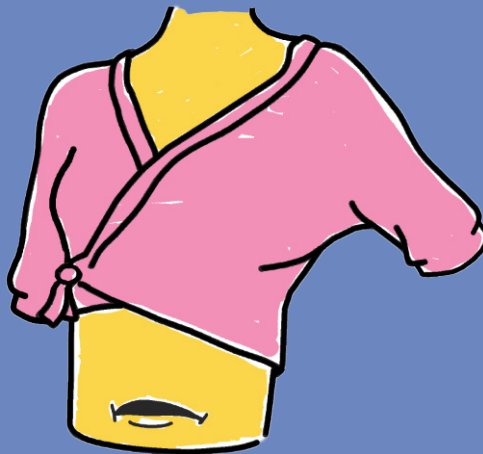
Depris



Dad/Joe

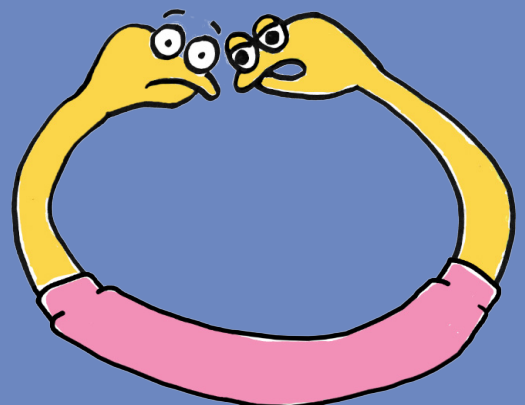


Denny



Angie

Gilli &
Bargo



Cast



Leah Barniville
playing
Anna



Ruairi Nicholl
playing
Dad / Gilli



Clare Barrett
playing
Denny / Bargo



Rachel Gaughan
playing
Mam / Angie

Crew



Cillian O Donnachadha
Writer / Director



John McLarnon
Composer & Lyricist



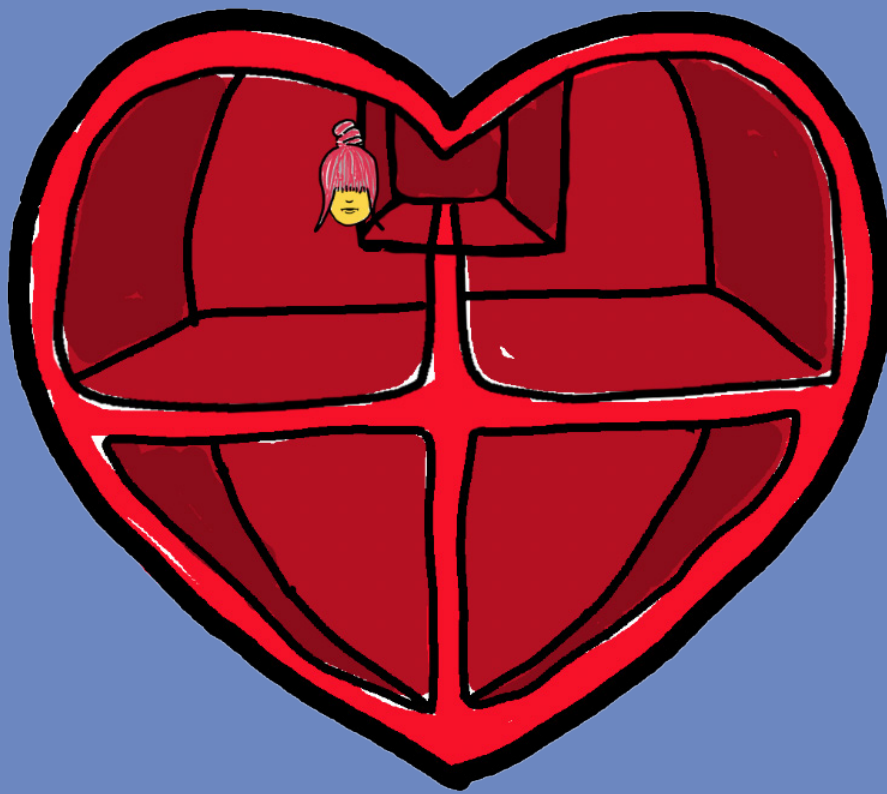
Ivan McKenna
Musical Director



Joe Redmond
*Stage Manager &
Costume Designer*



Melissa Gillespie
*Psychologist &
Guidance Counsellor*



A Little Heart

*is presented by
Biscuits for Breakfast Theatre Company,
in co-production with The Civic.*

*Kindly supported by The Arts Council
& South Dublin County Council*

