

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
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'DIARY OF A MARTIAN BEEKEEPER'- A THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE TO CAPTURE THE
POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE IN HUMAN SPACE EXPLORATION

Abstract

'Diary of a Martian Beekeeper' is the third theatre show by Niamh Shaw and her second collaboration with European Space Agency and CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory Cork. Funded by Science Foundation Ireland Discover Programme 2017, Niamh conducted a series of field trips at the Astronaut Centre in Cologne, interviewing employees working in different research departments. These testimonies and previous interviews with astronauts and other space scientists were interweaved in to the finished script, with the dramatised segments representing the individual within the collective. The final production created was a highly visual theatricalised exploration of future interplanetary human exploration.

With beekeeping as motif, the set, sound, lighting and audio visual designers created a new world order, reflecting the power of the collective, the fragility of the solitary human and the united will behind all major breakthroughs. 'Diary of a Martian Beekeeper' premiered at Space week Ireland in 2017, toured nationally in 2018 as part of Engineers week Ireland and an international tour is in place for 2019.

Positioning science within story and placing the human at the centre of the narrative is a highly effective tool in igniting curiosity across many audience types. Blending humour, warmth and humanity whilst disseminating difficult scientific topics has been shown to be an effective new form of public engagement. The nurturing and investment of artists working within these new cross-disciplinary relationships and the establishment of similar initiatives in other research centres warrants further investigation.