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# Youth shines on a challenging Salt Mountain

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National Youth Theatre's production of *Salt Mountain*  
*Ros Kavanagh*

## Salt Mountain by Carmel Winters

Rating: ★★★★★

To see the collaborative nature of theatre working at its best, you need look no further than *Salt Mountain*, written by Carmel Winters and currently running at The Projects Arts Centre. Presented by the National Association of Youth Drama, it was commissioned by the [Abbey Theatre](#) for the National Youth Theatre and features a sixteen strong cast, aged between sixteen and twenty years of age, assembled from youth theatre groups right across the country. Logistically an ambitious production, and theatrically and thematically too. Set in a dystopian world where a group of people are forced to flee their village as a result of war, *Salt Mountain* resonates with the horrors of displacement currently being experienced by millions worldwide as it follows its tribe of refugees desperately trying to survive. Unrelentingly intense, *Salt Mountain* features standout performances by an excellent cast, expertly directed, in a brave, new play that packs some pretty powerful

punches.

Narrative comes a distant second to ideas in Winters often demanding script that sometimes strains under the weight of its themes and language. After the group quickly flee to the mountain, a chain of intense scenes follow dealing with various issues which affect these outcasts. The lack of food, the need to record their story, the desire to go home, their sexual and personal desires, coping with winter, hunger and ultimately with death are all vividly explored. Language is employed to serve themes rather than characters, but they're big themes, brave themes, bold themes. And theatrically brought to life in a top class production.

The cleverly constructed traverse by set designer Liam Doona utilises a skateboarding half pipe to wonderful effect, all ably supported by lighting designer Kevin Tracey. Costumes by Niamh Lunny, which referenced the Hunger Games a little too obviously in places, were at their best as the conditions of the tribe deteriorated, with simple transformations brilliantly realised. Aside from the screamo thrash metal moments, which weren't as effective as they might have been, Roger Gregg's composition and sound design was incredibly effective. But it was Jo Mangan's excellent direction which brought these disparate ingredients together and elicited all round, excellent performances from her incredible young cast. Hugh Carr, Éabha Landers, Emer O'Hara, Ella Lily Hyland, Sam Molony, Patrick Sweeney, Catherine Blake, Lorna Kettle, James Roynane, Liadh O'Donovan, Clarabelle Murphy, Seán Hammond, Oisín O'Reilly, Neimhin Robinson, Peter O'Connell Stack and Taylor Moloney were individually and collective on top of their game, operating as a true ensemble.

As productions go *Salt Mountain* is often challenging but it's a challenge worth engaging with. As a piece of youth theatre, it's brave, daring and brilliantly executed. *Salt Mountain* makes no apologies for its young cast, it doesn't ask for your indulgence, nor does it need to. These brave, young actors deliver an incredible performance, dealing with difficult and demanding themes in a powerful production well worth seeing.

*Salt Mountain* by Carmel Winters runs at the [Project Arts Centre](#) till August, 29th at 8.00pm with a matinee, Saturday, August 29th at 2.00 pm

Tickets: €22/€18

For further information go to [Project Arts Centre](#)



**Chris O'Rourke**  
Tulsa Theater Examiner

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