

5.6 GOLDEN RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the T.E.E.N. project, we wanted to bring teenagers to the theatre and 'infect' them with the theatre virus. We challenged ourselves to summarise our experiences into ten 'Golden Rules' that described how teenagers engage with theatre. However, after visiting each of the different festivals, sharing lots of different theatrical visions, and testing different tools and methods of theatre criticism, we found that there was no definitive recipe for working with young people in theatre, and that it all depends on the context of your project, the individuals involved, and your point of view. There can be no rules when it comes to engaging teenagers in theatre, only recommendations. Therefore, we adapted our intended 'Golden Rules' into 'Golden Recommendations'.

In trying to engage teenagers in theatre, we think that it is important to create plans that suit your agenda, to think of the space you want to share with the young audience, and then to ask yourself the right questions. To help you ask those questions, you will find our 'Golden Recommendations' on the next page – from the point of view of a critic, a curator, the T.E.E.N. tutors, and the teenagers themselves. The recommendations reflect the dialogue in the project and the different agendas that are in play when working with teenagers and theatre.



Golden Recommendations – from the Critic’s Point of View

- 1.** Never forget who you are. Don’t mask your identity.
- 2.** Never pretend to believe in things you don’t believe.
- 3.** Always try to be honest with your feelings and perceptions.
- 4.** To criticise is not to judge – it is to begin a dialogue.
- 5.** Be transparent.
- 6.** A performance is not the end of a sentence – it is the beginning of a poem.
- 7.** Your job is not to help improve a performance. Your job is to be there and participate.
- 8.** Never forget that art is part of the world. It has a history, a purpose, and a future.
- 9.** Performing arts criticism is a medium through which we can reinvent the public sphere.
- 10.** A critic is never wrong because criticism is not about being right or wrong. It is about being present.

Golden Recommendations – from the Curator’s and Tutor’s Point of View

- 1.** There is not a definitive recipe for engaging teenagers in theatre.
- 2.** Be brave and dare to let go of your own ideas and agendas.
- 3.** Being present in the moment - engage properly with teenagers and they will respond by engaging with you.
- 4.** Networking - it is important for teenagers to meet peers with mutual interests.
- 5.** Community - create spaces for discussion and disagreement.
- 6.** Knowledge - provide an understanding of the cultural context of theatre and relevant cultural frameworks.
- 7.** Theatre Criticism and reflection - utilise innovate tools and methods of theatre criticism that give teenagers an opportunity to express themselves in ways other than they do at school.
- 8.** Quality - Keep in mind that what adults may perceive as quality might differ from what teenagers perceive.
- 9.** Empowerment - let the young people take control, allow yourself to stand back, and just give them support and guidance when it’s required.
- 10.** Last but not least: Never underestimate your audience.

Golden Recommendations – from the Teenagers’ Point of View

- 1.** Don't bring teenagers to the theatre in school groups.
- 2.** Ensure there is time for the teenagers to meet with the artists or the performers from the production.
- 3.** Programme performances which talk about, or relate to, contemporary issues, even if they are classics.
- 4.** Create a trailer of the performances and work towards making them go viral.
- 5.** Communicate with teenage audiences through Instagram and design one poster for each show you programme.
- 6.** Choose cool titles for your performances or your theatrical programme.
- 7.** Create critical focus groups for teenagers to be involved in choosing shows.
- 8.** Discount theatre tickets for groups of teenagers (e.g. provide a discount if you bring a certain number of friends with you).
- 9.** Don't specify that your theatrical programme is for teenagers, otherwise try to find a hip title / tagline (e.g. "Plays Forbidden to the Over 25s").
- 10.** Make it clear that theatre is composed of several types of art together (drama, music, cinema, art, paintings, visual, etc.).