

PART 3 THE AMBASSADORS

The TAGs were created following the different approaches outlined in part 1 of the booklet and these groups of teenagers were involved in the project's activities. From each national TAG team three ambassadors were chosen to travel to each of the festivals in order to share performances and workshops with each other, enter meaningful discussions about theatre, and have intercultural social exchanges with each other, the local TAG team, and the project partners.

During the T.E.E.N. project the ambassadors visited and met each other at:

- *Aprilfestival (Teatercentrum, Copenhagen, Denmark);*
- *SEGNI New Generations Festival (Segni d'infanzia, Mantua, Italy);*
- *Showbox (Norsk Scenekunstbruk, Oslo, Norway).*

As result of dissemination actions, the ambassadors were invited to:

- *ASSITEJ's Artistic Gathering 2018 (China National Theatre for Children, Beijing, China).*

In each of these meet-ups the teen ambassadors hosted a public discussion to present their point of view on a topic related to theatre and arts, in a set-up referred to as the 'Kitchen Table' format. In addition to the youngsters' inputs, adults and experts were sometimes invited to the table to contribute a comment or question. In *Part 5* of this booklet (*Toolbox and Methods*), you can read the 'Kitchen Table Manifesto' created by the ambassadors, and you can also find the 'Golden Recommendations' that they drew up.

Here we have included short CVs from each of the teen ambassadors involved in the project that not only introduce who they are, but also describes some of their theatrical experiences. Following this are some reflections from the ambassadors' perspective on what they feel they gained by participating in the T.E.E.N. project.



ANDREA CRUSCO



CITY/COUNTRY: Mantua, Italy

HIGH SCHOOL: ITIS "Istituto Isabella D'Este"

WHO ARE YOU? I'm a walker, explorer, nature lover, and pizza addict.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

When I was a child, my mother took me and my sister to see a series of classical stories told through puppetry. The first one I remember is *'The Odyssey'*. The play began with normal-sized puppets in their 'little theatre box' before real actors came out from the frame. Little by little the entire stage became bigger and the set grew around them. In the end, at the conclusion of the play, all the actors came onstage for a final song.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

'Io e Niente' (*'Me and Nothing'*) is a children's play that talks about the difficult relationship between a young girl and her busy father who works as gardener for the king. He is always tired from his job and he can't find time for her. So, she invents an imaginary friend named 'Nothing' to spend her free time with. In the play, the set is constantly changing: at the beginning there are real actors on the main stage, then they turned into puppets in a little toy kitchen, then they become shadows or light or glass figures projected on the walls or on big screens. These dynamic changes of perspective are followed by lights and colours that make your eyes move in every direction. By doing so, the audience travels across different perceptual planes accompanied by psychedelic music.

FEDERICO BOTTAZZI



CITY/COUNTRY: Mantua, Italy

HIGH SCHOOL: Liceo Scientifico "Alessandro Manzoni"

WHO ARE YOU? A boy who likes Netflix and TV series and, most importantly, Nutella. I heard about the project one year ago, when it started, and I liked it from the beginning.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

When I saw my first play I was thirteen. 'Nerd' was about a man who bought his first computer and had to make it work. I really liked it because, at one point, the actor called me up on the stage and made me do a video chat, which was really funny because he kept making jokes.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

During the project I saw *'Mi sa che fuori è primavera'*. The play was about the kidnapping of two children by their own father. The story told in the play had happened in 2011. The mother of the children was abandoned by her husband and the police. The actress who played her was incredibly capable of representing the pain of a mother who couldn't see her children anymore.

LEDA BONZANINI



CITY/COUNTRY: Cremona, Italy

HIGH SCHOOL: Liceo linguistico statale "M. Gioia"

WHO ARE YOU? I'm Leda, I'm sixteen years old. I love music, playing the clarinet, theatre, and learning new things. I really like talking with other people, especially to share my ideas with them.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

It was a children's play about nature and how it changes during fall. I was very little, so I don't remember everything, but I remember there were musicians playing classical pieces and we were sitting on the floor.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

One of the plays I've enjoyed the most is '*Sogno di una notte di mezza estate*' ('*A Midsummer Night's Dream*') by William Shakespeare. The director was able to bring out the play's comedy, making the audience laugh and enjoy the performance. The plot was very clear, and the scenography was simple but wonderful. The actors were really good, and they managed to create a magical and fairylike atmosphere, as demanded by the plot.

LORENZO TORTELLA



CITY/COUNTRY: Mantua, Italy

HIGH SCHOOL: ITIS "E. Fermi"

WHO ARE YOU? A human, a son, a student, a musician. In this order up until now.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

I don't remember the very first performance but one of the first was watching my brother and his band (they're called *Miatralvia*, check them out) playing instruments made of rubbish in a theatre. I don't know if this would be considered a theatre performance, but it was definitely a powerful performance put on in a theatre. I still remember it from my childhood because I would have liked to have been on the stage with them. I felt that they were having fun and so did we, the audience.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

The performance that engaged me the most was probably '*Io e Niente*'. It is 'just' a fairy tale, but I felt there was sincerity in the way they told the story. Most of all, I liked the unpredictable ways they used lights and shadows. Also, the soundtrack was in perfect harmony with the mood created by everything else. The only thing that this show lacked was a little bit of transgression such a social critique, or the revelation of irony about our lifestyles, but, as it was a show for kids, I suppose it was normal that it was meant to create a different mood.

MARTINA TONDO



CITY/COUNTRY: Mantua, Italy

HIGH SCHOOL: Liceo Linguistico "Virgilio"

WHO ARE YOU? I'm an eighteen-year-old girl who is interested in a lot of things. What I like is talking and meeting with new people, in lots of different contexts: going to concerts, going to the theatre, and going to art exhibitions. All these cultural events not only help you to meet new friends but also help you to know yourself better.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

The first performance I saw was a puppet show with the famous Italian puppet 'Arlecchino', but I was about four years old, so I don't remember too much.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

Earlier this year I watched a musical performance by *France Théâtre*. This year, they focused on a single theme – the condition of migrants in Calais' Jungle camp as they are trying to reach England. There were five characters – four were migrants and the other one was a woman who was a member of a humanitarian group. Her name was 'France', and this was by no means a random choice. During the production, each of the migrants told their stories to France about how they arrived there. The performance was able to compare the situation faced by the migrants to the conditions of the French people during revolution – as both groups were wanting to do something to change a bad situation.

NICHOLAS GUANDANINI



CITY/COUNTRY: Mantua, Italy

HIGH SCHOOL: Itis "E. Fermi"

WHO ARE YOU? I'm a student with a passion for music and theatre. I also play bass.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

The first theatre performance I saw was during elementary school. I liked it because of its story and the mood that the performance communicated to me.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

The best performance that I have ever seen was in Denmark at the *Aprilfestival*. It was a performance called 'Bounce'. I liked it because the dynamics between the actors was just right.

NORA JUNGEILGES HEYERDAHL



CITY/COUNTRY: Oslo, Norway

HIGH SCHOOL: Oslo Cathedral School

WHO ARE YOU? I am eighteen years old, and in my spare time I volunteer for the Green Party in my city. My family used to bring me to the theatre as a child, and I still go whenever I can.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

I do not know for certain which performance was the first one I saw but I believe it was a puppet theatre in a big tent called '*Karius og Baktus*'. The message of the play was to brush your teeth though I remember that I was terribly afraid of the toothbrush in the play!

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

The best performance I ever saw was a play called '*Nyanser av Gris*' because it spoke to me and my current life in a brilliant way. It also made me rethink my political opinions on an issue that I have spent a lot of time thinking about lately. Whilst the play was being performed, I honestly forgot that I was not a part of the action of the play because, just like the actors, we were seated in a classroom like students. I also liked that the actors were my own age.

RAUAND ISMAIL



CITY/COUNTRY: Oslo, Norway

HIGH SCHOOL: Foss videregående skole

WHO ARE YOU? I am an eighteen-year-old boy and work as a freelance art critic. I recently finished my high school education and will start my Philosophy degree at the University of Oslo this fall. I have been involved with the T.E.E.N. project since 2017.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

The first theatre performance I remember seeing was August Strindberg's '*A Dream Play*' at the *Norwegian National Theatre* in 2008. I vaguely remember the character of Agnes meeting other characters who were representing different issues surrounding humanity, such as poverty, for example.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

The best performance I have seen recently was Sarah Kane's '*Cleansed*' at the *Norwegian National Theatre*. The play is set in an institution that tortures its participants and makes them act as the institution's leader wants. The minimalist imagery and contemporary approach to Kane's play struck me as one of the most important interpretations of '*Cleansed*' in my lifetime.

HANNE HAUG JOHNE



CITY/COUNTRY: Oslo, Norway

HIGH SCHOOL: Recently graduated from *Oslo Katedralskole*

WHO ARE YOU? I have grown up in Oslo. My parents brought me to performances and exhibitions from a young age which fuelled my interests in art, literature, and culture. In recent years, I have written theatre criticism and curated an art exhibition.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

The first performance I can properly remember was 'Peter Pan' in which the actors were flying around above the set, throwing glitter at the audience.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

The best performance I have seen recently is 'Engler i Amerika, Part 1' at *Nasjonalteateret* in Oslo. The play is set in the US in the 1980s and is about how the gay community there reacts and deals with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The performance managed to be humorous, serious, and tragic at the same time - which made it very interesting and fun to watch.

PHILIPPE MANANE



CITY/COUNTRY: Sønderborg, Denmark

HIGH SCHOOL: *Sønderborg Statsskole*

WHO ARE YOU? I'm a boy that likes theatre and to be drawn into a universe where everything is possible. I have performed onstage myself many times before and enjoy it very much.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

The first play I saw was called 'Gummi Tarzan' and was about a boy that no one liked. Suddenly he got strong and he started to get popular.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

The best scene I've ever seen would be from a show called 'Klokkeren fra notre Dame'. A lot of the story took place in a cathedral. The visuals were amazing. All the walls consisted of huge displays that changed throughout the whole play.

MAJA LENE BIRKMAND



CITY/COUNTRY: Rønne, Denmark

HIGH SCHOOL: Rønne Gymnasium

WHO ARE YOU? I am an eighteen-year-old girl, who likes theatre and performance, and I am a human being.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

I was with my grandmother in the Royal Theatre and I saw a ballet called 'Nøddeknekkeren' ('The Nutcracker'). I am sure it was great, but I was five and I didn't understand anything at all.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

When I was fourteen, I saw 'Les Misérables' in London. It was on a big stage and it was fantastically magical.

SIGBRIT ELI NØRGAARD GYLDENKÆRNE



CITY/COUNTRY: Rønne, Denmark

HIGH SCHOOL: Rønne Gymnasium

WHO ARE YOU? I am a nineteen-year-old girl who lives in Denmark. I like to watch theatre.

DESCRIBE THE FIRST THEATRE PERFORMANCE YOU SAW

My first performance was when I was five or six years old. I saw a well-known television performer perform a children's show with a teddy. His name is Sigurd and the show was called 'Sigurds bjørnetime'.

DESCRIBE THE BEST THEATRICAL SCENE/ PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

I am not sure which was my absolute favourite performance but one of the best performances I have seen was 'Hjerterum' by Syddjurs Egnsteater. The play was split into three stories and throughout the whole show the actors and actresses were amazing.

3.2 THE AMBASSADORS' PERSPECTIVES

We asked the teen ambassadors to reflect on what they have learned from being a part of the T.E.E.N. project and this is what they said:

If someone asked me what I learned from the project I would say, of course, that I learned that the world of the theatre is not only vast but also gripping. Many ideas have been invested into every piece of onstage action. Days and days of actors and actresses rehearsing together have been necessary to reach the highest level of performance. I learned how to describe my feelings and emotions and how to appreciate other points of view, even if they are different from mine. However, the most important thing that I learned is that I should always be a critic, think with my own mind, and follow my dreams without being scared of what other people may think. The T.E.E.N. project was a fantastic experience! I'm glad to have had the chance to take part in this amazing adventure!

MARTINA BOSI

I learned a lot from this project which makes it very difficult to summarise everything in a few short lines. Not only did I acquire knowledge about theatre, but I also developed new soft skills. I learned to express my own ideas without being ashamed or afraid of what others may say, to have new creative ideas, to speak in public, and I also improved my English. During the Aprilfestival in Denmark and the Showbox Festival in Norway, I had the possibility to learn even more. I could compare my ideas with the ones of people who had grown up in different cultural contexts, and to discuss this with them. However, what was really important for me during these amazing experiences was that I didn't feel that I was 'only' Italian anymore. I felt I was part of something bigger and stronger, something that allowed me to widen my horizons and to make new fantastic friendships with people I would have never met without this project, who come from different places: I felt European. This helped me to find my way and to grow.

LEDA BONZANINI



I learned how to reflect upon the availability of theatre for children and young people in my own country compared to other places and I got better at expressing why I think performances are good or bad. In addition to making new friends and contacts, we've also had the opportunity to discuss our thoughts on being a young audience with curators and programmers (through the 'Kitchen Table' discussions).

THE NORWEGIAN AMBASSADORS

We are two girls from Denmark and we joined the T.E.E.N. project in March 2017.

To be honest, when we joined the project and left for the Aprilfestival in Sønderborg in 2017, we had no idea what we had agreed to. We did not know who we would meet or what we were supposed to do. We just knew that we would be going to watch theatre - and we hadn't seen much theatre before joining this project. It has now been a year and a half and what have we learned? It struck us how little emphasis is placed on theatre for young people. Even though people really want to hear about this project (everywhere we went people have been ecstatic at the opportunity of getting feedback from us), we feel that there is not very much theatre in the world that speaks to our age group. In the T.E.E.N. project many of the ambassadors are between fifteen and nineteen years old and it is seldom that we find a performance that hits this target group spot on. Many theatre producers think that they have found exactly the right ingredients to encourage more young people go to the theatre - but they do not get it right. We need to guide them, so they know which ways to develop. In spite of this, we have been able to learn that theatre can be interpreted in many very different ways - it is a completely individual experience. We have learned what language can bring to a performance and what happens when you don't understand the language. In the T.E.E.N. project, we met young people from three different countries and together we found a definition of what good theatre consists of. One of the things that we have been especially happy about in the T.E.E.N. project has been all the people we have been so fortunate to meet. It is the people we will miss the most.

MAJA LENE BIRKMAND AND SIGBRIT GYLDENKÆRNE



Handwritten text on a piece of paper held by the woman in the center. The text is partially obscured and difficult to read, but appears to be a list or set of instructions.