

TEACHERS
& CREATIVE
PROFESSIONALS'
REFLECTIONS
ON THE TEEN2 PROJECT
INTERVIEW 1

TEACHERS & CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS' REFLECTIONS ON THE TEEN2 PROJECT – INTERVIEW 1



AN INTERVIEW WITH TWO TEACHERS – JORDI & MARTA

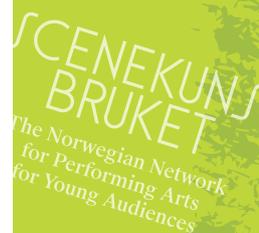


At the end of the TEEN2 project, interviews were carried out with three Teachers and Clara Matas from "la Caixa" Foundation, our Project Partner who has coordinated the Teacher Ambassador Group. The interviews offer an insight into the challenges and successes of the project. Key quotations from these interviews have been published on the TEEN website in the form of our "Tips for Teachers & Creative Professionals Working with Teenagers" resource. However, we are also including the full interview transcripts below in the hope that it will prove interesting and useful reading for those interested in learning more about Teachers and the role they can play in developing and engaging Teenage audiences.

You can read the first of the three interviews here and check out the others on our website.

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Cristina [Project Leader]: We just want to ask a few questions that will help us to better [...] understand the impact of what we have done together. And if there is something that maybe you can tell us that we don't see of the process that we have been doing together. [...] So, let's start from the first question, that is, why did you accept to participate in the project or how did you have the information about the project? And why did you accept to participate?

Jordi [Teacher]: I accept to participate [...] because I thought it would be interesting to know different ways to engage Teenagers in theatre, and I think it could be interesting to know more about that.

Marta [Teacher]: As with Jordi, I think it was very interesting to try to know how to get Teenagers interested in theatre. So, how was the relationship between the public to this stage? So, I think for me as a Teacher it was good to know and to participate and to see different activities and dynamics in this direction.

Cristina: Knowing that you have been participating in the process, which is the most unexpected aspect that the project taught you?

Jordi: Maybe now I can remember the activity in the TEEN Kitchen Table Meeting. It is a good activity to work with Teenagers on that theme. It's an easy activity to empower them to put their voice in the middle of the focus. And I think it's a good tool for us to work with them.

Marta: And for me, it was a surprise to see the Teenagers when they were in the workshops as to how they can express the different things that they

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want so clearly to different people like professionals or Theatre people. And I was very grateful to see that they could say and express very clearly what they want. It was very surprising for me and good.

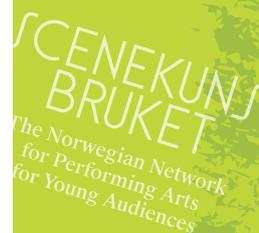
Cristina: In engaging Teenagers, do you think the typology of the show or the setting of the experience is more important?

Marta: I think in getting the Teenagers to go to Theatre, the two aspects are the same for me because if you are saying to them that they are going to have a good experience [...] they will have good expectations for the show. So, it's important. And at the same time, what you are going to offer them on the stage, it's important too so they can think it's an interesting theme or it's something that relates themselves to the show.

Jordi: Yeah. In my case, I think the same - the most important thing is the experience. You can share an experience with them in different ways. But the most important thing is the experience.

Cristina: And when suggesting a show to be programmed for Teenagers, which kind of show you think is the best one from what you experienced with the process?

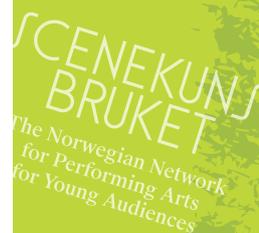
Jordi: It's not easy to answer. It's not easy because it's one of the aims of the project, but for me, the most important thing is, if you want to programme a performance show or something like this to Teenagers, you have to listen to them to take account of their point of view of the world, of society - or something like this. And it's important that they can choose to participate in the design of the Theatre experience.



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Marta: I think it's important in a show for Teenagers that they don't feel like it's a show for 'just' Teenagers [...] Teenagers are often stereotyped, and I don't think they like this. So, they want to be treated as adults, I think. Sometimes we are treating them as if they were children and they are not children. They are adults and they have their feelings, their point of views and it's important to take care of this – because, if not, they are disconnected from the show, I think.

Cristina: OK, and all that information about Teenagers, do you have that information about what is OK for them to be programmed as a show or how to engage them? Where do you take all that information from your Teacher experience or from the project experience? And if, yes, from the project experience, are you able to tell us which part or which activity or which situation of the project gave you some information more than what you already know as a teacher?

Marta: As a teacher, you have to direct communication with your Teenagers. In my case, at an Art School, we are performing [a lot] and we are [running] these kinds of activities. But for me, it was a revelation when we were in the workshops, as I said before, because they expressed very clearly what they do and do not want to see on the stage. Some of the things that we as adults thought were good for them, they didn't necessarily agree on. So, the workshops and the dynamics in the groups with the different spaces to write ideas down [in the TEEN workshops] was very, very clear.

[...]

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Jordi: The most important thing is listening to their voices, to take them into account when you choose a performance, a show, and when you are designing a programme and when you are watching Theatre and when you are choosing which show do you want to go to, and what you want to go to see with them.

[...]

Cristina: So, which are the elements you can't do without when you are a programmer for Teenagers?

Jordi: The Teenagers [themselves] obviously. You know, you have to think from their point of view, not from yours as an Artistic Director or something like this, so you have to put Teenagers in your team if you want to design something like this.

Marta: Yes, I think maybe we have to make the effort as professionals, or professionals in programming, or in production of different kind of artistic performances. We have to make that effort to go inside their world and try to understand what is going on in there because I think Teenagers nowadays are in a very complex space with a lot of different information and a very complex world. So, it's important we [...] try to experience this world for ourselves.

Jordi: And it's not easy because Teenagers are building an identity. So, it's not easy because maybe one day they say something and the other day they say another thing. So, the most important thing is to empower them to make them confident to express themselves.

Cristina: So, you touched on the topic of identity that is important for a teenager. What have you

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experienced in the TEEN project that you think is relevant to programming together with them? I mean, the project had different activities, so is there any one activity you thought that was the most relevant - or any one moment in which you understood something really important about programming with Teenagers?

Jordi: For me, the TEEN Kitchen Table Meeting is a very, very, very good activity to talk about Theatre. So, for me, I now use the Kitchen Table tool with my Teenagers, and it works! So, I think it's a good activity that I have learned from this project.



Marta: Yes, I agree with Jordi because the TEEN Kitchen Table Meeting gives you a space, a confident space to express things that maybe in another context it was not always easy to express. So, it's a very good tool to make them say what they are thinking about programming. It's important because they can talk about what they would like to see or what they would like to feel in the Theatre and I know it's good for that.

Cristina: You said that you are using the TEEN Kitchen Table Meeting with your students. Can you tell us more about that? In which situation? Where, when?

Marta: Well, I was using the TEEN Kitchen Table Meeting to talk about just this, about 'What do you want to see in Theatre?' or 'What do you think you don't want to see when you are going to Theatre?' or 'When do you decide to go to theatre?'. So, it was

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very rich to see them choosing different items to talk about. And they were very, very free in their dialogue. So, it was very fresh, very easy for them and they talked about a lot of things. About different kinds of, for example, comedy or drama or music or what they want to see. So, it was very rich and very, very easy to do it and it generated a lot of conclusions.

Jordi: Yeah, the same in my case with them. It was very interesting, this tool. It's an easy tool, it's not difficult, but I think it's useful.

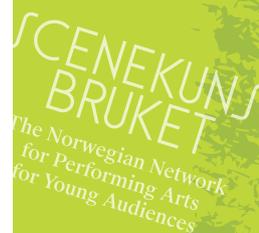
Cristina: OK. Another thing that is interesting for us is the point of view of teachers. It's difficult to engage Teachers in theatre, even more so than engaging Teenagers. Why do you think Teachers are so against the theatre?

Marta: I think Teachers are not against Theatre because Theatre is an education activity. [...] So, I think Teachers have to be open minded and see the performances and the productions and the Theatre activities as an opportunity to learn and to have a very good learning experience in a lot of different areas. So, it's true that some Teachers are in the Biology or Chemistry or whatever, and they are not interested in Theatre. Maybe, as a teacher, we have to go as a pioneer and offer some good advice for them and say, 'No, you can teach every area [through...] Theatre activities, with performances'. It could be a very important tool for them.

Jordi: Yes, sometimes Teachers want to choose a classic play - Shakespeare, Chekov something like this, but I think it's not the best option sometimes for Teenagers because it doesn't engage them in Theatre.

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Cristina: Have you had any Digital Theatre experiences and, if so, were they positive or negative?

Marta: Well, in this period of COVID, it has been very difficult to do Theatre because we were at home, so we [can only] reach the Teenagers with this ZOOM format. So, I started to do my classes through ZOOM, and it was an experience that is so very different [to normal] because you are in a little window and you have to play in this little window. So, this has some good things because they are at home, they are more relaxed. But it's difficult because there is not the same interaction that's very important in Theatre. But we made a little show through ZOOM, we did the research, and we recorded the different parts in groups with this format that we knew little about and we presented in June through the internet. So, it was a different experience, and it was good to try. Different, difficult but it was good.

Jordi: Yeah, we also created a show with ZOOM [as well]. For me, it's not the best option, obviously, because it's not a whole experience - but it was a unique way to do it.



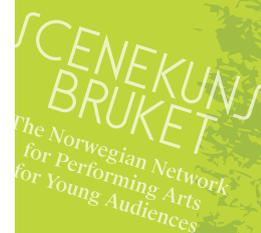
Cristina: Marta said that they were more relaxed because they were at home. Is there anything else positive that you can draw from this Digital experience?

Jordi: For me, it's not [necessarily] positive, but [just] an alternative way to do it.

Cristina: OK, and as a Theatre Ambassador, as someone who likes Theatre and is willing to engage Teenagers in Theatre, which is the action or the thing

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that you are willing to do to engage other Teachers in Theatre?

Marta: Well, to make the other Teachers be interested in Theatre, we always try to explain what we were making in the classes and we invite Teachers to the Theatre with us sometimes. And some Teachers go out to the stage and make Theatre with us. We try for them to be with us when we go to see a performance [that is] not a classical 'educational' performance. But the different kind of performance, a more contemporary performance - more open, more different and then they are surprised, and they say, 'Oh, I've never been in a performance like that'. So, in that moment, they feel they have discovered something different.

[...]

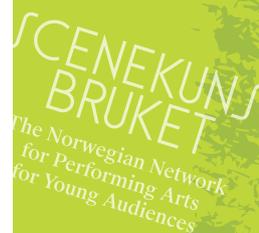
Jordi: I think the most important thing with Teachers is to share with them that in Theatre, the most important thing is not always the word - sometimes it is the body. So here you can open another way of understanding Theatre. [...] also working with Teachers from different fields [is very important], for example, those who teach Philosophy or Biology or different fields to do the work to altogether.

Beth [Project Assistant]: So, you both mentioned ZOOM but I was wondering if, during COVID-19 and online teaching, there were any other platforms or online tools that you used. So, anything else other than ZOOM?

Marta: During COVID I used only ZOOM because it was the better platform to see them all and to work together because other platforms were not very good.

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So, we try to do it by ZOOM because we experience about it and it was the better [option] for us.

Jordi: Yeah, we can use maybe WhatsApp or something like this, but always ZOOM is the best platform to work.

Beth: If you were going to ask a group of Teenagers to discuss a production, so if you went to see a show and then afterwards you wanted them to talk about it, what questions would you ask? What would be a really good question to ask them?



Jordi: 'What do/did you feel about this show?'

Marta: Yes, I agree, it's the emotional feelings or the sensations they have when they were at the Theatre and what is going on inside them [that's important].

Beth: That's really, really good, really good to know. And then also, what kinds of productions or production styles do you think are really good for a Teenager that's never been to the theatre before? So, somebody who's never been, maybe doesn't want to see something that's too abstract or too confrontational. What kind of productions do you think would be good for them?

Marta: I think it would be good for a Teenager that has never been to Theatre to see people onstage with characteristics similar to them. And the style should not be too formal, but very contemporary, very fresh, and maybe with the different elements that relate the Teenagers in the performance. For example, themes like music, [...] tools that Teenagers are using every day like WhatsApp, TikTok, Videos. So ,if you say to a

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Teenager, 'Go to see this performance because it talks about you with people like you', I think it's very good. For example, when last year we went to see a show that was done by 10 girls from Mexico, they were Teenagers, and they were talking about their lives and what they have been going through in Mexico - the meaning of being a girl in Mexico with all the violence and all the things. And my students were, 'Wow' - all of them. Why? Because the people that were on the stage, they were the same - from other country - but they were the same. So, they feel very emphatic and it was like, yes [clicks fingers], it's all they need.

Jordi: Yeah, a lot of different kinds of performance and shows [are good], but the most important thing is the show becomes a mirror for Teenagers to recognise themselves on the stage.

Beth: Final question. What is your top tip to other Teachers or to Creative Professionals & Artists on how to engage Teenagers in the Theatre?

Marta: I think to engage the Teenagers in Theatre it's important to get into their world, to listen to them and treat them as 'us', as persons. Not as children or as if they are not important. If they can see you are treating them equally to the others, the adults, they have the possibility of understanding and engaging.