

TEACHERS
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PROFESSIONALS'
REFLECTIONS
ON THE TEEN2 PROJECT
INTERVIEW 2

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AN INTERVIEW WITH CLARA MATAS FROM »LA CAIXA« FOUNDATION



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 second of the three interviews here and check out the others on our website.

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Cristina [Project Leader]: OK, so first question, the easy one. Why did you accept to participate in this process?

Clara [Project Partner, "la Caixa" Foundation]:

I accepted to participate in this project, because I think it's a very interesting subject. I work with Performing Arts and young audiences, and I think it's quite a unique project. There are not many projects focusing so much on the topics we have been working with and it was an opportunity to get to know other ways of working, other festivals, other partners and learn - learn and share.

Cristina: What is the most important feeling that you have learned from the process?

Clara: I've learned many things. I'm still learning, and I hope I will be learning much more if we keep working together. I've learned to, on the one hand, accept different ways of working and different ways of getting organised: facing the Theatre, working with Teenagers, running festival programming, communicating, eating - I mean this in terms of general relationships with the other partners. And I've learnt a lot about Teenagers from a very particular point of view. So often, we put Teenagers under the same umbrella and treat them like they are the same, but every Teenager is very different. [...] They are not the same, they are, very different - what they look like or the way they behave. Once you get closer to them and speak to them and make them confident, then they open up and they can share with you and offer you a very particular and unique vision of life - and specifically their vision of the Performing Arts.

Cristina: What was the point or moment of the project that was the most inspiring - the changing point?

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Clara: It was when I could listen to Teenagers during the different workshops that we did, especially in the TEEN Kitchen Table Meeting. I enjoyed a lot listening to them. And the way they were so confident and so open, you know, in quite a public setting - that was an eye-opening moment for me. When they were going to see the shows, the way they behaved, the comments they gave afterwards – they were like adults. Also, the comments I received from the group teachers [...] they've used the tools we've been developing in their classes in their everyday work in high schools.



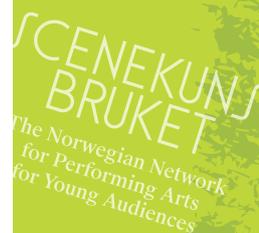
[...]

Cristina: Very well, thank you. Why do you think it's difficult to raise the interests of Teachers in Theatre because we know that it's difficult to engage them even more than engaging Teenagers, which is the problem?

Clara: I think there are many different situations or difficulties for them to get engaged in the Theatre. I don't think they are not motivated. I mean, I think they're motivated, but they don't have the time to come and the brain space to pay attention to Theatre. They are so busy in their everyday work, everyday obligations, the way they have to work with students, the meetings they have to do with whoever is in the school. They have to accomplish many, many schedules, many duties, so they don't even have time

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to say, 'Hey, why don't we do that?' or 'How would it be possible to go to the theatre just next week?' That's one of the things they face is the restrictions in the structure of the schools. The fact that going to the Theatre with their students is so difficult because they have to receive the permission and they have to interrupt the normal classes to go to the Theatre with the students so it's a big deal. So, they say 'It's too much, it's too difficult'. [They say], 'I have to choose the show and I have to pay; I have to get money for them to go with them, I have to convince the teachers, the Director and the students. So, I give up'. That's many things happening around them, even if they want to [bring their students].

Cristina: And do you think that the possibility of watching a show digitally can help in that direction? Can it be useful?

Clara: It can be one more tool, one more way, but not the only one. It will be great if this is only temporary and once the pandemic is gone, that we go back to the live Theatre. It can be a good tool so that the Teenagers can go easily, can attend easily, more easily to [watch] the front of a screen. [...] So, it's an option. It can be helpful, but it's only one more step. And I wish we don't have to use it for a long time.

Beth [Project Assistant]:

So, the first question I have is, after you see a show and you want to have a discussion with Teenagers, what question do you think would be really helpful to ask them?

What would you ask the Teenagers after the show?

Clara: It depends on the show because sometimes the nature of the show gives you a hint [about what to ask]. It gives you an 'open door' to ask a specific question linked to that show. I would avoid saying,

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'Did you like it? Did you enjoy it?' straight away. It puts too much pressure on them – give them some time and space to reflect first. They don't NEED to say, 'Hey, I like it' or "I don't". A nice way to start, to open up their perspective, is to ask them what they felt, what did they find more surprising, the special 'something' that maybe struck them, something that maybe touched them. Also, what they hated the most. I would ask them if they would recommend it to their friends because it's a very effective way to know if they like it or not, if they can recommend it to their friends who never go to the Theatre.

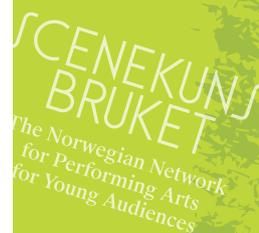


Beth: What tools have you found useful for engaging with Theatre online during COVID? So, like ZOOM or any other online tools that you might have used?

Clara: Well, I haven't used many tools to encourage Teenagers because I don't work directly with them. I know many Teachers have used ZOOM especially. I think Instagram is great in that sense to see live theatre and other local platforms online to see live theatre (not registered or not edited films but live with a good camera work) [...] I haven't had so much experience with them, with Teenagers, but for myself as an audience member, and relating that to a Teenager's perspective too, "I think it's still important to maintain the 'ritual' part of Theatre. So, saying 'hey, it's going to start, you have to connect now because it's going to start'. It's about watching the

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show [with other people] at the same time, 'so you should join now, not whenever you want'. Then you have a feeling of sharing at the same time and like a community. It's still not as powerful as watching a real performance in person but still it's a way to encourage them and to enjoy the experience, I think.



Beth: My final question to you is, what would be your top tip to a creative professional or a fellow Teacher on how they could engage Teenagers in the Theatre? So, if you have to give one little bit of wisdom, what would it be?

Clara: It's a difficult question. I don't have one, I have many. I would say don't treat them like children, don't treat them as if they were stupid or as if they are only obsessed with supposedly 'teenage' themes like social media or new technology. Don't underestimate them. If I can only say one thing, I have seven or eight more, but if I can only say this, it would be this one.

Beth: Thank you. All really good points I think, so thank you very much.

Cristina: I do agree. So, do you have anything else you want to add about the process of things?

Clara: Well, COVID was a terrible interruption of the project, especially because we were in a very special moment of the project that we were going deep into developing the tools of the programming workshop. And it was a real pity [to have to suspend some of the in-person activities].