

TIPS FOR TEACHERS & CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

WORKING WITH
TEENAGERS

TEEN AMBASSADORS
ACROSS EUROPE

TE
EN
THEATRE
EUROPEAN
ENGAGEMENT
NETWORK



Co-funded by the
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TIPS FOR TEACHERS & CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH TEENAGERS

AN INTRODUCTION

This resource has come out of the **TEEN Ambassadors Across Europe** project which was co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

We have written these tips based on our research and 1-to-1 interviews with Teachers, as well as with Creative Professional & Artists, who participated in the project.



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WHAT TEACHERS THINK IS IMPORTANT WHEN WORKING WITH TEENAGERS

- “We put Teenagers under the same umbrella and treat them like they are identical, but **every Teenager is very different.**”
- “Teenagers are not the same. They are very different in what they look like and in the way in which they behave.”
- “Once you get closer to Teenagers and **speak to them and make them confident, they open up.** They can share with you and offer you a very particular and **unique vision of life, specifically a vision of Performing Arts.**”
- It’s important 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.”
- “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.**”



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TOP TIPS FOR TEACHERS & CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

- **“Do things, don’t be afraid.** Because sometimes you are not going to get it exactly right. With Teenagers you never know if it will work but if you explain what you are going to do with them, they will be engaged with whatever happens. They are with you.”
- “If you are **genuine**, I think they are going to do it.”
- “I think that to have **more tools to connect with people**, to talk with other people from other countries (...) this makes your experience good and it makes sure that you want more.”
- **“The most important thing is empowering them [Teenagers], to make them confident to express themselves.”**
- “The most important thing is **listening to their voices, to take them into account** when you are choosing a performance, a show, and when you are designing a programme.”



ADVICE FOR PROGRAMMING FOR TEENAGERS

- “The most important thing is that if you want to programme a performance /show for Teenagers, **you have to listen to them to take into account their point of view of the world, of society.**”
- **“It’s important that Teenagers can choose, that they can participate in the design of the Theatre programme.”**



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- "I think it's important for a show for Teenagers not to feel like it's 'just' a show for Teenagers."
- "The Teenagers are often stereotyped, and I don't think they like this."
- "Teenagers want to be treated as adults; I think. Sometimes we treat them as if they are children and they are not children. They are adults and they have their feelings and points of view. **It's important to take care of this because, if not, they will be disconnected from the show.**"
- "You have to think from their point of view, not from yours as an Artistic Director. **You have to put Teenagers in your team** if you want to design something like this [a festival]."
- "We have to make the effort as professionals [...] **to go inside their world and try to understand what is going on there**, because I think the Teenagers nowadays are in a very complex space with a lot of different information and a very complex world."
- It should be "**quite a direct show.**"

TO AVOID

- It doesn't have to be "easy to understand, [as such] because they're all intelligent, but it should also **not be too sophisticated in terms of the message or the content or the plot.**"
- "It **should not be compulsory** [to attend Theatre] because that produces a negative reaction itself. This not only applies to Theatre but to almost everything. So, it's better to say, 'look, we have this opportunity, and I would like that you come with me and I would like to share the experience with you.'"

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- “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.**”

TALKING ABOUT THEATRE WITH TEENAGERS



- “I would **avoid saying, '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.”
- “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.”
- “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 don't like to ask if you liked it or if you didn't. This would not be one of my questions. Mostly I would say, **'How did you feel when you saw that the play?'**”
- Most important is “the emotional feelings or the sensations that they have had when they were at the Theatre.”

VIRTUAL/ ONLINE SHOWS



- "We discovered that a lot of teachers are not coming to theatre because **they feel that it's risky**. They don't feel prepared and they feel uncomfortable. Instead, **if you have online theatre, you can watch the show before, then you can watch it with your students and so you feel prepared.**"
- With watching Theatre online "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 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."

REFLECTION ON THE TEEN KITCHEN TABLE METHODOLOGY

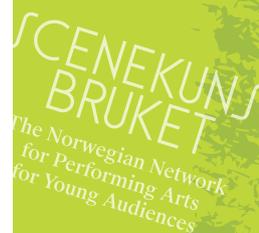


- "I enjoyed listening to the Teenagers."
- "They were **so confident and so open in quite a public setting**, so that was my eye-opening moment for me."
- "The way they behave, the way they acted – they were just like they are adults."

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- **“We have to listen to them much more as they have a lot to say.”**
- “The TEEN Kitchen Table is a good activity to work with Teenagers in that it is an easy activity to empower them to amplify and focus their voices. And I think it’s a good tool for us to work with them.”
- **“Teenagers can say and express very clearly what they want.** It was very surprising for me [how effective this was].”
- “It was a revelation when we were in the workshops because they **expressed very clearly what they do and do not want to see on the stage.** Or what they feel about the experience if it wasn’t so good for them. Some of the things that we ,as adults, thought were good for them, they didn’t necessarily agree on.”
- “For me, the TEEN Kitchen Table 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.**”
- The TEEN Kitchen Table “was **very rich and very, very easy to hold it and generate a lot of conclusions.**”



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