

Excellence and Inclusion Scheme Launch: Q&A's from the afternoon session

Miranda Cromwell; Bristol Old Vic Young Company: To the Young REP, how did you integrate young people from ethnic minorities and from working class backgrounds?

Tim Ford: Following the mapping exercise at Birmingham we discovered was that there is a particular area in Birmingham that is a large Muslim area, that theatre was not active in, so rather than expecting them to come to us we went to them. We set up a youth theatre session in their school which has been going for about six years now and slowly they have been integrated from that company to the company that meets at the REP. It's about us taking an active role in engaging why people don't come to us and doing something about it.

Alexa Cruickshank; National Youth Theatre: Any big surprises or shocks that came from doing the pilots or taking on some of the research?

Sarah Brigham: I'd say no, no huge surprises as a youth theatre practitioner but one thing that I am really proud of is that as a sector we are streets ahead of any sector, we don't have as much money going into youth theatre as some of the other sectors so whereas there are no big shocks or surprises I think the shocks will come from the other people. When they look at the documents they say "your sector is really interested in not just doing what you always do but moving forward" that is what's really exciting! Actually one shock was that we are a lot more diverse than people think we are and as a sector we are doing well but we can always do better and that is the point of this scheme.

Jonathan Neelands: I think the two big surprises to me, firstly was that young people wanted to say that they cared about inclusion and wanted to do something actively about it; that by broadening the youth theatre makes it better. Secondly that in the history of youth theatre there is always a debate is it social, artistic, or product and what I discovered from young people is that they now say that these are integrated and one can't work without the other.

Vernon: One thing that surprised me was the straightforward questions - "is your youth theatre welcoming?" which I thought I had the answer to but when we went into the deepness of that question, we realised we have a youth theatre that has full access for disabled young people but do we actually advertise to these young people? Do we have links with the organisations we need to? In a lot of instances it is the little things that pose the biggest thoughts/answers.

Rachel Tyson; Lyric Hammersmith: All of the work we currently do is free to members, which is great but we have had a few phone calls from parents asking 'Why is it free, it mustn't be very good'. To be truly inclusive we need to represent all the boroughs that the youth theatre is in situated in and how can we recognise that and have an inclusive youth theatre that then both these groups choose to attend.

Julia Box: that is a big debate, I would say that we do have a variety of young people at Brighton Youth Theatre but I would say it's not about saying you have to be open to all young people but who you are targeting. It's about clarity really, if you say we are open to everyone, is that really what you mean. Your mission statement really needs that clarity.

Caroline; Promote YT: to all of you who pilot the strands obviously you weren't told which strand you were going to get, I wondered what do you want to do next? Which other part of the document excites you and what would be your next choice?

Julia Box: It's hard because there's that temptation between doing something you want to do and something you ought to do. I think that there is a lot in both documents and we haven't formulised that yet, the young people are also very involved generally in what we do at Brighton Youth Theatre, I think the next exciting bit to do is to involve everyone in planning this and having something set to follow.

Owen Calvert-Lyons: When we did the pilot section with our youth theatre forum at the Arcola, at the end they asked if they could implement one section of the documents each term and it has been decided that they are going to choose each time.

Vernon: I think diversity and equality will be then next section we touch, trying to figure out where we stand and try to cater for as many young people as possible. I think it will be very interesting.

Jonathan Neelands: Just to make a point that this is a toolkit, it's more in the spirit of "we need to talk about this and what's going to help us"; this is the intention of this toolkit. This is something useful to help you with the kind of areas you may get stuck and we aren't trying to tell you that you have to do all sections simultaneously but to try out different parts.