I Will Be Everything

Public Engagement Toolkit

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We believe that audience development is a heartfelt desire to be deeply connected to our place and its people shared by everyone in our organisation that manifests itself in everything we do.

Introduction

ABOUT THE PROJECT

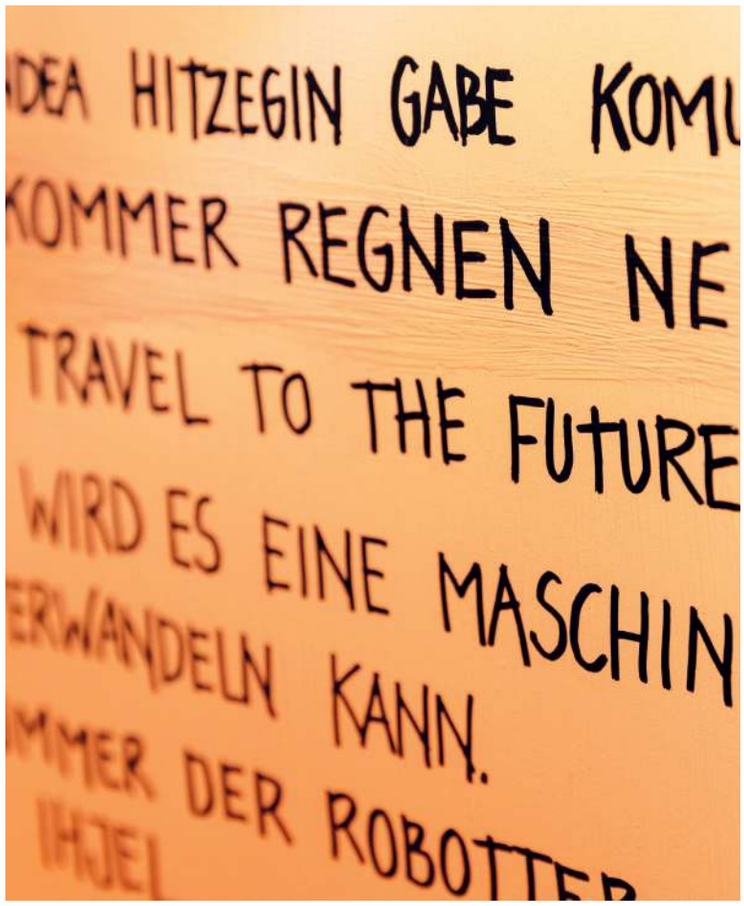
I Will Be Everything was a three-year project that explored the artists and audience of the future (and audience of the present) supported by the Culture Programme of the European Union. It brought together seven arts organisations that all make work with and for children and young people. The partners are from seven European countries across the continent that are as similar and as different as Europe can be: New International Encounter (UK), Nordland Teater (Norway), Odsherred Teater (Denmark), Sala Baratza (Spain), Teatr Figur (Poland), Theater am Ortweinplatz (Austria) and Theater Mummpitz (Germany).

I Will Be Everything asked the partners to invite the audience of the future into their venue and into their creative process. It asked the children aged between seven and ten to imagine their future, their town, their family, maybe their job, their football team or perhaps even a new environmental or social reality in the future. The children became co-creators of a touring immersive theatre performance and exhibition. Artists worked with children in school as part of the scheduled school day and with families outside school time to deliver creative workshops. They helped children to make creative material around the central theme by drawing, painting, writing and telling stories, making short films and recording audio. This material was then used by artists to create new professional performing arts works that could be shared with a wide audience.

The partners believe that using creative material made in workshops by children and enabled by Education/Creative Learning professionals as the starting point for the creation of new professional art works, opens arts organisations up to the influence and ideas of their audience. This co-creation model changes the direction of flow for ideas from one of Artist to Audience into one of Audience to Artists.

Alongside this, a key objective of I Will Be Everything was to develop new strategies that extended and increased young audiences for the performing arts. Enabled by an external expert, they researched and developed strategies for increasing the participation of easier to ignore audience groups or audiences who experience barriers to participation, shared good practice and explored challenges.

The results of this process are summarised in this toolkit.



OUR PLANS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The partners decided to use the term public engagement rather than audience development as they see it as a two-way process in which the organisation is developed just as much as the communities that they engage with. This is explored further throughout this toolkit.

The project focused on three groups:

- Children aged from seven to ten as creators and audiences
- Teachers, school managers and education leaders, especially those from schools not currently engaged with the professional performing arts for a young audience
- Cultural professionals including artists who want to work with and create art for a young audience

The partners wanted to address these challenges.

Building relationships with schools that currently do not engage with theatre by identifying and implementing effective ways of:

- Persuading head teachers and their staff that theatre is relevant to the wider curriculum
- Persuading teachers that theatre is relevant to young children and educational underachievers
- Helping teachers use theatre across the curriculum and overcome practical barriers to organising theatre trips
- Tackling the prohibitive cost of transport for schools, particularly those in rural areas
- Finding sustainable ways of reducing the costs for schools.

Building family audiences by identifying and implementing:

- More effective ways of communicating with families
- Methods of ensuring a good quality service for families on and off the stage
- Proven ways of engaging with disadvantaged families to build cultural capital among parents and carers as well as children, adapted to be sustainable in small cultural organisations

Phase One consisted of gathering and exploring the implications of available research to better understand the needs of schools and families and sharing good practice[1].

In Phase Two each partner designed and implemented a bespoke action plan. These were each very different, even more than anticipated at the beginning of the project.

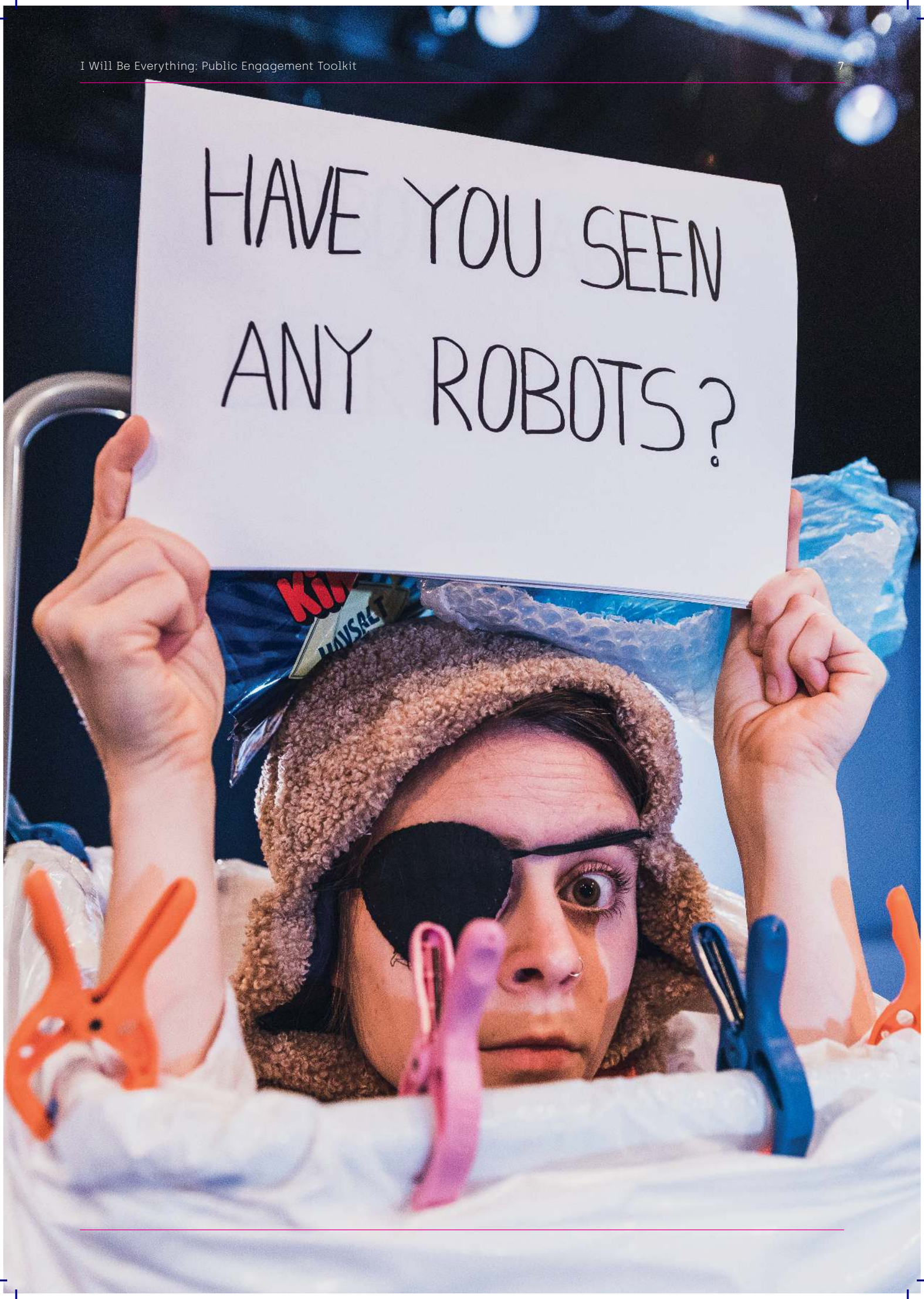
Phase Three continued the implementation of the action plans and evaluated their impact. It quickly became clear that the partners define and implement audience development differently. This led to a collaborative and fruitful exploration of the concepts behind audience development. As a result, several partners developed engagement strategies of a far greater scale, scope and impact than ever envisaged including:

- A funding application to the municipality to refocus a major part of the partner's artistic activities on engaging the disadvantaged community in which it is located
- Raising additional funds to treble the planned number of co-design workshops and related activities
- Involving every child in the municipality aged seven or eight in a co-design workshop as part of a large-scale social research study to ensure children's views influence political decision making
- Securing business sponsorship to develop facilities that will greatly expand the engagement of local young people

The different circumstances of the partners meant that some of the audience activities originally planned were not useful:

- Some of the planned activities, such as using a Family Friendly Audit developed in the UK, were too specific to a particular national context
- In some cases, other, local schemes achieved the planned goals in a way that was more appropriate to the context than the planned activities
- Several partners developed bespoke ways of engaging communities that were more rooted in their artistic work and had a life beyond I Will Be Everything rather than basing them on conventional audience development schemes
- Some focused on engaging a large number of schools in the project and others focused on a greater depth of engagement with a smaller number of schools. The needs of teachers in each municipality were different so partners developed tailored teacher engagement strategies, most of which were broader in scope than the project advisory group originally envisaged. All the partners, however, have used their involvement with I Will Be Everything to deepen existing relationships with schools and develop new school partners, consult teachers, research their needs and undertake advocacy activities with school leaders and teachers

1 Download the summary here: http://www.nie-theatre.com/take-part/UK


HAVE YOU SEEN
ANY ROBOTS?

Reflections

A SPOTTER'S GUIDE TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

HEATHER MAITLAND
Project audience development officer

So, everyone knows what a dog is, right? Waggy tail, leg at each corner, wet nose, faulty volume control. But in a world where dogs come in all shapes and sizes from chihuahua to wolfhound, how do you know that ball of fur scampering towards you is a dog? Seriously.

Audience development is definitely a thing - the EU says so. It's anything that widens audiences by getting more of the same sort of people already involved with what we do or diversifies audiences by getting different sorts of people involved or deepens the relationship between us and the audiences we already have. All the partners in I Will be Everything were doing stuff that achieved these goals. But it was very different stuff. It was so different, it was difficult to agree on anything we could do together to develop audiences.

Like dogs, audience development comes in all shapes and sizes. Humans have bred dogs over thousands of years to fill different gaps in their lives: status symbol, hunting aid, best friend. But how did audience development become so mixed up?

First, though, it's important to say that this project wouldn't have worked if the partners didn't have important things in common – our beliefs:

- We believe passionately in the power of theatre
- We believe that we don't have to be big to be important and valuable
- We believe in the value of young people's vision
- We believe in artistic and cultural quality

We even have a creative process in common in the way we turn conversations with communities into theatre.

But we have different histories, geographies, values, financial models and budgets so the possibilities open to us are different. We live and work among different communities. The art we create is different and we wrap different activities around it. The people round our table have different strengths and skills and they want different results. And I Will Be Everything is playing different roles in their organisation's overall strategy. These different inputs inevitably result in different outputs.

Our differences were so great that we had to find another way to label what we were doing. Most partners hate the phrase "audience development". To them, it implies that there are people who need "developing" and that means some ways of being involved in and appreciating culture must be better than others.

"Audience development" suggests that its aim is to create people who better appreciate what we, the arts organisations, do. It's a one-way street. It's something we do to people. And what is an "audience" anyway? It implies someone who sits and just listens.

We agreed to call it "public engagement". That's about people not audiences. That implies a two way relationship, a journey that we go on together where everyone is actively involved.

Does this sound trivial? A waste of time? It's not. At the heart of this discussion is a debate about the purpose of culture. Do we believe that some kinds of culture – our kinds of culture – are better than others. Or do we believe that the people in the communities we serve are just as much cultural experts as we are – that we can learn from each other?

To one of our partners, public engagement is about building from scratch intense relationships with relatively small groups of people by creating theatre together. "It's not about numbers," they said, "if we want bigger audiences we just put TV comedians on in our biggest auditorium". Sounds reasonable, but I'm not so sure. Like "audience development", doesn't that imply that those intense relationships with the arts are only for some sorts of people? Culture is a human right so people should have the right to choose. But it's hard to choose something you know nothing about. Surely, we have a responsibility to make sure everyone can make an informed choice, even about the unfamiliar.

I also worried about the partner that already had strong relationships with a group of schools and were more than satisfied with the number of school children who engaged with their work. They worked hard to get as many of those schools as possible involved in the co-creation workshops at the heart of this project, designed to gather young people's visions for the future. But otherwise, they did nothing different. After all, the workshops were public engagement, deepening those young people's relationship with the arts. But were the co-creation workshops public engagement?

I think they were, but only because we all found clear answers to these questions:

Who gets to engage with theatre?
Is it just the children lucky enough to have a teacher who is interested? Do we have a responsibility to reach out to teachers who do not engage? The research[2] tells us that they need information, support and a genuine artistic engagement, not just a relationship with a theatre's marketing person or a leaflet. So, what could we do to make sure that new teachers engage so we reach different children? Each of the partners held group meetings with all their area's teachers, ran workshops with them, brought them to the venue, established the goals they had in common with them, explored how they could share resources and communicated clearly how the teachers could create valuable experiences for their students. We have also developed an online resource for teachers and creative educators[3]. All of this meant we really did diversify audiences.

Is this an "educational" project?
There is a clash between how artists want children to engage with theatre and how schools want them to engage with the experience. Are the children who take part in workshops "those to be educated", passive receivers of a theatre experience? Or are they co-creators? If they are co-creators, what are we doing to show this to them, to their teachers and to their families before, during and after a workshop? Co-creators need to know what has happened to their ideas so how can we make sure that every child feels valued - especially when they will see the show and exhibition up to two years after the workshop they were involved in? We talked about every child making something that will be part of the exhibition that accompanied the performances, for example, creating with each school "the radio of the future" where all the children's stories are recorded on a CD. Like this we ensured that we deepened the relationship between the children and the arts.

Does the way our organisations work mean that there will be no audiences for theatre in 20 years' time?
Research shows[4] children associate theatre with schoolwork, not with their cultural life or with the creative world of the imagination. What can we do about this? Can we get their families involved? But families will only come to the show if they feel comfortable walking through the school gates or the theatre foyer, even if their child's story is in it. This depends on the school's or the theatre's culture, on its relationship with its students' families and its neighbourhood. Both schools and theatres make their neighbourhood – for good or bad. How could we use this project to deepen the relationship between the school, our theatre and the communities that surround us?

Audience development comes in all shapes and sizes. But you can spot when it's genuinely audience development (and especially when it's public engagement). It starts with people. It starts with seeing the world through their eyes. And that involves getting to know and understand them. Listening. Finding the common ground between you and then doing things differently to create art that is relevant to both of you.

One of our partners worried that their theatre was "an elite island of white, middle class people visiting a theatre space set in the heart of a disadvantaged multicultural community". This project's sometimes uncomfortable mismatch of attitudes towards audience development has sparked a discussion among their team. Since opening the theatre, they had involved local families in creative activities, encouraging community members to take charge of sessions. They learned so much simply by listening. The team are now asking how can they place their neighbours at the heart of what they do? How can they find relevance and how can they bring it onto the studio floor?

So, the audience has developed the theatre.

But is this the tail wagging the dog? Is this the artistic integrity of the theatre taking second place to the audience?

Find out what an artistic director thinks by reading Dagmara Zabska's essay over the page.

Teatr Figur schools' workshop

2, 3, 4 Download the research overview at: http://www.nie-theatre.com/take-part/UK

ARTISTIC CREATIVITY OR AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT?

DAGMARA ZABSKA
Artistic Director, Teatr Figur, Kraków, Poland

The term "audience development" was unknown to Polish readers till recently. There is no good Polish equivalent of the term. I tried to google it – most of the results were from 2012, the year the National Centre for Culture hosted a series of workshops with specialists from England. I did not use the term myself before I become part of this I Will Be Everything project. I had heard that there was a new methodology for working with an audience, a new profession emerging, but I did not know any specifics.

The situation changed substantially when the Creative Europe Programme Management Committee made audience development one of the priorities for the programme. Since then the term has grown in popularity. So, all of sudden, Teatr Figur finds itself part of a project, where the main focus is audience development: gaining and diversifying an audience.

Seven theatres have been involved in the project. By any measure, be it artistic, organisational, financial, we differ greatly. Some have several years' experience, some have several decades'; some are big institutions with big budgets and some have small teams and no regular public funding; some are repertory theatres with their own buildings and some are touring companies. For the last 18 months we've been defining the term "audience development" for ourselves, we've been seeking common ground, we've been inspiring each other.

It was clear from the very beginning that when we talk about audience development, we are talking about our organisations' missions. Each of us has the goal of building up relationship with an audience, to determine their needs and to respond to them—as opposed to just selling tickets. So, we have been talking more frequently about public engagement than about audience development. It seemed more egalitarian, more democratic.

For more than two years I observed closely the different strategies employed by the other theatres, I measured them up against our own, tested their ideas. From my point of view as the artistic director of a small, touring puppet theatre, the precise definition of a mutual relationship between our target audience and our own artistic ideas was very important.

In what way do activities, undertaken for and with the audience, shape the artistic profile of an organisation? How does one keep one's creative freedom and at the same time fulfil the needs of one's audience? What are the ways to build a good dialogue with the public? What can we do to become indispensable to them?

Since the very beginning of Teatr Figur, our main way of building up our relationship with the public was through workshops. We work with children, teenagers, families, adults, teachers, animators, local communities. It might be a one-off event, it might be a series of meetings. The main goal here was the creative encounter, but with a pronounced educational aspect. The goal was to teach participants the language of theatre. People have told me many times that theatre is not for ordinary people. It is too difficult, too hard to grasp. It is only for theatre specialists like me.

As we refuse to stick to a light repertoire, we decided to bring the audience tools that would help them to interpret the show, form their own opinion about it. That would make it easier to learn the language of theatre. When we entered the project, workshops like this were going to be one of the elements in our audience development for I Will Be Everything with the aim of getting an audience for the performances. Using the workshops, we were going to reach a new public: schools, families, local communities. But my attitude was that of a theatre specialist. A couple of meetings of the audience development group later, I realised how wrong I was.

Yes, we know how to lead a workshop, how to sell tickets to a new audience — of that I am still sure. But this does not amount to an audience development strategy. First of all, in most cases our contact with audience members was limited to a one-off meeting during the delivery of a project. Secondly, there was never a doubt who does what: we were the teachers explaining to the participants how to understand theatre.

But the essence of audience development should be the focus on the audience. Regarding them as our equals. Making the audience the point of reference.

For me, the story told by our Danish partners, Odsherred Teater was a source of inspiration. After almost 10 years of activity, they realised that they are almost totally unknown in their own town. The community that was, in theory, their target audience exhibited no interest in the theatre. They decided to change the way they worked, and most notably, redefine their mission. The main goal for them became to build up a deep and egalitarian relationship with local community and to use theatre as the means. All their efforts focus on work for and with town inhabitants. The artistic process has been reinvented with that in mind. For starters, in cooperation with town inhabitants they staged a show based on the "Twin Peaks" TV series. It was very different from the linear narrative of a traditional theatrical spectacle — more like a series of theatrical events, staged in various non-theatrical spaces including inside a car.

Ten years later, the theatre's team swear by this strategy that substantially strengthened their position in the town. Every one of them has such a clear focus. Whether we discuss participation in an international festival, a new show or a workshop for children, the subject of the audience pops up. The side-effect of this process is an increase in ticket sales. What is important for me in this story is the paradigm shift. Our Danish partners would not say, "We've hosted workshops and show for general public, to make them like theatre more." There is none of the attitude: we, the professionals, instruct you on how to make theatre. They backed down, gave up a little bit of their own space and started listening.

The thing our partners talked about, and that was absent in my theatre was a certain mindset, shared by all team members. I think this is the challenge when trying to implement this new way of thinking. As the head of a company it is very easy for me to envision large-scale plans, to find links between particular events, talk about the idea. To have this idea accepted by all team-members is a much harder task.

I've noticed that even if we do host the most awesome of workshops, most instructors treat them as if they were entities totally separated from the rest of our activities. It is hard to hold it against them: they want to lead as good a workshop as possible. In some organisations,

audience development is a dedicated role and the specialist holding it is responsible for developing the relationship with the public. Our theatre is a small, independent organisation, with no specialist roles, and we all interact with audiences, participating in workshops and projects.

My other reflection is linked to the funding system based on grants for projects. Almost all of our activities are delivered as a part of a short-term project. But audience development is a process. It is hard to imagine an "objective achieved" situation, where we regard our audience as fully developed or engaged. We can only plan projects which serve as a framework for additional audience development activities, especially as Teatr Figur does not have its own space, instead touring to affiliated stages.

We never know which of our project applications will be accepted and funded. For many years, I thought this uncertainty made any strategy of cooperating with audiences an exercise in frustration. Now I've changed my mind and think the uncertainty is largely irrelevant. Provided our main goal is to engage the local community with our activities, develop the audience, animate it and instil in it an interest in theatre, it is not important which project is funded. The mission can be fulfilled regardless. And the fact that each time we need to invent new creative ways to do it, works to our advantage in the end. The mission cannot be fulfilled using standardised procedures—that would introduce a routine, and that in turn, especially in a cultural organisation, would extinguish all creativity.

One of the I Will Be Everything project's objectives was to lead a series of workshops in which children would come up with their own stories about the future. What will the world look like in 50 years' time? What will I be? What will change? Performers based in the partner theatres are going to stage a spectacle based on those stories. The core of our target audience were schools and, to a lesser degree, families. Teatr Figur planned to host no fewer than 80 workshops.

In preparation for that task we recognised two possible pitfalls: The first was the process of co-creation itself. How to avoid using those children, treating them {merely} as source material?

We decided to let each group taking part in a series of workshops, create their own short shadow theatre shows. We invited students from other classes to the shows. The shows created varied, surprising and original worlds. Their worlds. All these shows have been recorded and will be displayed on screen to everyone watching our production of I Will Be Everything. Like this, the workshop participants will be promoted to being co-creators of the production. The second challenge is the fact that I Will Be Everything is a one-off project. Thanks to the Creative Europe funding and an endowment from a trust, we finally have a budget for a range of activities: workshops for kids, productions, courses for teachers, performances. But all of this will last only for a while. How can we use this opportunity to build a long-term relationships?

I do not pretend to have easy answers. For now, we are going to offer to teachers taking part in the project a series of workshop meetings, during which we can plan joint activities. We will try to find a common ground, common needs. But what I want the most is for us all to get to know each other. Only then we will be able to be realistic in our expectations.

On the surface not much has changed—we keep hosting workshops. But now we do not use them to merely develop the production, that is just a side-effect of our work. They are the opportunity to meet each other, the source of inspiration, the test-bed for our ideas. Workshops might directly shape our future productions, push us in a new direction (as it was the case with our last show - we came up with the idea working with small kids).

If we assume that audience development is much more than a way to sell more tickets, that it is an idea, that its main goal is to focus on the public, it will become obvious that there is no gap between an artistic creativity and the needs of an audience.

If we treat audience development as a process that does not end and that can be realised in many different ways, it is clear that it becomes the crucial factor that guarantees the development of an organisation.

Case Studies: Diversifying Audiences

NORDLAND TEATER

Nordland Teater, Mo i Rana, Norway is a state funded producing theatre in the north of Norway. They make and present work locally and nationally for adults, families and children and host national and international work in their building. It is funded by Nordlands Fylkeskommune and Rana Kommune.

MEET THE PARTNER

Why did you get involved in I Will Be Everything?
It was great to be asked because this is such an interesting project in so many ways. Elsewhere it's normal to go out into the community to collect material for theatre productions but we've never done it here. Of course, talking to people outside the theatre is really good and our outreach worker is out there all the time. But we've never done it in a way that involves the whole organisation. Each of us has learned something different, depending on how the project touches their everyday work. That really struck home when we first saw the material from the co-creation workshops gathered into an exhibition as part of our Winterlight Festival. An added benefit is having such different partners means we now have an insight into how other theatres work.

How does Nordland Teater think about audience development?
It depends who you ask. I think for many of us, our understanding has changed. In the past, we have focused on giving the audience a great show. Now everyone understands that it is about the whole experience of coming to our theatre and are more aware of how they contribute to that. "Treat yourself to an experience you didn't know you needed" has been the strapline for our Winterlight Festival for 20 years.

Public engagement or audience development?
We want a theatre that is for every Nordlander. Why? Because it is a funding criterion but also because we want to share what we make with everyone. We want to make an impact and to do this we need to reach a broad audience so they can be part of a discussion about society. At a deep level, we strongly believe that theatre is an important way for people to rehearse empathy and explore ideas. We want to be a voice in the discussion. Politicians are one voice, the media another and influencers yet another. People have a voice too, but no-one seems to listen. Although they express things, decisions are made anyway. At the very least, we are an alternative voice that challenges people to have an opinion by raising the issues, touching their emotions and offering different ways of seeing things. Our theatre has been questioning "truth" for 20 years and in this era of fake news, at least we can make them aware of the mechanisms. We are a different way of engaging people in what's important.

How can young people have a voice?
We make theatre for young people in the same way we do for grown-ups: the same resources and the same energy. We have rarely done a children's show with them sitting passively in the auditorium. That doesn't taste too good. We always have them with us on the stage, creating an experience that really pulls them in. I Will Be Everything is a perfect project for us because we are taking the views of children seriously, giving them a powerful, collective voice across nations. And it is a public collective voice, not just one that lives in the classroom. We have been given a precious gift during this project that we must strive to ensure lives on. We want to share it with everyone in our organisation and in other cultural institutions, too. They should have the chance to work as we have because it is such a powerful way of developing both theatre as an artform and the communities in which we live and work.

Birgitte Strid, Theatre Director and
Tina Ditlefsen, Acting Marketing Director

th•mann

«VISER OG VAFLER» OG «ANDRE BOLLER»

Our aims:
With this project we wanted to:

- Get more people to visit the theatre
- Make our venue more familiar, and less scary to come into
- Give families and elderly people the opportunity to experience theatre at low cost
- Establish a low threshold offer to get repeating visitors
- Make the theatre a «happening place»
- Create a good and safe atmosphere for all citizens to come visit

What kind of people is it aimed at?

- Low income families and elderly people
- Everyone curious about theatre, but not wanting a whole evening show
- New visitors to the theatre

What happens?
Every third or fourth Saturday the café in our venue is the arena for this happening, and a small-scale play for about 30-45 minutes is played. It can be singing, dancing, storytelling or short-plays. Tickets are at very reduced prices. Included in the price is coffee and a snack.

The performers of these short shows are in general the in house artistic staff, and they take turns in making and performing the shows.

Why did we do it?
To generate more new audience groups, and to maintain the already established ones. When we create a positive and low-threshold experience, it is more likely that audiences will return to a familiar scenery.

With reduced prices on productions, we can also reduce prices on tickets, and also low-income families get the chance to bring the whole family, and in that way also get familiar with the venue and the theatre. And are more likely to come back.

During these Saturday café performances, we marked our bigger productions, and create more buzz and give out information about these.

The outcome
The Saturday café has been a great success for us, and every show is now full. We also see that more and more of our new audience come back for evening shows, even the shows that are more expensive. It is a great way to market our other shows, and we sell more tickets because of this. It is also a great way to interact and become closer friends with our audience.

Case Studies: Building Relationships with Schools

TaO! – THEATER AM ORTWEINPLATZ

Theater am Ortweinplatz (TaO!), Graz Austria is both a theatre venue and a place for theatre education. They produce new work with and for children and young people in Graz and host the biennial Spleen Festival of international work for children and young people. They are supported by Bundeskanzleramt Kunst, Land Steiermark Kultur, Land Steiermark Jugend, Frauen, Familie, Bildung, Land Steiermark Soziales und Arbeit, Stadt Graz Kultur and Stadt Graz Jugend und Familie.

MEET THE PARTNER

Why did you get involved in I Will Be Everything?
It's a great chance for us. The co-creation workshops are very close to how we make theatre. The difference is that many of our productions are made with young people as performers alongside professional artists. These young people are among the 200 involved in our weekly theatre workshops. They are our experts about young people of their own age so we always want to know what they think and feel.

I Will Be Everything involves children who are younger than our usual participants. We are learning so much as they need more imaginative, fantastical and playful forms of work. Their stories come more from the heart than the brain.

But what about our immediate neighbourhood? It's near the city centre without a clearly defined population as students, new arrived migrants and older people all call it home. I Will Be Everything has encouraged us to engage this neighbourhood in co-creation. We're planning a sequel to the project as part of our City's celebrations in 2020. This will include pieces for the square in front of the theatre co-created by very local communities and involving professional performing artists who live in our neighbourhood too.

How do you think about public engagement?
Public engagement is necessary if we think about culture in a democratic way. It's an exchange rather than a financial transaction. We learn from the audience, working out with communities how to communicate and collaborate in a creative and open way.

There are parallels between us and the other partners – we share values but implement them in a different way. We are the only partner that focuses on theatre pedagogy and has such a close relationship with young people aged ten to 16. Being on stage is hugely thrilling – it's like bungee jumping. That enables us to work with the young people's families, friends and neighbours.

We also have a big schools audience, working with trainee teachers on engaging with theatre. In recent years, school children (and their teachers) are under a lot more pressure to learn competencies like reading a newspaper text or writing a letter. They don't encounter the beauty of reading and writing for its own sake. Theatre can allow them to play with language and ideas, creating reservoirs of alternative thoughts, feelings and spirituality. These reservoirs are what makes people resilient.

Why is it important?
No-one forces us to focus on public engagement but we have to do it. Schools don't have the skills to enthuse people about the arts because you need to be close to the creative process to engage people effectively. If you take public engagement seriously, you will end up creating new ways of making art. It's also ok to make art for art's sake – but that's not what we do.

Manfred Weissensteiner, Artistic Director and Founder

Scene from Dorian Gray – Pictures of Beauty (2019)
Young performers are at the core of many professional TaO! productions
Photo: Edi Haberl

Participants in the Theaterpädagogischer Lehrgang (2017) working creatively with children
Photo: Clemens Nestroy

TEACHER TRAINING FOR THEATRE PEDAGOGY

Our aims
Within the last 25 years, TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz has become a centre of theatre pedagogy in Austria. For us, theatre education is not just a means of preparing viewers, but a way to engage people – specifically young ones – to discuss and express their ideas in a creative setting. This idea gave birth to the "Theaterpädagogischer Lehrgang", a teacher training course for theatre pedagogy organised in collaboration with the Styrian University for teacher education (Pädagogische Hochschule Steiermark) since 2008.

What happens?
This two-year extra-occupational training course aims at supplying teachers with theoretical input as well as practical experiences which they can use in their classrooms. They learn about different approaches and methods of theatre pedagogy as well as theatre and directing concepts and learn to understand how to create lesson plans and projects using theatre exercises targeted at, for example, perception, concentration and creativity.

The first year closes with a performance created and acted out by the teachers themselves, thus giving them the opportunity to experience a creative process from the point of view of an actor. At the end of the second year, the participants take on the role of the director and create short performances with their pupils.

Additionally, regular group visits to the theatre give participants the chance to discuss and reflect on different artistic styles. Altogether, the goal of the training is to give teachers a comprehensive set of theatre tools to use with their pupils, thus spreading the concept of theatre pedagogy in different schools.

The outcome
Over the years, the project has created an extensive pool of people who expand its impact for the Graz theatre scene. Many former participants not only use their acquired knowledge to create their own lessons and projects, but have also become regular theatre viewers, often bringing new groups of pupils and teachers to see performances. Some training graduates have also become involved in additional TaO! theatre projects after the course. For us, engaging with teachers as equals and giving them the tools to become experts themselves has proven to be one of the most successful methods to create close collaborators in our daily work.

Why did we do it?
In I Will Be Everything we wanted to engage participants of the current training course in the creative part of the project by confronting them with the concept of co-creation. With the help of the training course leaders, they were given the task to create their own two-hour workshop plans for creating material on the concept of "future" together with pupils. They were then given the chance to try out their workshops, followed by a group discussion and self-evaluation. This way, the participants could get a clear understanding of the concept of co-creation and were strongly involved in the EU project. As collaborators, this will make them not only advocates for the concept of co-creation, but also for the IWBE production when it tours to Austria.

THEATER MUMMPITZ

Theater Mummpitz, Nuremberg, Germany is a children's theatre. It makes and tours work for young people locally, nationally and internationally. It is funded by the State of Bavaria, the Region of Middle Franconia and the City of Nuremberg with further co-operation partners.

MEET THE PARTNER

Why did you get involved in this project?
We have organised a biennial European children's theatre festival, panoptikum, since 2000. It brings together 20 directors from all over the world, so we knew how much international collaboration opens up new perspectives. It puts our own style of working into a wider context and introduces us to other creative approaches. We knew the project would be interesting because we were familiar with NIE's director, Alex Byrne, through children's theatre festivals and shows he directed for us in 2008 and 2015. Artistically, we have quite a lot in common with the other partners. As it turns out, that's not the case with audience development because we are such very different organisations. The artistic process embodies everything we stand for – the values we share – so it unites us.

What is Theater Mummpitz's approach to public engagement?
We make theatre to reach an audience. It's our responsibility to think about audience development and to know who comes and – more important! - who doesn't come. For our family performances at weekends we have a strong core audience of people who have an affinity for education and culture – they want to expand their children's minds. This project has made us think a lot about diversity questions over the past two years. The German theatre system is very white. And its audience is predominantly white, too. But if schools come, they arrive in all their diversity. It's family audiences we need to diversify.

Why is that important?
Theatre brings people together – it's not a solitary thing because you feel other people's reactions. It's a shared experience. Although the world will continue to turn if there is no theatre, it's important to civil society that it reaches more than the 5% who currently engage. We hear children coming out from a show saying, "This movie was lovely!" because live performance doesn't touch their world. It's cinema or TV that is familiar.

Why do you think there are such big differences in the way the partners develop audiences?
Our organisations are different in so many practical ways. A municipal theatre in the traditional mould doesn't do things in the same way as a small, contemporary theatre company. We did the Family Friendly audit but there was so much that wasn't relevant, for example our audiences don't care about parking for strollers because we don't do work for very small children. It seems so formal to give a theatre a certificate for having things like spaces for strollers – it's not how we do things. But there are also national cultural differences. We never think about strong language because in Germany most people don't care if someone swears on stage as long as there is an artistic reason for it.

Cathrin Blöss, PR

(Top)
KulturRucksack
Photo: Niklas Kammermeier

(Bottom)
Performance at
Theater Mummpitz

CULTURAL BACKPACK – A PROJECT FOR 1,500 STUDENTS

For the possible to emerge,
the impossible must always be tried.
– Hermann Hesse

Today, pupils often carry a backpack with them. In it are all of the things that they need to get through the day— school books, lunch boxes, athletic gear, smartphones … But – why not carry around culture and art?

Our aims
The concept "Cultural Backpack" comes from Scandinavia. In Norway, since 2000, there has been a national cultural mediation program for children and young people aged between 6 and 16 years. The aim of this program is to make professional art from different disciplines accessible and thus tangible for children from all social classes.

Why did we do it?
In 2009 Theater Mummpitz established the Nuremberg KulturRucksack (Cultural Backpack) together with the municipality. Since then, Theater Mummpitz acts as an organising cultural agency and mediating partner for the participating schools, cultural providers and sponsors.

The project started with 370 children from five elementary schools in Nuremberg. Since then, the number of pupils has steadily increased. In 2019 already more than 1,500 third graders from 18 elementary and special schools take part - that is a more than a third of all third graders in Nuremberg! Over the past ten years, a total of around 10,000 third graders have participated.

What happens?
At the beginning of each school year, all participating third grade classes receive a symbolic backpack filled with a selection from the varied cultural offerings of the city of Nuremberg.

The contents are theatre, museum, concert, exhibition, and dance. These cultural excursions to institutions of alternative culture (e.g. Theater Mummpitz) as well as high culture (e.g. the State Opera) are complemented by educational offers that are directly related to these events so that the pupils can process and deepen their experiences. They attend four different cultural excursions and four in-depth educational workshops each school year. For the children it is a great and lasting enrichment – experiencing art and culture and being able to actively engage themselves with the different art forms.

The outcome
The PISA study proves that education and future prospects of children in Germany are as closely as in no other country coupled to the income situation and the social class of the parents. We wanted to do something about that! Because "it is not enough to want, you have to do it" (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe).

The Cultural Backpack is based on the conviction that children have a right to culture and cultural education. With this project each child receives a high-quality, varied range of services, regardless of the preferences and abilities of individual teachers or schools. It allows access to art and culture and stimulating additions to everyday school life and reduces learning pressure.

The participating cultural providers are strengthened and additionally encouraged to develop a child-friendly educational supplement to their program and offer what ultimately comes to all children. However, the Cultural Backpack is not intended to be a replacement for aesthetic subjects taught by the school, but a supplement. Artists and cultural workers do not replace teachers but function in a purely artistic capacity!

Finances
- One cultural backpack for a child costs about 67 Euro a year
- A class set is financed with about 1,500 Euro
- A sponsorship for one school costs about 8,000 Euro
- The children, or rather their parents, contribute 10 Euro for the entire school year

Up to now, the funding of the Nuremberg Cultural Backpack has been ensured by the promotion of the city government and the support of foundations, sponsoring by the local economy as well as private persons.

Sustainability
Theater Mummpitz has to fight for funding every year again. Only when the State of Bavaria, together with the municipality of Nuremberg, finally realises that this project deserves a continuous promotion, the cultural backpack can and will be permanently anchored in our city.

Case Studies:
Engaging whole communities

TEATR FIGUR

Teatr Figur, Krakow, Poland is a contemporary theatre company, now twelve years old, whose mission it is to create original spectacles and artistic events, to seeks new forms of expression and to find modernity in traditional puppet techniques. Its main field of interest is shadow theatre, theatre pedagogy and social art. They receive project-based funding from the state.

MEET THE PARTNER

Why did you get involved in this project?
We've co-operated with theatres across the US and performed a lot in Asia but have never been involved in a project with this number of international partners. We were curious to see how these collaborations work. How do you communicate with seven partners, budget such a complex project and manage so many different ways of working? Although we performed at one of Theater Mummpitz's festivals, we didn't know the other partners so worried that our values would be different and they might not deliver what they promised. But it was worth the risk. At that point, we hadn't started touring Europe. Personal contacts are central and so the best way to become part of international networks is to meet and work with people. I Will Be Everything has given us that in abundance.

How do you approach audience development?
We've discovered we have been doing audience development since we were founded – but we didn't call it that. We did it because it was the only way to survive. We are a small organisation with very little public funding and no building of our own. Back then, we had no money for marketing so no-one knew about us. We needed to show people that our work was good but all we had was ourselves and our stories. So, we did workshops for teachers, for schoolchildren and for families so they could experience the way we worked. We did free circus workshops in the park on Saturdays. We built partnerships with cultural institutions who found our small size and flexibility helped them engage with people more effectively. We created a schools' programme, teaching science by exploring the principles of shadow puppetry. We built close collaborations with teachers in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, supporting them to engage students in new and exciting ways.
All these projects started with conversations about shared values. We find it difficult to develop audiences on tour to venues that don't share our values about connecting with people and places. It's simply impossible to build lasting relationships on our own in just a couple of visits each year.

What's the difference between audience development and public engagement?
We need to develop from our engagement with people, too. It's about equality. My job as a theatre maker is to find inspiration from others and inspire them in return. There's no point in making work that no-one wants to see. But there's also no point in making yet another show about Hansel and Gretel or focusing on curriculum texts. Our engagement with people reveals unknown stories that inspire fresh thoughts and fresh aesthetic impulses. Last year we created a show exploring patriotism with children in kindergarten. We asked them to imagine a princess in charge of her kingdom. What orders would she give? The children's perspective was unexpected. Their princesses were far from pink and sparkly. Some were mean and exploited their power. Others refused to tell other people what to do. Out of this came a great show we could never have imagined on our own.

Dagmara Zabska, Artistic Director

Teatr Figur's circus workshops in the park
Photo: Lukasz Baran

Teatr Figur in The Little Ones
Photo: Mateusz Wróbel

LOCAL ARTISTIC ACTIONS

Teatr Figur is a small, independent theatre in a big city, that has a dozen of other theatres and a huge number of cultural institutions. We are a shadow puppet theatre. We play in various spaces, also non-theatrical ones. We have hard times competing against public institutions, that attract audiences with famous names, beautiful spaces and targeted advertising.

As the only things we've got are ourselves and our willingness to do the hard work, we realised we have to turn them to our advantage.

Our aims
The project had two goals: First, let audiences know (and like) us. Second to establish a (social) space for joint, creative work. This gave birth to an idea to implement (shadow) theatre actions using windows of neighbouring houses, local institutions, vehicles etc. Some of those actions are targeted at families, some at local communities, schools, or students. Our job is to provide the working basis and to inspire our participants, but we give them a lot of freedom in developing their ideas. This is their spectacle not ours.

What happens?
Depending on a project, an audience can be a random group of people as when a play is staged in tram window to people standing at a tram stop. Sometimes we organise a big promotional campaign and pupils, neighbours and families with children gather under the house window where we play.

We give them the know how. Together with some families, we've done (among other things) the Christmas show this way. Inhabitants of several different neighbourhoods joined us to stage the "Shadow All Souls' Day". There are no set-in-stone limitations to how we might work during the project: time and scale of work, a level of sophistication of the show — it all depends on individual needs of any given group. When we work with families, and young children, we know there will be no more than two rehearsals. Third level students on the other hand may be able to stage an almost professional show.

The outcome
The project is very popular for several reasons:

- Shadow theatre can be spectacular, even with unexperienced participants and limited time for rehearsals
- Use of unexpected spaces intrigues people: theatre in a window, how come?
- Audiences do not gather to watch Teatr Figur but to meet their neighbours or friends. Getting to know Teatr Figur is a side benefit

What made it a success?
- Finding a form of expression that is attractive for participants and target audiences
- Finding interesting places. It does not have to be house windows. A forest, basement or a bus are equally good
- Keeping in mind: this is the participants' own show. You are there to assist them in its execution

NEW INTERNATIONAL ENCOUNTER (NIE)

New International Encounter (NIE), Cambridge UK is a theatre company based in Cambridge in the East of England. Its focus is on making work with and for children and young people and on bringing artists from different countries to work together. NIE was is the lead partner of I Will Be Everything. Since 2008 it has received 3-year regular funding from Arts Council England.

MEET THE PARTNER

Why did you initiate the project?
We believe that it's important for children to be part of an international project to develop an awareness of and empathy with children in other countries. This project connects them in the realm of imagination and story. The emergence of the far right and nationalism in Europe often means the opposite happens, that they view the 'other' without empathy – it makes me think of the popular comics I grew up with in which all Germans were caricatured as horrible and frightening.

We are an international company so we always want to share and explore co-creation with other groups who do it in the same way. We often work with six of the partners but only one at a time. We have never had them all in the same room together. We are all familiar with the process of co-creation but it's been a huge creative challenge to work out how to mix all the very different ideas that have emerged into a unified whole.

What is NIE's approach to public engagement?
We try to engage audiences who don't usually come to the theatre and give them a stake in the creative process. That's possible because we want to have a long-term relationship with people in Cambridge. We also work with our partners to develop audiences on tour. It's more difficult with our biennial Christmas show because our engagement is more fleeting.

We work in partnership with schools to engage children because it's the best mechanism that allows you to reach all children and because schools can act as a focal point for local families and community. We have been involved in projects where participants are targeted for their particular socio-economic background. This can make participants feel labelled. One child asked us, "Is it because I'm poor that I'm in this project." Projects in school time involve everyone, no question. The issue, though, is how you choose the schools you work with.

In that case, surely the responsibility for audience development rests with the schools?
Children have an entitlement to develop their cultural confidence and capabilities and be recognised as a member of civic society. This enables them to express their needs and opinions, question what others say and to call out what is fake or manipulative. The arts, and theatre in particular, are a great forum for exploring ideas and trying out alternatives and possibilities. Unfortunately, not all schools do this, and the curriculum does not always encourage this, so we aim to support schools to offer creative opportunities wherever we can.

What is the difference between audience development and public engagement?
Public engagement is less about selling tickets and more about engagement as a collaborative experience, giving people an emotional and intellectual stake in the art.

Michael Judge, Associate Director, and
Cat Moore, Executive Director

(Top left & bottom right)
New International Encounter in Top Secret at Alconbury Weald • Photos: Tim George

(Top right & bottom left)
New International Encounter in Tales from the Edge of Town • Photos: Claire Haigh

TALES FROM THE EDGE OF TOWN 2070

Our aims
With this project, we wanted to:

- Co-create with children so they take part in an authentic artistic experience and their stories are presented on a professional platform
- Work with schools/families who are poorly served by the rich cultural assets of Cambridge City because of geographic, economic or cultural barriers as evidenced by Cambridge having the title the UK's most unequal city
- Invite the young people, school and teachers into the wider IWBE project and how they might connect across Europe to other schools and artists
- Build a local network of schools who are interested in a follow-on project 'Tales from the Edge of Town', and to develop a longer-term local engagement strategy.

What happened?
This was our first engagement project with our local community, designed to raise awareness of NIE beyond the city's arts centre. NIE has a significant international profile but is less well known with the local Cambridge community and its schools. We made a 50-minute theatre show in a non-theatre space on the edge of town with seven schools' performances and two public performances. We co-created content through 16 creative workshops using animation, writing and drama.
The project deepened our engagement with schools by creating a project together, not just inviting them to attend a show. Several of their stories and many of their ideas and artwork were included in the show and one of their stories was included in the performance that emerged from the wider I Will Be Everything project.

We organised transport for schools to come to the performances and the shows for the wider community involved food, drink and time to come together.

We built on relationships begun through the performances in the community centre so we:

- Handed out feedback forms adding 69 people to our mailing list
- Gave three primary schools we had not worked with before free tickets to our Christmas show at Cambridge Junction
- Gave follow on support to the school which decided to use our Christmas show as the case study for their students' national exams
- Invited the audience to write down wishes on postcards. We mailed them back to them before the Cambridge performances of I Will Be Everything. This was to remind them about the project and prompt them to buy tickets for the show

The outcome
- 50 children co-created the artistic work
- 420 school children and 86 people from local families saw the show
- 70 school children saw our family Christmas show

"More than simply having their ideas presented back to them, the young people are given a chance to be players in it. Presenting this in a local community venue, provides access to an extraordinary creative experience in the most usual setting, an act of 'levelling' that illustrates how easily culture can feature in children's lives."
Akua Obeng-Frimpong,
Arts Development Officer, Cambridge City Council

"The show itself was brilliant, allowing students to fully engage in the action. The show involved unusual techniques and performance space giving us lots of areas for discussion within lesson time."
Natalie Evans – Head of Drama,
Trumpington Community College

"I watched the children's faces during all stages of the performance and they were enthralled. Many of them could recognise their ideas in what they saw. It was greatly enjoyed, but more importantly, will have a long-lasting effect, and even impact on their future direction, for many of them. Fantastic!"
Sally Haiselden – Headteacher,
Cherry Hinton Primary School

What made it a success?
- Communication: being clear with partners about the project; the invitation to the children, the 'give and gain' contract, the time frame and the updating as the project develops
- Artists with commitment and skill to work with children, and artists who are ready to value their ideas
- Ambitious but realistic targets – eg two public shows which were full rather than four which were half empty.
- Testing out ideas. Early on, we ran a couple of workshops on a Saturday morning which were not well-attended but which gave us a realistic insight into local public engagement

SALA BARATZA ARETOA

Sala Baratza Aretoa, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain is an independent venue for contemporary performing arts and culture. The space, which opened in 2013, is home to the different phases of the creative process: investigation, training, meeting-place, dissemination, debate, programming and production. It is funded by Eusko Jaurlaritza Gobierno Vasco (the Basque Government).

MEET THE PARTNER

Why did you get involved in I Will Be Everything?
We admired the importance the project gave to the voice of young people – it's not a gimmick but integral to the process without losing the artistic focus. It's a strong model for how we could engage with our communities. Being part of an international collaboration gives us experience of how other theatre models work, it gives us a road map. Theater Mummpitz could be us in 20 years' time.

We have only been open for two years and have not had the opportunity to develop our funding base. Being part of something outside our city gives us a chance to grow.

I Will Be Everything is our first venture into theatre for young people for a while. We have a specific organisation in the city dedicated to children's theatre that dominates access to schools. The municipal theatre also programmes work for children from September to May. We got involved because the project is about community engagement as much as the final theatre performances.

Our immediate neighbourhood has an interesting mix of recent arrivals and a more traditional working class, Basque-speaking community and quite a lot of gypsies. We want to support a more equal provision and embrace all of those cultural identities. We will now keep an open house for all the very local families who have been involved. It will take time so we are making a long-term commitment rather than a one-off gesture. I Will Be Everything is our springboard.

Audience Development or Public Engagement?
It depends who we are talking to. We are talking about people so we feel more comfortable with public engagement. But institutions are more familiar with the phrase audience development. An "audience" has a specific role – it's clear that they are expected to attend performances and to sit and listen. But we want to engage people in many different ways so programming the work on stage is just one aspect of what we do.

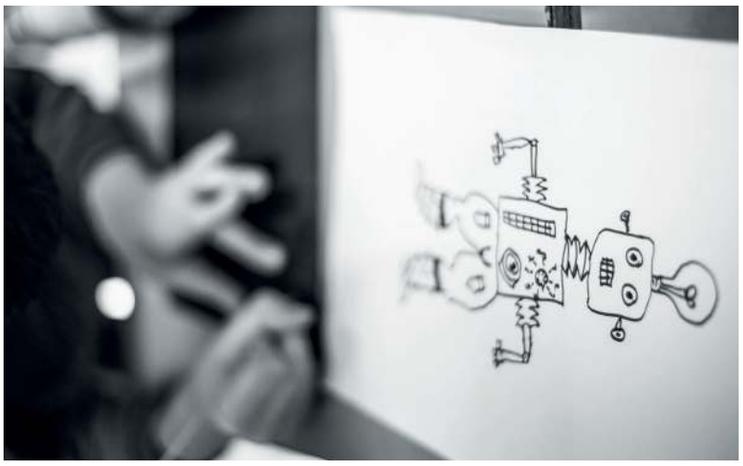
Why is it important?
We feel we have a public mission in return for public money. In France, education has a dialogue with art. That's not the case in Spain so cultural organisations step in. Sala Baratza has already had a big impact on the city. We are one of just two independent theatres in the Basque region and, as such, we are a platform for even smaller festivals and organisations and for individual artists. Our local media has always been very supportive, helping us with advocacy. They value Sala Baratza as an alternative culture to the mainstream.

Each one of our projects is about people within our neighbourhood, the city and the region. We provide a home for alternative culture of all sorts, welcoming culture that has nowhere else to go. Some of the projects that hire our venue don't reflect our own ethos but they bring people in who get to know us. Next time one of our own activities strike a chord, they will come along.

So we may not see audience development as our responsibility but it is our real and sincere desire.

Hannah Whelan, Artistic Director, Parasite Kolektiboa and Jemima Cano, Project Manager

I Will Be Everything workshop at Sala Baratza
Photo: Mateuzs Wróbel



I Will Be Everything workshop at Sala Baratza
Photo: Mateuzs Wróbel

AUDIENCE SURVEY

Our aims
We decided that we needed evidence of the impact we were having after the first two years of running our project. It is very complicated to know if things are going well, whether you are meeting people's interests and expectations when you are trapped in handling the everyday problems of a private culture centre.

Some people seemed enthusiastic after experiencing what Baratza could offer to them: a friendly place to approach performing arts, especially those who didn't have a place in the public theatre agenda, and also an opportunity to "taste" what creating could be like (through open rehearsals, post-show talks with the artists, etc). But, of course, some people just disappeared after the show or class and we didn't succeed in building that bond.

That's why we decided we require a system that collected everyone's opinion, no matter if they were close to the team or not, and that it should be like a map of the things that needed to be revised. We are achieving this by combining two things: an annual survey that is now much more sophisticated than it was at first and a new ticketing system that stores the data of everyone buying a ticket. We do so because the ticketing is not enough, we have "users" that don't buy a ticket, they come to a class, to a speech, to do a residency, etc.

How does this fit with what we do?
Since the very beginning, Baratza was meant to be a place open for people. It had to fulfil the needs of the artists behind the project (a place to create and show), but also the needs of artists living and working in the area and the needs of audiences. It was easier for us to check if the artists are happy: we have their contacts, we talk. But it can be very difficult when you do not know who is attending an event. This is why we have invested in getting information about them (too). It's part of what we want to be, useful and relevant.

What happened?
We made a simple survey to check the opinion of everyone included in our database. This database features both artists, companies, institutions, programmers and students, collaborators, spectators, followers. We combined this information with the analysis of our customer relationship management and ticketing service. We will do this once a year, combined with a system that collects data with every programming session (we have four weekend festivals every year).

The outcome
Some people came to congratulate us for just asking their opinion. We took their suggestions very seriously and we made some changes following their advice. We have built a small but very loyal community who know they are important to us and we care about their opinion and their well-being.

What made it a success?
- People say nowadays "sharing is caring", and apart from social networks, we really want our community to share our project, therefore we have to start by listening. Being humble, confessing you don't have all the answers and you need them, in our opinion, that's key
- Ask+Listen+Answer
- It's very important to ask for people's feedback, but then you need to take it into account. Maybe you can't do what they are proposing, but it's always good to explain why, and to show yourself permeable to what your audiences think, say and need

  "Thanks for giving life to the city"

  "I think you are doing great"

  "Go on, we need people like you"

  "Thanks for consulting."

  "Don't stop!..."

Case Studies: Engaging young people

ODSHERRED TEATER

Odsherred Theatre is a regional theatre subsidised by the local authorities of Odsherred and the Danish Arts Council. It is the aim of Odsherred Theatre to create stage art of high artistic quality that engages and challenges its audience, both artistically and in content. In its 22 years of existence our theatre has produced a remarkable line of very well received productions. The theatre has a newly negotiated 4 year contract, running 2021 – 2024.

MEET THE PARTNER

Why did you get involved in I Will Be Everything?
Since 2013 it has been a new and important aim for the theatre to strengthen the international perspective through projects pointing at the connection between the local and the global. The "Pim and Theo" project was first step in that direction. The show focuses on multiculturalism, freedom of speech and puts the question of the limits of tolerance in our European context into debate. It was a co-production between NIE (UK), Stiftelsen NIE (N), Korjaamo Culture Factory (SF) and Odsherred Theatre (DK). The show toured all over Europe since opening in DK in October 2013 and after its long run of nearly 150 shows, had its final show at the Assitej International Congress / "Cradle of Creativity" festival in Cape Town, SA, in May, 2017.

The international aim and work has lately furthermore resulted in the EU funded co-production, "I Will Be Everything", based on a groundbreaking, thorough workshop activity with European children, focusing on their views and expectations about the future. How will the world be in 50 years time?

Does that mean audience development was a new concept for you?
No, it's been present in discussions about theatre for a long time, particularly the concerns around reaching new target groups, but it seemed to be more about selling more tickets to more people. That is fine, but that can be achieved in many different ways, right? We have never been a big fan of the phrase "audience development". Somehow its seems to relate more to marketing, then to values, both artistic values and the once who are more related to political and democratic issues. The questions we often seem to relate on is more like: How can you establish a more enduring relationship with your audience? For us it's more about establishing a longer lasting relationship with people who get a sense of ownership of their local theatre. We want to engage with the society in which we work. We want to attract everybody, including people who don't care about theatre or culture in general. We want to be an open and democratic cultural institution.

Audience Development or Public Engagement?
Public engagement, for sure. As a significant, cultural institution in a remote area of Denmark, we find our commitment to and engagement in our community essential and it has become an integral part of how we operate, based more in values than commercially. This has an impact on our choice of projects. Our shows often reflect social and human issues of the area. At the present, productions are often based on interviews and integrating citizens of our community on different levels. The dialogue based research method, which is integral part of our international work, too, creates strong relations with our audience, not only on a short notice.

So far public engagement has been a success for us. With the project "WAY OUT THERE… – should I stay or should I go?" we redefined ourselves from being a nationally touring company. On our initiative the project

(Top left)
Odsherred Teater in Way Out There
Photo: Mie Neel

(Top right)
An audience at Odsherred Teater
Photo: Lars Wahl

(Bottom left & bottom right)
Local audiences and performers in Odsherred Teater's Byen bag skoven • Photo: Mie Neel

introduced interinstitutional co-operation. We collaborated with a museum, library, and in developing the project, included a large number of young people of the area. After a year in process it culminated in a hybrid of performance and exhibition/installation about the challenges of growing up in a remote and socially challenged area. With this kind of project and activity, our theatre has reached new target groups that seldom are seen as a theatre audience. It has created a relation with our area on many levels, citizens, political authorities, business community, a o.

Odsherred Theatre is today established as much more than just being "a theatre". It's role in the community as a unifying factor, has processed a positioning of local culture as an essential tool and force on many levels

Simon Vagn Jensen, Artistic Director &
Henrik Ipsen (Project Manager for IWBE)

WAY OUT THERE – SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Our aims
The project is a cross-cultural collaboration between three cultural institutions in Odsherred to create a combined exhibition and performance based on the involvement of young people in Odsherred. It aimed to be a catalyst for the young people's thoughts, dreams and expectations of life generally and in Odsherred specifically. The project wanted to develop an interactive process in which the young people experience honest interest and respect for their views on life, translated into an artistic production of high quality.

The cultural institutions hoped that young people in Odsherred would see themselves as part of a context, engage as citizens and get involved in the future of the area in both the short and long term.

The project aimed to engage young people with professional art and culture of high quality and be involved in the artistic process.

What happened?
We collected documentary material from a diverse range of young people through interviews, facebook groups, blogs, focus groups, and a young anthropologist who lined up with different youth groups. We devised a report on the material to draw a picture of young people's dreams and visions.

We will continue to have a dialogue with the youth of the area in the future and have developed models for involving young people in the development of the institutions' offer for young people.

The cultural institutions in Odsherred gained experience of interdisciplinary collaborations, where their professional competencies are challenged and developed in collaboration with partners such as high school, schools and the media etc.

Evaluation was through focus group interviews, online dialogue, and a debate involving young people.

Public engagement catalogue

LOW INCOME FAMILIES

KULTURTICKET

Partner: Theater Mummpitz

Aim: To reach out to people with not much money who receive free tickets when registered with the “KulturTicket” organisation

People: People with low incomes

We provide 3 x 2 tickets for nearly every Sunday afternoon show. They are distributed to citizens registered with KulturTicket, which was founded by a non-profit organisation. If the ticket holders don’t show up without notice they will be banned from further support.

http://www.buergerstiftung-nuernberg.de/kulturticket/das-kulturticket.html

FAMILIES

CREATIVE FAMILY GATHERINGS

Partner: Sala Baratza

Aim: To meet with our kids and other creative families in order to promote creative leisure, and encourage our kids (and ourselves) to propose and develop an artistic activity

People: Families (most of them mothers, but not all) with their kids aged from 3 to 8 years

We organised creative family gatherings during one season September to June to help families to do something creative, fun, and indoors, with other children and adults with whom they share values and interests.

WORKSHOPS FOR FAMILIES

Partner: Teatr Figur Kraków

Aim: To meet people, let them meet us, build the relation with the audience, make them curious about the work

People: Families with kids 4 to 7 years old

Twice a month we make workshops for families including shadow theatre, paper theatre, puppets, storytelling etc. Parents engage in the workshops with their children.

This page:

[Left]
Audience members at a Teatr Figur performance

[Right]
I Will Be Everything workshop at Sala Baratza • Photo: Mateuzs Wróbel

Opposite page:

[Left & Right]
SpyNet performance by New International Encounter

FAMILIES (CONT.)

OPEN DAYS

Partner: Nordland Teater

Aim: To open up the theatre and show people behind the scenes

People: Anyone, especially families

One day every year we open up the theatre to the public. It's free and there are sneak peeks at upcoming shows, tours of the theatre, technical workshops, prop-making and a children's show. The café is open. Most of our team are there, showing what they do all year round.

OLDER PEOPLE

HISTORIEN OM EN SANG (HISTORY IN A SONG)

Partner: Odsherred Teater

Aim: To launch Odsherred Municipality's new aging strategy and spark a debate about loneliness, dementia and losing a life companion

People: Isolated older people aged 80+

Our resident playwright worked with home helps to get in touch with their clients and interview them about their lives. She always ends the conversation by asking about their favourite song. The result is a cabaret linking the stories and songs which has toured to more than 80 residential care homes, adult education centres and churches throughout Denmark.

MIXING GENERATIONS

SPYNET

Partner: New International Encounter

Aim: To make a show for libraries in rural Cambridgeshire

People: Young people (13+) from youth clubs and older people with stories to tell about spying and working on Cambridgeshire's military airbases

An intergenerational co-creation project with a show that tours to libraries in geographic areas where there is little other cultural provision. The story tells of the Cambridge connection to spying and links the heritage of the military airbases with the new world of cyber surveillance. The show is free and aims to attract casual users of the Library who may never have visited a theatre. The artistic form mixes audio (headphones), visual (exhibition) and live action (professional actors); the library becomes a site-specific performance space.

https://www.nie-theatre.com/projects/spynet/

RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES AND KINDERGARTEN TOURS

Partner: Nordland Teater

Aim: To make theatre accessible to everyone

People: Older people in care homes and under 5s in kindergartens

We create a show and tour our region visiting care homes and kindergartens for free or very low cost.

Sala Baratza's Laboratorio de Experimentación Escénica
Photo: Iñigo Perez Picazo

MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

LAB

Partner: Sala Baratza

Aim: To engage newly arrived migrants with professional theatre

People: Immigrants or people with no means

Through a local NGO we offer one or two places for migrants with low or no incomes to join for free our "Laboratorio de Experimentación Escénica" (Stage Experimentation Lab) that runs three mornings a week. They become part of this lab for a year to play, perform, learn, train and propose projects in both theatre and contemporary dance.

YOUNG ARTISTS

SPLEEN*TRIEB

Partner: TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz

Aim: To create a platform for young / aspiring artists to realise ideas

People: Young people interested in creating their own theatre experiments

Spleen*trieb is a participatory project which is part of the biennial festival spleen*graz. It gives local young artists the chance to create small, interdisciplinary theatre experiments and present them at an international festival. Artists and groups participating in spleen*graz are supported financially and advised/accompanied artistically, but are generally free to create any project they want. Over the years, spleen*trieb has helped creating a strong network of young theatre groups and artists.

NT UNG (NT YOUTH)

Partner: Nordland Teater

Aim: To create tomorrow's actors, technicians and theatre lovers and get their families engaged in our theatre

People: Young people aged 14 to 20

Nordland Teater's own youth theatre trains actors once a week and more often close to shows. It presents two or three shows a year in the theatre.

TaO! in Zwischen den Bäumen
Photo: Clemens Nestroy

SCHOOLS WITH CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

WUNDERTÜTE (SURPRISE BAG)

Partner: TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz

Aim: To provide financial support for pupils, thus reaching out to diverse audiences

People: Teachers and their pupils aged 6-13, especially those from a low-income context

Based on the original idea of the "KulturRucksack" (see above), the project is organised and funded by the Graz City Council. The project was started in 2014 and consists of reduced tickets for pupils (12€ each) for a package of 3 cultural offers (theatre, opera, concert, film, museums etc) and accompanying workshops for each. One civil servant is in charge of counselling and booking the different offers as a link between teachers and cultural institutions.

MACHT|SCHULE|THEATER

Partner: TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz

Aim: To create theatre productions in close collaboration with teachers and pupils

People: Teachers and pupils and their audience

Macht|Schule|Theater was a project funded by the Austrian national government for several years. The idea behind the project was to group theatre institutions with two different schools in order to create performances involving as many pupils as possible on stage as well as behind the scenes. Some of these collaborations have created a strong bond between TaO! and the schools involved.

PARTNER SCHOOLS

Partner: TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz

Aim: To create close relationships with schools

People: Teachers and pupils

Partner schools are offered reduced group ticket prices and a free workshop when they make eight group reservations throughout the year (eg two classes visiting four shows or eight classes visiting one show).

TEACHERS

PROBESICHTEN

Partner: Theater Mummpitz

Aim: To tie teachers / educators to our theatre in a more casual way

People: Teachers / educators

For every new show we invite them to a main rehearsal a few days before the premiere and listen to their opinion afterwards (with free wine and snacks)

DENKWERKSTATT (THINK TANK)

Partner: TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz

Aim: To create an engaging dialogue between theatre and school

People: Teachers

We initiated this project a year ago when we realised that although we had talked and thought about new offers for schools quite a bit throughout the years, we still felt that we had lost touch with the actual reality of what schools and staff need and want. The idea behind this think tank is to involve teachers and draw on their expertise in a discussion about the tension between artistic visions and educational goals.

FREE EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL FOR SCHOOLS

Partner: Nordland Teater

Aim: To get a wider range of schools interested in our shows, make them easier to access and create a deeper understanding among teachers and their students

People: Schools and educational institutions

We create and give away educational material related to the shows we produce.

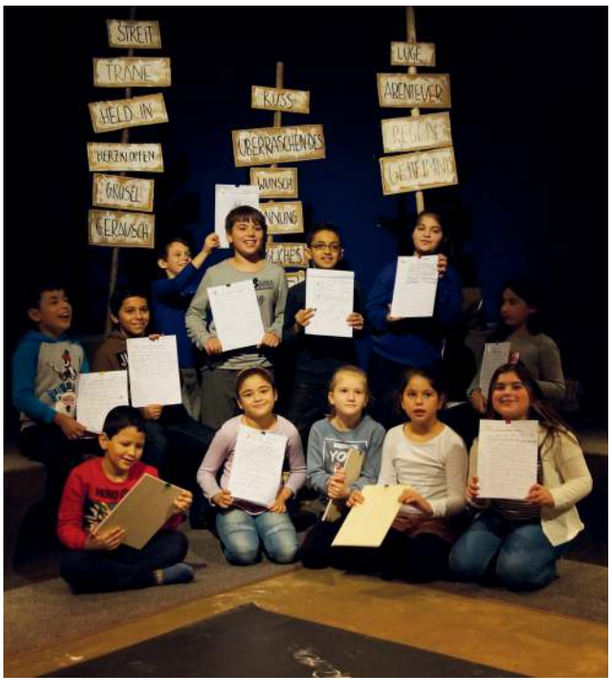
THEATERPÄDAGOGISCHER LEHRGANG (TRAINING FOR THEATRE PEDAGOGY)

Partner: TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz

Aim: To give teachers the tools to use methods of theatre pedagogy in their everyday work

People: Teachers interested in theatre pedagogy

This two-year training course is organised by the local university for teacher education in cooperation with TaO!. It aims at supplying teachers with theoretical input and practical experiences which they can use in their classrooms. Throughout the course, teachers learn about methods of theatre pedagogy as well as theatre and directing concepts and get the chance to participate in productions as actors and directors. Over the years, the project has created a pool of multipliers for the Graz theatre scene.



TEACHERS (CONT.)

CENTRUM EDUKACJI TEATRALNEJ (THE CENTRE FOR THEATRE EDUCATION)

Partner: Teatr Figur Kraków

Aim: To find a common field of interests with schools and preschools. To meet teachers and let them meet us and find out about our skills and offer. To show teachers theatre.

People: Early years and primary school teachers

We organise a series of different kind of workshops and seminars for preschool and elementary school teachers in Krakow and Małopolska. These include shadow theatre, paper theatre, “how to make a show with kids” and how to use theatre tools in education.

Previous page:

Participants in the Theaterpädagogischer Lehrgang (2017) working creatively with children • Photo: Clemens Nestroy

This page:

(Left)
Workshop at Teatr Figur

(Right)
Young Theater Mummpitz participants

RURAL AND SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES

THEATRE SUMMER CAMP

Partner: Teatr Figur Kraków

Aim: To build relationships with new partners to make theatre interesting and friendly

People: Children 6 to 13 years old

Each year we organise at least two weeks of summer camps in culture houses, libraries and schools in smaller towns and villages in Małopolska. The children take part in workshops (set design, acting, music and promotion), six hours a day, six days a week. At the end we all make a show. In 2018, we had five summer camps.

FREE TRANSPORT

Partner: Theater Mummpitz

Aim: To make visiting our theatre easy and reasonably priced

People: Families, schools and kindergartens from the city and the region

All our tickets include the complimentary use of the public transportation in a radius of about 50 km

Participants in New International Encounter's Top Secret at Alconbury Weald
Photo: Tim George

RURAL AND SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES (CONT.)

BYEN BAG SKOVEN (THE CITY BEHIND THE FOREST)

Partner: Odsherred Teater

Aim: To involve citizens in telling the story of some of the residents of the old psychiatric hospital, separated from the town by a forest

People: Local residents

This site-specific, total theatre production involved over 100 citizens starting in some of their homes, workplaces, the public swimming pool and supermarket. They tell part of their life story, but then the audience takes over, choosing the trajectory of their host's life. SMS text messages, letters and audio recordings from their hosts add to the story, as they wander around the empty buildings of the psychiatric hospital.

WELCOME TO TWIN PEAKS

Partner: Odsherred Teater

Aim: To connect the theatre firmly to its people and place and put it on Denmark's cultural map.

People: Local residents

Ten citizens tell audiences the stories of their lives. Some of them, as they drive them around the area in cars, and some, visiting them in their homes. In his double bed, in his parents' home, a young man describes growing up in the countryside and finding his identity. In a small shop, selling Chinese handicraft, the owners tell of the ghosts they have been trying to get rid of for years. In the pub, the Greek landlord tells the story of how he ended up in Denmark.

THEATRE MAKER

Partner: Nordland Teater

Aim: To connect with small communities and co-create theatre and music with their residents

People: Amateur theatre groups, choirs, schools and institutions

Anyone who needs help from a professional theatre maker can apply to get help in making shows, leading workshops and supporting volunteers.

TOP SECRET AT ALCONBURY WEALD

Partner: New International Encounter

Aim: To increase cultural engagement by children and young people in rural communities that are under-served by cultural offers

People: Targeted young people from a low income or disadvantaged background who have had limited access or engagement with the arts

A six-month programme of workshops with a core group of young people (20) from local youth clubs, with a focus on skills development. Through the workshops with professional artists they learned animation, set design, film-making, direction, production, lighting and live performance. They worked together to create a walk-about theatre show for families and local communities in a former nuclear bunker.

https://www.nie-theatre.com/projects/top-secret-at-alconbury-weald/

I Will Be Everything workshop at Sala Baratza
Photo: Mateuzs Wróbel

BUILDING CONFIDENCE TO ENGAGE WITH UNFAMILIAR WORK

ATARI (WE WANT EVERYTHING)

Partner: Sala Baratza

Aim: To connect with new audiences through another type of event, where music, expositions and short micro-theatre performances for a very cheap entrance become more a party than a show

People: Mainly young people, university students, artists of other fields and their friends, culture vultures and so on

The first Friday of every month, in the hall of the venue, a young artist/actress/creator holds ATARI where a short concert and a micro-theatre show coincide with the opening of an exhibition that will be on the auditorium walls for one month. It starts around 7.30-8pm until 11pm and the bar is open throughout.

SATURDAY CAFÉ

Partner: Nordland Teater

Aim: To get more people into the theatre by making it more familiar and less scary

People: Local residents

Every third or fourth Saturday we open our café and present a 20-30 minute performance. It could be singing, dancing, storytelling or a short play. It's a low-key offer at a very low price which includes coffee and a snack with special treats for children.

CONVERSATIONS AFTER SHOWS

Partner: Sala Baratza

Aim: To make the artist, the show and the proposal more understandable, to humanise the artist

People: Contemporary audiences, mostly youngish or related to arts/visual arts/design, engaged in courses, etc

We organise discussion sessions with the company that has just performed after most performance-based shows, mainly premières and work-in-progress.

OPEN REHEARSALS

Partner: Sala Baratza

Aim: To invite audiences to a real rehearsal (with some stops on the way with people working and talking to them) when the show isn't finished

People: Contemporary audiences, mostly youngish, often related to arts/visual arts/design, or related to the training happening in the same venue, professionals, etc

An open rehearsal is a session in which, with a free entrance, our community is invited to see a rehearsal of an unfinished piece of work, usually with an explanation, an extract, or a talk by the creator/artist.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

CO-OPERATIONS

Partner: TaO! – Theater am Ortweinplatz

Aim: To create artistic networks and broaden the audience pool

People: Institutions interested in artistic cooperation/ collaboration and their potential audience

Over the years, TaO! has cooperated with a variety of institutions in different projects. Cooperations help us not only to exchange ideas and collaborate on an artistic level, but also to reach out to new audiences. Recent examples include:

- Zwischen den Bäumen (Between the Trees), an open air performance created by TaO!, presented at "La Strada", a popular annual street theatre festival
- Fremd (Foreign / Strange), a TaO! performance developed with people from various social and ethnic backgrounds, initiated by Megaphon, a Graz street newspaper mainly supporting refugees

UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES

AUDIENCE SURVEY

Partner: Theater Mummpitz

Aim: To learn more about our audiences

People: All visitors to our weekend family performances (about 40 shows per season)

The survey was carried out between October 2018 and May 2019.

Diverse audience attending Zwischen den Bäumen (2016), a co-operation between TaO! and La Strada
Photo: Clemens Nestroy

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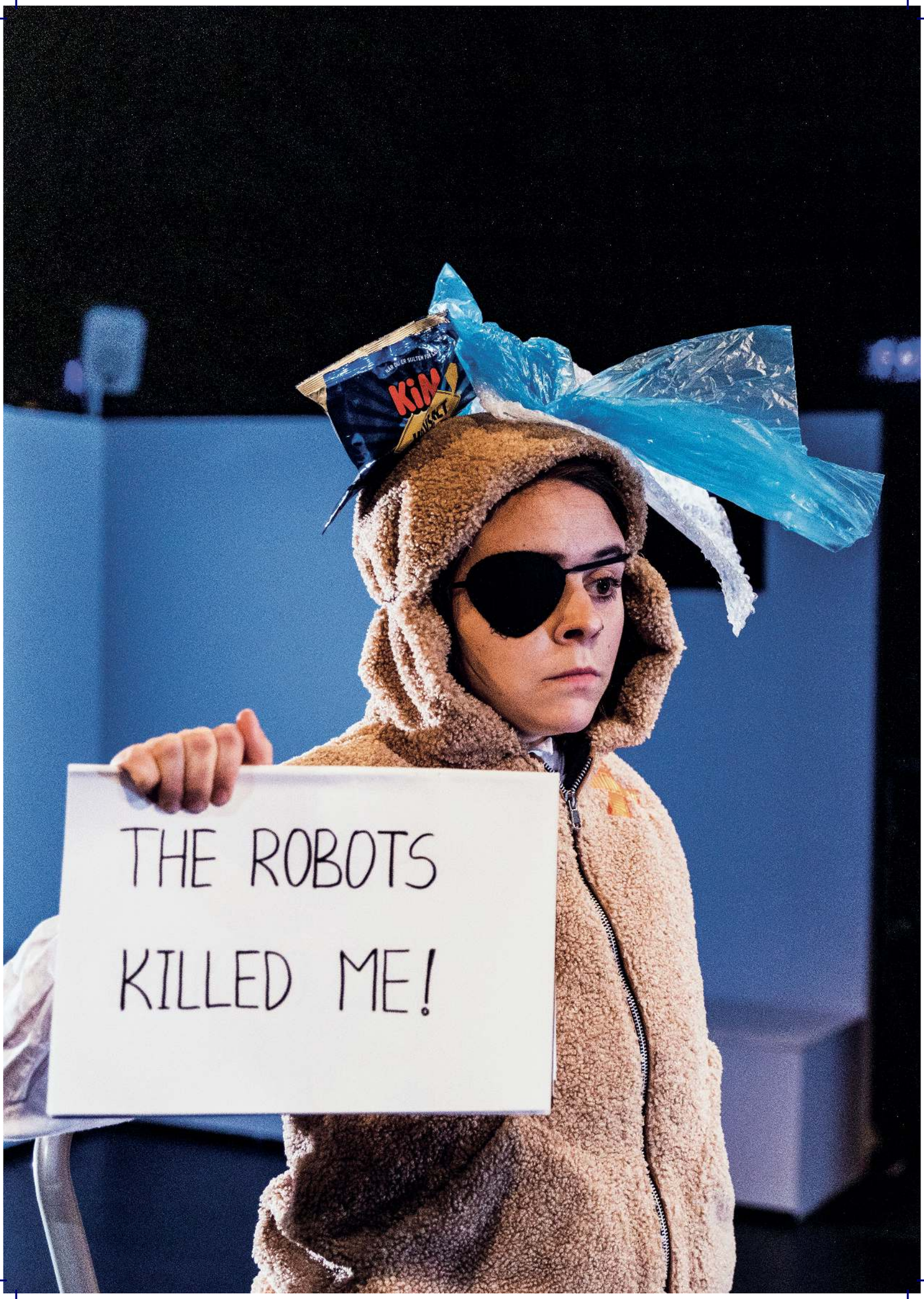
KiM
THE ROBOTS
KILLED ME!