

Centre
Stage

+ 10

Chapter 4: Youth Theatre Practice and Programming

Introduction

The youth theatre movement has grown to encompass a wide variety of youth theatre practice and programming. This section of the report is explored under the following headings:

- 4.1 Youth Theatre Practice
- 4.2 Programming
- 4.3 Youth Theatre Activities
- 4.4 Other Elements of Practice

4.1 Youth Theatre Practice

Youth theatre practice is explored under the following headings:

- 4.1.1 Ethos of Youth Theatre
- 4.1.2 Quality in Youth Theatre Practice
- 4.1.3 Ingredients of a Quality Programme

4.1.1 Ethos of Youth Theatre

In Ireland, a wide variety of youth theatre practice exists. This diversity has increased since *Centre Stage* as youth theatres have developed new models, new founding partners and new parent organisations. Some youth theatres have also changed in size and structure as they continue to increase their number of sub-groups to engage a wider age range. The traditional model of one youth theatre group working with a small group of leaders has developed in some cases to multi-centre and multi-group youth theatres where young people may participate in different workshops or outreach projects and come together only for special projects, events or performances.

All youth theatres provide access to drama and theatre for young people. Aside from this common aim, however, youth theatres express different reasons for their existence. Some youth theatres describe their purpose as providing access to quality drama and theatre processes. The creation of theatre and drama with young people is the primary aim of these youth theatres and leaders may see the personal and social development outcomes as positive by-products of their work. Some youth theatres concentrate their efforts on theatre processes that build to performance while other youth theatres focus on drama processes within a workshop setting. The vast majority of youth theatres adhere to the principles and practices of youth work but not all youth theatres would state these as their primary aims. Some youth theatres are committed to providing personal and social development for their members and use theatre as the tool to achieve this end.

Youth theatres may look different and vary in terms of their purpose but there are some common principles and practices that link the youth theatre sector and define its ethos. Youth theatre leaders and stakeholders were asked to describe what they believed was the ethos of Irish youth theatre. The research project defined ethos as the ‘fundamental values that are specific to the youth theatre movement and inform youth theatre practice’.

Youth theatre leaders and stakeholders suggested the following:

- **Personal, social and artistic development**

Though youth theatres may differ about the primary aim of their youth theatre, they all believed that youth theatre contributed to the personal, social and artistic development of their members. A youth theatre leader from Co. Sligo believed that youth theatre adhered to two different value systems, that of quality theatre and that of quality youth work:

“The strongest point for me about our ethos up here is that you’ve got the value system that’s attached to quality youth work and best practice in youth work, which is important because developmentally it’s their creative needs, child protection concerns, their confidence- all that. And then you’ve got another value system, which is the theatrical value system which is about producing good work and mixing with professionals who are of a high quality and building a skills base, you know? What I’ve found through my experience in youth theatre is that sometimes one of these is used as an excuse for bad practice in the other. I feel here that those two systems complement each other very well and that the only way you can

run a good youth theatre is by saying we're not going to slip on either of those things. They're both equally important. We don't have to compromise on either of them. We can invest in both of those fields. I think that's the unique challenge of youth theatre." – Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Leader

- **A Unique Form of Theatre**

Youth theatre as an artform values the unique relationship between young people and theatre.

"The role of youth theatre or young people's theatre in the entirety of theatre in Ireland is critical. It's hugely important. We need it. We need to hear it, hear about it and go to it. There's good stuff out there, very good stuff going on and I think you can do things in youth theatre that you can't do later on... scale, size but more importantly, themes. You can explore with young people the themes and concerns of their lives in a way you can't with 40 or 50 year olds. There are things that are very distinctive about youth theatre that need to be acknowledged really." – Head of Young People, Children and Education, The Arts Council

- **Young Person Centred**

The work of the youth theatre is designed for the particular group of young people who are in membership of a youth theatre. The youth theatre process starts from the particular personalities, interests and needs of the young people who are involved.

"I suppose one thing that would make youth theatre different from other drama opportunities is just putting the young person at the centre of it and making the work about them. It isn't just about getting a script and being on stage, it's about self-development and self-exploration as well." – Arts Education and Development Co-ordinator, Co. Roscommon Arts Office

- **The Ensemble Experience**

The ensemble approach is a fundamental principle of youth theatre practice. Ensemble techniques such as group improvisation and devising are commonplace. The youth theatre members work together as a company over a long period of time, working together to establish trust, making decisions collaboratively, sharing ownership of the artistic work and taking collective responsibility. Youth theatres still value the individual voice within the ensemble and provide for individual growth within an ensemble setting.

"If I was given the opportunity to have a main part then perhaps I would excel and perhaps I would prove that I am a good actor, you know? Without having the opportunity then you'll never know about that one particular person. And they will always be left in the background, which isn't fair because youth theatre is about community. It's about friends. It's about being involved. It's about being a part of something instead of being in the back." – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

- **Opportunities for Young People to Take Part in Workshops**

Youth theatres provide opportunities for young people to take part in workshops and process drama experiences that explore skills and themes that are relevant to the youth theatre members.

- **Opportunities for Young People to Take Part in Performance**

Youth theatres provide opportunities for young people to take part in performance. The type of performance situation may vary and is defined by the profile, experience and history of the young people. Youth theatre values the processes involved in theatre production and the processes involved in the drama workshop.

- **High Artistic Standards and Production Values**

Youth theatres aspire to the highest artistic standards and production values that their resources will allow. Creating the highest artistic standards for young people encourages respect for the work and the aspirations of the young people involved.

- **Voluntary Participation and Informal Settings**

Youth theatres occur in informal settings where young people participate on a voluntary basis. Young people make an active choice to participate and commit to their youth theatre.

"I think the biggest core value is probably voluntary participation. People are there because they want to be there." – Youth Work Services Manger, CYC

- **Opportunities for Progression**

Youth theatre provides opportunities for continuous development through new experiences and challenges. Youth theatre is clear about its capacity to deliver further training opportunities so that progression pathways are clear to youth theatre members.

- **Inclusion**

Youth theatre welcomes all young people, regardless of ability or background and promotes a varied demographic in youth theatre membership.

“We’re all different... it doesn’t really make a difference to people here. Nobody here is judged on “Oh, look you’re this”. Everybody’s got some purpose. We’re all doing drama. It’s level. Everybody, you know, gets on no matter whether they’re from: different groups, different schools, ages... it doesn’t make that much difference.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

- **Productive Fun**

Youth theatre is characterised by an informal approach to work and relationships that promotes an enjoyment of theatre and is fun for young people. However, youth theatres also require discipline and hard work from their members and have high expectations of young people and what they can achieve.

*“It’s important to have fun but you have to do proper stuff as well... productive fun.”
– Portlaoise Youth Theatre Member*

- **Youth Participation**

Within an ensemble environment there is a unique power sharing balance between leaders and members. Youth theatres involve young people in the decision-making aspects of the organisation in different ways. The majority of youth theatres involve young people in decisions about which projects and productions to pursue and some youth theatres involve young people in decisions on the running of the organisation.

- **Respect**

A mutual respect exists between members and leaders and their working relationship is collaborative. It may be the first time in the young person’s life where they have a relationship with an adult that is not authoritative by nature, such as with a teacher or a parent.

*“I think respect is a core value. Respect for the young people, the stage they’re at, their imagination, their ability – you know, you can name all those kinds of things about them. I think I’ve rarely seen a situation where a youth theatre leader isn’t respected by the youth theatre they’re working with. So there’s kind of a mutual respect even though the age gap might be quite considerable. The person is treated with respect.”
– Artistic Director, Graffiti Theatre Company*

CASE STUDY: Roscommon County Youth Theatre – ethos

‘As a youth theatre, we advocate a way of working which puts the integrity of the young people at the centre of a process valuing both exploration and artistic excellence. Our approach to youth drama differs from professional or amateur theatre in that youth drama is not about producing plays for people to see. The process involved is considered to be of equal if not greater importance than the finished product. Youth drama encourages the development of the whole person, and uses a range of drama methods to respond to the personal needs of the participants involved and contributes towards the development of the creative, physical, social and intuitive intelligences in its participants.’

– Roscommon County Youth Theatre Policy Statement

4.1.2 Quality in Youth Theatre Practice

Youth theatres have been working towards ideas of best practice for many years. Youth theatre leaders, members and stakeholders have debated concepts of best practice in relation to welfare, ways of working with young people and the planning and delivery of youth theatre activities. The emergence of ‘quality’ benchmarking in the youth work and arts sectors has recently influenced this debate as funders from both sectors express an interest in funding ‘quality’ youth theatres.

All youth theatre leaders and stakeholders were asked in interviews what the indicators of quality were in youth theatre practice. Most youth theatre leaders and stakeholders said they would look first to the quality of theatre production. For a few leaders, production standards were how they rated the overall quality of a youth theatre but for many leaders it was simply the easiest outward indicator of some of the work taking place in the youth theatre. Some youth theatre leaders commented that if you could feel an honest connection between the young people on stage, their actions and the content of the play it was a sign of a good rehearsal process and therefore a quality youth theatre. Others felt that a clear sense of ownership was also an indicator of quality.

Most youth theatre leaders felt that productions needed to be viewed in context, with an understanding of the journey the group has been on and an appreciation of the process. For these youth theatre leaders, a quality youth theatre meant a quality journey for the group and each individual young person. One youth theatre member believed that all youth theatres should be creating 'quality' productions but that this standard could vary between youth theatres. She said that quality should be described as:

“The highest standard you can possibly get with your own resources, talents and what you can do in the time.”

Other youth theatre members felt patronised by the idea that their productions would be judged by different standards to professional theatre and believed that their work should be seen objectively, without any need to understand the journey behind the production.

Youth theatre leaders felt that quality could be judged by the skill level, experience and qualifications of the leaders. They believed that 'quality' staff led to a 'quality youth theatre'. Others believed that quality should be judged on the participation levels of the young people and their commitment to the youth theatre. Other leaders mentioned the individual stories of young people who had participated in the youth theatre and felt that these individual stories of growth and development signified quality practice.

When youth theatre leaders were asked what they would draw attention to in their own youth theatre to demonstrate the 'quality' of their work, nearly all leaders said they would invite people to witness workshops or rehearsals. They felt that these elements of practice would help an external person to understand the value of their work and its approaches. Leaders believed that an external person should talk directly to the young people about their views and then finally, if there was time, see a production. It appeared that those involved in youth theatre would often judge each other in terms of production standards but would like to be assessed in a different way themselves.

4.1.3 Ingredients of a Quality Programme

Youth theatre leaders and members around the country were asked what they felt should be included in a quality youth theatre programme. A large number of youth theatre leaders and members described the existing programme of their youth theatre. This could indicate a high level of satisfaction with the quality of their programme (some youth theatres have been developing and refining their youth theatre programme for 20 or 30 years). The suggestions of youth theatre members were based very much on their own personal youth theatre experiences and included activities they had prior experience of and had enjoyed. The aspirations of the youth theatre members who participated in the Members Workshops were very much dictated by the resources, programming and history of their own youth theatre. The responses of leaders and members could also indicate a lack of communication between youth theatres and a lack of knowledge about the types of activities other youth theatres are undertaking.

The majority of youth theatres felt that they were delivering a quality programme that reflected the resources and policies of their youth theatre. Some were aware that levels of resources and funding were preventing them from providing the type of programme they aspired to. Where youth theatre leaders described 'quality' programmes that were more developed than their existing programme it was always with the understanding that it would require increased levels of funding, staffing and time.

Youth theatre leaders described programmes that were in keeping with their existing ethos and value system. Youth theatre leaders added activities to their established annual programme such as festivals, increased numbers of skills workshops and different types of performance opportunities and projects. One or two youth theatres mentioned that if resources were unlimited they would shift towards a full-time youth theatre focused on 'training' that would provide a comprehensive weekly programme of workshops and a number of performance opportunities for members to build towards. Other youth theatre leaders believed that increased opportunities for the members to socialise amongst themselves and with other young people contributed to a quality programme.

Overall, leaders believed that a quality youth theatre programme needed to be planned in advance so that workshops, rehearsal and production processes and other activities connected together to provide a well-rounded experience. Leaders believed that first and foremost, a good programme should be designed to suit the profile and experience of each individual group and should challenge youth theatre members of all levels of ability. This indicates that a 'quality' programme needs to be flexible and adapt to the changing dynamic, skill levels and interests of each group of members. Leaders mentioned that a good youth theatre programme establishes a way of working that enables members to feel that they have ownership of their own work. Some leaders believed this meant creating structures that formally recognise the importance of members' opinions and ideas. Both members and leaders believed that a quality programme would require the commitment and focus of youth theatre members but they also believed that it should create an atmosphere of fun and celebration that promotes an enjoyment of youth theatre.

Youth theatre leaders and members made some specific recommendations of what should be included in a quality programme:

- **A QUALITY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME**

- A programme of regular workshops that offer a range of skills on all aspects of theatre designed specifically to suit the profile and experiences of the group;
- A workshop programme designed to build self-confidence and the group dynamic, focusing on group development as well as personal development;
- A special introduction programme for new members such as a 10-week induction programme for large groups of new members or a series of core skills/group development workshops for all members at the beginning of a youth theatre year;
- Leaders felt that the programme should include workshops that are planned and delivered effectively and evaluated with the young people;
- Leaders and members thought workshops should cover basic youth theatre skills such as improvisation and devising but also deliver specialised training in voice, movement, dance and music or advanced skills workshops in different actor training styles such as Stanislavski or Suzuki;
- Leaders felt that the programme should include specialised workshops in theatre crafts and technical theatre such as costume and lighting and sound design/operation;
- Some youth theatre leaders believed that a variety of stimuli should be used in the workshops such as a variety of texts, images and music.

- **QUALITY PRODUCTIONS AND THEATRE EXPERIENCES**

- A quality programme should include a wide variety of drama and theatre experiences;
- Leaders believed that youth theatres should expose members to contemporary theatre (new directors, new writing, new companies, other youth theatres);
- Leaders and members thought that a good programme should include at least one performance opportunity for all members. Some leaders felt the programme should include one major and one minor production a year, others described a programme based on performance opportunities in selected categories of production. For example one production-focused youth theatre with a large membership felt the programme should include a classic production (Shakespeare, Marlowe, Greek theatre, etc.), a modern production (Wilde, Shaw, Ibsen), two or three new plays written for young people to perform and about three productions devised by the members and based on issues that they feel are relevant;
- In general, leaders and members believed that there should be a balance of devised work, scripted work, writing by members, physical theatre, site specific and issue-based theatre;
- Leaders mentioned the importance of encouraging members to write themselves and some mentioned providing opportunities for members to write sketches or one-acts that could be performed within workshops or one-act festivals;
- Leaders and some members were also keen to include one-act festivals that provided young people with the opportunity to direct, write, produce and act in their own short pieces of theatre;
- Leaders and members felt that there should be high production standards within a quality youth theatre, assisted by the employment of professional directors, designers and production staff;
- A few youth theatre leaders felt that devising over a long period of time with a writer in residence would contribute to a quality programme.

• QUALITY OF STAFF

- Youth theatre leaders felt strongly that only ‘quality’ staff could deliver a ‘quality’ programme;
- The programme should be led by youth theatre leaders with a high level of skill and experience in theatre and work with young people;
- The programme should be led by more than one youth theatre leader to allow members to experience a variety of approaches. However, consistency in leaders is also important to allow the rapport between leaders and members to develop and for the ensemble to create a way of working together;
- A variety of freelance facilitators, directors and other artists should be invited to work with the group to provide variety and increase skill levels and production standards;
- The youth theatre should support and promote senior members and one youth theatre leader suggested that these ‘young leaders’ should be able to do work-experience with other youth theatres.

• QUALITY OPPORTUNITIES AND A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES

- A quality programme should include opportunities to engage with the wider youth theatre community, theatre or arts community and other young people in general on a local, national or international level;
- A quality programme should include annual activities or once-off projects and events that deepen and expand the regular youth theatre programme;
- Some leaders felt that a good programme should involve increased levels of exchange between youth theatres and particularly between youth theatre leaders;
- Leaders suggested that youth theatres should participate in festivals or exchanges abroad every two to three years. Some leaders felt it was very important that members should work with peers that have the same level of experience;
- Some leaders felt there should be increased numbers of local youth theatre festivals initiated and organised by the youth theatres themselves;
- Leaders recommended increased opportunities for groups of members to participate in NAYD Festivals and events so that all young people have the opportunity to take part. A few leaders felt it was important to provide opportunities that cater for varying levels of experience. They recommended events that focus on participation and basic skills as well as events that centre on performance or advanced skills workshops;
- Some leaders mentioned that it was important for individual members to have experiences away from the main youth theatre through different arts programmes, exchanges or NAYD programmes such as the National Youth Theatre and Young Critics;
- Some youth theatre leaders mentioned that special annual events should happen within a youth theatre. Leaders recommended week-end residentials that focus on skills and group development or specific projects such as devising;
- One or two youth theatres felt that a quality programme should include a wider engagement with other disciplines and art forms including art, photography and film.

4.2 Programming

Youth theatre programming is explored under the following headings:

- 4.2.1 The Youth Theatre Year
- 4.2.2 Levels of Activity
- 4.2.3 Planning and Programming

4.2.1 The Youth Theatre Year

The youth theatre year varies in length and structure around the country. Each youth theatre creates their own individual annual pattern over time according to the profile and needs of the group, their artistic policy, opportunities for productions and projects as well as the resources available to them.

A typical youth theatre year starts in September and runs until May, taking breaks according to school holidays. These youth theatres generally run weekly workshops focusing on group and skills development during the Autumn term and then create blocks of workshops, devising and rehearsals for the remainder of the year. This type of youth theatre year would average at 28 weeks of activity per year. Youth theatres arrange their year according to what best suits their members and leaders, their access to local venues for performances or opportunities to participate in festivals, projects or exchanges.

Most youth theatres will vary from their own individual pattern each year according to the opportunities that arise, including festivals, extra productions, exchanges or residential trips. Some youth theatres regularly include two productions as part of their annual programme and youth theatres with multiple groups may arrange performance opportunities for each sub-group within the youth theatre. Youth theatres with a production-based artistic programme may create several performance opportunities for their members each year.

The youth theatre year will take into account group development issues such as the inclusion of new members at specific times of the year. A few larger youth theatres which recruit significant numbers of members every year will schedule a series of introductory workshops for new members before they join the mainstream activities of the youth theatre. However, it is much more common for youth theatres to include new members in the main workshop group for a series of general workshops which focus on skills-building and group development, leaving older members to act as role models and to help the integration of new members occur quickly.

CASE STUDY: Stradbally Youth Theatre

September – December	Weekly workshops focusing on group and skills development
January – May	Weekly workshops may develop into a devising process and rehearsals or weekly workshops may move straight into the rehearsal of a scripted piece. A performance will take place at the end of the youth theatre year, usually in May. One or two weekly workshops may follow the production to conclude the year.
June – August	The youth theatre does not run activities during the summer.

There are many reasons why youth theatres close down during the summer months. Youth theatre members may be busy with summer work, family holidays, residential language courses and other hobbies or they may be involved in state exams until the end of June. It becomes difficult for a youth theatre leader to retain a consistent group of young people over the summer months. Some youth theatre leaders remarked that they needed a break to refresh themselves for the following year while others mentioned budget constraints as one of the reasons they close for the summer months.

However, there are a considerable number of youth theatres organising a longer youth theatre year and operating during the summer months. For example, Kildare Youth Theatre runs throughout the year except for a break of two weeks at Christmas, one week at Easter and two weeks in the summer. Youth theatre leaders take into consideration the difficulty of retaining consistent attendance across the summer and are more likely to schedule short-term, intensive projects rather than weekly workshops. For example, Co. Clare Youth Theatre organises a short ‘summer school’ for youth theatre members and other local young people who are interested in drama. The summer months can create a distinctive atmosphere and offer different opportunities to youth theatres.

“I think there’s been a couple of years where we did break for the summer but it’s not something I’m that interested in doing and certainly from the feedback I get from the kids- some of them are asking already will we go on for the summer, you know? Now some of them go away and it does tend to be quieter. We’d usually have one production, a smaller production on during the summer. Last year we travelled up to Omagh and did a joint production up there. It’s a good time to do something smaller, low-focus, that doesn’t cost as much money and doesn’t stress people out as much and maybe do something more fun when not all the eyes are on it, you know?” – Sligo Youth Theatre Leader

For some youth theatres, the summer months mark the busiest time of the year. They take advantage of the fact that many of their youth theatre members may have increased free time and run intensive rehearsal periods that lead to productions at the end of the summer. This is more likely in a youth theatre with older members who show high levels of commitment.

CASE STUDY: Limerick Youth Theatre

First Years:	
October – December:	Theatre History – from Greek Tragedy to contemporary styles
January – March:	Performance – approaches to text, character, improvisation, physical theatre
March – May:	Production Skills – lighting, costume, sound, writing...
Second Years:	
October – December:	Project 1 (in film/radio/performance art)

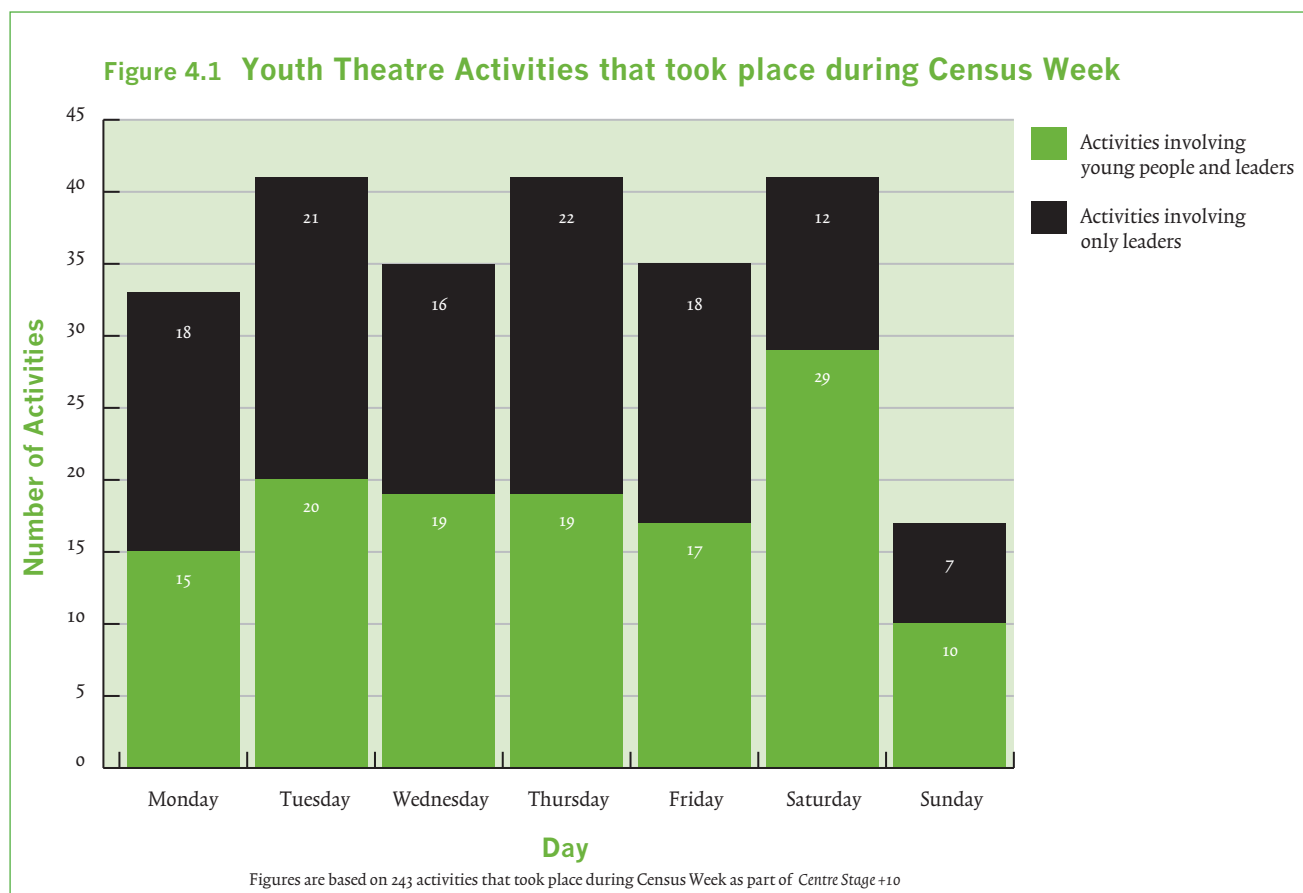
January – March: Project 2 (in film/radio/performance art)
 March – May: Preparation for Summer Production

The Summer Production usually takes place in August.

The modular structure that Limerick youth theatre uses to plan the youth theatre year is unique but bears some similarity to Galway Youth Theatre. Galway Youth Theatre breaks its youth theatre year into different terms by running an ‘education’ term from September to April and then focusing on productions until August. They also run separate workshops for first year and second year members before bringing the two groups together in January each year.

“We tend to do about 10 weeks of classes, maybe 12 weeks, and in that, there may be three master classes at weekends. They would do two to three classes a week and our classes would run four nights a week, 6-8, 8-10 from Monday to Thursday. So the first term is really given up to that, particularly with first years. It’s the same thing with the second years, but one of those classes is a devising project where they create a piece that would be staged in December. Now then in January we mix the classes. So, first years would still have one class with just first years, second years would have one class with second years and then we’d give a range of classes for them together. They do five weeks of Shakespeare together and then jump over and do five weeks of physical theatre and at that point the first years are doing their devising piece, which is staged around February. So, the education term would last from September until April.”
 – Galway Youth Theatre Leader

Levels of activity vary across the youth theatre year but also within a typical week. Figure 4.1 shows the levels of activity that took place on each day during Census Week and the balance between youth theatre activities involving young people and those involving leaders only.



Activities involving young people take place every day of the week across the country. The most popular day for youth theatre workshops and rehearsals is Saturday. This was also the case 10 years ago in Centre Stage. However, youth theatres are scheduling an increasing number of activities on weeknights to suit youth theatre members who are working or involved in other hobbies on a Saturday and also to secure a suitable space. Some community halls and centres charge more for rental at the weekends, making weeknights a more affordable option for

youth theatre leaders. Youth theatre leaders are active throughout the week but are more likely to be involved in administration, planning and production tasks on weekdays. Sunday is still regularly the quietest day of the week which can prove useful for leaders who are trying to schedule extra rehearsals leading up to a production.

4.2.2 Levels of Activity

Levels of typical youth theatre activity were captured during the Census Week of *Centre Stage +10* where 39 youth theatres logged all activities that involved youth theatre members and leaders. Census Week took place between Saturday, 24th November and Friday, 30th November, 2007. The dates were chosen to match the Census Week organised during the *Centre Stage* research period and to ensure that activity levels could be compared. The Census Week demonstrated high levels of activity:

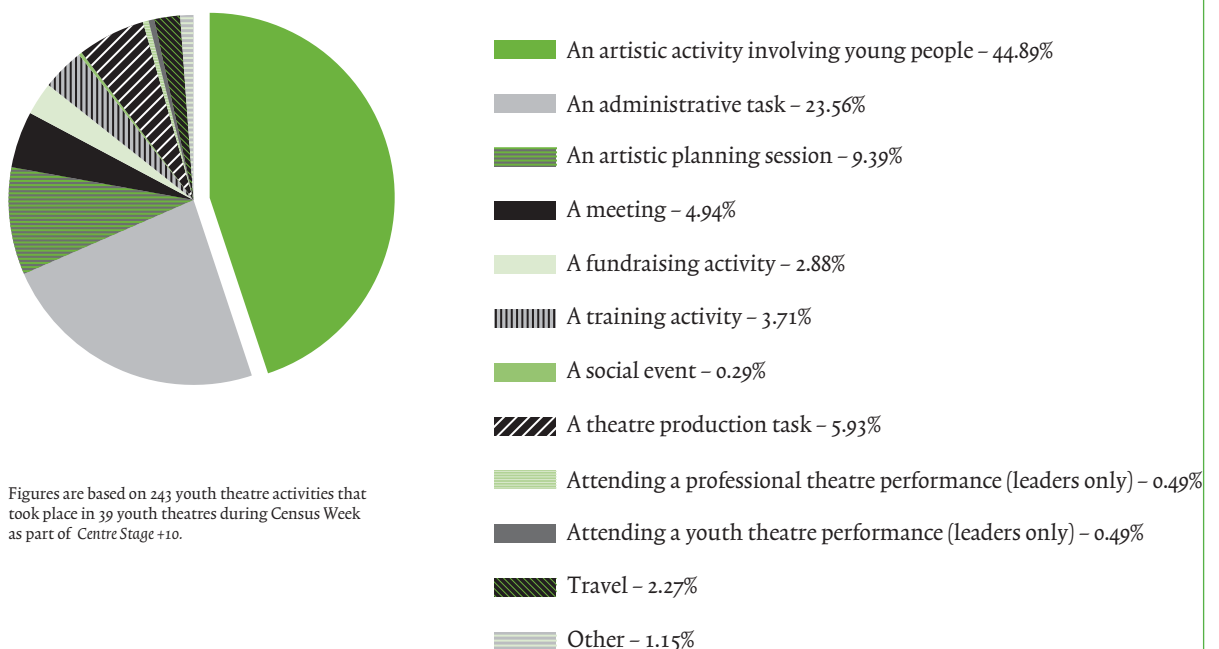
- 243 youth theatre activities took place during Census Week;
- 6.2 youth theatre activities was the average number for a youth theatre;
- 129 activities involved youth theatre members;
- 243 activities involved youth theatre leaders;
- 114 activities involved youth theatre leaders only.

During the original *Centre Stage* Census Week, youth theatre leaders from 32 youth theatres logged their activities in the same manner. Youth theatre leaders logged a total of 112 activities in that original Census Week. This would indicate that the average number of weekly youth theatre activities has grown from 3.5 to 6.2 in the past 10 years. However, it is unclear whether youth theatre leaders from *Centre Stage* logged all administrative and planning tasks during that week so the increase in activity levels may not have been as steep. Of the activities that were logged during the first *Centre Stage* Census Week, 5.36% involved planning or meetings for leaders and a further 5.36% of activities involved production tasks which could have been carried out by leaders on their own.

The youth theatres that participated in *Centre Stage +10* logged a range of activities in which they were involved, from administration tasks through to workshop and rehearsal planning and cleaning the space used by the youth theatre. The log shows an increased recognition of the level of administration and artistic planning involved in running a youth theatre. Many youth theatre leaders reinforced this point during their interviews, commenting on an increase in the level of administration required as part of their youth theatre role.

Census Week data shows that 46.91% of all youth theatre activities involve leaders working behind the scenes to create the 53.09% of youth theatre activities that involve young people.

Figure 4.2 Breakdown of Hours spent on youth theatre activities during Census Week



Activities during Census Week lasted from 15 minutes (a telephone conversation about booking a venue) up to 12 hours (script editing). The 39 youth theatres that took part in Census Week registered:

- 607 hours of youth theatre activity;
- 15 hours and 30 minutes was the average time spent on youth theatre activities in a youth theatre;
- 299 hours of activity involving youth theatre members;
- 607 hours of activity involving youth theatre leaders;
- 308 hours of activity involving youth theatre leaders only.

During the original *Centre Stage* Census Week, youth theatre leaders from 32 youth theatres logged a total of 277 hours. This would indicate that the average number of hours spent on youth theatre activities has grown from 8 hours 40 minutes to 15 hours 30 minutes in the past 10 years.

Activity levels for individual members and leaders during Census Week varied according to the role of the youth theatre leader (see chapter 5.4 for further information) and the age range of the youth theatre members. During Census Week, 1452 young people participated in 129 activities but some members took part in one workshop while others were involved in a series of workshops, rehearsals and performance. The Census Week data shows that 1452 youth theatre members engaged 1999 times in youth theatre activities, creating 1999 different points of contact between young people and youth theatre activities. Figure 4.3 compares the percentage of young people who took part in Census Week with the percentage of contacts made, to examine which age range was the most active during Census Week.

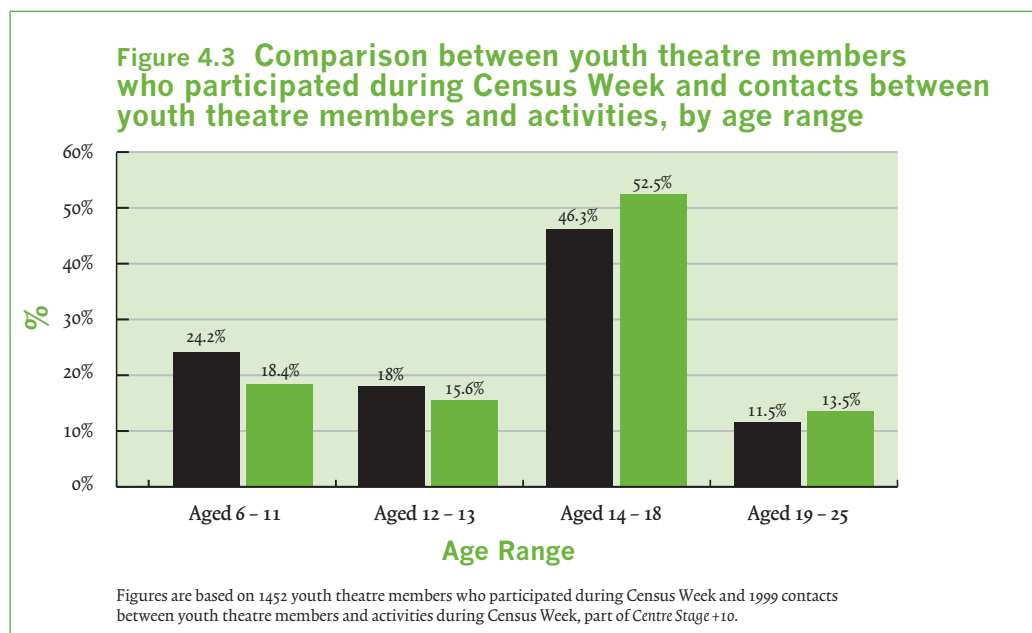


Figure 4.3 shows that the 14–18 age category has the highest number of members but also the highest participation rate. They are most likely to be involved in multiple activities including workshops, rehearsals and performances. Youth theatre leaders indicated that the same is true for members aged 19 to 25, though the statistics from Census Week don't indicate high participation levels.

Figure 4.3 also indicates that youth theatre members aged 12 and 13 are not likely to participate in multiple activities during a typical week. This tendency increases with the 6–11 age range where youth theatre members are likely to only participate in a weekly workshop.

The levels of activity vary greatly between youth theatres and are determined by the resources available to the youth theatre as well as the policy, size and ethos of each group. Some youth theatres programme one activity per week when they are not involved in a production week while other youth theatres may programme a weekly combination of workshops and activities alongside a busy rehearsal and production schedule.

- The maximum number of activities for any youth theatre was 19;
- The minimum number of activities for any youth theatre was 1;
- The average number of activities for a youth theatre was 6.

CASE STUDY: Celbridge Youth Drama

Six activities took place during Census Week, involving five leaders and 26 young people over 12 hours 15 minutes.

1	Accounts	1 hour
2	Rehearsal for upcoming show	3 hours
3	Booking theatre tickets, checking insurance, sending emails regarding permission and printing permission letters	1 hour
4	Meeting with Assistant Arts Officer, Kildare County Council	1 hour
5	Weekly Workshop	2 hours
6	Visit to the Riverbank Arts Centre to see Macbeth performed by Kildare Youth Theatre	4 hours, 15 minutes

CASE STUDY: Kildare Youth Theatre

Eighteen activities took place during Census Week, involving 20 youth theatre leaders and 105 youth theatre members over 73 hours.

1	Weekly workshops 5-13 age group (Crooked Mice)	4 hours
2	Administration	7 hours
3	Technical rehearsal for Macbeth	4 hours
4	Filming of a fight scene for Macbeth	4 hours
5	A dress rehearsal for Macbeth	4 hours
6	Weekly workshop in improvisation	2 hours
7	Introductory session for work-experience student	4 hours
8	Workshop about the viewpoints technique for older members	2 hours
9	Research and evaluation session for members with NUI Maynooth student	1 hour
10	Administration	7 hours
11	Performance of Macbeth	2 hours, 30 minutes
12	Administration	7 hours
13	Performance of Macbeth	2 hours, 30 minutes
14	Administration	7 hours
15	Performance of Macbeth	2 hours, 30 minutes
16	One-to-one monologue and audition preparation work with members	3 hours
17	Administration	7 hours
18	Performance of Macbeth	2 hours, 30 minutes

4.2.3 Planning and Programming

Youth theatres are involved in a greater level of strategic planning than ever before. Youth theatre leaders are also increasingly likely to organise activities involving young people more than one month in advance and to plan the content of each individual workshop and rehearsal.

A significant number of youth theatres have developed artistic policies and it is these policies that provide the framework for the annual programme of the youth theatre. The policy will guide leaders on the design of a workshop programme, their choice of productions and the ethos, purpose, style and content of their work. Artistic policies are generally created by a combination of leaders, members, board members, advisors or staff from parent organisations. When designing an annual programme, youth theatres will receive support from their existing governance structures, such as boards or staff from parent organisations. A few youth theatres create extra structures to advise on artistic planning such as Dublin Youth Theatre's artistic sub-committee which works to support the Artistic Director. Other youth theatres have informal arrangements with an external artistic advisor such as Ballina Youth Theatre's relationship with the Artistic Director of a local professional theatre company.

CASE STUDY: County Wexford Youth Theatre – artistic policy

Artistic Policy:

CWYT provides an outlet for artistic expression among the young people of County Wexford through the medium of theatre production and performance. CWYT develops and presents existing, new and experimental work by young people across disciplines. CWYT is inclusive and apolitical and actively promotes equal access to the arts for all.

Aims:

- To enable members to articulate their needs clearly in a safe group;
- To enable members and leaders to develop interpersonal skills, such as confidence, social interaction, responsibility sharing, planning, decision-making, and problem sharing;
- To introduce young people to new and innovative elements of the arts;
- To provide training and education in creative skills for leaders and members.

Objectives:

- To develop and nurture young peoples' artistic/creative interests, abilities and talents;
- Establish an ethos and atmosphere of trust, support, respect and democracy;
- To promote the social interaction of members especially those marginalised by geographical, financial and educational backgrounds;
- To enable young people to negotiate their own development (personal and artistic) within a safe environment;
- To introduce young adults to training for the theatre and film industries, helping them to source agents, find further training at third level, and perform audition pieces with confidence;
- To provide an alternative for young people to existing, exclusive private fee-paying Drama Schools;
- To cater for non-performers through instruction in skills which are complementary to those developed in drama workshops; e.g., stage management, technical theatre, administration etc.;
- To incorporate other artistic disciplines such as dance and movement, music theatre, film making, writing, etc., through workshops by visiting youth theatre practitioners;
- To provide a public focus for the work by producing public performances of established, new and devised works;
- To participate in local, regional and national festivals through venue-based and site-specific public performances;
- To participate in national and international youth theatre exchanges;
- To play an active role in the work of the National Association for Youth Drama.

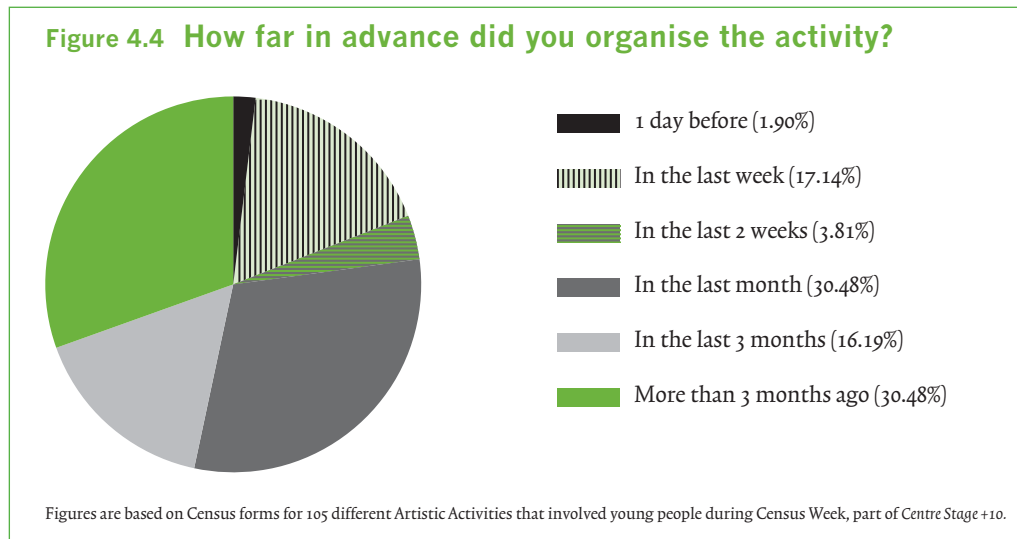
Some youth theatres operate according to a basic artistic policy where they commit to offering a wide variety of drama and theatre experiences that provide for the artistic, personal and social development of youth theatre members. Some youth theatres plan on a very informal level, making flexible plans that adapt to changing circumstances throughout the year. These youth theatres are likely to create a loose, annual programme together but are unlikely to write it down.

Youth theatre leaders generally create annual programmes because they feel it is best practice but some leaders are required to write up annual programmes for funders and for parent organisations. Youth theatre leaders noted that annual plans need to be flexible to allow them to respond to the needs of each particular group, to allow youth theatre members time to contribute to the planning and to allow leaders to respond to opportunities that arise to participate in festivals, projects or exchanges. Leaders also remarked on the difficulty of the budget year (January to December) not matching the youth theatre year (September to August).

One autonomous youth theatre included in the research was not in a position to plan ahead because the lack of regular, voluntary leaders was making it difficult to organise a consistent series of workshops or build towards a production. They were planning on a week-by-week basis depending on who was available to lead a workshop. Other youth theatres that have no annual funding source other than membership fees can find it difficult to plan ahead due to the insecurity of their resources.

As part of the Census Week in *Centre Stage +10*, youth theatre leaders were asked to indicate when they had organised the activities that involved youth theatre members and when they had planned the content of the artistic activities that involved youth theatre members. The figures show that nearly half of all activities (46.67%) were planned more than one month in advance, with 30.48% being planned more than three months in advance. This would indicate that almost a third of youth theatres are organising activities a term in advance.

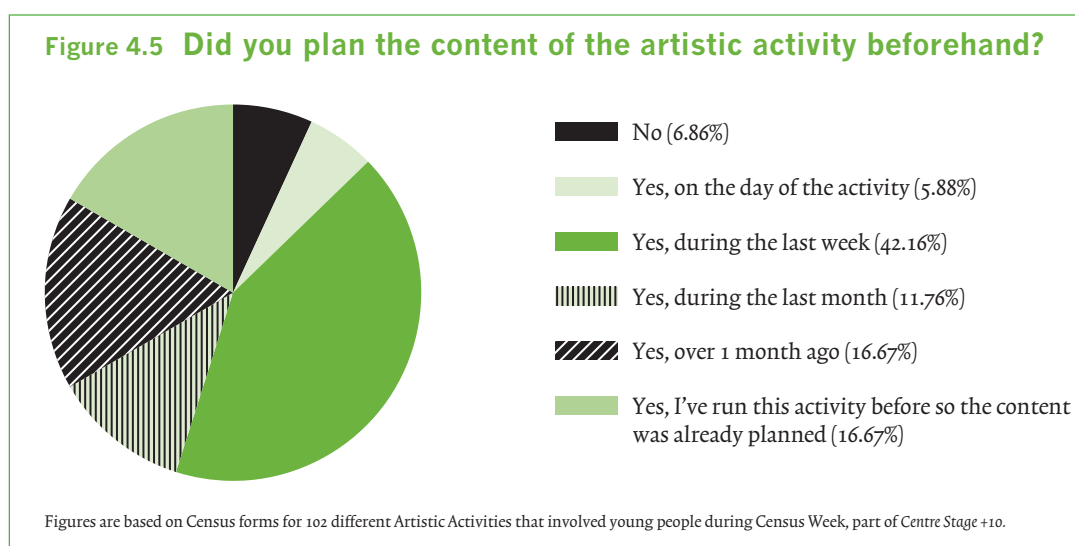
Figure 4.4 provides information about the organisation of youth theatre activities that took place during Census Week.



Not all activities were organised in a way that gave advance notice to members. 19.04% of activities that took place during Census Week were organised during the previous week, with 1.90% being organised on the previous day. The activities that were planned one day before included a weekly drama workshop and a devising/script workshop. Of the activities that were planned in the previous week, five involved rehearsal and the remaining 13 were weekly drama workshops that involved a mix of activities such as improvisation, script work and devising.

In general, youth theatre leaders create a workshop or rehearsal plan for each individual activity that they organise. Youth theatre leaders during Census Week planned the content for 76.47% of activities that involved young people. There is no data from *Centre Stage* to illustrate levels of planning in 1997/98 but anecdotes from leaders and stakeholders indicate that planning and preparation have progressively emerged as common practice in the last 10 years.

Leaders had not planned the content of 6.86% of artistic activities involving young people. Only one of these activities was a weekly drama workshop. The remaining activities were trips to see professional and youth theatre productions, rehearsals and workshops given by freelance facilitators. Leaders did not plan the content of 16.67% of activities because they were re-using a workshop or rehearsal plan that they had written previously. The majority of these were drama workshops that leaders had run before with different groups but leaders also stated that they did not plan for four rehearsals because they used previous rehearsal plans. Figure 4.5 provides a breakdown of the level of planning that leaders undertook for activities that occurred during Census Week.



A vast amount of this organisation and planning is carried out by leaders alone. According to the Census Week data, youth theatre leaders spend almost half of all youth theatre hours working by themselves, planning and organising youth theatre activities. Youth theatre leaders were asked to indicate whether young people contributed to the planning of activities during Census Week. Leaders responded that young people were involved in planning 36.45% of 107 artistic activities. They stated that young people were not involved in planning 42.06% of activities and a high percentage of leaders did not respond to this question.

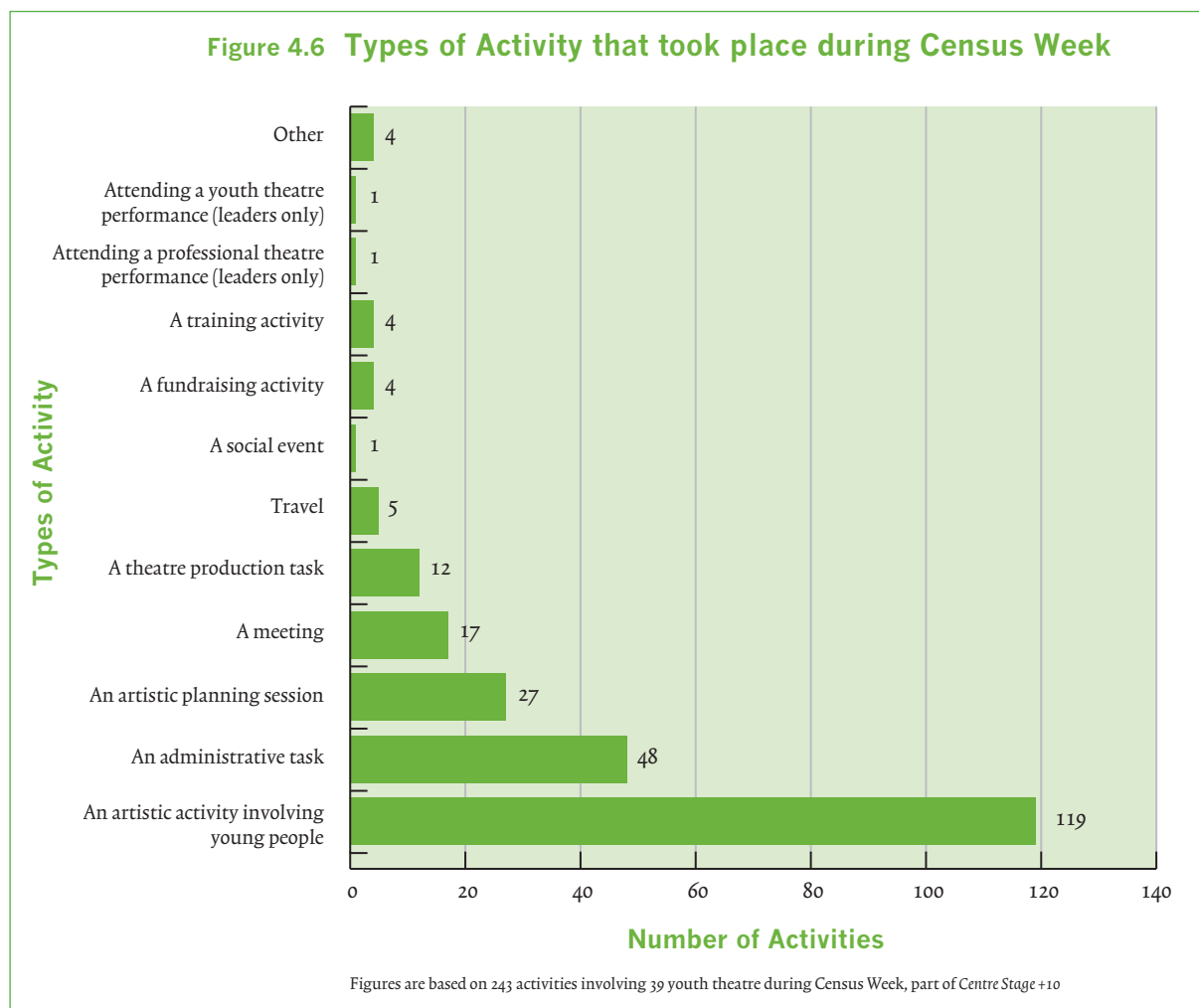
4.3 Youth Theatre Activities

Youth theatre activities are explored under the following:

- 4.3.1 Types of Youth Theatre Activity
- 4.3.2 Workshop Programme
- 4.3.3 Productions
- 4.3.4 Attending Youth Theatre and Professional Theatre Productions
- 4.3.5 Festivals and Exchanges

4.3.1 Types of Youth Theatre Activity

It is clear from Census Week data that youth theatres are often incredibly busy places that provide a multitude of different drama and theatre related activities for the young people in their area. The data also shows that these activities are only made possible by the wide variety of administrative, planning and fundraising tasks carried out by youth theatre leaders. Figure 4.6 illustrates the different types of activities that took place during Census Week.



The Census Week that took place during Centre Stage +10 showed that:

- 46.91% of all youth theatre activities involved leaders working by themselves on administrative, planning and productions tasks;
- 4.12% of all youth theatre activities involved young people in non-artistic activities;
- 48.97% of all youth theatre activities were artistic activities involving young people.

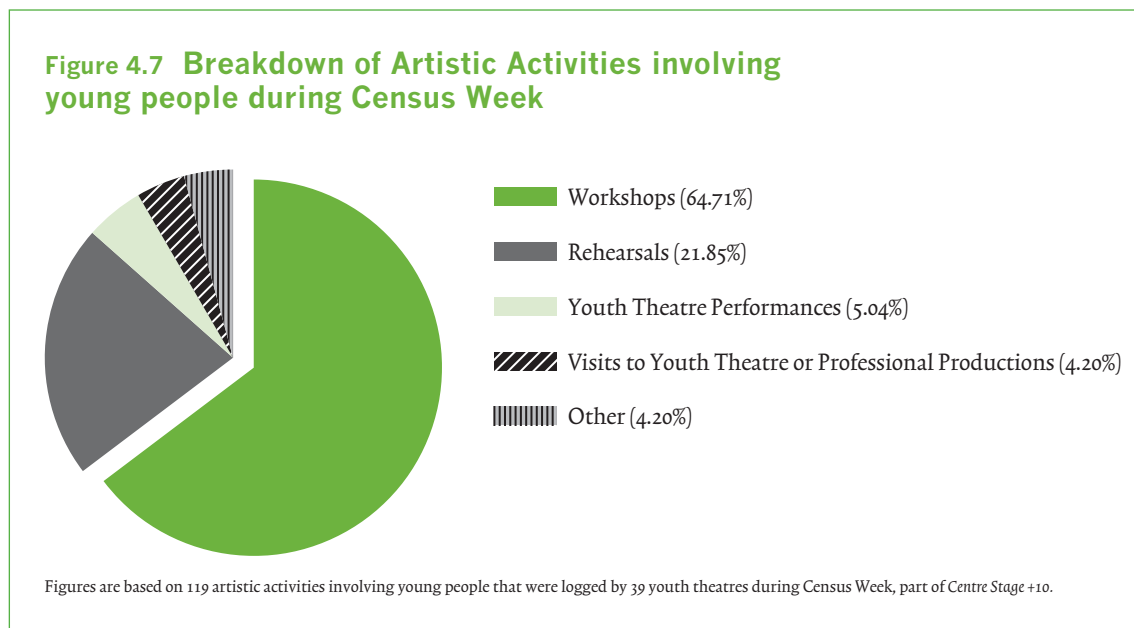
• **YOUTH THEATRE ACTIVITIES INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE**

This section explores youth theatre activities involving young people in greater detail.

Youth theatre leaders and members identified key types of artistic activity within their youth theatre year:

- Drama workshops;
- Rehearsals, Production work and Performances;
- Attending professional theatre performances and youth theatre performances;
- Festivals and Exchanges.

Each one of these activities is explored in detail in Sections 4.3.2 to 4.3.5. The balance between these artistic activities during Census Week is indicative of a typical youth theatre programme. Figure 4.7 provides details of this breakdown of activities. 64.71% of activities were drama workshops and 26.89% of activities were rehearsals and performances.



Activities included in the 'other' category of Figure 4.7 included preparing audition pieces and monologues with some older members, reading excerpts from plays, filming a fight scene for an upcoming production, and a 'project session' for the 6-11 age range.

• **NON-ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE**

Youth theatre members are also involved in a wide variety of non-artistic youth theatre activities. During Census Week alone, young people completed administration, took part in fundraising activities, went to meetings, training activities and social events, were involved in theatre production tasks, tidied up a venue after a show, put up posters and talked to other young people as part of a recruitment drive.

Some youth theatres arrange a number of social activities throughout their youth theatre year. These can include end of year celebrations, Christmas parties, or post-show parties. Other youth theatres consider visits to see professional or youth theatre productions their social events and arrange for the group to travel and eat together as well. A few youth theatres, for example Dublin Youth Theatre, maintain a space where youth theatre members can spend time together on weekly workshop days or others such as Celbridge Youth Drama arrange breaks in

the middle of their weekly workshops for members to socialise.

Youth theatre members value informal activities and many members described their own youth theatre traditions such as going for smoothie breaks, 'having the craic' and eating pizza when describing typical youth theatre activities during Member Workshops.

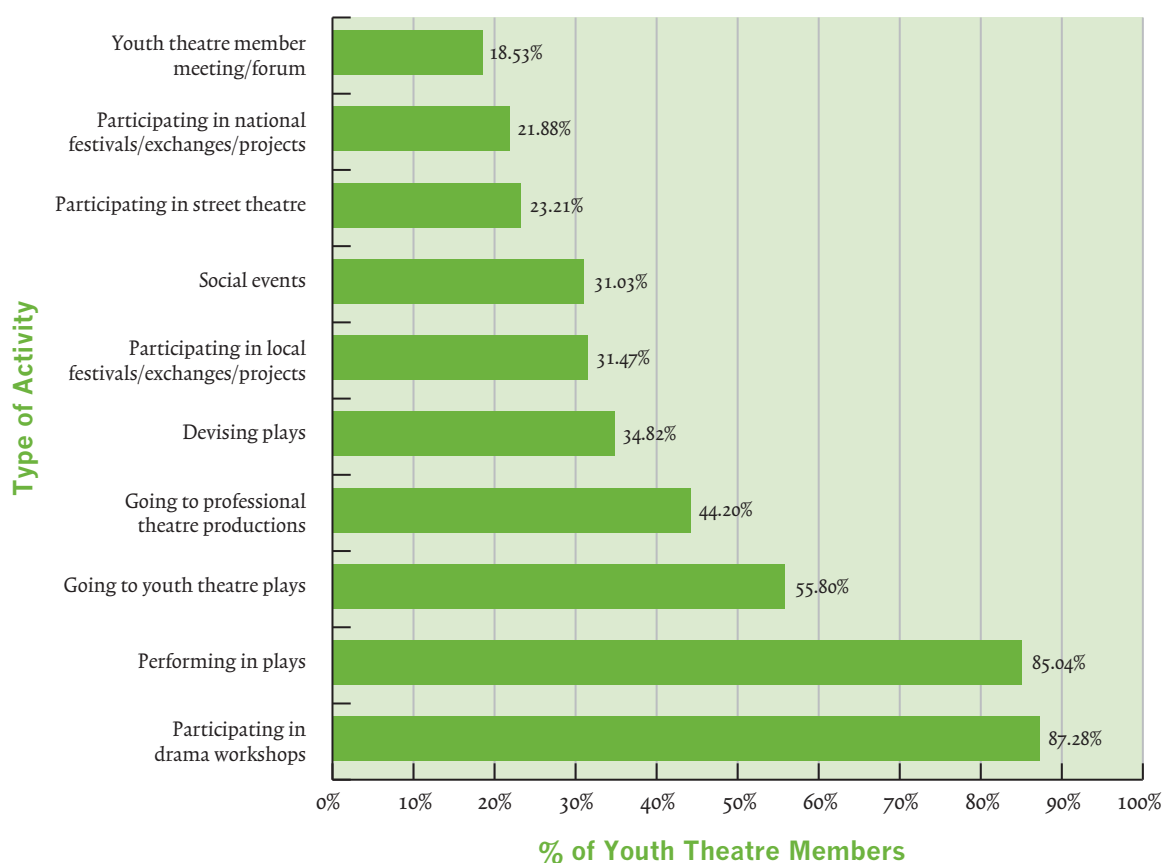
CASE STUDY: Co. Sligo Youth Theatre – youth theatre activities

Co. Sligo Youth Theatre is a large autonomous youth theatre based in Sligo town. The youth theatre has recently reviewed its programme of activities but at the beginning of 2008 its youth theatre programme consisted of:

- Regular weekly workshops for three different age groups (11–12 year olds, 12–14 year olds and 15 upwards);
- One large production each year and possibly one smaller, devised production during the summer;
- Regular weekly workshops in circus skills. The Circus Group is a voluntary wing of the youth theatre and is one of the oldest circus clubs in Ireland. Volunteer leaders focus on the development of circus skills through workshop activities and occasional performances. Circus group leaders and a senior member recently travelled to Los Angeles for an extensive three-week training placement with the Scarlet Sisters Circus Group;
- Regular visits to local professional and youth theatre performances and occasional visits to Dublin. This element of the programme was developed into the 'Young Audience Programme' which organises theatre visits, negotiates cheaper ticket prices with venues, organises events such as post-show talks and includes young people from Sligo who are not members of the youth theatre;
- Assisting Omagh District Council in the establishment of Omagh Youth Theatre. A series of weekend workshops culminated in a week-long intensive summer school, when Omagh Youth Theatre welcomed a group of young people from Co. Sligo Youth Theatre. Together, they spent a week creating and rehearsing a performance that incorporated masks, live music and puppets. The piece was performed in Sligo during Census Week as part of the second stage of the exchange.
- Participation in NAYD projects such as the Young Critics and the National Youth Theatre;
- Fundraising activities such as an improvised comedy show that was developed and organised by members with assistance from youth theatre facilitators and members of the local improv group 'Scratch That';
- Outreach projects are being developed which target young people in Sligo who may not have easy access to youth theatre and drama.

Every youth theatre offers a different combination of experiences to their membership and these can also vary according to the age range of the youth theatre. Members aged 12 and over were asked to identify their youth theatre experiences from a set list. Their responses are collated in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8 What experiences have you had in your youth theatre? 12 and over



Figures are based on 448 youth theatre members who completed '12 and over' questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 Members could choose multiple activities: 448 members registered 2463 activities.

Other activities included:

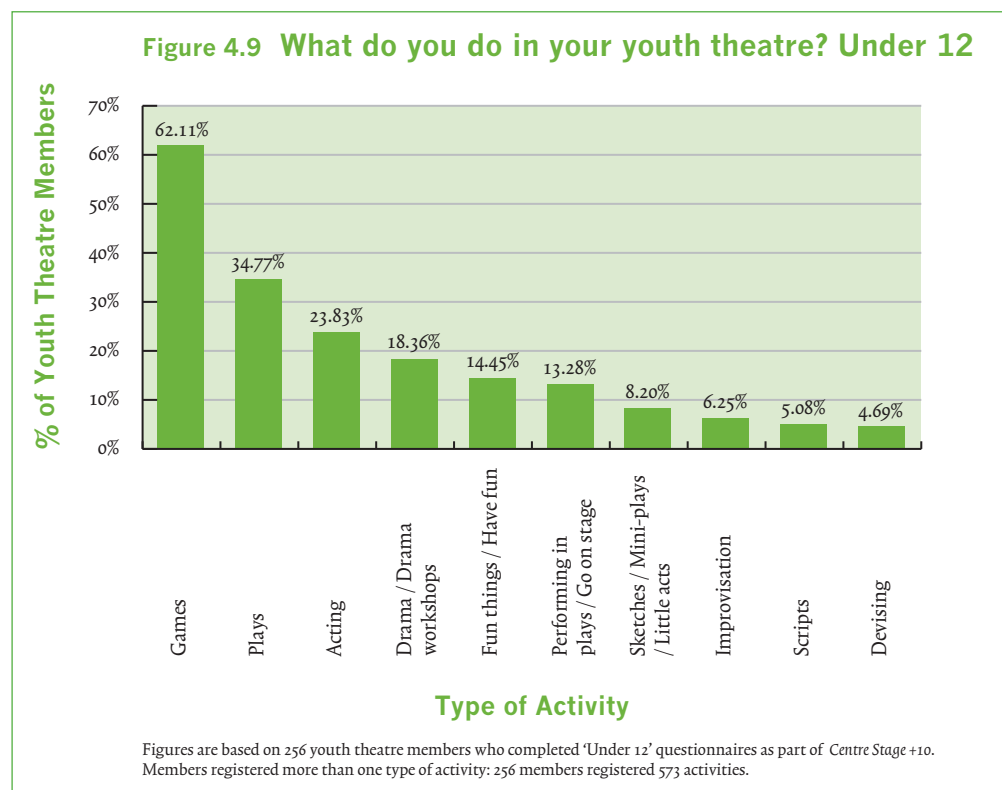
- design -set/costume/poster/technical (18.30%);
- writing for youth theatre (16.29%);
- participating in international festivals/exchanges/projects (15.40%);
- making costumes (15.40%);
- stage management (12.05%);
- set construction (12.05%);
- technical -light/sound (11.38%);
- directing plays (7.59%).

Figure 4.8 indicates that youth theatre members have regular opportunities to participate in drama workshops and perform in plays while a significant number are also accessing other youth theatre and professional theatre productions. The data indicates that opportunities to participate in events such as festivals or exchanges are less common. The irregularity of these events within youth theatres where young people average 2.3 years of membership, means that specific generations of youth theatre members may miss out on the opportunity to take part.

Although youth theatres are keen to provide a programme of activities that include different aspects of technical theatre and theatre crafts such as costume and set construction, it appears that very small numbers of members are accessing these experiences. Some youth theatre leaders state that members develop theatre skills such as writing and directing and that they organise opportunities for members to explore these skills independently through one-act festivals and other low-pressure performance situations. The data from the 'over-12 member questionnaires' and information from leader interviews would suggest that these types of activities are not commonly included in a youth theatre's annual programme.

YOUTH THEATRE ACTIVITIES INVOLVING CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 12

Children under the age of 12 were asked to describe what they did in their youth theatre as part of their questionnaire. The majority of this age group listed activities that take place within the workshop experience. This suggests that the workshop is the central experience for this age group and that there is considerably less variety in their programme than in the over-12 category. Drama ‘games’ were mentioned by 62.11% of members and appear to be the principal youth theatre activity. Figure 4.9 lists the top 10 youth theatre activities that children under the age of 12 mentioned.



Youth theatre members in this age group describe their workshops in terms of two separate sections: drama games or warm-ups and what the children call “doing the acting” or “doing drama”. These ‘acting’ activities may involve working on short scenes or ‘little acts’, some improvisation or devising scenes. The language this age group use to describe their activities can seem basic but may reflect the instruction and communication style of the leaders as well as the real content of workshops for this age group. Some children had developed a strong vocabulary to describe their activities and mentioned improvisation, devising, script work and vocal exercises.

Only 34.77% of members aged under 12 had been involved in activities they called ‘plays’. 13.28% of members in this age group specifically mention performing in plays and only 2.34% mentioned rehearsals. This indicates that this age group is not generally involved in performance. They are also unlikely to go to see plays, only 3.91% of members had been to see a play with their youth theatre. This age group do not seem to engage with other youth theatres or groups and do not participate in festivals or exchanges outside of events such as St. Patrick’s Day parades.

Other activities that the under 12s mentioned were:

- seeing plays (3.91%);
- mimes (3.13%);
- parades, dancing (1.95%);
- art (1.95%);
- building confidence (1.56%);
- use imagination (1.56%);
- breathing/vocal exercises (1.56%);
- learning acting (1.17%);
- street theatre(1.17%);
- poems (1.17%);
- making costumes (1.17%).

4.3.2 Workshop Programme

Workshops lie at the heart of the youth theatre programme. A workshop is a series of planned activities which engage young people in an active exploration of drama. They create a safe environment for young people to play and experiment. Youth drama practice involves group or ensemble drama approaches and responds to the developmental needs of the participating young people.

All youth theatres that were involved in *Centre Stage +10* ran workshops during their youth theatre year. Data from the *Centre Stage +10* Census Week shows that 64.71% of artistic activities that involved young people were workshops. Youth theatre members who completed questionnaires for *Centre Stage +10* also indicated that workshops were the most common youth theatre experience. 87.28% of members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires had taken part in a youth theatre workshop.

The youth theatre year is typically built around a structure of weekly workshops. These workshops may develop into devising sessions or rehearsals as the group approach a production, but within youth theatres that have a large membership it is common for weekly workshops to continue so that members who may not be involved in a production can maintain their level of engagement with the youth theatre. Workshops last between one and three hours. The younger age groups are more likely to work for an hour to an hour and a half.

Youth theatre leaders and members work hard to create a supportive as well as a creative environment within the youth theatre. A supportive environment is key to enable young people to take risks, push beyond their comfort zones and learn from new experiences. Many youth theatres create group contracts where members agree rules that deal with behaviour within youth theatre activities. A large number of youth theatres felt that the facilitation style of the leaders and the example provided by older members were instrumental in creating a positive environment. The inclusion of time for group feedback and discussion had a positive effect on the group dynamic and leaders believed that it was very important for the personal development of members.

Workshops are directed at the specific age range of the members and their skill and experience levels. Youth theatres with a wide age range divide members into different age groups to ensure that workshops will be directed at their specific developmental needs. One exception to this was Boomerang Youth Theatre where the weekly workshop included members aged between five and 18. The youth theatre used to divide the group into different age ranges but were experimenting with a multi-age group in 2008:

“It was hard for the first while because I couldn’t figure out how to relate to the whole group at the same time and make sure that the older ones were progressing. I didn’t want repetition. So what we do is the first hour and a half will be warm-ups and devising and brainstorming and things like that and then sometimes I’ll take the older ones and get them to work on specific character building exercises or on actual ideas for the play. I’ll send them off to direct the younger ones in small scenes. So, that’s how I’ve worked it for the last while. I think they’ve gotten used to me and I’ve gotten used to them in this huge group now and it is much better. It took the younger ones a long time to get used to it as well because they had to get used to not having as much of my attention as they normally did, you know, for stories and talk about things they did during the week.” – Boomerang Youth Theatre Leader

• **WORKSHOP CONTENT**

Workshops are designed to meet the developmental needs of the group and cover a wide variety of material:

• **Skills development**

Youth theatre workshops explore and develop basic drama and theatre skills. Leaders identified these as improvisation, character work, script work and basic movement and voice work. Many youth theatres focus on devising skills and through the sharing of short devised scenes, members also explore basic skills in performance, analysis and constructive criticism.

• **Group development**

Youth theatre workshops aim to develop the group dynamic by exploring teamwork and trust and by taking a group / ensemble approach in tasks and activities.

• **Issue-based and process drama**

The main objective of a workshop can be the exploration of a specific issue or theme rather than the development

of a skill. Process drama techniques are used to explore issues that are relevant to the group and issues that emerge as part of a devising or a rehearsal process.

- **Specialist skills and theatre techniques**

Youth theatres may engage members with advanced movement and voice skills, actor training methods developed by Stanislavski, Grotowski, Lecoq or Suzuki. Youth theatre groups may also engage with other theatre forms and techniques such as ‘viewpoints’ and Playback Theatre.

- **Technical theatre workshops**

Youth theatres may run workshops to explore lighting and sound design as well as set design and costume design. These workshops may be built into a production process or could be arranged as part of a separate skills development programme.

- **Dance and other art forms**

Many youth theatres involve movement, dance and music within their regular drama workshops but some arrange specific workshops that focus on these individual art forms. Youth theatres may also run workshops on art forms such as film or radio that lead to specific projects.

The workshops that took place during Census Week explored improvisation (including issue-based improvisation), character building and text analysis, ‘acting skills’, monologues, script work, movement and dance, devising, status and viewpoints technique, circus skills and lighting. One workshop explored trust-building and another was about creating a group contract.

- **WORKSHOP STRUCTURE**

Youth theatre leaders develop workshop patterns and structures that become traditional within their youth theatre:

“Well, I’d always start off with a warm-up, a game... like always a physical warm-up, then voice, you know with tongue-twisters, trying to work on a bit of diction, trying to do a bit of something every night just to move it along. And games, loads of fun games, you know? There’d always be a concentration game and memory games. There are loads of different things that I’ve worked on over the years cause I still go to workshops myself. I just came from... last week I went to Dublin for a week and did a clown workshop so I take lots of bits from that and bring them back to workshop with them”

– Ballina Youth Theatre Leader

“My idea is to get them so that they can improvise... so everything is geared towards that. The warm-up, composing activities, whatever main improvisation thing we’re doing and then the wind-down... and then within that we’d do movement or mime as well and a bit of voice.” – Stradbally Youth Theatre Leader

Youth theatre leaders were asked to outline the content of their workshops during Census Week and leaders gave information about the content of 66 different workshops. The workshop outlines that were provided by leaders suggest some common characteristics of youth theatre workshops in Ireland.

- **Warm-ups**

The majority of youth theatre workshops begin with a warm-up and most use games to focus the group. Many are ‘traditional’ youth theatre games such as ball games for concentration, ‘pass the clap’ and versions of ‘zip, zap, boing’. It appears that leaders who have completed professional theatre training, youth drama facilitation or have associations with theatre companies are more likely to include technical, physical and vocal exercises as warm-ups.

- **Preparation games and exploratory exercises**

Preparation games included in the workshops are often simple and concise in the mode of ‘Pass the clap’. ‘Walk-about’ are still present in the youth theatre workshop and are used to achieve various aims such as preparation for movement, building the group dynamic, character development or spatial awareness. Exploratory exercises are longer exercises that in some way build towards the main activity of the workshop. This type of exercise appeared in less than half of all workshops.

- **Main activity and ‘showing’**

The main activity of 61 workshops that took place during Census Week involved the development of scenes that were shown at the end of a workshop. The majority of these main activities explored improvisation and

devising skills where frameworks were given to members so that they could prepare a piece to show to the rest of the group. Stories and fairytales were popular frameworks for devising workshops, particularly for the 6-11 age group. Scripts and other texts were also popular stimuli for scene work. The majority of workshops contained some form of 'showing', either of results from exploratory exercises or from the prepared pieces. In some cases, work was re-shown after feedback.

- **Feedback, wind-up and closure**

Feedback is present in the majority of workshops, mostly in relation to the 'show' in the main activity. Information was provided about the closure of about half of all workshops. Groups usually finished with a discussion about the main activity, a few 'de-rolled' from activities in a simple manner and some groups finished with a favourite game such as 'pass the clap' or 'zip, zap, boing'.

4.3.3 Productions

Youth theatres can have very individual artistic programmes and often the type of productions they choose really define the artistic character of a youth theatre. The artistic interests and tastes of both leaders and members can direct youth theatres to scripted or devised performances, work written for their own age range or beyond, theatre based or site-specific work, multi-disciplinary performances or traditional actor-focused theatre. During Census Week youth theatres were involved in productions of Macbeth, 'East of the Sun West of the Moon', and a contemporary version of King Lear.

Youth theatres all have their own unique manner of choosing plays. In some youth theatres the decision is made by a leader or a commissioned writer and in others, young people are involved in the decision making process. Clondalkin Youth Theatre described a democratic process where young people could present their proposed plays to the rest of the group and members voted to pick the play. Co. Wexford Youth Theatre leaders felt that young people don't often have the theatre knowledge to be able to find or suggest plays that would interest and challenge them. They developed a process where the group would feedback on issues, themes and styles of theatre that they were enjoying and ideas that they were interested in developing. The group then trusted the leaders to search out a play that would answer their criteria and provide new challenges.

Another leader described their process as:

"I don't choose a play and land it on them. I would normally go with five or six that I have short-listed and then we will spend a couple of weeks, we will read parts of them. They will improvise around them and kind of hot-seat different characters from them and maybe different groups of three or four would look at one script for a couple of weeks. So they decide the play with some guidance and then they feel ownership of it. They feel that they chose that play and that's the play that they want to do. So they are very instrumental in what we choose." Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Leader – Lough Gur

Youth theatres will usually try to provide a variety of different theatre experiences for their members. Youth theatres may focus on providing an overall balance between scripted work and devised work so that a young person can experience both styles of rehearsal. Some youth theatres may take other factors into consideration when choosing a play such as the style, genre, or content of the play:

"We do a modern contemporary play for Christmas where they play teenagers, they play their own age range and they play something that's of particular relevance to them as teenagers. And then later in the year we work on a period play. They're three act adult plays that are not written for young people, that don't necessarily include young people, that have issues and also I try to make them different types of plays. So last year they did an 18th century melodrama, this year they're doing a play set in the 1930s in the depression, in a Glaswegian tenement but it's actually a play about the economics of women's labour so it's their first political play. So that they have to explore a fictional world that's very, very different to their own." – Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Leader – Lough Gur

When choosing scripted plays, leaders mention that they search out plays with large casts so that they can provide an ensemble experience for their group. The gender breakdown of a play can also play a large factor in its selection.

- **SCRIPTED PLAYS**

The vast majority of youth theatres perform scripted plays but they have very different ideas about which type of scripted play is best suited to youth theatre.

- Traditional / classic plays are very popular with youth theatres who love to engage with Shakespeare and plays such as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* or modernists such as Caryl Churchill. Some youth theatres have a strong interest in performing Irish plays and both young people and leaders have been active in suggesting plays by Sean O'Casey, Brian Friel, Oscar Wilde, Yeats and Synge. A few youth theatres mentioned that they had a strong preference for these types of scripts because they found plays written for young people limiting, occasionally patronising and based too much on what were deemed to be 'teenage' issues;
- Some youth theatres prefer to perform plays that are specifically written for young actors to perform. Youth theatres choose these plays because they are relevant to the issues and situations within young people's lives or because they have a strong belief that young actors should only play characters within their age range. Plays that are commissioned for youth theatres generally fall within this category;
- Other youth theatres perform one-act and full length plays that have been written by members. Full-length plays written by members are not very common but Limerick Youth Theatre has produced a full length version of a play written by one of their members called *In Rear View*.
- **DEvised AND ADAPTEd PLAYS**

Devising is a very different process to the rehearsal of a scripted piece and can provide different opportunities for skills development. It can provide young people with the opportunity to develop a piece that is specific to their locality and their youth theatre and a chance to explore and value their own ideas. Devising can bring about a very clear sense of ownership of a process and a production. Leaders also remarked that devising can help young people to develop theatre skills around structure and narrative as they develop a piece of theatre from the potential of an initial concept. The majority of youth theatres devised productions because of an interest or a commitment to the process of devising rather than a lack of suitable scripted plays. The only exceptions to this were situations where leaders working with younger groups and Na Crosáin Youth Theatre who devised partly out of a love for the process and partly due to a lack of good scripts for their age group written in the Irish language.

Roundabout Youth Theatre have a strong tradition of devising productions inspired by their local area and people and have produced theatre-based as well as site-specific pieces such as *Tumbledowntown* and *Xspired*. Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre recently devised a production called *Carshow*, a site-specific piece of theatre based on characters from their local area. A few youth theatres work primarily on devised pieces and Boomerang Youth Theatre has a policy of devising all productions.

Youth theatres are also very active adapters of novels, poems and films. Co. Clare Youth Theatre recently adapted *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Dreamstuff Youth Theatre has adapted *The Life of Brian*, *Treasure Island* and *Grimm Fairy Tales*.²

CASE STUDY: Na Crosáin Youth Theatre – devised productions

Na Crosáin Youth Theatre is run by An Taibhdhearc, a professional theatre company and venue in Galway. The youth theatre runs two groups in Galway city (Dordán and Ardán) and one group in Connemara. Na Crosáin is the only youth theatre included in the study working through the Irish language and the youth theatre has a strong interest in physical theatre.

“I'd love to see the Irish language theatre going more towards a non-verbal, not-language heavy, theatre, where you can't rely on your audience having the amount of language that you need to understand everything they're watching. So we work a lot on physical theatre and physicalising what you're doing. I suppose we do a lot of skill work based on mime and physicality and we do a lot of Lecoq style exercises.” – Na Crosáin Youth Theatre Leader

The youth theatre show a strong preference for devised work, partly because of a lack of suitable plays for young people written in Irish and partly because of a love of the devising process.

“I like to give everybody a kind of equal experience. Then we have an ensemble and there's no focus. There's no pressure because the pressure is on the group so they bind together as a group and they have ownership over the piece.” – Na Crosáin Youth Theatre Leader

Workshops involve a large amount of ensemble work, movement work and improvisation. Ideas often emerge through workshop improvisations which are then developed as part of a devising process before eventually being directed as a youth theatre production. Jane was inspired by a Bjork song which was

² Adapted from *Grimm's Fairy Tales*

written in Icelandic. The group used ideas from Boal's image theatre to develop material and devised a performance over a five month period.

As a venue-based youth theatre, the group generally creates productions that are traditionally staged. However, the group was commissioned to create a street theatre performance for a St. Patrick's Day Parade and members worked alongside professional street performers and actors skilled in Commedia dell'Arte to create the piece.

The group have also worked on scripts that were translated into Irish. The youth theatre worked in three separate groups to translate, act and direct three short plays by Chekhov. In spring 2009, the youth theatre were starting work on a scripted play based on Siobhán McKenna's life and career.

• **MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND MULTI-MEDIA WORK**

Some youth theatres have a strong interest in physical theatre, dance, movement and other types of multi-disciplinary theatre. The West of Ireland is particularly rich in facilitators trained in Lecoq and Commedia dell'Arte and this has impacted on the production choices and styles of some youth theatres. Limerick Youth Theatre has a strong connection to local dance companies and have been involved in large scale dance-theatre projects and performances such as *The Odyssey Project*.

Youth theatres in Ireland have not traditionally engaged with musical theatre but recently Activate Youth Theatre devised a cabaret about young people and their experience of the 'Debs' called the *Debutantes' Cabaret* and Mayo Youth Theatre – Ballina produced *Into the Woods* by Stephen Sondheim. Backstage Youth Theatre has experience in developing dance and musical numbers with members from the senior drama group for the annual Longford pantomime. They also generally include a musical interlude during their one-act performances.

Some youth theatres have also become interested in multi-media work within their productions. This can range from the projection of images and films within a theatre performance to the live use of cameras on stage. Dublin Youth Theatre has actively engaged with new technologies in recent theatre productions and has established relationships with young theatre companies that are working in this field. They believe strongly that multi-media work should be integral to the theatre performance. Live cameras were used in two of their recent productions, *Daily Bread* by Gesine Danckwart and *This is Still Life* which was devised by the cast with Brokentalkers Theatre Company.

New technologies are emerging more clearly in the content of youth theatre productions, especially productions which have been devised by the cast. The internet and mobile phones have had a profound effect on the way in which young people communicate with each other and this surfaces in their improvisations, in their devised work and in popular plays such as *Chatroom* by Enda Walsh.

• **A VARIETY OF PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

Youth theatre members are often keen to perform to the wider community, travelling to youth theatre festivals and events with their productions. They are excited about sharing their work with the outside world. Leaders believed that it was their responsibility to ensure the youth theatre provided appropriate performance opportunities for their members based on their experience, ability and performance history.

Some youth theatres have closed performances where only members, family and friends are directly invited. These events are typically one-act festivals where young people have directed, written, produced and acted in their own short plays. A few youth theatre leaders described the importance of providing a supportive and low-pressure performance environment where young people can experiment with new skills and find their own unique voice through theatre. Dublin Youth Theatre has traditionally organised two one-act festivals for members each year that are usually attended by family and friends of members as well as friends and ex-members of Dublin Youth Theatre. The 'First Year One Acts' Festival is an opportunity for first-year members to act in short plays that are directed by professional theatre practitioners, with the 'Members One Act Festival (MOAF)' providing opportunities for members to write, direct, produce and act in their own short plays. These types of festivals are very difficult to organise in youth theatres with a smaller membership and have generally declined in popularity over the past 10 years.

Youth theatre stakeholders commented positively on the increase in high profile youth theatre productions,

their participation in mainstream theatre festivals and their access to quality theatre venues. However, some stakeholders wondered if the decline in smaller, less pressurised performance opportunities meant that youth theatre members were losing out on the freedom to experiment and to take risks.

• PRODUCTIONS WITH YOUNGER GROUPS

A large amount of younger groups within youth theatres do not create productions but focus instead on the workshop experience. Some youth theatres will create presentations of short scripted or devised scenes that they have developed within their workshop for parents and friends. A few youth theatres, such as the West Cork Arts Centre, ensure that every age group has a performance opportunity once a year. The content of these plays is often based on stories and fairy tales.

CASE STUDY: **Physically Phishy Youth Theatre – productions with younger groups**

Physically Phishy Youth Theatre is run by Graffiti Theatre Company and works with young people aged 10 to 14. The youth theatre have a strong history in devising theatre based on themes and issues that emerge from the young people's lives. Leaders found that young people in this age group weren't always in control of their own lives and were not always able to attend rehearsals on a regular basis. Therefore, the group often structure their plays around scenes involving a small number of young people.

Their plays have included *And so this is Christmas* based on the group's experience of Christmas time and *Growing Pains and Gains* based on the group's experience of being a teenager. One of the group's devised plays was called *Abandon Shandon* and was about the members' feelings about the area where they lived and where the youth theatre was based. The play explored the recent development of the area and the lack of facilities for young people. It was performed locally in the Shandon area and was also included in an international festival.

"We invited the Lord Mayor to *Abandon Shandon*. He turned up and I think he was expecting a Christmas play and he got a group of young people who were saying this is your fault. And they were saying if any more developers come in here... there's nothing left and this is what the consequences are. I suppose it was agit-prop in a big way but they were very full of it at the time and afterwards we got a phonecall from the Lord Mayor to say we don't want you to abandon Shandon. The phrase had gone back to the City Hall. I always thought that was a kind of 'Whoa' moment. – *Physically Phishy Youth Theatre Leader*

CASE STUDY: **Waterford Youth Arts – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:

Diversions

Seven local writers each wrote short scripts that were directed by senior members of WYA. The performance took place on a bus.

et cetera

The play was devised by a cast of older members.

I Can Hear The Night-Birds Sing

The play was written by Jim Daly specifically for the 12-14 age group. The story is set in a Hospital with the main character, a young man of 17 years, who has temporarily gone blind.

Festival

The play was devised by the cast and director. It featured a main stage for spectacle, a dance tent for drama and chill-out zones for comedy.

To Leap from Paradise

The play was written by Jim Daly. It tells the story of 14-year-old John and his younger sister Rosie, during an emotionally-fraught time in the life of their family, a captivating young girl enters John's life.

The Outsiders

The play was written by Pat Daly and looked at obsession with celebrity and image.

Clem and Ben

A promenade play written by Pat Daly. It's an urban tale about two skateboarders, with a tragic twist.

The Exam

By Andy Hamilton. The play was a comic look at the pressures facing Andrew, Bea and Chas as they faced

the inevitable state exams.

CASE STUDY: **Backstage Youth Theatre – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:

The Do-It-Yourself Frankenstein Outfit

A play by David Campton. A demonstration of the latest DIY robot does not quite go to plan. The demonstrator finds a hostile audience and his assistants are not all they seem to be.

Toil and Trouble

A play by Ciarán Gray. The play takes place in a centre for girls who have been in trouble with the law and who are on short-term remand while they are assessed.

Dreamjobs

A play by Graham Jones.

Totally over You

A play by Mark Ravenhill.

Folie 'tha

A play by Ciarán Gray.

On the Outside

A play by Tom Murphy. Two lads stand outside the local dance hall in rural 1950s Ireland without the social or financial resources to gain entry.

None the Wiser

A play by Anthony Booth. The action focuses on a group of 'nuns' who live in a convent by night and shoplift by day. Everything is going well until they meet another group of 'nuns' and then they have to pretend to be real.

CASE STUDY: **Limerick Youth Theatre – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:

The Odyssey Project

A collaboration between a Latvian composer and dancer / choreographer (who runs a youth dance troupe in Latvia called Zvaigznu Aka) and the youth theatre, including members of the new Latvian community within Limerick. It was an original piece of dance-theatre about immigration to Ireland, told by bodies and metaphor.

Tentacle

A Tenth Anniversary Show in 8 parts, written, designed and produced by 10 past members of Limerick Youth Theatre and performed all over the Belltable Arts Centre.

Plan Nine from Outer Limerick

Plan 9 was the first full-length devised play by LYT. Mixing Physical Theatre with Metaphysics, the group created an enormous cast of characters who find that their lives are playing out as the Reality TV of the future.

Romeo and Juliet

A Limerick version of the play by William Shakespeare.

In Rear View

A full three-act play by Caoimh McCarthy, a former member of the youth theatre. The play is about the experience of secondary school from the first day to the Leaving Cert.

The Beggar's Opera

John Gay's anti-opera is set among the thieves of 18th century London. The libretto was set to contemporary well-known tunes, including Chris de Burgh and Michael Jackson.

Rhinoceros

A piece of Theatre of the Absurd by Eugene Ionesco. Rhinoceros is about a town where the inhabitants turn into rhinoceroses.

CASE STUDY: **Activate Youth Theatre – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:

Debutantes' Cabaret

A cabaret devised by youth theatre members about the experience of going to the 'debs'.

Ideal Homes Show

A play devised by youth theatre members and then scripted and directed by ex-members of Activate Youth Theatre. The play explored the concept of home in a changing Ireland. Where is home these days and what does it mean?

Requiem for Lena

By Veronica Coburn. This play was commissioned as part of the NAYD Nextus project.

Morelight

By Bryony Lavery. The play portrays the life of a Geisha and explores ideas about women being seen as objects. The play was commissioned as part of the New Connections programme.

After Juliet

By Sharman MacDonald. The play was commissioned as part of the New Connections programme.

My City Saturday

A play devised by the youth theatre members about life in their city on a typical Saturday.

'Juliets and Romeos', Shakespeare in Shandon

A promenade performance through Shandon of scenes and monologues from Romeo and Juliet.

4.3.4 Attending youth theatre and professional theatre productions

The majority of youth theatres endeavour to see professional theatre. It is an important but irregular part of their youth theatre programme. Youth theatres are also likely to travel to see other youth theatre productions, with a small number of youth theatres watching several youth theatre productions every year. Youth theatre leaders want to expose members to a wide world of theatre that will inspire them and open their eyes to different approaches and styles.

• PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

The majority of youth theatre leaders state that their members see a professional theatre production at least once a year. During Census Week, the senior group of Roundabout Youth Theatre went to see Rosaleen McDonagh's play *Stuck* at the Project Arts Centre and Limerick Youth Theatre went to see a dance performance. However, only 44.20% of 448 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires for those aged 12 and over reported that they had attended a professional theatre piece with their youth theatre, indicating that less than half of all youth theatre members are attending professional theatre together on an annual basis.

Youth theatres who regularly attend professional theatre generally negotiate deals with theatre venues or receive special offers or free tickets from theatre companies and venues. It is this assistance that makes professional theatre trips feasible. Roundabout Youth Theatre mentioned that they had received free tickets from a theatre company and a dance company which enabled them to bring youth theatre members to see performances. The cost of theatre tickets can make professional theatre inaccessible for youth theatres with low levels of funding and resources. One or two venues who maintained good relationships with their local youth theatres had actually initiated a 'Youth Theatre Member' rate that was lower than the general concession rate. The majority of youth theatres subsidise a theatre trip so that the young person is either attending for free or is contributing a small sum towards the travel and ticket costs.

Youth theatre leaders want to expose members to challenging, high quality theatre. Many leaders were keen to take their members to see more theatre but felt limited by the options that were available to them locally. Youth theatres that are not based near urban centres mentioned that it can be difficult to find theatre that is not only suitable for the age range of the group but also theatrically interesting. These leaders felt that some arts centres and local venues were under pressure to programme theatre that would be popular with local audiences but that may not be the most theatrically challenging material for their youth theatre members. Some leaders spoke of their desire to expose members to a style of theatre that was different to the amateur theatre background of their local area. They felt that experiencing a wider range of theatre styles would encourage their members to experiment and find their own way of making theatre. Leaders at the Backstage Youth Theatre praised a recent professional theatre network, NOMAD, for bringing quality theatre to their local venue.

Youth theatre leaders say that a lack of time is one of the main barriers to organising theatre trips. Leaders feel that they can put in an immense effort to arrange tickets and travel to a local town only to be disappointed by the quality of the theatre that they experience. They feel that theatre trips can be a great risk when there is no

guarantee of quality. A sense of cultural or geographical isolation can really limit the practical possibilities, as well as the aspirations of youth theatres. However, some youth theatres do travel great distances to create opportunities for their members, Co. Clare Youth Theatre recently travelled to Dublin to see a performance at the Abbey Theatre.

In 2004, NAYD introduced the Young Critics Programme to offer youth theatre members greater opportunities to see professional theatre, to explore and articulate their opinions about theatre and learn about the craft of the critic. Some youth theatres have also developed activities to support their members' engagement with professional theatre:

- Co. Sligo Youth Theatre recently introduced their own 'Young Audiences' programme to explore professional theatre productions in their local area;
- Co. Clare Youth Theatre and Backstage Youth Theatre have arranged post-show talks or workshops with directors and actors that have been involved in local touring productions.

• YOUTH THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

The majority of youth theatres do travel to see each other's productions. During Census Week, the youth theatre in Killeshandra went to see the production of a neighbouring group, Celbridge Youth Drama went to see Kildare Youth Theatre's production of *Macbeth*, Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTH) travelled to see a performance given by LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon in their home town. Of the 448 youth theatre members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires, 55.80% had been to see another youth theatre show.

Some youth theatres build strong relationships with other local youth theatres and they will regularly go and see each other's work. This is very common within youth theatres run by Local Authority Arts Offices. The youth theatres are often encouraged to view themselves as belonging to a countywide community of youth theatres and the Local Authority Arts Office will usually fund tickets and travel so that they can view each other's performances. The Local Authority run youth theatres in Leitrim are one example of this tradition:

"The youth theatre were at Carrigallen last night and they've been to Carrick-on-Shannon before Christmas... a contemporary version of King Lear which I really liked and they have been to the Sligo Drama Circle and that was a devised piece that was all about teenage issues and stuff and they really enjoyed that. And we had questions and answers afterwards." – Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTH) Leader

However, youth theatres do build strong relationships with youth theatres from different counties and different backgrounds. These relationships are often created during residential exchanges and festivals. Urban youth theatres demonstrated low levels of attendance at youth theatre performances. There were very low levels of engagement between the multiple youth theatres based in Dublin and Cork city and it was uncommon for youth theatres in these areas to see each other's work. Galway Youth Theatre and Limerick Youth Theatre also reported low levels of engagement with youth theatres in their area and they prioritised engagement with professional theatre practice.

Many youth theatres mentioned seeing other youth theatre performances at the New Connections festival (previously Shell Connections) at the Everyman Palace in Cork and more recently at the Riverbank Arts Centre in Newbridge. Some youth theatre leaders also mentioned NAYD programmes such as Nextus or the National and Regional Youth Theatre Festivals as opportunities to develop relationships with other youth theatres. Leaders and members felt that participation in Connections had allowed them to see the work of many other youth theatres from around the country. Both leaders and members commented on the unique performance context of a festival. It provides an opportunity for youth theatre members to perform and to weigh their work against the quality of other youth theatre productions. A sense of competition can sometimes be made explicit in the formal structures of a festival.

"Yeah of course quality matters. You know, you go to compete really against the other ones, you know? So you want to... you want to take it seriously." – Independent Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members are concerned about producing quality theatre and want to see quality theatre in return. They want to view youth theatre as they would any other theatre production:

"Youth theatre is getting more credible now, like in the last two years there's just been some really good stuff produced and I think it's starting to lose that stigma of like... people are starting to say "That was

actually a really good show” and not just for young people, do you know what I mean like? But they aren’t just young people – they’re actors as well.” – Dublin Youth Theatre Member

Other youth theatre members wanted an audience to see youth theatre productions within the context that they were created. They wanted an audience to understand what they recognised as the purpose of youth theatre productions:

“Well, like you know, if the production is bad or whatever, like... you learn from that. So I think like even if a play is bad, it’s more about having fun with the play instead of having it perfect. It’s what you make of it really instead of what the audience make of it.” – Lightbulb Youth Theatre Member

This sense of understanding the context of a youth theatre performance is possible when youth theatres see each other’s work as part of an ongoing and developing relationship. It is easier within this framework for young people to have a shared understanding of each other’s rehearsal process.

Lack of time and the cost of travel and tickets were the most common reasons that youth theatres did not attend other youth theatre productions. Some youth theatres feel very geographically isolated and may not have developed relationships with nearby youth theatres or the nearest youth theatre may be some distance away. Some leaders mentioned that NAYD’s “Go See YT” fund had helped subsidise travel costs and enabled them to travel to their nearest youth theatre. A few youth theatre leaders were negative about the standards of youth theatre productions and felt happier to encourage their members to see local professional theatre instead.

Youth theatre leaders and members also cited trips to see professional and youth theatre productions as a strong social element of their programme:

“Our social event is going to a show. All the girls got dressed up for going to the theatre last week. That was brilliant. So we went at Christmas and we went last week and we’re going again this Thursday night to another show which is in Ballina so we don’t have to organise a mini-bus or anything and... so it’s brilliant.” – Ballina Youth Theatre Leader

4.3.5 Festivals and Exchanges

Youth theatres really value taking part in festivals and events and they can often be the highpoint of a youth theatre year. These type of events do not generally form part of the regular youth theatre programme but may happen once every year or two depending on the youth theatre. These activities typically revolve around group participation and group exchange, however, some projects may involve the participation of individual youth theatre members working with young people from other youth theatres, youth drama groups or arts projects.

The key to these types of activities is the artistic and social exchange that takes place between young people from different youth theatres and backgrounds. Youth theatre leaders report that this ‘exchange’ can be viewed as an important landmark for a group but they felt it was important that youth theatre members have enough time to bond and develop as a group first before they look outwards and engage with others. Participation in festivals and exchanges can foster a sense of belonging to a wider community and this can prove beneficial for both members and leaders.

Each youth theatre builds a different type of relationship network, with some youth theatres feeling part of a very local community and others having an international sense of community. Other youth theatres may feel part of the youth theatre community, the professional arts community or the local youth work community. Youth theatres organise participation in exchanges and festivals based on their own particular relationship network and outlook and there are also a few who are happiest working in isolation.

Youth theatres who took part in Centre Stage +10 had participated in:

- **NAYD**
Recent NAYD festivals and programmes such as Regional Festivals involving skills workshops and performance, the European Children’s Theatre Festival in Cork, Young Critics Programme, the National Youth Theatre. They had also participated in older projects organised by or with NAYD such as week-long National Festivals, NEXTUS, Bards in the Yard, NAYD 25th Birthday Celebrations and European Youth Theatre Encounters.

- **New Connections**

Many youth theatres had taken part in the New Connections Festival (previously Shell Connections), an initiative of the National Theatre in London. The New Connections Programme commissions playwrights to write for young actors and provides opportunities to workshop with the writer, perform in a home venue, present the production to an NT Staff Director, and perform it at a New Connections Partner Theatre.

- **Local Festivals**

Youth theatres had participated in local festivals. In some cases these were local arts or community festivals. Some youth theatres mentioned St. Patrick's Day parades while others such as Co. Carlow Youth Theatre had a record of participating in their local arts festival, Éigse. Kildare Youth Theatre had also engaged with a Human Rights Festival.

- **Local Youth Theatre Festivals**

Youth theatres were also creating festivals that focused on youth theatre workshops and performances. Youth theatres in Kildare (Kildare Youth Theatre, Griese Youth Theatre and Celbridge Youth Drama and another local youth drama group from Prosperous) participate in an annual festival, combining skills workshops and performance opportunities. Roscommon Youth Theatre hosted a youth theatre festival called 'West Awake' and the South East Network of Youth Theatres (SENYT) used to hold annual youth theatre festivals.

- **Theatre and Arts Festivals**

Some youth theatres regularly participate in mainstream festivals. Dublin Youth Theatre and Roundabout Youth Theatre have taken part in the Dublin Fringe Festival and Galway Youth Theatre regularly participate in the Cúirt Festival and the Galway Arts Festival.

- **International Festivals and Exchanges**

Youth theatres had also participated in European and International festivals and exchanges. Some youth theatres had sent individual members to take part in European Youth Theatre Encounters while others had organised exchanges where the youth theatre group travelled to another country and took part in a combination of workshops, theatre performances and cultural exchanges. These exchanges were generally theatre-focused but could sometimes serve a broader cultural or social remit and include multi-art form practice. Waterford Youth Arts had recently attended the Big Youth Theatre Festival in London hosted by the National Association for Youth Theatres in England and Kildare Youth Theatre had recently visited Teatro della Limonaia in Florence, Italy as part of an ongoing exchange programme.

In general, youth theatres were very interested in participating in festivals and exchanges. The main barriers to participation were cited as lack of time, lack of funding and a lack of contacts or experience in creating exchanges. Youth theatre leaders felt more secure when a national organisation such as NAYD was involved because they could more confident about the level of accommodation, food and welfare provided and they believed that artistic and welfare policies were similar to their own. Youth theatre leaders were concerned about the level of responsibility they would have for the welfare of their members on an exchange or residential festival. Youth theatres were also concerned about finding good exchange partners who would have a similar ethos and way of working with young people, would have a similar age range within their membership and a similar level of interest and ability in drama/theatre.

Youth theatre leaders who have been involved in exchanges and festivals are very positive about the outcomes for their members and the importance of these types of activities within their programme.

"I think exchanges and festivals have a really profound effect on young people- theatrically, socially and emotionally. You just see people going away and coming back about three foot taller because they've experienced other stimuli and I think it's really, really positive"

- Artistic Director, Graffiti Theatre Company.

Youth theatre members and leaders reflect that participating in an exchange or festival can help young people feel not just part of a wider community but also part of a wider artistic community.

"The first time when we were in Cork [Connections Festival] when we were all there with loads of other youth theatres and stuff... and kind of realising that all these people, all these youth theatre people are kind of like-minded. They're all absolutely off the rocker completely and you cannot get embarrassed, you cannot... no-one will look at you weird for saying something random or anything. You're all together." - Portlaoise Youth Theatre Member

“We’ve always had somebody from Activate in every Encounter (European Youth Theatre Encounter). There was always someone coming back with stuff. The utter excitement of it and the way some people’s lives just utterly changed. One member is now working in theatre in Germany but she always said that this was because they went to Denmark [the youth theatre took part in a festival called ‘The Celts are Coming’] and she suddenly realised that there was a whole life of theatre going on that she could be part of and, you know, she went to live in Germany and stayed there.”

– Activate Youth Theatre Leader

The statistics from the member questionnaires indicate that the level of participation in festivals and exchanges is quite low. However, leaders from many groups described previous experience of these types of activities. The majority of youth theatre members remain part of their group for between one and three years and the irregularity of these exchanges and festivals means that particular generations of members can miss out on these valued experiences.

There is no record of the 6-11 age group participating in festivals and exchanges that involve travel although some younger members may be involved in local festivals such as St. Patrick’s Day parades. The 12-13 age group also demonstrate low levels of participation in these type of activities, the only activities mentioned for this age range were the European Children’s Theatre Encounter in Cork and the NAYD Regional Festivals in 2006.

CASE STUDY: Boomerang Youth Theatre – international exchange

International collaboration and exchanges are central to the annual programme of Boomerang Youth Theatre. The youth theatre members participate in two international exchanges every year. Groups of young people have travelled to and worked with other young people in Germany, Finland, Czech Republic, Italy, France, Portugal, England and more recently to Jordan and the Middle East. The exchanges are often issue-based, with young people from the youth theatre exploring diverse cultures, traditions and opinions through the medium of drama, other arts forms and discussion. Youth Theatre Leaders at Boomerang feel their members really benefit from these exchanges:

“It’s just really good to let the kids see these totally different styles and totally different ideas. It does change the way they look at things. It’s great for them to have that at such a young age. I think it creates much more interesting theatre as well because there is a language barrier there and so they had to learn to relate to each other in a completely different way. I think, really, they just see outside of their own little world. They do start questioning things a little more.”

Boomerang have also been involved in a joint venture with The Playhouse in Derry called YouC.A.N. It is a cross-border, cross-community Youth Culture Arts Network that promotes partnerships between arts and youth organisations and works towards developing creative and innovative projects to facilitate cross-border communication between young people. Activities centre on annual conferences and training for young artists.

4.4 Other Elements of Practice

Other elements of youth theatre practice such as programme delivery, evaluation and documentation and recruitment are explored under the following headings:

- 4.4.1 Programme Delivery
- 4.4.2 Evaluation and Documentation
- 4.4.3 Recruitment of Members

4.4.1 Programme Delivery

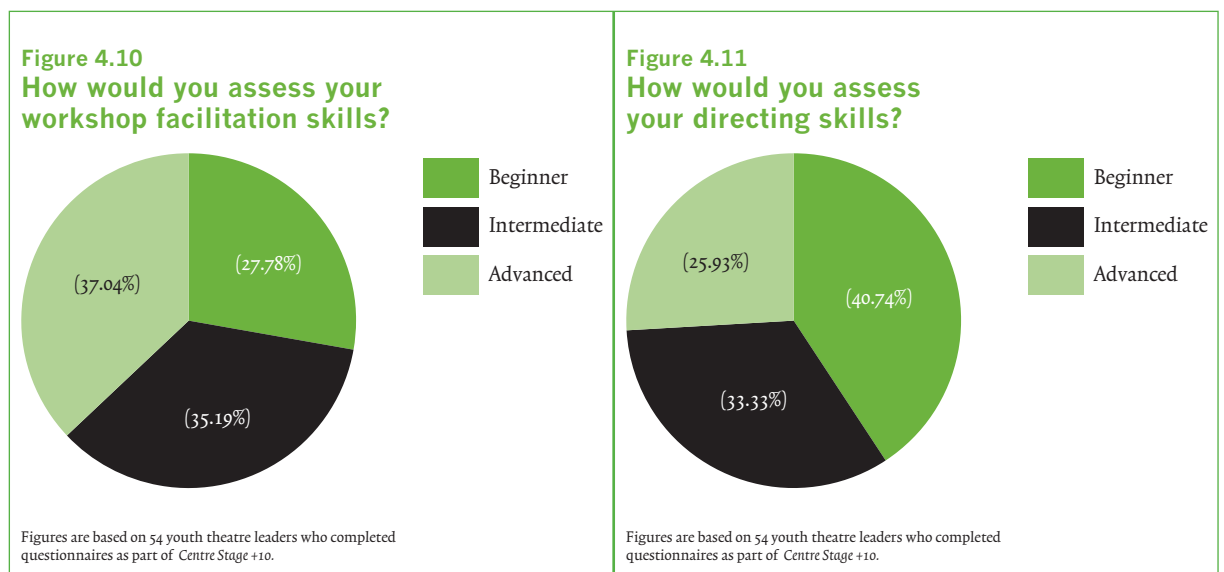
Youth theatre leaders have high levels of skills and training. In general, leaders felt that they had achieved good levels of core youth theatre skills. Leaders felt comfortable facilitating drama workshops and leading a variety of activities such as drama games, improvisation and devising. Leaders spoke positively about their ability to work with and relate to young people and were happy with their leadership and teamwork skills.

SKILLS OF YOUTH THEATRE LEADERS

Figure 4.10 indicates that leaders are generally confident in their facilitation skills with 35.19% of leaders who completed questionnaires describing themselves as having an intermediate level of skill and 37.04% describing themselves as having advanced facilitation skills. Leaders who described themselves as ‘beginners’ came from a wide age range but all had been working in youth theatre for a comparatively short amount of time. Some leaders also reported specialisms in certain areas such as puppetry, clowning, physical theatre, process drama, and Shakespeare.

“I suppose my skills are... I’d say, certainly management of teams and of people. I’m good on drama skills, improvisation and workshops. I would be a director and I’d know the production side of things pretty well and would have a life of training on that. I would be good around group dynamics- people working together, teamwork and empowering youngsters. - Carrigallen Youth Theatre Leader

Youth theatre leaders were also asked through the questionnaire how they would assess their directing skills. Figure 4.11 demonstrates that youth theatre leaders are less confident of their directing skills with 40.74% of them describing themselves as beginners. However, the majority of youth theatre leaders feel they have intermediate or advanced levels of directing skills and some mentioned that they were very confident of their rehearsal techniques and characterisation. Some youth theatre leaders were most comfortable directing script-based productions with a rehearsal process that was built around the interpretation of the text and characters. This is particularly common with leaders who come from a background in amateur theatre but not exclusively so, as theatre in Ireland has traditionally been text-based and this is the comfort zone of many youth theatre leaders across the country. A number of leaders were more comfortable with a rehearsal process built on a period of devising and script-writing while other leaders felt most comfortable with physical theatre.



EXTERNAL FACILITATORS AND DIRECTORS

*“What we’re looking for I suppose, is things that we don’t have or things that they’re better at doing.”
– Co. Wexford Youth Theatre Leader*

In general, youth theatre leaders do not deliver the annual programme of a youth theatre by themselves. They will bring in freelance facilitators, writers, artists, directors and designers to complement the expertise that already exists within the youth theatre. This level of input by external staff will vary according to the budget and resources that are available as well as the ethos of the youth theatre and attitude of the youth theatre leaders. The most common way that youth theatre members engage with external staff is through specialist skills workshops. This is a short-term input that focuses on a particular skill that youth theatre leaders believe would benefit the members and provide more experienced members with opportunities for progression. The most common specialist skills that leaders would like to explore with external facilitators are voice, movement and physical styles of theatre. Other skills areas that leaders have been keen to explore are:

- choreography;
- singing;
- stage combat and swordplay;
- street theatre;
- radio plays;
- viewpoints technique;
- technical workshops in lighting and sound;
- mime;
- the Lecoq approach to physical theatre;
- Alexander Technique.

“Always artistic skills... there is enough experience in the youth theatre to do the process-based work, the reflection, work about social issues, devising, that sort of work. What they have to develop are the artistic skills like Commedia, voice work and viewpoints.” – Kildare Youth Theatre Leader

External facilitators are sourced through the leader’s own social and professional network, through parent organisations such as Local Authority Arts Offices, theatre companies or youth arts organisations as well as through NAYD. Some youth theatres will also approach theatre companies and individual performers in local arts centres and theatres about facilitating a workshop with their group. Clare Youth Theatre has run workshops with two different actors who were touring productions to their local arts centre.

Youth theatres are also interested in developing relationships with external staff that will contribute towards a more long-term process or a production. Youth theatres may hire directors and designers that work with members throughout a rehearsal period and a production week. The four large autonomous youth theatres, Dublin Youth Theatre, Limerick Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre and Co. Sligo Youth Theatre all regularly hire freelance directors to work on their main annual productions. Other youth theatres have also hired freelance directors including some run by professional theatre companies, Local Authority Arts Offices and youth arts organisations.

Youth theatres may also commission writers and other artists to work with them to develop scripts and projects. For example, Co. Wexford Youth Theatre worked with a leader skilled in Commedia dell’Arte to learn some physical theatre skills and devise and write a piece for an Arts Festival, while the final performance of the piece was directed by the regular youth theatre leader. A few youth theatre leaders mentioned that they would be interested in the support of a skilled facilitator to help with the long term development of specialist skills such as devising.

CASE STUDY: West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre – external facilitators and artists

West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre regularly finds opportunities to engage with artists who may be involved in arts projects or exhibitions at the centre. The youth theatre commissioned a writer to create a play for their younger age group in 2005. Frances Kay worked with the youth theatre members and staff to develop script ideas and then created a play called *Corcadia* that was performed by the younger age group and directed by the regular youth theatre leader. The project was funded by a commissions award. Leaders felt that it was of huge benefit to the members to experience the process of the writer and thought it had been a very successful development in their programme for the younger age group.

The youth theatre is also keen to bring in external facilitators and artists to assist the training of the core youth theatre leader. The youth theatre recently hired an external facilitator to act as mentor to the youth theatre leader during the rehearsal process for a play by Shakespeare.

“I get to work with other people and constantly be kept on my toes. I can learn various different things from other people and everybody has their own different styles, you know? I suppose my style is constantly developing as well, as a result of the different people that I work with. Just being in the room with somebody else, you are able to pick up different things – the way they say things and their use of language. So it’s really intriguing watching other people work. I’ll be sitting there taking my notes and seeing what I can learn out of it so that I can incorporate ideas into future classes.” – West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre Leader

REASONS FOR HIRING EXTERNAL FACILITATORS OR DIRECTORS

Leaders cited specific reasons for bringing in external specialists to assist with the skills development of their youth theatre members. Youth theatre leaders felt that members should be exposed to other theatre styles and types of work but that they should also work with a variety of different leaders. It was important to many leaders that young people understand that there isn’t just one way of doing things. Stakeholders remarked that youth

theatre members who work with a variety of facilitators and experience different approaches become less dependent on a sole youth theatre leader. Working with freelancers and working with a variety of regular youth theatre leaders can help members develop a bond with the identity of the youth theatre rather than simply the youth theatre leader and can assist with sustainability issues if the key youth theatre leader leaves.

Freelance facilitators, directors and artists can help the leaders learn new skills as well. The short-term specialist workshops as well as more long-term involvement can support a leader with aspects of theatre where they feel less confident. Youth theatre leaders commented that they really enjoyed learning from other people’s style of facilitation too and valued the opportunity to watch someone else work. These experiences often provided them with an opportunity to stand back and watch the participation of their members on a more objective level. Youth theatre leaders reported that working alongside another skilled leader can refresh and invigorate their work and many voluntary leaders remarked that it also gave them a much needed break. Some youth theatres also consider the fact that certain facilitators or directors may increase the status of a youth theatre project or the profile of the youth theatre.

Activate Youth Theatre employed an ex-member to write a script based on a collaborative, devising process and an ex-member to direct the final production. The youth theatre leader was keen to reflect the type of director and writer that these ex-members had become but also to celebrate the continued creative relationships between current members, ex-members and youth theatre leaders. It is also worth noting that leaders highlighted a few difficulties that can arise with the process of letting an external facilitator or director work with your group:

“The handover can be a difficult process. You’ve got to be prepared to step back and you’ve got to know who you’re dealing with. I would only take in a director if I was really, really sure that it didn’t upset that creative exchange. If somebody started to enforce or direct in a way that I see some people directing, I think it would be completely against the whole ethos of Activate or Physically Phishy.”
 – Activate and Physically Phishy Youth Theatre Leader

• TRAINING NEEDS OF YOUTH THEATRE LEADERS

Youth theatre leaders were asked to rank their training needs as part of the leader’s questionnaire. Leaders get involved in youth theatre because of a commitment to young people and a passion for theatre and drama. Their self-assessment of training needs (Table 4.1) underlines their enjoyment of practical drama work with young people and their commitment to skill development in this area.

Table 4.1 Training Needs of Youth Theatre Leaders

OVERALL RANK	AREA OF TRAINING
1	Workshop facilitation
1	Directing
2	Voice
3	Acting
4	Devising
5	Improvisation
6	Movement
7	Writing
8	Street theatre
9	Technical (lighting, sound)
10	Design
11	Circus skills
12	Mask
13	Event management
14	Fundraising
15	Child protection & welfare
16	Marketing
17	Stage management
18	Governance (boards etc.)
19	Music

4.4.2 Evaluation and Documentation

Youth theatres are all involved in evaluating and documenting their work to some degree. In general, youth theatre leaders are keen to keep records of workshop plans and scripts as well as photographs and films of productions and events. Youth theatre leaders are involved in very informal styles of evaluation but a few examples of a more formal approach exist around the country.

• EVALUATION

Youth theatres were asked if they had evaluated any work during Census Week. Of the 36 youth theatres who responded:

- 55.56% youth theatres had evaluated something during Census Week;
- 44.44% youth theatres had not evaluated something during Census Week.

Figure 4.12 provides further information on the types of activity that were evaluated during Census Week.

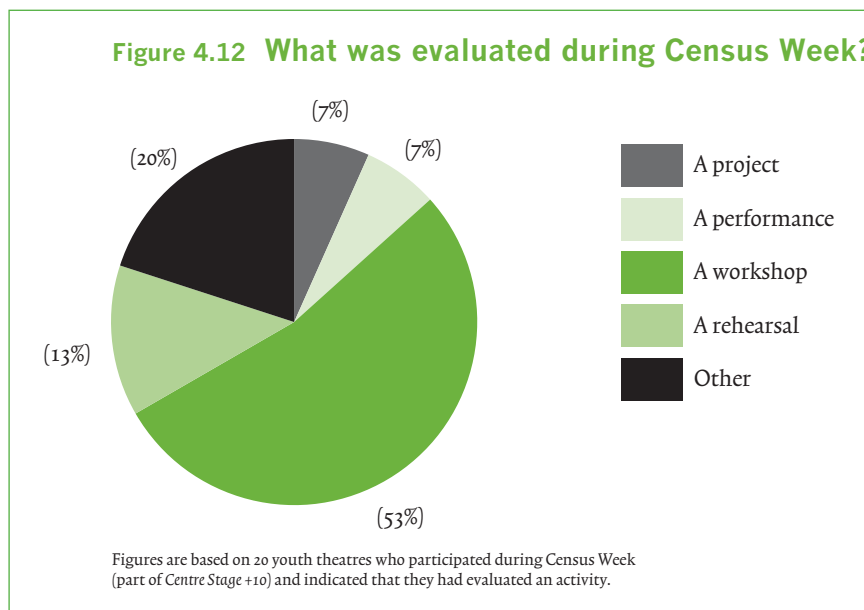


Figure 4.12 indicates that a significant number of youth theatres are regularly evaluating their core activities. Youth theatre leaders explained in interviews that this evaluation generally consisted of short and informal discussions between leaders or leaders and members at the end of a workshop or rehearsal to explore simple questions such as “How do you think that went?”. Leaders state that the discussions influence plans for the next workshop, rehearsal or project but the outcomes of the discussions are not generally recorded or written down.

Some youth theatres create more formal evaluation sessions for youth theatre members at the end of projects. These types of sessions are also discussion based and provide young people with a dedicated space to feed back their opinions on youth theatre activities. Other youth theatres, such as West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre, complete a one-page evaluation form at the end of each workshop that is added to a central youth theatre file. Information about the content of the workshop and the response of the group and the leader are recorded.

Youth theatres do not generally engage with formal evaluation structures that examine whether youth theatres are achieving their aims. There is very little academic evaluation of youth theatre activities and the benefits of participation for youth theatre members. A few Local Authorities, such as Co. Mayo Arts Office have organised external evaluations of their youth theatres. Kildare Youth Theatre encourages postgraduate students from NUI Maynooth to study their youth theatre and evaluate the benefits of participation for its members. In general, evaluation ranks quite low in the priorities of youth theatre leaders. A lack of time and expertise prevents people from more formal evaluation processes but a dislike of administration and bureaucracy also influences their practice.

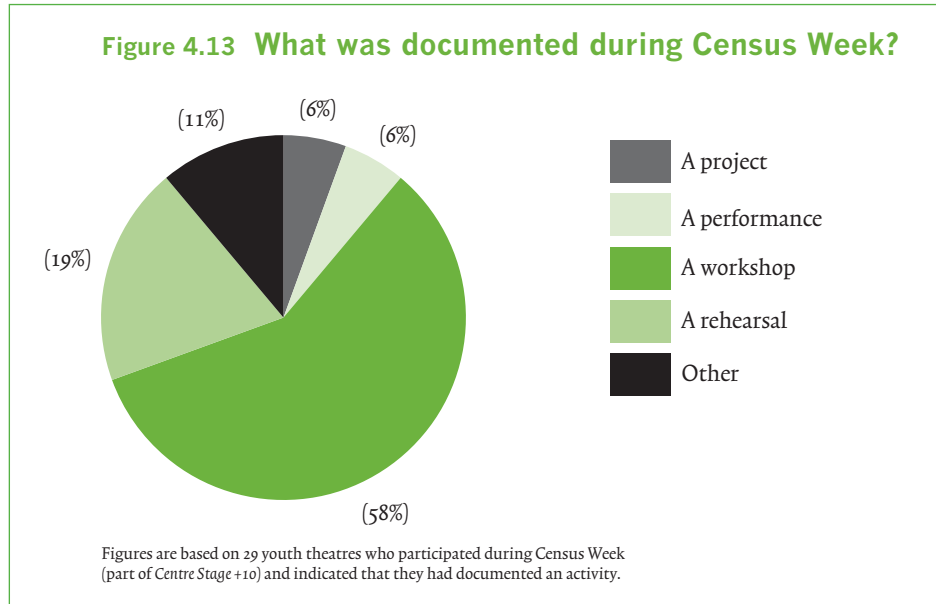
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DOCUMENTATION

Youth theatres were asked if they had documented any work during Census Week. Of the 36 youth theatres who responded:

- 80.56% of youth theatres had documented something during Census Week;
- 19.44% of youth theatres had not documented something during Census Week.

Figure 4.13 provides further information on the types of activity that were documented during Census Week.



Youth theatre leaders show more positive attitudes towards documentation. In Census Week, leaders stated that they documented many of the core activities of their youth theatre. Leaders may have kept records of workshops plans, written down new scenes from a devised piece, updated rehearsal notes or filmed or photographed an activity such as a performance. The motivation for this level of documentation can be very practical if youth theatres are working through a devising or a rehearsal process or if it's part of a contractual agreement with a funder. It can also be driven by a commitment to memory building that validates and support youth theatre practice.

Youth theatre members are becoming significant documenters of their own work, using new technologies to post comments, photographs and film clips on their youth theatre web pages. Photographs, scripts and programmes traditionally remained in the office drawer or the attic of a youth theatre leader but young people are increasingly sharing their youth theatre memories online to a wider youth theatre community through bebo and myspace.

4.4.3 Recruitment of Members

“The members will always be there. It’s our responsibility to find them. We as a Local Authority have a civic responsibility to provide that kind of service for our young people. The problem will never be membership because there will always be young people who will always need this.”

– Local Authority Arts Officer, Co.Wexford

Youth theatre membership appears to be thriving in Ireland. The 39 youth theatres who took part in the Centre Stage +10 Census Week reported a membership of 1452 young people, an average of 37 members per youth theatre. However, a significant number of youth theatres have a membership of less than 20 young people, including some well-funded youth theatres who have the resources to carry out effective recruitment drives. There is great disparity between the membership levels of youth theatres around the country even though youth theatres are often using the same recruitment strategies. It is an issue effecting both rural and urban areas alike. What is clear from leaders and stakeholders is that it is easier to attract young people to youth theatres that already have high membership levels, a strong programme of activities and a sense of excitement and commitment among the membership.

Once youth theatres become caught in a cycle where they are losing members and are unsuccessful at recruiting

new ones, it can have an effect on their ability to plan and provide a strong programme and have a knock-on effect on the atmosphere among existing members. Some youth theatre leaders and stakeholders point to ineffective or non-existent recruitment strategies as a significant problem, while others feel that the sector is not communicating effectively with young people and that there may be problems in 'selling youth theatre', that is expressing the unique values and opportunities that make youth theatre different. Others point to a shift in youth culture as the main reason for difficulties in recruitment. They point to increased pressure from schools and parents to succeed in exams as well as increased levels of part-time work as large factors in this trend.

A Youth Work Services Manager at Catholic Youth Care believed that this trend was something which has an effect on all areas of youth work:

"I've seen in youth work in general, both at voluntary level and at full-time level, a gradual slide towards the younger age group. I think it's because it is easy to engage younger kids. I think the older ones are harder to reach because people perceive them as more challenging. I think the other thing is that the programmes need to be engaging, creative and challenging or else they are not going to engage. Because I mean there are loads of other things that they can do with their time. They will vote with their feet. Whereas a 10,11,12 year old, they will come to something because it's on."

The most common type of recruitment strategy is passive in nature. Leaders rely on word of mouth to bring in extra members and will ask youth theatre members to talk to their friends and see if they are interested in joining. Youth theatre leaders report that this is a very effective way to bring new young people to the youth theatre and some youth theatres rely on word of mouth as their sole recruitment strategy.

Small youth theatres who run one workshop group have the resources and staff to typically accommodate up to 25 members, though some will accept more. These youth theatres may only be able to accept 4 or 5 new members every year and can be reluctant to run recruitment drives that may result in leaders having to disappoint young people who are genuinely interested in joining.

Leaders report that word of mouth is the most effective but also the fairest method of recruitment in this instance. Leaders also indicated that young people who come to the youth theatre on the recommendation of existing members have a clear set of realistic expectations on joining the youth theatre. However, youth theatre leaders and stakeholders pointed out a number of difficulties that arise when recruitment strategies are entirely passive. They pointed out that it usually doesn't help the diversity of youth theatre members as it can multiply the number of young people from similar areas and backgrounds and can increase any existing gender imbalance in the group. It can also be difficult for leaders to estimate membership for the year or ensure a consistent group of young people in the Spring when members traditionally leave for study and exams.

The most popular type of active recruitment is delivering free workshops in secondary schools. Youth theatre leaders arrange opportunities to work directly with young people through practical drama workshops to help young people get a 'taste-tester' of youth theatre. Leaders can target schools in specific local towns or areas of a city to balance out the geographic spread of their members and also target boys' schools to address a gender imbalance in the group. Many youth theatre leaders work professionally as freelance drama facilitators within formal education settings and they also direct interested young people to the youth theatre that they are connected to. A further example is The Civic Theatre in Tallaght which runs a theatre project for local Transition Year students and at the completion of the project provides information about the local youth theatres in the area.

Youth theatre leaders find that there can be difficulties with recruiting young people directly from schools. Leaders are often only invited to provide the free workshops for 1st year, 2nd year and 4th year students or asked to run workshops within 30/40 minute class times. There is also confusion about whether leaders are allowed to gather the contact details of interested young people within a school so that they can be contacted at a later date to discuss their interest in joining.

Limerick Youth Theatre mentioned that they had stopped running workshops in schools as a recruitment method because they felt that atmosphere and levels of participation weren't representative of the youth theatre experience and may actually be putting young people off. Instead, they make a presentation on the youth theatre and its activities and simply encourage young people to turn up and try it out.

Youth theatres try many different approaches to recruitment, based on their knowledge of the local area and local young people but also based on their youth theatre model and resources:

- Youth theatres place advertisements in local newspapers, village newsletters, church bulletins or on bebo pages and youth theatre websites. Youth theatres may also be featured in the brochure of a local arts centre where activities are based;
- Youth theatres get referrals from local youth services, residential centres for young people and from local teachers who believe that youth theatre could be of benefit to particular young people that they are working with;
- Sometimes the high profile of a youth theatre or its parent organisation can attract the interest of young people or their parents who will make contact with the youth theatre to talk about joining without seeing any direct advertising. This would be more likely to take place within the large autonomous youth theatres or within those run by professional theatre companies;
- Productions are often the public face of youth theatres and many young people become interested in joining after seeing a performance. They may be attracted by the standard of the production, by the atmosphere around the production or sometimes by the sense of teamwork and group achievement that is evident amongst members. Some youth theatres will keep in touch with interested young people over a long period of time, inviting them to productions and events to maintain their interest until the time of year when they can accept new members;
- Some of the larger youth theatres run outreach projects in city estates or local towns and villages, targeting areas where young people have a low level of access to the arts and other services. These outreach projects can attract a variety of young people to the main youth theatre activities once the project finishes.
- Youth theatres also attract members who are participating in other types of activities being run by a parent organisation. For instance, young people who are involved in an art project within a youth arts organisation may be willing to try youth theatre as well or a young person who participates in a school project run by a professional theatre company may be willing to try the youth theatre based within that company;
- Youth theatres may also attract members from other activities and groups working within the same building. For example, Co. Carlow Youth Theatre runs regular workshops within the local youth services building and may attract the attention of the young people who are regularly using the space. Stagecraft Youth Theatre in Clonmel often attracts young people who are attending other activities within the local arts centre;
- Youth theatre leaders who live in the same area as their youth theatre often try direct recruitment by walking around the local area, speaking with young people about the youth theatre and inviting them to come along and try a workshop. This is easiest within a rural setting where the youth theatre leader has strong local connections and is known by parents in the area.
- A few youth theatres such as the Cork School of Music Youth Theatre and Independent Youth Theatre will recruit a majority of members through other drama courses and classes. Students who attend the drama department at the Cork School of Music are invited to attend the youth theatre. Young people who attend the Independent Theatre Workshop are encouraged to join the Independent Youth Theatre. Both youth theatres also welcome any young people from the local area who have an interest in drama.

CASE STUDY: Tallaght Youth Theatre – recruitment strategies

Tallaght Youth Theatre is an autonomous youth theatre run on a completely voluntary basis. The youth theatre operates a number of active recruitment strategies however, at the time of the *Centre Stage +10* Census Week, the youth theatre had low membership levels.

Strategies include:

- running taster workshops in local secondary schools;
- putting up flyers and posters;
- promoting the youth theatre through articles in local newspapers;
- linking with the local youth service and ensuring youth workers have enough information on the youth theatre to refer any interested young people;
- linking with staff who run the Transition Year ‘Tenderfoot Project’ at the The Civic Theatre to ensure they have enough information on the youth theatre to refer any interested young people;
- inviting other local groups of young people to see performances.

The youth theatre runs a recruitment drive at least once a year but will often run additional strategies to increase membership levels prior to a rehearsal process or project. The youth theatre will generally accept members throughout the year.

