

## **SAMPLE THREE-YEAR ARTISTIC PLAN FOR YOUTH THEATRES**

**This is a three-year artistic plan that could be used for any youth theatre. It is primarily aimed at youth theatres in their first year of existence but could equally be applied to a more mature youth theatre.**

**This plan is a guide to help youth theatres develop an artistic programme. Every youth theatre has its own distinct character and activity programme, and it is important that this plan is not viewed as ‘*the* youth theatre syllabus’ or a plan that all youth theatres *have to* follow. However, the activities and programming ideas included in this resource will help you develop solid foundations for your youth theatre and support the artistic development of the group.**

**The plan is structured around a three-term year. It is hoped that you find the plan to be realistic, but factors such as manpower, volunteerism, space and finances could have a bearing on how practical it might prove for your youth theatre. We hope that you will build upon this plan and develop your own individual artistic path in accordance with the resources available to you.**

### ***Note***

This sample artistic plan incorporates the roles and responsibilities of an Artistic Director over a 3-year cycle.

This plan assumes that the Artistic Director’s primary responsibility is the artistic and administrative running of the Youth Theatre. In most situations, the Artistic Director will report directly to the board / committee of a Youth Theatre or to a senior staff member within its parent organisation (a theatre company / youth arts organisation / arts centre etc.).

Some youth theatres may call this role the Youth Theatre Director, the Youth Theatre Leader, or the Youth Theatre Facilitator. Whatever the title, there is often a lead person in charge of the day-to-day running of the youth theatre programme and the Artistic Director’s tasks included in this plan are aimed at this individual. It is also important to explore whether the Director can practically fulfill all these tasks himself/herself or whether they need to be delegated to other volunteers / staff / committee members / facilitators / junior leaders. They should take responsibility to develop a long term artistic plan with input from the committee/ board where appropriate or necessary.

Another common situation is where a committee, or a group of individuals, shares the day-to-day running of the youth theatre. In this case, it is very important to explore how these tasks can be delegated to the group at the beginning each year and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Youth theatre is often shortened to ‘YT’ throughout the document.

## Year 1

### 3 Terms

#### The Artistic Director of the Youth Theatre will:

- Actively recruit new members for the youth theatre. This recruitment strategy should be agreed with the board to create a viable and sustainable youth theatre.
- Create a safe, creative place where young people can take part in drama workshops and other related activities regardless of their skill levels, artistic needs and abilities.
- Plan and deliver workshops lasting two hours unless expressly stated.
- Engage with a new group of youth theatre members in a 10-week induction programme.
- Establish a core group of members for the youth theatre.
- Provide more core skills-based workshops in Term 2.
- Present one small performance/sharing in Term 3.
- Provide the group with the opportunity to see quality professional theatre and other youth theatre performances.
- Engage in the NAYD national programme.
- Identify potential junior leaders.

#### **PRE-TERM: (JULY / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER)**

- Contact local youth services and youth cafes to publicise the upcoming recruitment drive for the YT. Follow-up on any young people referred to you by these organisations (referrals).
- Design and conduct a series of 'Taster' recruitment workshops in the catchment area. These will be 1-1 ½ hrs in duration and should accurately reflect the potential work of the youth theatre. They can take place as part of local Summer Projects (July) organised by local youth services and secondary schools, or in schools within the catchment area (focusing on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> years in early September). The aim of these workshops is to recruit members for the youth theatre.
- Host an *Open Day* in your home venue. Along with other leaders and members of the board, be on hand to run a selection workshop for members. Everyone should be welcome to attend. (Mid- late September)
- Contact all new members to offer them a place at the youth theatre and give details of the workshop schedule (late September).
- Recruitment can be harder than you think. Simply putting up a poster in a school will not be enough. Do not underestimate how much work is needed for this phase. See the NAYD fact sheet on recruitment-<http://www.nayd.ie/files/image/MembershipRecruitment.pdf>.

- The hard work done at this stage will pay huge dividends down the line for the youth theatre.

### **TERM 1: OCTOBER - DECEMBER (10 WEEKS)**

- In Term 1, design and facilitate an initial weekly *Introduction to Youth Drama* workshop programme (10 two-hour sessions). This will be with your first intake of youth theatre members, aged between 14 and 18 years of age. The workshops should aim to engage the young people creatively; developing their self-confidence and interpersonal skills; developing their artistic creativity and introducing core theatre skills. The content of these workshops will be designed with the developmental needs of the young people in mind and will contain exercises appropriate to their skill levels and material appropriate to their age. This programme should be a basic introduction to drama and theatre, and include principles and concepts such as Building the Group Dynamic, a Sense of Play, Trust, Teamwork, while developing Observation and Listening skills. It would also introduce drama techniques including Stagecraft, Voice, Movement, Rhythm, Storytelling, Improvisation, Devising and Text, while also developing an Audience- Performer Relationship. The facilitator will lead, encouraging growth and risk taking. (Suggested dates running from October – Dec)
- Programme and organise a trip to the theatre. Dependent on the cost, the group should go to one professional production that would be innovative, or of interest to them, in their local venue. This could happen mid-way during the term or be used as a final social activity before breaking for Christmas.
- Programme a small social activity at the end of the 10-week workshop programme. This could be a little party with pizza and soft drinks, or a trip to cinema, or another suitable activity.

And/or

- Organise a general Annual Fundraising Event to raise money and the profile of the youth theatre. This is a very good way of developing a full, team spirit and also involving friends and family. From here, potential relationships can grow within your organisation and the wider community. Meet the parents and identify those who may help you down the line. Any money raised is a bonus.

And

- Hold a small *Internal Review*, assessing the needs of the membership to see if they are progressing well. Review the facilitation practice within the youth theatre to see if they are providing the young people with a creative and interesting artistic programme.

### **TERM 2: JANUARY – MARCH (8- 10 WEEKS)**

- Lead a 2-hour, weekly drama workshop in *Core Skills* with the members, aimed at engaging the young people creatively; further developing their self-confidence; developing their artistic and acting skills; and in due course preparing them for performances.  
The content could be increasingly theatre skills specific, concentrating on core performance skills such as voice, movement, improvisation, characterisation and text. (Suggested dates 8- 10 weeks, Mid Jan – March).
- Supervise a visit by a guest artist or workshop facilitator. As the group develops, there should be provision for guest facilitators in key, or specialist areas, (perhaps one in term 2 and one in term 3 of the first year). This could complement the ongoing work of the director.
- Programme and organise at least one trip to the theatre. Dependent on the costs, the group should go to one professional production or one youth theatre production in the local venue, a nearby youth theatre venue or a regional city venue. Ideally, this could be the work of one of the guest facilitators, before, during or after their time working with the group.
- Choose a short play for performance in Term 3.

### **TERM 3: MARCH- MAY (10 WEEKS)**

- Direct the members in a performance (Term 3). This could be a small-scale production in a small venue (50-100 seats), or the workshop space, for a very limited number of performances (1-3). You could possibly only open it to friends, family, funders and stakeholders but you could also invite the wider public. This could either be a devised piece, or a showcase of selected texts or scenes. This could be seen as a sharing rather than a major production, and it is important to remember that it will be the group's first time appearing on stage together. It is important that the performance/sharing reflects the ongoing work of the youth theatre, and demonstrates the skills learned and the personal growth within the membership. Rehearsals should take place during the weeks leading up to and including Easter Break. These would take the place of regular workshop activities but provisions should also be made for extra rehearsal time as necessary. Ideally, it should be staged in April/early May- not too close to school exams. The performance should include all those members wanting to act but also make provision for those wanting to take part in a non-performing capacity.
- This could include a last night, fully supervised party in the venue or other suitable location.
- Supervise and conduct an end of year workshop. This should be a *Reflective Workshop* that gives the membership the opportunity to discuss the year and make suggestions for future planning. Also, take names for Year 2 and see who may not want to/be eligible to return. If members are becoming too old, could they take the role of a junior leader at a later date?

- Hold a *Yearly Review* with the artistic team; see what worked, what didn't work and what needs to be improved for next year.

## SUMMER

- Take a break for summer as this will allow the director a chance to re-charge their batteries and the young people can engage in family holidays, exams etc.

Or

- If the youth theatre is affiliated to NAYD, their members are eligible to take part in the NAYD national programme. The youth theatre could apply to NAYD's National Festival of Youth Theatres, which takes place in early July. Youth theatres send in expressions of interest in March/April. The festival usually invites 8 members and 2 leaders per group to attend. This is a very good way to see the work of other YT's, meet new people, learn new skills and make new friends. Members could be 'picked from a hat' or chosen based on attendance and other positive attributes. Participation could be used as a reward for those who fully take part in the YT. It is also a great opportunity for leaders to network.
- Other opportunities for members and leaders to engage with NAYD during Year 1 (All events are free of charge or subject to a very small charge):
  - *March/October*: Young Critics- open to members aged 16 yrs and over.
  - *March/August*: Auditions for National Youth Theatre for production in August. Open to members aged 16 yrs and over.
  - *May/June*: Leading On.... Leaders only training weekend in mid June. Focus on different facilitation skills.

## YEAR 2

### 3 Terms

#### The Artistic Director of the Youth Theatre will:

- Actively recruit another group of new members for the youth theatre.
- Create a safe, creative place where young people can take part in drama workshops and other related activities regardless of their skill levels, artistic needs and abilities.
- Plan and deliver workshops lasting two hours unless expressly stated.
- Engage new and existing members in a 10-week induction programme that introduces the basics as well as challenges existing members (including workshops with guest facilitators).

Or

If you have the capacity to take in 12-20 new members, run a 10-week induction programme for these 1<sup>st</sup> years (as in Year 1) and a separate workshop programme with guest facilitators for existing members (2<sup>nd</sup> years).

- Explore the possibility of presenting one small performance in term 1.
- If you have 1<sup>st</sup> years and 2<sup>nd</sup> years, successfully integrate both groups around Christmas and consolidate the group.
- Provide more core skills- based workshops in Term 2.
- Present one mid scale production in Term 3.
- Further engage in the NAYD national programme
- Develop a partnership with another local Youth Theatre.
- Provide the group with the opportunity to see quality professional theatre and other youth theatre performances.
- Begin to engage with an outside artist to create original work for youth theatre
- Begin to identify older members for junior leader roles.

### **PRE-TERM: (JULY / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER)**

- The same as Year 1.
- Host an *Open Day* in your home venue. You could include a section of the Spring Performance or improvisations from the current members.
- Contact existing members to see who wants to take up their place for the coming year.
- Identify and make contact with other local youth theatres for a possible partnership in Year 2. This may have already happened through involvement with the NAYD national programme.
- Begin to identify a guest artist/director/writer for work on a Big Show with the group in Year 3.
- Book a venue for the spring show. In order to secure a space and for details of the production to be included in the seasonal brochure, this must be done months in advance.

### **TERM 1: OCT- DEC (10 WEEKS)**

- Facilitate a *Welcoming Workshop*. This would include new members and existing members. As the name suggests, its purpose is to help begin the integration of new members within the group.
- In Term 1, design and facilitate weekly ‘*Introduction to Drama & Core Skills*’ workshop programme (9 two-hour workshops). This will include new, incoming members alongside existing members. The workshops should be a combination of group building and core skills. In order for the whole group to gel, it is worth revisiting some of the more effective getting to know you, teambuilding and basic theatre skills exercises from the previous year. These are always worth redoing with a group. In order

to keep the more experienced members interested, these should be interspersed with new, more challenging exercises. This is extremely important. In order to retain the current membership, the YT should be offering them something new and building on what is already there. This can often prove a downfall for youth theatres. Members who are not challenged may get bored, leading to disruptive behaviour or they may simply stop coming.

- If there are enough resources to sustain taking in a whole new group (12-20 new members), then it warrants making two separate groups. Call them the 1<sup>st</sup> years and 2<sup>nd</sup> years. In this case, run your Introduction to Youth Drama programme with 1<sup>st</sup> years, as you did in Year 1. For 2<sup>nd</sup> years, do a combination of *Core Skills* and *Specialist Skills*.
- If you have two groups, then other people could facilitate some of these workshops. These could include board members, visiting professionals, or specialist tutors. These *Specialist Skills workshops* could look at more advanced or specific types of theatre or disciplines. They could include writing, Commedia dell'Arte, stage combat, directing, contact improvisation, devising, mask work, theatre history, Playback, Forum theatre, Technical Theatre, Costume, Spectacle, Acting for Camera, Process Drama, Theatre Discussion & Criticism or Clowning. They could be specific skills that would be utilised in the production in term 3. (The director could sit in /assist the guest facilitator or artistic director. By shadowing the lead facilitator, they will gain lots of practical skills and techniques. This would also comply with Child Welfare procedures). This role could be paid or voluntary depending on what contacts are available. Try to target people you know who are working professionally in the arts and who might happily do one or two workshops free of charge.
- If a junior leader (aged +18) has been identified, then they could assist you in running the workshops. The level of responsibility delegated to them is dependent on their capabilities. They can observe and shadow the main facilitator, and maybe lead one or two warm-up exercises for now.
- Programme and organise a trip to the theatre. Dependent on the costs, the group should go to one professional production and/or another show by a potential partner youth theatre in their home venue. Ideally, this could be the work of one of the guest facilitators or an outside artist/writer/ director, before, during or after their time working with the group. This also would include both new and existing members / 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years in a social setting.
- Programme an end of year social activity.
- Organise a general Annual Fundraising Event to raise money and the profile of the youth theatre.
- Approach a Guest Artist about working on a show with the group in Year 3. It may be one of the facilitators that facilitated one of the *specialist skills workshops* earlier in the term. Someone whose work excited you or

the group responded well to his or her work. Or it could be a writer who may write specifically for the group, or a well-regarded director who may choose a classic or existing text. Either way, before committing to anything, invite them to assist with/ give two or three workshops in the next term. This will be a good opportunity to see how they work and if they would be a good fit with the YT and the young people.

And/or

- You could possibly organise a late winter performance. This could be a tie-in with your local Halloween Festival or Panto, including some of the new & existing members/ 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> years. This may not be a core activity and should only be done if there is sufficient interest from members/staff and an outlet for this to happen. The YT could potentially take part in NAYD's *New Stage* programme (see below).

### **TERM 2: JAN – MARCH (8-19 WEEKS)**

- In Term 2, co-ordinate, plan and facilitate the 2-hour, weekly drama workshops *Specialist Skills* (See previous note on *Specialist Skills*).

And/or

- The group work with an invited artist/writer/director or programme an early rehearsal period/ devising period for an original work created for and by the group and to be staged in Year 3.

And/or

Do a small exchange with a partner youth theatre. Either host or travel to a day-long/weekend workshop event, facilitated by yourself or a specialist workshop facilitator. This project could culminate in a small joint performance/sharing of work. NAYD may be able to offer financial support through its Youth Theatre Support Scheme.

### **TERM 3: MARCH- MAY (8-10 WEEKS)**

- Direct the members in a performance (Term 3). This could be a larger scale production than last year's performance. Ideally, in the same small home venue space (50-100 seats) for a limited number of performances (1-3). This could either be a devised piece, an existing classic text or something from the *Playshare /New Stage* collection. It could be a double or triple bill of one-act plays. The scope should be more ambitious than the performance in Year 1, depending on resources and experience. It is important that the performance reflects the ongoing work of the YT and demonstrates the skills learned and the personal growth of the membership. Rehearsals should take place during the weeks leading up to, and including, Easter Break. Ideally, it should be staged in April/early May. The performance should include all those members

wanting to act but also make provision for those wanting to take part in a non-performing capacity.

- Supervise and conduct an *End of Year Workshop* (similar to Year 1). Identify and approach older members who may be interested in becoming junior leaders.
- Hold a *Yearly Review* with the artistic team.

## SUMMER

- Take a break for summer.

And/or

- Do a small exchange with a partner youth theatre. Either host or travel to a day-long/weekend workshop event facilitated by yourself or a specialist workshop facilitator. The project could culminate in a small joint performance/sharing of work. NAYD may be able to offer financial support through its Youth Theatre Support Scheme.

And/or

- The YT could apply to NAYD's National Festival of Youth Theatres, which takes place in early July. If the group didn't do this in Year 1, then maybe they could apply to participate in Year 2.

## Year 3

### 3 Terms

#### The Artistic Director of the Youth Theatre will:

- Deliver a similar programme to Years 1 & 2 with:
- Provide more varied (guest facilitators) workshops for existing members/ 2nd year members during Term 1.
- Explore the possibility of presenting one small performance in Term 1.
- Explore the possibility of running a weekend residential away from your home location.
- Provide more core skills- based workshops in Term 2.
- Engage with an outside artist to create an original work for the YT.
- Present one large-scale production in Term 3. This could be an original/ commissioned work especially for the YT.
- Engage in more NAYD national events and training courses/events.
- Further develop and train older members for junior leader / assistant roles.
- Begin to identify an International partner for an International exchange in Years 4 or 5

### **PRE-TERM: (JULY / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER)**

- Similar to Year 1 & 2, using all successful recruitment strategies.
- Book a venue for the Big Show in the spring.
- Investigate and book a venue for a Residential Weekend.

### **TERM 1: OCT- DEC (10 WEEKS)**

- Follow the same programme as Year 2.
- The junior/ assistant leaders could shadow the facilitators for this. They may be able to lead some workshop activities such as warm-ups.

And/or

- The group work with an invited artist/writer/director or participate in a more detailed devising/early rehearsal/ refinement period for an original work created for and by the group for staging in Term 3.

(Suggested dates running from October 6<sup>th</sup> – Dec 8<sup>th</sup> Inclusive- afternoon session)

- Programme and organise trip(s) to the theatre. Dependent on costs, the group should go to one professional production or another youth theatre show in a local venue. Ideally, this could be the work of one of the guest facilitators, before, during or after their time working with the group. Use a junior leader (18+) as the second adult on these trips.
- You could programme a potential, late, winter performance. This could possibly be a tie-in with a Halloween Festival or Christmas activities. This may not be a core activity and should only be done if there is sufficient interest from members and an outlet for this to happen. The group could possibly take part in NAYD's New Stage programme (see below).
- Programme an end of year social activity such as a small party after the last of the workshops (in a suitable venue). The Board / Committee could organise this event with significant input from the members.

And

- Organise a general Annual Fundraising Event to raise money and the profile of the YT. This could be used to raise funds for the Big Show in Term 3 or the residential weekend.
- Depending on the overall membership numbers and resources, it may be possible to only run one series of workshops alongside rehearsals. You should always strive to recruit new members and their introduction to drama, and integration with the more established members, is paramount.

### **TERM 2: JAN- MARCH (8- 10 WEEKS)**

- Run a *residential weekend* away from the youth theatre base. Provide an artistic and social programme for *all* members who wish to participate / a *limited* number of youth theatre members (depending on your capacity and resources). This could be facilitated by the guest artist who is writing/ directing the Big Show for Term 3. This is a big step and would need a lot of organising, in particular getting extra, capable welfare leaders. This would provide a very memorable weekend for the membership while providing a great opportunity for a lot of concentrated work to be done in preparation for the Big Show. It could also be used as a carrot to promote good attendance and to ensure that members are paying fees.
- In Term 2, co-ordinate, plan and facilitate the 2-hour, weekly drama workshops in *Core & Specialist Skills*. The workshop programme could be similar to Year 2 and could include movement, improvisation, characterisation and text or any specialist skills such as singing or dance that may be required for the Big Show in Term 3. (8 weeks, Jan 13<sup>th</sup> – March 2<sup>nd</sup>).

And/or

- Begin to look for possible International Partnership for Years 4 or 5

### **TERM 3: MARCH - MAY**

- Direct the members in a performance, or co-ordinate/produce the guest artist/director and the members in a performance (Term 3). This should be a large-scale original production. The Big Show should be staged in an established theatre space for an extended number of performances (5). It is important that this work reflects the ongoing growth of the YT, and demonstrates the skills learned and the personal growth of the membership. Lots of effort will be required to ensure the success of this production as a quality, well-attended piece of theatre. This would also be reflected in the level of funding required for such a venture. Rehearsals for this should take place during the weeks leading up to, and including, Easter Break. Ideally, it should be staged in April/early May. The performance should include all those members wanting to act but also make provision for those wanting to take part in a non-performing capacity. Depending on the project and your ethos, everyone may not get to take part.  
For many of the original members, this could be their last involvement with the youth theatre, depending on their age and further education commitments.
- Supervise and conduct an *End of Year Workshop*. This should be a reflective workshop that gives the membership the opportunity to discuss the year and make suggestions for future planning.
- Hold a *Yearly Review* with the artistic team. There may also be a focus on recruitment at this stage, as the YT could lose members due to age, exams or college life. Also, it may be worth doing a review of the last

three years to see what worked or may need improvement within that cycle.

## **SUMMER**

- Take a break for summer.

And/or

- The YT could apply to NAYD's National Festival of Youth Theatres, which takes place in early July, or take part in other NAYD events as in Years 1 & 2.

## **Year 4 and Beyond**

- You could possibly repeat the cycle for years 1-3 (depending on your membership), or aim to do an international event in Year 4 or 5. Evaluate what works best and what is worth exploring further.