



#YouthTheatreTuesdays is an initiative of Youth Theatre Ireland. Due to the restrictions of movement and the gatherings of large numbers due to the COVID19 health emergency, this is a way for our community to stay connected and share practice.

Each Tuesday, youth theatre leaders come together through video conferencing to share ideas, insights and inspirational ways to keep their programmes on track.

These facilitated discussions are open to youth theatre leaders, facilitators and assistants. Each week a new area of discussion is proposed and guests are invited to submit ideas and exercises to be shared with the cohort. A volunteer takes the notes and then they are then shared with the group. These notes are more of an aid memoire rather than an extensive write up of any exercise or idea. Using the medium of Zoom software, the exercises make reference to the functionality of that app. i.e. chat boxes etc.

These are the notes from:

#YOUTHTHEATRETUESDAY – Back in the Circle – Jun 23, 2020 12:00 PM

Proposal: This weeks #YTTuesdays is all about opening up. We will be looking at the phases of re-opening as per government guidelines and discussing the practical implications for youth theatres.

Included in the session will be an input from Carl Jørn Johansen who will give practical insights into how workshops and rehearsals have been managed already with social distancing in place in Norway.

Carl Jørn is a dramaturg and theatre-maker at the Rogaland Theatre in Stavanger, Norway. He studied at the Department of Dramaturgy at the University of Århus, Denmark. He has been working with youth and adult theatre for the last 20 years. He has experience working within large cultural institutions and fringe theatre. He is the project leader for international relations with the Rogaland youth theatre. <https://www.rogaland-teater.no/english>

We have created:

Back in the Circle: Guidance on Re-opening Your Youth Theatre is a resource developed by Youth Theatre Ireland to support Youth Theatres as they move towards re-opening.

Available from: <http://www.youththeatre.ie/programmes/new-stage/>

This resource seeks to highlight issues from governmental guidance which may be of relevance to your youth theatre in terms of the timeline for re-opening and guidance on organisational responsibilities.

It would be beneficial to familiarise yourself with this document in advance of the meeting, so you are up to speed with current thinking and developments.

#YOUTHTHEATRETUESDAY – Back in the Circle Jun 23, 2020 12pm

1. Member Survey Results

Michelle Carew gave a summary of the results of the recent member survey sent to all Affiliate Youth Theatres. 39 Youth theatres responded to the survey with the following results:

- 100% of respondents were challenged by ‘Implementing social distancing’
- 92% were challenged by ‘Managing H&S’
- Other areas that majority of respondents found challenging were; ‘Including all members’, ‘Recruitment of new members’ and ‘Paying facilitators & overheads’
- 82% of respondents found ‘Maintaining quality youth theatre practice’ challenging

2. Carl Jørn Johansen, Rogaland Teater, Norway

Carl Jørn gave practical insights into how workshops and rehearsals have been managed already with social distancing in place in Norway. They have a large youth theatre with 300 young people weekly.

Covid19 Restrictions in Norway at the moment:

- 1m distancing
- Masks are optional, a topic for on-going discussion
- Schools reopened in Norway quite early so kids are really good at social distancing
- Summer holidays started in Norway last Friday and schools are back on 20th August
- Norwegian government updates rules for the performing arts sector very often
- From mid-June actors were allowed to get closer than 1m but there needs to be an independent risk assessment for it.

- They have an App for contact tracing in Norway on everyone's phone though it was shut down last week due to GDPR but a new version is being built

Situation at Rogaland Teater:

- They closed down 11th of March stopping all their activities
- From end of May they would have been allowed to open again for workshops and rehearsals with social distancing, and have opened for rehearsals for the next production, but haven't opened their weekly youth theatre sessions yet
- They have also opened for performances for the past month at low capacity (60 people in a space that can hold 160) and have had one youth performance
- Weekly Youth Theatre sessions are back first weekend of September, rehearsals in August in smaller groups
- They have maximum 20 kids and 2 adults in a room at the same time and no time limits for the sessions
- They need to know at all times who is in the building and keep register of everyone
- They have 3 different spaces and those spaces are divided into 6 sessions of 20 people in each session with separate entrances so that they can include everyone
- They received 420 applications from young people to join the youth theatre and have had no decline in interest - even the opposite. People really want to come back
- They gave all the rules and information to parents and members and said that it's ok if they didn't want to join back just yet. They continued to give regular updates. They haven't had any one who said they didn't want to come back

Some tips from Carl Jørn:

- Social distancing feels very limiting but we just need to adapt as it won't change any time soon
- It can also open up some creative new ideas; one of the theatres in Norway turned their rehearsal room into a giant chess board and run drama games with the squares
- A lot of preparation is needed; room needs to be cleaned, on-going hand sanitizing, different entrances and exits etc.
- The atmosphere can be a bit strange but is probably more strange for leaders than young people
- In rehearsals and sessions: keep personal props and items in a box for each participant with no one else touching these
- No showers nor dressings rooms
- Backstage rules: also social distancing, everyone can only touch their own props

- Sound and lighting desks are now considered personal equipment and need to be sanitized.
- Tech rehearsals have become more elaborate, really need to think of logistics
- Restructuring of schedules and groups is needed
- Every organisation should have one person who knows and understands all Covid19 safety measures and can have the final word to avoid spending too much time discussing the rules or have too much interpretation
- Rules for professionals are not always suitable for youth theatres
- Don't allow yourself to be tempted to find loopholes in the rules. Always question: Is it necessary?
- Main thing is that they are active again

3. *Back in the Circle: Guidance on Re-opening your Youth Theatre*

A resource developed by Rhona at Youth Theatre Ireland to support Youth Theatres as they move towards re-opening. A brief summary and discussion on this document:

- When is it right for your Youth Theatre to open? What's the right timeline for you, the young people, parents?
- Is there a mixed approach between live and online? Outdoors is also an option
- Look at Overarching Guidelines section in the document on hand hygiene, distancing etc.
- Look at section for staff and volunteers
- Use the templates provided. Perhaps consider an adapted version of the employee form for the young people
- "This is how WE work together. This is how WE work in this building."
- A question was asked if we are covered by our insurance if young people don't follow the rules and the YT becomes a hot spot?
 - o Youth Theatre Ireland is seeking clarity on insurance for the groups who are under the group insurance scheme
 - o Declaration forms for young people, volunteers and staff may become, not just good practice, but a centre piece

4. *Some Tips from Breakout rooms on 'How can we maintain quality youth theatre practice while social distancing?'*

- A few groups have already met with their groups outdoor and at least one is planning to hold auditions indoor in the next few weeks
- It would be helpful to create and share a document for parents/guardians to advise them of the standards and procedures the youth theatre has in place and to get their feedback
- Youth Theatre Ireland will continue to provide updated guidance on re-opening.

- It would be helpful to have some materials / support for facilitators on how to lead socially distanced workshops. Youth Theatre Ireland will work on these over the summer
- Facilitators are role models; Don't promote fear. Facilitator needs to be completely confident with the procedures so that they and the young people can relax in the sessions and the space
- Ideally the lead facilitator is not the H&S person also
- Please contact the Youth Theatre Ireland team for help/advise and they will do their best

Youth theatre Tuesdays will take a two-week break. The next session is on 14th of July.

PS. Some places left in the Leaders programme:

National Festival Leaders Idea Exchange Friday July 3rd 3pm - 4.30pm

Annie Ryan - Journey to Character Saturday July 4th 2pm to 4.30pm

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XlibibjSlw&list=PLJ2PcSrqITrnOuLm3s4ZjkTiROUvwlZA6&index=9>

***Notes kindly taken by Ulla Hokkanen, Executive Creative Director,
Galway Community Circus with additional material by Alan King, Youth
Theatre Ireland.***