

WHAT IS YOUTH THEATRE?

Youth drama is a unique form of theatre that is defined by the contribution of young people and is also a unique youth work practice that engages young people as active participants in theatre by using group or ensemble drama approaches. Youth theatre contributes to the artistic, personal, and social development of young people through their commitment and voluntary participation. Youth theatre:

- is a drama group for young people that offers a year-round programme of activities, including a regular programme of drama workshops and the staging of at least one theatre production each year
- takes place outside of school and requires voluntary participation
- draws its adult leaders from the voluntary and/or professional sectors
- is open to all young people regardless of their gender, background, race, sexuality, religion, ability, or economic situation
- is not-for-profit. Participation in youth theatre is not determined by financial contributions from the young people
- is a safe and supportive space. The welfare and protection of young people is a priority for youth theatres
- has its own identity forged by its members and its interaction with the wider community

The role of youth theatre...in Ireland is critical. It's hugely important... you can do things in youth theatre that you can't do later on... [in terms of] scale and 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.

—Head of Young People, Children & Education, The Arts Council of Ireland

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUTH THEATRE?

Drama workshops form the core of youth drama practice. They are the stable element of any youth theatre. In drama workshops participants explore themes relevant to their lives and learn about every aspect of theatre.

Youth theatres will have at least one production each year. Many youth theatres stage existing plays or specially commissioned theatre by writers writing for young performers. Youth theatres also encourage ensemble playing and experimental performance that is often devised by and with the members.

Youth theatre is a place with astounding imagination.

—Youth Theatre member