

MODULE A: INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP

The Northcott Theatre in Exeter is over 50 years old. In that time, it has collected and stored a host of archive materials, which include programmes, photos, financial and administrative paperwork, news articles and reviews. This collection is housed at the University of Exeter.

As part of a Heritage Lottery funded project, we have been looking through and digitising the archive so that people can have easier access to the theatre's history.

<https://www.exeternorthcott.co.uk/about-us/our-history-heritage/>

This workshop will provide an introduction to what an archive is and ask students to think about what they would want to see in an archive of the future.

TASK ONE: LOOKING AT THE ARCHIVE.

An archive is a collection of materials from an organisation's history. Look at the selection of archive programme covers. Then give one cover to each small group.

In your group, use your archive programme cover to decide:

- What kind of show is it? How can you tell?
- Is it made by adults for adults? Adults for young people? Is it made by young people for adults? Young people for young people? How do you know?
- Would you be interested in watching it? Why? / Why not?

Using just the materials you have in front of you, make a group freeze frame which might appear in the show. Share and discuss – what was the process you used to come to this freeze frame?

TASK TWO: YOUNG PEOPLE'S FESTIVAL

Festival – The Northcott regularly used to programme and organise festivals for young people. Look at the examples from the archive. There is a mixture of (quite traditional dry) theatre, some films and workshops. It's important to consider who decides what theatre young people should watch / experience.

The Northcott and other theatres like it have changed in recent years – theatres often have Young Companies or Community Companies who make work and young people's panels who feed into programming decisions.

If you had to programme a theatre or arts festival for young people in the next months, what would you like to see? Mapping exercise. Design the festival on a large sheet of paper.

How long will the festival last? What would you call it? Would it have an overarching theme? Or would it be a range of styles and genres?? Who is the target audience? How would you fund it? Would there be an audience charge?

Map ideas and feed back

TASK THREE: FESTIVAL SHOW PRACTICAL TASK

In a group, you are going to pitch an idea for a new show in this festival for YP. You can do this in any way you like but it would be good to include:

- An introduction from the group about the show (you might each decide to take a role – the designer, director etc)
- A performed scene from the new show.

You need to make it as energetic and appealing as possible.

The show might be based on a story you already know. It might be a new adaptation of something on TV or a film. It might be something completely new. It might be completely serious or light-hearted and silly.

Time to prepare and share. Feedback from the groups about the ideas in the room.

CLOSING DISCUSSION

It's interesting to prompt questions about who decides what young people can / should watch at the theatre. Historically, artistic directors and programmers have tended (not exclusively, but generally speaking) to be white middle aged middle class men. What are the students' views about young people having more power and ability to input into programming decisions? What does this say about accessibility in the arts?

EXTENSION TASK

Students could do some further research on how other theatres make decisions about programming. Look at the websites below and research who makes the decisions. Do they make their own work or just receive touring companies? Do they have a diverse staff? Do they include young people or community groups in their programming and decision making? Do they have Young Companies or Community Companies who feed into the body of work?

USEFUL LINKS

<https://thelowry.com/>

<https://www.stratfordeast.com/>

<https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/>

<https://bristololdvic.org.uk/>

<https://theatreroyal.com/>

RESOURCE CHECKLIST

1) Printouts of the following programme covers (available on the website):

- The Sleeping Beauty
- Dick Whittington
- Godspell
- Oh What a Lovely War!
- Peter Pan
- A Christmas Carol
- Oliver!

2) Large Paper and Pens

3) Printouts of Archive Festival pages (available on the website)