



## ➔ JOINT VENTURES

*Partnerships with Outside Theatre Professionals*





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*National Association for Youth Drama*

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# JOINT VENTURES

## Partnerships with Outside Theatre Professionals

Workshops, productions, events; with so much going on in the life of a youth theatre, there are times when a youth theatre engages an outside professional. With the right balance of planning, communication and vision, this partnership can be of benefit to all parties involved. 'JOINT VENTURES' was developed by the National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD) to assist youth theatres and outside professional theatre practitioners in working together.

These guidelines outline good practice when engaging an outside theatre professional to work with a youth theatre. Supporting advice sheets are available through [www.youth-drama.ie](http://www.youth-drama.ie). These guidelines have been drawn up in consultation with Theatre Forum, professional theatre practitioners and youth theatre practitioners.

### Before engaging an outside theatre professional a youth theatre should:

- Have a Child Protection Policy and an artistic ethos or policy.
- Think of the youth theatre as an employer and act accordingly
- Have a clear and realistic time frame that may include the application for funding, pre-production and rehearsals
- Assess the resources and support available appropriate to the project
- Identify the youth theatre's expectations of the role of the outside theatre professional
- Identify potential candidates
- Set up an initial meeting with the chosen professional

### Internal youth theatre roles

Appoint one leader to act as a liaison to the individual being hired.

This person could be responsible for:

- Informing the young people of their rehearsal schedule
- Developing a code of conduct for the young people and person being engaged, where mutual respect is ensured.
- Ensuring that the code of conduct including attendance is adhered to
- Supporting the theatre professional in the area of working with adolescents
- Providing an insider's eye where appropriate

Appoint a member of the Board to act as a liaison for the person being engaged in the event of a grievance. A grievance procedure should be in place before employing an outside professional.

### Meeting the outside theatre professional

It is imperative to meet with the theatre professional prior to the commencement of their engagement. This allows for both parties to negotiate the terms of engagement. Initial meetings may include:

- Appropriate background information on your youth theatre and members
- Articulation of the youth theatres artistic ethos or policy
- Articulation of the youth theatres Child Protection Policy
- Articulation of procedure in the event of a grievance
- Resources and support available
- Explanation of the personal development aspect of your work and the sensitivities involved in working with the particular age group
- Timeframe of the project to include lead in, rehearsals, production and evaluation
- Roles and responsibilities of both parties
- Expectations of both parties
- Fees

### Be aware of the following

- The outside professional can only know what you tell them about your youth theatre and may not be aware of the questions to ask. Do not make assumptions, no matter how simple, on their understanding of your youth theatre.
- Be sensitive to the personal contact details of the individual being engaged. These details should never be given to the young people without permission.
- Do not assume that the person will be aware of the length of time needed to rehearse a youth theatre cast. Explain that your youth theatre meets once a week and may only be able to rehearse part-time.
- Be clear about what will be included in the fee and/or what is covered under expenses, e.g. phone calls, travel accommodation.

If during your negotiations you realise that you have not got all of the elements in place, identify what elements are outstanding and work towards putting them in place.

Be honest. A partnership is as much about interpersonal relationships as letters of agreements. If there is not an ease, or similarity of vision in the initial meetings, be honest and work from that basis.



## NAYD ...

Encourages the establishment and ongoing development of youth theatre and youth drama practice. It does not 'set up' youth theatres but provides advice and support to those who do. It encourages drama for the social, personal and artistic development of young people.

### As an outside theatre professional, being engaged by a youth theatre, you should:

- Expect to be involved in the application for funding. This is particularly the case with residencies. You may be asked to provide your C.V. and other relevant material.
- Expect a long lead-in time to production. As youth theatres usually only meet once a week during the year, you may not be able to rehearse or work with them full time. This will have a knock on effect on the lead-in time to a production.
- Ask about the youth theatre's Child Protection Policy, reporting procedures, code of conduct and the artistic ethos or policy.
- Be clear about your fee and your schedule of payment.
- Be clear about what you expect to be covered by expenses, i.e. travel, phone calls, accommodation.
- Expect payment to be prompt.
- Sign a letter of agreement.
- Expect to be treated in a professional manner by all the youth theatre members and personnel.
- **Not** be held responsible for the supervision of young people.
- **Not** be held responsible for the scheduling of rehearsals, meetings and sessions or the transfer of that information to the membership and artistic team. You should, however, be involved in that scheduling process.
- Be informed of the experience of the rest of the production team, whether they are non-professionals, amateurs, volunteers or youth theatre members.
- Be clear whether you are willing to act as a mentor within your engagement and discuss what would be expected of you as a mentor, including credits in programmes and professional standards.
- Check working spaces and expect to work in an adequate space for the work you are undertaking.
- Expect to be insured.
- Expect to have health and safety concerns addressed.
- Be adaptable.

If you feel the youth theatre is not ready to engage you at this period of time, say so and postpone the engagement until you and they feel that every thing is in place to proceed.

## Adolescents

When you are engaged by a youth theatre you will be engaging with adolescents. As an individual being engaged by a youth theatre, without prior experience of working with young people, it is worth spending some time thinking about the developmental challenges that face them. Those challenges will vary widely between a twelve year old and an eighteen year old.

- The adolescent is in transition from a dependent child to an independent adult. They are in a process of gaining independence and developing those skills that will allow them negotiate the society in which they live.
- They are trying to negotiate the changes that this transition brings to their lives specifically in the areas of work, study, relationships with peers and parents.
- They are developing a moral frame of reference that is personal to them and is informed by the adults around them.
- They can be self-conscious and sensitive about how they are perceived by others.
- Relationships with parents and those in authority may be fraught.
- They may need a lot of encouragement and reassurance to take risks or try something new.
- There are a lot of demands on the adolescent's time such as family, education, part-time work. They may have little choice how they manage these demands.
- They may not have the skills to cope with serious family or personal problems that may be affecting them.
- As part of their developing sexuality, adolescents have a heightened sense of physical awareness. You need to be sensitive to this particularly when they are performing and/or in costume.

The above will influence on how you work with this age group, especially in the area of theatre. The youth theatre liaison should be able to advise.

- It is never appropriate to explore an individual's problems through drama or to involve yourself in these problems.
- It is important to be aware of any literacy problems, learning difficulties, recent bereavements that exist in the group and to be discreet in the application of this information.
- In relation to rehearsals and scheduling be aware that the young people may not always be in control of their own schedule and transport.
- Examine and adapt your methods to the age and need of the client group. Recognise the developmental concerns of the group you are working with.
- Due to heightened physical awareness and levels of self-consciousness, considerations must be made when costuming or asking young people to do something on stage or in rehearsals they may not be comfortable with. Their concerns should be respected.
- If you are experiencing challenges in working with the group or an individual it is important not to personalise it. If expressing dissatisfaction be clear why and offer workable solutions.

Remember that a partnership is as much about an interpersonal relationship as a business one. If you feel that there is not a similarity of vision or clear communication, be honest about that and work from that basis.



For further assistance and information please visit [www.youthdrama.ie/partnershipswithoutsideprofessionals/](http://www.youthdrama.ie/partnershipswithoutsideprofessionals/) and download advice sheets on developing agreements, working with writers, sample contracts, grievance procedures and the roles and responsibilities for directors, producers, production managers, designers etc.

Thank you to Sarah Fitzgibbon, who developed 'JOINT VENTURES':

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**Disclaimer**

'Joint Ventures' is a set of Guidelines and checklists developed by the National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD) to assist youth theatres and outside theatre professionals in working together. The National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD) accepts no responsibility for those youth theatres and individuals who use these Guidelines in planning and undertaking a joint partnership.

Please be advised that they form no legal framework or contract with the National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD) and should be used only as a checklist in advance of any joint partnership.

