

# Young Thespians' Toolkit

For Youth Educators and Youth Leaders

**Youth Performing Arts Education for All!**  
Toolkit to Promote Inclusion and Diversity  
Through Performing Arts



### Acknowledgements

We aspire for the Toolkit to provide a truly enriching experience to youth leaders and facilitator dedicated to promoting equal access to performing arts education and be a source of inspiration, motivation, and knowledge.

We express our deepest gratitude for all contributions and unwavering support throughout this journey of creating the Toolkit. The dedication and enthusiasm of Austrian and Icelandic researchers, practitioners, youth educators, and youth have shaped this publication into what it is today. To our esteemed participants of the research, LTTA training, and pilot courses, thank you for sharing your experiences and perspectives. We appreciate the youth and educators who have added a vibrant and dynamic dimension to our research. Your enthusiasm and creativity have amplified the impact of this publication, making it relatable and relevant.

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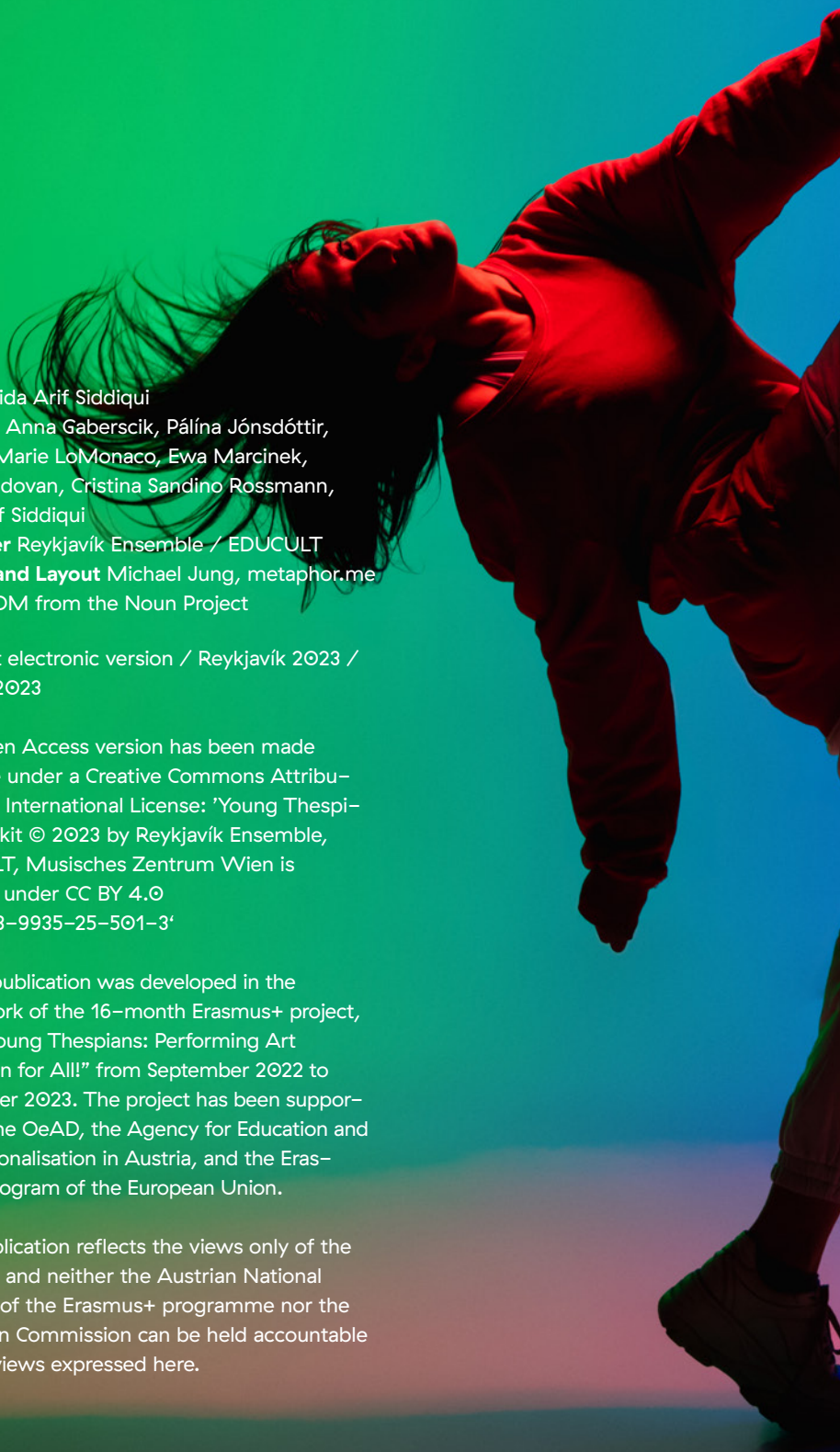
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## Roadmap

### If you are interested in

- Creative activities, see pages 10, 11, 13, 16, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25
- Communication and discussions, see pages 12–14, 15, 17, 29, 20, 22–25
- Activities and discussions on power dynamics, see pages 14, 24, 25
- Reflection and definitions, see pages 6, 7, 14, 16, 17, 19–21, 23, 28, 29
- If you are just starting out and want to plan a first session, it could look like this: 5, 10–13, 16, 20, 21, 24  
Soul Train as final activity'



### How to use the Young Thespians' Toolkit

The Young Thespians' Toolkit is a collection of resources, materials, and guidelines compiled and organised to assist youth leaders, educators, and professionals in performing arts education. We, the authors, believe that anyone can be empowered to lead or facilitate in an inclusive way, with access to the right tools. This Toolkit is immersive and focuses on inclusivity that can help facilitators of all levels, whether they have many years of formal training or are youth themselves, who want to start a project for and with their peers.

The stories, exercises, and methods will be helpful to anyone interested in ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities to participate fully in the performing arts, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances. We hope this Toolkit gives you assistance in facilitating and creating safer spaces for everyone.

This Toolkit can be approached from different angles. Please see the Roadmap on page 1 where we have laid out a number of paths that can be taken navigating the cards. For example, we have a path that focuses on practical performing arts activities, self reflection and discussion.

Through this Toolkit we hope to promote a sense of belonging, equality, and active participation for all youth and facilitators. We hope it helps to create a community where those facing discriminatory behaviour are welcomed with a sense of allyship and balance.

### How To Read The Cards

The activity cards are designed to help make the activities more approachable and allow each reader to customise their experience. Please note that in addition to the Roadmap, each card is colour/symbol coded, so you can bunch similar cards easily.

**Each card is designed to read as you would read a recipe card.**

**Title** is the name of the activity (Note: this can be found in the table of contents as well as a reference on other cards).

**Symbols/Coding** is a designation of what the card focuses on. The themes that are in this Toolkit are: Arts, Reflection, Communication, Power Dynamics, and Definitions. Additionally, to make starting off easier, we have marked a number of cards that we see as Must-Dos in order to create a safe, inclusive space. The Must-Dos cards are also useful in creating pilot programs to establish your group and see what their needs might be as you start this journey.

**Intensity** is a gauge we have created to give facilitators an idea of the emotional labour that can go into holding this activity. As we are working with vulnerable groups of people who might struggle with social interactions, we recognize this takes a toll on a facilitator, and we want to make sure our facilitators are supported as much as the youth participants. Ratings tend to be subjective, and your experience may vary, but these are suggestions based on our experiences of the card.

**Movement advisory** is how much physical movement is suggested. Please note that to be inclusive, a facilitator may have to adapt an activity to suit all participants to the best of their abilities. This is not only in terms of accommodating folks who may not be able to move as freely as others, but allowing space for those who might struggle with sitting still for too long. We want to create a space where everyone can be engaged as much as they are able to.

**Number of participants** is the minimum number of participants needed for this activity. Some can be done with as few as 2 people, others require 8+.

**Time requirements** is the minimum time needed to safely hold this activity. Please note that if you are working with a larger group it's good to plan for extra time. In many activities, the more the participants, the longer it will take. For the purposes of this Toolkit we have

estimated the time needed for the minimum number of participants.

**Materials needed (if any)** some activities will require materials, whether it is space to move around or painting supplies. Get creative! Not all budgets mean we can have the desired materials, but hopefully this Toolkit will help in exploring other options.

**Method** is the section with instructions on what is done during this activity and how to facilitate it.

# Each card has a number, like a page in a book. These are referenced in the Table of Contents, References and Glossary.

The **Background section** will very often be additional information on why this activity can be useful, where the idea came from as well as theoretical information.

**Reference** is a tool which we use to give facilitators advice and additional places to find more information. The **Reference section** will have resources to activities that are similar, linked, or are thematically relevant. It may also have further resources that are related to the proposed activities..

### Breakdown of the Themes, Symbols, and Types of Cards



**Must-Dos** are activities crucial to safety for your group to hold an inclusive space. The sub-themes in this symbol include, but are not limited to, awareness, first session ideas, manifesto creation, and empowerment.



**Arts** include topics such as Art Theory, Performing Arts activities and practice, Creative Writing exercises, and Movement.



**Communication** includes explorations on language, team building, and specific inclusion in how we express ourselves.



**Power Dynamics** These cards should be used mindfully due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed. They address matters of inequality, discrimination, life experiences, and how we exist in society.



**Reflection** are activities based on sharing our own experiences, looking back at our own stories, self awareness, and understanding. The self reflection cards are for participants, facilitators, and decision makers.



**Extended Activities** include expanded lists for certain activities. Since the Toolkit is a constantly evolving document, it needs to be customizable. We encourage facilitators to adapt their program to their local context and the needs of the participants.



**Definitions** are meant as a quick reference for many of the terms used in this Toolkit.



**Connecting Tools** are adaptable for use in different contexts. These are activities that can be repeated with different themes and discussions.



**Thought Bubbles** can be found throughout the Toolkit on cards and are ideas the authors find helpful to keep in mind.

### Things to Think of Before You Start

It is important to make your space accessible. For this, we encourage you to learn about [Universal Design](#), a concept of creating spaces with accessibility for all in mind. Reflect on how this might apply to your project before you begin.

In addition to physical hurdles in a space such as stairs or narrow doorways that may need to be navigated with a wheelchair, for example, please consider that a space may need to be made accessible in other ways. If you are meeting in a large space, is the echo too loud for participants to hear each other? Is the lighting too bright and overwhelming? Explore the space you intend to use and see how accessible it is physically and mentally. Can you alter the space to fit the needs of the participants? Are other spaces available? Meeting participants at the door is encouraged. Consider adding a picture of the entrance in the invitation to the workshop/event, and add pointers inside the space marking designated spaces (such as a relaxation zone), and a possible way out.

Think of strategies that enable youth with intellectual disabilities to participate. For example, using simplified text, visuals, videos, large fonts, and symbols.

As a facilitator, please think of the resources you will need! We encourage you to ask for help and work as a team of two or more, if needed. A core ideal of being a facilitator is leading by example. We hope that facilitators allow themselves to actively participate alongside the youth participants.

[Resources can include:](#) human, time, functional, physical, etc  
[Needs can include:](#) mental, emotional, physical, etc

### Keeping an Open Call Open

In one of our interviews, a young theatre maker from Finland said:

[“If only white, able-bodied cis-gendered people reply to your open call and attend your audition, there is probably something to work on your open call.”](#)

How do you prepare the most welcoming and accessible invitation for a collaborative project? Who are the people who have prepared the open call? Do they represent the people they want to work with? What needs should be addressed so that everyone can join? Discuss the common marginalisation factors in your area (examples: financial barriers, location, venue, accessibility, language, lack of assistance) and design an ideal open call.

[Remember, it is good to ask for help!](#) If you have had issues with open calls in the past, consider engaging a marketing expert in your area!



## Glossary

### Key terms and definitions

**Accessible/accessibility** – making things easy to use and accessible for people with apparent and non-apparent impairments, who experience disability. It involves removing barriers and creating inclusive environments or designs that accommodate different abilities. It can apply to physical spaces, digital platforms, services, or information, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

**Cognitive diversity** – inclusion of a variety of people with different thought patterns, ideas, problem-solving methods and mental perspectives.

**Diversity** – presence of individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, races, genders, ages, abilities, religions, or other characteristics within a group or society. It encompasses: recognizing, respecting, and valuing the unique perspectives, experiences, and identities that people possess.

**Disability** – any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for a person with the condition to do certain activities, and interact with the world around them.

**Displaced** – condition or situation of individuals or groups that have been forced to leave their homes or usual places of residence due to various factors, such as conflict, natural disasters, persecution, or economic hardship and may seek assistance and protection from humanitarian organisations or government agencies.

**Equitable access** – providing fair and just opportunities for all individuals to access resources, services, opportunities, or benefits without discrimination or barriers based on

factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, or disability.

**Gender equality** – ensuring equal rights and opportunities for people of all gender expressions.

**Gender equity** – recognizing and addressing that different genders may face different needs, challenges, and barriers due to historical, social, and systemic factors.

**High culture** – cultural products, activities, and achievements that are considered to be of the highest intellectual, artistic, or aesthetic quality and are often associated with the elite class. *Hochkultur* has been subject to criticism for its exclusionary and elitist tendencies, as it perpetuates social hierarchies and limits the recognition of diverse cultural expressions.

**Inclusion** – creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered. It involves embracing diversity and removing barriers to ensure equal access and opportunities for all individuals.

**Integration** – process of bringing people from diverse backgrounds together, fostering mutual respect and cooperation for a cohesive and inclusive society. This use of this term is discouraged, as it implies power dynamics at play, and creates divisions.

**LGBTQIA+** – an acronym representing a diverse range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions. It stands for: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and other identities. The „+“ symbolises the inclusion of additional identities.





**Marginalisation** – structural discrimination where individuals or groups are pushed to the edges of society, leading to their exclusion, disadvantage, and limited access to resources. It prevents full participation in society, and perpetuates social inequalities.

**Microaggressions** – everyday slights, insults, putdowns, invalidations, and offensive behaviours experienced by groups that are frequently discriminated against, by society.

**Minorities** – A minority or minority group is a subgroup of the population with unique social, religious, ethnic, racial, and/or other characteristics that differ from those of a majority group. The term usually refers to any group that is subjected to oppression and discrimination by those in more powerful social positions, whether or not the group is a numerical minority.

**Neurodivergence** – variations in neurological functioning and cognitive processes.

**Performing arts** – a wide range of cultural expressions and educational forms, including theatre, dance, performance, and spoken word.

**Safer space** – a physical or virtual environment that is intentionally created to be free from discrimination, judgement, or harm. It is a space where individuals, especially those from vulnerable communities, can feel secure, supported, and respected.

**Taboo** – term used for an act, idea, or topic that is avoided or forbidden for religious or social reasons.

**Tokenism** – the act of superficially or symbolically including members of minority

groups, often by recruiting a small number of individuals from underrepresented communities solely to create the illusion of equality.

**Universal Design (UD)** – can be used as a verb or a noun. When used as a verb, it refers to the process of designing something to be functional as possible for as many people as possible. When used as a noun, it refers to a functionally inclusive design of something.

**Youth** – According to the European Commission's definition, youth refers to individuals aged between 15 and 29 years.

**Youth art cluster** – a community or a group of youth artists who come together to collaborate, support each other, and engage in artistic activities. It serves as a hub for networking and creative development.



## What We Learned Researching in Austria

The desk research, interviews, and focus group conducted in Austria between November 2022 and February 2023 shed light on the ongoing tension between social reality and institutional practice in performing arts education. These discussions focused on the power dynamics within Austrian society, particularly the clash between the centralised and dominant *hochkultur* (high culture) and the needs of youth, especially those from minority backgrounds and non-European cultural heritage. During the interviews and discussions, the problematic use of terms such as diversity, inclusion, marginalisation, and integration emerged as symptoms of a divided society. One youth aptly summarised, that “the key factor leading to marginalisation is to think in a marginalised way; there is me and you, and there is a line between us. As long as the line is there, you will draw it everywhere you go”.

In urban areas of Austria, concerns were raised about territorial segregation and the cultural prioritisation of city centres. Disparities in cultural funding and a need for more outreach programs in neighbourhoods with more diverse populations further exacerbated the issue. Lack of awareness and cultural representation, gender imbalance, and rigid and outdated support structures were major obstacles to equal access to performing arts education. Additionally, the scarcity of funding, language barriers, and lack of information added to the challenge youth face in this context.

## What We Learned Researching in Iceland

In Iceland, the research and interviews conducted from November 2022 to February 2023 revealed numerous challenges in ensuring equitable access to performing arts education for youth. While performing arts are included in the national curriculum, opportunities for non-formal performing arts activities are severely limited for youth over 19. Access to performing arts education for Icelandic youth varies based on region, municipality, and neighbourhood, with significant disparities between urban and rural areas. The most vulnerable groups, including first-generation immigrants, refugee youth, those with mental and physical disabilities, neurodivergent individuals, youth with mental health issues, and the LGBTQIA+ community, could greatly benefit from participating in the performing arts.

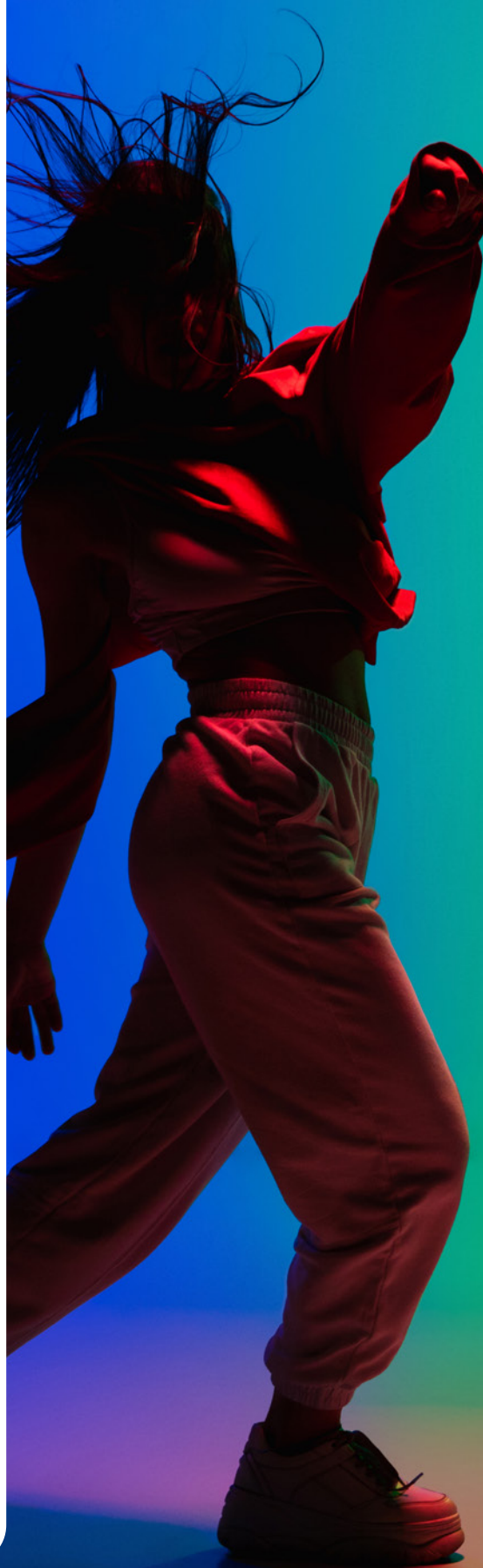
However, financial barriers, unequal budget allocation among schools and neighbourhoods, language barriers, insufficient funding, and lack of support from translators and experts pose significant obstacles. Interviews with youth leaders and performing arts educators working with communities that have been marginalised highlighted additional drawbacks to achieving equal opportunities. Inherent to Iceland's small and tight-knit population, the lack of representation for minorities, nepotism and elitism are serious flaws. This is particularly evident as youth from artistically established families dominate the group of professionally performing young artists.

### Young Thespians: Youth Performing Arts Education for All!

The publication of the Toolkit to Promote Inclusion and Diversity Through Performing Arts Education was made possible by the collective efforts of youth, educators, artists, and researchers who generously shared their expertise in the Erasmus+ partnership project Young Thespians.

The partners from Iceland (Reykjavík Ensemble International Theatre Company) and Austria (EDUCULT – Institute of Cultural Policy and Cultural Management, supported by Musikisches Zentrum Wien) combined their experience in research and performing arts to support the diversity and inclusion of youth, particularly those with fewer opportunities due to ethnicity, race, language, gender, and religion, through performing arts education.

2022 September	<b>Project starts</b>
2022 November	<b>Research</b>
2023 May	<b>Report on Needs Assessment</b>
2023 October	<b>LTTA Training in Iceland</b>
2023 October	<b>Pilot courses in Iceland and Austria</b>
2023 December	<b>Toolkit</b>





# Warm-Ups

## Must-dos, Arts

Intensity ●●○○○ | Movement **Movement based** | Number of Participants **3+**

Time Needed **10 mins** | Materials **Space to move**

## Method: Alien in space

Warming up can mean the body, voice or the group. It can be a physical experience or something that allows the group to arrive in the room. It can be a one-time getting to know the group or become a ritual if you are working over a longer period of time.

In this activity the group imagines arriving on earth for the first time and challenges their perceptions of everyday objects and experiences. It can be a short and sweet moment or can turn into a longer session, that is inspired by Mary Overlie's "The Six Viewpoints".

## Method: Soul Train

Warming up can mean that a facilitator or participant guides an exercise such as "alien in space" or it can turn into a freestyle session. If you would like to warm up in a way that doesn't need a lot of words, "Soul Train" might be the right way to go. The group splits up into two lines that face each other. Now, the music starts and two people get to go through the "aisle" in their own way – so they can dance through it or walk as if they are walking on clouds (to name just one example). The people in the two lines cheer on the two people that are dancing/walking. At the end of the "aisle" the two people rejoin the lines and the next two people at the top of the lines can start their freestyle. To prepare for this you can do the activity for "Introduce Yourself" p. 12, where people say their names and pronouns and do a simple movement, which the whole circle then repeats. After that you can go on and start a Soul Train.

## Background

Just like many sports, performing arts can be a full body activity, so it is important to make sure our bodies and voices are ready to move and act! Vocal warm-ups include warming up our necks, jaws, faces, and tongues. Practice projecting our voices from our diaphragms and learning to fill a room with sound without hurting our vocal cords. Tongue twisters can be useful, as well as saying lines from a show you might be working on together to limber up our voices. Stretch your body to prepare to move, and connect with how your body feels. This can also be helpful in seeing if there is a part of you that does not feel good, so you do not get injured doing activities.

We invite you to come back to some key elements of performing arts. Mary Overlie created a study that 'establishes and expands the base of performance by inquiring into the vocabulary of the basic materials that are found in the creation of all art'. You can always come back to these elements in your warm up to create an atmosphere where people can arrive in their own rhythm, tend to their needs and greet the room and the group:

"The seed of the entire work of The Six Viewpoints is found in the simple act of standing in space. From this perspective the artist is invited to read and be educated by the lexicon of daily experience: The information of space, the experience of time, the familiarity of shapes, the qualities of kinetics, the ways of logics, and the states of emotional being and exchange."





# Walk As If...

## Arts

Intensity ●●○○○ | Movement **Movement based** | Number of Participants **2+**

Time Needed **10–15 mins** | Materials **Space to move**

Note that in this activity it is easy to refer to the *First Agreement of Try it on*. We have often used the example “Walk around the room as if you are a chicken.” We know that a human is not a chicken, but it doesn’t hurt to try it on. Just because you are acting like a chicken, doesn’t make you a chicken.

## Method

- 1 The facilitator starts by saying “Walk around the room as if...” and then everyone follows the prompt.
- 2 Allow the group to explore the first prompt for a little while, then make a new prompt.

## Some examples

- You are late for work and need to get there as soon as possible
- You are a chicken
- You are carrying a heavy rock
- You are afraid of everyone you see
- You are lost in a foreign country
- You are walking on ice
- You are a snake
- You are an insect
- The floor is lava

Get creative and challenge people to step out of their comfort zones!

## Background

Walk As If is a great activity to jump into a group improvisation and can be used again and again. The activity can be a simple warm-up, or later developed for character exploration. For example, if a participant knows what role they will play in a performance, they can do this activity in character. Participants can also be prompted to Walk As If while being themselves and immediately after be prompted to do the same walk in character.



# Introduce Yourself!

## Must-dos, communication

Intensity ● ○ ○ ○ ○ | Movement **Low impact, seated or standing**

Number of Participants **4+** | Time Needed **1 min per participant**

Materials **None**

Make a habit of introducing your pronoun and asking about others. Embrace gender neutral greetings like „y’all“ or “everybody” instead of „ladies“ or „guys.“ Practice it with your group.

## Method

Gather participants in a circle so that everyone can see each other.

Ask participants to introduce themselves!

In this activity, every participant introduces themselves with their name and pronoun. After they say their name, they do a simple movement. The rest of the group repeats the person’s name, pronoun, and movement to the best of their ability.

## Background

Don’t assume things when it is so easy to ask! While many individuals may use ‚she/her‘ or ‚he/him‘, using the appropriate pronouns is a powerful way to acknowledge, validate, and accept others. This is especially crucial for trans and nonbinary individuals who face discrimination and violence due to social stigmatisation on gender identity.

Gender is not what people look like to other people; it is what we know ourselves to be. No one else should be able to tell you who you are; that’s for you to decide.

Alok Vaid-Menon, *Beyond the Gender Binary*



# Making a Manifesto!

## Arts, Communication

Intensity ●●●○○ | Movement **Low impact, seated**

Number of Participants **2+** | Time Needed **15 mins +**

Materials **Paper and pen or other recording device, First Agreements card**

We encourage you to explore creative ideas that might make exercises more accessible. Can this be done via voice recording? Would images instead of text be more helpful?

**Young Thespians' Mini Manifesto:** We use nonviolent forms of communication with each other. We only engage in physical contact with each other if consent has been provided. We allow participants of the group to eat small snacks during sessions if they need an energy boost. The group should have monthly check ins. During these check-ins, participants are invited to share with facilitators how the sessions have been for them, what works, and what they would like more or less of. This allows participants to share their feedback and contribute in shaping their own experience in the sessions.

## Method

Create a manifesto, or a group agreement together!

A manifesto is a document that everyone agrees to, which sets up the mindset of the group as they work together and interact with each other. The manifesto is a guide for how participants should act, what they expect, and what their goals are. It should be prepared collectively.

You as the facilitator decide how this should go based on your group and their needs.

Some options are:

Follow and implement a list of safety precautions and common agreements (See Expansion card #1 First Agreements, page 26). Some of these might include explaining and agreeing to concepts such as Amnesty, Take care of yourself, and Be as honest as you can be. This group agreement is to establish the way in which we interact with each other, keeping inclusivity, sensitivity and understanding at the front of our minds.

OR

Another option that can be used is for the facilitator to introduce the idea of a manifesto, or a group agreement, and allow the group of participants to create their own. Here, a facilitator may leave the group, in order to allow participants to create the manifesto independently. It can be helpful to look at the way we work with each other and the way we interact with each other separately.

## Bakgrunnsopplýsingar

**How to hold a safe(r) space:** In order to create a safe(r) space, a collaborative contract or agreement is made by all group members: THE MANIFESTO. This symbolic group agreement serves as a clear statement outlining the objectives and rules governing their collaboration. For instance, "We don't judge each other. Every idea is a good idea, even if we decide not to use it. Speak your mind. We agree to disagree". Creating a manifesto encourages participants to approach their collaboration with mindfulness, empathy, and openness.



# Youth Comes in All Colours, Shapes, and Sizes

Communication, Reflection, Power Dynamics

Intensity ●●○○○ | Movement **Stationary**

Number of Participants **3+** | Time Needed **20 mins**

Materials **Space to be comfortable, paper and pens/recording devices, Manifesto**

**Remember:** needs can be mental, emotional or physical.

## Method

- 1 Participants are prompted to write down the needs they have in order to feel comfortable in a space.
- 2 Collect papers and group similar needs together.
- 3 Compare the groups' needs with the Manifesto. Are their needs being met in the Manifesto, or do more things need to be added?
- 4 Work together to make sure the needs of the group are met to the best of the facilitator's abilities.

**Food for thought** How can everyone be made to feel heard, but not exposed?

## Background

Facilitator and youth leaders must prioritise understanding the needs and challenges youth face. By engaging in self-learning, training, or collaborating with experts in areas such as migration, mental and physical disabilities, **neurodivergence**, mental health, the **LGBTQIA+** community, and more, you can make a significant impact through your work.

**Additional work:** List topics you would like to learn more about. How much do you already know about these topics: access audit, ADHD, agender, androgyne, asylum seeking, autism, bigender, cerebral palsy, cisgender, dead name, drag, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, humanitarian protection, hyperlexia, hyperacusis, intergender, intersex, non-binary, OCD, pangender, people-first language, refugee status, sign language, Tourette syndrome, trans, queer, universal design, white cane? These are just a few examples. Find more! Check courses and workshops in your area that introduce you to these subjects in a professional setting.







# What About Our wants? Dream Expressions

**Must-Dos, Reflection, Communication, Arts**

Intensity ●●●●○ | Movement **Low impact to full out movement**

Number of Participants **2+** | Time Needed: **40 mins +**

Materials **Art supplies, space to move**

"Many of us have lost our ability to dream, or we were never allowed to have it in the first place."  
**Luvvie Ajayi Jones**

## Method

Through early work such as making a Manifesto and learning how to function together, we have identified our needs. But what about our wants? Many young people are not given the chance to explore and express the things that they simply want when their basic needs are not being met. In this activity, we invite the participants to do just that.

Encourage participants to identify and envision their wildest wishes or dreams. Each participant is then asked to make an artistic expression of their dreams. This can be in any creative form, from a drawing to a poem to a dance. The only limit on this activity is the access to supplies the facilitator has!

After the pieces are created, the group is invited to share their art and dreams. They can simply show their work, explain it, or abstain. For this activity we do what we **want** to do.

## Background

This activity is based on the idea of seeing our dreams come true. The authors were inspired by the Nordic Black Theatre (NBT) that was established over three decades ago in Oslo. This company showcases multicultural performances and operates Nordic Black Express, a tuition-free theatre school for culturally diverse youth. Students receive scholarships, enabling them to dedicate themselves to education. The program fosters performing skills, professional experience, and personal development while offering guidance, community support, and self-esteem building.



# Brainstorming Islands

## Communication, Connecting Tools, Reflection

Intensity ●●●○○ | Movement **Low impact movement**

Number of Participants **4+** | Time Needed **20 mins – 1 week**

Materials **Paper and things to write with,  
a way to record anonymously**

“With the word inclusion, you also say we own the space, and we will include you in it. A letting go needs to happen for people to be let in”.

**Participant in research  
conducted for Young Thespians**

## Method

The facilitator chooses a topic or theme for the group to brainstorm about. Create “brainstorming islands” by spreading several big pieces of paper throughout the room. If your work setting allows for a longer reflection, you can use different rooms, leaving posters and writing utensils for over a week (for example, next to the coffee machine, by the printer, or even the toilet).

Everyone is invited to share their experiences, perceptions, and questions by writing on the “islands”. The key question to ask is: **What do I need my group to know about...** When everyone is done or the allotted time has finished, the posters are collected again.

**Reflecting on the posters:** Are there recurring topics that need attention, questions to be answered, or definitions to be reviewed before going into a group discussion? If so, take some time to tend to those topics. Invite the group to pick one topic and split up into smaller groups.

**Get to the essentials:** What should the whole group know (and maybe agree on) about your chosen topic? What safety mechanisms might be necessary when working in this group with this topic or theme? Each group then presents their findings to the whole group. Could you discuss installing certain measures to address these topics during your collaboration, work setting, or wherever you wish to apply this reflection?

## Background

Commonly used terms such as diversity, inclusion, marginalisation, and integration might come up while talking about the group’s needs – but most likely, people who experience these phenomena know what they mean – even if they don’t address them in this way. Depending on the context of the work it might not be necessary to discuss these specific terms. It might be more interesting to cater to the specific needs of the group and to see what they want to talk about. That way, facilitators and also participants can make sure that no topics are forced onto the group. As a facilitator it is important to critically assess one’s own usage of words like inclusion or integration, as they can imply power dynamics and create divisions. In a next step one can also assess the way institutions and companies use these words: Is diversity something where individuals are appreciated for who they are and with all the experiences and realities they bring to the table – or is it a marketing concept? When this occurs, it is referred to as tokenism.









# Art Inspiration and Working Across Disciplines

Art, Reflection, Communication, Pilot

Intensity ● ○ ○ ○ ○ | Movement **Stationary**

Number of Participants **2+** | Time Needed **10–30 mins**

Materials **Space to be comfortable, writing or recording materials**

## Method

Brainstorm a variety of disciplines and learning opportunities within the realm of **performing arts** that can be offered to youth. How can knowledge from various disciplines and fields of interest such as natural sciences and engineering or even sports and popular culture enrich a workshop or process?

### Ask yourself and participants:

Where do I look for these inspirations?

Do I look at art — and if so, what is art for me?

Within a group share your creative ideas and suggestions in the form of a list.

How many different actions did you find? Could these actions have one or more people involved? In the spectrum of your inspirations — did you find yourself prioritising one over the other? Why was that? Is there an unconscious bias or hierarchy that you discovered?

This activity can be useful in seeing where your group is at and what their interests are. Make sure to stress that **everyone is creative!** This is a tool to challenge the beliefs of what is art.

## Background

**Summer Youth Theatre** is a camp for young artists organised every summer, in Hvammstangi in Iceland. In this captivating program, youth from nearby villages engage in remarkable theatrical productions. The youth also have the opportunity to enrol in **youth radio workshops**, become part of a **vibrant Youth Art Cluster**, **collaborate closely with visiting artists**, and use dedicated **art studio space** to nurture their artistic projects.



# Meeting Beyond Language

## Communication, Reflection

Intensity ●●○○○ | Movement **Stationary**

Number of Participants **2+** | Time Needed **10–30 mins** |

Materials **Space to be comfortable**

Check out your local library, maybe they have a book on the topic you can borrow.

**Remember:** sign language is also a language!

## Method

The facilitator leads a discussion on language barriers, followed by an activity.

All participants sit in a circle. Together, they identify the different ways of communication in the group. It can be communicating through the body (sign language) or verbal language (for example different languages used at home).

Communicating through Gestures: **Sign Name**

Sign names are personalised or customised signs that combine hand shapes and movements to refer to a certain person... they're like nicknames. Working in pairs, we designate the sign name for our partner.

Information about getting or giving sign names:

- Deaf signers typically give sign names to friends and family members.
- They can be based on personality traits, distinctive physical qualities, or habits.
- They can also be initialised with the first letter of your name.
- Some sign language users are not given a sign name or choose not to use one, especially if their name is short and/or easy to spell.
- Typically, when introducing yourself, finger spell your name and present your sign name after.

## Background

Communication can pose challenges for many individuals regarding self-expression, especially for newcomers grappling with local languages. However, performing arts provide compelling alternatives. We can communicate and convey meaning independently through gestures, body movements, sounds, images, and music.

## Resources

For this activity it is recommended to have at hand different resources such as:

1. Images and information on sign language, according to the country where the workshop is being held.
2. Images and information on the Braille alphabet.

This will help us to share and discuss different forms of communication.



# Human Sculptures

## Arts, Reflection, Connecting Tool

Intensity ● ○ ○ ○ ○ | Movement **Stationary audience, moving performers**

Number of Participants **5+** | Time Needed **20 mins**

Materials **Space to move**

## Method

One participant is chosen or volunteers to be the sculptor in this activity. The sculptor's materials are other participants. The number of people to become the sculpture can vary depending on the topic and group size.

1. The sculptor is given a word, such as politics, inclusion, love (or a word that is relevant to the theme of the day), and is instructed to make a tableau or still scene of that word. They should draw from their own understanding and experience of this word in their own life. This exercise is done in silence, the only speaking done by the sculptor if they need to direct a fellow participant in a movement or position in creating the statue.
2. Once the scene is set to the sculptor's liking, the other participants are invited to look at the scene and discuss what they see and engage the sculptor. Participants who are statues and observers are equally encouraged to share their experience after the activity in a group conversation.
3. After a short discussion, the sculptor is instructed to change the image to what the ideal/dream situation would look like.
4. The group discusses the portrayal of the ideal and what it means to them or how it feels to them.
5. Finally, the sculptor is challenged to create a scene of the situation changing from the reality to the ideal. What does change look like? How can we see momentum in a static image?

## Variations

An audience member or part of the sculpture presents the sculpture they see without hearing the sculptor's point of view.

This is done as a "gallery exhibition" and audience members are invited to walk around the scene to observe.

## Background

By exploring ways we can move our communication from verbal to visual, we can engage different creative expression. This activity is versatile and can be used to help engage all participants, even if there are language or speech barriers. It offers insight and engages many principles brought forth by Augusto Boal in his book *Theater of the Oppressed*. This helps move ideas from theoretical into physical, offering a new way to engage in a topic.



# Young But Professional

## Arts, Communication

Intensity ●●○○○ | Movement **Stationary audience, moving performers**

Number of Participants **5+** | Time Needed: **20 mins**

Materials **Space to move**

The arts aren't just for artists.

## Method

1. Develop the idea of a project for the team or talk about one you are a part of or have seen.
2. Compile a comprehensive list of the roles and tasks required for your project and discuss it together. Identify the professional terms associated with each job and outline the skills and responsibilities associated with these roles.
3. Engage your group to gather their preferences and interests regarding these positions.
4. Create a Sculpture (See Card #21) portraying every role needed in the project the group has created together.

**Examples of roles:** Director, Playwright/Scriptwriter, Stage Manager, Set Designer, Costume Designer, Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Choreographer, Music Director, Prop Master, Makeup Artist, Technical Crew, Performer, Public Relations Manager, Production Assistant, Technical Director, House Manager, Box Office Manager, and more...

## Background

**Performing arts** encompass many roles and diverse artistic, technical, and social skills, powerful for any career path.

Other roles in the arts, such as technicians, administrators, educators, provide technical expertise, logistical support, education, critical evaluation, visual enhancement, and community/financial support, collectively ensuring the realisation and accessibility of a creative vision, and enhancing the quality and cultural significance of the arts.

Treating youth seriously and supporting young artists on their vocational journey is extremely important. Taking the example of theatre, together define the roles using internet sources like the Get Into Theatre. This exercise empowers youth to embrace the professional side of theatre, discover job opportunities, and enhance their employability.





# It Takes A Village

## Communication, Reflection

Intensity ●●●○○ | Movement **Stationary**

Number of Participants **2+** | Time Needed **20 mins**

Materials **Space to be comfortable**

This activity might be helpful for participants who may want to go on to create their own projects. Use this as a guide they can take with them on their own journeys!

## Method

1. Participants work together to create an exciting performing arts idea.
2. Explore how friends, families, parents, teachers, neighbours, and the local community can actively participate in the production. Brainstorm ways to involve them and make their contributions integral to the project's success.
3. Think about location. Where would this take place? Who runs the space? Are there alternatives? What area would draw the most amount of your target audience? Get to know your surroundings and options!

**Note:** This activity can directly follow the activities on the Young But Professional card! (Activity card #11, page 22)

## Extra topics to discuss in this activity can include:

How do we like to communicate on how we make decisions?

Expectations vs. reality, and expectation management in project members.

## Background

Involving the entire community in youth projects generates tangible social impact. By inviting families, parents, neighbours, teachers, and friends to actively contribute to a youth project, production, workshop, or performance, we gain valuable insights into the cultural needs of youth and establish social structures that will foster their future growth.

Using theatre to learn about ourselves and our community members is a step towards **accessibility** for more people. The authors highly recommend reading the book *Theatre of the Oppressed* by Augusto Boal, which inspired many activities in the toolkit. *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a dramatic primer on how we can use the safety of theatre and performance to improve our lives by exploring our options in the imaginary world of the stage. Check out methods derived from *Theatre of the Oppressed*: Forum Theater and Adapted Forum Theater.



# Art Can Create Change – Mirroring Exercise

Communication, Arts, Power Dynamics

Intensity ●●●○○ | Movement **Stationary**

Number of Participants **4+** | Time Needed: **20 mins**

Materials **Space to be comfortable, space to move**

Eye contact helps a lot in this activity! If someone is not comfortable making eye contact, that is okay. Encourage them to find other ways that they can follow along with their partner.

## Method

Lead a group discussion about the following: What are the pressing concerns, conflicts, and anxieties faced by the young artists I collaborate with? How can we discuss and express these issues safely and creatively through art and symbolism? How can art mirror real life, and how can we see power dynamics in art?

1. Ask the group to pair off so that each person has one partner. The partners decide who will be A and who will be B. Person A starts by leading person B through simple movements which they have to copy. The goal that each group has is to act like a mirror for their partner. The pairs will learn the speed at which they will need to move to keep pace with one another.
2. After a short time, invite person B to lead person A in the same exercise.
3. Finally, A and B continue to mirror, but this time without one person leading. This helps develop teamwork and awareness. We learn balance and how to share power by having no leader. This is a scaffolding technique that can be taught in acting, but applied in life as we all have to learn to share power and share leading responsibilities.

**Note:** This activity can be adapted, and there is room for flexibility with its method. As an example, not all body parts may necessarily be used.

## Background

Many facilitators recognize the power of performing arts as a conflict resolution tool. For example, in response to a severe gender bullying problem among students, you can collaborate with young artists to create a school theatre production celebrating gender diversity. Such an initiative could address the issue directly, providing a safe and creative space for discussion, support, and empowerment.



# Collaborating Across Hierarchy – Lead them by the Nose

## Communication, Arts, Power Dynamics

Intensity ●●○○○ | Movement **Stationary and some movement**

Number of Participants **4+** | Time Needed **20 mins**

Materials **Space to be comfortable and move around freely**

This exercise helps with spatial awareness as well as helps visualize how we use our power. Person A could easily try to make Person B move into uncomfortable positions, or they could make it easy for them to follow their lead and be successful.

## Method

1. Ask the group to pair off so that each person has one partner. The partners decide who will be A and who will be B. Person A starts by putting their arm up, away from Person B's nose. The goal of this activity is to have an arm's length distance never become smaller or larger. Person B has to follow Person A's hand as much as they can.
2. After some time, the roles switch so that Person B leads and Person A follows.
3. This can be expanded by taking 2 pairs and making a group of 4, in which one person leads and the other 3 have to maintain the distance as they follow.

Having experienced what it is like to hold power over another person, prompt participants to design a project idea where the facilitator or coordinator steps back and allows the group to take charge.

How do we use our power in working together? How would roles in the production be chosen? How might this approach unfold, and what support would be crucial for its success? What is the value of peer education and learning on the job?

## Background

The youth edition of the Reykjavík Fringe festival has a unique strategy for working with young artists. During the festival, youth were given full artistic freedom and technical support without supervision over their artistic process to create and stage a performance.

Remember that good things can happen without your active presence. Meeting youth where they are, regarding their likes and dislikes, is essential for creating an atmosphere of trust and respect. The facilitator is there to guide and hold the space.

# First Agreements

- **Confidentiality:** What is said in this room, stays in this room. Our stories are ours to share and what is said during rehearsal is for the ears of the participants only, not a tale to be told to others.
  - **Amnesty:** We are all learning, and making mistakes along the way is to be expected. We agree to give amnesty to each other. What happened in the past stays in the past and will not be held as an absolute over someone. We all need room to grow and be allowed to change our minds without being held to a single opinion forever.
  - **I Statements:** We can't speak for others when we express our opinions, so we use first-person statements. The sentence "All women feel bad when men do X" would be a generalization. Instead, we will try to use statements like "I feel bad when X is done to me". We speak for ourselves so that we remain open to other people's experiences.
  - **Respect:** We treat others the way they want to be treated! We do not assume everyone wants to be treated the same way and will do our best to respect every individual. Ask for consent before doing something. If you foresee something that will make you uncomfortable, speak up. We communicate our boundaries clearly
  - **Listen:** We will not sit and just wait for our turn to speak without listening to what someone else is saying. We give our attention to the person speaking and acknowledge internally how we feel about it. We listen to others as well as ourselves in order to better understand things.
  - **Put-ups, not put-downs:** If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all! Which is not to say that we cannot express negativity, but rather that we will strive to lift each other up rather than put each other down. Give compliments, don't tease or name call.
  - **No cross talk or piggybacking:** Cross talk refers to the interference or overlap of communication between two or more individuals. It can happen in various situations, such as during group discussions, meetings, or conversations. When cross talk occurs, it can be challenging for people to effectively communicate and understand each other, leading to confusion and misunderstandings. Piggybacking in communication occurs when one person immediately follows another's statement without giving any significant pause or allowing time for reflection. This can hinder the depth of conversation and may lead to miscommunication or a lack of thoughtful engagement.
- Tips when listening to others:** Active Listening skills: Actively focus on the person speaking, avoid distractions, and make eye contact (if possible). Show you are engaged and understanding of their perspective.
- Tips when being interrupted:** Clearly express what is causing discomfort, share your feelings using statements that begin with "I" to avoid sounding accusatory and provide details to enhance understanding.
- It is important for the facilitator to suggest alternative approaches or solutions that might make the conversation more



# First Agreements

comfortable for both parties, and to encourage open communication by creating safer spaces for others to express discomfort as well, fostering open dialogue.

- **Try It On:** Try out new things. Just because you never stood on a stage doesn't mean you should never stand on a stage! Give things a chance before you decide to say no.
- **You can pass:** As much as we encourage ourselves to try things on, we also always have the right to pass and not take part. However, we will aim to do so mindfully. We will ask ourselves, why did I choose not to participate? How does that make me feel? If it is an ability or safety issue, is there a way that it could be addressed so that if you wanted to participate, you could?
- **Be as honest as you can be:** We will strive not to lie when we express our opinions. We cannot always share everything, and that is okay, but we will be honest with what we say. We will also be honest with ourselves when we participate with things and not just tell ourselves to feel the way we feel we "should" feel or are expected to feel.
- **Take care/Enjoy yourself:** Performing arts workshops and activities we engage in should be fun! Sometimes there is hard work, but we want our net outcome to be more positive than negative. Be careful with yourself. If you have a broken leg, don't jump on it because it is part of an activity. Make sure you and the people around you are safe.
- **Step up/Step back:** Some of us are more extroverted and outspoken than others; some of us are more comfortable staying quiet. Every opinion is important, and we want to hear as much as we can. If you are prone to speak up, try giving someone else the chance to speak. If you are prone to stay silent, try speaking up and letting your voice be heard. We don't want only a small group of individuals to dominate all conversation, but for everyone to be involved.
- **Affection yes, sexual contact no:** This is not a place for a date. We can respectfully and consensually be affectionate, but will not engage in sexual activity during rehearsal.
- **No drugs or alcohol:** In order to be as honest as we can be, we must be in complete control of our faculties, meaning we should be sober when participating. This is a drug and alcohol-free place, and we agree to be sober during rehearsals.
- **Accountability:** If you say you are going to do something, do it. We will always try to stay true to our word and try not to agree to do things we are unable to do for whatever reason.

## #2 Expansion card

### Self-reflection points for youth

- ☐ How do I ask my teachers, local cultural office, youth council, or municipality what support and funding is offered to youth in your area interested in performing arts education?
- ☐ Do local art schools, theatres, and community centres offer classes, space, support, or outreach programs for youth interested in performing arts?
- ☐ Do I have an idea for a youth project to share with my friends, teachers, and local community?
- ☐ What would our manifesto be like?
- ☐ How can I support my peers with information, guidance, openness, and encouragement?
- ☐ How do I personally benefit from taking part in performing arts?
- ☐ What skills would I like to develop?
- ☐ What career path would I design for myself?

## #3 Expansion card

### Self-reflection points for facilitator

- ☐ How do I make my communication clear?
- ☐ What boundaries are important in my profession?
- ☐ Do I invite youth to create a manifest of our collaboration, a set of rules for a safe and encouraging space?
- ☐ How diverse are my colleagues, especially in terms of minority representation?
- ☐ Am I receptive to non-European artistic expressions?
- ☐ Am I actively participating in training on accessibility, anti-racism, gender diversity, and unconscious bias?
- ☐ Are there financial barriers hindering access to my project?
- ☐ How accessible is the chosen location for local minority groups?
- ☐ Do I embrace different languages and transcend language barriers in my practice?
- ☐ Do I engage committed volunteers, youth workers, experts, translators, or psychologists for support?
- ☐ Is my program adaptable to accommodate the group's needs?
- ☐ How do I foster gender equality?
- ☐ How can I make an open call genuinely inclusive and inviting to all?
- ☐ How do I encourage professionalism and artistic freedom of young artists?
- ☐ Do I treat young people as collaborators or merely as students?
- ☐ Do I prioritise empathy over my artistic vision?
- ☐ Do I involve friends, parents, neighbours, teachers, and the local community in contributing to the project?
- ☐ How do I prevent bullying?
- ☐ How can I encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among youth?
- ☐ Do I celebrate novelty and discovery through my practice?

## #4 Expansion card

### Self-reflection points for decision-makers

- ☐ How diverse are our hiring teams, boards, and panels?
- ☐ How many young people are part of our team?
- ☐ How many youth projects do we fund?
- ☐ How do our decisions and policies promote social equality among young people?
- ☐ How do our decisions support social equality, gender diversity, and accessibility?
- ☐ How do we support the visibility and cultural representation of minorities?
- ☐ How many training sessions on accessibility, anti-racism, gender diversity, and unconscious bias have we undergone and offered?
- ☐ Does our outreach project genuinely value minorities?
- ☐ What laws and policies have we introduced to protect youth from discrimination?
- ☐ What financial, organisational, expert assistance, and research support do we offer minority groups to engage in performing arts education?
- ☐ Is the application process for funding easy, accessible, and available in languages used by local minority groups?
- ☐ How do we prevent social isolation within our community/region?
- ☐ How do we create and support equal opportunities and funding for youth across different neighbourhoods and regions?
- ☐ How do we support the cultural heritage of minority groups, particularly non-European forms of artistic expression?
- ☐ How do we promote non-formal artistic education opportunities and youth-led grassroots projects?





