

# A NIGHT LESS ORDINARY - WHAT DID WE LEARN?

## Peer sharing day summary report

RIBA, 66 Portland Place London W1B 1AD

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## INTRODUCTION - WHY A NIGHT LESS ORDINARY?

**Barbara Matthews, Director, Theatre, Arts Council England**

Goal 5 in Arts Council England's ten year strategic framework is that every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts

ANLO has made a difference – you have given away over 300,000 tickets and have attracted millions of pounds worth of media coverage. We may have missed opportunities and it would be great if a pilot turned into an ongoing programme but we live in the real world.

What is most important is how ANLO has impacted on the way you engage with children and young people - your potential audiences.

### The A Night Less Ordinary Effect: Stories from Venues

**Christina Dixon, Project Consultant, Theatre Royal Plymouth: Panel Chair** asked venues to talk about three things they've learned as a result of ANLO.

**Dan Bates, Chief Executive - Sheffield Theatres**

York Theatre Royal had a track record for engaging with young people, a £5 unrestricted ticket which we sold 12,000 a year; 350 youth theatre members; a youth engagement team and theatre companies in residence. We wanted a better relationship with this audience. So we did The Takeover Festival with a young people's board and young programmers. We had an unexpected outcome: many young people who were our volunteers are now employed in the arts

At Sheffield, we had a complicated ANLO sign up process which we abandoned. We released tickets first Tuesday of every month, you could book online, and we offered greater availability on our produced work. Many ANLO people came at least twice and they were new to us, they also supported our produced work. Interestingly, paid tickets increased and concessions have grown. We targeted universities as there are 75,000 students in Sheffield. Our staff became less suspicious of young people; there was a change in attitude. We recruited younger staff front of house and more young people came forward. We have a new scheme, Live for £5, you can come to see anything for £5. 100 people used the scheme for our first show.

*But... we didn't consult enough with young people when we started and during the course the scheme we changed in response to what they told us.*

## **Richard Bonham, Audience Development - The Carriageworks**

Carriageworks is only 5 years old. Over 50% of people getting ANLO tickets had never been to us before so it succeeded in getting new people. Our three things are:

1. Mixing how we targeted people: open access tickets were available to anyone from our box office and website and we targeted community groups, not schools: finding gate keepers with access to young people really worked for us.
2. Developing wrap-around activities to go with shows: added - value activities with our family shows like talks, backstage tours, workshops, craft activities: this works really well and we will carry that on, especially for children up to 12 years old.
3. Using ANLO for PR. Our best attenders got a VIP day which they really loved and we got good publicity. They retain their interest, stay in touch and recommend us to their friends. This led us into creating a young ambassadors scheme.

*But... we should have made it easy online: we couldn't do online booking our website is a ongoing saga in many ways. I probably would have done something where they could text in rather than have speak direct to box office which was quite a barrier.*

## **Sam Franklin, FreeB, The Barbican**

In 2008 the Barbican recognized that we needed to attract younger audiences. ANLO got us going and enabled our own scheme FreeB, to be launched a lot faster in March 2009. We allocated 10,000 theatre tickets and pledged a further 20,000 to reflect that the Barbican is a multi arts centre. It was free to anyone aged 16 -25, with a dedicated mini site for members to join, browse, book online.

1. **Online only** saved time and money which was critical to a free ticket scheme. Members could get used to the Barbican website with the incentive of claiming free tickets; they could see the latest information: this is a good way to communicate with this tech savvy group.
2. **Using social networks:** FreeB means that tickets are allocated last minute, so cultivating an audience online and announcing FreeB ticket releases on our facebook and twitter sites allows us to distribute these quickly. them. It helped us develop a voice for FreeB scheme that reflects the youthful demographic that we are appealing to.
3. **Working with Fresher's Fairs across London:** We collected 10,000 student emails to contact about the scheme. We got to know the audience and understand some of the challenges facing recognition of the Barbican branding.

*But... although our website and online was a biggest success it didn't offer the flexibility for our members to get involved or cancel. We had some tough measures such as non attendance would result in cancellation of membership. This was counter productive when we want to*

*encourage more people, so we became more lenient. We changed how tickets were allocated to give away tickets weekly rather than by season and that has worked well.*

So where are we today? We have given out 32,000 tickets with about 28,000 of those being taken up. FreeB has 13,000 members, 2,500 hundred Facebook fans and 1,000 on twitter. 93% of the members are new to the Barbican and, importantly, they have generated revenue of £95,000 over that time.

### **Su Matthewman, Director of Communications, West Yorkshire Playhouse**

1. **We created a multi layered scheme.** We want to give people a place to go, not just get them in once and then leave them. Our scheme allows a young person 5 free tickets a year, then 5 tickets for £5, then 10 tickets for £10. We have given away 9,860 free tickets; we have 1,041 people on the 5 for £5 scheme and 56 people on the 10 for £10 level – not massive numbers but we are retaining those new people. . We are really satisfied with what ANLO has done for us – 87% of our people are new to us, we now have 4,889 new people on the database, so here is a new audience that we can go somewhere with.
2. **We appointed one person to run the scheme:** so it was easy to make decisions quickly without going through a committee.
3. **We kept box office admin simple and to a minimum:** our scheme has no paperwork: young people turn up, show some id, we enrol them at the box office and tag them as ANLO people. We offered a very friendly and personal service and no one has found the scheme internally or externally complicated.

*But... one of the things we should have done is introduce a membership card. ANLO has to be more than just a discount scheme, it has to become a membership scheme.*

ANLO prompted us to re-evaluate our work with young people; it spurred us to introduce a young ambassador scheme, and a young people's panel to help develop the venue as a relevant and good space for them. It has not yet affected our programming but this is on the agenda at senior level. Our challenge is to retain engage, challenge and entertain these young people. We will keep the scheme running when ANLO finishes. It's not affected our financial bottom line, We are considering an under 30's addition to our scheme to keep people involved longer term. I think we should be doing this anyway as a venue.

### **Rebecca Rimmer, RSC**

Since 2005 we have had a £5 ticket scheme for 16-25 year olds which we were thinking about developing. ANLO was a perfect stepping stone for us to develop our £5 ticket scheme. The last 2 years have taught us a lot:

1. **Branding:** we use ANLO header and branding to talk to young people about our free tickets and link through to the main website. They need a brand to associate with rather than just saying there are free tickets on a Tuesday. RSC doesn't mean anything to 16-25 year olds and can alienate them if they think Shakespeare is boring. The ANLO brand taught us a lot about developing our brand for our own £5 ticket scheme.

2. Good, constant communication with young people who booked tickets. At the start of ANLO 19.8% of free tickets were uncollected. To reduce this we checked with bookers the day before to ask if they were coming: our uncollected rate went down to 4.8%. Young people want a constant relationship so we now have regular e-newsletters with updates to all 16-25 year olds and the new scheme has its own facebook and twitter sites.
3. The way we were talking to our 16-25 year olds wasn't hitting the mark. Offering a £5 ticket is not enough. Our emails now feature news, discounts and events. Before ANLO, our 16-25 year old emails had a 21% open rate (the national average is 34 %). Following the changes we made we now get a 45% -60% open rate, which is really high.

For RSC, ANLO has been really successful; it brought 60% new bookers to RSC, 40% who were already on our existing £5 ticket scheme. ANLO has helped us to better connect and communicate with young people who want to take a risk on Shakespeare: there are barriers for people who don't want to see that sort of thing.

*But... It's not just about free tickets, sometimes the price isn't the barrier. We need to offer more and communicate other messages - not just about seeing theatre. Exhibitions, restaurants, cafes, can be first step to engaging people, once they are in you sell them a ticket for special event for non theatre goers. Since doing non-theatre activity we have had 83% of people who have never been to RSC before. I believe it's because we offered them other things first before we offered £5 theatre tickets.*

### **In summary:**

**Keep it simple:** in the design of the scheme, communicating it to young people: the booking process - but not so simple that you miss out on the basics.

**Get the whole organisation involved:** ANLO worked well where there has been a lead from the top of the organisation, and not just the marketing department and when young people have been involved part of the team as volunteers or ambassadors.

**Get the Communication right:** social networking is a gift for its immediacy and feedback of comments.

**Add value in the programming mix and wrap around events,** for early years and families and understand the value of bringing young people into your organisation as this can mature into ambassadors' schemes or panels.

## POINTS FROM DELEGATE DISCUSSION

### Age focus

**Theatre Royal Plymouth's** scheme looks at developing theatre attendance by individuals rather than families. If we re-designed it, it would be for 14 – 25 years old, a lot of the programming is 14 plus but this would make the marketing message much more direct and simpler.

### Social media

About one third of attenders run a Facebook site that is geared up to encourage young people in.

**RSC Key** has Facebook and Twitter sites, as we had an existing, probably aged over 25 audience as our Facebook fans, could put out 3 or 4 messages per day about 16-25 activity:

**Theatre Royal, Plymouth** runs two Facebook sites, good for immediate feedback and quotes from such as a love it or hate it forms. Facebook groupies have been brought in as reps. Twitter gets audiences who are probably in their twenties. For young family work we don't use social media at all. Comedy and contemporary works for people who engage in social media. We have found social media hasn't been the hook that you might imagine, but it's early days yet.

**Oxford Playhouse** found twitter has an older demographic and for Facebook it is younger. We did a punk rock night for free on the ANLO scheme, and we gave 600 tickets away to under 26s. We had live feed screens on twitter so they could tweet but we had a minimal amount of tweeting on the night. That was the point we realised that Facebook is a much stronger media than Twitter for this age group.

### Ambassador Schemes

Examples given by delegates include:

**Branding ambassadors schemes by age groups:** Ambassadors Pro for young people, Silver Ambassadors for older people.

Recruiting **youth theatre** members as ambassadors, they also provide valuable feedback.

**Reduce admin:** the main thing with a scheme is to not to have heavy admin and not organise anything too far ahead.

**Recruiting 18-25 year olds at fresher's fairs,** collecting emails and talking to young people, post adverts for the ambassador's scheme on the venue website and on university platforms.

**Young people on work placement** can become ambassadors and benefit from free tickets, find out about working in the arts, interviewing people, writing a backstage blog, meeting the press at a press night.

**Young reps to promote ANLO:** Theatre Royal Plymouth's box office suggested that if young people handed out ANLO tickets it would be more user- friendly. They are recruited through word of mouth, the theatre brochure and young people's networks. The scheme was set up jointly by

marketing and creative learning/education, so the participation element was driven by creative learning but they work as an extended marketing team to come up with new ideas.

**Young promoters:** The Cornwall scheme involves rural tourism to 65-75 village halls from 80 to 1,000 seater venues. Just after their ANLO award they received a Paul Hamlyn Foundation award to support 10- 12 young promoters. They sent them to Edinburgh to choose shows for Cornwall to promote at their local venues. Linking young promoters to ANLO has been effective in expanding ideas.

## **Booking tickets**

Feedback from young people on issues with booking tickets was raised by several delegates.

**Every venue had a different way of booking tickets** or providing information on what was available. In some instances phone and on-line information differed. To someone who has never booked a ticket before this could be a big barrier.

**Chichester Festival Theatre** did online booking, with tickets available at different price bands at the start of the shows; up to 4 tickets could be booked online. Tickets were not sent out; ID had to be shown to collect tickets. Emails asking for the Arts Council data and as reminders of the event were sent.

**Theatre Royal, Winchester:** People could click on the ANLO logo on the theatre homepage, download the application form and return it to the venue or email it back. They quickly learnt that young people would not access and return an online form. They made more tickets available for popular shows. Details of all tickets are published in their seasonal brochures.

**A 21 year old delegate** felt it was appealing that you could just show your id but this didn't seem 'official' like a railcard which you have to show to get discounts. Also, one person couldn't book tickets for a group of friends. Someone under 26 would rarely go to the theatre alone and would go with mates. To have the flexibility to book group tickets and show id's on the night would make it easier.

**Phil Cave, Arts Council England:** Following feedback that young people were finding it really difficult to get tickets, ACE invested in an online website allowing people to pull the free tickets. We did this late on so it would be interesting to hear how it is working or could work in the future.

**Rachel Jeffcoat, &Co** developed this online booking system and is gathering data from users. 70% of respondents indicated that they would prefer to book tickets online, about 80% hadn't actually booked for ANLO before the ticketing resource was launched. Around 80% of the tickets available to book on this system have been taken up, with the majority of shows selling out. A key finding is that people visit the site to look for what was available rather than to necessarily book for a specific show. Respondents were frustrated when they found the show they wanted to go to but couldn't immediately book their tickets.

## ANLO Branding

**Phil Cave, Arts Council England:** 'Did it help to be part of National drive to get young people engaged? Specifically, does it matter to you if whatever you do independently is called something different in every theatre around the country - or is there a strength in sharing something?

Delegates felt that it helped to be part of a national brand; this has been demonstrated by the geographical spread. The negative side is that venues all operated differently with different schemes - can it be standardised? This it does seem like a big ask at the moment.

Comments from delegates:

*"You can't see young people as one group. The national brand is more useful for young people who are already engaged with theatre. It doesn't work with people that haven't been to the theatre before and don't see themselves as theatre goers."*

*"The ANLO branding just didn't work for us or the young people. We had feedback that they don't get it, don't understand the words or what it's all about. We are about to rename it for our venue and I wonder if anyone who is going to retain the scheme will keep the ANLO name?"*

*"The ANLO branding was a strong launch pad for venues own schemes, it drew national attention. and it was a good position to start from."*

*"I feel we have learnt a lot through ANLO, how you brand a scheme and how we can come to events like this and get feedback from everyone else: to be able to come and share stories makes us glad it was a national incentive."*

*"The branding didn't help us; we consulted right from the application stage with our young producers group who advise us. ANLO - even the film A Life Less Ordinary is before my time and I am 26 years old, so it didn't speak even to me let alone the young people we work with."*

*"The national branding meant nothing to the young people who came to our venue, it was local to them, it was how they engaged with our venue, which looks like an 18th Century manor house and people think it's a museum, so getting young people through the door was hugely important. ANLO has changed the entire makeup of who attends so it was very successful."*

*"We did use ANLO branding to tie it all together and it gave us the impetus to start a scheme like that for our venue, which had previously appealed to our older clientele rather than our younger."*

## RE-IMAGINING A NIGHT LESS ORDINARY

**Barbara Matthews**

We asked each of the following people to answer this simple question – if the theatre industry is serious about wanting to engage more young people – what is the most important thing to do.

**Jane Finnis, Culture 24**

I am going to start by sharing some findings from two projects Culture 24 are involved with running.

1. The first is an action research project about how you evaluate success online, working with 17 organisations around the UK including Watershed, Royal Shakespeare Company, The National History Museum, The British library, Tate, and British Museum.

How do we know if any of this digital approach is actually working? What is actually happening in the channels we are using and what can we learn from that? The research is ongoing, but a couple of the key things which have come out that I think are useful to this group is the **difference between popularity and engagement.**

**What you have to do to get engagement is different to what you have to do to get popularity;** I think that is a very important thing to consider. The people who were getting the most engagement weren't necessarily those who had the most strategies. When we dug into it a bit deeper, we found there were a **lot of issues about developing a social media strategy that created barriers within the organisation about permissions.** Some of the people who were getting the most activity and engagement were side stepping their formal approach to strategies.

2. The second project I think is interesting is called **Museums at Night** and it has a lot of parallels with ANLO. The point of it is to do something different, stay open late and hopefully attract someone new to come to your gallery, museum or event. The evidence from last year was that 47% of people that came had never been to the venue before.

One of the things that inspired us is something that happens in the music industry a lot where artists have digital street teams and get their fans motivated to become advocates for what they are doing - working as both online advocacy and an offline advocacy. It's the basic idea that you find the people who already like what you are doing and motivate them in some way has been what we are trying to build our thinking on for Museums at Night.

You need to have something to say that is reaching out to somebody who wants to hear that, and you have to be genuinely willing to listen to what they have to say back. **It might not always be positive, it might be critical and being able to respond to that at an organisational level is a strategic mind shift for a lot of organisations.**

My final thought is that there is loads of clichés everywhere around the scale of change and all these digital opportunities available.

**I think the most useful way to think about change is not in a technological way but in a social way. It's not all about the latest technology or which platform, it's about changing the way you are thinking about your engagement and where those conversations start with your audience.** It's not all about online, it's about the blend of online and offline and if you can get that mix right it will be way more powerful.

### **Jake Orr, A Younger Theatre**

For [ayoungertheatre.com](http://ayoungertheatre.com) the website I founded in 2009, we have often asked the question 'what is theatre for to young people?' The response we have found seems to be repeatedly the same – theatre is uncool, theatre is educational, theatre is expensive and theatre is elitist.

***“Theatre is educational, cinema is entertainment”*** - this statement came from a young person describing the difference between the two. Young people frequently perceive the link between theatre and education as a barrier. As part of the English and dramas classes they are rounded up and put on coaches taken to the theatre under the supervision of their teachers, told they must write a report on it. What part of this is fun?

One of the biggest challenges we face is perceived notion that theatre is only that within the West End – musicals dominate the notion of theatre for young people.

Theatres that incorporated student ambassadors and youth panels have already made the leap towards actively endorsing theatre to a younger demographic, for utilizing a pre existing young audience, hopefully a viral effect through friends and social platforms will be held.

**Do not underestimate the power of word of mouth for young people, if huge marketing budgets are out of the question, use direct face to face method and social networking sites to promote your work.**

So how do we inspire a young audience to attend when there are so many unspoken rules and restrictions? Whose duty is it to make younger audiences understand and how many of you provide additional information for first time theatre audiences?

**I believe it is the duty of each organisation to see the potential in their productions for new younger audiences, if we can connect with them today then this is the legacy that will continue with them throughout the rest of their lives.** In the wise words of Lyn Gardner 'if theatre can't afford the young it can't afford the future', I couldn't agree more.

## **Susan Whittingdon, Mousetrap Theatre Projects**

We are an independent theatre education charity, founded in 1997. Our remit is to take disadvantaged young people to the theatre and those with special needs to the theatre, identifying those young people who wouldn't otherwise go.

Mousetrap schemes:

- **C145:** Each month we offer an event for £5 reduction which ranges from musicals to challenging new plays to opera and dance. Each event includes a behind the scenes talk with the producer/designer/actors – giving these C145'ers as they are called a better understanding of the production or specific art form.

C145's remit is to encourage young people to come on their own or with a friend to explore a range of London theatres and different types of productions. The only concession we make for them is that we will meet them at a local tube station and walk them to the theatre. We help them organise tickets but they have to come to the theatre on their own.

- We also run a similar scheme for 19-23 years olds called **WestEnd 4 10** for which we target at young people in drama schools and further education; however any person between the ages of 19-23 can join.

The nature of the production is slightly different, often the plays wouldn't be appropriate for 15-18 year olds and the after show discussions are usually at a high level and focus on professional development - we have close to 3,000 members.

We have also created a path for our most enthusiastic members to take a leadership role suggesting productions, marketing and running events and recruiting new members through our youth forum. We follow up with attendees directly the next day after an event inviting their thoughts and feedback and we always pass on the feedback to the producers.

**The most important thing we feel we do is create a connection between the young person and Mousetrap, so the younger person feels it is a personal and valued membership.**

## **James Mackenzie, National Youth Theatre**

So the question specifically was, 'if the theatre industry is serious about wanting to engage more young people the most important thing is'. Well I think you will all agree there are many important things for us to consider but I want to spend the next 10 minutes on 2 of what I think are the key issues.

1. As a sector we need to find more opportunity for young people to showcase their own work, for them to share this with their peers and for this work to be validated and understood by theatre programmers.

I think young people make great art happen now, I don't necessarily think they are all artists and audiences of only tomorrow. This is never more evident in my new job at the National Youth Theatre where I am constantly blown away by the talent I see every day across Great Britain. This work is outstanding now, it's valid for modern day adults and young audiences today. I would like to challenge you all to return to your venues and look in your communities for extraordinarily talented young people.

I would like you to find someone extraordinarily talented who would be classified as a young person and find an opportunity for whoever the decision maker is in your building to witness and experience that work. Don't do that unless you are 100% positive that the work you want to show them is exceptional and I do think if you can find some of that work in your region, get it programmed, find a space, find a corner for it to breathe and I think in time your audiences might change.

2. Secondly, I think we need to have some complicated conversations in our venues and in our organisations about departmental structures – where does an education department or learning department begin or end and where does a communications team start?

I think ANLO has started what I think could be a really important conversation about the future of what our structures look like in building based theatres. In these complicated times of arts funding I would like to provoke that we need to be much braver about how we think about young people as audiences in our venues and how as staff and as arts practitioners we manage on peoples interventions either as artists or as audience.

**I do wonder whether or not there is some work to do on helping those marketeers to understand that audience development needs to be much more of a two way conversation, much more of a dialogue with communities** and I am quite certain that their colleagues in the office across the corridor in learning could teach them something about that. I think this is a really important time for us to take a step back and re-visit our core organisational values in relation to young people which I think in turn will change the way in which our day to day operation runs.

## WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE TELLING US? EVALUATION HEADLINES

**Chair: Phil Cave**

**Pam Jarvis and Shaun Roman, SAM**

**Susan Ingham, &Co**

**The core aims of A Night Less Ordinary are:**

- To increase the number of young people going to the theatre for the first time
- To attract first time young audience attenders to venues participating in the scheme
- For participating young people to continue to attend theatre beyond the project duration
- ... and to give away half a million theatre tickets to young people

...because the price of a ticket is perceived as the main barrier to attendance and if the theatre industry collaborates nationally we would get further.

**Has a night less ordinary made a difference – and to whom?**

To answer this question, sam and &Co are melding many voices and stories into a narrative for their evaluation of the project.

We talked to and surveyed:

Venues in the scheme; Young people who had free tickets; Theatre producers and companies  
Stakeholders.

**ANLO works well in venues where:**

- It links into their everyday practice of engaging with different audiences and communities and responding to their needs;
- There are audience development strategies; there is infrastructure and expertise to talk advantage of schemes like this;
- There is imagination and inventiveness so the funding has been used to create events, make changes to programming and the broader venue offer, listening to young advisors, expanding use of social media for real involvement not just a free ticket.

**Venues say:**

*“It’s been exciting seeing new audiences come through our doors”*

*“ANLO has enabled young people to experience theatre for the first time”*

*“ANLO made us look really hard at what we need to do to attract young audiences”*

*“It’s good being part of a nationwide campaign with the extra publicity it has brought to the scheme”*

*"It's about perception, not just price. Young people liked their experience, therefore breaking down perceptions that theatre is not for them"*

"New ways to talk" Facebook was a great success for many venues.

*"A bumpy start... but a rewarding finish"*

### **Young people say:**

*"I never had the money to go to shows before ANLO."*

*"I have friends who have never been to the theatre who came with me on ANLO tickets for the first time ever."*

*"With theatre, you invest money and don't know what you are going to get back, down the pub you know what you are getting. ANLO means I can easily go to the theatre more and take a chance, but when I have to pay I pick something I know about - no risk."*

Changing perceptions and improving opinions of the theatre:

*"When you see a show and are completely bowled over it reminds you of why you go to the theatre."*

*"My friends thought the theatre is a big dark building where rich people go to club."*

*"Watching a lot of different things helps you think about who you want to be as a person. More inspiration and ideas of what you want to do."*

### **&Co's surveys: The headlines**

- 317,456 tickets taken up (of an available 444,329) and on average, young people booked 3.4 tickets for themselves.
- 93% were positive about what they saw at the theatre.
- 8% of survey respondents were first-time attenders. This may be higher amongst audiences as under 15s are under-represented in the survey and the scheme was widened to include school groups who did not provide individual contact details.
- 35% say they would probably or definitely not have gone to the theatre if it hadn't been for the ANLO free tickets.
- 22-26 is the biggest age group. (over 40%)

### **Is price the issue?**

- 81% say that price has put them off attending theatre in the past
- 73% said it was the only or main barrier to attendance
- 80% say they are more likely to re-attend because of the scheme

- 88% are prepared to pay.
- Most commonly, they would be prepared to pay £10 for a ticket.

### **Does having a free ticket reduce what they see as risk?**

- 21% said not knowing if they would enjoy the theatre put them off - the free ticket eliminates risk
- 53% used their ticket to try a type of show they hadn't seen before
- 27% say they used their free ticket to try a different venue

### **Friends count:**

- 27% were told about ANLO by their friends or family
- 91% say they would recommend it to a friend, and respondents booked 3 - 4 tickets so that they could attend with companions.

### **Young people are telling us...make it easy**

- Think smartphones. They want information on your offer instantly, informally and on a channel that works for them, from one central info point.
- Streamline the process so they can book remotely, they want one central point to buy tickets.
- No ID? No problem.

Give advice on...

- How to get to you by public transport
- Where to pick up their tickets
- What to expect... seats, intervals, end time of show etc.
- Getting back home... when is the last bus / train?

### **It's the experience that counts**

- Walking into a theatre for the first time can be a bit daunting. There are a lot of conventions and expectations about what a 'theatre' is...
- ... try to see your venue from the viewpoint of a young, first time visitor, think how do you want them to feel about their visit.
- Can you set up young ambassadors to make them welcome?
- Make your venue a place that's good to go to - maybe a special night - so they can be with their peer group - a traditional theatre audience can put them off.

### **A Night Less Ordinary is a good starting point:**

- 80% of young people are more likely to re-attend because of the scheme
- 93% were positive about what they saw at the theatre

Talk to them about what it feels like to come to your venues, they want their voice to be heard.

They appreciate being involved and having new opportunities and new experiences ...and maybe some conversion too.

Be prepared to change to meet their needs and recognise that what they want might not fit with your 'core' audience.

Your 'core' audience is not eternal... who will replace them?

### **You've put a lot of effort into A Night Less Ordinary and it has made a difference:**

*"As a skint student I feel valued. Money is always an issue but with a Night less Ordinary I can go all the time - its not just for special occasions"*

*"I would now go (to the theatre) more often, pay for things that I am not so sure of - it has enabled me to take more of a risk with shows I know little about."*

**The theatre industry coming together to share ideas and experiences will enable what works in reaching young audiences to be more widely adopted across the arts.**

## **WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU?**

### **Responses and ideas from delegates on taking ANLO forward**

**Barbara Matthews:** There seems to me to be a leadership vacancy. You say collaboration and learning is useful but if you haven't got the Arts Council handing out cheques or cracking whips saying thou shall do A Night Less Ordinary – how you going to make it happen? Who is going to start the conversations?

**Dan Bates:** Collaboration and not being competitive is the way forward. The new funding streams have made us all inward looking and competitive. ACE could facilitate sharing our work, information and data with other theatres.

**Cultural youth passport:** A Dutch scheme for which young people pay a yearly fee of £15 to get cultural discounts. It is run by a small team with a monthly magazine setting out what was available. You register once and renew every year until you were 26. It is part government funded and nationwide so all producers know about it. This is a scheme that we could really look at but administer it like a promotion code, or as a simple concession.

If we agreed on a national culture card would require a unanimous decision nationally. When we tried to move on to online booking for ANLO, only a few venues picked it up and then it petered out because not everyone took it on. So unless every venue agrees to go along with it in exactly the same way then it wouldn't work.

**Ideas Tap and Theatre Ninjas:** Ideas Tap, an online network for young artists, funded a mobile app called Theatre Ninjas. This alerts people to tickets free at shows in Edinburgh and gives them away at the last minute, using technology that young people are used to: theatres can subscribe their tickets to that service.

**Share the data:** A lot of qualitative data is being shared about ANLO but we want to know more on the quantitative data which can tell about its overall success or challenges. Could you facilitate an opportunity for us to come together again when we have all of the information and for us to lead an event about what next.

**Barbara Matthews:** In accepting government money for ANLO is we have to play by their rules: ANLO is an official statistic but it is quite difficult to work with at times. As soon as we give you the data it is in the public domain as an official statistic. We try to share what we can but as soon as we do a full report anyone can ask for it under freedom of information. For instance that 8% figure takes into account that most people are taken to theatre at some point in their lives, maybe at school or college, it does put a different slant on it so we need to put those facts and figures into a meaningful format.

**Think about the theatre ecology** when designing future schemes to take the diversity of venues and business models into account.

**David Brownlee, Audiences UK:** If an over arching organisation can help coordinate thinking about going forward, Audiences UK would up for that. At the same time we would want to talk with the TMA, Culture 24, Mousetrap and others to find out their take on things like ANLO going forward

### **Phil Cave: Closing Remarks**

This is a chance for Barbara and I to thank you. This has been a perfect storm of a political project which we have had to explain to various ministers. All along you, as theatres, have been incredibly supportive of ANLO and have made it work. We now have the ammunition to say don't just look at the numbers, this is about quality. People signed up for ANLO as a pilot with a genuine sense of experimenting and we have never done this before as an industry.