

In what ways can touring theatre affect its audience in terms of addressing social, political and cultural issues?

The notion of touring theatre has been around almost since the dawn of theatre as we know it. Performers would travel from village to village telling fairy tales for entertainment but also as cautionary stories. I believe that touring theatre, by its nature, has the power to affect great change within a society. As a company we have been discussing the theory of collective conscious and kindness and how we can present this idea to school kids aged 9 -11 across Wales. That is a hugely impressionable demographic. A piece on developmental milestones in children says *"Their attention span is getting more advanced and a nine year old can spend prolonged periods absorbed in activities that are of interest to him or her. Reading in depth to learn more about a particular topic is common, and they can start to express their thoughts and opinions with others on these"*¹. I feel, knowing this information, that we have a huge responsibility to provide accurate, engaging content in a suitable and educational way as this could perhaps spark an idea or change the opinion of the next generation. Furthermore, we have an opportunity to share important information about the world we live in, that may have initially dismissed by this demographic, but present it in a way that allows them to understand, appreciate and question. With that in mind, I believe there is a firm place for touring theatre for adults also mainly because of how accessible it is. It's local and in most cases at a cheaper rate than at an in house production in Central London for example. It also provides the creatives a chance to explore big, hard hitting themes that may not necessarily be appropriate for children and spread the message to a more mature audience. *"Drama can also be used to present moral issues in a non-threatening way to the audience, through the lives of fictional characters. Audience members can experience the moral dilemmas faced by these characters, and then relate them to their own lives, at their own pace"*². This idea can be applied towards children also but I feel best applies to a more adult audience as in my opinion there's usually more subtext and a darker vibe in most contemporary productions in this current climate. Politically, touring theatre has the opportunity to voice an opinion to an area that in the majority may not essentially share the same political standpoint. This is not to be confused with forcing an opinion on a collective but more to educate and start a conversation or debate on perhaps an opposing point of view. *"What is the balance between an aesthetic response to a work of art and a political one? We are against censorship. However, literature or art does not have to be balanced or fair. It can't be. Any great work exists because its creator had a particular vision of the world and felt compelled to express that vision. How political that vision should be is not fixed; it is a historical question."*³. This refers to earlier when I mentioned about how touring

¹ "9 Year Olds - Fundamentally Children."

<https://www.fundamentallychildren.com/child-development-advice-including-special-needs/child-development-by-age/9-year-olds/>. Accessed 29 Oct. 2019.

² "'Putting Yourself in Other People's Shoes' - Taylor & Francis" 3 Aug. 2010, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03057240120111418>. Accessed 29 Oct. 2019.

³ "Theatre and politics | Socialist Review." <http://socialistreview.org.uk/336/theatre-and-politics>. Accessed 29 Oct. 2019.

theatre can inform a generation on things that may be happening currently in their world that may have slipped over their heads or they may have no interest in. It's up to the company to inform and educate. In conclusion I believe that touring theatre more so than regular in house theatre not only has a greater chance of affecting its audience but almost a responsibility to. The notion that a piece of entertainment can trigger change politically, socially and culturally, not only for one set of people but for a larger demographic, in any area of the world. If you strip the idea of touring theatre down to its basics it's all about it's accessibility and its message and what you want to share with that specific group of people. In my opinion, it's the duty of the company not to abuse their responsibility and share a message for the betterment of the world and our society.