

Was there ever a marvelous production you saw as a young child that sparked inspiration inside of you? Touring theater has a significant impact on children and young individuals throughout the world. As Alan Billings wrote in *Touring the Educational Theater* (1964), “tours often reach people who have seldom, perhaps never, experienced a live theatrical performance. The touring children’s theater, for example, introduces an artistic experience to children who might grow up without any awareness of what living theater has to offer.” Touring theater affects its audience profoundly in addressing social, cultural, and political issues by showcasing morals, giving insights, and raising awareness for many problems emerging in the world through a collective conscious.

Our piece, *Bon Voyage Boffins*, tackles social issues through the collective conscious, showing the importance of kindness and responsibility, the ability to help people via morals, and understanding humans as a society. For example, we deal with a group of experts that are all different, which, “responds to the needs, interests and ambitions of all people across the country, whatever their background and circumstances,” (Arts Council England, 2018), which can hint at different ethnicities, backgrounds and the social issues surrounding that. Also, stemming characters from different backgrounds peaks the inclusion of culture, like the Arts Council England also discusses, providing children the first opportunity for cultural exposure, whether that be hat expertise or yoga and meditation mastery. Once everyone gets together as a collective, mirroring the experience of bringing touring theater to kids, then can we give insight into humanity and shape the collective consciousness through morals. This affects the audience, as seen when our main protagonist turns over the ‘owl glass’ after realizing humans have put

themselves in their predicament in the first place. We also call the children our experts as well, coining the term from Dorothy Heathcote, which allows the children to “grapple complex concepts through roleplay... identification and re-enacted reality” (Schweitzer, Pam 2007). Thus, *Bon Voyage Boffins* showcases that touring affects audiences by addressing social issues like morality and responsibility.

Cultural and political issues can also be addressed in touring theater to affect an audience as well. Specifically, in *Bon Voyage Boffins*, our characters go on a journey, “to have fun, to connect with friends and strangers... and to make sense of the world,” (Arts Council 2018) after time has been messed up, which creates a new sense of culture and, “binds communities,” (Arts Council 2018). Touring theaters bring shows to people, and in this case, kids, to help them be creative and imaginative, while also adapting to, “understand and benefit from a complex, fast-paced and ever-changing society,” (Arts Council 2018) as seen when things get out of kilter in our production. Touring theater is a chance to showcase culture like “local legends, historical stories, heroes, and community narratives” (Wang, 2014). All these arise in communities and helps bring people into one collective. Touring theater also brings them a space to spring up conversations about current topics freely, after shows, to discuss the root of issues and understand them from a new perspective. This is supported by Sharpe, ErinK in *Festivals and Social Change: Intersections of Pleasure and Politics at a Community Music Festival* (2008) when Sharpe discusses an idea that Hemingway, J.L introduces that a space of leisure, like seeing a show, “might serve as a social space for individuals to organize, discuss, identify with, or otherwise engage with the civic and political sphere of life,” (Hemingway, J.L. 1999) Thus,

touring theater affects audiences by addressing cultural and political issues because it brings awareness to them and gives the viewer an open space to engage with the topics.

In summation, *Bon Voyage Boffins* shows that touring theater allows audiences to be affected when social, cultural, and political issues are addressed, giving them an open space to engage and discuss in, after raising awareness and being presented with morals and insights into humanity and our responsibility through a collective conscious.

References

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