



# ON THE EDGE

## ON THE EDGE FESTIVAL of Theatre for Young Audiences and ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016

### Evaluation Report

Susan Potter

September 2016



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

*"I've never been here before but that was amazing! It was so funny and clever. I think it's a good thing for us to come here because it gives us more ideas, like for our stories and stuff. We could even make a little show of our own but with a different story. Also, we can tell our parents about it when we get home and any other adult people, so we can talk about it with them and maybe write about it when we are back at school. I would really like to come here again on another day!"*

ON THE EDGE Participant Pupil, July 2016

*"I just wanted to congratulate the team on a terrific festival! OTE was far more of a festival than many ASSITEJ events I've attended. Having a centre at the REP made a huge difference. There was a palpable buzz, a place to meet and confer, a social centre and a hub for all manner of transactions. The programme was inevitably mixed, with some talking points and leading examples of quality work internationally and from the UK and Ireland. The symposia far exceeded what is usually on offer. If anything, there was too much but what there was, was highly stimulating!"*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016

*"In terms of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA), I wonder why we have to treat children's work separately from that of work for adults. The Hamilton Complex is a perfect example, in that it's equally touching for adults as it is for young people. Our reactions to the work are very different but that doesn't mean you need to make a separate play for the adults or the children. This is far more 'efficient' if you like, in addressing those issues it needs and wants to. Those are questions which might be further investigated by ASSITEJ, something about blurring the boundaries that have been established through TYA in the past."*

ON THE EDGE Participant Teacher, July 2016

*"A huge congratulations to you all for visioning and delivering such a fantastic feast of work, conversations and gatherings over nine brilliant days. My four days in Birmingham were fantastic, the atmosphere was warm and welcoming, the conversations challenged and invigorated and the programme of shows superb! I have really enjoyed working with you all and feel very proud to have been 'on the edge' of something so skilfully conceived and delivered."*

ON THE EDGE Performance Artist, July 2016

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Executive Summary	5
Acknowledgements	7
1 Introduction	8
2 Evaluation Methodology	11
3 Inputs and outputs	12
4 ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering	14
4.1 Description of delegates	14
4.2 Ratings of ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering	18
4.3 Impacts of OTE Festival	20
4.4 Responses to open questions	22
5 ON THE EDGE Festival	23
5.1 Description of audience	23
5.2 Perceptions of OTE Festival	26
5.3 Responses to open questions	28
6 Learning and recommendations	29
6.1 Engagement and attendance	30
6.2 Content and delivery	32
6.3 Impacts for Birmingham	34
6.4 Learning for ASSITEJ/TYA UK and TYA Ireland	37
6.5 Feedback from ON THE EDGE Steering Group	39
6.6 Recommendations	40
7 Summary and conclusions	41
8 References and bibliography	43
9 Image credits	45
10 Partner organisations	46

## **Executive Summary**

### **Background**

TYA UK and TYA Ireland are the UK and Irish Centres of ASSITEJ, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People. ASSITEJ comprises a worldwide network of makers and promoters of professional theatre for young audiences, with centres in over 80 countries. TYA UK and TYA Ireland connect theatres, organisations and individual artists throughout the UK with other artists and organisations around the world. In July 2016, the World Festival of Theatre for Young Audiences and annual ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering took place in Birmingham, marking the first time for an international ASSITEJ event to be held in the UK.

### **Aim**

TYA UK and TYA Ireland are the national membership associations representing and promoting professional organisations and individual artists whose work primarily focuses on engaging children and young people through professional theatre. They provide a crucial link between members and ASSITEJ as a global association, the arts sector, the wider community and funders, supporting opportunities for professional development, advocacy and internationalism. Their members aim to provide access to high quality professional performing arts experiences to all children and young people in the UK and Ireland. The main premise of the ON THE EDGE Festival was to raise the profile of theatre for young people in the UK and internationally, while enabling creative encounters and debate between academics, artists, programmers and audience members alike. Through an eight day festival taking place in nine high profile venues across the city of Birmingham, ON THE EDGE had the following overarching aims:

- To raise the profile for Theatre for Young Audiences within the UK and Ireland
- To offer professional development opportunities for artists
- To provide an international showcase for UK work
- To expose the best TYA from across the world to audiences of children, young people, teachers and families in Birmingham and the West Midlands
- To bring together the leading thinkers, practitioners and artists in the field of theatre for young people from across the world to explore, discuss, share and network.

### **Method**

The ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering offers an annual opportunity for the international membership of ASSITEJ - along with colleagues working in Theatre for Young Audiences - to explore practice, challenge and learn from their peers, and to be inspired through exposure and networking within the field of TYA. A key part of the gathering is the extensive and exciting ON THE EDGE Symposium Programme, including workshops, lectures, sharings, panel discussions, works in progress and the Artistic Encounters. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the ON THE EDGE Festival/ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 as described by audience members and delegates.

The aims of the evaluation are to:

- Examine the inputs, outputs and outcomes for individuals and organisations participating in the ON THE EDGE Festival 2016
- Measure the successes of the ON THE EDGE Festival 2016 against those key aims and objectives, established at the outset
- Draw out any general lessons for effective practices for the development of future, similar events delivered by the REP and TYA UK and TYA Ireland.

### **Inputs and outputs**

The ON THE EDGE Festival/ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 attracted over 400 delegates from 51 countries and featured a programme of 91 live performances and 56 symposium events. The festival was hosted and produced by Birmingham REP, in collaboration with nine partner venues across the City. ON THE EDGE comprised performances by 25 companies and 160 artists travelling to Birmingham from 14 countries, including the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Australia and South Korea. From 2 to 9 July 2016, 9,940 individual OTE audience members and ASSITEJ delegates were able to experience the best in theatre for young audiences from around the world.

### **Quantitative findings**

Evaluation questionnaires were delivered to ON THE EDGE (OTE) audience members and ASSITEJ delegates. Surveys were completed by 70 audience members and 110 delegates, with the following key findings.

Audience member responses:

- 93% audience members noted OTE shared high quality theatre with children and young people
- 91% audience members noted OTE included a wide diversity of performance work
- 90% audience members agreed OTE treated children and young people with respect
- 91% audience members reported OTE encouraged a love of live theatre from a young age
- 91% audience members agreed OTE raised the profile of theatre for children and young people
- 78% audience members suggested OTE would make them more likely to attend theatre events for children and young people.

Delegate responses:

- 67% delegates noted OTE raised the profile of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) in the UK/Ireland
- 71% delegates noted OTE raised the profile of TYA internationally
- 42% delegates reported OTE raised the profile of their work in the UK/Ireland
- 40% delegates reported OTE raised the profile of their work internationally
- 45% delegates had seen work they would programme in their own venue/country
- 23% delegates had secured bookings for their work as a result of OTE
- 75% delegates suggested OTE had provided a source of new ideas and inspiration
- Delegates spent on average £499.58 while staying in the city, suggesting £200,000 income generated for Birmingham via the ASSITEJ/ON THE EDGE events.

## Acknowledgements

The REP, TYA UK and TYA Ireland would like to thank the contributing individuals and organisations who have given their time, skills and resources to the ON THE EDGE Festival. Thanks are also due to those numerous ASSITEJ delegates and audience members who shared their experiences, insights and suggestions through the delegate questionnaire and audience member feedback postcard. Susan Potter is grateful for the support provided by the following individuals, in the collection of data and preparation of this evaluation report.

ON THE EDGE Steering Group and Project Team:

Steve Ball, Associate Director at Birmingham REP/Executive Producer ON THE EDGE

Maria Fleming, Chair TYA Ireland

Nina Hajiyanni, Communications Director and Chair TYA UK

Daryl Beeton, Access and Inclusion Director

Philip Hardy, Symposium Director

Paul McEneaney, Welcome Director and Chair TYA Northern Ireland

Thomas Maguire, University of Ulster

Thomas Wildish, Producer ON THE EDGE

Lauren Fallon, Learning and Participation Manager Birmingham REP

Kirsten Peters Roebuck, Assistant Producer ON THE EDGE

Jenny Duffin, Volunteer Coordinator ON THE EDGE

Jenny Smith, Volunteer Coordinator ON THE EDGE

The ON THE EDGE Festival included:

Sarah Argent and Theatr Iolo with Out Of The Blue

Bob Théâtre with Nosferatu

bread&circuses with Wot? No Fish!!

Brush Theatre with Brush

HETPALEIS & Sontag (Lies Pauwels) with The Hamilton Complex

Mary-Frances Doherty in association with Young at Art with Katie's Birthday Party

Monkeyshine Theatre with Losha

New International Encounter and Odsherred Teater, in association with Stiftelsen NIE and Korjammo

Culture Factory with Pim & Theo

PuppeTTrees and Dschungel Wein with Reinräumen

Seydou Boro Company with Why do hyenas have shorter back legs than front legs and why do monkeys have bare bottoms?

Shona Reppe with The Curious Scrapbook of Josephine Bean

Terrapin Puppet Theatre with I Think I Can

Theatre Lovett with A Feast of Bones

Travelling Light Theatre Company and Bristol Old Vic with Boing!

20 Stories High and Theatre-Rites with The Broke 'N' Beat Collective



## 1 Introduction

TYA UK and TYA Ireland are the UK Centres of ASSITEJ, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ). ASSITEJ comprises a worldwide network of makers and promoters of professional theatre for young audiences, with centres in over 80 countries.<sup>1</sup> TYA UK and TYA Ireland connect theatres, organisations and individual artists throughout the UK with other artists and organisations around the world.<sup>2</sup> In July 2016, the World Festival of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) and ASSITEJ annual gathering took place in Birmingham, marking the first time for an ASSITEJ international event to be held in the UK. Hosted by Birmingham Repertory Theatre (The REP)<sup>3</sup>, the ON THE EDGE Festival provided an unprecedented opportunity for the TYA sector in the UK, offering unique cultural and artistic opportunities for numerous children, young people, their families, schools and communities, while raising the profile of TYA in the UK and internationally.

There is widespread consensus that engagement in the arts affects and changes lives. Culture and the arts play an important part in the health and vitality of communities, creating vibrant and attractive places for people to live and work, bringing pleasure and enjoyment.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the arts are evidenced to strengthen social bonds. The arts teach us about the present and the past through dance, drama, literature, music and visual art; they cut across differences in culture, educational background and ability, bringing

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<sup>1</sup> [www.assitej-international.org](http://www.assitej-international.org)

<sup>2</sup> <http://tya-uk.org>; [www.tya-ireland.org](http://www.tya-ireland.org)

<sup>3</sup> [www.birmingham-rep.co.uk](http://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk)

<sup>4</sup> NCA (2009). A Manifesto for the Arts. London: National Campaign for the Arts



every subject to life and turning abstractions into concrete reality. However, many children and young people continue to leave school having never visited an art gallery or museum, watched a performance in a theatre or listened to an orchestra play live.<sup>5</sup> ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland together seek to address this imbalance, inspiring children, young people, their families and teachers to engage directly with high quality work and practitioners, while increasing the profile of the wider TYA sector to audiences, funders and policy makers alike.

Members of TYA UK and TYA Ireland include professional theatre companies that produce work for young audiences, individual theatre artists, researchers, teachers, programmers, parents and people interested in high quality theatre for children and young people. TYA UK and TYA Ireland have a track record of delivering events that improve the quality and practice of the sector through working with skilled workshop leaders and artists. The TYA UK and TYA Ireland board comprises leading arts managers, producers and directors who have a wealth of experience of working in theatre, leading their own organisations and collaborating with their peers. TYA UK and TYA Ireland members and partners across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland aim to deliver, support and promote:

- High quality theatre experiences for all children and young people
- Professional development for established and emerging artists
- Festivals and conferences
- Information about plays, artists, events and trends worldwide
- Research into new approaches
- International opportunities.

TYA UK and TYA Ireland are the national membership associations representing and promoting professional organisations and individual artists whose work primarily focuses on engaging children and young people through professional theatre. They provide a crucial link between members and ASSITEJ as a global association, the arts sector, the wider community and funders, supporting opportunities for professional development, advocacy and internationalism. Their members aim to provide access to high quality professional performing arts experiences to all children and young people in the UK and Ireland. With generous support from Arts Council Ireland<sup>6</sup> and an overarching theme of 'Where are the Pioneers: Who is on the edge of practice & research?' this year's ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering and ON THE EDGE Symposium also included a rich and stimulating programme for participant delegates (i.e. celebratory opening and closing events; professional development workshops; lectures and panel discussions; work-in-progress performances; networking opportunities and social gatherings) all produced and hosted by Birmingham Repertory Theatre (The REP).

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<sup>5</sup> See bibliography for full list of research studies

<sup>6</sup> [www.artscouncil.ie](http://www.artscouncil.ie)

The main premise of the ON THE EDGE Festival was to raise the profile of theatre for young people in the UK and Ireland, while enabling creative encounters and debate between international academics, artists, programmers and audience members alike. Through an eight day festival taking place in nine high profile venues across the city of Birmingham, ON THE EDGE had the following overarching aims:

- To raise the profile for Theatre for Young Audiences within the UK and Ireland
- To offer professional development opportunities for artists
- To provide an international showcase for UK work
- To expose the best TYA from across the world to audiences of children, young people, teachers and families in Birmingham and the West Midlands
- To bring together the leading thinkers, practitioners and artists in the field of theatre for young people from across the world to explore, discuss, share and network.

The purpose of this report then is to provide an overview of the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the ON THE EDGE Festival and ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 as described by audience members, performance artists and ASSITEJ delegates. In addition, the evaluation aims to investigate the impacts of the festival for the ON THE EDGE delivering team, supporting volunteers, TYA UK and TYA Ireland more broadly. The findings suggest highly positive outcomes for both audiences and delegates, while also describing valuable learning outcomes to support the further development of ASSITEJ/TYA events in 2017 and the TYA sector. ON THE EDGE attracted over 400 delegates from 51 countries and featured a programme of 91 live performances and 56 symposium events. From 2 to 9 July 2016, towards 10,000 individual audience members were able to experience the best theatre for young people from around the world.

The successes of the ON THE EDGE Festival have undoubtedly been due to the shared vision and commitment of Steve Ball, Thomas Wildish, Daryl Beeton, Maria Fleming, Philip Hardy, Nina Hajianni, Paul McEneaney and Thomas Maguire, with support from the OTE Festival Team, REP staff and ON THE EDGE volunteers. Described as ‘fun’, ‘exciting’, ‘stimulating’ and ‘a triumph’ by those who took part, this evaluation therefore examines the processes and outcomes of ON THE EDGE and the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering, while suggesting recommendations for future, similar initiatives delivered by ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland.

*“Birmingham proved to be an excellent choice for the 2016 ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering - ON THE EDGE - hosted by TYA Ireland and TYA UK. A vibrant and youthful city which celebrates its diverse multi-cultural tapestry with verve, Birmingham pulled out all the stops for the 400 international delegates from 51 countries, hosting excellent productions, stimulating discussions and workshops, and productive meetings. ASSITEJ is delighted to have had the opportunity to discover this culturally rich and distinctive city, which has showcased itself brilliantly over the nine days of ON THE EDGE, proving that being ‘on the edge’ is a very exciting place to be!”*

Yvette Hardie, President of ASSITEJ

## 2 Evaluation Methodology

Through consultation with the REP Learning and Participation Department and ON THE EDGE Festival delivering team, an evaluation methodology was proposed including both quantitative and qualitative measures. The aims of the ON THE EDGE Festival evaluation are to:

- Examine the inputs, outputs and outcomes for individuals and organisations participating in the ON THE EDGE Festival/ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016
- Measure the successes of the ON THE EDGE Festival/ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 against key aims and objectives, established at the outset
- Draw out any general lessons for effective practices for the development of future, similar events delivered by the REP, TYA UK, TYA Ireland and ASSITEJ more broadly.

Data for analysis was collected between June and August 2016 via the following means, in order to document and evaluate the impacts of the festival for OTE audience members and ASSITEJ delegates:

- Planning meetings to establish the aims of ON THE EDGE evaluation study
- Six half-day site visits, observing and documenting ON THE EDGE Festival activity (e.g. registration; live performances; workshops; panel discussions; festival hub)
- 110 questionnaires completed by ASSITEJ delegates attending ON THE EDGE Festival
- 70 questionnaires completed by ON THE EDGE Festival audience members
- 25 audio recorded interviews conducted with artists, audience members and delegates
- Coding and analysis of quantitative and qualitative datasets
- Production of written evaluation report with summary of findings.

Following data collection and collation, important themes have been analysed, compared and contrasted from each dataset, in order to develop meaning and illuminate the findings. It is hoped that this method follows on logically from the objectives, to provide a robust and objective evaluation to support the further development of ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland events in 2017 and beyond.

### 3 Quantitative findings

#### 3.1 Inputs and outputs

As described in Table 3.1 (over), the ON THE EDGE Festival/ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 was delivered across the City of Birmingham from 2 to 9 July 2016. Inputs and outputs for the event were as follows:

- Engagement with 400 national and international delegates from 51 countries (e.g. Brazil, France, India, Israel, Sweden, Turkey), and five continents (i.e. Africa, Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe)
- Engagement with 25 performance companies and 160 artists from 14 countries, including the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Australia and South Korea
- Live performance programme featuring 16 productions and 95 unique performances to 9,940 audience members across nine ON THE EDGE Festival days, taking place in nine Birmingham venues (i.e. Birmingham City University, Birmingham REP, MAC Birmingham, The Old Rep)
- Accompanying programme 65 symposium events funded by Arts Council Ireland (e.g. artist led workshops, presentations and panel discussions; skills sharing, professional development and networking opportunities; welcome events and cultural visits), delivered by 103 presenters and resulting in 2,235 attendances
- Delivery of ON THE EDGE learning programme, generating £14,556 from schools and £22,000 from trusts and foundations, partnering ten participating companies with ten Birmingham schools and youth groups, engaging with 1,007 children/young people and 57 teachers/group coordinators
- Recruitment and training of 90 volunteers, providing 2,192 hours and generating £15,782.40 in-kind<sup>7</sup> in the coordination and delivery of the ON THE EDGE Festival and ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016
- 400 new visitors to Birmingham during July 2016 via ON THE EDGE Festival and ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016, generating £199,832 income for the city (calculated from average spend of visiting delegates surveyed<sup>8</sup>)
- Design and production of high quality ON THE EDGE Festival promotional materials including delegate programmes, flyers and posters resulting in additional in-kind revenue through regional, national and international media items including magazine, newspaper, radio and television articles and features.

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<sup>7</sup> Calculation based on 2,192 hours @ £7.20 per hour, UK minimum wage 2016

<sup>8</sup> Calculation based on visiting delegates/audience members reporting average individual spend of £499.58 during event

**Table 3.1 ON THE EDGE Festival/ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016: summary of inputs, outputs and outcomes**

Activity	Inputs and outputs	Outcomes
ON THE EDGE Festival	8 x days duration 9 x performance venues 25 x performance companies 160 x performance artists 16 x individual productions 95 x unique performances 9,940 audience members	Development of local, national and international audiences for high quality TYA Enjoyment and inspiration for children and young people, their teachers and carers Growth in Birmingham's reputation as an internationally recognised centre for performance arts in and across UK/Ireland New learning, understanding and skills amongst artists and audience members Professional development opportunities for artists, audience members and festival volunteers International networking opportunities for artists and arts professionals
ON THE EDGE Learning Programme	7 x days duration 10 x performance companies 10 x schools/youth groups 57 x teachers/group leaders 1,007 x children and young people	Development of local, national and international audiences for high quality TYA Enjoyment and inspiration for children and young people, their teachers and carers Growth in Birmingham's reputation as an internationally recognised centre for performance arts in and across the UK/Ireland New learning, understanding and skills amongst artists, children, young people and schools Professional development opportunities for artists, teachers and festival volunteers
ON THE EDGE Volunteer Programme	25 x induction/training sessions 90 x volunteers recruited 2,192 x volunteer hours £15,782.40 x in-kind	Providing accessible routes to volunteering Professional development opportunities for local community members Increased civic pride and commitment to Birmingham's cultural sector Improved employee (HSBC) motivation and wellbeing
ON THE EDGE Symposium	5 x days duration 9 x performance venues 400 x international delegates 65 x symposium events 103 x presenters 2,235 x attendances	Development of local, national and international audiences for high quality TYA Growth in Birmingham's reputation as an internationally recognised centre for performance arts in and across the UK/Ireland Professional development opportunities for established/emerging artists and arts professionals Dissemination of information about plays, artists, events and trends worldwide International networking opportunities for artists and arts professionals

## 4 ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering

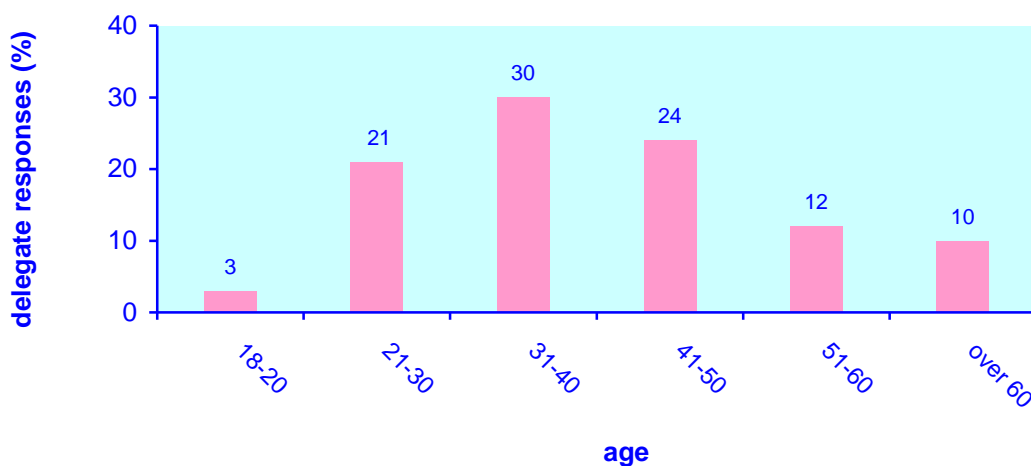
### 4.1 Description of delegates

Travelling from across each of the ASSITEJ partner countries and wider Europe, delegates to the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering were aged from 18 years to over 60 years. Evaluation questionnaires were delivered to a randomised sample of delegates (27%) who attended the ASSITEJ event, including items to investigate socio-demographic data (e.g. gender, age, employment status, ethnicity) and items relating to their experience of the event (e.g. attendance at other ASSITEJ events; source of publicity and promotion; ratings of individual elements). A total of 110 individuals completed the questionnaire (56% females and 42% males) across the duration of the event, resulting in the following findings.

#### 4.1.1 Age

As described in Figure 4.1 below, questionnaire data suggests the ON THE EDGE Symposium attracted delegates aged from 18 years to over 60 years. If those individuals completing the questionnaire provide a representative sample of total delegates, the larger majority were aged '21 to 30 years' (21%), '31 to 40 years' (30%) or '41 to 50 years' (24%). A lesser number were aged '51 to 60 years' (12%) or 'over 60 years' (10%), while a small minority were aged '18-20 years'. This would suggest the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 attracted a younger audience, as compared with traditional theatre going publics in the UK.

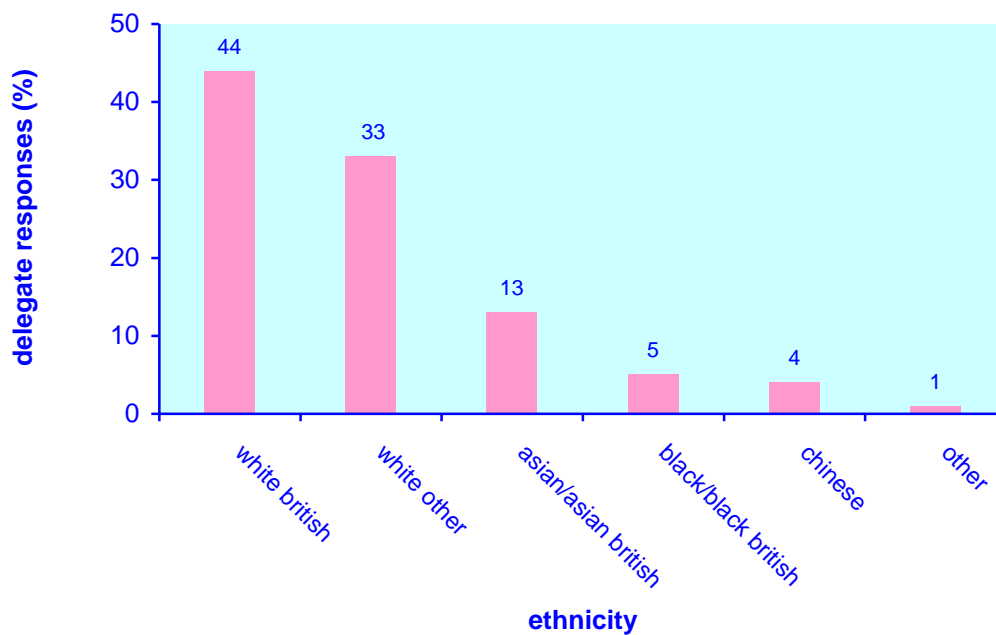
**Figure 4.1 Delegate responses: age**



#### 4.1.2 Background

The ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering attracted a wide diversity of visitors to Birmingham, travelling from 51 separate countries. When asked for their country of residence, the larger majority of respondents (50%) were from the UK and Ireland, while 27% came from other parts of Europe. A lesser number were from Asia (8%) and the Americas (7%). A small minority respondents travelled from South Africa (3%) or other African states (3%), while 2% were from the Arab states. In terms of ethnicity meanwhile, the majority of respondents defined as 'White British' (44%), or 'White Other' (33%). A lesser percentage described themselves as 'Asian/Asian British' (13%), while only 5% defined as 'Black/Black British' or 'Chinese' (4%).

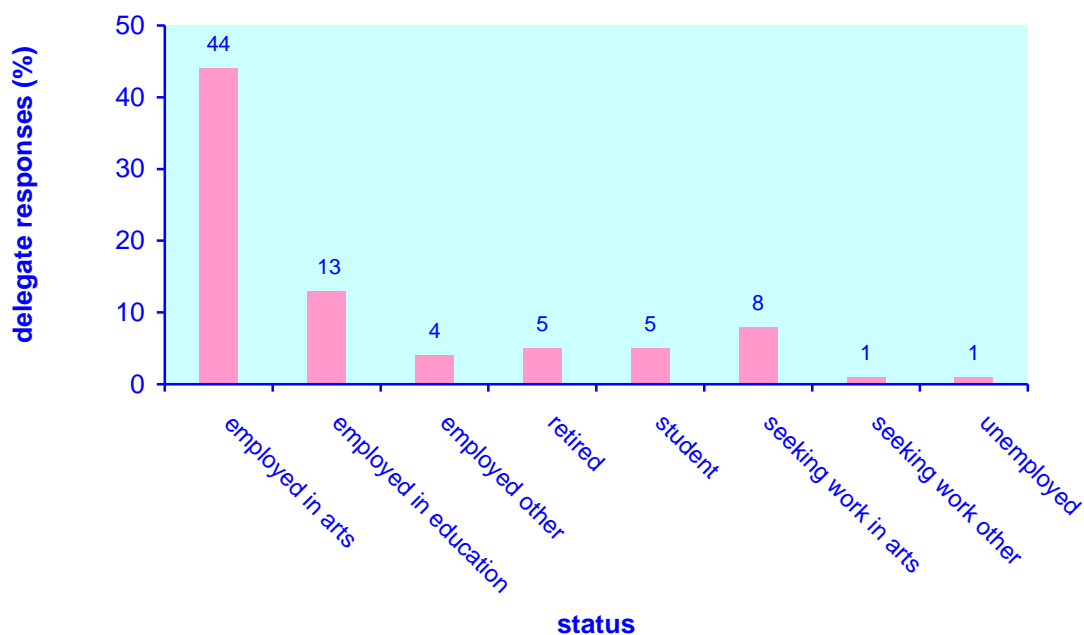
**Figure 4.2 Delegate responses: ethnicity**



#### **4.1.3 Status**

As described in Figure 4.3, when asked about 'employment status' as might have been anticipated, the larger majority respondent delegates (63%) described themselves as 'employed in the arts'. A smaller proportion were 'employed in education' (13%) or 'seeking work in the arts' (8%). A minority respondents were 'students' (5%), 'retired' (5%) or 'employed in a different sector' (4%).

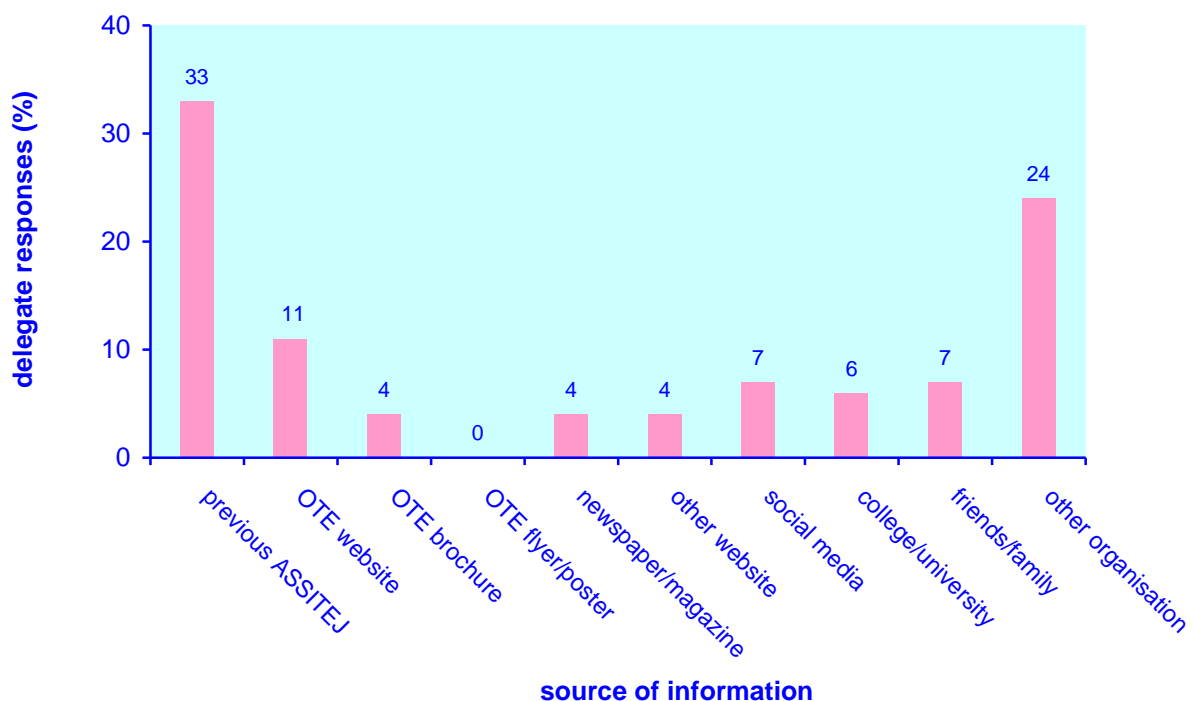
**Figure 4.3 Delegate responses: status**



#### 4.1.4 Engagement and attendance

In order to investigate the outcomes of various marketing approaches, questionnaires asked delegates how they heard about the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering. As described in Figure 4.4 below, the larger majority respondents heard about the event through attending a 'previous ASSITEJ event' (33%) or via 'another cultural organisation' (24%). A lesser number of respondents discovered the event via the 'OTE website' (11%), 'social media' (7%), 'friends or family' (7%), or 'college/university' (6%). Other sources of information (i.e. printed publicity, media items, partner websites) resulted in a minority of responses. These findings would suggest the most successful means for publicising ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings and/or TYA events are through previous attendance - as a result of positive experience - and direct recommendation, either via a personal contact and/or another cultural organisation engaged in the delivery of the event.

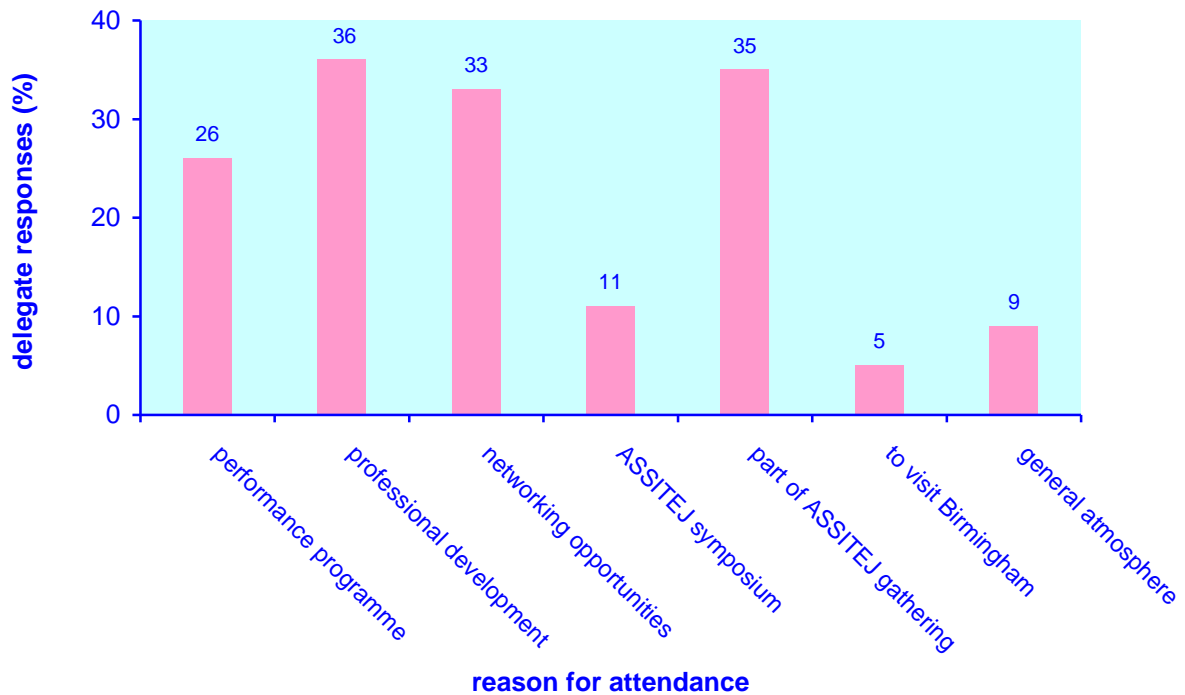
**Figure 4.4 Delegate responses: source of information**



Questionnaires asked delegates if they had attended a previous ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering. For the far larger majority (59%), this was their first time. A lesser number respondents (18%) had attended 'three to five previous editions', while 14% had attended 'one previous edition'. A minority respondents (9%) had attended 'two previous editions'. When asked what had encouraged them to attend the 2016 ASSITEJ event (Figure 4.5), majority responses were evenly spread across 'professional development' (36%), 'being part of the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering' (35%) and 'networking opportunities' (33%). It is interesting to note that a lesser number of responses were allocated to the 'performance programme' (26%) and 'the symposium' (11%), while a minority respondents noted 'the general atmosphere' (9%) and 'to visit Birmingham' (5%) as their main reason for attending the event.

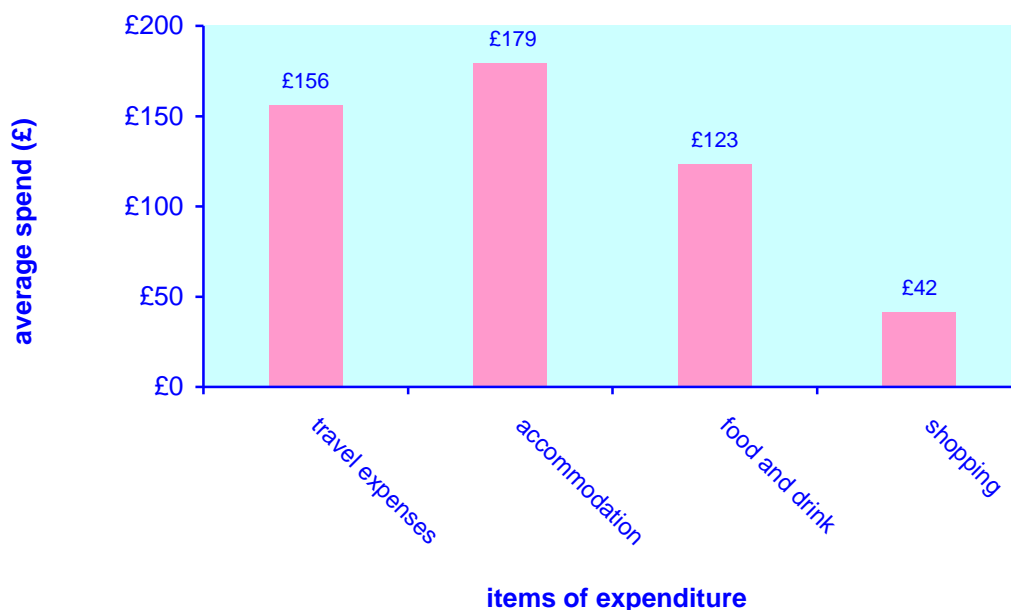


**Figure 4.5 Delegate responses: reason for attendance**



In order to investigate specific impacts for Birmingham, questionnaires asked delegates whether they attended any other festivals in the City. The far larger majority (82%), responded in the negative, while 18% suggested they had attended other festivals in Birmingham. Finally, questionnaires asked delegates how much they had spent while staying in the City. A total of 80 delegates completed this question and as described in Figure 4.6, respondents reported an estimated average spend of £499.58 (i.e. travel expenses, accommodation, food and drink, shopping). If this sum were multiplied by total delegates, it would suggest £199,832 income generated for the City of Birmingham via the ASSITEJ/ON THE EDGE event.

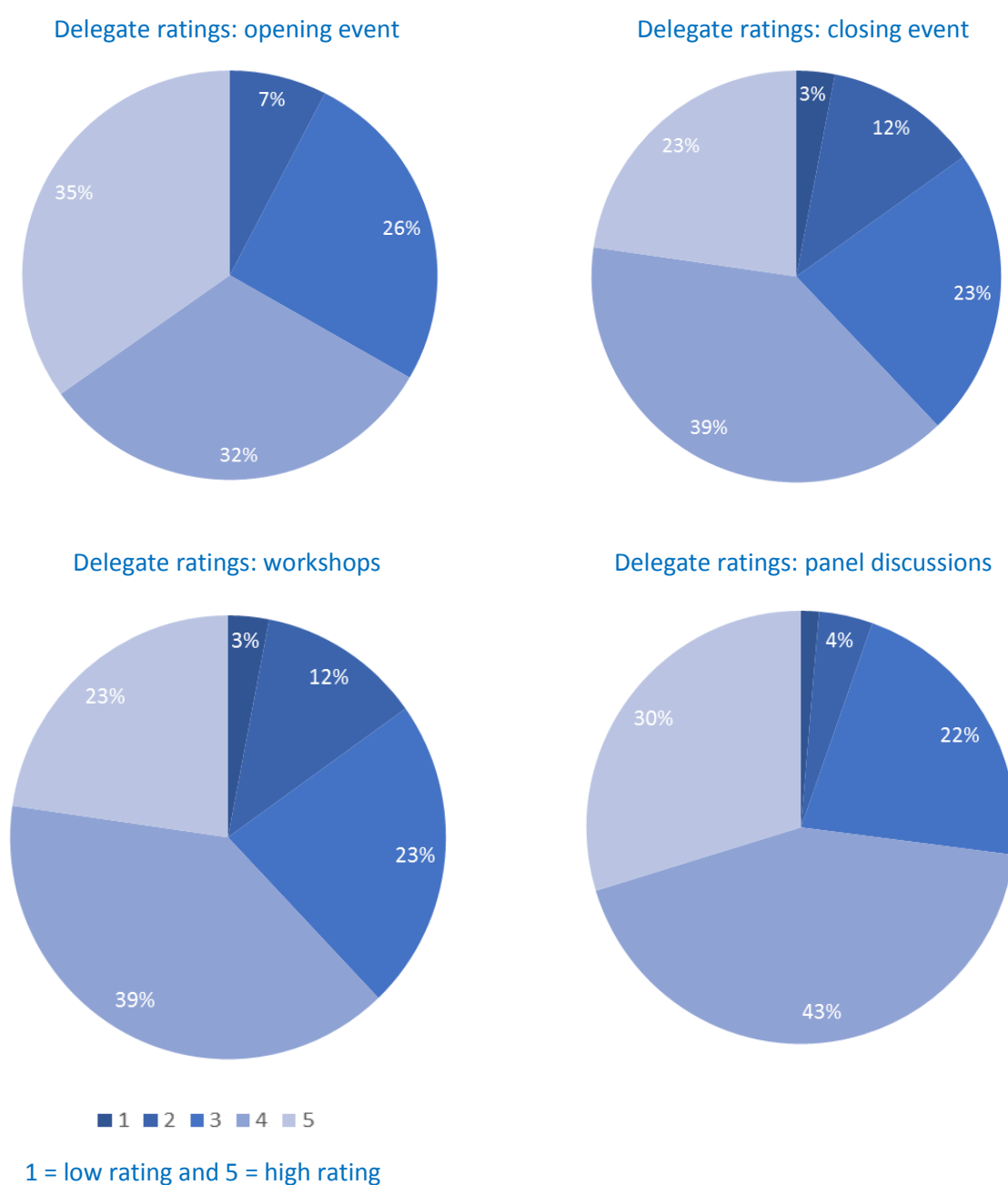
**Figure 4.6 Delegate responses: average expenditure**



## 4.2 Ratings of ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering

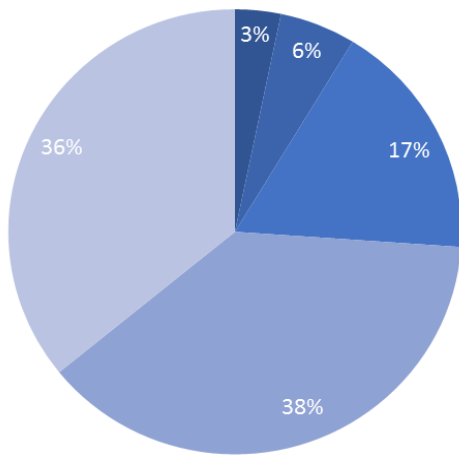
In addition to the collection of socio-demographic data and in order to evaluate the content of this event, questionnaires asked delegates to rate specific elements of the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering (e.g. opening and closing events; performance programme; panel discussions; workshops and social programme) on a scale of one to five. A summary of findings is described in Figure 4.7 (below and over page)<sup>9</sup>, providing a snapshot evaluation for the reference and reflection of The REP and all ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland partners, thereby supporting the processes of forward planning and development.

**Figure 4.7 Delegate ratings of individual elements**

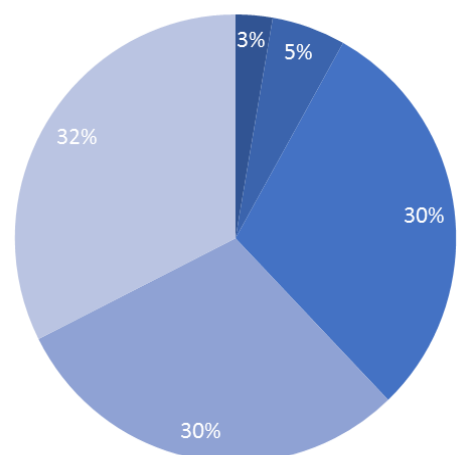


<sup>9</sup> 'Not Applicable' ratings are not included in these datasets

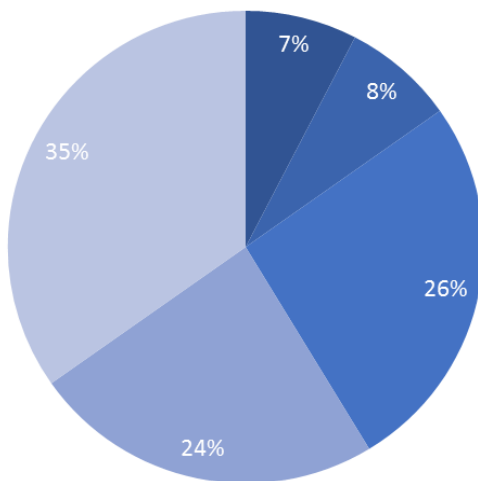
Delegate ratings: performance programme



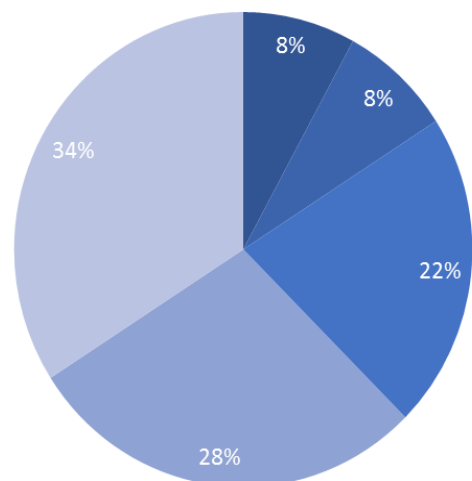
Delegate ratings: works in progress



Delegate ratings: networking events



Delegate ratings: social programme



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

1 = low rating and 5 = high rating

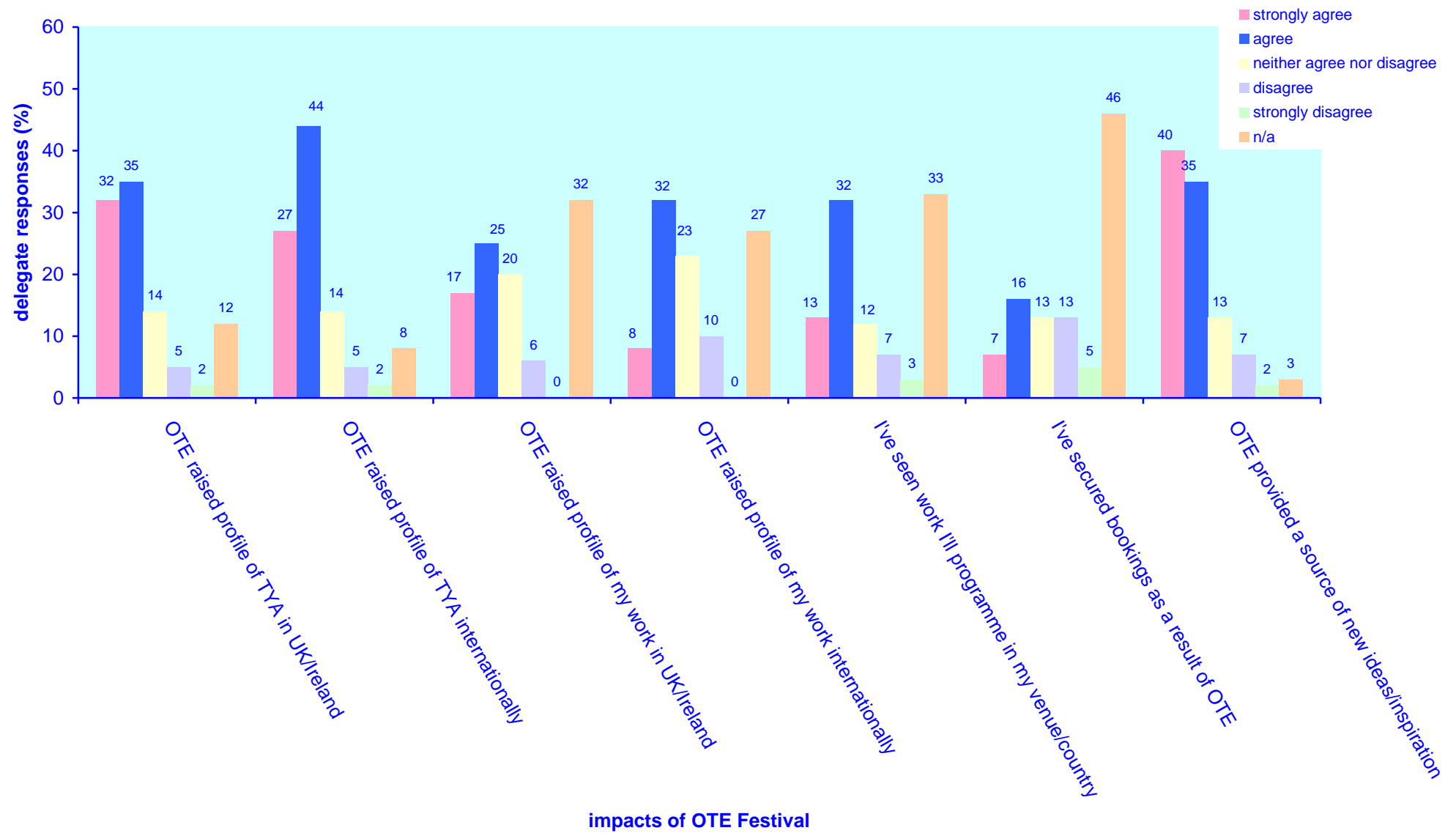
As illustrated in Figure 4.7, those delegates who attended the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering and subsequently completed the questionnaire rated the event highly. In terms of specific elements, the 'opening event' was rated especially positively, as was the 'closing event'. The 'panel discussions' were rated favourably, as was the 'performance programme', with both elements given slightly higher scores than the 'workshops' and 'works in progress'. Finally, there appeared to be little difference in respondent ratings regarding the 'networking events' and the 'social programme', with both elements receiving a positive response.

### 4.3 Impacts of OTE Festival

To investigate the impacts for individual ASSITEJ members attending the ON THE EDGE (OTE) Festival, questionnaires asked **delegates** to respond to a number of statements, closely aligned to the overarching aims of the event. As described below and in Figure 4.9 (over) responses were largely positive:

- Asked whether OTE had raised the profile of Theatre for Young People (TYA) in the UK and Ireland, 32% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 35% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (5%) or 'strongly disagreed' (2%), while 14% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. For the remaining 12% respondents, this question was 'not applicable'
- Asked whether OTE had raised the profile of TYA internationally, 27% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 44% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (5%) or 'strongly disagreed' (2%), while 14% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. For the remaining 8% respondents, this question was 'not applicable'
- Asked whether OTE had raised the profile of their work in the UK and Ireland, 17% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 25% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (6%), while 20% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. For the remaining 32% respondents, this question was 'not applicable'
- Asked whether OTE had raised the profile of their work internationally, 8% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 32% 'agreed'; a smaller number of respondents 'disagreed' (10%), while 23% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. For the remaining 27% respondents, this question was 'not applicable'
- Asked whether they had seen work they would programme in their own venue/country, 13% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 32% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (7%) or 'strongly disagreed' (3%), while 12% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. For the remaining 33% respondents, this question was 'not applicable'
- Asked whether they had secured bookings for their work as a result of OTE, 7% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 16% 'agreed'; 13% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' (5%), while 13% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. For the remaining 46%, this question was 'not applicable'
- Asked whether OTE had provided a source of new ideas and inspiration, 40% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 35% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (7%) or 'strongly disagreed' (2%), while 13% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. For the remaining 3%, this question was 'not applicable'.

**Figure 4.9 Delegate responses: impacts of OTE Festival**



## 4.4 Responses to open questions

Finally, along with those interview questions regarding individual responses to the ASSITEJ event, open questions were included in the delegate questionnaire to ascertain those elements ‘most enjoyed’ during the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering and ‘suggested developments’ for future ASSITEJ events. An analysis of data revealed several themes across questionnaire and interview responses, as described in Figure 4.10 below.

**Figure 4.10 Delegate responses: open questions**

### **Q. What did you enjoy most about the OTE Festival/ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering?**

- Individual performances, e.g. Hamilton Complex; Pim and Theo; Brush; Boing!
- A chance to meet and engage with delegates from different parts of the world
- The wide range of performance pieces, displaying a high level of skill
- The passion in the organisation of the event; the warmth extended to delegates
- The debates evoked by the gathering and dialogue surrounding TYA
- More of the same, a good balance between theory and practice.

### **Q. What would you like to see happen in future ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings?**

- More participation from e.g. Asia, US and South America
- More scratch nights for new work and/or new writing
- Provision for touring companies to directly meet with programmers
- Greater representation of disabled and/or marginalised artists
- Shorter ‘work in progress’ slots, to allow for inclusion of more work
- More students and young people to meet, discuss and network with
- More participatory and/or interactive productions.

### **Q. What improvements would you make to future ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings?**

- Closer locations, so less time taken moving from place to place
- More workshops, more shows, more social events
- Better scheduling between symposia events and performance programme
- More structured, scheduled networking and development opportunities
- More time and space to meet informally and/or socially
- More diverse performance programme, with greater number of shows
- Opportunity to stay within host country families/homes.

## 5 ON THE EDGE Festival

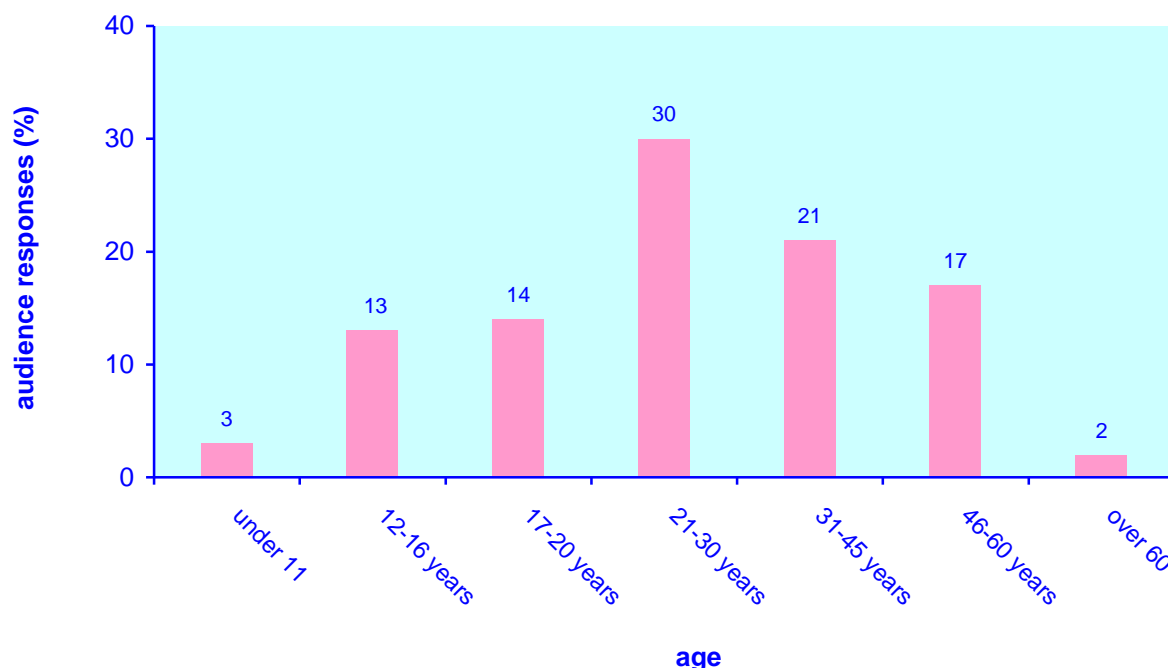
Evaluation questionnaires were delivered to a randomised sample of audience members who attended the ON THE EDGE Festival (OTE), including items to investigate socio-demographic data (e.g. gender, age, ethnic background) and items relating to their experience of the event (e.g. attendance at theatre for children and young people; source of publicity and promotion; perceptions of festival). A total of 70 individuals completed the questionnaire (53% females and 47% males) across the duration of the festival, resulting in the following findings. It should be noted however that this analysis does not include specific detail regarding the additional OTE Learning Programme<sup>10</sup>, which engaged with a far wider and more diverse range of audience members.

### 5.1 Description of audience

#### 5.1.1 Age

OTE attracted 9,940 audience members aged from 18 months to over 60 years. The audience member questionnaire was completed by a smaller sample aged between under 11 to over 60 years. As described in Figure 5.1, the larger majority respondents were aged '21 to 30 years' (30%) or '31 to 45 years' (21%). A lesser number were aged '46 to 60 years' (17%), '17 to 20 years' (14%) or '12 to 16 years' (13%). The remaining minority were aged 'under 11 years' (3%) or 'over 60 years' (2%). This data once again suggests OTE attracted a far younger audience, as compared with traditional theatre going publics in the UK.

**Figure 5.1 Audience responses: age**

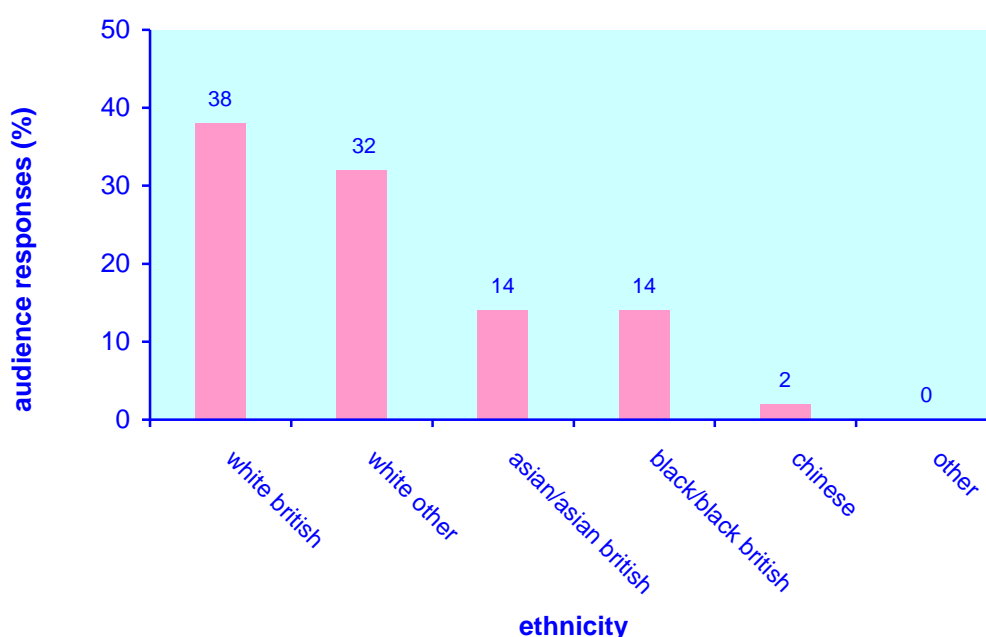


<sup>10</sup> OTE Learning Programme Report available on request

### 5.1.2 Background

OTE attracted a wide diversity of audience members, travelling from across the UK, Ireland and wider Europe. When asked about their country of residence, 52% respondents were from the UK and Ireland, while 38% were residents of Birmingham and the West Midlands more specifically. In terms of ethnicity meanwhile, the far larger majority of respondents defined as 'white British' (38%), or 'white other' (32%). A lesser percentage described themselves as 'Asian/Asian British' (14%) and 'Black/Black British', while a small minority defined as 'Chinese' (2%).

**Figure 5.2 Audience responses: ethnicity**

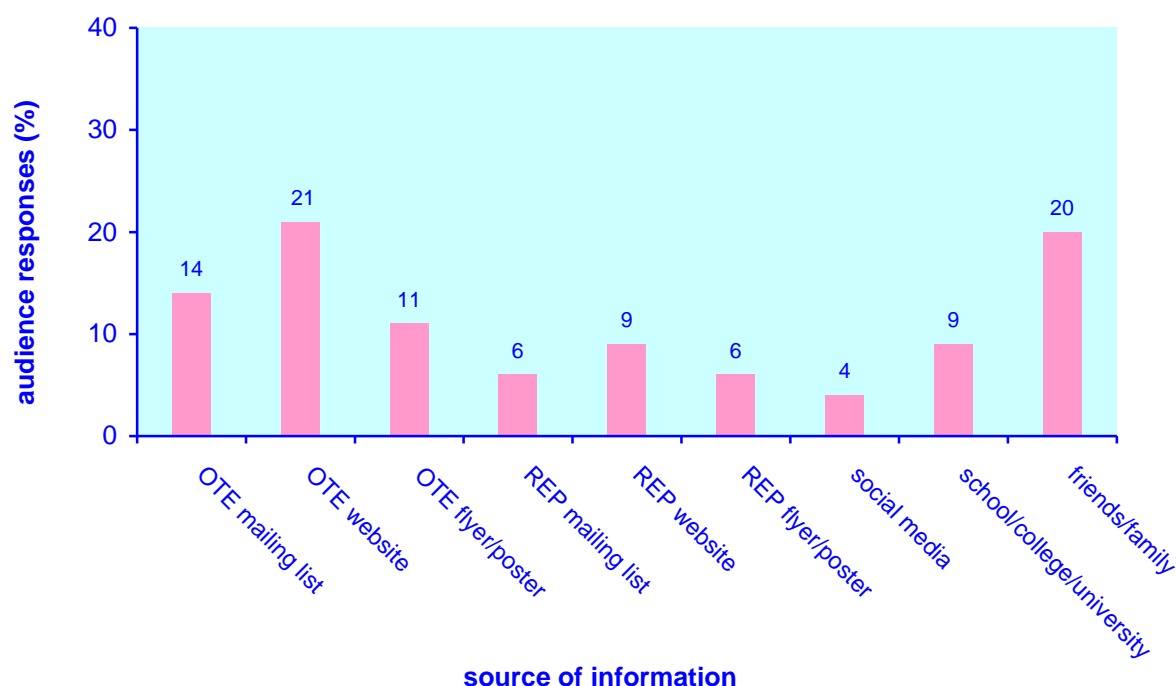


### 5.1.3 Engagement and attendance

As with the delegate questionnaire and in order to investigate the outcomes of various marketing approaches, questionnaires asked audience members how they heard about OTE. As described in Figure 5.3 (over), the far larger majority respondents heard about the festival through 'OTE website' (21%) or via 'friends and/or family' (20%). A lesser number respondents were informed through the 'OTE mailing list' (14%) or 'OTE flyer/poster'; other respondents heard about OTE through their 'school or college' (9%), the 'REP website' (9%) or 'REP flyer/poster' (6%). Only 4% respondents suggested they heard about this event via 'social media' (4%). These findings would suggest the most successful means for publicising future TYA activity at The REP are through previous attendance and subsequently subscribing to partner mailing lists and/or through personal recommendation or word of mouth.

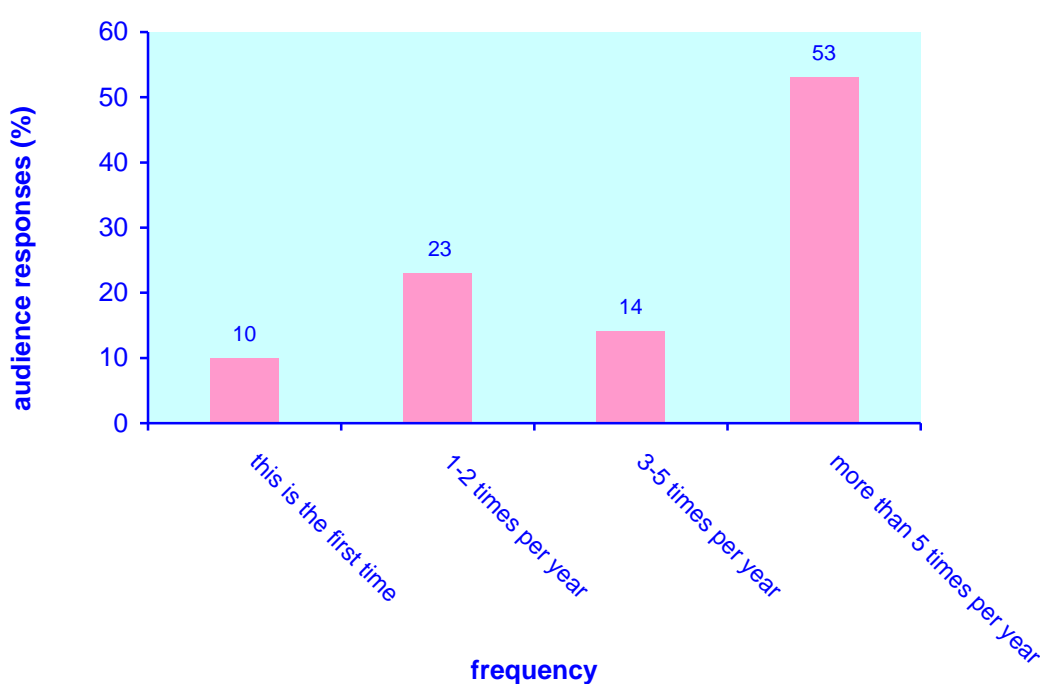


**Figure 5.3 Audience responses: source of information**



Questionnaires asked audience members how often they saw theatre for children and/or young people. The far larger majority (53%) were regular TYA attendees, noting 'more than five times per year'. A lesser number (23%) attended 'one or two times per year', while 14% attended 'three to five times per year'. For a minority respondents (10%), this was their first experience of theatre for children and/or young people. However, this does not include data relating to the OTE Learning Programme, engaging with numerous children, their teachers and carers for whom TYA and/or attending the theatre was a new experience.

**Figure 5.4 Audience responses: source of information**

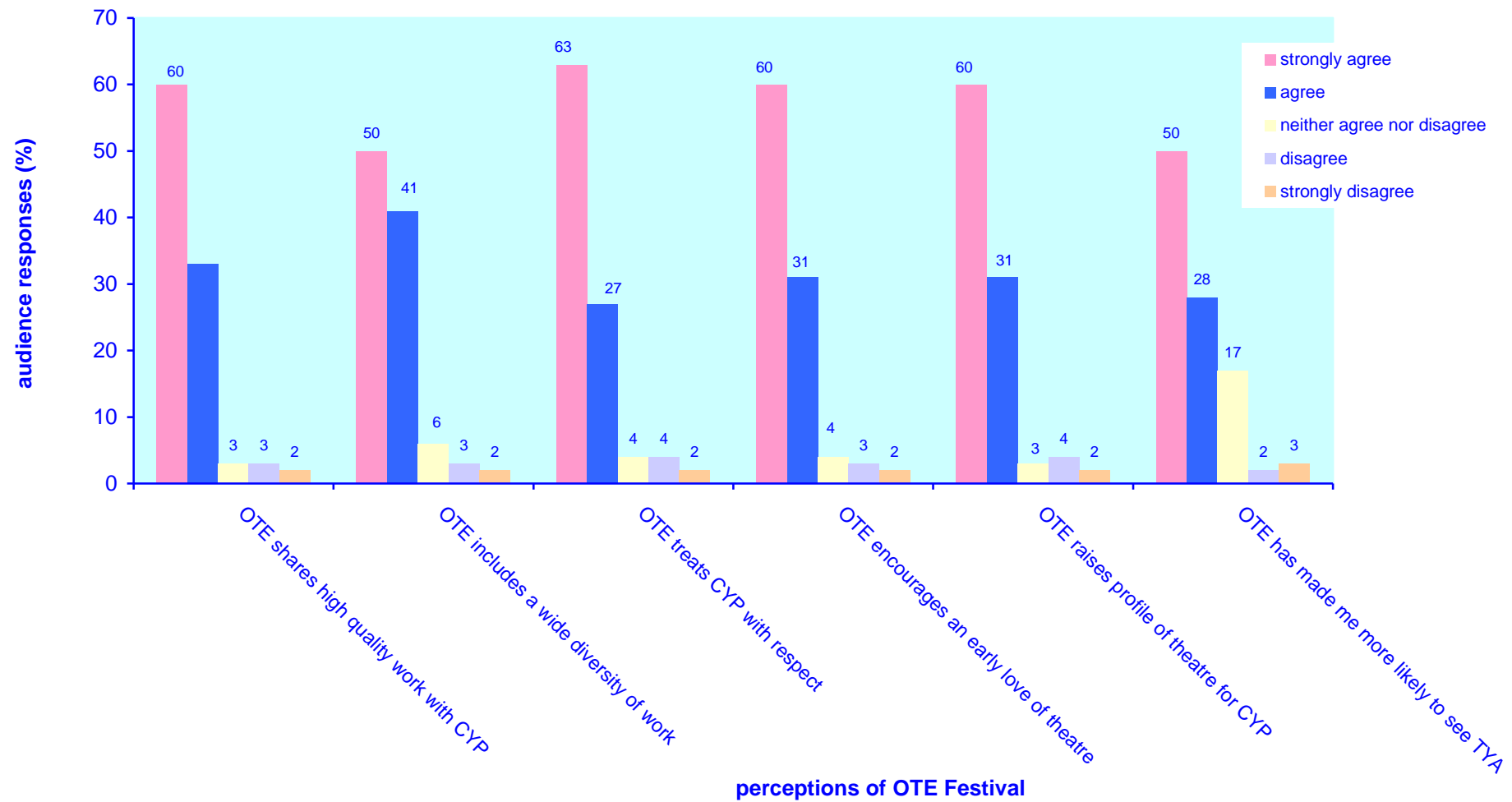


## 5.2 Perceptions of OTE Festival

To investigate the perceptions and experience for those attending ON THE EDGE, questionnaires asked **audience members** to respond to a number of statements, once again closely aligned to the overarching aims of the event. As described below and in Figure 5.5 (over) responses were highly positive:

- Asked whether OTE shares 'high quality theatre with children and young people', 60% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 33% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (3%) or 'strongly disagreed' (2%), while 2% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'
- Asked whether OTE included 'a wide diversity of live performance work', 50% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 41% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (3%), while 6% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'
- Asked whether OTE 'treated children and young people with respect', 63% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 27% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (4%) or 'strongly disagreed' (2%) and 4% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'
- Asked whether OTE 'encouraged a love of live theatre from a young age', 60% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 31% 'agreed'; a smaller number of respondents 'disagreed' (3%) or 'strongly disagreed' (2%), while 4% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'
- Asked whether OTE 'raised the profile of theatre for children and young people', 60% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 31% 'agreed'; a small minority 'disagreed' (4%) or 'strongly disagreed' (2%), while 3% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'
- Asked whether OTE had made respondents 'more likely to come and see theatre for children and young people', 50% respondents 'strongly agreed' and 28% 'agreed'; 2% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' (3%), while 17% 'neither agreed nor disagreed'.

**Figure 5.5 Audience responses: perceptions of OTE Festival**



### 5.3 Responses to open questions

Finally, along with those interview questions regarding individual responses to the OTE Festival, two open questions were included in the audience member questionnaire to ascertain those elements ‘most enjoyed’ during a performance and ‘suggested developments’ for future, similar events. An analysis of data revealed several themes across both questionnaire and interview responses, as described in Figure 5.6 below.

**Figure 5.6 Audience responses: open questions**

#### **Q. What did you enjoy most about today’s event?**

- Beautifully staged, well-acted with a brilliant script
- Great song writing and really lovely music
- Challenging, confronting, emotional and touching
- Diversity of performers challenging issues of inclusion
- Beautifully crafted and performed throughout
- Sense of fun and unpredictability found in objects
- Refusal to oversimplify for children and young people
- Imagination and innovation with low tech materials
- Lovely story-telling, great props and quality performance
- Big bold characters with lots of humour
- It was funny and sad, the cake was nice too!

#### **Q. What suggestions would you make for future, similar events?**

- Those boys should play nicely next time!
- Interesting and unusual sounds are good for little ones
- The space was very hot for some of our children, maybe a cooler space
- Keep the action moving for very young audience members
- More young people performing in new, challenging work
- Less adults in the audience, since it inhibits younger audience members
- Better publicity at each of the participating venues
- Lots of participatory or interactive work included in programme
- More young people helping in volunteering roles
- More diversity amongst performers, providing positive role models for children
- Programme notes for teachers and/or group leaders.



## 6 Learning outcomes and recommendations

Findings suggest that the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 and OTE Festival resulted in extremely positive benefits for the larger majority of stakeholders, including ASSITEJ members, OTE audience members, partner organisations and the City of Birmingham. As with any project of this nature - working with multiple stakeholders across diverse locations - it has resulted in many valuable insights to assist in the forward planning of ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland events and/or further, similar activities delivered by The REP. The following learning outcomes are for consideration by the ASSITEJ/OTE project team and its partners, in order to assist in the processes of reflection, discussion and development. This list aims to raise those issues deemed most important by the data, in supporting ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland through its next phase of delivery. Data collected through ASSITEJ delegate and OTE audience member questionnaires revealed the following themes:

- Engagement and attendance
- Content and delivery
- Impacts for Birmingham
- Learning for ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland.



## 6.1 Engagement and attendance

The OTE Festival engaged with towards 10,000 adults and children/young people. Attendees travelled to the City of Birmingham from across the region, the UK and other parts of the world to take part in this unique event. Evaluation findings suggest both ON THE EDGE Symposium and Festival attracted a younger and more diverse audience as compared with traditional UK theatre going publics, while exposing the best in TYA to numerous children, young people and families from Birmingham and the West Midlands.

The majority of audience members heard about the festival through the OTE website or via friends and/or family members (41%). The most successful means for publicising future TYA activity at The REP might therefore be through previous attendance and positive experience - subsequently subscribing to partner mailing lists - and/or through personal recommendation. The larger majority (53%) of audience members reported attending TYA more than five times per year, while for 10% respondents this was their first experience. This might suggest the festival was less successful in engaging new audience members from across the community. Those families who did attend however suggested they were drawn to the festival as a result of its international focus, with an expectation of new and different cultural experiences, while recognising the importance of presenting high quality work to young audience members.

*"I booked tickets for 'Brush' because it was suitable for the ages of my children (one is three and one is six), also I thought there was a novelty to it. There was drawing, there was painting and music, it just seemed as though it might be a bit different. It also felt like it was a 'mature' piece. Often with children's theatre, it's either a children's story that comes to life on stage or it's something experimental, whereas this felt like it had a little of everything that I knew my two would enjoy. It's also really good for us to get to see the best theatre from other places in the world."*

ON THE EDGE Audience Member, July 2016

With regard to developing new audiences, the OTE learning programme provided the opportunity for 1,007 children/young people and 57 teachers/group coordinators from across the region to engage with visiting international artists and companies. Several teachers reported having never visited The REP before with their pupils and/or the theatre generally. Those schools/teachers who did visit the theatre noted attendance to be limited to once per year, most frequently to attend a Christmas production or pantomime. Few had experienced the nature of productions included in OTE, which they described as 'brilliant', 'clever' and 'really different'. For those schools/teachers who had developed a longer term relationship with The REP meanwhile, a noticeable shift was described where families had now become more engaged with TYA and theatre more broadly.

*"We have adopted The REP as our partner for approximately eight years. During that time, there has been a definite shift in children going to the theatre more and more, as their families have been converted of its value. I had been teaching at the school for eight years previously and children didn't go to the theatre at all. So there has been a clear culture shift, which is proof that you can engage parents and children to enter the theatre once or twice. That practice then begins to become quite normal and more acceptable."*

ON THE EDGE Participant Teacher, July 2016

The ON THE EDGE Symposium attracted 400 international delegates and delivered a stimulating programme of 65 events, presented by 103 professionals from across the sector and resulting in 2,235 attendances. The majority of delegates suggested they had attended for reasons of 'professional development', 'networking opportunities' and 'being part of the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering'. As with audience members, the 'international nature' of the event was viewed as critical for engaging delegates, as was the importance for 'sharing practice', 'stimulating thinking' and 'learning from other professionals' across the sector.

*"The really important thing about the ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering and its international standing is the chance to engage with theatre from such very different cultures. That is a really positive thing for professionals across the sector, to open up the thinking and learn from the experiences or communicate with colleagues from across the world. It's not that we have to show the rest of the world how to make theatre, it's a chance to find out from others working in this field. It shows how different kinds of cultural practice may influence each other. This is why we need ASSITEJ!"*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016





## 6.2 Content and delivery

The OTE Festival and accompanying ON THE EDGE Symposium were praised highly and by the larger majority of stakeholders, including audience members, delegates, participating schools and volunteers. The delivery of both events was described as ‘professional’ and ‘well organised’. The majority of those OTE audience members surveyed (78%) suggested OTE would make them ‘likely to see more TYA’ in the future, while 75% ASSITEJ delegates noted the event had provided ‘a source of new ideas and inspiration’. The range and diversity of productions included in the programme was welcomed by many, with individual performances described as ‘high quality’, ‘original’ and ‘thought provoking’. For those artists/companies invited to take part in OTE, the planning process for the most part was reported to be smooth. While in Birmingham, performers suggested they had been given ‘a warm welcome’, ‘excellent technical support’ and ‘a positive response’ from audiences and delegates alike. However, several individuals commented upon elongated timescales and issues of communication, while noting small but important missed opportunities for audiences, programmers and performance venues.

*“In terms of planning, we’ve been sent loads of information but it has come trickling in over the past months and from lots of different people. Sometimes it’s difficult to remember who wrote to you and in relation to exactly what. I raised the issue of a ‘free sheet’ for audience members this morning because I know I had sent the text to someone but that didn’t seem to get through and/or get printed. If I had known, we would have brought our own programme sheets ready for everyone but that’s not the fault of the festival, it has been organised over a long period.”*

ON THE EDGE Performance Artist, July 2016



For ASSITEJ delegates meanwhile, the balance between the performance programme and symposia events was frequently commented upon, while the inclusion and/or quality of individual productions was questioned by some. Several delegates suggested there should have been more performances included within the festival and/or certain productions should have been programmed for the duration. Others meanwhile described a certain frustration at not being able to attend the maximum number of performances alongside those symposia events they were keen to take part in.

*“In terms of this week and future ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings, when I found out how few performances there were, I was really disappointed. When I attend festivals, I like to see a lot of performances each day but the way it is organised, unless you are here all week you can't get to see many of the shows. When we received the symposium details, it was clearer since there are so many competing activities for everyone to choose from. It was difficult for people to decide what they wanted to squeeze in and what they felt able to miss.”*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016

In addition to promoting and showcasing international theatre for children and young people, the OTE Festival enabled numerous programmers from across the UK and beyond to experience the best in current TYA practice. As previously described, 45% of those ASSITEJ members surveyed suggested they had seen work they 'would programme in their own country/venue', while many also emphasised the importance of observing the reactions of young audience members, as part of this process.

*“So far, I think this has been really well organised and what I'm particularly impressed with, is the fact that children, young people - and even babies this morning - have been invited as audience members to the performances. I've attended similar events and that hasn't happened, so the work is performed to delegates only. It's critical that we are able to observe the responses of the audience this work is made for. That is an important element of this year's ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering and should be continued in all future events.”*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016

In sum, the majority of audience members and delegates were extremely positive in their feedback regarding all aspects of programme content and delivery, while making constructive suggestions for future, similar ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland events:

- Closer locations, so less time taken moving from place to place
- Greater diversity amongst participant artists, providing positive role models
- More balance between adults and children/young people attending events
- Better scheduling between symposia events and performance programme
- More structured networking and development opportunities for delegates
- More time and space for delegates to meet informally and/or socially
- A more diverse performance programme, with a greater number of shows
- Opportunity for artists/delegates to stay within host country families/homes.



### 6.3 Impacts for Birmingham

The OTE Festival/Symposium resulted in numerous positive outcomes for Birmingham and the West Midlands more broadly, including economic, social and cultural benefits. The event attracted 400 international delegates to the City, generating £199,832 income. The REP successfully recruited 90 volunteers from a range of ages, interests and backgrounds, providing 2,192 hours of support and generating £15,782.40 in-kind. The event also generated £36,556 in support of the OTE Festival's accompanying Learning Programme (i.e. Foyle Foundation, John Feeney Charitable Trust), partnering ten participating companies with ten Birmingham schools and youth groups, engaging with 1,007 children/young people and 57 teachers/group coordinators. In addition to engaging the support of numerous individuals through volunteering roles, OTE worked in collaboration with nine local arts and cultural organisations (e.g. Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham City University, MAC Birmingham, The Old Rep) all of whom brought valuable skills and resources to delivering the event. These partnerships generated additional in-kind support, through venue hire, marketing, equipment and materials. New relationships have since been established, extending the impacts of OTE beyond Birmingham and 2016.

Evaluation data suggests the 'international' aspect of OTE was welcomed by residents, in that it brought greater 'cultural diversity' to Birmingham, reminding them they were 'part of the wider world', while putting the city 'on the map' amongst arts professionals and across the wider cultural sector. Through the festival, residents and visitors of mixed nationalities were able to meet and interact via performances, symposia events and social gatherings in an atmosphere of warmth, openness and informality. The festival connected people of different national, cultural and economic backgrounds through sharing high quality theatre for children and young people, while inspiring feelings of social cohesion and civic pride.

*“It’s wonderful to have this event here in Birmingham. The city is completely committed to both theatre and working with children and young people. There is an amazing Learning and Participation Department here at The REP that works across the city, so it’s important to show and share this work with a wider international audience of arts professionals, learning professionals and our youngest audience members. This event is really important in raising the profile of TYA within the city, across the UK and beyond.”*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016

When interviewed, many audience members, workshop participants and volunteers suggested they had no prior experience of the companies and/or artists represented in OTE, yet were keen to discover more. At the end of the festival, 30% delegates wished to join the ASSITEJ mailing list, in order to be kept informed of further TYA activity. For volunteers meanwhile, this experience was reported to result in ‘increased skills and learning’, ‘valuable networking opportunities’, ‘new friendships’, ‘inspiration and enjoyment’. For those individuals with a professional interest in theatre (e.g. theatre design students; visual and performance artists; producers and directors), OTE enabled them to engage with all elements of the festival, while also gaining valuable experience in their chosen practice. For others with little experience of the arts, OTE provided an opportunity to gain an insight into a different sector, while supporting their local community.

*“I’m not someone who attends arts events usually. I’ve chatted with a lot of different people while I’ve been here and everyone seems really happy! It’s a very different energy to being at work in the bank, undoubtedly. This just gives you a bit of a perspective of working in a different sector. Not many people know about HSBC’S corporate social responsibility policy, which encourages employees to give something back to their local community. It adds value to our jobs and hopefully helps these organisations along the way. This has been really enlightening and exciting!”*

ON THE EDGE Volunteer, July 2016

In these and other ways, OTE contributed to Birmingham’s burgeoning creative industries, while supporting the delivery of Birmingham City Council’s Cultural Strategy<sup>11</sup> and more specifically The Creative Future II<sup>12</sup>, along with the wider ambitions of Arts Council England<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, through the promotion of ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland to high profile national and international organisations, OTE built upon Birmingham’s standing as an internationally-recognised centre for the arts, while providing a model of best practice to numerous professionals working in the sector (e.g. artists, critics, directors, producers, programmers, writers) thereby extending the ethos and reputation of OTE far beyond Birmingham.

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<sup>11</sup> Birmingham City Council (2010). *Big City Culture 2010-15: Birmingham’s Cultural Strategy*. BCC: Birmingham

<sup>12</sup> Birmingham City Council (2010). *The Creative Future II. Strategy for children, young people & the arts*. BCC: Birmingham

<sup>13</sup> Arts Council England (2014). *Great art and culture for everyone*. ACE: London

*“First of all was the opening event, which was really brilliant! For me, it was especially important to have young people on the stage, performing at the event. Afterwards, those Indian guys who make the music, really great! I had a talk with the man from the British Council who told me how much there is going on here in Birmingham. I have the impression that people are very passionate about the arts here. For me, it has felt very friendly and very open, a warm and open atmosphere!”*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016







#### 6.4 Learning for ASSITEJ/TYA UK and TYA Ireland

An overarching aim of the OTE Festival was to raise the profile of TYA within the UK and internationally. As previously described, 67% of those delegates surveyed reported the event had raised the profile of TYA in the UK and Ireland, while 71% noted the festival had raised the profile of TYA internationally. Likewise, 91% audience members surveyed suggested OTE had raised the profile of theatre for children and young people. Participating artists and/or companies supported these findings, with 42% of those surveyed reporting OTE had raised the profile of their work in the UK/Ireland and 40% stating OTE had raised the profile of their work internationally.

*"I'm one of the performers from 'The Hamilton Complex' and am performing here this week as part of ON THE EDGE. It's very exciting for us to be performing here at the ASSITEJ event. Some of the audience members have been pretty shocked, while others have been less shocked but everyone has given us helpful feedback about the show. This piece of work is not something you see every day, the subject matter might be challenging for some people to watch, you know, reaching puberty, developing sexuality, all of that which is part of our lives. But it has been really nice for us to be here, we have been well looked after and Birmingham is a very beautiful city!"*

ON THE EDGE Performance Artist, July 2016

Questionnaire data suggested 23% of artists/companies had already secured bookings for their work as a result of OTE. Although it is acknowledged that further opportunities might not be immediately forthcoming, many of those performers/companies interviewed suggested there was a need for more structured networking between artists and programmers. Programmers and producers meanwhile frequently stressed the importance of 'integrating the voice' of children and young people within all future ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland events - alongside the voice of the maker - in order to ensure they remained current, meaningful and relevant.

*"We should maybe talk more about how these children and young people are an integral part of society. They have their own values and perspectives regarding the arts, as with everything else in their lives. It is important for us - programmers and managers - to speak more directly with both the artists and the young audience members, in order to learn from their experiences and the impacts of creating theatre for children and young people."*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016

In conclusion, evaluation questionnaires and interviews asked delegates and partners what they might like to see happen in future ASSITEJ events. Rather than offer suggestions, respondents frequently took this opportunity to praise and thank the festival coordinators, e.g. "I wholeheartedly thank you for the contribution you have made to ASSITEJ with OTE", "Congratulations on such an impressive and high quality programme", "The support we received from your team was tremendous" and "It was really great for BCU to be a part of OTE. It would be very good to work together again on future projects". However, many interesting and thoughtful ideas were also included across the datasets, which might provide a valuable starting point for taking forward other ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland events:

- More participation from e.g. Asia, US and South America
- More scratch nights for new work and/or new writing
- Provision for artists and companies to directly meet with programmers
- Greater representation of disabled and/or marginalised artists
- Shorter 'work in progress' slots, to allow for inclusion of more work
- More students and young people to meet, discuss and network with
- More participatory and/or interactive productions
- Improved national and/or specialist press coverage of TYA events.

## 6.5 Feedback from ON THE EDGE Steering Group

Finally and as described in Figure 6.1 below, internal summative feedback collected from members of the ON THE EDGE Steering Group included a number of key achievements resulting from the Festival and Symposium, with recommendations in support of planning future, similar TYA UK and TYA Ireland events.

**Figure 6.1 ON THE EDGE Steering Group: summative feedback**

### Q. What were the key achievements of ON THE EDGE?

- The way in which The REP fully embraced the event
- The sense of community generated by the event
- The high number of international delegates travelling to Birmingham
- The positive collaboration between different regions and countries
- The very positive feedback received from delegates and audience members
- Bursaries enabling emerging practitioners from UK/Ireland to attend
- The feeling of being a part of something bigger/more important
- The broad ownership and delivery of this event
- The successful recruitment and support of volunteers.

### Q. What suggestions would you make for future, similar events?

- Investigate the means for raising the national profile of TYA across media
- The need for dedicated individuals in both UK and Ireland focused upon PR
- Revisit the processes of selecting shows, since this proved challenging
- The need for earlier, dedicated production capacity to support smooth delivery
- Ensure the symposium venue is closer to the main festival hub
- Ensure the voice of children and young people is included throughout
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of all delivering team members
- Clarify the aims and objectives of any evaluation requirements
- Make closer connections with the theme of 'ON THE EDGE'.

## 6.6 Recommendations

- i. The Producers of the ON THE EDGE Festival and ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 are recommended to disseminate the learning outcomes resulting from the event - and its evaluation - with ASSITEJ International, in order to inform future ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings and Congress
- ii. TYA UK and TYA Ireland are recommended to organise a collaborative event during 2017, to discuss the inputs, outputs and outcomes from ON THE EDGE; explore the legacy of ON THE EDGE and address its key learning outcomes; consider the most appropriate and strategic ways forward for TYA UK and TYA Ireland in future phases
- iii. The REP is recommended to build upon the positive outcomes resulting from ON THE EDGE, through sustained audience development and learning provision within the City, the region, nationally and internationally
- iv. ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland are recommended to investigate the longer term impacts of ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings for artists, delegates and audience members, via continuing independent evaluation and/or longitudinal research studies
- v. TYA Ireland is recommended to build upon the positive outcomes resulting from hosting the annual ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering in the UK, with the aspiration to bring an ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering to Dublin in 2021 or 2022





## 7 Summary and conclusions

In July 2016, the World Festival of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) and the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ) Artistic Gathering took place in Birmingham, marking the first time for an ASSITEJ international event to be held in the UK. The ON THE EDGE Festival therefore provided an unprecedented opportunity for the TYA sector in the UK and Ireland, offering unique cultural and artistic opportunities for numerous children, young people, their families, schools and communities, while raising the profile of TYA across the UK and internationally.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an overview of the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the ON THE EDGE Festival and ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016 as described by artists, audience members and delegates. From 2 to 9 July 2016, ON THE EDGE engaged with a total of 25 international performance companies and 160 individual artists, to deliver 91 unique live performances to 9,940 audience members. The festival was accompanied by 56 ON THE EDGE Symposium events including workshops, panel discussions, works in progress and social events presented by 103 professionals from across the TYA sector and resulting in 2,235 delegate attendances. In addition, ON THE EDGE delivered a vibrant accompanying learning programme partnering ten international companies with ten Birmingham schools, engaging a further 1,007 children/young people and 57 teachers/teaching assistants.

Described as 'brilliant', 'challenging', 'stimulating' and 'thought-provoking', ON THE EDGE resulted in numerous and continuing positive outcomes for participant artists, performance companies, audience members, delegates, volunteers and partner organisations. Benefits reported by OTE artists and companies included: raised profile, visibility and validation; opportunities for creative exchange; professional development opportunities. Outcomes for audience members included: engagement with high quality

international theatre for children and young people; increased awareness of arts and cultural opportunities across Birmingham; stimulation of further creative activity. Outcomes for delegates meanwhile included: raised profile of TYA across the UK/Ireland and internationally; a source of new ideas and inspiration, professional development and networking opportunities. In addition, feedback collected from members of the ON THE EDGE Steering Group included a number of key achievements, resulting from the Festival and Symposium with recommendations for future, similar TYA UK and TYA Ireland events.

As ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland move into their next exciting phase, it will be helpful to determine how future events might be best delivered and improved, with reference to those learning outcomes described in this evaluation. This report has assessed the inputs, outputs and outcomes for those partners, delegates and audience members engaged in ON THE EDGE, while suggesting recommendations for developments in 2017 and beyond. Clearly defined management roles and responsibilities, a coherent vision and identity, realistic targets and timescales, marketing and evaluation strategies, formal agreements with all partners and continuous open dialogue between stakeholders will all undoubtedly strengthen ASSITEJ, TYA UK and TYA Ireland as they move forward.

In the context of a challenging broader economic and social environment, the findings of this evaluation are both positive and timely. The REP, TYA UK and TYA Ireland now have an evidence base with which to further develop their programmes. They also have an opportunity to continue to play a leadership role in demonstrating ON THE EDGE as a model of best practice, raising the profile of theatre for children and young people nationally and internationally, while encouraging stimulating creative encounters between artists, academics, educators, programmers and audience members alike.

*“In his keynote speech, Martin Drury talked of how a moment of theatre, a moment of truth or beauty in a play can have an effect on that child’s day, maybe can extend into their week, maybe even follow them into their life. Where a piece of theatre can ‘ripple’ through a child’s imagination, their mind and their soul. It can have a profound effect on a young person, often in a far greater manner than we might think. Sitting in an audience and having an enjoyable experience is just the beginning. It can have an effect on how they think and how they feel, and it can be an agent of change. We do it all and we do it well!”*

ON THE EDGE/ASSITEJ Delegate, July 2016

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## **10 Partner organisations**

**The ASSITEJ Artistic Gathering 2016/ON THE EDGE Festival was presented by:**

ASSITEJ International

Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) UK

Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) Ireland

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Arts Council England

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Welsh Government

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**Presenting partners and partner venues included:**

ACE Dance and Music Centre

Birmingham City University

Birmingham REP

Blue Orange Theatre

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Mayfield School

The Library of Birmingham

The Old Rep

The Patrick Centre