

## The Benefits of Theatre in Adolescents

By Maya Schoof

Being involved in theatre is valuable for students because of the many lessons often learned through these experiences. Teamwork, responsibility, problem solving and ambition are a few of the many habits discovered through participation in a theatrical production. Theatre tests teens in a plethora of ways to expel their best qualities that are useful for the rest of their days.

Firstly, being involved in a theatre production provides many life skills related to cooperation and learning how to work as a unified group. Communication is a key value in theatre and is essential to participate. Most students develop the imperative ability to communicate ideas clearly, quickly and thoughtfully. Acting onstage teaches teens to be comfortable with public speaking in front of large audiences which makes presentations seem much more doable. The enunciation and projection, actors also learn, is beneficial for their future as they will be able to be understood and confident. Furthermore, the backstage workers learn just as much communication. The crew of a show must be clear, precise, and well-organised. Avoiding misunderstandings, long meetings with no resolution and unorganised actions is a result of clear communication in all aspects of production. The crew must know who is in charge of what and convey and fulfil their role. As well as efficiency, students develop friendships and connection through the interaction of peers with similar interests. Teamwork is a trait many adolescents walk away from a show. No drama production has ever been created without a team, large or small. Therefore, one learns how the connected pieces and individuals work together to realise their collective vision. Looking past disagreements, accepting realities and being able to compromise are necessary elements of theatre that are demonstrated often. An actor may disagree with a costar on how to portray a scene and they will compromise with something in the middle of both their ideas. Combining creative differences, whether it's regarding lighting, costumes, sets, sound or acting, is what makes theatre so beautiful and what teaches these valuable lessons. A successful production requires consistent dedication from everybody who's involved which is only possible with mutual respect. Working on a production teaches students to trust the talents of their team. For instance, a writer collaborating with a team to write a show must be able to trust in others that they will be committed and contribute something meaningful. Communication, teamwork and trust are the fundamental pillars of cooperation that are paramount in a theatre production and are lessons unavoidable to thespians.

Within a theatre group, there are often rules, deadlines and authorities that must be respected. Theatre teaches the importance of authority, rules and leadership. Whether it's the school principal, the theatre rentals or the manager, there are always guidelines that a student must learn to respect. The majority of the time, a student will have someone in charge of a portion of a production that they must adhere to. Theatre teaches you to accept and respect authority. Instead of disputing and arguing, a theatre student will learn to attempt to understand the

significance of a policy and then provide a thoughtful response. The authority comes with rules that are frequently out of a teenager's control. For example, a costume designer must stick within their determined budget or a line must be changed to suit the audience. These restrictions provide a challenge and the opportunity to grow. Theatre adolescents learn to work around these obstacles instead of giving up. In addition, there is also a structure of procedures that help guide the workflow such as meeting times, a schedule and a calendar. A teen must understand how to show self-discipline and consideration for others by being on time to rehearsals or meetings, and finishing tasks on time ensures the success of a production. Staying on schedule is a major concern as it affects the work of everyone on the team. Once one has learned all the necessary skills for teamwork, respect and trust, a leadership position may be acquired such as a director, producer or designer. This role teaches how to properly assist and lead others without being disliked or authoritarian and on the other hand, being confident to put down regulations or call out disrespect. Leading in theatre provides a safe place to understand how to direct a project and handle multiple moving parts. In essence, the control of leadership or the lack of control by dealing with authority and rules provide important qualities that will carry into adulthood.

Although thespians are known to exhibit creativity in the many facets of theatre such as acting, writing or directing, they have learned resilience through their challenges. Successfully adapting to difficult experiences, especially through pressure, obstacles and mistakes, is a priceless skill many learn. When a regulation or other factors throws a wrench in an original plan, a theatre kid can quickly find an alternate path that results in a modified, similar or even more successful result. In all aspects of theatre, creative problem-solving techniques are used, such as identifying problems, evaluating possible solutions, and deciding on a course of action. For example, a set piece may break at the last minute and the crew must come up with a solution quickly. The ability to handle a substantial amount of pressure is learned in any theatre project. Whether it's racing the clock and deadlines or demand from leaders and peers, they often find a way to complete what needs to be done. In order to succeed in theatre, it's vital that everyone involved with a production be able to retain a calm and enthusiastic attitude under pressure. Case in point, a thespian will often sacrifice after school hours and lunches to get the work done before the deadline. In another instance, a teen may utilise concentration strategies and mindfulness practices to stay calm and focused during a stressful time like a performance day. A production is an immense undertaking that takes a lot of effort. They also have to balance their school work along with chores and activities by scheduling their days very carefully. Budgeting their time and staying poised are admired skills that will help with stress in other parts of life. Theatre students, whether they're memorising lines or learning new technology, must have the talent to absorb new information quickly. Changing from an actor to makeup artist to selling tickets requires the ability to learn quickly. For example, adaptability was learned when the main actor had to assist with painting the set. Thespians show a substantial amount of adaptability and flexibility during their time with a project. Willingness to deal with new ideas, challenges, changing situations and conditions is a crucial

characteristic for a victorious production. Along with learning quickly and adapting, drama teens face rejection and mistakes on a regular basis. Whether it's not getting the acting part, one's script getting rejected, or a project falling through, the passionate theatre adolescent will still attend the next audition, rewrite and try again. Through these common theatre experiences, they have learned to be resilient and to not give up. Moving on after disappointment is a key skill that helps one continue to succeed and to learn from instead of mourn past mistakes. Persevering through roadblocks and obstacles is a common thespian trait. Resilience is a core qualification that most theatre teens possess.

Beyond cooperation and resilience, useful personal lessons are learned as well. Dedication, self-discipline and taking initiative are valuable skills that allow individuals to thrive in aspects later in their life. When one signs up, is chosen or auditions to work on a show, full dedication is required. Many thespians discover that committing is deeply rewarding as it's the only way to have a triumphant show run. Suppose that students are rehearsing for hours and redoing scenes till perfection. That demonstrates ambition to create the best show possible. When a student becomes passionate about a project larger than themselves, dedication is a trait easily learned. This benefits the teens by allowing them to experience ambition and dedication which they can trade to other aspects of life. Another strong and valuable skill is to stay motivated for long periods of time. A show may take a couple weeks to a few months. Through that time, a student must remain motivated and on top of the task load. Few other disciplines will help the development of motivation and commitment. Theatre students are often given responsibility to complete something on their own. For instance, a student may be trusted to return costumes used that day to be secured in the costume room. The ability to take responsibility to complete the request is crucial for the organisation in the drama space. Another student may have to design a poster for a show before the deadline. It's left up to them to figure out how to achieve the goal and do it in the most successful and efficient way. Individuals grasp how to govern themselves by keeping up with responsibilities. The ability to work independently is a trait that carries through one's lifetime. The power to act or take charge is a key talent that many learn through a theatre production. Whether it's proposing a new play or volunteering to create the soundtrack, people who do what needs to be done without waiting to be asked are a fundamental part of theatre. The complexities of a production demand teens who are willing to initiate things independently. These respected qualities are all learned through working in theatre.

Being ambitious, flexible and passionate are lifelong competencies that are taught through the theatre community. In the long run, a production is one of the best adventures an adolescent can go on to discover their full potential.