

Opgang2 Theatre

A short study on how Opgang2 Theatre in Aarhus places audience at the centre of the institution.

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KEYWORDS

Youth, community rooted, place, artist and audience led, diversity, building capacity, co-creation, by choice, by surprise.

SYNTHETIC DATA

Organisation	Opgang2
Year of establishment	1974
City and Country	Aarhus, Denmark
Culture Branch:	Theatre, film and youth cultural programmes
Legal status	Independent cultural institution
Venue Size:	Opgang2 Theatre occupies the large hall at the former school, Brobjergskolen, in Aarhus with a total of 400 m ² .
Number of Employees:	FTE: 19 employees
Locus and facilities:	Opgang2 Theatre lives together with Opgang2 film and Opgang2 Youth Track at Brobjergskolen in the centre of Aarhus.
Form of financing:	Opgang2 has a project structured economic model with public support, operational grants, partner financing and own financing.
Economic Turnover:	DKK 9.605.695 (€ 1.292.000) 28% is public support from among others the municipality of Aarhus (project support for the theatre activities) and the Arts Council (operational grant on a 3-year basis), 19% is production support from partners and 53% own financing (incl. project funding).
Number of arrangements:	The theatre performs between 100 and 150 performances annually.
Annual number of visitors:	20.000 - 25.000 visitors to the performances alone.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Opgang2 is an independent cultural institution based in Aarhus. The organisation focuses the three core areas: Opgang2 Theatre, Opgang2 Film and Opgang2 Youth Track (Ungdomsspor). Since the beginning in 1974 Opgang2 has grown into becoming one of the most significant professional institutions for youth programs and activities within theatre and film. The three departments work both independently and together, united under the common OPGANG2 logo

Opgang2 is housed in a former school in the centre of Aarhus. The venue frames all three activities and offers a theatre stage, studios and workshop facilities as well as education rooms for learning programs.

The Opgang2 Theatre brings professional theatre to the all parts of Denmark, especially to an unfamiliar theatre audience. The touring theatre performs between 100 and 150 performances each year and all new shows have their premiere at the Aarhus Theatre, the regional main venue for theatre and performing arts. In 2014 the theatre won a Reumert (Best Child and Youth Performance) for the show 4 EVER.

Opgang2 Film produces series and documentaries. The film Series "3 Minutes in Gellerup" from 2012 has had more than 1.5 million views. Opgang2 Youth Track is an activation programme for young people on social assistance in Aarhus. In the youth track the participants work together with professional artists in theatre, music and art. In addition to these activities Opgang2 produces the annual JALLA-festivals, which has turned out be a highly important part of Opgang2. JALLA consists of invited artists, both professionals and talented amateurs on stage in a large performance program of theatre, music, dance, song and poetry that transcends both cultural and age differences.

GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS / WHAT THEY WANT!

As an independent cultural institution Opgang2 produce professional theater productions, documentaries and cultural festivals with and for a young audience – and they engage the youth in a partnership with the artists. The spine of Opgang2 is the use of art and culture as a transforming power to move and create movement. To challenge stereotypes and provoke taboos and in doing so building bridges between people across ethnic, social, cultural and psychological barriers with the overall aim to change people's views of themselves and others. As such the organisation has a clear inclusive and democratic agenda.

On their website¹ Opgang2 defines the ambition to help create a Denmark that values the individual's unique quality in meaningful communities. This is done through a deliberate artistic and pedagogical method developed over more than 40 years' practice as a socially engaged initiative. The organization addresses and promotes a deep faith in the ability of the individuals they serve.

The stories presented are taken from the communities in and around Aarhus, picturing the surrounding reality, as seen and felt by the "unruly and disaffected - bruised and confused - edged and chaotic - seeking and courageous young". The performances circle and provide sharp narratives on essential and uncomfortable social issues as a way to create a strong resonance in the young audience.

¹ The Opgang2 website: <http://opgang2.dk>

Opgang2 are dedicated to a CCR, Corporate Cultural Responsibility² value system and strategy, which help promote their work with a diverse cultural reality as both 'a player' and partner, ensuring the living cultural heritage, democratic cohesion and the development towards a more humanistic society. The CCR strategy influences the organisations sponsorship work and business relations.

Opgang2 Theatre produced 2 national touring productions³ presenting 154 shows all over the country. The productions AR (Scar) and 4-ever were both sold out and 4-ever also had a sold out spring tour in 2016, this as the immediate result of the Reumert Award for best youth production now seen by more than 70.000 students and young people.

The community understood as the marginalised young, those left outside the mainstream of artistic production and narratives, is at the very heart of everything Opgang2 does. The inclusive methods used, the collaborative approach and the anchorage in terms of working with, for and by young people runs through the projects, their stories, participants and the audiences they reach.

MAKING IT HAPPEN / HOW DO THEY DO IT?

As co-creation and a high degree of participation has been the very core of Opgang2s productions the social engagement in the community from the side of the organization is much about finding ways to ease the participation of the young people that deliver so much and who live in the periphery of the Danish welfare state. The Opgang2 model takes a fundamentally different starting point than Danish society as such, in addressing the young as a resource for the artistic and educational projects and in doing so creating an environment and experiences that reinforce the ability, the will and belief in their own power and their own potential. In a Danish perspective this is a unique position⁴.

In 2015 25.000 young saw the theatre's performances of which roughly 23.000 were from outside Aarhus. As one of very few theatres in Denmark Opgang2 reaches suburban migrant communities from all parts of the country. This has given them an exclusive position and they are widely regarded as one of the most significant intercultural players in the country.

Throughout the years Opgang2 has positioned itself as a still more important institution high lightening the life circumstances of marginalised young people by giving them an opportunity through art to express and frame their own stories to a young audience. Opgang2 is motivated and established in order to foster change and inclusion of those who are left outside the norm and cultural offerings through a deliberate artistic and pedagogical method, where the young people becomes co-creators of the productions, all anchored in narratives deriving from the young themselves.

Since Opgang2 does not have an overall audience strategy in a narrow definition, but rather work with a strong intertwined and hybrid approach, it would be fair to say, that audience perspective as an initiator for artistic productions and accordingly audience reach are closely connected and it would be meaningless to separate them in this case.

² The CCR strategy can be read here: <http://opgang2.dk/Om-Opgang2/Vaerdier-CCR.aspx>

³ The performances can be found here: <http://opgang2.dk/Turnéteater/Forestillinger.aspx>

⁴ In the interview Lise Ørskov underpinned the importance of the national focus alongside the local one as a high priority for the organisation supported by the Arts Council and the board. However it is not reflected in the statutes yet.

Despite the clear focus on the marginalised young and the close connections between content and audiences / participants, Opgang2 does not have an advanced measurement system for who is actually visiting their activities. They use Google analytics for their digital outreach. Most of the performances sold through schools and local municipalities are measured only by numbers, geography and age / demographic characteristics. A more closely analytic tool to dive into more social aspects and /or segmentation characteristics is not being used.

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This report is part of a transnational EU study on how small and midsize cultural institutions and festivals places audiences at the centre of their institution and activities.

The views expressed in the report are the sole responsibility of Niels Righolt as a researcher in the study and in no way reflect the views of the European Commission.



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