

## OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO CULTURAL ATTENDANCE

As part of BACKSTAGE? ME?, there was a discussion about the potential barriers (real and imagined) that individuals might experience when accessing cultural activity. Notes from the discussions are below.

### BARRIERS

- Cost / perception of cost
- A fear of not understanding the rules of the game / etiquette
- Not knowing the practical things - Where do I go? How do I know where to sit? Where are the toilets? What happens at the interval?
- Class - Seen as a middle class 'hobby'
- Them and us perception - it's for old people
- Pre-judgement from others - Will I fit in? Will I stand out? Am I OK to be there?
- Social exclusion
- Low self-confidence / self-worth
- Lack of knowledge of what is available
- Is it for me / Will I enjoy it?
- Lack of knowledge of the art form (e.g. classical music)
- Pre-judgement from others
- Social exclusion from others
- Feels too posh / like an exclusive club
- Getting to venue - transport
- Fears around being out at night
- Intimidated

### OVERCOMING BARRIERS

#### Recommendations for homeless organisations

1. Ensure that you brief participants before the visit – explaining exactly what will happen
2. Come as part of an organized trip
3. Do some prep work in advance so that the group feel confident about what they're going to see. This could include a backstage tour / pre-visit from someone from the cultural organization
4. Talk about the visit afterwards and reflect on the experience – perhaps consider attending an after-show discussion
5. Attend an informal activity / something that is special e.g. an open day or an exhibition opening
6. Don't just do a one-off: maybe come and see a run of plays
7. Take a supported risk as well as completing the necessary risk assessments! Some of the most rewarding and fascinating visits have been to see pieces of new writing / less traditional productions
8. Explain reasons for cost so that participants understand what you get for your money

## Recommendations for arts organisations

1. Try and offer free tickets, or consider introducing tiered ticket prices to enable all to attend. Offer organisational subsidies
2. Deliver targeted outreach work with groups to encourage and support them to attend
3. Make sure that information about your programme is well advertised and available
4. Develop a shared understanding / culture of 'open door – art for everyone' from Board / Exec / Senior Management level right through the whole organisation down to Box Office and Front of House
5. Provide training for all customer facing staff to help them identify and support new and vulnerable visitors – consider having a welcome team who greet first time visitors and support them to use the facilities (like you're hosting your party)
6. Introduce a Buddy scheme – so your buddy comes free: this reduces the cost and there's someone to look after first time visitors
7. Offer relaxed performances where it is OK to speak in the audience, and creating work which is accessible e.g. a range of languages / signer performances
8. Invite different agencies together to a Community Evening
9. Follow Streetwise Opera's model of participatory work and prep by using professional musicians/performers so that people can make connections to someone on stage