

Blog: Keir Bust (Wild Young Producers) full interview

Full blog article

Introduction:

It has been a bit of a full-circle moment for Keir Bust, who has recently run the very youth group at South Hill Park that he first joined as a young person nearly 15 years ago. Wilde Young Producers is a free opportunity for 14-20 year olds who handle the planning, organisation and delivery of an arts festival for local school children in the heart of South Hill Park each summer. We sat down with Keir to hear all about the group and what it brings to local young people interested in a career in the arts.

How did you first get involved with South Hill Park?

I first got involved with South Hill Park through the youth theatre and through the summer schools, so I've sort of grown up through performing here. I now work here as a director and a freelance creative as well as running the Wilde Young Producers Group, which I was actually involved with when I was younger, although it was called Missed Out back then.

Back then it followed exactly the same training course and trajectory. We worked towards what was originally called Missed Out Mole, which was a week-long arts festival in the summer for local primary schools. And now we call it the Wilde Week and we run it with the same ethos, spirit, planning and creativity as it has always had.

So tell us about the group, who is it for and what does it entail?

Wilde Young Producers is for young people in the area aged between 15 and 20, where we train them on how to run arts events, such as an arts festival, a concert, a cabaret night etc. Whatever it is, we give them all the skills and tools they need to run it, from pre-production, production and post-production. So then hopefully, they could go and work as a creative, producer or director, or anything they want within the creative sector.

Did you enjoy the scheme when you were younger?

I thoroughly enjoyed it, because you got to meet so many amazing people. We got to meet people like the creative team from Theatre Re – a big leading theatre company out in the industry, which was amazing – as well as the in-house teams who taught you all their production skills.

You got used to working with different venues, how to talk to people, plus general presentation and communication skills, which I found really beneficial when I was growing up. You could use these skills in everyday life, as well as within the group and wider.

So what projects is the group working on this year?

The Wilde Young Producers are working towards Wilde Week, which follows a different theme each year, this year's being the 40th anniversary of the Wilde Theatre. Participants from local schools will take part in a series of workshops linked to the Wilde Theatre in South Hill Park Arts Centre for a day, and this will all be delivered by the Wilde Young Producers, with the support of our creative freelance team.

What responsibilities do the young people have in delivering it and how do you support them?

The young people have an array of responsibilities within the group. So generally when we're setting up a project, we will split into different roles. This will cover everything from project management to marketing to finances to just generally being a runner for the team.

And then when we get to the Wilde Week, the team will all support the professional team of freelancers in the classes. This will be from welcoming the schools, making sure they know all the health and safety of the venue, as well as helping within the sessions themselves.

I think this is the most important skill that they will take away from it and that can all sort of jump into a different skill. Whether that's anything they're more comfortable with or something they're not so comfortable in, it just gives them a nice big array of responsibilities and skills that they can take forward after being a part of the group.

How do sessions work in the run up to an event like Wilde Week?

We split sessions into all the different stages of planning for the event. At the minute we're working through the pre-planning of the project so that we understand everything that needs to be set up before we deliver the week.

As we move towards the summer, we'll start working on delivering, getting used to how the timetable will run, how the schedules will all run, what everyone will be doing, where the rooms will be stationed and who we'll be working with. And then after the project we'll have a debrief, see what worked, maybe what didn't work, and then we can carry that forward into the next year's festival so then it all runs as smooth as possible.

Do you see the young people grow in confidence throughout the course and Wilde Week?

You absolutely see the young people developing confidence the further they go on with the project. From my experience, you get used to meeting these people who start off as strangers and then you develop a friendship and then also a working relationship. And there's still people I work with now professionally who I worked with when I was part of Wilde Young Producers, which is really lovely.

You definitely see them get more confident in their roles but also just generally in talking and dealing with people, dealing with myself and working around the building. You just see them develop in so many different ways.

What does it mean to you to be able to run a class that you attended as a young person?

It's really lovely to be now running the class that I attended. It's not something I thought I would do or be a part of, but it's nice to then take my lived experience from being a part of the group years ago and put it into the class now. But it's also nice to work with new people and see how they maybe interpret things that we did and maybe how that has to evolve and change. And it's just nice to work with new young people who have new ideas and implement what we all knew and take it forward for a new generation of people.

What made you want to get involved in a community outreach scheme in the arts for young people?

To begin with, I mainly got involved to largely spend time with the friends I'd connected with at South Hill Park and then slowly you sort of find the enjoyment within the classes, whether that's the Youth Theatre or Wild Young Producers or 1117, you sort of find what you want to take out of those sessions the further along you go with them. So all these community classes that I'd taken part in mainly started off as a social activity for me and my friends and

then we slowly started to pick out all the things that we wanted from it. And as we got older the more that became the focus.

And why do you think it's important that young people have an outlet like this?

I think it's important that young people have community outlets like this at South Hill Park because there aren't many around in the local area that aren't specifically with the Wilde Young Producers group. There isn't a tonne of access to production or production arts for young people.

It's a completely free group as well, so there's no restraint on finances, anyone can come and attend, as long as they're passionate about the arts. I think having that here for young people of all ages sets up a nice foundation for future creatives to then have the platform to learn and to have those foundations and those skills to take forward in later careers.

And what skills did you take from it that you now use in your career?

The skills I took away from it are definitely organisational! You learn all sorts of different skills because the Arts Festival is such a big thing. And it's been something that I've been able to implement in jobs that I've now had as an adult. And just general skills that you can talk to people with, organising, health and safety, risk assessments. It's all something that you carry forward into jobs that maybe aren't even creative or in the arts sector, it's things that you can carry forward into any role.

Do you think there's a mental wellbeing benefit for young people having access to the arts in this way?

Definitely. To have a free community outreach group like this is amazing, because there isn't really anything like it around. Being able to come and see your friends, but also take something away from the arts centre, which they might not have been able to do otherwise. It's not just a theatre and a restaurant, there is much more to it than people think, particularly young people think.

I think it's hugely beneficial because they're not only coming here just to see a show or take part in a production, they're actively learning in a different way from school. And I get to see and experience firsthand the benefits of being part of these groups at South Hill Park.

What's your favourite moment in the process as the facilitator of the courses?

Definitely seeing them deliver the end product and seeing the local schools engage with the Wilde Young Producers in the final product. It's really lovely when you see all that work finally come into reality, you see them delivering the sessions, you see them working with the young people from the schools and you see their enjoyment that they've gotten out of it, that they've first hand created this product for young people. I think that's my favourite moment of it.

And do you have a favourite memory from when you were taking part in it yourself?

I remember one of the Wilde Weeks was space themed, and we held it out on the field. We did these exploding rocket bottle, which was just fantastic, seeing all these young kids super excited to see these space bottles flying up in the air. And it was peak summer, we'd just finished school, finished our GCSEs and it was just this big sense of enjoyment. I remember that so clearly.

What benefits do you think that the arts in general bring to young people?

I think the arts are hugely beneficial to young people for so many reasons. I think everyone sort of latches onto the thing they want out of it the most, but I think especially here at South Hill Park having that community of people around you that are so like minded but can also be so different.

I think in particular for young people to have access to this creative community at a young age is so important, because they get that sense of belonging, that sense of individuality that I don't think you get from other places. I think South Hill Park really encouraged that and really championed that and I think that's what makes it so unique and important for young people.