

# THE INTERNATIONAL PLAYABLE THEATRE LAB

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Evaluation Report



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# Introduction to the IPTL

The International Playable Theatre Lab (IPTL) was a two-week digital residency for artists to learn about the intersections of digital and Playable Theatre. This inaugural edition of the IPTL was funded by the British Council Arts Digital Collaboration Fund.

This project was led by Upstart Theatre, and delivered in collaboration with two partner organisations Teatro al Cubo and MI Film who, through an open call, selected 4 further Participant Artists to take part in the programme. The IPTL ran on weekdays from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021. It consisted of daily 3-hour training sessions (10 in total) led by Artist Mentors - experienced artists with a track record of making digital and playable theatre. Alongside this, Participant Artists worked independently on developing their idea for a new playable theatre show. These ideas were presented in a sharing session on the final day of the residency, where Artist Mentors were in attendance.

## Partners

- Upstart Theatre, UK (Artistic Director Tom Mansfield, Producer Hannah Tookey)
- Teatro al Cubo, Mexico (Director Aarón Hernandez Farfan, Producer Mishell Ordóñez)
- MI Film, North Macedonia (Director Ivica Dimitrijevic, Coordinator Jasmina Vasileva)

## Artist Mentors

- Tom Mansfield, Artistic Director of Upstart Theatre
- Rachel Briscoe, Artist of theatre company [Fast Familiar](#)
- Tassos Stevens, Director of theatre company [Coney](#)
- James Blakey, Independent Artist and Upstart Theatre's Director of Co-Creation
- [Chloe Mashiter](#), Independent Artist
- Lucy Wray, Associate Artist of [Metis Arts](#)
- Eve Leigh, Playwright
- Celia Pearce, Game Designer, Academic at Northeastern University and Founder of [PlayableTheatre.org](#)

## Participant Artists

- Diego Sosa Ortega (Mexico City, Mexico)
- Isabel Vázquez (Xalapa, Mexico)
- Aarón Hernandez Farfan (Mexico City, Mexico)
- Ivana Balabanov (Skopje, North Macedonia)
- Teodora Ezhovska (Skopje, North Macedonia)
- Ivica Dimitrijevic (Skopje, North Macedonia)
- Jasmina Vasileva (Skopje, North Macedonia)

You can read more about each of our Artist Mentors and Participant Artists [on our website](#).

For each training session, the Participant Artists were joined by Upstart Theatre's team (Artistic Director Tom Mansfield, Producer Hannah Tookey and Director of Co-Creation James Blakey). Teatro al Cubo's Director Aarón Hernandez Farfan, and MI Film's team (Director Ivica Dimitrijevic, Coordinator Jasmina Vasileva) were both partners and Participant Artists for the IPTL.

### **The 10 training sessions were:**

- IPTL Welcome Session and Upstart Theatre workshop: Lenses for Making Playable Theatre
- Upstart Theatre workshop continued: Lenses for Making Playable Theatre
- Coney workshop: play through their show The Magic Trick followed by a Q&A
- Fast Familiar workshop: play through their show The Evidence Chamber followed by a Q&A
- Meta Theatre workshop: Topic Driven Game Design
- Eve Leigh workshop: Changing the Rules, practical exercises for thinking about rules in gameplay and performance.
- Chloe Mashiter workshop: Twine for Theatremakers, exploring the popular text-adventure software Twine, which we use both to make digital games and to power interactive shows.
- James Blakey workshop: Playability and Participation, how we can combine co-creation with non-professional performers with playability and interaction.
- Celia Pearce workshop: Play and Agency, how can we give the audience genuine agency in our interactive experience
- Final sharing/presentation of each artists' idea for a playable theatre show to all Participant and Mentor Artists.

This project has been evaluated against our core goals through a combination of: post-programme discussions between the Upstart Theatre team and partner organisations; an anonymous end of programme evaluation survey measuring Participant Artists' experience of the programme; pre and post residency skills surveys measuring the change in Participant Artists' perceptions of their knowledge and skills in Playable Theatre; Equality Diversity and Monitoring forms (completed by Participant Artists); feedback on a Google Jamboard; and internal evaluation meetings between the Upstart Theatre team. The final evaluation was written by Hannah Tookey for Upstart Theatre.



**“ Playable Theatre Lab was an amazing experience that definitely directed us towards new horizons and opportunities in creating new forms of theatre... Absolutely amazing. ”**

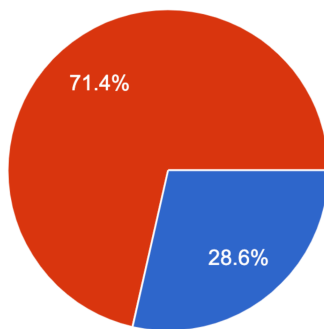
Participant Artist

# The Format of the IPTL

## Financial Provisions and Programme Structure

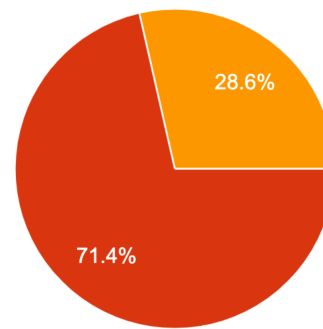
The financial support offered by the programme was:

- More than enough
- Just Right
- Too little



The number of workshop sessions were:

- Too many
- Just right
- Too few



All Participant Artists were paid a fee for taking part in the IPTL. For Artists based in North Macedonia this was 68750 Macedonian dollars (approx £1000), and for Artists based in Mexico this was 8000 pesos (approx £300). This fee was designed to cover artists' full time participation in the lab over two weeks, and was set according to the average local fees for artists in each respective country. There was a consensus that the fee offered was sufficient to cover artists' time on the programme, and it was largely agreed by 71.4% (5) artists that the number of sessions (10 over two weeks) was a good structure.

Generally, Participant Artists felt that the format of the IPTL was the right fit, with one Artist describing it as "**perfect**". In particular, it was felt by many Participant Artists that this structure worked best because it gave artists "*time to **reflect and implement the knowledge** into our ideas*". Others commented that three hours was the right duration for online sessions, as there is a natural limit to how long you can focus on Zoom for.

Another suggested that whilst this format was "**really good**", holding workshops over three weeks instead of two, and thus allowing for a break every second day, would have been preferable. Another wondered if holding one session per week over 10 weeks would be more effective.

One Artist wanted more time, particularly to allow "*more discussions with our peers on our own work*". This was echoed by others who suggested that they would like to have more time with the cohort after the sharing, with regular check-in sessions to follow the development of each other's work.

Working in a digital space from our homes also came with benefits. It allowed many of the activities used in the IPTL (for example challenges to create a story using an object) to become more personal, as we were all surrounded by personal items in our homes. This allowed everyone to bring more of ourselves to the IPTL than perhaps we would have been

able to do in an in-person space. As a result, this led to a stronger sense of community earlier on.

*“Grateful to you all for your **openness to new ideas** and to each other, your generosity. **We feel very together** despite the distance”.*

*“I love the fact that even at the distance, I feel as though I have **made new friends**.”*

Working in a digital space also meant that tasks inevitably become more solo, which meant that there was often more space for personal reflection on the process.

One Artist told us that *“despite the fact that I am not completely in favour of working virtually, I was surprised by **how well the sessions flowed** as the days went by”.*

However, not everyone found it easy to stay focussed when working online. One Artist spoke of the limitations of Zoom, and said they were *“faced with several noise distractions”* and sometimes *“bad connections”* which made it difficult to concentrate. Another recognised that they **may have focussed better if the IPTL had taken place in person** as *“working from home gives you time to do other works, but that takes away your time from working in iptl.”* And another found balancing their job and working independently during the IPTL *“complicated”*.

This suggests to us that it may have been easier for artists to treat the IPTL as an exclusive residency period, and in turn that artists may have made more progress in developing their independent ideas, if we had worked in a physical space, where other commitments such as families, children and/or work can't infringe on dedicated IPTL time so easily.

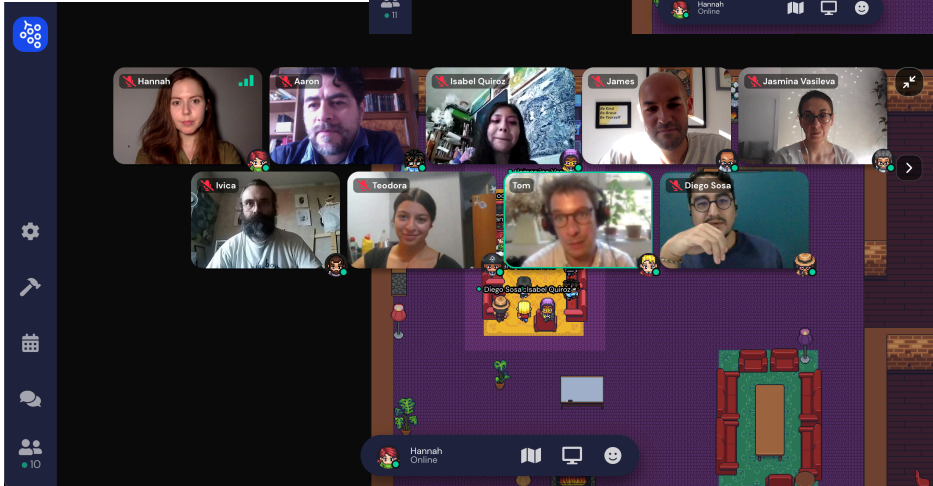
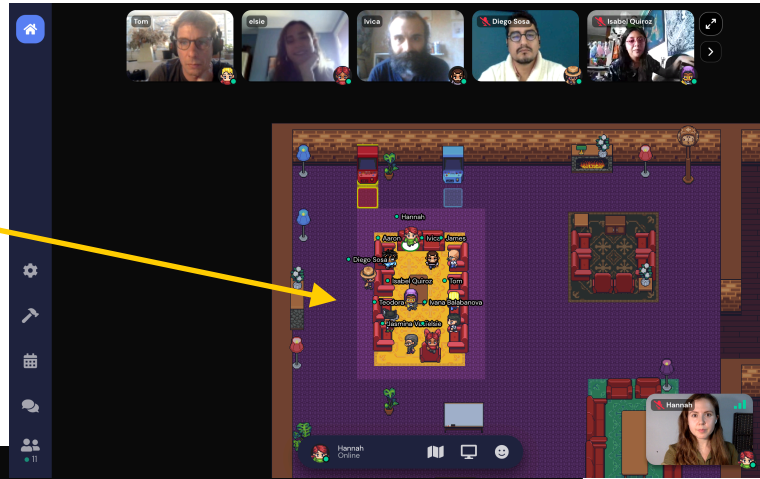
Furthermore, numerous artists provided feedback via both the survey and the Google Jamboard that demonstrates that they would **really like to see in-person elements** to the IPTL.

In addition, in some instances such as the final sharing, the Upstart team also felt that we would get a better, and more practical sense of each other's work if we were able to experience it in person. Some sharings worked really well in a presentation format, and others could have benefited from playing through the idea. In future, this could be aided either by holding some in-person residency elements, or perhaps by exploring more flexible or creative ways to enable artists to share their ideas digitally e.g. through a fund to cover production costs such as hiring actors.

## Digital Tools

We used four key digital tools to deliver the IPTL. The first was **Gather.Town**, an online platform that users move around using an avatar and which allows for video-conferencing between users. This was our hub for the residency, which we joined at the start of every session. It was also available for artists to drop into at any point during the residency if they wanted an online space to connect with others. Some workshops were run on Gather.Town, and others over **Zoom**. The Upstart Lab on Gather can be accessed [here](#).

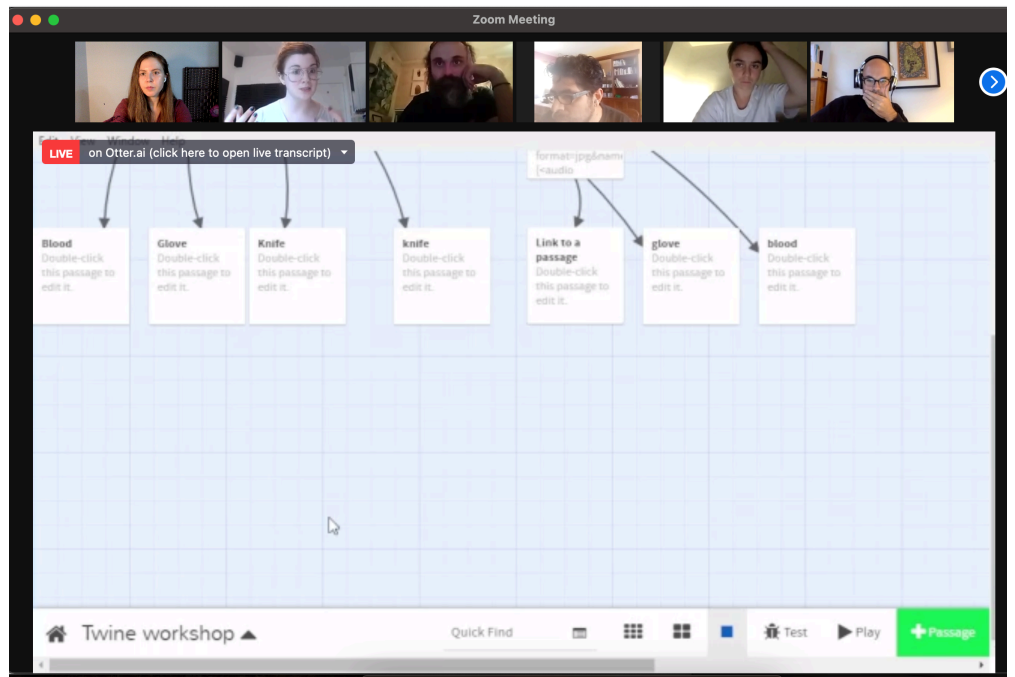
Gather was used to convene the start of each training session, and some workshops took place entirely in this online hub.



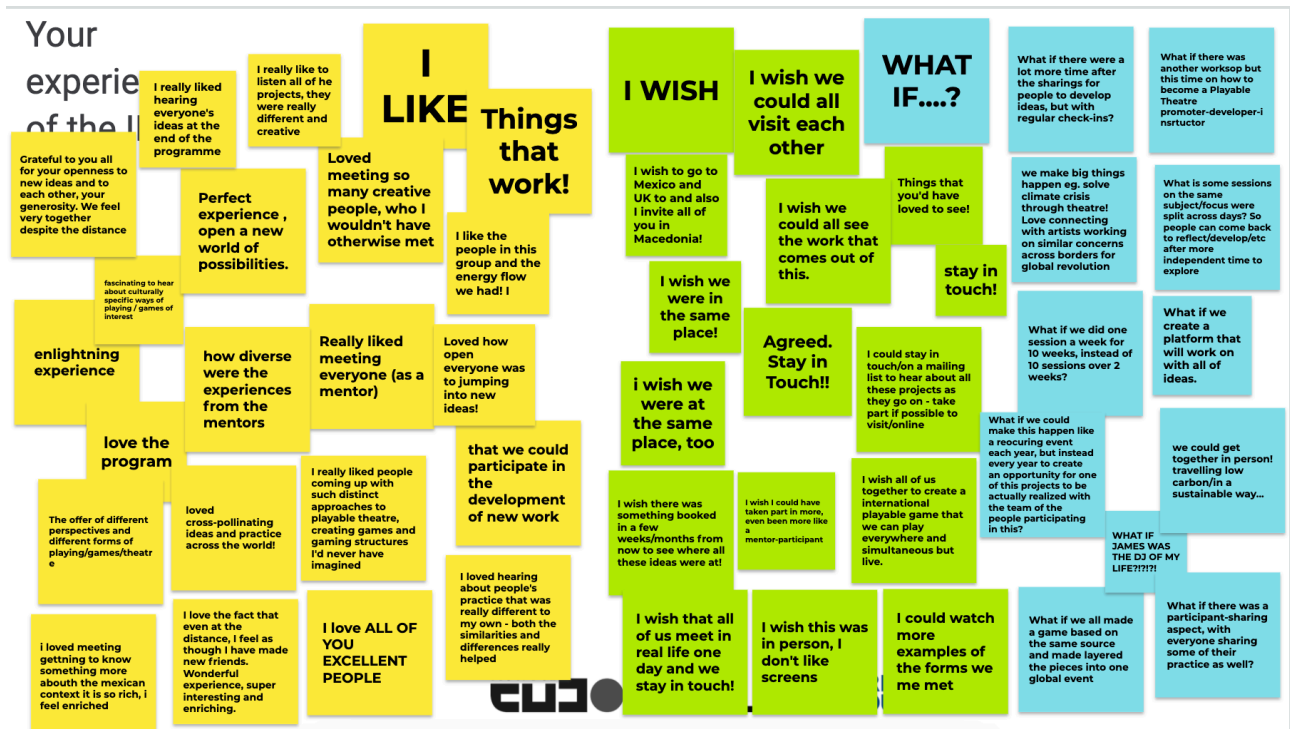
Users can expand the view to see more up to 9 people at a time, and they can use the white arrow on the right to scroll through if there are more than 9 people in the conversation



Other sessions, such as the Twine for Theatre-makers session (pictured right), took place on Zoom.



**Google Jamboard** was used to gather feedback during the final sharing, with each Artist presenting being allocated a dedicated slide for others to add their feedback onto. We used the model 'I Like, I Wish, What if...?' to structure feedback on artists' ideas for Playable Theatre shows. We also used this to capture thoughts from Artist Mentors and Participant Artists on the IPTL itself, which you can see here:

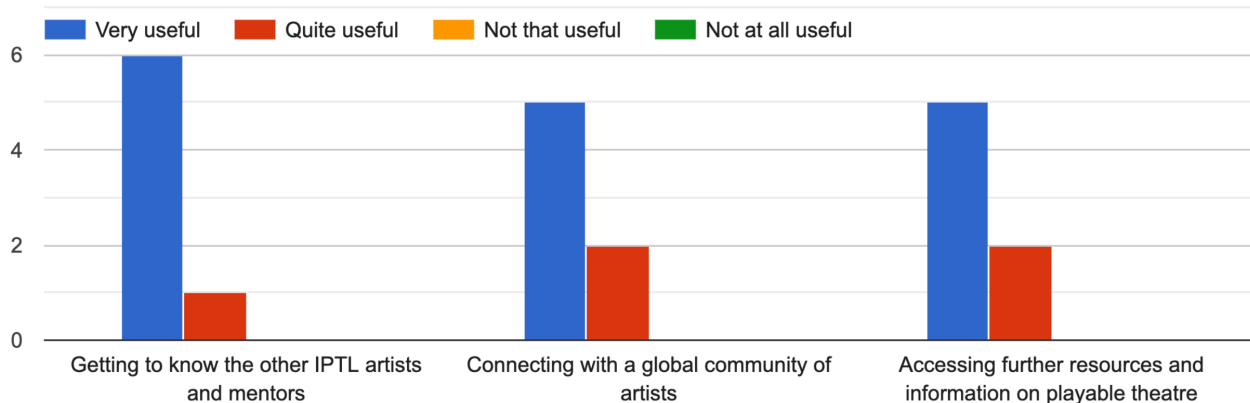


For the launch of the IPTL, Upstart Theatre created The UN (The Upstart Network) - an international network that aims to connect and inspire existing and new Playable Theatre makers. At this stage, it exists as a digital network using the software Discord, however, we plan to extend this to in person opportunities at a later stage.

Launching the platform just before the IPTL kicked off gave us a sense of a **'ceremony of arrival'** as we saw Artist Mentors and Participant Artists entering the space and introducing themselves one by one. We also expanded The UN to our wider networks, helping to build connections between them and IPTL artists.

The use of two digital spaces (Gather.town and Discord) during the IPTL served to **create a real-time environment where artists could meet and share at any time of day**, using text, video chat or voice channels. This allowed an ongoing connection throughout the residency, with artists sharing blog posts and reflections on the lab content outside of the workshop sessions.

Please tell us how you found the digital space on Discord for:



As we launched The UN just before the IPTL began, the above feedback is both encouraging and, we think, an accurate reflection of the ability and potential of the platform at this early stage to achieve its aims. We're really pleased to see that the majority of Artists found it very useful for connecting with both members of the IPTL and the wider Playable Theatre community, and hope that this will only increase as the platform's membership grows. We'll continue to share resources and information via The UN to inspire and inform artists about new developments in Playable Theatre.

Further comments from Artists confirmed that the platforms were easy to engage with, however one Artist expressed that they would prefer the Gather platform to be further developed in future. This echoes the Upstart team's thoughts; as we are also eager to see Gather build in greater functionality for mobiles and tablets, as it doesn't yet allow access to the full range of features on these devices.

*"IT WAS **AMAZING!** I cannot believe that I didn't know about these things before. I **loved them**, especially Gather and the sticky board".*

*"**Easy and very useful**"*

*"I **really like it**, especially with Gather and Discord, because I didn't had [sic] any experience of this platforms, and I was **easy to engage with.**"*

*"**Amazing** platforms"*

*"It took me at least one session to understand how Gather and Discord work. I **thank the Lab for guiding us** through them."*

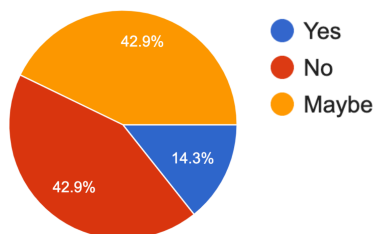
*"**Perfect! I loved** Gather!"*

**“ I can say that all the programme and the mentors were all excellent and really enjoyed the balance of playing games and having fun and learning at the same time. Truly great experience! ”**

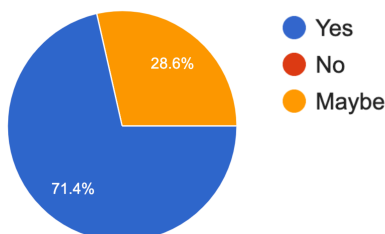
Participant Artist

# Development of Participant Artists' Own Playable Theatre Shows

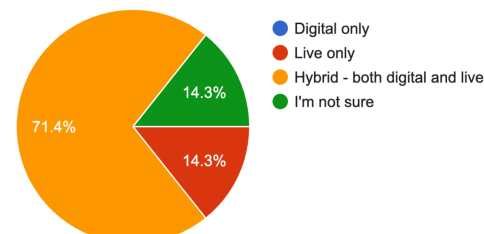
Would you be developing your show as a playable show if you hadn't been selected for the IPTL?



Do you intend for your show to be/ remain a playable show in the future?



Do you intend to make your show as a digital version in the future, in a live format, or both?



All Participant Artists were paid a fee to spend the full two weeks of the IPTL attending workshops and independently developing their own idea for a Playable Theatre show in their remaining time. We wanted to find out what their experience and process of doing this was.

Responses to our survey suggest that this residency programme was instrumental in encouraging Participant Artists to develop new work in the Playable Theatre genre. We're pleased to see that five of the artists are planning to continue developing their idea as a Playable Theatre show, with a further two considering whether this is the right direction. As the Participant Artists came to the IPTL with no prior experience of creating Playable Theatre, it is natural that some may now be unsure whether that will still be the right fit for the specific idea they applied with.

One Artist told us that their independent time was valuable as *"every workshop inspired me to bring something new into my show"* and having this time allowed them to further investigate these ideas. Others echoed this, stating that they found the time useful to reflect on the previous workshop and explore ways that they could apply those ideas to their own show. They typically spent this time researching their idea and collecting relevant references to the themes and style of their intended show, including watching examples of playable theatre online, further investigating the platforms introduced in the workshops such as Twine and reading books on Playable Theatre. It's clear from responses that **having this independent time was especially important for Artists when learning about a new genre**; it allowed them to absorb the material at their own pace, and also suited the independent style of learning and creating that it seems is favoured by many of the IPTL Artists.

None of the Participant Artists yet have concrete plans for the next stage of their projects, but all cited seeking funding as a critical next step, in addition to undertaking further research and development on their show. Most are hoping to bring their work in front of a live audience (whether online or offline) in the future. To support this, we've already planned the next stage of the project which will see Participant Artists receive full commissions to develop their show, whilst the partner organisations develop and run a series of Playable Theatre festivals that share work with audiences in-person locally, and online. We're currently seeking funding.



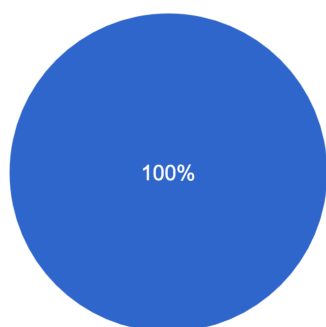
# Quality of the IPTL Training Sessions & Creative Support

Our evaluation asked artists to rate each of the eight workshops delivered during the IPTL, with space to provide additional comments. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive for all of the workshops. Selected comments have been included below, and full feedback from each workshop session has been passed onto the workshop leaders.

Artists were asked to rate each workshop using the same scale, ranging from excellent to very poor.

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor
- Didn't attend

## Making Playable Theatre



*"It was **amazing** and **great initiative**. We need this!"*

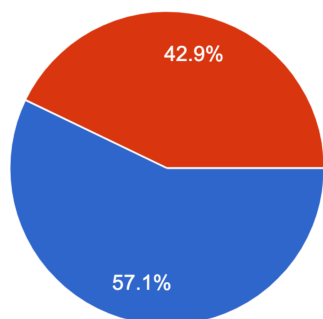
*"**Awesome**. Really big experience for me."*

*"Everything was just **perfect**."*

*"I found the information very **clear and accurate**. I would have liked to investigate in more depth, but it also seems to me that the basis of the upcoming sessions were established."*

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## The Magic Trick



*"It was **great work** for your imagination"*

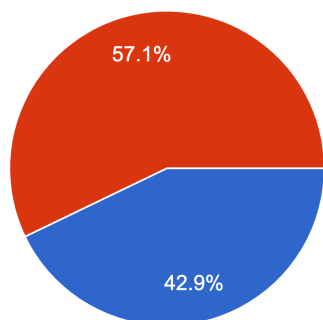
*"pure deep simplicity **full of commitment** and **excellent** games and ideas."*

*"It was **really satisfying**. I was surprised how we were able to take a trip together being so far apart... it changed my day"*

*"I wish I could have seen this show live. Something **gets lost** while **online**"*

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## The Evidence Chamber



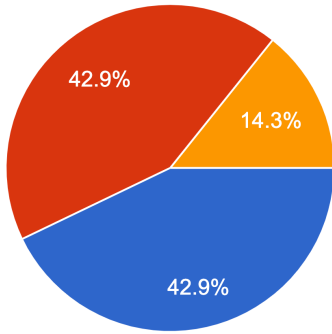
*"**Keeps you engaged** all the time"*

*"It just became a little hard as a non-native English speaker to follow some of the information... but it was **amazing! Bravo!**"*

*"Just **amazing**. I have no more words. I think it is one of the **clearest examples of the weight of the audience** in this type of theatre."*

*"Just **perfect!**"*

## Topic Driven Game Design



*"It was a **revelation** on how good playable theatre can look"*

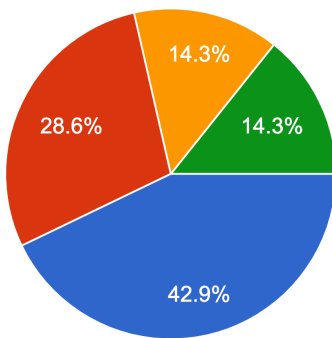
*"I **loved her approach** to help us find ways to work with controversial topics... **Great workshop**"*

*"It makes **very clear the impact that this type of theatre can have on the audience** and, above all, its characteristic of axis of change"*

*"**Excellent!**"*

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## Changing the Rules



*"I **really enjoyed** [the workshop]"*

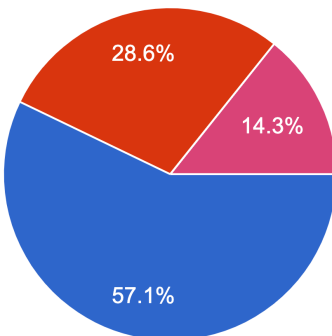
*"Changing the rules **changed the game for me** even in everyday life."*

*"It was **very good**, to understand flexibility when creating rules helps make the show more enjoyable"*

*"**Perfect!**"*

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## Twine for Theatremakers



*"**Very useful tool**"*

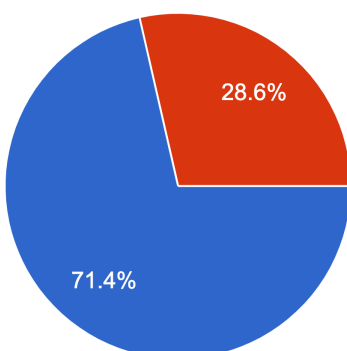
*"I loved that it **took me out of my comfort zone**... I am still reflecting on its uses... looking forward to experiment on it"*

*"I **would have liked more sessions working on Twine**, [it's] a tool that can be used a lot and I would have liked to know more ways and possibilities, but [this] was a **good starting point**."*

*"It's such a complex tool that I **would have loved to have a bit more time**"*

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## Playability and Participation



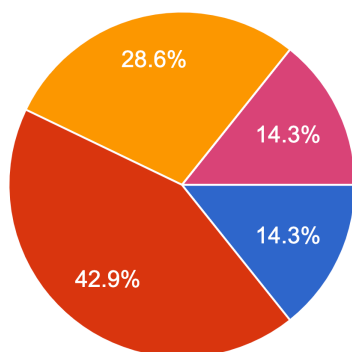
*"It was **very interesting** to see how everyone cooperated to build the narrative around the suggested photo"*

*"a **great teacher**"*

*"the 8 points shared as a methodology were **invaluable!** And to understand how important, clarifying and deep defining gesture is, **will definitely help me on my future work**... **amazing job**"*

*"**Fantastic session.**"*

## Play and Agency



*"an untraditional lecturer, which I really liked"*

*"I loved the practical side."*

*"I would have liked more time to be able to observe more carefully the information... especially because [the] references were [new]"*

*"There were so many topics to discuss and we hardly covered them. I would suggest a better structure and perhaps a little more hands on activities."*

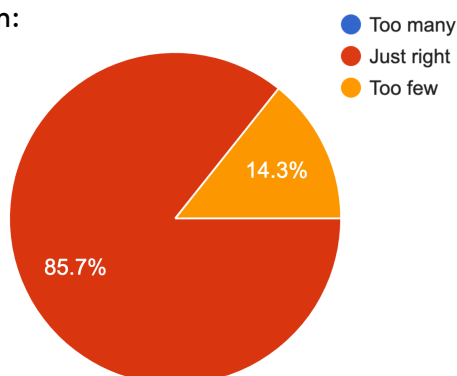
The workshop sessions were curated to provide Participant Artists with a broad, foundational understanding of Playable Theatre. They covered practical tools (such as Twine), important concepts such as the lenses of Playable Theatre and how to structure story, and also looked at how to embed co-creation methodologies into a playable work. They covered a broad range of perspectives, with Mentor Artists' works taking different approaches. The IPTL didn't dictate any one 'right way' to make Playable Theatre, but instead sought to inspire Participant Artists with a range of ideas. Sessions took different formats, with some including play-throughs of existing Playable Theatre shows followed by a discussion, some teaching through practical exercises and games, and others featuring more discussion-led activities.

The feedback above shows us that the quality of workshop leaders and topics was high and has served to inspire, inform and entertain the Participant Artists. One artist told us that *"the workshops enlightened"* them, whilst another confirmed that *"all the programme, and the mentors were all excellent and really enjoyed the balance of playing games and having fun and learning at the same time. Truly great experience!"*

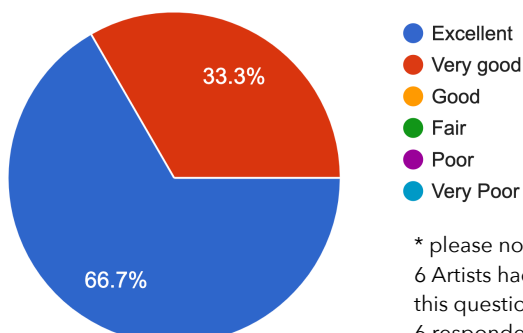
## 1-2-1 with Upstart Theatre team

All Artists were offered a creative 1-2-1 session with Upstart Theatre's Artistic Director Tom Mansfield during the IPTL to discuss their general development as Playable Theatre artists as well as their proposal for a Playable Theatre show. Feedback from these sessions was positive, however one artist felt that they would have liked more sessions. In future, we'll make sure it's clear to Artists that they can request additional sessions if necessary, so that everyone feels they've received the right amount of 1-2-1 support.

Was the number of creative 1-2-1 sessions you had with the Upstart Team:



If you had additional 1-2-1 creative sessions, please rate the quality of the feedback/support you were given in those sessions:



\* please note that only 6 Artists had 1-2-1s so this question had only 6 respondents

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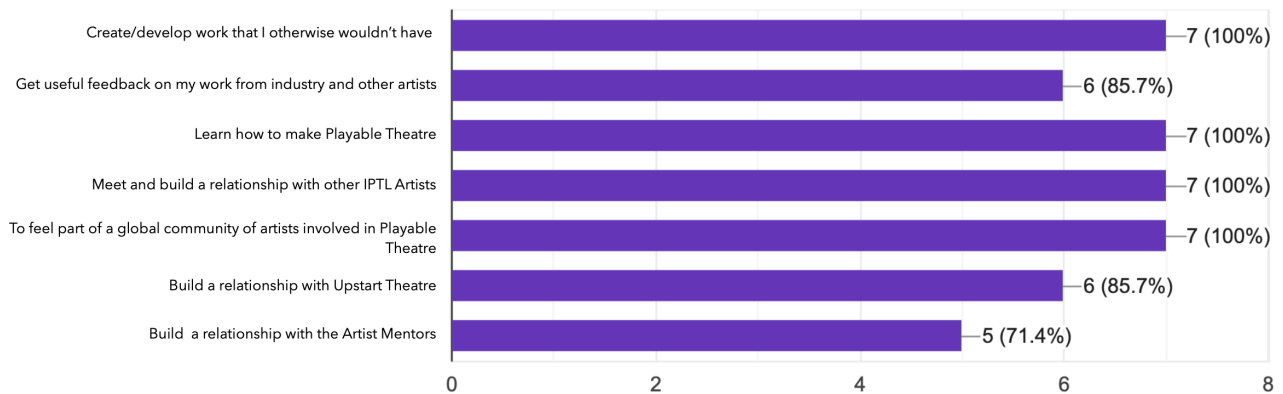
***The truth is that I was very nervous because I did not have much knowledge of the world of the Playable Theatre, I had an idea of what it could be, but as the sessions went by, the possibilities opened and it was really much more than I imagined experiencing. It is a truly complex world that far exceeded all the ideas I imagined having of it.”***

”

Participant Artist

# Beneficiaries and Impact of the IPTL

Please select all that apply. Taking part in the IPTL has enabled me to:

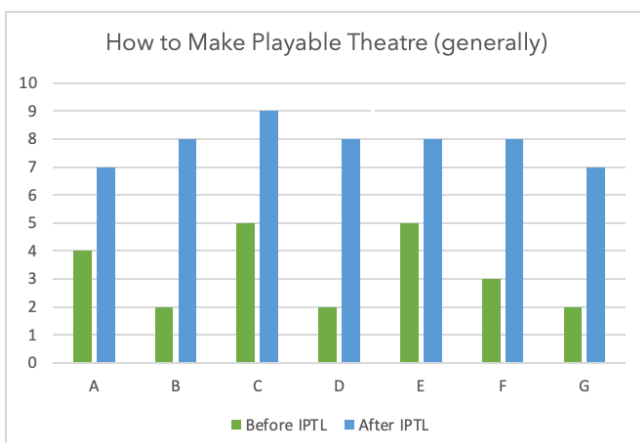


The above responses demonstrate that the IPTL has been instrumental in enabling all seven Participant Artists to learn how to make Playable Theatre and to develop new work. The intensive nature of the programme, coupled with the digital platform are a likely reason why they also feel they have built a relationship with each other, and why they now feel part of a global artistic community.

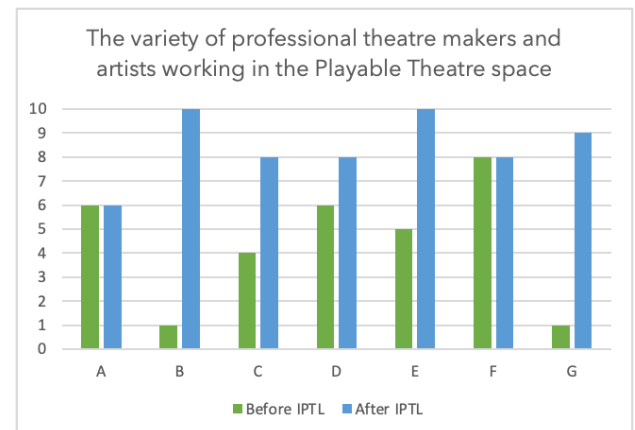
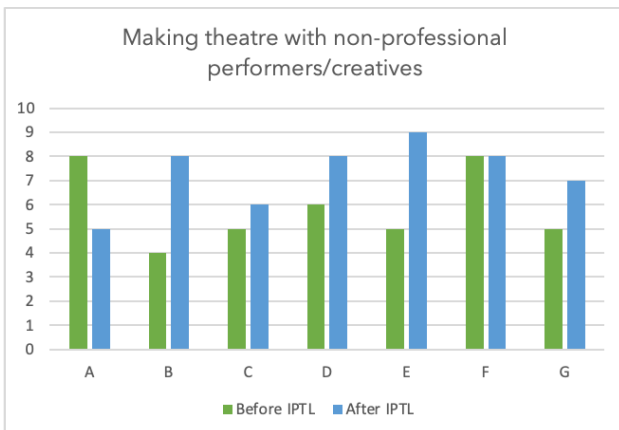
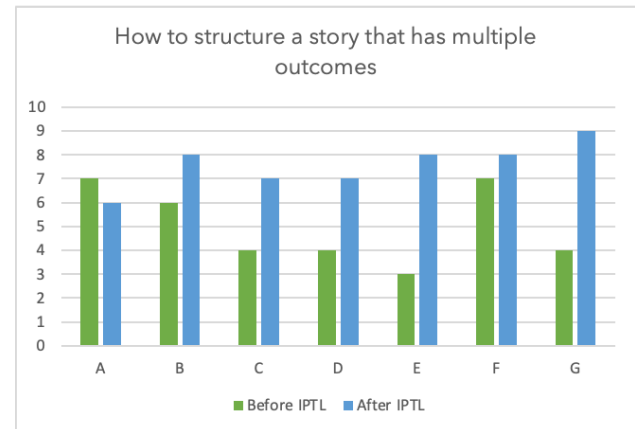
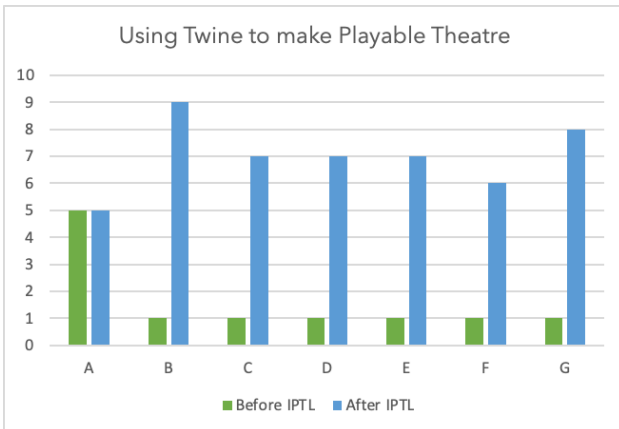
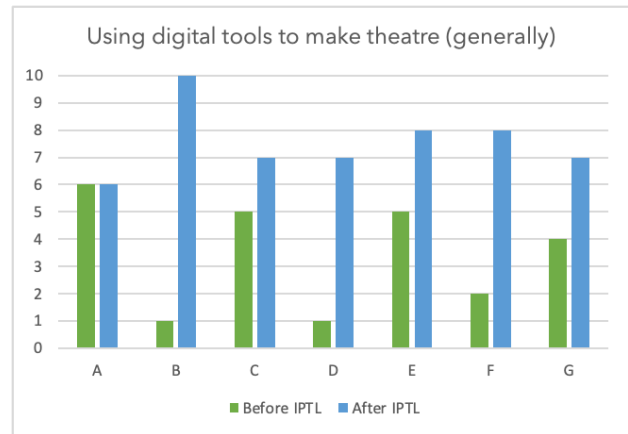
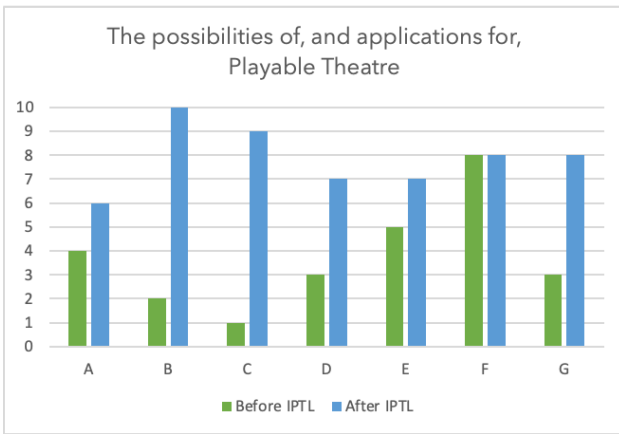
However, the responses also show that there is room to increase opportunities for artists to build a relationship with both Upstart Theatre and the Artist Mentors, and perhaps this could be achieved by providing additional 1-2-1 mentoring and support sessions. Furthermore, there is room to increase opportunities to receive feedback on their work. This chimes with the earlier suggestions that some in-person elements of the programme may enable everyone to get a stronger sense of each others' work.

## Progression and development of Participant Artists' Playable Theatre skills

As stated in the introduction to this report, all Participant Artists filled out two identical surveys to assess their perception of their skills in Playable Theatre, with one being completed shortly before the residency began, and the other at the end. The surveys asked them to rate their current knowledge and skill level in seven topics on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 is the highest level of knowledge and 1 is where they know nothing). Artist names have been replaced with letters in the following graphs. Each letter corresponds to the same artist, e.g. A represents the same artist in each of the seven graphs.



*"All of this about Playable Theater was new for me , but through this Lab I **build up my knowledge** about it. I **feel now more confident** in terms of how to make it and how to think gamingly. "*



As will be evident above, there was generally an **upwards progression** in most skills for most Participant Artists. This was most notable in the use of the interactive storytelling software Twine, which all but one artist had no prior experience of.

Artist A however, showed a downward or stable rating post-IPTL for 5 out of 7 skills, which would imply that they feel they have the same or less ability after two weeks of learning about these topics than when they began. This Artist had prior experience using Twine, and the workshop was geared at an introductory level, so it is understandable that their ability in this area may remain stable. However, their downwards progression for 'making theatre with non-professional performers/creatives' and 'how to structure a story that has multiple outcomes' make little sense and in addition, doesn't match this artist's verbal and written feedback. This Artist commented that the *"Playable Theatre Lab was an **amazing experience** that definitely **directed us towards new horizons and opportunities** in creating new forms of theatre. I definitely received knowledge in how game mechanics work and what to focus on in creation. I*

*have definitely grown* in areas in terms of possible outcomes, twists and game changes, how to reimagine theatre and how to include the audience in it. I loved all the teachers and they've really added value to the whole thing. **Absolutely amazing.** I've also found out about many new tools that I could use in my work such as: Twine, Stickynotes board, Gather, Discord, which is a great discovery."

This was the first time that all of the Participant Artists had learnt about Playable Theatre, so we can perhaps surmise that Artist E may have overestimated their abilities pre-residency, and that after learning more about the genre, they are more accurately able to measure their skills and knowledge post-IPTL.

Participant Artists also reflected on how they felt they had developed during the programme, with many referencing a growth in skills, knowledge, confidence, understanding and inspiration. Many expressed surprise at the new perspectives and ideas they had encountered.

*"Considering I started on 0, I really appreciate the opportunity brought by Upstart Theatre, I found it **refreshing, enjoyable** and socially committed. **Awesome Lab!** Thank you very much!"*

*"Given the fact that before the residency started, i didn't had any experience or knowledge of playable theatre. I can with confident say that this workshops proved us with lot of knowledge about different areas and how we can develop our own ideas. Changing the rules, how to make theatre with the community, non-professionals, how to structure, the stages that includes making the story, **all of this help me understand and dive deeper** into how to make playable theatre."*

*"I have a **better understanding** on how to think about the structure of a game and to foresee the outcomes of the decisions I make while devising a game."*

*"Mainly, I [am] reminded that **we all have the ability to play** and that it is **a means of basic human interaction**. From the laboratory, I can see that the interaction can take place in different ways and through different channels and that they are not limited only to the face-to-face. In my experience, **I feel safer when proposing shows** where interaction with the audience is essential, because I now consider that I have greater perspectives for doing it."*

*"Because I had no idea what we were going to face. The truth is that I was very nervous because I did not have much knowledge of the world of the Playable Theatre, I had an idea of what it could be, but as the sessions went by, **the possibilities opened** and it was **really much more than I imaged experiencing**. It is a truly complex world that **far exceeded** all the ideas I imagined having of it."*

*"It **took me to a perspective I didn't imagine** to work with audiences and non-professional participants and I am looking forward to create new aesthetically experiences"*

*"I **really enjoyed** the session and activities that we did. I am grateful to have been a part of it... I am still assimilating much of the information and still analysing the path that each activity took us. I am very curious to continue investigating shows of this type and I know that surely everything I have learned will be reflected in mine."*

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring

Upstart Theatre is taking the 2021-22 financial year to monitor the demographics of the artists, partners, participants and audiences that we engage with our work. This marks the start of our efforts to formally monitor the diversity of our network, and gathering statistics in this first year will set the basis for our future EDI targets. As such, we don't yet have targets to measure the diversity of the IPTL against, but we are striving to make our work as inclusive and accessible as possible. In the call out for Participant Artists, we strongly encouraged artists from underrepresented backgrounds to apply.

The Participant Artists' demographics can be seen in the graphs below. It is notable though that there were no Participant Artists with disabilities in the cohort, despite one artist identifying as disabled applying to the programme, and a further two applicants who did not identify as disabled but said that their activities were limited by health conditions. Unlike with other Upstart Theatre artist development programmes such as DARE Festival, the IPTL did not reserve places on the cohort for artists from specific backgrounds. We will reflect on whether it is necessary to do so in future. This may also have been impacted by working with a limited budget which meant that it was not possible to offer access support to artists at the time of the call out. It is possible that with this in place, we may have received a higher number and greater quality of applications from disabled artists to the IPTL, and we will include this in future budgets.

As the Playable Theatre genre gains greater awareness and support in Mexico and North Macedonia, as well as globally, we are confident that in future we will see a greater diversity of applicants and Participant Artists engaging with opportunities to learn about Playable Theatre.

Gender Identity	
Female	50%
Male	50%

Gender Identity different to the sex assigned at birth	
Yes	16.7%
No	83.3%

Sexuality	
Heterosexual	83.3%
Open	16.7%

Social Class (self-identified)	
Middle	83.3%
Lower Middle Class	16.7%
Working Class	16.7%

Highest level of qualification	
Post-graduate qualification (e.g. Masters, PhD)	16.7%
Undergraduate degree	83.3%

Ethnicity	
Hispanic	16.7%
Latin American	16.7%
Zapotec/mixed	16.7%
Macedonian	33.3%

Caring responsibilities	
Primary carer of a child/ children (under 18)	16.7%
Primary carer of an older person	16.7%
None	66.7%

Disability	
Day to day activities limited a lot	0%
Day to day activities limited a little	0%
No disability	100%

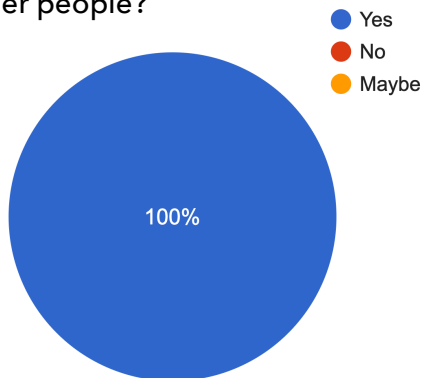


**“ Not only did I got a  
wonderful enriching  
experience but I got to meet  
amazing people. ”**

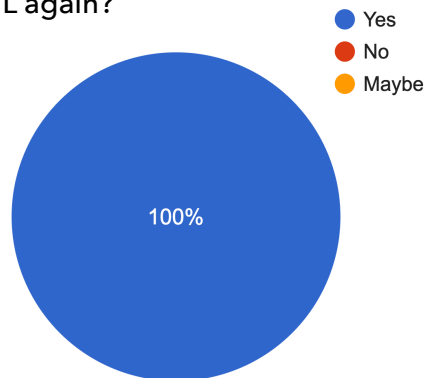
Participant Artist

# General IPTL Feedback and Outcomes

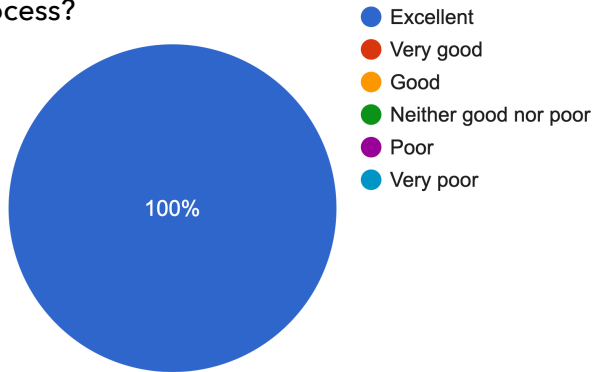
Would you recommend the IPTL to other people?



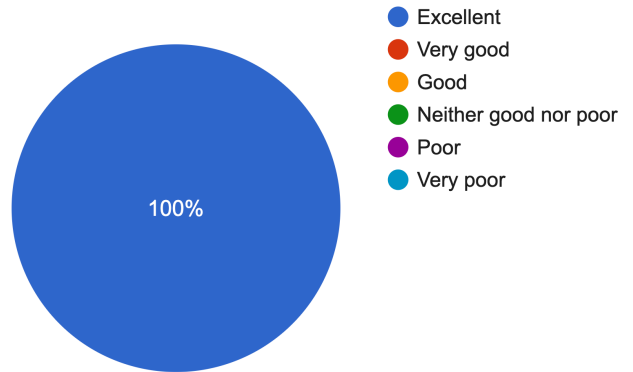
Would you consider applying for the IPTL again?



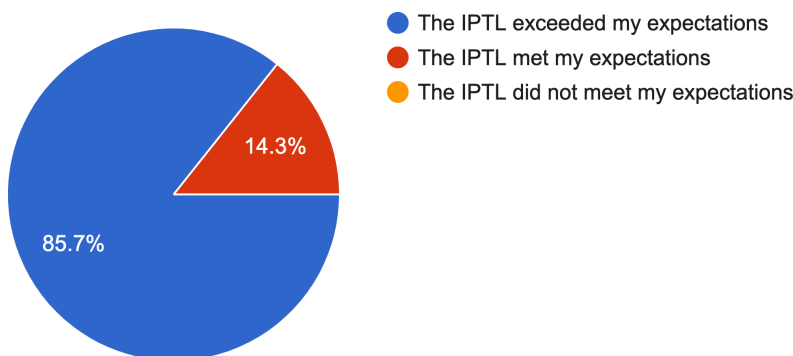
How would you rate the communication from Upstart Theatre throughout this process?



How would you rate your experience of the IPTL overall?



How did your experience of the IPTL compare to your expectations for it?



We were thrilled to see that the Participant Artists rated their experience of the IPTL so highly, with all artists indicating that they would recommend it to others, and take part in the programme again. Ratings for their overall experience of the IPTL, as well as Upstart’s communication with artists as ‘excellent’ is a testament to the design and planning of the project by both the Upstart Theatre team and the partner organisations Teatro al Cubo and MI Film.

From responses, it is clear that a prior lack of knowledge of the Playable Theatre genre meant that Artists were less sure of what they would encounter on the programme, and this will naturally have altered their expectations of the IPTL. However, we're pleased to see that this has resulted in a positive experience, including a "**wonderful enriching experience**" for one artist who felt they had met "**amazing people**".

*"I didn't expect for such a **good planning and organisation**, I didn't expect so many external teachers and also such a **quality** imagined structure of work. Bravo!"*

## **New words to describe Playable Theatre**

At the start of the IPTL, no word or phrase to describe playable theatre existed in Spanish or Macedonian. However, the participant artists worked together to create a word in their native language to describe playable theatre. This resulted in:

In Spanish: "**Jugueteatro y Juegateatro**" which translates loosely as play theatre and toy theatre. The combination of words creates a warm phrase, as if inviting someone to play.  
In Macedonian: **Игрив Театар (Igriv Teatar)**.

The moment of sharing these phrases felt like the real beginning of this art form in Mexico and North Macedonia.

To our knowledge, this is the first international artist development programme dedicated to Playable Theatre, and in particular, this was the first formal introduction of playable theatre to artists in Mexico and North Macedonia. This marks an innovation in theatre in each of these countries, with 6 artists now equipped with skills and knowledge to begin making work in the Playable Theatre genre. We hope that this project will have a long legacy in each of these countries, with Playable Theatre becoming an established genre in future years.

## **Impact on Upstart Theatre**

Bringing a new group of artists together and seeing their progression was also particularly satisfying for Upstart Theatre, especially as most artists started from a place of knowing very little about playable theatre and all progressed to a point of presenting their own ideas for Playable Theatre shows at the end.

This project was the first time that Upstart Theatre's core team of three - including our Artistic Director, Producer and Associate Director - have been able to spend a considerable period of time focussed on the same objectives, with space and time for planning and reflection. This was also the first time that our Producer has been able to be in a creative room for two weeks. This collective focus on learning about Playable Theatre has helped our team develop a shared creative language, which is really important when working in an emerging field. It's also helped us see where we are individually and collectively aligned.

Further to this, the IPTL has given Upstart Theatre the capacity to create a new Director of Co-Creation role in the company (formerly an ad-hoc Associate Director role) - a post which will focus on developing projects that allow non-professionals to co-create excellent Playable Theatre work with professional artists.

By working with 8 exceptional Artist Mentors during the IPTL, we've also greatly expanded our pool of artists who we can call upon to support future editions of the IPTL, DARE Festival and Upstart's ongoing workshop programme run through The UN. The IPTL grew our ability to bring diverse voices and perspectives into the Playable Theatre space. It also increased our capacity to offer support to artists in the future, and we'll be able to call on this network to offer a wider range of development opportunities to a greater number of artists.

The IPTL was a fantastic opportunity for Upstart Theatre to learn from others, and it created a space in which we could open ourselves to learning from other practitioners, as well as sharing our own knowledge. As a result, we've developed a greater understanding of the cultural specificities and conditions of making theatre in Mexico and North Macedonia, including understanding why certain activities and games resonate more with different artists.

## Final Thoughts & Changes to Future IPTLs

As with all of Upstart Theatre's projects, we have taken considerable time to reflect on the feedback provided to us by artists, and will be making changes to our international artist development work in the future. As a result of this evaluation process, our key outcomes and actions going forward include the following:

- **To build upon our use of both Gather and Discord.** We are continuing to develop The UN community, connecting artists around the globe via this digital platform to meet, share ideas and find inspiration. The IPTL artists will remain a member of The UN for life and will thereby have an immediate connection to future IPTL artists, and others working in this genre.
- **To review our progress on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** and to include access support in our budgets to encourage more applications from artists with disabilities or health conditions.
- **To embrace a hybrid model of online and offline work.** Working exclusively in the digital space comes with some obvious benefits, including fewer demands on finances and time, and reduced environmental impact. However, the inclusion of in-person activities was the most widely suggested change to the programme. In the future, we will continue to run residency and artist development programmes both online and offline. The model we're most likely to pursue will include localised in-person and online international activity.
- **To continue introducing Playable Theatre to new artists and in new locations.** Playable Theatre is an emerging genre with huge potential for genuine, satisfying audience agency. It has potential to be utilised in participatory arts, and by theatremakers who tackle socio-political issues, as the genre ensures audiences engage directly with the themes of the work. Beyond this, there are opportunities for its use in wider society by academics, researchers & the social sector, and Upstart Theatre aims to continue supporting artists' development in this genre.
- **To continue offering opportunities to artists from a wide variety of creative backgrounds (not just theatre), to encourage the cross-pollination of ideas from different art forms.** Two of the selected artists for the IPTL were primarily dance artists, and we were struck by their ability to innovate within the medium of Playable Theatre. It's perhaps because of their different artistic focus that they were able to bring new ideas to the lab and approach offers from the Artist Mentors differently to others, which led to particularly striking final ideas.
- **To secure funding to commission the full production of the project ideas developed by artists on the IPTL, which will be presented in online and offline international festivals of playable theatre, taking place simultaneously in the UK, Mexico and North Macedonia.** This project has also served to strengthen relationships between partners Upstart Theatre, Teatro al Cubo and MI Film and we are in the process of planning the next stage of our Playable Theatre artist development work together. We hope this will see us commission the IPTL artists to realise their ideas, and allow them to introduce Playable Theatre to their local audiences.

