THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 5 – Episode 5

Acting Up with Kit Phillips

Ashley: Hello and welcome back to the Resilient Kid podcast. I am joined today by Kit Phillips, who is the founder of First Acts Arts. Now, Kit has a very special place in my family, he is not part of the family and his face will be like, oh, what? I'm quite surprised, but all will be revealed. Now, just the top of this, I want to say, the reason that we're kind of inviting all these different guests at the moment is because, you know, I bang on about resilience all the time, and actually, extracurricular stuff, particularly in summer, is really good to try something new, to just give it a go, encourage the kids, and that's, you know, that can be you, and it can also be your kids.

But yeah, just to try something new in the, you know, you know, there's lots and lots of benefits for trying. So Kit is an amazing actor, a fabulous director, and he's also the founder of First Act Arts. So Kit, welcome to the Resilient Kid podcast this morning.

Kit: Thank you for having me. Pleasure to be here.

Ashley: Tell us a little bit about, first of all yourself, and then also how did you get into acting and things like that.

Kit: So, as you said, my name's Kit, I'm the founder of First Act Arts. I've come from a teaching background originally, so I was trained and worked for about eight years as a primary school teacher. Theatre had always been part of my life as a child and kind of as an adult as well in amateur theatre circle. So there was a couple of experiences that I had as a teacher that then led me kind of down the path of youth theatre and developing theatrical opportunities for young people, which is where First Act Arts was born.

I got into it, from a very young age. There wasn't quite the youth theatre scene that there is now when I was young and growing up in Warrington, but there were a couple of, you know, old adult, church, societies that I kind of got, went into just as like, you know, I was probably the youngest member by about 30 years, but I kind of jumped into there and kind of developed a love for being on stage and performing.

And, that kind of just stayed with me through life. I was never something I kind of wanted to pursue as a job. It was something that was always very kind of like therapeutic for myself and just something I did to kind of express myself. but then when I started working with young people in schools and because I had a theatre background, straight away, school plays, nativities, end of year productions, wash, they came straight to me because of that.

And I started to see how. Theatre and performing was having this positive influence on the young people that I was working with. That's kind of what sparked that interest. And, I was really lucky in 2017 that I got the opportunity to kind of, start exploring that fully with first act kind of part-time to start off with. And then, being able to move into kind of, running first act full time.

Ashley: Yeah, I, I bet you. I had absolutely loved it when you joined the school, because I do see that anybody who's kind of got a little bit of a singing voice or, you know, can play guitar or have done a little bit of acting suddenly get this whole production, every production going at their door.

Kit: Absolutely.

Ashley: So I bet they loved you. So I kind of, we met, I'm trying to think how long, Finn has been at Fursats actually, over a year, probably about. Probably 15, 18 months maybe? I should have asked him before we came on.

Kit: Yeah, definitely a couple of years now, isn't it?

Ashley: Yeah, I think so. So he, him and his sister danced for forever.

Like, I think his sister was about three or four, did dancing. We lived abroad and, my hubby's family are Irish and they did Irish dancing in Abu Dhabi. The only grandkid out of like, you know, 10 to do anything remotely Irish and they lived in

Abu Dhabi. And I remember Erin going to the dance class and I'm going to pick her up with Finn in tow, who was kind of You know, two and a half, three.

And the teacher said, Oh Finn, have you ever thought of having a go? And he was like looking at us to go, well, what is this about? And he said, oh, you'll never want for a girlfriend if you can dance. And that was it. Like he always danced after that. Right up until like a couple of years ago. And actually, he'd done a little bit more on stage, and I think Nicola, Dan's mum, was also, Dan was dancing at the same dance school here, over in Northwich.

And she said, you know, does Finn not fancy trying acting? And I said, actually, we'd really love to, but we're not really seeing anywhere around here. And that was our first intro to First Act, and I'll tell you what, we've never looked back. There is times, I'm going to be honest, Kit, on, you know, kind of, Either Sunday evening or Wednesday night when I'm sat in Starbucks for four hours at a chunk, where Finn is at first act again for the, you know, the second or third time that week where I think, oh, what are we doing?

But the benefit for him, like you say, that, that being able to express himself, being able to, have this camaraderie. With, with everybody that's there and everybody's there with a purpose and everybody, you know, is supportive of each other. This is literally off the back of Chorus Line. You've just done Chorus Line at the Brindley, haven't you?

Kit: Yes. Yeah.

Ashley: How many, how long does it take to put on a production? Because this is not just acting class. I mean, first act, you offer almost everything, don't we?

Kit: Yeah, we started off kind of our initial kind of selling point was we are going to be acting and drama lessons, kind of specifically, because that's where my skill set lay.

And then we found over the course of the last seven, eight years that the students that were coming to us. Loved us for our approach, the way that we kind of learning first, kind of a focus to the lessons. It wasn't kind of coming and just playing games for no particular reason. There was a, a real kind of focus on skill development and learning new things.

And we had a lot of students who really, that really resonated with, and from just offering the acting, there was some of the Orwell. Do you do musical theatre as well? Do you do one to ones? Do you do the qualifications? And so it's kind of been built and led by the students. , but yeah, one of the things that we do is we do productions alongside the classes. We have a specific kind of theatre company as well and we put on productions most recently, it's been Chorus Line, and we kind of put six months aside to put a production, which sounds like a long time, but we only really rehearse once a week for between two to four hours. So it's, it's quite intense to do it even in six months.

Ashley: Yeah, and, and you don't shy away either. Like chorus line is quite hard hitting, even though it was the teen version, you know, it's quite hard hitting. There is a character Paul, I think, who stands up and gives this monologue, and actually, I'd seen it twice, which I tend to do, I always tend to, if Finn's in it, I go Opening Night and Closing Night, and I'd already seen it by the time Closing Night came.

So I'd already cried at his monologue and I cried again, and so did all our guests who came with us. You know, it's a real hard hitting, but you've done some really fantastic stuff, haven't you? Like, Scuttlers, Midsummer Night's Dream. Go on, you tell us a little bit about that. Why, why do you pick the plays you do? Because you don't shy away from the hard ones.

Kit: No, no, we've kind of developed a bit of a reputation for, for that specifically. There's kind of an inside joke amongst the children and the staff and the parents who have been with us for a long time that , if there's a first act show and the character doesn't pass away or there's not some sort of gory battle, then, you know, is, are we feeling okay?

Is that a usual first act show? And that's kind of been the way we've always done it. We've either picked plays, well, they're normally hit to specific categories, and it's not just a shock value. We always go for shows that resonate with young people. So, we never want to put on a play. All we try to avoid putting on play is where Students are generally not playing young people.

Again, Chorus Line was probably one of the first exceptions to that because they were playing 20, 30-year-olds. But most of the shows that we do, the students are playing young people or characters that don't really need a specific age, like Wind in the Willows. And we do that because we find that the students resonate with

those characters, the stories that they're telling are normally more relevant to what the young people are experiencing.

And that's the second thing, we pick shows that we think are going to benefit the young people that perform in them. So, Scuttlers is a, which we did in, March, March of this year it was, and Scuttlers is a play about Manchester street gangs, almost Peaky Blinders but with children, and it has some of the worst language that we've seen, it has some very distressing scenes, both on stage and insinuated offstage. And the actors that I'm working with, their characters have these backstories of grief and being abandoned and how those early influences kind of impact how they act within the scenes that we see in the play. And there's so much kind of depth that we have to explore with these young actors, but we, beyond its kind of being an amazing show and being really hard hitting for the audience, what those young actors then leave with is that developed sense of empathy and that understanding of the different things that other people have gone through.

And acting is all about stepping into other people's shoes, and understanding the world from their perspective. And to have those really meaningful conversations about, okay, who is this person? What have they been through? Okay, well how does that then impact how they see the world? Why might they respond to this situation in a certain way, opens up those channels within a young person's mind of understanding why people might behave in certain ways, why they might do certain things, and in turn, hopefully, will help them turn in and reflect upon their own behaviors and how they might respond to the world. And while there is absolutely nothing wrong with, you know, youth drama groups putting on productions that are, you know, very young or very safe, there's a big market for that.

There's lots of opportunities where you can do that, but there's less opportunities where theatre schools and drama clubs are, really exposing those young people to more difficult material and we've done it for a few years now. We started, you know, doing musicals such as Spring Awakening, which if you know the original play was banned for years because of the context and it's all about personal awakening as people move through puberty and Through doing those kind of productions, we've developed safeguarding mechanisms and ways of working with young people and their parents as well, because in Scuttlers we had a little girl who was considerably younger than the rest of the cast, she was only in year six, I think, who was saying some of the worst language, involved in some of the worst scenes,

and having that kind of communication with the parents about how we're going Translate this material to that young person.

We've developed this system of making sure that we're doing it in a safe way. And we do, we get, we get Facebook messages every so often from people telling us that they think it's wrong, what we're doing and why would we put on plays? Cause obviously when we're advertising our plays, they come with trigger warnings and people say, well, why, why are you doing that to young people?

And, I do. Sometimes message back, and I'm saying we're not doing it to young people, we're providing young people with these safe opportunities. And I think until you've seen those plays and, you know, spoken to the people who've been involved in them, I think sometimes it is, from an external point of view, difficult to realize How much they are getting from that, but it is, it's, it's such a unique experience.

And that's something that I hope those young people will remember throughout the course of their life, being involved in something that was no special and challenging and something to them that they think, yeah, I really made an impact on the audience because of the story that I was able to tell.

Ashley: Okay. So that's my job done there. Built resilience completely. I, do you know what is so important? And it is one of the big things for me because, you know, you're not, you're not the closest, theatre group to us. You're not the, you know, by any stretch, but actually what I really loved is that is exactly that.

And, you know, often, we talk about resilience and we talk about building that empathy because a lot of people think, you know, or we can build empathy, but we absolutely can, as we can build resilience. And I think what you're doing is putting them literally in the shoes of those characters where they can feel, they can, you know, they've got the depth of that character.

And, and yeah, it has to be handled carefully. And yes, it has to be explained sometimes, but actually I see. Backstage, you know, so yes, there's a lot of pressure on them when they're on stage and stuff because they've got to get it right. And there's a, there's a standard I think that you guys have that's very high and they all are aware of that.

But actually the camaraderie backstage, they always do something, like, after the, you know, after the last show and stuff. And this time they all did, like, a massive sleepover. And, but just, you know, they come out of that backstage, and they're giving each other a hug, and they're going, I love you, Mae.

And, you know, it's just so lovely, because they all know how each other has worked really, really hard. And they know. Times when they're slacking, you know, when each other is slacking as well, and they kind of call each other out on it. But, but to see them develop in such a way, you know, from that very start, must be amazing Kit, you know, to kind of closing night where they're getting standing ovations.

You know, I don't know what the youngest was in, in chorus line. I know the oldest is 18. And there was a couple of 18-year-olds, weren't they? I mean, there was a couple of 14-year-olds, that's Finn's age. But actually, to, I brought along with me kind of, the owner of Radio Northwich and, the TEDx, in Northwich, the, the licensee, and I, because I, I'd been obviously spouting about how good First Act is and stuff, and they know Finn, and they were like, oh, we'll come, we'll come and see it.

They were blown away. You know, they were just like, because they're looking at standards of performance and stuff like that, you know, not just, Oh, there's your awesome Finn or there's Finn's friends. And they were blown away. Before I kind of, I carry on, I looked at some studies around acting and as a job, actors have the highest empathy rating.

Of most, employment out there, which is, you know, it's completely understandable when they, when you're putting, you know, when they're putting themselves in that character shoes.

Kit: Absolutely. I think, not only, not only do you find that, I think amongst actors, you tend to find that their ability to, process new information, to, to problem solve all those, soft skills, as well as generally we, we see that.

Students who engage in the performing arts. It does have a positive impact on their academic success as well, whether that's through confidence or again, like we said, problem solving. Yeah, there's so many kinds of wider benefits. And one thing you get quite often is, oh, my child doesn't want to be. And actor, therefore there's no benefit for them going to acting classes, but in the same way that you don't

necessarily go to martial arts classes because you think you're going to become an Olympian. it's those wider benefits, isn't it? Of, of engaging in that process that, yeah, you see across, you know, all facets of a person's life. So yeah, that I've not seen that state, but yeah, that, that, that doesn't surprise me at all.

Ashley: Yeah. I think one of the big things for me as well, particularly in teens, is that, you know, we often get, I, I get parents or teachers coming to me going, they don't have any extracurricular activities and are they, they're all running with the wrong crowd, you know, and everything, and I bang on about this on the podcast, but everything that as they hit teens, as they go through that puberty, everything in them wants to pull away from us trusted adults to identify with their peer groups. And actually if they don't feel they belong, if they don't have that safe group to go to, they will find it. They will, they will look for somewhere they belong. And if that means that they're getting involved in drugs, if it means that they're drinking on the park or whatever, it doesn't matter because they belong and that's all they want.

And actually to see the camaraderie and that sense of belonging. Even though, you know, I know that this time has been particularly hard because there's some of them that will leave because they've hit 18, you know, they've done their stretch. Yes, they might, you know, stay on and be involved and stuff with different things, but they're out of that group now and, and the next set kind of move up and into it. But the fact that they have that safe space, because if we don't provide opportunities like They will seek out where they belong, and that might be places that we don't want them to be as young people. Taking risks maybe we don't want them to do, whereas actually, they're taking safe risks, aren't they?

Kit: Absolutely. I think, when I look back on my childhood, and I think it's the same for a lot of the people I know who moved in theatre circles, I Look back on the friends that I still have now from my teen years, and I think there's probably maybe one friend who came from School, like a forced, kind of collection of people, you know, I have a friend who I went to school with, , in high school and I, I still keep in contact with them, but everyone else who I was friends with during high school, I don't keep in contact with anymore.

But there is a large group of people who I was in youth theatre with who are still my main friendship base because they are people who, and again it's about finding your people isn't it, they are people who had shared interests with me, that we went through these experiences together, you know, we went to go and perform on the

West End or we reminisced our shows that we were in and we had those shared experiences and yeah, they, they are the safe.

group of people for me, and still are many, many years later. And I would hope that these friendships that, you know, Finn and all the other children that I've, involved in First Step, whether they're in shows or just the classes, because these are like-minded people and they're sharing these great experiences together, these will form safe communities for them for many years to come.

Ashley: I think as well, I think that safe communities is a really good expression because for me, they kind of can be themselves, you know, at school, they have to conform quite often. There's people who will judge them. They feel very judged in schools at the moment, you know, of people who I know for a long time then didn't tell anybody that he danced.

You know, now they all pretty much know that he does acting, but it's, you know, they feel judged that they're putting on almost a performance, whereas I feel like they can just be themselves because they take on such personas and they do, you know, various different learning the skills, whether it's, you know, singing or acting or, you know, really trying out different characters just means that they can, they can be themselves, but also that they can learn to express, because I don't think there's many, many kind of extracurricular stuff where they can process stuff that they're going through, whether that's because a character resonates or just themselves, they can, you know, express it through some of the skills that they learn. And I think it's, it's such a, we talk about soft skill, but for me, I'm finding client wise. It's a hard skill for a lot of kids to learn if they haven't got that outlet and if they haven't been taught it, you know, to process how they feel or express their emotions.

So I think it's such a valuable, safe space and a safe community to be able to do that for sure.

Kit: Yeah, absolutely. I think there's a couple of good things to pick up on there. I mean, the It's quite, it's a sad state of affairs. I think sometimes because the education system being what it is. And, you know, I know firsthand that I've seen it and tried my best to, to fight against it, but it didn't, didn't work.

There's so much curriculum content now that even in primary schools where I was, yes, we had dedicated time to PHSC and developing personal relationships. But,

you know, for me, I. In my classes, that was a 20-minute slot on a Friday, and everything else was so academically focused. And, you know, you look at those, the way that schools are run, and yeah, you think, where, where are those interpersonal skills being developed?

Because, you know, they're not, they don't happen organically. You can't just put, you know, People together or young people in a situation and assume that they will, learn how to communicate correctly with each other or express themselves. As you said, they are skills that need to be taught. And unfortunately, I think that is a bit of a gap and a failing, you know, that obviously we have drama and we have dance and we have expressive arts within the curriculum.

However, Again, those teachers are trying their best, but the curriculum that is given to them is still very theoretical. There's not that kind of space. And yeah, if they're not engaging in those opportunities externally, or the, the opportunities that they are engaging in externally don't maybe lend themselves, to developing those skills, then you think, well, where are they going to be learning them?

Cause not. Not all children are lucky that, they get to learn them at home either. I think you, you also touched on, that obviously they can, they can be themselves. And one of the biggest gateways into the performing arts is that people have a preconceived notion of what you have to be to be a performer.

A theatre kid or an actor or, and actually it takes all types. We've at first act, we've had every different personality under the sun. From the people who are a little bit more, extroverted, a bit more flamboyant to really, you know, quite insular, people who love the craft. I don't particularly love it when you have to do it like a warm up game or something like that, but I love the intellectual side of it.

And I think, again, there’s a bit of a, an issue when maybe the only experience of drama and acting that young people have is within a school setting. And, you know, throughout your high school experience when you are doing your drama lessons, they are, Sometimes not the best experiences because if you are someone who's a little bit more reserved, you can find being expressive and performing in a group of people that maybe you don't feel comfortable doing that with, or in a setting where it's a little bit more manufactured, some people don't want to be there, some people aren't there for the right reasons, and that can create quite negative experiences.

And then people are saying that, you know, this is not for me. Performing is not for me when actually it's ingrained in ours. DNA to tell stories and, you know, give, give anyone the right situation, you know, in a group of friends, or we see it online, you know, Roblox, Minecraft. The first thing people will do is create stories and, and perform.

It's just, I think for some people that the. idea of this structured class where you come and you perform and you act. It holds a certain image, I think, in people's heads of what that looks like or who you have to be in order to participate in that. , and hopefully one of the things we're doing when we go into schools is show people that's not necessarily the case.

And there's loads of great work. Going on around, the North West, and just call out to, not necessarily related to children, but Jimmy Fairhurst, who works in Warrington, who is all about, bringing theatre to people who feel that theatre just isn't for them, bringing theatre into, Pubs, bringing it into places where working people are and saying, you know, this is for everyone. That's really important, I think.

Ashley: Yeah, I think you're right there. Just having that experience or having limited knowledge of what that experience looks like. And I think that's one of the great things about, First Acts for me is last Christmas was the first awards evening I'd been to and experienced.

You know, it's very lovely. It's very fun. But actually what it does is show you the complete like range of students that you've got, you know, from very neurodiverse, quite shy, insular kids to those who are very gregarious and, and, you know, want to be front and center. But actually what I noticed is you can go, you don't have to, you know, you don't have to audition A play.

You don't, you, you can just come every week, learn the craft, make friends, learn new skills, like, you know, the competence, building the flexibility, the, you know, the problem solver, all those kinds of things. And I love that nobody's pressured. It's almost like, it feels like the theatre side is, I know it's completely separate for you guys, but actually that is completely separate. You know, you take it. Like, this is what we do every, every week, and actually, by the way, we're doing this play and if you want to audition, you can. It's, it's really lovely that they can just be themselves and there is no pressure to perform almost, you know, to be on stage or

to want to be an actor. It's very much around that actual class, you know, that they do.

Kit: Yeah, absolutely. I think that was probably came from how we were born. We were, we came from, I was doing a production of Oliver, and I managed to wrangle in about 25 young lads, both from the school I was teaching at and like the local area. And then we finished that production and all these kinds of like lads I was like, okay, where are we going now?

What's next? I was like, there is, there is, there is nothing now. So that started first and it was born. Simply out of a, we enjoyed working together on that show. Let's just do that weekly. There was no ever kind of vision of creating a theatre company with these shows and all sorts, it was just about, you know, we enjoy working together.

I enjoy working with them as young people because they inspire me all the time. You know, a lot of the students that you mentioned before, when they say they're leaving from chorus line, we have that all the time. And some of the guys who were with me on the very first day, seven years ago, they've gone off to university, I've supported them through like their, their uni applications and things like that and they come back and now I would consider them like, you know, friends and they're people that I have really great relationships with because, I think naturally theatre is non-hierarchical.

I think it's very easy to be like, oh, you know, you know, the director or the teacher is, you know, in charge, but really, theatre is all about exploring together. So it creates lovely relationships and, you know, I'm hoping that as well as the relationships with the young, other young people, the young people are seeing adults in a different way, the adults that they interact with at first act, they are kind of learning how to develop relationships with, you know, older people, how to be collaborative and share ideas, rather than just having, they're the teacher, they're going to tell you what to do. Being able to have that dialogue and things like that. So I think that's where that all stems from, but yeah, that's, that's exactly what we wanted.

Ashley: And I think that's so important because often our kids You know, and I, I say this a lot that sometimes we need to talk to our kids, or we want them to talk to others. And actually, we have to have trusted adults, and I think it's really important.

I know there's a couple of, occasions where Finn has spoken to Keris, or he's, you know, spoken to you, or, or Craig. And, big shout out to Craig and Keris, by the way, they are amazing teachers. And, but also as well, like I have, you know, I've gone, you know, Finn's going for GCSE, should he go for drama? Should he go for music? And, you know, and, and just to have that open dialogue and, and the advice, you know, that you guys have in already done it and stuff. But I think it's so important that there's other trusted adults in our kids' lives That are not just us or family members, but actually that they can reach out to and not necessarily pull the heart out, but just go, what do you think?

Like, I'm thinking this, what do you think? You know, I just think that's such an important relationship and gives them those skills of talking to adults as well, which I think, you know, again, we don't, as parents, we often shy away from, you know, I, I see a lot of parents ordering for kids in restaurants. Like what you doing, you know, or, they're meeting friends and they'll go, oh, this is, you know, this is Jimmy and, and the parents talking for the child and the child just stood there, you know, and I think it's so important that we encourage those relationships with trusted adults. It's, it's really important for, you know, it's important for later on when they go for jobs or uni interviews and things. They feel comfortable enough. So, Kit, I know, am I right in thinking you also do A senior section of Fursat.

Kit: As in like an adult version?

Ashley: Yeah, sorry, not as in OAPs.

Kit: That's a great market. It's, it's, it's, so it's something we've explored and we have varying degrees of it. So we have adults that we work with quite regularly.

We have You know, some of them are parents of people who first act, some of them are like Warrington and Manchester based performers. And when we've tried to get the adult one off the ground, there's always been a few stumbling blocks, either, you know, adults find it harder to, to make commitments.

There's also a lot of more adult offering. Warrington's great for adult theatre. There's some amazing theatre companies out there. And we've never quite carved out our own niche in the same way. What we kind of offer for adults is the ability to come in and, and some people love this and some people don't, to, Support the young people again.

So I think, I think Spring Awakening, I think the trials, which is happening in October, so the Spring Awakening was a cast of eight young people, who are incredible is musical theatre production. They were playing instruments as well. It was just fantastic. And that's the story of, young people in Germany, in the 1800s in a very repressed society and they are going through changes and puberty and they have questions and the adults in their life are either ignoring it, telling them it's wrong, or feeding them false information. And we had an amazing group of five adults who came into that production and were able to work with them.

The young people. And again, it's everything we've said. It's that it was seeing those adults on a flat hierarchy. They were, they were their teammates. They were working together. There was no like they're the adult, you're the child. They were working together to tell the story and it just creates fantastic opportunities in the trials.

It's going to be slightly different. The adults are going to be prerecorded. The concept of the trials is that it's 12 young jurors in the future, in a near future where climate change has kind of completely devastated the planet. There's a lot of links to the Nuremberg trials. The young people are putting the older people on trial for the actions that they committed, which led to this climate disaster.

And we're having, you know, adult performers being the people on trials. Again, because it gives those young people the actual sense of the production. It enhances the meaning for them and the story for them. And especially for those young people who have got parts that really relate to those older people, whether that's a family relation or they really despise them, it gives them something to, to act off.

So we don't have a very formal, acting division, but we do incorporate adults just because it just enhances everything. And we're really lucky that again, just like with our young people, we've had very experienced performers like Mark Murphy, who is a fabulous actor and he's in Warrington and does amateur theatre in Warrington. He's involved as well, but there's also a lady called Fabianne and her daughter doesn't come to First Act anymore, but Fabian was never really done. I think she used to work on Les Mis in the West End as like a costume mistress. I think she used to do something like costumes or wigs. And she hadn't done it for years, hadn't been on stage for years and years and years and she auditioned for Spring Awakening and she got in, and it was just a great, an amazing experience where she developed new friends through that.

And it was everything that we want for the young people. We were seeing the adults as well. So yeah, we're not a formal adult division, but adults do get involved from time to time.

Ashley: And do you know what, it is, it is so amazing to watch the young people and but also to watch that interaction, and I can't wait for trials because I think it's such a, Finn, I just read in the book, but actually it's so relevant, so current right now for the young people who are looking at, you know, us oldies and going, what you done?

Like literally, what have you done? You're leaving this to us in this state. , you know, and I think it will resonate with a lot of people. So, kick. We, you know, we, we talked about the benefits of, of acting where, if somebody wants to get involved in, you know, theatre, if they want to get involved in, you know, learning these skills are encouraging their kids to get involved. What do you suggest they do?

Kit: So there's, luckily there's loads of amazing places in all different areas of England, so normally finding in schools, It's fairly easy. What, what I would suggest for all parents is to, to, to really explore and to kind of have a little try of all the different places, because you might find acting schools within an established dance school.

You might kind of go to one of these big name schools, you know, you've got stagecoach and, , It used to be called Helena Grady, I don't think it's called Helena Grady, , but then you've got lots of independent ones like ourselves, , and what I'd say is it's about really finding the match for your, for your child and where, again, everything we've said about your child feeling comfortable in that space, , because every Acting group, every theatre school, runs slightly differently and has a particular emphasis on something different.

And while I am hundred percent support everything we do and the ideology ideologies we have at First Act, I know that we're not necessarily It's going to be the right match for every person and it's so important that, , when developing something like the arts, you find a match that is right for your child.

So, go have trial lessons, don't be afraid to, do a couple of weeks, one place, try somewhere else for a couple of weeks, you know, the, those drama schools who are really keen on, you know, developing, , Skills for young people and really keen

to nurture young people will completely understand that you need to find the right place for your child.

, So that's definitely the first thing I would suggest, , I think again, understanding whether what your kind of, what you and your child want from it is really important. Do you want to be doing the performances? Do you want to have The, , kind of the learning and the skill development, or do you want to focus to begin with on just that community?

Because there's a lot of drama groups that, again, don't have performances and don't really push their skill development, but are great for just coming together and being young people in a space where you can be creative and expressive. That has so much value as well. So understanding what the schools around are offering and which kind of, which one of those or which combination of those things they really value. yeah, I think finding that matches is really important. Because that's, that's what's going to allow your child to thrive. Cause again, they could be absolutely ideal. For the performing arts, it could be really their bag, but if they go to the wrong place that doesn't have the same values or same kind of, puts the same emphasis on things that they feel are important, then it might, might kind of slow that process down.

It might kind of be a bit damaging. So yeah, exploring around. And making sure all those values align, I think.

Ashley: And, you know, Kit is really, really humble there. And I remember having a conversation, I think it was with Keris, and I said, you know, what about Finn's dance? Because he wouldn't be dancing as much.

And, This sums up, I think, the, the ethos of First Acts, and she said, we will keep our eye on it, and if we feel that he is dropping his standard, we will actively encourage you to go somewhere else, because it isn't about us, it's not about numbers or money or anything, it's about what's best for that child, and I think you've just said that, that you very much at First Acts, it is about developing that child, however that is, but a very holistic way, and so, I would just want to say, first of all, if you're anywhere near the Warrington area, and we travel half an hour, three times a week, probably, most weeks, excuse me, because it is absolutely worth it.

Go to First Act if you're anywhere within that. And I know you have people come from Bolton and Liverpool and the Wirral, because it's absolutely worth it., It is such a beautiful community. And then the second thing I want to say is if you are anywhere near , go to the Brinley Theatre later. When is trials at Health Kit? When is when?

Kit: So it's in October. The exact date is, is, is kind of not on the top of my tongue. I will be able to find you with a link if, if you'd like. Yes. Where people can, can buy their tickets if they wish.

Ashley: because it is. We, you know, we talk in about youth theatre, but it is actually nothing like you've ever seen youth theatre before.

If you've gone to a school and you've seen a play and you think, oh my god, that's amazing. Of course it is. But this is. Those young people being expected to put on a professional performance where people are going to pay for the ticket, and they've got to do it night after night after night. And sometimes that's while they've done a full day at school, while they've played, you know, soccer match in the afternoon against five other schools or something and they've got to stand, they've got to get to that theatre and they've got to perform and it is like nothing else I've seen. So get yourself to see The Trials if you are about in October and you're anywhere near Romcom because it is well worth it. Kit, thank you so much for joining us today.

I think just listening to the community and the way that you talk about young people and giving them that space to be themselves, to develop those skills is beautiful. And I'm just really pleased that Finn already goes there. so thank you so much for today. No, you are welcome. And just as we finish here, check out the show notes, check out the reels, we will put all the links to, to First Act, to the trials that we were talking about, and follow, follow, , First Act on Insta because they are quite prolific on there as well and you get to see a little bit behind the scenes which is just amazing. Kit Phillips, thank you very much.

Kit: Thank you.