

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**The Seven Ages of Musical Theatre:**  
The life cycle of the child performer

by

Lyndsay Barnbrook

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the  
Humanities Faculty  
School of Music

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*“A person’s a person, no matter how small.”*

Dr. Seuss





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# *Abstract*

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## **The Seven Ages of Musical Theatre: The life cycle of the child performer**

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The purpose of the research reported here is to explore the part played by children in musical theatre. It aims to do this on two levels.

It presents, for the first time, an historical analysis of involvement of children in theatre from its earliest beginnings to the current date. It is clear from this analysis that the role children played in the evolution of theatre has been both substantial and influential, with evidence of a number of recurring themes. Children have invariably made strong contributions in terms of music, dance and spectacle, and have been especially prominent in musical comedy. Playwrights have exploited precocity for comedic purposes, innocence to deliver difficult political messages in a way that is deemed acceptable by theatre audiences, and youth, recognising the emotional leverage to be obtained by appealing to more primitive instincts, notably sentimentality and, more contentiously, prurience. Every age has had its child prodigies and it is they who tend to make the headlines. However the influence of educators and entrepreneurs, artistically and commercially, is often underestimated. Although figures such as Wescott, Henslowe and Harris have been recognised by historians, some of the more recent architects of musical theatre, like Noreen Bush, are largely unheard of outside the theatre community. Theatrical dynasties seem to have been important in protecting and in training young performers, in keeping them ‘grounded’, and in helping to manage the transition to adult performer, although the ‘edge’ enjoyed by the children of theatre families was to some extent eroded by the growth of public/private education provision in the 20th century which improved access and started to ‘level the playing field’.

Secondly, the research investigates how well aspiring young performers are served by the UK education system. Although much is written about the education system in general, what has been written specifically about the performing arts appears to focus only on component parts. Relatively little seems to have been done to assess the system in its entirety, taking into account both state and private provision, let alone the part played by the ‘third sector’ in the form of youth theatre and theatre schools. The research reported here considers the contributions made by the various elements of the performing arts eco-system and the coherence and cohesiveness of the system of the whole. The research goes on to consider the end product<sup>1</sup>, and the context in which musical theatre operates.

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<sup>1</sup>Bearing in mind that, unlike in many professions, young performers often work in the industry long before they have finished their formal training.



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# Declaration of Authorship

I, LYND SAY BARNBROOK, declare that this thesis titled, ‘THE SEVEN AGES OF MUSICAL THEATRE: The life cycle of the child performer’ and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed:

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Date:

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In addition, I would like to express my sincere thanks to colleagues in the musical theatre industry. Specific contributions are acknowledged at the relevant places in the text, but I am indebted to them more generally for sharing their knowledge and expertise with me over the years I have been working in the industry.

Figures 2.1, 2.12 and 2.20 are taken directly from the sources cited at the relevant places in the thesis. The other figures and tables are original, with data sources cited in the relevant places and/or summarised at Appendix A in the cases where data were assembled specifically for the purposes of this research.

I am grateful to family members for helping me to expunge typographical errors, and to my dad for advice on producing those figures which were especially challenging to construct using Microsoft Excel/Powerpoint (namely, Figures 2.3, 2.7, 2.11, 2.16, 3.4, 3.11, which were prepared using yEd and Circos software).

The thesis was prepared in Latex, using a template based on one originally created by Professor Steve R. Gunn at the University of Southampton ('ECStthesis.cls'), modified by Dr. Sunil Patel ([www.sunilpatel.co.uk](http://www.sunilpatel.co.uk)), and adjusted as necessary to meet my own needs. TeXcount (<http://app.uio.no/ifi/texcount/>) was used to carry out the word count of the text in the Latex files making up the thesis.



# Abbreviations

<b>ABRSM</b>	Associated <b>B</b> oard of the <b>R</b> oyal <b>S</b> chools of <b>M</b> usic
<b>ACCAC</b>	Awdurdod <b>C</b> ymwysterau, <b>C</b> wricwlwm ac <b>A</b> sesu <b>C</b> ymru (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)
<b>ACE</b>	<b>A</b> rts <b>C</b> ouncil <b>E</b> ngland
<b>ADPA</b>	Associate <b>D</b> iploma in <b>P</b> erformance <b>A</b> rts
<b>ALCM</b>	Associate of the <b>L</b> ondon <b>C</b> ollege of <b>M</b> usic
<b>ALRA</b>	<b>A</b> cademy of <b>L</b> ive and <b>R</b> ecorded <b>A</b> rts
<b>BATD</b>	The <b>B</b> ritish <b>A</b> ssociation of <b>T</b> eachers of <b>D</b> ancing
<b>BA</b>	<b>B</b> achelor of <b>A</b> rts
<b>BECTU</b>	<b>B</b> roadcasting, <b>E</b> ntertainment, <b>C</b> inematograph and <b>T</b> heatre <b>U</b> nion
<b>BIS</b>	Department for <b>B</b> usiness, <b>I</b> nnovation and <b>S</b> kills
<b>BBO</b>	<b>B</b> ritish <b>B</b> allet <b>O</b> rganization
<b>BMus</b>	<b>B</b> achelor of <b>M</b> usic
<b>BTEC</b>	<b>B</b> usiness and <b>T</b> echnology <b>E</b> ducation <b>C</b> ouncil
<b>BYT</b>	<b>B</b> illy <b>Y</b> outh <b>T</b> heatre
<b>CDET</b>	<b>C</b> ouncil for <b>D</b> ance <b>E</b> ducation and <b>T</b> raining
<b>CDS</b>	<b>C</b> onference of <b>D</b> rama <b>S</b> chools
<b>CCEA</b>	<b>C</b> ouncil for the <b>C</b> urriculum, <b>E</b> xaminations and <b>A</b> ssessment
<b>CFYT</b>	<b>C</b> hichester <b>F</b> estival <b>Y</b> outh <b>T</b> heatre
<b>CGI</b>	<b>C</b> omputer- <b>G</b> enerated <b>I</b> magery
<b>CME</b>	<b>C</b> ertificate in <b>M</b> usic <b>E</b> ducation
<b>CPA</b>	<b>C</b> olin's <b>P</b> erforming <b>A</b> rts
<b>CPD</b>	<b>C</b> ontinuing <b>P</b> rofessional <b>D</b> evelopment
<b>CTFA</b>	The <b>C</b> hildren's <b>T</b> heatre of <b>F</b> oundation of <b>A</b> merica
<b>CTLIS</b>	<b>C</b> ertificate in <b>T</b> eaching in the <b>L</b> ifelong <b>L</b> earning <b>S</b> ector

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<b>DaDA</b>	<b>D</b> ance and <b>D</b> rama <b>A</b> wards
<b>DBS</b>	<b>D</b> isclosure and <b>B</b> arring <b>S</b> ervice
<b>DCMS</b>	<b>D</b> epartment for <b>C</b> ulture <b>M</b> edia & <b>S</b> port
<b>DDE</b>	<b>D</b> iploma in <b>D</b> ance <b>E</b> ducation
<b>DDI</b>	<b>D</b> iploma in <b>D</b> ance <b>I</b> nstruction
<b>DfE</b>	<b>D</b> epartment for <b>E</b> ducation
<b>DipLCM</b>	<b>D</b> iploma of the <b>L</b> ondon <b>C</b> ollege of <b>M</b> usic
<b>DTLLS</b>	<b>D</b> iploma in <b>T</b> eaching in the <b>L</b> ifelong <b>L</b> earning <b>S</b> ector
<b>EFA</b>	<b>E</b> ducation <b>F</b> unding <b>A</b> gency
<b>FE</b>	<b>F</b> urther <b>E</b> ducation
<b>FLCM</b>	<b>F</b> ellowship of the <b>L</b> ondon <b>C</b> ollege of <b>M</b> usic
<b>FTCL</b>	<b>F</b> ellowship of <b>T</b> rinity <b>C</b> ollege <b>L</b> ondon
<b>G&amp;S</b>	<b>G</b> ilbert & <b>S</b> ullivan
<b>GCSE</b>	<b>G</b> eneral <b>C</b> ertificate of <b>S</b> econdary <b>E</b> ducation
<b>GSA</b>	<b>G</b> uildford <b>S</b> chool of <b>A</b> cting
<b>HEFCE</b>	<b>H</b> igher <b>E</b> ducation <b>F</b> unding <b>C</b> ouncil <b>E</b> ngland
<b>HE</b>	<b>H</b> igher <b>E</b> ducation
<b>HMG</b>	<b>H</b> er <b>M</b> ajesty's <b>G</b> overnment
<b>IB</b>	<b>I</b> nternational <b>B</b> accalaureate
<b>IDTA</b>	<b>I</b> nternational <b>D</b> ance <b>T</b> eachers <b>A</b> ssociation
<b>ISTD</b>	<b>I</b> mperial <b>S</b> ociety of <b>T</b> eachers of <b>D</b> ancing
<b>ITC</b>	<b>I</b> ndependent <b>T</b> heatre <b>C</b> ouncil
<b>KS</b>	<b>K</b> ey <b>S</b> tage
<b>LAMDA</b>	<b>L</b> ondon <b>A</b> cademy of <b>M</b> usic & <b>D</b> ramatic <b>A</b> rt
<b>LCM</b>	<b>L</b> ondon <b>C</b> ollege of <b>M</b> usic
<b>LLCM</b>	<b>L</b> icentiate of the <b>L</b> ondon <b>C</b> ollege of <b>M</b> usic
<b>LSC</b>	<b>L</b> ondon <b>S</b> tudiof <b>C</b> entre
<b>LSCD</b>	<b>L</b> ondon <b>S</b> chool of <b>C</b> ontemporary <b>D</b> ance
<b>MA</b>	<b>M</b> aster of <b>A</b> rts
<b>MDS</b>	<b>M</b> usic and <b>D</b> ance <b>S</b> cheme
<b>MMus</b>	<b>M</b> aster of <b>M</b> usic
<b>MIT</b>	<b>M</b> assachusetts <b>I</b> nstitute of <b>T</b> echnology
<b>NASUWT</b>	<b>N</b> ational <b>A</b> ssociation of <b>S</b> choolmasters <b>U</b> nion of <b>W</b> omen <b>T</b> eachers



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<b>NAYT</b>	National <b>A</b> ssociation of <b>Y</b> outh <b>T</b> heatre
<b>NCC</b>	National <b>C</b> urriculum <b>C</b> ouncil
<b>NCDT</b>	National <b>C</b> ouncil for <b>D</b> rama <b>T</b> raining
<b>NC</b>	National <b>C</b> urriculum
<b>NEC</b>	National <b>E</b> xhibition <b>C</b> entre
<b>NFER</b>	National <b>F</b> oundation for <b>E</b> ducational <b>R</b> esearch
<b>NNCEE</b>	National <b>N</b> etwork for <b>C</b> hildren in <b>E</b> mployment and <b>E</b> ntertainment
<b>NYMT</b>	National <b>Y</b> outh <b>M</b> usic <b>T</b> heatre
<b>NYT</b>	National <b>Y</b> outh <b>T</b> heatre
<b>Ofqual</b>	<b>O</b> ffice of <b>q</b> ualifications and <b>E</b> xaminations <b>R</b> egulation
<b>Ofsted</b>	<b>O</b> ffice for <b>s</b> tandards in <b>e</b> ducation, children's services and skills
<b>PAT</b>	<b>P</b> erforming <b>A</b> rts <b>T</b> heatre <b>C</b> ollege
<b>PCE</b>	<b>P</b> ost <b>G</b> raduate <b>C</b> ertificate in <b>E</b> ducation
<b>PCHE</b>	<b>P</b> ost <b>G</b> raduate <b>C</b> ertificate in <b>H</b> igher <b>E</b> ducation
<b>PGCLTHE</b>	<b>P</b> ost <b>G</b> raduate <b>C</b> ertificate in <b>L</b> earning and <b>T</b> eaching in <b>H</b> igher <b>E</b> ducation
<b>PPA</b>	<b>P</b> erformance <b>P</b> reparation <b>A</b> cademy
<b>PPA</b>	<b>P</b> reparation <b>P</b> lanning and <b>A</b> ssessment
<b>PQA</b>	<b>P</b> auline <b>Q</b> uirke <b>A</b> cademy
<b>PTLLS</b>	<b>P</b> reparing to <b>T</b> each in the <b>L</b> ifelong <b>L</b> earning <b>S</b> ector
<b>QCA</b>	<b>Q</b> ualifications and <b>C</b> urriculum <b>A</b> uthority
<b>QTS</b>	<b>Q</b> ualified <b>T</b> eacher <b>S</b> tatus
<b>RADA</b>	<b>R</b> oyal <b>A</b> cademy of <b>D</b> ramatic <b>A</b> rt
<b>RAM</b>	<b>R</b> oyal <b>A</b> cademy of <b>M</b> usic
<b>RAD</b>	<b>R</b> oyal <b>A</b> cademy of <b>D</b> ance
<b>RCSSD</b>	<b>R</b> oyal <b>C</b> entral <b>S</b> chool of <b>S</b> peech and <b>D</b> rama (previously <b>CSSD</b> )
<b>RBS</b>	<b>R</b> oyal <b>B</b> allet <b>S</b> chool
<b>RUG</b>	<b>R</b> eally <b>U</b> seful <b>G</b> roup
<b>SFA</b>	<b>S</b> kills <b>F</b> unding <b>A</b> gency
<b>STEM</b>	<b>S</b> cience <b>T</b> echnology <b>E</b> ngineering and <b>M</b> athematics
<b>STP Musicals</b>	<b>S</b> outhern <b>T</b> heatre <b>P</b> roductions <b>M</b> usicals <b>A</b> cademy
<b>TCL</b>	<b>T</b> rinity <b>C</b> ollege <b>L</b> ondon
<b>TiE</b>	<b>T</b> heatre in <b>E</b> ducation
<b>TYA</b>	<b>T</b> heatre for <b>Y</b> oung <b>A</b> udiences

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<b>V&amp;A</b>	<b>V</b> ictoria and <b>A</b> lbert museum
<b>VIDLA</b>	<b>V</b> ocalist <b>I</b> nternational <b>D</b> istance <b>L</b> earning <b>A</b> cademy
<b>YMT</b>	<b>Y</b> outh <b>M</b> usic <b>T</b> heatre

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This dissertation explores the history of musical theatre in Britain from social, educational and economic points of view - placing the art-form (about the aesthetics of which little will be said) in socio-economic context. That context has changed over time and continues to change. In some eras musical theatre has been an elite interest, court masques for instance, involving young performers of the highest social rank including even princes and princesses. In other eras musical theatre producers have aimed to achieve the widest possible popular appeal, recruiting child performers from working-class ranks and exploiting them systematically, as other types of employer exploited their parents. Recent changes to public funding have placed higher and higher access barriers in the way of students preparing for careers in professional musical theatre, denying them training and in turn denying them career opportunities matching their ability. Since London's West End is a profitable sector of the entertainment industry, public policy changes starving it of the trained talent on which profit depends are of great concern. Bad educational policy could do serious social and economic harm.

The thesis presents data collected from a wide range of sources, bringing them together in one work of reference for the first time so that policy debate, informed both by the data and by a nuanced sense of the sector's history, can happen. Colleagues working in the musical theatre training sector will find the data particularly useful; so will funders to whom evidence-based decision-making appeals. The thesis could also help to enrich wider policy debate, of the sort advocated by Dave O'Brien and Kate Oakley in "Cultural Value and Inequality" ([O'Brien and Oakley, 2015](#)). Audiences for musical theatre and the performers they pay to see are 'excluded' from Arts Council subsidy benefit but not at all excluded from culture. Because the musical theatre sector is so sparingly subsidised, national policymakers protecting their 'investments' give it little serious attention: its cultural value is under-appreciated and the economic consequences

of worsening inequality of access to specialist training provision are ignored. *The Seven Ages of Musical Theatre* is, in a way, a thesis-length response to one of O'Brien and Oakley's key observations: "there remains an absence of robust data on one hand and more systematic work on how inequality operates on the other. The relationship between these issues and the sort of culture we get - the representation question - remains under-explored" (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015).

The popularity of musical theatre on both sides of the Atlantic is irrefutable<sup>1</sup>. Although it is the big productions that make the headlines (and the money), musical theatre is by no means confined to the West End and Broadway<sup>2</sup>. Importantly, these smaller shows provide young performers the opportunity to 'cut their teeth', and are thus a source of both ideas and talent for the West End and Broadway. More generally, musical theatre is an important gateway to theatre for large numbers of young people, both as audience members and participants.

There seems to be a broad consensus that the benefits which accrue from the arts are substantive and substantial<sup>3</sup>, but are notoriously difficult to quantify<sup>4</sup>, and to trade off against 'necessities' like schools and hospitals. The difficulties of being able to quantify the benefit of things done for the collective good of society as a whole, are of course no reason to deny their value<sup>5</sup>.

While economists strive to perfect a convincing method of evaluating the impact of the arts overall<sup>6</sup>, a number of studies have attempted to produce estimates for more specific

<sup>1</sup>Musical theatre is a major cultural force in the United States. In 2008 nearly 17% of Americans said that they attend musicals annually, making them the most popular of the seven performing arts surveyed by the National Endowment for the Arts (Williams and Keen, 2009: 77). A survey conducted by Ticketmaster in 2013 found that "63% of the UK population has been to at least one theatre show in the past year – that's more than sporting events and music concerts" (Ticketmaster, 2013).

<sup>2</sup>"Musical theater also continues to thrive regionally and away from Broadway, where more adventuresome work can be explored due to lower costs" (Miller, 2007). "A great deal of high quality theatre happens outside the West End . . . Every year there are 17,000 theatrical productions in the capital, many in small theatres which help develop talent and shows and also boost the economy by drawing visitors to areas outside central London" (Mayor of London, 2013a). Although it is the West End that attracts most media attention, touring theatre is also thriving. In 2010 Bill Kenwright Partnerships, which is the dominant player in the touring market, reported a 157% surge in net profits despite a fall in turnover to £39m (The Stage: Biz 2 Biz, 2010a).

<sup>3</sup>See (Throsby, 2010: 183), amongst others.

<sup>4</sup>Although perhaps no more difficult to quantify than the value of defence spending, for example, in that much of the latter is essentially insurance for the collective good, rather than something that benefits individuals directly and immediately.

<sup>5</sup>Many people have counselled against the folly of making only what is measurable important, rather than making what is important measurable. As Sir David Nicholson put it when giving evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Health, this is to risk "hitting the target, but missing the point" (HoC, 2013).

<sup>6</sup>Academics have undertaken theoretical work aimed at providing a more coherent understanding of how the marketplace for the arts works, but rigorous analysis seems to be especially challenging for the performing arts where data tend to be patchy and unreliable. For example, Throsby makes the case for using an economic approach for judging the value of the arts, whilst stressing the need to guard against the use of economics simply to 'talk up' the value of the arts (Throsby, 2010: 93), and bemoans the dearth of data required to undertake rigorous analysis. He goes on to advocate the collection of a

sectors of the arts. The seminal work on the impact of theatre on the British economy was done by Travers ([Travers, 1998](#)), and concluded that it was substantial<sup>7</sup>. Travers' findings on the theatre industry were updated and extended by Shellard ([Shellard, 2004: 5,8](#)) who "conservatively" estimated the economic impact to be £1.5 billion per annum in the West End and £1.1 billion p.a. elsewhere, and drawing on census data, estimated that around 650,000 people are employed in the (theatre) industry. The Society of London Theatre reported that 2007 set a record for attendance in London: total attendees in the major commercial and grant-aided theatres in Central London were £13.6 million, and total ticket revenues were £469.7 million; the statistics on visitor numbers to major cities across the World ([LDA, 2009](#)) show the importance of the performing arts to London in particular. The number of professionals directly involved in productions rose significantly during the first decade of the 21st century<sup>8</sup>.

There is little attribution specifically to children, either as performers or consumers of theatre, in what is written on the contribution theatre makes to the economy<sup>9</sup>. However it is worth noting that many of the West End's most commercial offerings either are aimed at family audiences<sup>10</sup>, or feature child performers in a major role, *Matilda* and *Billy Elliot*, for example. Many of the projects aimed at neighbourhood regeneration<sup>11</sup> are especially important to young people; it is not uncommon for musical theatre to feature in outreach programmes.

People who work with young people believe that the benefits of musical theatre are not confined to short-term economic returns<sup>12</sup>. There is evidence that musical theatre offers

comprehensive range of cultural statistics and the creation of 'satellite accounts' as an adjunct to the National Accounts ([Throsby, 2010: 224-226](#)).

<sup>7</sup>London retains its status as the theatre capital of the world, producing more shows and attracting larger audiences than anywhere else, including Broadway. As a net currency earner for the UK, West End theatre is of a comparable size to the entire UK Advertising, Accountancy and Management Consultancy industries, and is considerably bigger than the UK Film and Television industry. Global earnings of the most successful British shows are far greater than those of Hollywood blockbusters such as *Titanic* and *Jurassic Park*. In 1997 the economic impact of West End theatre was £1,075 million, 41,000 jobs depended on it, and it contributed a surplus of £225 million to the UK's balance of payments ([Travers, 1998](#)).

<sup>8</sup>During 2002-2012 there was a rise in the UK of 3.6% (to 29,000) for musical directors/composers, 129% (to 48,000) for actors and 87.5% (to 60,000) for producers/directors. (The corresponding figure for the US for MDs/composers was 178% (to 24,940), which suggests that the definitions used are not fully aligned.) ([Quinn, 2013](#)).

<sup>9</sup>This is unsurprising given the difficulties of producing the overall estimates.

<sup>10</sup>For example "*The Lion King* has taken more money at the box office than any other stage show, or cinema release. It has made more than \$6.2bn (£3.8bn) in ticket sales alone, not counting merchandise, cast recordings or revenue from the film on which it is based". "Its 22 productions around the world are thought to have been seen by 75 million people" ([BBC News, 2014b](#)).

<sup>11</sup>A DCMS report concluded that sport and the arts "can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities" ([DCMS, 1999](#)).

<sup>12</sup>Throsby argues that it is helpful to think about the contribution that the arts make in terms of their effect on the stock of 'human capital' ([Throsby, 2010: 181](#)). Reeves subdivides benefits into 'human (i.e. personal) capital' and 'social capital' ([Reeves, 2002](#)), and surveys a range of methodologies used to assess the value of the arts, including a 'social audit' designed to explore the social impact of theatre

educational benefits, particularly, but not exclusively, to socially disadvantaged groups which the education system invariably finds most challenging<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless there has been long-standing concern within the industry that the arts are the poor relations of the education system, fuelled by well-intentioned attempts to steer young people into careers that are considered to be in the country's economic interest:

*There are people who have even developed tests of creativity on the three year old on the grounds that if you find a child who is creative, you can perhaps switch him over to mathematics and sciences and have him off to M.I.T. before he is nicely out of the finger-painting stage.*

(Taylor, 1963: 306)

Many authors have proclaimed the benefits of developing the social skills<sup>14</sup> associated with participation in musical theatre<sup>15</sup> including: interpersonal skills, self confidence, communication, team work, organisational skills, and the ability to 'think on your feet' (figuratively and literally, in the case of performing arts students). Pink claims that only 4% of performance at work is attributable to technical skills, as distinct from 'people skills' (Pink, 2008). It is perhaps unsurprising then that participation in university choral/musical society groups is by no means limited to performing arts students<sup>16</sup>; there is invariably a high take-up amongst medics and scientists. It is said to be a 'good thing' to mention participation in the performing arts on an application form for medical schools - presumably because it makes applicants appear less 'geeky'.

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(Matarasso and Pilling, 1999). In the UK, the Government has conceded that narrow economic measures do not adequately reflect the mood of the electorate, and is exploring the use of broader measures of 'well-being'. Government statistics on 'well-being' include an assessment of 'human capital', although the focus seems to be on employment readiness rather than social enrichment; a definition of 'human capital' is discussed at (ONS, 2012). In March 2013, 'human capital' was estimated to be over £17 billion (ONS, 2013).

<sup>13</sup>In an analysis of a large scale US database of school children (the study also compares and contrasts with UK research into TiE projects), Catterall confirms the widely-held view that there is a strong correlation between musical and mathematical competence (Catterall et al., 1999), and also finds discernible benefits for individuals and for the community from involvement in theatre. Catterall observes that the biggest effects are seen in socially disadvantaged groups (Catterall et al., 1999). In fact many authors have pointed to the benefits of participation in the performing arts to those from disadvantaged groups, and to its therapeutic value to individuals with behavioural problems (Weare and Gray, 2003: 69,95), but it is also commended to the parents of 'gifted and talented' children, where early involvement is considered especially important to children who may seek a career in the performing arts (Karnes and Karnes, 1982).

<sup>14</sup>Gladwell refers to the success that teachers at the KIPP school in the Bronx had by making the development of social skills their first priority (Gladwell, 2009: 251).

<sup>15</sup>It is of course conceivable that those who are drawn to musical theatre are people who already have these skills – does it add or simply reinforce? – a classic 'which came first, the chicken or the egg?' problem. However I have witnessed enough examples of students who began with very little self-confidence, flourish, to convince me that participation in musical theatre genuinely helps to bring people out of their shell, so to speak.

<sup>16</sup>Cambridge University's 'Footlights' is a well-known example; and one that is echoed in most 'good' universities.

Musical theatre is the entry route into music for a large number of young people. There are now many theatre companies producing work only for children, and the already large number of stage schools is growing: ‘Stagecoach’ alone has over 700 franchises in the UK. It is big business. Moreover it has cultural significance. Musical theatre programmes range from the unashamedly popular to material that is innovative, creative and adventurous; and people who are in a position to know, testify to the fact that it can be artistically challenging:

*“Of all the things that I have done, directing new musicals is the most difficult, without question.”*

Sam Mendes, Director of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

Musical theatre is a genre that seems to have attracted less attention from academics than other genres; this is particularly so for children’s involvement in musical theatre. Consequently, although there is an enormous amount of experience and expertise in the musical theatre industry, much of it remains tacit. The purpose of this research is to attempt to fill some of the gaps and to draw findings together into an integrated picture.

Specifically, this research seeks to:

- Probe the origins of children’s involvement in musical theatre from its beginnings, through its heyday during the Elizabethan period, charting a course to the present day in order to understand how it came about and what made it what it is.
- Understand what it is that is distinctive about it, and what makes it successful; in particular to examine how the industry is supported by the education system.
- Explore ways in which it is constrained and at the same time stimulated by cultural norms.

The approach used is multi-faceted and includes:

- A review of documentary evidence<sup>17</sup>.
- Scrutiny of musical theatre education in its various forms, reviewing syllabi, standards and outcomes.
- Analysis of musical theatre works, identifying specific characteristics, and how these have changed over time.
- Discussions with leading practitioners in the field to develop an understanding of the influences, development and direction of children's musical theatre.
- Given the interdependencies with socioeconomic factors, an examination of how musical theatre fits within the wider context.

In addition, I draw on my personal experience as a teacher and as a practitioner<sup>18</sup>.

The research is presented in four parts. The first is a historical analysis of the part played by young people in musical theatre, which sets it in historical context and seeks to draw out enduring themes.

The second attempts to gauge how well young performers are served by the UK education system, and considers how best to assess it, with a focus on current funding arrangements.

The third investigates the ways in which the formal education system is augmented by organisations like youth theatre and stage schools.

Finally it explores the opportunities that professional theatre offers to young people both as participants and as audience members.

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<sup>17</sup>This includes programmes, eye witness accounts, reviews, journals, costumes etc., including for example the rich archive at the theatre museum recently re-opened at the V & A.

<sup>18</sup>I have endeavoured to remain objective throughout. However, so that the reader can be satisfied that appropriate academic detachment has been observed in the analysis, I make it clear where I have worked in schools, colleges and for performing arts companies mentioned in the text and, in what capacity.



## Chapter 2

# History of young people in musical theatre

### 2.1 Background

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the influences that forged and shaped musical theatre, and the part that children played in it. Whilst there are some excellent texts that examine specific time periods (e.g. (Austern, 1992), (Varty, 2008)), it seems that an historical analysis tracing the evolution of children's involvement in musical theatre does not exist. Both for its own sake, and because of its influence on musical theatre more generally, this seems to be a rather unsatisfactory omission. The investigations summarised in this chapter are intended as a first step toward addressing this deficiency.

Like other histories covering long spans of time, findings are organised around periods of major cultural developments. For the purposes of exposition, human history is here divided into seven ages. These differ from those used by others researching into the history of theatre<sup>1</sup> and instead reflect what might be considered to be the 'growth spurts' in the development of children's musical theatre.

Where possible the analysis draws on existing research done on specific time periods: the Elizabethan and Victorian periods are particularly well-served. The research is less well developed for the 20th century, and for this, the discussion is largely based on an extensive examination of material in newspaper/journal coverage, material held in archives, and to a lesser extent personal accounts gathered through discussions with colleagues in the industry.

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<sup>1</sup>(Wickham, 1992) and (Southern, 1963) for example.

For the Elizabethan period onwards, when the volumes of available material become large, evidence relating to each time period is organised using a common overall structure to help to draw out themes more clearly. To provide a conjunction between successive phases of development, the discussion of each stage is prefaced by a short overview of that age's legacy from its predecessors. Rather than simply cataloguing 'facts' in chronological order, evidence is then examined under four headings: socio-political, economic, educational and creative. These categories are chosen to draw together inter-related influences, and are defined broadly. For example, 'economic' covers both commercial factors and patronage; religion is covered under 'socio-political'; and technological developments fall under the 'creative' heading.

Few of the influences considered have proved to be unequivocally good or bad; at times each has served to promote the development of musical theatre, at others they have inhibited. Examining how the competing tensions play off against each other is designed to put the highs and the lows into perspective.

Indeed much of the history of the involvement of young people in musical theatre foreshadows the modern situation discussed by O'Brien and Oakley (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015).

The emerging themes are drawn together in the final section of this chapter, and a bird's eye overview of the key milestones is presented in a chart designed to provide a potted account of the evolution of musical theatre and the part played by young people.

## 2.2 The embryonic stage: pre- and proto- literate society

Many people see musical theatre as a modern phenomenon, associating it with Andrew Lloyd Webber, or perhaps the Broadway musicals of the so-called 'Golden Age'. In fact the roots of musical theatre reach rather further back into history.

Some of the earliest cave paintings show humans dancing (Levitin, 2009: 21). Pinker believes that music preceded language (Pinker, 1997)<sup>2</sup>; "we had music before we had a word for it" (Levitin, 2009: 14). Cross<sup>3</sup> argues that the discovery in southern Germany of a flute carved from a mammoth tusk<sup>4</sup> dating back around 40,000 years (Higham et al.,

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<sup>2</sup>As did Darwin (Darwin, 2004), although others have been sceptical of Pinker's argument e.g. (Cross, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>Ian Cross is professor of music at the University of Cambridge.

<sup>4</sup>"Making such an instrument would have required a great deal of skill, time and a mental template of the finished product" (Levitin, 2009: 251).

2012) indicates that some of the “most technologically advanced tools available at the time were musical instruments” (Levitin, 2009: 251)<sup>5</sup> (see Figure 2.1 on page 9).



FIGURE 2.1: Early flute: c. 40,000 BCE

In pre- and proto- literate societies, the transmission of know-how relies on demonstration, imagery and word of mouth. Selling a message and getting it to stick in people’s minds thus rested heavily on story-telling, spectacle and song: the essential ingredients of musical theatre. Hence it is likely that musical instruments would have played a part in the education of the young<sup>6</sup>.

## 2.3 The first steps: The theatre of the ancients

In Europe, musical theatre, in a sense distinct from ceremony and ritual<sup>7</sup>, is generally held to date back to the theatre of the ancient Greeks, who included music and dance

<sup>5</sup>It is possible to speculate about why our ancestors were prepared to invest so heavily in something that at first sight has little practical value. Levitin believes that “as well as signalling creativity and the ability to engage in abstract thinking, the development of the artistic (poetic, musical, dancing and painting) brain allowed for the metaphorical communication of passion and emotion. Metaphor allows us to explain things to people in indirect ways, sometimes avoiding confrontation, sometimes helping another to see that which she has difficulty in understanding” (Levitin, 2009: 21). Abstract thinking is a manifestation of the ability of the human brain to imagine, something that Gilbert argues is its greatest achievement and the quality that distinguishes human beings from other animals (Gilbert, 2007: 3-4). As he puts it, “we use our eyes to look into space and our imaginations to look into time” (Gilbert, 2007: 24). Conard argued that flutes of this sort “add to evidence that music may have given the first European modern humans [Homo Sapiens] a strategic advantage over Neanderthals” (Owen, 2009).

<sup>6</sup>Archaeological evidence indicates widespread use of musical instruments across a range of cultures throughout history: an example is given in (Comotti, 1989: 7) which shows a vessel bearing the image of a singing phorminx player dating back to 700 BCE.

<sup>7</sup>“The earliest extant Egyptian texts for funerals and coronations date as far back as 3000 BCE, but are not really plays” (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 7).

in their stage comedies and tragedies in the 5th century BCE<sup>8</sup>. “Theatre was at the same time a product and the name of community activity” (Green, 1994: 5). Athenians commissioned the plays they wanted to see performed, offering prizes to writers and actors, and supplying large numbers of young men to sing and dance in the choruses, something that would have been an expensive distraction from their day-to-day duties given the time required for rehearsals. By the 4th century a state subsidy, the ‘theorikon’, was introduced so that no citizen was prevented from joining the celebration through unreasonable economic hardship (Green, 1994: 8).

“During the last decades of the 5th century BCE, popular actors were accorded superstar status” (Hall, 2006: 5). Professionals played the principal roles. However they could be significantly outnumbered by others: “the dramatic and dithyrambic choruses at the City Dionysia alone comprised 665 men and 500 boys; the professionals, including musical accompanists, numbered no more than 57” (Sommerstein, 2002: 6). The characters in the chorus were for the most part female, and so were roles well suited to younger performers. Inspection of some of the texts indicates that the part of the chorus could be substantial ((Aeschylus et al., 1961); (Aristophanes and Sommerstein, 2002); (Euripides and Vellacott, 1954); (Sophocles et al., 1984)).

Theatrical involvement ran in the family. “Many of the spectators at Greek drama had once themselves performed in dramatic choruses, and may have been watching their own sons and grandsons performing” (Hall, 2006: 2). “All three major tragedians as well as Aristophanes had sons who became dramatic poets” (Green, 1994: 13).

Audiences, which could number as many as 15,000 (Kenrick, 2008: 21), also “included many children and teenagers, and behaved more like football crowds than opera goers” (Sommerstein, 2002). This was popular musical theatre, with substantial participation by young people - boys at least - both on the stage, and in the audience. In some cases, boy actors were likely to have been as young as ten years old (Sifakis, 1979). Whilst girls did not make an appearance on the Greek stage, they were involved in both music and dance. For example, the “*Iporchima*”<sup>9</sup> was a combination of dance and pantomime,

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<sup>8</sup>Originally plays were delivered by two male actors, each playing more than one part. The actors performed on a raised stage, speaking, chanting or singing their lines. In an area in front of the stage the chorus remained in front of the audience, dancing, chanting or singing, for the entire duration of the play (Green, 1994: 29). The function of the chorus was threefold, “It partly interacted with the actors, partly created mood, and partly commented on the action, and thus provided time for the actors to change their masks and costumes” (Harris, 1992: 10). The dramatists Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes composed their own music to accompany their plays and choreographed the dances of the chorus. There is evidence that writers acted in their own plays, carrying through the creative process (Green, 1994: 13). Greek drama required its exponents to be all-rounders in that it “mated action, poetry, music and dancing on more or less equal terms, being at once drama and religious ritual” (Mellers, 1965: 133); in today’s musical theatre parlance, they were ‘triple threats’.

<sup>9</sup>(Or *Hyporcheme*).

singing and music from Crete; it was danced by boys and girls together singing choric poems” (Lahanas, 2013)<sup>10</sup>.

Children’s education in Babylon included “all categories of songs and how to conduct a choir ... and the use and technique of various musical instruments” (Oates, 1979: 164).

Romans had been exposed to theatre by the 4th century BCE (Beacham, 1991) but indigenous Roman drama did not begin until 240 BCE (Brockett and Hildy, 2010). Its “suspension of reality and reversals of social norms” (Kenrick, 2008: 25) meant that theatre was regarded with suspicion by the Roman establishment<sup>11</sup>, and it was limited to performances in temporary wooden structures until the first stone-built theatre with a capacity of 27,000 was commissioned by Pompey in 55 BCE (Kenrick, 2008: 25).

The layout of Roman theatres differed from their Greek forebears, reflecting the differences in the structure of productions (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 27). The chorus now did more singing than dancing, though the major musical numbers, ‘cantica’, were the preserve of the actors, and “were well-known to all the citizens from generation to generation” (Harris, 1992: 10-11). Over time the focus on the principal actor increased to the point where he became a ‘pantomime’, or ‘actor of all parts’<sup>12</sup>. “The pantomimes were the great stars of the Roman stage and inevitably became the heroes of the day and the darlings of all the women in the audience” (Harris, 1992: 10-11).

<sup>10</sup>Statistics on the incidence of surviving objects (Green, 1994: 70) suggest that the “Greeks of South Italy, and especially the Tarentines and the Syracusans, were addicted to theatre. Theatre must have been the major source of popular culture, the source of poetry, music, dance, and enjoyment, as well as an emotional escape that was not restricted to the aristocratic or wealthy segment of the population (as was symposium poetry)” (Green, 1994: 56). One of the things that people found most “exciting about theatre when it was first being invented was the visual spectacle” (Green, 1994: 17). Whilst there was no scenery in the modern sense, the stage wall provided an increasingly elaborate architectural background, and on each side of the stage were the *periaktoi*. “These are believed to have been triangular prisms that could be rotated to indicate symbolically the change of scene by means of the painted tree, a column, or waves. There was a crane by which a god could descend from heaven to sort out the complications of the plot (whence the expression *deus ex machina*), and there was also a wheeled platform on which a prearranged tableau could be shown, and a machine for imitating thunder” (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 22).

<sup>11</sup>The Romans introduced innovations, both technical and structural. For example, wig colour was used to signify age and status; the yellow wig for women was retained even after women took over the roles from men. “To make dance steps audible, actors attached metal chips (*sabilla*) to their footwear, the antecedents of modern-day tap shoes” (Kenrick, 2008: 25).

<sup>12</sup>“As the supporting actors disappeared, the chorus became more important again and divided into ‘pyrrhicists’ and ‘symphoniacs’ - dancers and singers - who reinforced or counterpointed the main actor’s movements and choral motifs. The instrumentalists down in the orchestra, the original dancing folk, also became subordinated to the principal actor, highlighting his performance with their zithers, trumpets, cymbals, flutes and castanets” (Harris, 1992: 10-11). The preeminent playwright, Terence, dropped the chorus altogether, which of course “put an enormous physical strain on the main actors and they exercised constantly to preserve the tone of their muscles, suppleness of their joints, and the volume and charm of their voices, and also followed a strict diet which called for purgatives and emetics the moment their waistline was threatened” (Harris, 1992: 10-11).

All of the parts in Roman theatre were played by slaves<sup>13</sup>. Indeed the much-revered playwright, Terence, himself began life as a boy slave before being educated and freed. Quintus Roscius Gallus (c126-62 BCE), born a slave, reached great heights in Roman theatre, and his name became synonymous with theatrical excellence. Thus, although the Greek tradition of inter-generational involvement of the general public in the theatre was not carried forward into Roman theatre, the name of one of its most celebrated performers would endure to serve as an accolade for future generations of boy actors (including the child prodigy, Master Betty<sup>14</sup>).

By the first centuries of the new era, Roman theatres had been built all over Italy, in Spain and France, and in the Colonies in North Africa (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 28). Theatregoers in Roman Britain were able to take their families to a pantomime in towns like St. Albans or Canterbury where theatres accommodated audiences of around 2,000 people entertained by touring companies<sup>15</sup>.

By the time the Roman Empire collapsed<sup>16</sup>, Roman theatre had at any event “become so tawdry that the Catholic Church condemned it as a corrupt and sinful influence. The church’s influence was such that professional theatre ceased to exist in Europe for several centuries” (Kenrick, 2008: 25)<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>13</sup>This was in contrast to the Greek theatre where the actors were generally of high social status.

<sup>14</sup>Although often described as a Victorian child prodigy, William Henry West Betty, born Sept. 13, 1791 in Shrewsbury, was in fact a popular child actor in the early 19th century, retiring in 1824. Betty was often referred to as ‘The Young Roscius’ (Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.b).

<sup>15</sup>Although rather smaller than the audiences that Roman theatre attracted at its peak on home soil, they were large by modern standards, particularly when considered in the context of the size of population at the time, estimated to be around only a million for the whole of England (Coleman and Salt, 1992: 2) – initially in 43 CE, Romans had numbered less than 50,000, though this grew substantially after that – and the fact that “British audiences preferred the bloodthirsty exhibitions of gladiators in the amphitheatres” (Branigan, 1980: 184).

<sup>16</sup>Roman theatre came to an end in the 6th century CE with the arrival of the Lombards. “Loss of theatres meant the end of the pantomimes, because theirs was an expensive kind of show to produce, needed a large stage and, despite its erotic appeal, depended on an artistically cultivated audience which could appreciate the finer points of dance and choral music. It did not appeal to the Barbarians who favoured sword dances and bagpipes” (Harris, 1992: 17-18).

<sup>17</sup>Musical theatre is not of course an exclusively Western phenomenon. The musical theatre of India, Natya, is thought to date back to 200 BCE. As Sanskrit theatre declined in the 10th century, traditional folk theatre became popular. Regional traditions including the Yatra of Bengal, the Ramlila of Uttar Pradesh, the Terukkuttu of Tamil Nadu and Parsi theatre are thought to be the fore-runner of Bollywood. Sanskrit theatre was reportedly all adult, with child performers not taking the stage until the 15th century (Varadpande, 1991: 304).

## 2.4 Finding its feet: Medieval and Renaissance theatre

### 2.4.1 Transition

Some historians believe that after the pioneering work of the Greeks, theatre took a step backwards under the Romans, and was stopped in its tracks by the Barbarians. However there are indications that musical theatre did not die out completely, but simply went into hibernation, surviving in the form of its component parts. Apart from a scattering of references to individuals such as the ubiquitous Cædmon ([Sacks, 2007: 7](#)), it is the case that historical evidence tends to be even more ephemeral for the ‘plastic arts’ than, say, painting or literature, and glimpses of Anglo-Saxon culture such as these are few and far between. The so-called ‘dark ages’ are sometimes dismissed as a wasteland for the arts, and at first sight the prevailing instabilities in governance ([Lee, 1997](#)) and language ([Bragg, 2004](#)) would not have been the ideal conditions for theatre. However Mills argues that the settlement of the Anglo-Saxons c. 450 CE “brought about the large-scale sense of community that is a pre-requisite for the most socially-dependent of art forms and marked the beginnings of village life in England”; he makes the point that Medieval drama is the generic expression of the new communities, “deriving from the awareness of the community as an economic, social and ‘religious’ unit” ([Mills, 1983a: 122-123](#)).

There is disagreement about whether drama in England was essentially a continuation from that developed previously in mainland Europe<sup>18</sup>; what is clear is that throughout the Middle Ages, playwrights drew heavily on Graeco-Roman culture<sup>19</sup>.

Much of the extant historical evidence is courtesy of the clergy, a lot of which would seem to be associated with the education of the young (([Happe, 1999: 94](#)), ([Herrick,](#)

<sup>18</sup>Mills argues that “there is no evidence to suggest that any earlier tradition of drama, deriving from Celtic culture or the dramatic traditions of the Romans existed in the British Isles” ([Mills, 1983a: 122-123](#)). Hartnoll, on the other hand, is sceptical about the notion of a complete break in the development of theatre, and the implication that it had to be independently reinvented arguing that “this is to underestimate both the force of the mimetic instinct in man and the stubbornness of inherited traditions” ([Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 32](#)). She supports her view with an example from 6th century Byzantium where adaptations from the old pagan theatre found their way into religious plays. Wickham takes a similar line arguing that, “the English ‘players of Interludes’ and their equivalents on the continent invented very little. Their platea, or acting area, and its relationship to the audience was essentially still that of liturgical music-drama in Christian basilicas of the 11th and 12th centuries and of the Mummings and extremets of banquet halls of the 13th and 14th century” ([Wickham, 1974: 195](#)). Roberts provides a hint that these two viewpoints may not necessarily be mutually exclusive; he refers to the spread of megalith technology from the Mediterranean to northern Europe, and concludes that the evidence suggests sporadic borrowing from other cultures rather than wholesale adoption ([Roberts, 1996](#)). Whilst snatches of the culture of the early Middle Ages are sparse, on balance there is then enough evidence to suggest that drama in one form or another enjoyed a largely unbroken history, and exhibited a good deal of continuity in both form and content.

<sup>19</sup>The 10th century Benedictine nun, Hroswitha, drew on Terence when writing her ‘dramas’ ([Happe, 1999: 10](#)). Shakespeare borrowed plots from Plautus and Plutarch.



1955: 61-62)). In around 940 CE Aelfric used drama to educate his pupils (Bragg, 2004: 31). The first recorded instance of *St Katherine* at Dunstable grammar school was in 1100 (Various, 1983: xx). This was produced by a schoolmaster, Geoffrey of Maine, who became abbot of St. Albans in 1119 (Hillebrand, 1964: 10).

Performances in the Middle Ages tended to be in Latin<sup>20</sup>, and so fully accessible only to the educated, others having to make do with imagery and music. The 12th century Anglo-Norman play *Adam* was one of the earliest departures including speeches in the vernacular<sup>21</sup> (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 40).

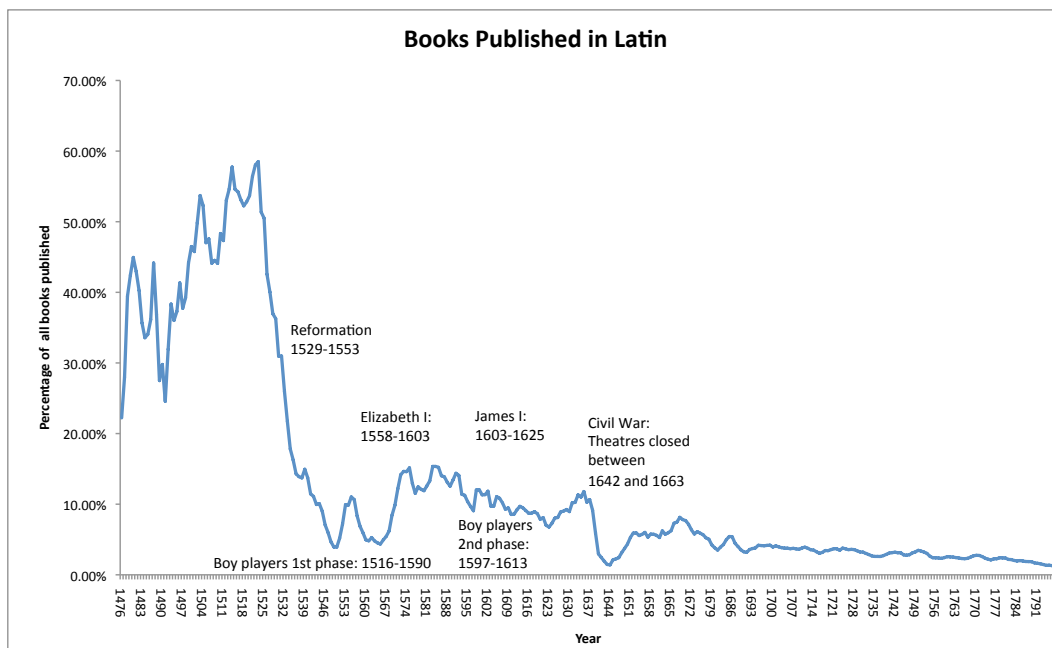


FIGURE 2.2: Books published in Latin

“It is clear that the citizens of England were very familiar from early times with seeing children acting in public capacities that were wholly or partly dramatic” (Hillebrand, 1964: 9)<sup>22</sup>. The companies of boy actors, which came to prominence in the 16th century, were the result of a co-evolution of three separate cultural developments (Hillebrand, 1964: 9):

<sup>20</sup>And of course most published works were in Latin: Figure 2.2 on page 14. Data were taken from (Simons, 2013), and a 5-year moving average applied to smooth out the large fluctuations in the early years, and to expose the effects of the Reformation, the Civil War and the changes in monarchs more clearly.

<sup>21</sup>It was “set out of doors, with the church doors forming a background through which God and chief actors came and went, while the Devils ran about in front of the raised platform” (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 40).

<sup>22</sup>Malone tells us that the performance of mysteries by choirboys was “a very ancient practice, probably coeval with the earliest attempts at dramatik representation” (Malone, 1821: 22). Child acting was thus common before the organisation of children into companies, and indeed common from the early Middle Ages (Hillebrand, 1964: 10).



- “boys of abbeys, churches and grammar schools from the very early times acted in religious plays and interludes.
- choirboys throughout England and the rest of Europe went through a mummary at the feast of St. Nicholas, when one of their number acted for a time as bishop.
- half dramatic pageants with which the large cities welcomed visiting sovereigns and titled guests, during which children were used”.

Shapiro agrees that companies had a long pedigree, but gives particular weight to the role of choirs in their development<sup>23</sup>.

It turns out that we had drama before we knew what to call it. The Oxford English Dictionary records the use of the word drama as an alternative to play in 1515 (Mills, 1983b: 79). Interestingly, this happens to broadly coincide with the first play attributed to the Chapel children: “The first play<sup>24</sup> that can be safely assigned to the Chapel children was *Troilus and Pandor*, written by William Cornish, the master of the troupe, and presented at Eltham on 12th night, 1516” (Shapiro, 1977: 7).

However it was not until Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558, that the Children of the Chapel reached prominence at Court; they fared especially well under the stewardship of Richard Edwards, admired as much for his plays as his music (Austern, 1992: 3). Whilst other troupes existed (at Westminster<sup>25</sup> and Eton for example), the history of companies of boy players is dominated by two groups (and others related to them): the Children of the Chapel<sup>26</sup> and the Boys of St. Paul’s<sup>27</sup>. A summary of performances by

<sup>23</sup> “True theatrical performances by choirboys arise not from the ceremony of the Boy Bishop but from tropes introduced into the mass after the ninth century. From dialogues between two half choirs, these tropes expanded into short scenes with clergy and choristers singing individual parts. In the earliest of these scenes, and in the later mystery plays, choirboys often took roles which naturally suited them: Angels; children, such as the innocents; and sometimes women such as the Maries. Choirboys continued to play these roles even after the municipal guilds undertook the production of religious plays in the 14th and 15th centuries” (Shapiro, 1977: 9). Nonetheless he concedes that the Court plays performed by boy players in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII were but part of a much broader spectrum of entertainment, including tournaments, pageants, disguisings, mummings, interludes and debates; “one of the earliest recorded entertainments, the dialogue of love and riches (1527), was little more than a debate used to introduce jousting at barriers” (Shapiro, 1977: 140). These occasions were hugely important in cultural terms, as observed by Huizinga in respect of similar events in 15th century Burgundy in that “they still preserved something of the meaning they have in primitive societies, that of the supreme expression of their culture, the highest mould of a collective enjoyment and an assertion of solidarity” (Shapiro, 1977: 38).

<sup>24</sup> “Although the children of the Chapel Royal participated in numerous pageants and other semi-dramatic entertainments under the first two Tudors, we hear relatively little of their performing plays. The gentleman of the Chapel seem to have presented plays as early as 1506” (Shapiro, 1977: 7).

<sup>25</sup> Westminster boys entertained Queen Elizabeth regularly between 1566/7 and 1575/6 (Shapiro, 1977: 11).

<sup>26</sup> Also known as ‘the Children of the Queen’s Revels’, and later as the more commercially orientated ‘the Children of the Blackfriars’ and ‘the Children of the Whitefriars’ (Shapiro, 1977: 179).

<sup>27</sup> And later by ‘the Children of the King’s Revels’ which some believe to have been formed from the Children of Paul’s; they were not a success, performing during 1607/8 only (Austern, 1992: 10), (Gurr, 2009).

the principal companies of boy players (based on data from (Gurr, 2009) and elsewhere) is shown in Figure 2.3 on page 17.

The Children of St. Paul's came to the fore in 1557 under the guidance of Sebastian Wescott, and went on to perform at Court on 27 occasions, more than any other group ((Burwick, 2011: 12),(Shapiro, 1977: 11)); and later (after a suspension between 1584 and 1597) under the direction of Richard Pearce, who relinquished his place as gentleman of the Chapel Royal to take over the group and who steered the group to great heights (Austern, 1992: 5).

The participation of children, especially choristers, in elite (and other) entertainment was widespread across Europe (Austern, 1992: 1) and it was common for children to participate in plays. "Many of the Italian *sacre rappresentazioni* were played exclusively by boys. In Germany, France and England it was common to cast boys as angels and so swell the ranks of attendants upon such dignitaries as Pharaohs or the Magi with pages" (Wickham, 1974: 92)<sup>28</sup>.

Our understanding of musical theatre history is of course limited by the availability of documentary evidence, which became more abundant in the latter part of the 16th century<sup>29</sup>. Some scholars point to an increase in published plays as a key factor in increasing their popularity. However the scale of printed books remained relatively modest until the mid 17th century (see Figure 2.4 on page 18)<sup>30</sup>. It is arguable then that musical theatre's specific connections with the Royal Court may have been at least as big a factor in increasing its profile as the arrival of the printing press in 1467. In that sense it could be argued that the emergence of children's companies, through their close association with the Court, helped to stabilise and make more comprehensive the social record on theatre.

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<sup>28</sup>Indeed the developments in musical theatre were not restricted to Europe. Whether conceived independently, or sharing a common ancestry, they were taking place across the civilised world. During the 14th century, there were small companies of actors in Japan who performed short, sometimes vulgar comedies. The director of one of these companies, Kan'ami (1333-1384), had a son, Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443) who was considered one of the finest child actors in Japan. In 1374, when Zeami was 11, he acted before the Shogun (Brandon, 1993: 145), and went on to become an actor/playwright who wrote 16 treatises over his lifetime, including 'practical advice on how to train child actors' (Banham, 1995: 266). In the 17th century, Noh actors were given Samurai rank and only the sons of actors were allowed to become performers" (Brandon, 1993: 145). The first '*Cinderella*' is thought to have been written down in China around 850 A.D. (Sierra, 1992: 4). The Kurds used "stories, poetry, songs, ritual speech, literature and syntax of language (to) store the collective intellectual achievements of a culture and supply us with unique perspective on fundamental problems of the human condition" (Edgecomb, 2008: xii).

<sup>29</sup>See for example Fleay (1890).

<sup>30</sup>Data are taken from (Simons, 2013). Simons estimates that in 1700 only 4% of books were classified as music and 6% poetry, whereas over half were classified as divinity.

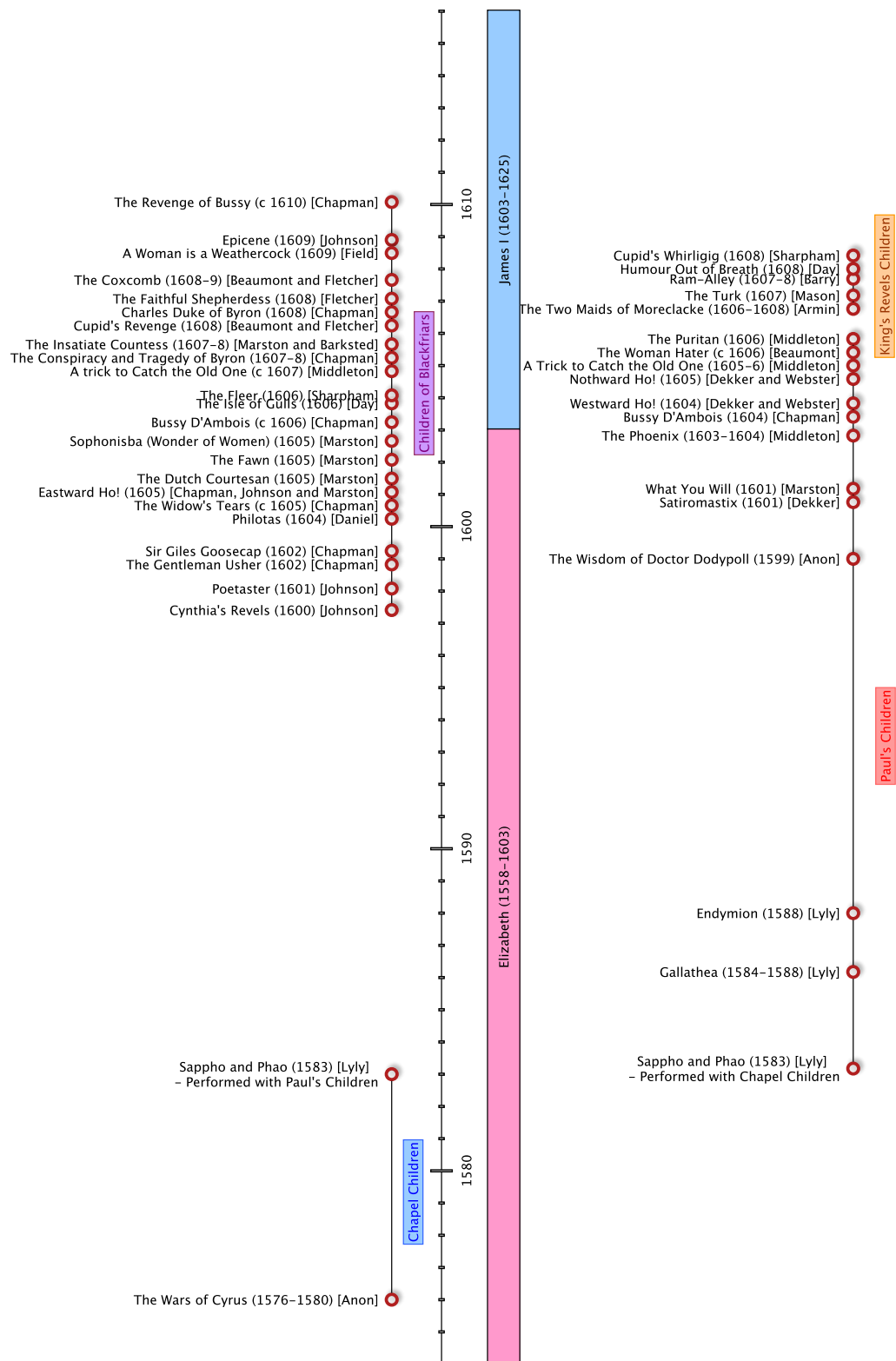


FIGURE 2.3: Performances by boy players

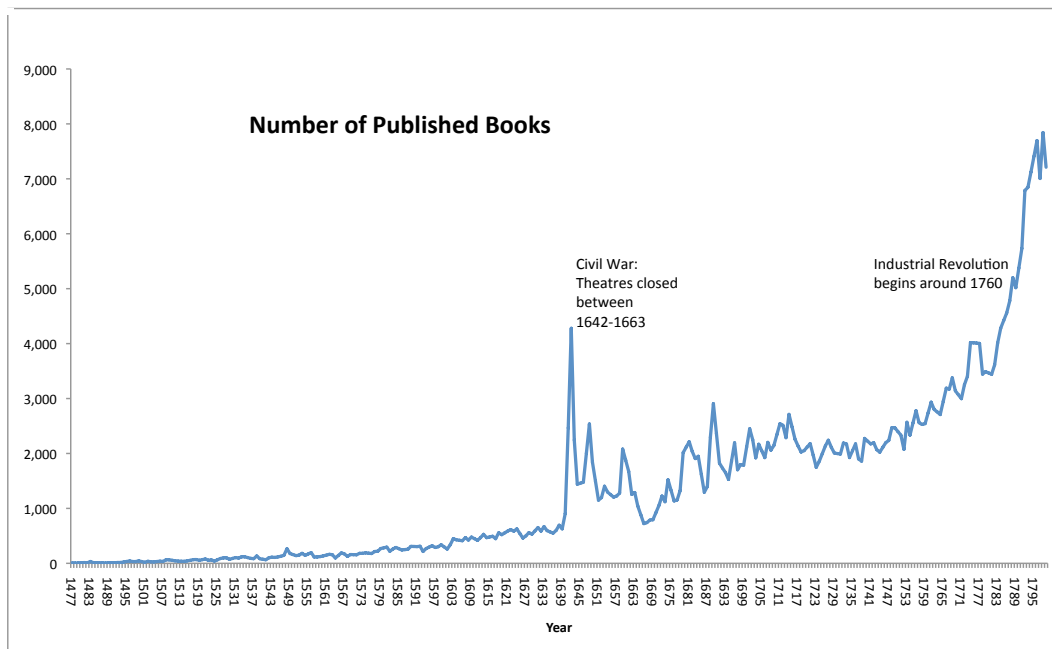


FIGURE 2.4: Number of published books

The scarcity of written material, let alone the low levels of literacy<sup>31</sup>, underlines the importance of theatre, and of musical theatre in particular, not only for recreation, but also in the transmission of ideas. Writers and actors, particularly those in travelling companies that ranged across Europe, and beyond, were the ‘opinion formers’ and the ‘messengers’ of the day. Through their part in Renaissance theatre, children had an important, if unwitting, role to play as the mouthpiece of playwrights and producers, including those with a political agenda.

More importantly as far as students of theatre are concerned, children made a substantial contribution to driving up artistic quality. There is general agreement about the quality of productions delivered by companies of boy actors (Shapiro, 1977: 31). This quality brought with it a virtuous circle with the companies able to recruit the best and the brightest playwrights and musicians, and to supplement their numbers of boy actors as necessary through ‘impressment’ (Austern, 1992: 2-3). The companies enjoyed a strong brand: their names emphasised their royal connections and suggested precocious talent, and they were able to go on to exploit their prestige and ecclesiastical connections, which were “amusingly incongruous” with the bold plays and bawdiness which made them famous (Austern, 1992: 10).

<sup>31</sup>At the beginning of the 17th century, levels of literacy in the North were around a third for men, and less than 10% for women (Clark, 2004: 34).

It was musical quality that is seen to set the boy companies apart, with offerings including relatively sophisticated polyphonic songs<sup>32</sup>. In later years there was a greater degree of cross-fertilisation<sup>33</sup> between public and private theatre than is sometimes admitted, with adult companies taking on polyphonic songs, for example.

Whilst scholars have understandably devoted most of their attention to the amateur companies of boy choristers, the involvement of children in theatre was by no means limited to these (in either their amateur or professional guises). There were many others with an involvement in the adult companies of the day. The ‘Beeston Boys’ (also known as The King and Queen’s Young Company), composed of boys and young men in their early twenties and specialising in plays performed previously by adult companies, were especially active between 1637 and 1642, delivering at least 14 performances in 1639 (Gurr, 2009: 64). An examination of a sample of 200 professional actors reveals that around half began as boy players, or played a role in training apprentices (Astington, 2010: 188-224). To put this into perspective, it is estimated that at any one time London hosted around 200 professional actors, and around twice that number nationwide<sup>34</sup> (Astington, 2010: 8).

Some, like Nat Field and William Ostler graduated from the troupes of boy actors. But others, like Kemp, who specialised in comedy/dance, were schooled in professional troupes (Austern, 1992: 17-18).

Whilst it may be a step too far to claim that child performers transformed the economics of the theatre, it is fair to say that they played a key role in turning the industry into a respectable profession. During the 16th century professional actors had been regarded with disdain. The boys of private theatres were different: they were not paid for acting, nor did they serve as lowly actors’ apprentices. “They were principally angelic choirboys and privileged schoolboys pressed into occasional playing by certain of their masters” (Austern, 1992: 16). Yet these companies came to enjoy unprecedented commercial status (Austern, 1992: 1), and in a real sense paved the way for their adult counterparts, helping to make the theatrical profession more respectable and more successful through the diffusion of material and personnel.

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<sup>32</sup>Yet the companies were by no means limited to these. Whilst plays performed by children did generally include more challenging music than those performed by adults, and there was more of it, Austern argues that this had much to do with the genres of the plays performed; children’s companies were more likely to perform comedies, and these tended to include more music than other genres. She observes that a number of the plays performed by children included no music at all, and less than half of the songs were polyphonic. There was substantial overlap in the lyrics featuring in plays performed by adults, and these were dominated by “the sort of unaccompanied, pre-existing pieces associated more strongly with the public theatres” (Austern, 1992: xvii).

<sup>33</sup>Of both content and personnel – the two unlikely to be totally unrelated of course.

<sup>34</sup>The ‘Bacon number’ in Renaissance England would have been very much smaller than it is today (*The Oracle of Bacon*, n.d.).

### 2.4.2 Socio-political

Theatre is best understood if it is considered in its social context and this is certainly true of Medieval theatre, and particularly so during the Renaissance when theatre can be said to have aligned itself to serve the three estates of Medieval England: the clergy, the nobility and the commoners.

“By the early Middle Ages, theatre in Europe consisted mostly of travelling minstrels<sup>35</sup> and small performing troupes of performers singing and offering slapstick comedy. In the 12th and 13th centuries, religious dramas, such as *The Play of Herod* and *The Play of Daniel*, taught the liturgy, set to church chants. Later ‘Mystery plays’ were created that told a biblical story in a sequence of entertaining parts” (Harris, 1992: 93)<sup>36</sup>.

Casts “consisted of clerics, choirboys, and in at least some instances, nuns” (Kenrick, 2008: 27). “Originally performed in church to augment the mass or evening prayer, these plays eventually moved to outdoor stages where more vernacular content was acceptable. By that time, members of local craft guilds had taken an active role in the performance and production of these plays. There were various types of music-drama, each defined by specific content (Kenrick, 2008: 27):

- “Folk plays were based on popular myths, such as the legend of Robin Hood.
- Miracle plays involved the lives (true or fictional) of the saints [and martyrs].
- Morality plays were allegories illustrating the seven deadly sins.
- Mystery plays were dramatizations of Bible stories”.

There were few sites used exclusively for theatre until the end of the 16th century<sup>37</sup>. Touring companies would use wagons to stage (mystery) ‘cycles’<sup>38</sup>. Several pageant wagons (stages on wheels) would move about the city, and a group of actors would tell their part of the story<sup>39</sup>. Children also participated in another type of pageant,

<sup>35</sup> “The gléoman is heard of among the Angles of the 4th century” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2013), though minstrel guilds were not founded until 1321 (Kant, 2007); in England the charter issued by Edward IV in 1469 required all minstrels to join a guild on “pain of suppression” (Cambridge History of English and American Literature, 1907–21).

<sup>36</sup> The fact that performances of these plays are still able to fill a central London theatre is testament to their ability to engage an audience; for example, *The Globe Mysteries* at Shakespeare’s Globe on 10th Aug 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Aside from the pageant wagons used in the York processions (Tydeman, 1986: 104), the staging of theatre took a number of different forms including the Booth stage (constructed in Inn courtyards), the Croxton play of the Sacrament (erected in the churchyard), theatre in the round, and plays staged in the Great Hall (Tydeman, 1986: 36,60,102,136).

<sup>38</sup> “These plays developed into an autonomous form of musical theatre, with poetic forms sometimes alternating with the prose dialogues and liturgical chants. The poetry was provided with modified or completely new melodies” (Harris, 1992: 93).

<sup>39</sup> Once finished, the group would move on with their wagon, and the next group would arrive to tell its part of the story.

in which a “moving audience encounters tableaux placed along its route. The second type of pageant was used well into the 17th-century for coronations, welcoming of distinguished visitors, and annual Lord Mayors shows, and frequently involved schoolboys and choristers dressed in appropriate uniform and mounted on temporary platforms as musicians, singers, orators, mute emblematic figures . . . Although adults sometimes appeared in these stationary pageants, children were generally preferred for being less likely to crowd a scaffold or jeopardise its stability. Children’s troupes continued to appear in such pageants even after they began offering plays at Court and ‘rehearsing’ these plays in their own private theatres” (Shapiro, 1977: 143).

When playhouses finally emerged<sup>40</sup>, it was London they came to first. By then the population of London had started to rise sharply (spasmodically checked by the ravages of the plague) (see Figure 2.5 on page 21 (Demographia, 2001)).

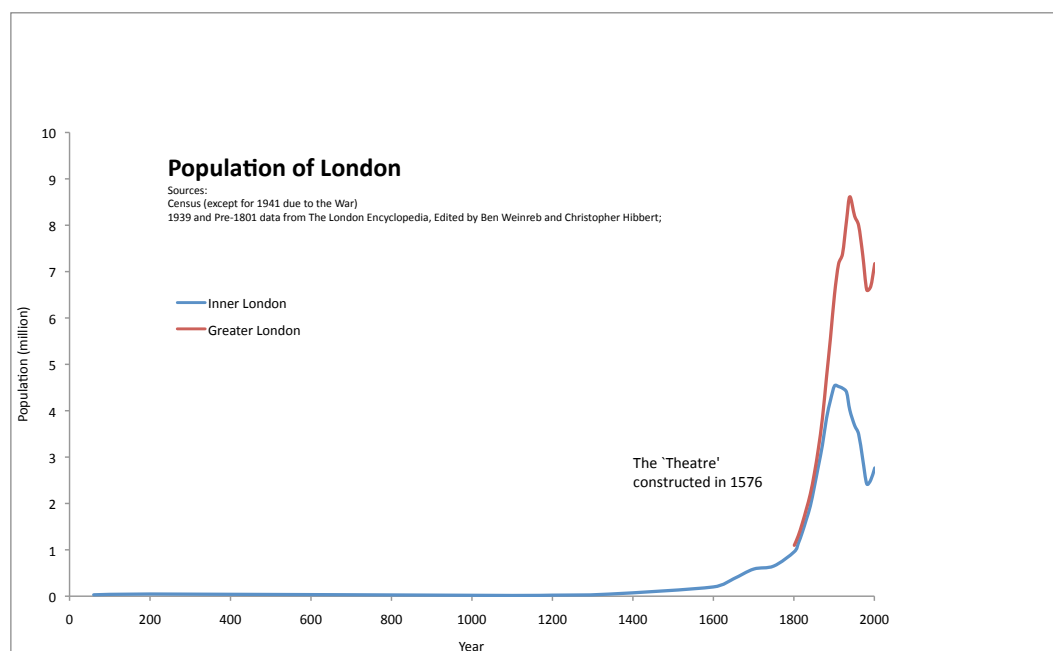


FIGURE 2.5: Population of London

Playhouses were of two types: ‘public’ and ‘private’. The former was “descended from theatre delivered by groups of itinerant actors in animal baiting arenas and inn yards” (Austern, 1992: xv). Unsurprisingly therefore the offering was designed to have popular

<sup>40</sup>In the same year as the last major English cycle at Wakefield was suppressed in 1576, the first permanent theatre was constructed by James Burbage (Harris, 1992: 189). ‘The Theatre’, as it was unimaginatively named, had to be built outside the city boundary due to opposition from the Mayor of London (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 73). (As it turned out, the Theatre proved not to be all that ‘permanent’ in that Burbage’s sons surreptitiously dismantled it during the night in 1598 and transported it to Bankside to build the Globe (Dunton-Downer and Riding, 2004: 28).

appeal, and its actors trained on the job as apprentices<sup>41</sup>. It was in the ‘private’ theatres, where the boys of the chapel began (and in some cases ended) their acting careers.

Elizabeth travelled around the country a lot<sup>42</sup>, staying with various members of the nobility. The boy players were known to be among her favourite entertainers (Austern, 1992: 10) and her tours no doubt helped spread enthusiasm for the boy players and for theatre in general, and may have played a role in establishing troupes of adult players; the boy actors could be said to have had a hand in fathering adult theatre, so to speak.

There was thus a cachet associated with private theatres (Austern, 1992: 10,38). The content of plays performed in private theatres was different to their public theatre counterparts<sup>43</sup>. “Plays written for the private theatres often focused on the economic, social, political, and intellectual concerns of a self-conscious, self-styled elite<sup>44</sup>. Even when these boys were joined or supplanted by non-chorister actors and their Court performances had all but ceased, the mystique of royal entertainment was carefully maintained” (Austern, 1992: xv).

“The musical conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama owed their origins to non-dramatic ideas and practices, not to the special training of the specific troupes of actors<sup>45</sup> ... It has long been assumed music in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama was but an echo of music and contemporary life and thought. But every specific use of music in children’s plays between 1597 and 1613 has an established antecedent outside the theatre. They would have been familiar to playwright and audience alike, and most of the children’s playwrights connected dramatic music to contemporary thought in the text of their plays” (Austern, 1992: xvii).

Throughout history, musical theatre has tended to sail close to the wind - politically or morally - sometimes receiving a boost, sometimes encountering resistance.

<sup>41</sup>The new ‘public’ theatres, such as the Globe, were large (seating around 3,000), open roofed and (roughly) circular, with cheap standing room in the yard. In contrast, ‘private’ theatres were a close relation of the banquet hall where members of the nobility were used to being entertained. They were smaller (<700 seats; at Court, smaller still: 100 seats), rectangular, entirely enclosed, with seating for all (Austern, 1992: 25-26). Their offering tended to be more ‘exclusive’, as were their admission fees (Shapiro, 1977: 67).

<sup>42</sup>Reportedly to keep her own costs down, and thus help her live within a budget.

<sup>43</sup>Although not as different as is sometimes assumed.

<sup>44</sup>The “actors originally employed in the private theatres further recalled aristocratic diversions, for they were at first the choirboys of St. Paul’s Cathedral and the Chapel Royal, who had traditionally played for the Tudor court” (Austern, 1992: xv).

<sup>45</sup>“Writers on nearly every topic known to 16th and 17th century England had something to say about music, and many of these observations are reflected in the theatre” (Austern, 1992: xv).



Despite the fact that drama began in the church<sup>46</sup>, the clergy had an ambivalent attitude toward theatre. The path from liturgy to drama was not always a smooth one. “By the end of the twelfth century, so far had this aspect of the play developed that the Abbess of Hohenburg, near Strasbourg, felt obliged to remonstrate against this exhibition of ‘irreligion and extravagance with all the licence of youth’ ” (Wickham, 1992: 71).

“In 1418 the Mayor and Aldermen of London issued an edict forbidding mumming in the Christmas season that year, [the wording extending to] enterludes” (Wickham, 1974: 172). Protestants in particular were troubled even by religious drama (Heinemann, 1980), believing that they must not “let themselves be corrupted by any form of art, which was inevitably a human distortion of God’s truth - and drama was a particularly reprehensible form of art, utterly trivial in its treatment of life, a temptation to murder and fornication, and a great waster of God’s good time” (Harris, 1992: 188-189); the cross-dressing of young boys to play female parts offended the puritans, who were the authority in the City of London at the time (O’Connor, 2008: 39).

A statute was enacted in 1572 consolidating the proclamation of 1559 “providing that common players in interludes etc. not belonging to a baron or higher personage or not having license from two JPs should be dealt with as rogues or vagabonds” (Fleay, 1890: 44). But passions continued to run high: in 1578 Seman preached against “dancing about church, and without to have naked men dancing in nets, which is most filthy” (Fleay, 1890: 50).

Objections from the clergy reverberated across Europe. The acting of religious plays was forbidden in Paris as early as 1548 (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 51). The rapid rise of the boy players in England was arrested in 1588 as part of the ongoing political struggle between denominations, and children’s drama in England vanished completely in the late 17th century as the authorities became increasingly concerned about the “transformation of sacred choirboy into profane actor” (Austern, 1992: 1). “Jesuit drama was scholastic rather than theatrical, and was quick to take advantage of the new classicism, mingling Hercules, Tritons and nymphs with saints and martyrs. School drama was very largely educational, and still written in Latin ... The religious play [persisted longest in Spain where it was not forbidden until] 1765 (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 51).

Having noted the church’s concerns about the moral hazards associated with theatre, it is worth exploring the day to day impact on conditions for children working in it.

<sup>46</sup>Drama, particularly musical drama, had its roots in Medieval liturgical drama prevalent across Europe e.g. Spain (Wickham, 1992: 192). Easter celebrations were especially influential because the Resurrection, far more than the Nativity, was the focal point of the Christian year (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 35), though the oft-cited ceremony of the Boy Bishop was enacted on Innocents’ Day (December 28) (Shapiro, 1977: 8).

Children's companies provided an education for their members, and careers for some. But there were some downsides as well.

The treatment of children in Elizabethan theatre was not especially topical in the way that it was in the Victorian period for example, and so the literature says relatively little about it, other than to indicate that choristers were not exempt from school discipline. A verse by Redford, the Almoner and Master of the Choristers at St. Paul's includes "a chorister's lament at the beatings dealt out by, presumably, Redford himself" ([Byram-Wigfield, 2007](#)). On balance there seems no reason to believe that the treatment of children in theatre was in general better or worse than their counterparts outside the theatre. There were industry-specific risks to those working in the theatre, and to those who were not.

Salomon Pavy, immortalised by the epitaph written for him by Ben Johnson, was recruited to the Children of the Chapel in 1600 when he was ten and became famous "for portraying all men on stage", before dying when he was only thirteen ([Austern, 1992: 18](#)).

Stage make-up was a hazardous commodity in Renaissance theatre (([Karim-Cooper, 2006](#)), ([Pollard, 1999](#))). Boy players were particularly at risk due to the white make-up used when playing female roles. The make-up contained lead and caused skin diseases, and many are reported to have died as a result of lead poisoning (([Karim-Cooper, 2008: 70](#)),([Globe Education, n.d.](#)),([Williams, 2015](#))).

Boys outside theatre companies were not beyond the reach of company managers. Theatrical 'pressgangs' were at liberty to supplement their numbers by virtue of a patent of 'impressment'. "Unlike the Children of St. Paul's, the children of the Chapel had no convenient institution from which to recruit extra actors and in 1600 the son of a gentleman was abducted by one of Nathaniel Giles' deputies for service in the theatre, prompting a vigorous complaint from the boy's father to the Star Chamber"<sup>47</sup> ([Austern, 1992: 7](#)). The boy was recovered soon after, but investigations by the boy's father revealed that a number of others, including Nathan Field and Salomon Pavy had been similarly recruited. As a result of the complaint, "Henry Evans was censured for 'unorderly carriage and behaviour in taking up of gentlemen's children against their wills and to employ them for players, and for other misdemeanours' and was ordered to have nothing further to do with the Blackfriars establishment" ([Austern, 1992: 7](#)). This prompted Evans to leave town for a few years until the episode was forgotten. "The Clifton indiscretion ultimately failed to hurt the company's continued success. The boys still occasionally performed at court, and their Blackfriars Theatre became the most fashionable in London" (([Austern, 1992: 7](#)), ([Fleay, 1890: 128-129](#))).

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<sup>47</sup>The so-called 'Clifton case'.

Young people often found themselves in the vanguard, politically as well as artistically. They became both unwitting protagonists and unwilling victims in the rise and fall of Elizabethan theatre. In the first half of the 16th century interludes were used in performances at schools, universities and Inns of Court, but also as propaganda exercises by those with a political motive including Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell (Harris, 1992: 162).

Ritual mockery had long been the basis of the comedy in festal ceremony. “Institutionalised forms of misrule”, manifest in the feast of fools and the Boy Bishop ceremony, were especially popular, and Renaissance appetites were exploited in plays performed by the children’s troupes (Shapiro, 1977: 40,42). What made children’s plays effective was their ability to inflate the self-image of audience members by encouraging them to “identify [with] characters of high rank whilst inviting the ridicule of others” (Shapiro, 1977: 38-39).

The view that children could not be held morally responsible for what they said on stage conferred immunity, particularly since attacks on figures of authority were usually delivered by the smallest members of the cast (Shapiro, 1977: 48), thus allowing them to be used as human shields in the political battlefield. At the same time phrases like “children and fools speak truth” were used by playwrights to ensure that their message was undiminished (Shapiro, 1977: 41).

The popularity of St. Paul’s at Court afforded their master, Sebastian Westcott, protection from the municipal and ecclesiastical authorities antagonised by Westcott’s Catholicism (Shapiro, 1977: 12-13). However the popularity of the boy players was tested to breaking point when they performed plays by Lyly and other young writers recruited by the Anglican authorities to provide a riposte to pamphlets written by a puritan writer under the pseudonym of Martin Marprelate. As a result the boys were banished from the Court and the theatre for nearly a decade ((Austern, 1992: 5), (Shapiro, 1977: 177)), leaving the company without patronage and so in much reduced circumstances (Shapiro, 1977: 183). Relations with the Court deteriorated further in 1606 when the Children of the Chapel offended James I<sup>48</sup> enough for him to withdraw royal patronage. The company continued under the new name of the Queen’s Revels, but after continued provocation James broke ties completely with the troupe in 1608; the troupe was subsequently dissolved in 1609 by impresario Henry Evans (Austern, 1992: 7).

Cutting satire had been the making of children’s troupes, but it also proved to be its undoing. “Satire has to escalate in vigour to remain interesting” (Shapiro, 1977: 230), and eventually the line is crossed alienating its audience, provoking the authorities, or both. Despite its demise, the art of the boy players had left its mark. Ultimately the

<sup>48</sup>Already less enthusiastic about the boy players’ performances than Elizabeth.

satiric drama of the boy players migrated to adult theatre and profoundly influenced Jacobean drama (Austern, 1992: 36). In the meantime, children's theatre attempted self rehabilitation by toning down scripts (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 89) or by resorting to self parody (Shapiro, 1977: 230), but never succeeded in recovering its previous popularity.

There was one factor that affected all three 'estates' of Elizabethan England: the Plague<sup>49</sup>. Plagues affected London between 1559 and 1642<sup>50</sup>, causing 21,530 deaths in London alone (Fleay, 1890: 44). In 1586 there were no plays in London (Fleay, 1890: 91), but this led to a displacement rather than an outright suspension, because during the term of their 'exile', the players toured the country, or sold their skills in Europe. In 1603 theatres were closed because of Elizabeth's illness, remaining so after her death for about a year. Shortly after they reopened, the children of the Queen's Revels performed their own "Fortune Hunter" city comedies, such as *Eastward Ho!* (Shapiro, 1977: 214). During 1606-1610 theatres were closed for at least five months in the year; on one occasion, 1608-9, for 17 months continuously, markedly affecting the prosperity of actors, and substantially reducing the number of new plays produced. Shakespeare for instance, only produced one play per year during this time (Fleay, 1890: 167).

The Elizabethans had made great strides in turning theatre into a respectable profession, "but it was not until 1661 that drama became a recognised genre - 'the dramatic branch of literature, the dramatic art' - and not until 1714 that it appears referring to an action not textually controlled" (Mills, 1983b: 79).

### 2.4.3 Economics

Probing the prevailing socio-political environment helps us to understand the context in which theatre operated, but no industry can exist for long without funding and it is important therefore to consider the economics. Then as now, theatre operated in a mixed economy, funded from audience receipts and through subsidy.

Patronage was important<sup>51</sup>; it had a 'priming' role that was pivotal in getting theatre

<sup>49</sup>During the reigns of James and Charles, plagues were so frequent that theatres were often closed in consequence (Fleay, 1890: 162). "There were battles with the clergy who saw theatre as increasing the risk of spreading the disease. This, coupled with the noise and hindrance caused by the theatre gave the Lord Mayor good excuse to expel theatre companies from the city" (Fleay, 1890: 12).

<sup>50</sup>The worst of these occurring in: 1586, 1593, 1636 (Fleay, 1890: 7).

<sup>51</sup>That said there are examples of self-sufficiency amongst those who were not fortunate enough to enjoy subsidies from the aristocracy. Tydeman refers to lines in 'Mankynde' that suggest that it was performed by a professional band of strolling players, and goes on to cite evidence from 1525 that it was not unheard of for amateur groups to make a collection - house-to-house collections in some cases (Tydeman, 1986: 31).

established; its value was as much in making it respectable as it was in providing financial support<sup>52</sup>. An early well-documented example of patronage is that of Eleanor of Aquitaine, renowned for the support she gave to 12th century poets and troubadours (Bragg, 2004: 46). Elizabethan playing companies all had patrons<sup>53</sup>. The royal patronage enjoyed by the boy players brought with it indirect as well as direct benefits. The journey from patronage to professionalism was gradual and the distinction between professional and amateur was not always clear-cut, but the process unquestionably received added impetus from the boy players' association with the monarch. Whilst their status as 'amateurs' could be preserved as long they appeared at Court (Shapiro, 1977: 15), the quantity and quality of the plays performed by children's troupes increased markedly in their later quasi-professional phase (Shapiro, 1977: 29). The drift into professionalism was to a large extent inevitable; payment for a Court performance was £10 but this could be earned only twice a year, obliging the masters of the children's troupes to charge audiences to see 'rehearsals' simply to cover their costs (Shapiro, 1977: 15).

Local guilds were important in producing plays; they employed 'professionals' to increase the appeal of religious dramas (Tydeman, 1986: 200), and also nurtured apprentices<sup>54</sup>. An examination of extant financial records shows that drama was not cheap, an indicator of the value put on it by local communities. In 1463 "Agnes Ford was paid 6s 8d<sup>55</sup> *pro ludo interludii Passionis Domini*" (Wickham, 1974: 170). (To put this into perspective, a master mason might be paid 8d/day, and a gallon of ale cost 1d/gallon (National Archives, 2009)). By 1501 the average cost of a pageant had risen to £120. At the New Romney 3s 4d was paid "to buy paper for the writing of the parts of the play" (Wickham, 1974: 183). Based on figures cited by Wickham, Crawley and others<sup>56</sup>, prices appeared to have been reasonably stable during the first half of the 16th century, though prices

<sup>52</sup>Generally speaking, being a poet was a respectable career path, being a playwright was not, although "if high enough social standing to write as amateurs, playwrights remained immune from the stigma of the profession" (Austern, 1992: 42).

<sup>53</sup>Shakespeare had a number of patrons, principal amongst them was Lord Southampton (until he got himself into trouble) (Brown, 1912).

<sup>54</sup>Coyle argues that guilds were a key factor in explaining statistically improbable clusters of artistic genius (Coyle, 2009). In some cases this was through the direct mentoring support given by master craftsmen to their apprentices, as was the case for Renaissance Florentine artists. But he also alludes to the collateral benefits derived from the 'creative leakage' from one art form to another, at a time in history when the arts (and for that matter, sciences and philosophy) were less tightly compartmentalised.

<sup>55</sup>According to economists this is equivalent to between £236.70 and £104,000 depending upon which index is used! (Measuring Worth Foundation, 2013).

<sup>56</sup>At Chester in 1554 the total cost of a play amounted to £3 4s 7d; 10s 6d was paid to actors, varying from 6d to 3s 4d for individual actors (Cawley, 1983: 48-49); an actor in Coventry was paid 3s 4d for playing the part of God (Wickham, 1974: 92). It seems clear that plays made money. In 1523 the play of St. Swithun cost £3 1s 4d, the collections totalled £614s 11½d, leaving a profit of £3 13s 7½d. In 1525 the play of St. Andrew cost £4 9s 9d, but made a profit of £3 19s 9d. In 1535 the play of St. Eustace cost £6 13s 7½d, but reaped takings of £14 17s 6½d. (Wickham, 1974: 193). Cathedral accounts provide further information on payments made to performers (Lehmberg, 2014: 301-302).

would have been caught up with the ‘price revolution’: rapid inflation that increased prices 6-fold in 150 years<sup>57</sup>.

Children played their part in fund-raising. ‘Plays’ and ‘games’ were closely associated with fund-raising activities. From 1523 onwards the parish church of St. Mary Hill in London ran a school and arranged on occasion for the children to present a play. (Parish Church of St. and Littlehailes, 1905) cited in (Wickham, 1974: 192).

Interesting as it is, information about the costs of the Medieval theatre tends to be patchy, making it difficult to make like-with-like comparisons. We are more fortunate in respect of Elizabethan theatre thanks to the diaries of Philip Henshaw which provide us with detailed records of disbursements associated with theatre companies (Fleay, 1890: 103).

Children’s drama in the Middle Ages divides broadly into two phases: the first running from 1516 to 1590 when the two major troupes performed at court. This led to rehearsals before paying spectators. “The second ran from 1597 to 1613 characterised by commercialisation and competition with adult companies” (Austern, 1992: 2). The acquisition of the Blackfriars theatre for the Children of the Chapel in 1576 represented an important step toward professionalism. Another came in 1582/3 when its lease was acquired by entrepreneur Henry Evans, who maintained a mutually profitable relationship with the troupe for twenty years, despite a lengthy interruption caused by a dispute with the owner of the theatre (Austern, 1992: 3). A similar interruption in the performances of St. Paul’s boys caused by the Marprelate affair led to a prolonged period of hibernation for children’s drama, and adult companies were not slow to fill the void. When children’s troupes re-emerged in the late 1590s, tastes had changed, the distinction between public and private theatres had blurred and the competition from adult companies was much stronger (Austern, 1992: 5,34).

The commercialisation of children’s drama brought criticism: “John Northbrooke condemned the use of children’s drama publicly for profit” (Austern, 1992: 14). And there are suggestions that masters of the troupes were less than open about it, “Ferrant pretended to use the house only for teaching of Children of the Chapel but made it a

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<sup>57</sup>There are a number of authoritative sources which provide comprehensive accounts of the movements in prices over time, including (Fischer, 1996).

continual house for plays” (Shapiro, 1977: 15)<sup>58</sup>. Notwithstanding Ferrant’s protestations, there is ample evidence of the commercialisation of children’s drama: directly from the master of St. Paul’s boys, and also indirectly from playwrights and courtesy of a libel suit brought against the troupe in 1603 (Shapiro, 1977: 13,21,22,25). Neither was commercialism confined to the two most prominent boys troupes; for a short while it extended to the pupils of Merchant Taylors’ grammar school also (Shapiro, 1977: 13). Whilst it had its critics, commercialisation ensured that troupes remained financially viable, and that plays became more accessible to more people. Impressarios like Evans and Henshaw played an important part in bringing about a more commercial theatre in the absence of sponsorship on the required scale<sup>59</sup>. Henslowe was in some ways the forerunner of the modern day producer<sup>60</sup>.

Theatre producers exhibited a determination to give (and to get) value for money, and to preserve the company’s reputation.

Quality assurance was imposed through auditions (Shapiro, 1977: 32). Precautions were taken to prevent bad acting (Cawley, 1983: 38) and penalties imposed if the production fell below the required standard<sup>61</sup> (Cawley, 1983: 4).

Professional troupes were especially sensitive to the need to retain their audiences; when admission prices increased, there was a corresponding increase in the length of plays from one hour to three (Wickham, 1974: 220).

#### 2.4.4 Education

No examination of children’s drama would be complete without consideration of the contribution made by the educational system. In fact the relationship between theatre and

<sup>58</sup>Ferrant was not alone in attracting disapproval. In 1583 the headmaster of the local grammar school was reprimanded by the Dean and Chapter of Wells cathedral for taking the children of the grammar school and the choristers of the cathedral church to perform in the Axelbridge parish church theatre, and as a punishment the headmaster was ordered to pay 2s to each of the 24 poor persons in the almshouse. The nature of the Dean and Chapter’s objections are unclear and may simply have been that he objected to the children being carted around to outlying parishes; on the other hand he may have regarded the plays as frivolous or believed that the headmaster had profited personally from the performance (Lehmberg, 2014: 301).

<sup>59</sup>Entrepreneurs built seven theatres between 1576 and 1605 in a London of only 200,000 people (Langhans, 2000: 2).

<sup>60</sup>He owned the Rose, the Fortune and the Hope theatres which he leased to playing companies and paid for scripts, costumes and properties in return for a large share of the takings (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 73). Opinions vary on Henslowe (Henslowe and Foakes, 2002), whose methods differed from other major theatre companies in that he employed ‘talleyman’ methods: keeping actors (and playwrights) tied to him by paying low wages whilst lending them money to create debts that they could never hope to pay off (Fleay, 1890: 117). Nonetheless there is no doubt that these men played a pivotal role in developing a more commercial product.

<sup>61</sup>(Tydeman, 1986: 183) cites instances where people were given substantial (6s 8d) fines, in one case because the individual did not know his play, the other because the company did not know their play.



the educational system was symbiotic in that theatre required and therefore strengthened budding musical, grammatical, and rhetorical skills – skills that would serve young men well in later life (Gibbons et al., 1968).

As early as the 10th century Aelfric used drama in teaching his students (Bragg, 2004: 31). It is clear that drama was used to help students acquire new skills and behaviours as well as for simply transferring knowledge. A 16th century schoolmaster believed that acting helped “to remove useless modesty”, and headmaster of the Merchant Taylors’ school, Richard Mulcaster, believed it taught students “good behaviour and audacity” (Shapiro, 1977: 3).

Performing in plays gave children experience of public speaking, skills in singing complex parts, and those attending choir schools were taught to play instruments including the organ, the lute and viols. “In *Wit and Science* for example, Redford has four of his actors demonstrate their versatility by performing as a consort of Viols” (Harris, 1992: 177). William Byrd proclaimed that everyone should learn to sing because “it is the best means to procure a perfect pronunciation, and to make a good orator” (Austern, 1992: 22).

“To ensure a steady supply of choristers, monasteries, cathedrals, collegiate churches, and even some parish churches supported choir schools<sup>62</sup> ... Boys usually entered the schools at the age of seven or eight, and served as choristers until their voices broke, generally at 13 or 14, although the change could sometimes be concealed for several years. The choir schools provided an excellent musical education which included instruction in polyphonic singing and in playing such instruments as organs, virginals, the viols, cornets, and recorders. The choirboys received their secular education from the almoner, from a special chaplain, or at the grammar school of the institution, if it maintained one<sup>63</sup>, just as grammar school boys sometimes learned music at the choir school”<sup>64</sup> (Shapiro, 1977: 8).

The level of skills developed by the boys can be inferred from the demands of the roles devised for them (Austern, 1992: 21). However neither precocious talent nor the skills developed at school were a guarantee of a successful career<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>62</sup>The choirboys were generally maintained by alms, lodged in the almonry, referred to as *pueri eleemosynariae* (or almonry boys), and supervised by the almoner, who was also frequently the choir-master.

<sup>63</sup>“At St. Paul’s, the Cathedral statutes provided for eight *pueri eleemosynariae* in the 14th and 15th centuries, increasing to ten by the mid-16th century, to be trained as choristers at Gregory’s Parish Church Cathedral grounds, but in 1584 the Dean of the Cathedral ordered them to attend St. Paul’s grammar school ‘that they may learn the principles of grammar’ ” (Shapiro, 1977: 8).

<sup>64</sup>Nevertheless a clear distinction always existed between choristers and grammar schoolboys and between the two types of schools.

<sup>65</sup>Data on the destinations of students is sparse, but as Shakespeare observed, “the boys who delighted the audience for a few years had uncertain futures. Some grew into common players and succeeded to adult dramatic companies. A few others attended university and won fame as musicians and composers.



### 2.4.5 Creative

Having set the scene with an overview of the socioeconomic and educational context, we can now consider the product itself. The discussion covers the three key ingredients: the play (and playwright), the performance (and performers) and the production (staging, spectacle etc.).

#### 2.4.5.1 Plays and playwrights

Medieval plays were generally of high quality ((Tydeman, 1986: 7-8), (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 48)). Tudor interludes were associated with choirmasters and academics like John Heywood, Nicholas Udall and John Redford, and thus with child performers (Wickham, 1974: 169-170), and the play credited with being the first English Renaissance comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, was written for children by Udall (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 72). There are also (later) examples of plays that were written and performed for Elizabeth by students of the Inner Temple (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 72).

“Children’s companies did much to raise the literary level of the early Elizabethan drama and open the way for the first wave of important dramatists, like Marlowe and the University Wits” (Harris, 1992: 170). In their first phase, prior to 1591, plays performed by children’s troupes fell into four categories (Shapiro, 1977: 139):

- “those influenced by debates, pageants, and other quasi-dramatic forms of court entertainment;
- plays derived from Roman comedy (both original plays in neo-Latin, and vernacular plays modelled on them (Shapiro, 1977: 3);
- plays about pathetic-heroines derived from Euripides and Seneca;
- Lyly’s sophisticated comedies for the court and private theatres.”

Plays modelled on formal debates in which characters argue opposing positions, such as those written by Medwall and Rastell in the early 16th century, were performed by adult companies, but were better suited to children’s troupes who performed to educated audiences (Shapiro, 1977: 140). “Troupes of grammar schoolboys frequently performed comedies by Terence and Plautus at Court or before Wolsey and Cromwell [, and later] performed plays from the ‘Christian Terence’ tradition typically derived

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But the majority of names to appear on the lists connected with children’s companies are never seen again” (Austern, 1992: 14).

from the prodigal son parable [where] naïve, impressionable youths are deflected from the path of virtue into a life of riotous living, represented dramatically by gambling and drinking, whoring and – God help us – singing” (Shapiro, 1977: 148-149). In the late 16th century pathetic-heroine plays became a speciality for the major London children’s troupes, well suited to the boy players because of the prevalence of female protagonists (Shapiro, 1977: 154-155).

After 1597, almost 70% of children’s plays were written by just six men, notably John Lyly and Marston who specialised in the musically innovative (Austern, 1992: 43,44); these playwrights were typically well educated and highly regarded dramatists. There was relatively little overlap between the commercial plays written for the three major children’s troupes (St. Pauls, Merchant Taylors and Children of the Chapel) and those performed in schools (Shapiro, 1977: 152), but rather more with those performed by adults; many playwrights wrote for both, though those plays written for children tended to be more ‘high brow’ (Austern, 1992: 31). The Children of the Chapel are said to have launched the careers of playwrights like Fletcher and Johnson (Austern, 1992: 7), and in a sense by parodying his work St. Paul’s boys helped to sustain the influence of their erstwhile principal playwright, Lyly, even after he was no longer in vogue (Shapiro, 1977: 184).

Although children’s companies did perform tragedies (Shapiro, 1977: 118), and those they presented were both innovative and influential, the companies were better suited to comedy. Comedies tended to include more (vocal) music, allowing the boy actors to play to their strengths, and parody in particular could exploit the incongruities arising from the boys’ diminutive stature (Austern, 1992: 33,36,41-42) accentuated by the names chosen for the characters (Shapiro, 1977: 105,149). Bawdry was similarly used to comic effect (Shapiro, 1977: 107,123,166). Children’s companies had earned their reputation through their ability, particularly their musical prowess, but their commercial success may have been due in part to the popularity of musical comedy (Austern, 1992: 36).

Each genre had its time. Satire came to the fore in the latter part of the 16th century (Shapiro, 1977: 177). By 1604, the traditional moralising form of satiric drama was being displaced by the more biting ‘city comedy’, typically set in a London context and “drawing on recognisable character types, familiar social tensions and colloquial diction”<sup>66</sup> (Shapiro, 1977: 211). However plots were, as Shapiro puts it, “refractions rather than reflections of social reality” (Shapiro, 1977: 211), deriving not only from traditional literary sources but also contemporary rogue literature<sup>67</sup> modified to appeal

<sup>66</sup> “Three motifs were especially common: the triumph of the prodigal son over an avaricious authority figure; the courtship of a rich heiress or widow; a liaison between a young gallant and the wife of a jealous old citizen” (Shapiro, 1977: 212).

<sup>67</sup> Jest books and conny-catching pamphlets.

to the private theatre audiences and given a “patina of realism”: the Private Eye of the time (Shapiro, 1977: 211). City comedy dominated children’s performances during the first decade of the Jacobean era, and was quickly adopted by the adult actors. It poked fun at every aspect of London life including a “broad spectrum of contemporary musical taste, the musical canon, and familiar musical styles” (Austern, 1992: 39-40).

John Rastall (1475-1536), a printer as well as a dramatist, was the first to print polyphonic songs. Marston was the first to “write his satires with publication in mind, helping to bring courtly plays to a slightly wider audience” (Shapiro, 1977: 205). However in general, publishing plays was very much an afterthought and when they were set in print they contained few stage directions, no musical notation and often lacked the playwright’s name ((Austern, 1992: 42,49), (Shapiro, 1977: 229)). Plays were often collaborative ventures, not attributable to a single playwright. These challenges notwithstanding, Figure 2.6 on page 34 attempts to summarise what is known about the life spans of the Renaissance’s best known playwrights<sup>68</sup>, and the years during which they were most active, indicating those making a substantial contribution to children’s theatre based on data from (Happe, 1999).

The masque<sup>69</sup>, especially popular with James I, had an association with children’s theatre from its beginnings, and between 1599 and 1611 most of the plays including masques were written for children (Austern, 1992: 97-98).

#### 2.4.5.2 Performance

##### Acting:

A touring company originally consisted of as few as four adult men and a boy-apprentice (Bevington, 1962: 5,74); and doubling of roles remained common practice (Wickham, 1987: 220). Children’s chorister groups consisted of 10-12 boy players, though grammar school groups may have been larger (Banham, 1995: 125).

Comprehensive membership records do not exist even for the children’s companies, but Figure 2.7 on page 35 provides summary information on the boy actors performing in the principal companies of boy players, and the plays in which they are believed to have appeared.

<sup>68</sup>The Figure shows only a subset of the available data.

<sup>69</sup>“Elsewhere, Italian Renaissance playwrights rediscovered ancient Greek drama and, seeing the extensive use of choral verse, assumed that these plays were originally all sung-through. Based on this well-meaning error, Monteverdi and the Camarata Fiorentina made Greek drama the model for what we now know as opera. So contrary to widely held belief that musical theatre is a descendant of opera, it turns out that opera is actually an accidental descendant of musical theatre” (Kenrick, 2008: 28).

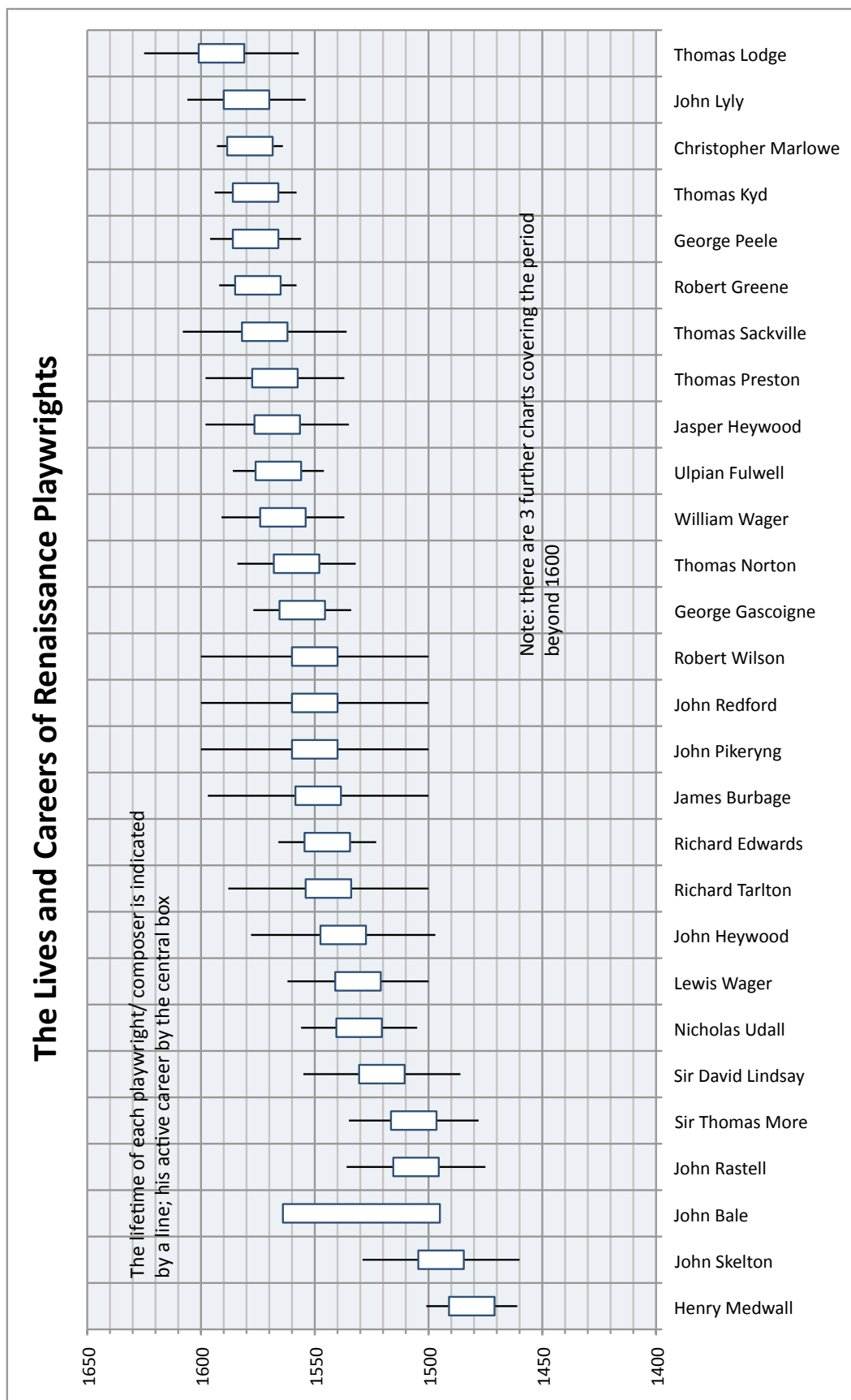


FIGURE 2.6: Renaissance playwrights

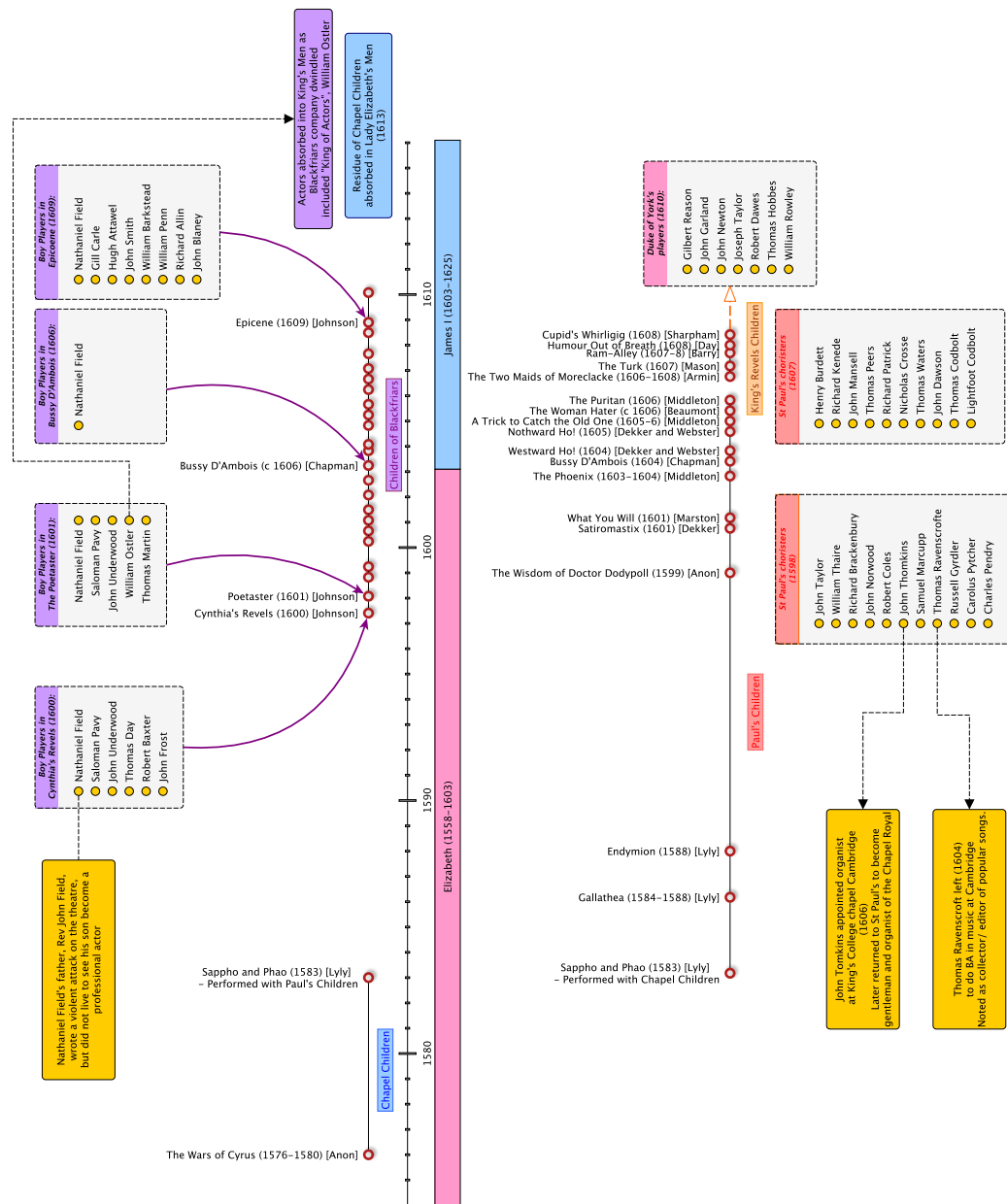


FIGURE 2.7: Elizabethan boy actors

“It is likely that roles were created with the talents of a specific individual in mind” (Austern, 1992: 24).

A fuller summary of the lives and careers of Renaissance actors based on data from (Astington, 2010) is shown in Figure 2.8 on page 37. The chart shows life spans or active careers, depending on the data available<sup>70</sup>.

In addition to their undoubted talent (particularly in music and dance), boys had a number of attributes that distinguished them from their adult counterparts. The physical disparity between themselves and the roles they played lent itself to comedy, and boys were in general better placed to play female roles, particularly since puberty tended to arrive later than it does now (Austern, 1992: 24). Contrary to popular belief, women did, very occasionally, perform in plays<sup>71</sup>. Women appeared infrequently not because it was considered shameful, but rather that the clergy and the guilds involved in the organisation and production of plays were exclusively male. This together with the ready supply of boys with trained voices meant the appearance of women was a rarity (Wickham, 1974: 93-94). There is also the possibility that part of the appeal of boys playing feminine roles is the allusion to the “fashionably forbidden fruit of homosexuality” (Austern, 1992: 12). Boy actors acted for adult troupes (Edgecombe, 1995). Although children’s companies enjoyed a number of advantages over the adult troupes of the day, there were other factors that favoured their adult counterparts. For example the gravitas that only comes with maturity gave them greater credibility when acting certain types of plays, notably tragedies. Troupes of travelling (mainly adult) professionals acquired wider experience of audience responses; they performed the same plays frequently, which allowed them to polish their performances and hone their skills. The need to contain production costs gave them more control over their art and their fortunes ((Wickham, 1974: 196), (Austern, 1992: 15)).

Children’s comedy employed various devices to remind the audiences of the actors behind the characters, including the use of adult actors alongside the child actors, bawdry, self reference, and induction (Shapiro, 1977: 104).

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<sup>70</sup>The Figure shows only a subset of the available data.

<sup>71</sup> Playwrights were almost exclusively men; Mrs Aphra Behn (1640-89) was the exception, being the first woman to earn her living from writing plays (Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.a).

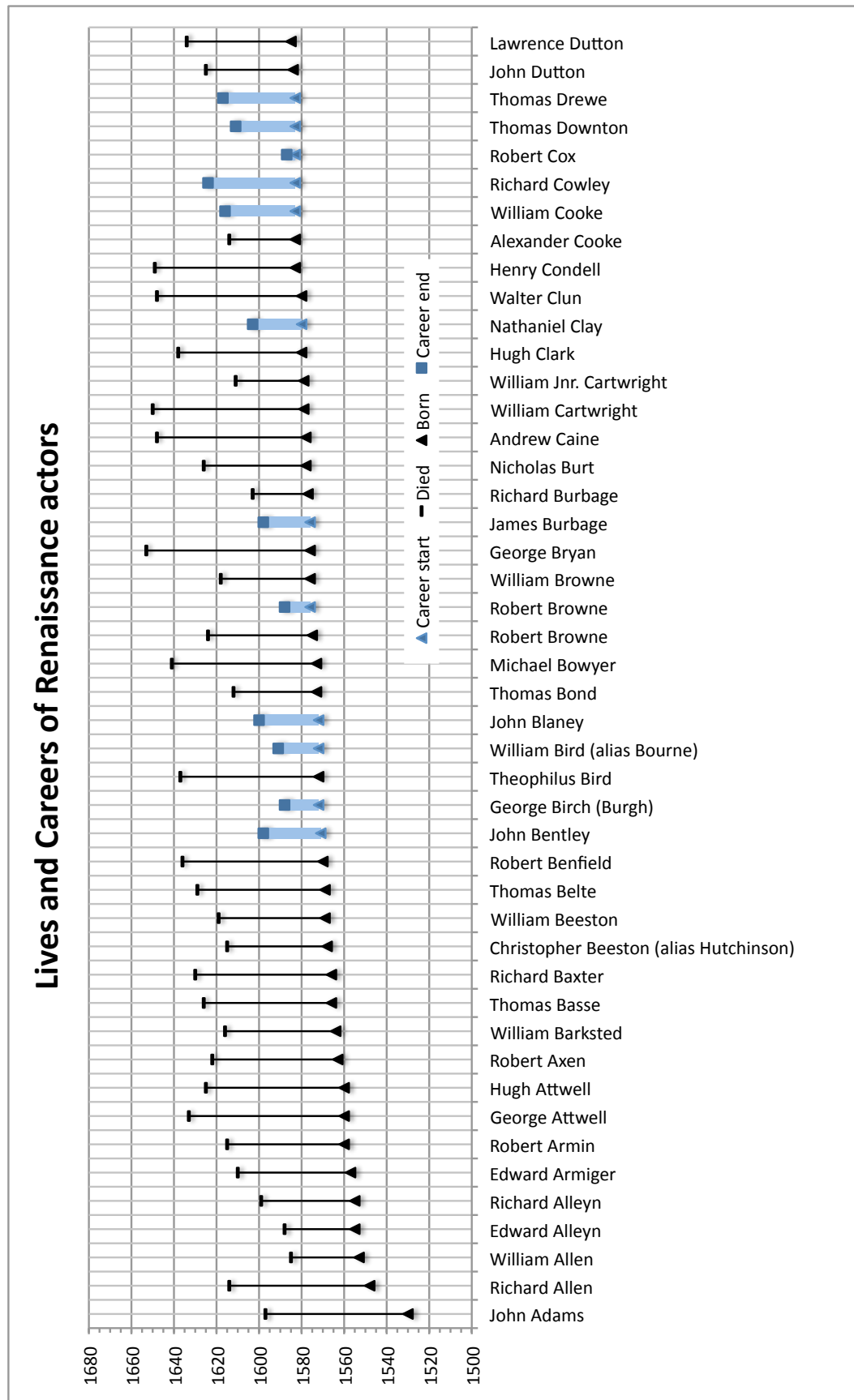


FIGURE 2.8: Renaissance actors

The combination of acting style<sup>72</sup> and presumed innocence enabled the children's companies to deflect mockery and, for a time at least, to strike an acceptable balance between entertainment and travesty ((Austern, 1992: 12), (Shapiro, 1977: 137)).

### Music:

Characters based on vagabond musicians, whose lowly social status offered playwrights an opportunity to add colour as well as providing a vehicle for musical performance, featured prominently in children's plays (Austern, 1992: 147)<sup>73</sup>.

The amateur boy players of the early children's companies, renowned for their musical ability (Austern, 1992: 12), were in any event exempt from the stigma suffered by their professional counterparts. However, based on an analysis of plays performed in their second phase (after 1597), Austern challenges the belief that their repertoire was restricted to sophisticated polyphonic art songs, arguing that they also drew heavily on a wide range of contemporary popular music (Austern, 1992: 51). Moreover, when stripped back, many polyphonic songs of the time become "tuneful songs with limited vocal range, not musically unlike ballads" (Austern, 1992: 52). Whilst not present in all of the plays performed by the boy players, music tended to be more plentiful in their performances than those by their adult counterparts (Austern, 1992: 32); something she attributes to the fact that music was more commonplace in comedy, and that the proportion of plays that were comedies was almost twice that for adult troupes (Austern, 1992: 33).

Nonetheless there were musical features that set the performances of children's companies apart. Parody was commonplace in the drama of the time and was evident also in its music: "parody of a previously published lute ayre" was unique to children's plays (Austern, 1992: 12,52,53). Although later adopted by adult companies, the use of the (accompanied) polyphonic song was originally the preserve of children's companies, written specifically for the plays and set apart from the spoken dialogue (Austern, 1992: 54); stage directions were more comprehensive in contrast with those for (unaccompanied)

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<sup>72</sup> Actors were required to perform in three distinct styles, sometimes in the same play ((Shapiro, 1977: 127,135), (Austern, 1992: 10))

- 'natural' - mimicry verging on caricature, was the norm for induction;
- 'declamatory' - oratorical, used like Brecht's 'alienation effect', affording audience detachment from the action; actors 'impersonate' characters much as opera singers do (Shapiro, 1977: 116); frequently augmented with music (Austern, 1992: 12);
- 'parodic'.

<sup>73</sup> In contrast to art practitioners like Byrd and Dowland who were held in the highest regard (Austern, 1992: 147), professional musicians without patrons fell toward the bottom end of the social scale, despite the undoubted importance of music to the Elizabethans and Jacobeans (Austern, 1992: 33,50). Music was valued by playwrights not only for its own sake, but also for its ability to prompt, to accentuate and to bind together other elements of a play (Austern, 1992: 95).



popular songs where directions were limited to whether the song was to be sung as a solo or canonically by several performers (Austern, 1992: 53). Extra dramatic music, before, after and between acts of plays, was originally unique to children's plays (Austern, 1992: 79)<sup>74</sup>.

Instrumental music was performed by off-stage musicians<sup>75</sup> recruited on a play-by-play basis to supplement that provided by older choristers who could no longer sing<sup>76</sup>.

Even after its own popularity had waned, children's theatre was to have a lasting influence on adult theatre: dramatically, musically and by providing personnel. Costumed fiddlers found their way into restoration theatre (Austern, 1992: 71). By the Restoration inter-act music became a standard part of London's drama (Austern, 1992: 79), and as the stars of children's companies went on to become prominent figures in adult theatre, the polyphonic art song was adopted by adult companies playing increasingly in private theatres (Austern, 1992: xvii).

### **Dance:**

Dance choreographies were recorded in Western European dance treatises as early as the 15th century (Kant, 2007: 9).

Boys were proficient in dance as well as singing, and dance was common in the plays they performed (Austern, 1992: 105). The specially choreographed pieces that featured in the earlier phase of performances were displaced by various forms of social dance after 1597, particularly those choreographed for Court masques ((Austern, 1992: 104,108), (Wickham, 1992: 125)).

### **2.4.5.3 Staging and spectacle**

#### **Stage and scenery**

Sets in Elizabethan theatre could be quite elaborate, involving wood and canvas constructions to represent castles, temples and other structures (Shapiro, 1977: 33). Scenic properties were especially important in children's theatre; Italian commedia erudite had made both music and spectacle essential ingredients as early as 1576 (Wickham, 1992:

<sup>74</sup> "Jacobean theater used the jig as a foil for serious drama", and it is believed to anticipate the Ballad Opera (McGuire and Plank, 2011: 173).

<sup>75</sup> Like modern day booth singers in musical theatre productions.

<sup>76</sup> "The plays are full of directions for music to sound from above, below, or within; to accompany mimed action, song, dance; to set the atmosphere; and to emphasise important speeches. These hidden performers included individuals with competence on keyboards, plucked and bowed strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion instruments" (Austern, 1992: 24). The companies made use of a wide variety of instruments, the cornet proving especially popular. Stage directions were uncomplicated: "Loud musicke" being used to evoke brass or powerful wind instruments, (even) less specific musical prompts usually referred to stringed instruments (Austern, 1992: 59,63).

125). Much of the pioneering work had been done in Italy where the proscenium arch was developed and great advances made in painted scenery (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 52); between 1605 and 1630 many of these were imported to England by Inigo Jones much to the displeasure of Ben Johnson who felt his dialogue was upstaged by the spectacle (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 87).

### **Machinery and stage effects**

Medieval theatre, particularly performances by children (Shapiro, 1977: 147), was similarly sophisticated in its use of stage effects. For example in performances as early as 1501, 17 men were employed to work cranes and smoke to effect the ascent of God and his angels to heaven (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 46). They used trapdoors (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 75), “spotlights using sunlight reflected by metal bowls to follow key performers” (Kenrick, 2008: 27), and introduced footlights (Hartnoll and Brater, 1998: 88).

### **People effects**

Perhaps a carry-over from their involvement in pageantry (Shapiro, 1977: 142), children’s performances routinely exploited cast numbers to add to the spectacle. Even in relatively small theatres, the main stage afforded space for at least 17 actors, with space for group dances (Austern, 1992: 26). Plays featured “elaborate theatrical dances and celebratory choruses”, with the cast clad in fantastic costumes (Austern, 1992: 38).

## **2.5 Growing Pains: The Restoration to the reformers**

### **2.5.1 Transition**

Theatres in England, closed in 1642 due to the Civil War, did not re-open until 1663 after Charles II granted Killigrew and Davenant the right to form acting companies and build theatres in London (Moody, 2000: 10). However appetites for theatre had been tempered by years of Puritanism and it wasn’t easy for the companies in the early years (Bevis, 1988: 33); later, even the so-called ‘legitimate theatre’ of the patent houses went to great lengths to court popularity, including high kickers, jugglers, ropedancers, performing animals and prologues recited by boys of five (Vanbrugh et al., 1927: xxi).

In the latter part of the 17th century, it was increasingly common for women, trained at dance and music schools, to act, very often dressed in breeches to play the parts of boys (Bevis, 1988: 35) - ironic given that women’s roles were once played by boys. Music continued to be a central component of dramatic productions. The once popular masque

was beginning to evolve. *Venus and Adonis* (1683) is considered by some to straddle the boundary between masque and opera. Whilst boys had been displaced by women on the professional stage, schools continued to serve as a proving ground for drama; Purcell wrote *Dido and Aeneas* (1685) for a girls' dancing school rather than for the public stage (Bevis, 1988: 179).

The 18th century saw the beginning of theatre in America. The first was built in Williamsburg in 1716, and immediately advertised for musicians (Mates, 1962: 40). Meanwhile in England, Walpole sought to bring theatre into line with the 1737 Licensing Act (Bevis, 1988: 120)<sup>77</sup>. Only patent theatres were allowed to perform drama - known as 'legitimate' theatre. Non-patent theatres performed melodrama, pantomime, ballet, opera and music hall (burlesque), which involved music or musical interludes and were not classed as 'plays' and hence were outside the Act. The Act thus shaped, rather than suppressed<sup>78</sup>.

Pantomime emerged as "the quintessential Georgian entertainment" (Bevis, 1988: 180). Like opera, it evolved from the masque and, like opera (Moody, 2000: 12), it was attacked by the critics (Nicoll, 1963: 202). Now regarded as archetypal children's theatre, pantomimes sometimes featured child performers for the purposes of comedy (Nicoll, 1963: 142-143).

Pantomime proved by far the most successful offering even at London's two patent houses (Drury Lane and the Garrick). The price in the boxes was raised from four to five shillings at pantomime time" (Bates, 1906: 78-81) and for a while at Drury Lane "Booth, Wilks, Cibber and Mrs. Oldfield could draw but £500 a week to the treasury, the genius of nonsense would swell the receipts to £1000" (Bates, 1906: 78-81). Pantomime was to become a huge favourite with Victorian children.

Growing up in the 19th century alongside the grandeur of city theatres were the rather less prepossessing 'penny theatres'. Various known as 'gaffs', 'dives', 'geggies' and 'bursts', their offerings were crude but immensely popular. There were over 80 penny gaffs in the East End alone (Sheridan, 1981: 2)<sup>79</sup>, typically accommodating a couple of hundred people but some, notably one in Paddington, that could take in as many as two thousand at every performance (Sheridan, 1981: 7). There could be up to nine performances in a day (Sheridan, 1981: 3), with overall daily attendance figures in excess

<sup>77</sup>The Act was replaced by The Theatres Act in 1843 which extended its provision. The power of the Lord Chamberlain to license plays was not revoked until Parliament passed the Theatres Act of 1968.

<sup>78</sup>That said, the prosecution of a clown for uttering "roast beef" on stage when unaccompanied by music (Moody, 2000: 24) must have been a powerful incentive for actors to learn to sing, and a striking demonstration of unintended consequences!

<sup>79</sup>Sheridan draws heavily on an article by James Grant, journalist and one time editor of 'The Morning Advertiser' (Grant, 1838), a copy of which is held in the University of Southampton library.

of 24,000<sup>80</sup> (Sheridan, 1981: 11). The large majority of the audience was made up of youths between eight and sixteen, predominantly boys, who were present every night and would “at any time infinitely sooner go without a meal than be deprived of that gratification”<sup>81</sup> (Sheridan, 1981: 10-11).

Unsurprisingly not everyone approved, and there is evidence of attempts to close them<sup>82</sup>. Others were more sympathetic, regarding Penny theatres as a form of escapism and better than the available alternatives (Sheridan, 1981: 7,44,68,69,77). Moreover they have been credited with stimulating interest in ‘legitimate’ theatre (Sheridan, 1981: 12), and survived until 1904 (Sheridan, 1981: 99) when they were supplanted by cinema (McKernan, 2006).

Importantly, the 19th century witnessed the emergence of children from across the social spectrum as major consumers of theatre, and they were no less prominent as performers. In the 1880s pantomimes were performed mostly, if not entirely, by children (Varty, 2008: 2). “By 1887 it was estimated that during pantomime season [from Christmas until April] there were some 10,000 children working in theatres across the country” (Varty, 2008: 2), and their involvement was “widespread, sophisticated and encouraged by adults” (Varty, 2008: 1).

### 2.5.2 Socio-political

The 19th century was a time of great social reform. Children’s theatre was not exempt from the changes affecting Victorian society, and indeed brought them under the spotlight. Reform was not a smooth process, with opposing views deeply entrenched and defended fiercely. Reformers were deeply concerned about what they saw as the cynical exploitation of children. Bernard Shaw was amongst the critics, “How was it possible to justify this parading of prettily dressed boys and girls, who had not even reached their teens and had never been to school, so that adults might enjoy a repertoire of sensational entertainments? Why should theatre managers consider themselves exempt from the regulations that protected young children from being exploited in factories and workshops? Their descriptions of theatres as perfect schools of deportment where the charges’ characters were moulded by masterpieces of English poetry, were purely commercial bluff” (Holroyd, 2009: 12).

Children were exposed to hazards, both moral and physical (Varty, 2008: 195). Responding to the Victorian appetite for stage effects heightened the risks for child performers,

<sup>80</sup>A figure not dissimilar to the nightly combined audience at musicals in today’s West End.

<sup>81</sup>Theatre performances were the ‘Xbox’ of the day.

<sup>82</sup>Amongst the Burgess collection of newspaper cuttings held by Harvard University (Sheridan, 1981: 49).

and producers were slow to put in place precautions to ensure their safety, resulting in some serious accidents (Varty, 2008: 38-40). Many were worried about the moral risks, particularly to young girls (Varty, 2008: 43,47,172,198,207), but boys were not immune, with reformers raising concerns about boys imitating the scenes of violence that they had seen in penny theatres<sup>83</sup> (Varty, 2008: 171). There are many harrowing accounts of mistreatment and there was criticism of the naïvety of theatregoers oblivious to the price paid for their entertainment in terms of human suffering (Varty, 2008: 159,162,166,216-217,221,223,231). Speaking in the House of Lords, The Archbishop of Canterbury went as far as to instruct Christians not to attend pantomimes in which children performed (Varty, 2008: 1).

Their (general) education suffered (Varty, 2008: 207) and in some cases children were abducted and pressed into service against their will<sup>84</sup> (Varty, 2008: 21).

Defenders of the status quo saw things differently. Performances by children enjoyed the support of many from the aristocracy (Varty, 2008: 1). Many of the protagonists appeared to be either in denial, wilfully obtuse, or simply naïve (Varty, 2008: 11,97-98,160,216,235). There were those who had an obvious financial interest, such as producers, and the children's parents who often relied on the income earned by their children and who were known to collude with producers and agents in circumventing legislation to enable their offspring to perform (Varty, 2008: 182,218). There were also those with a prurient interest; suspicions about Lewis Carroll and Ernest Dowson are widely reported (Varty, 2008: 7,14, 48,54-55,57-59,61). Publicly, Carroll was a strong supporter of child performances, claiming that listening to the works of Shakespeare was an education in itself, and kept children away from the viciousness of the streets (Holroyd, 2009: 12); in private even he conceded concerns (Varty, 2008: 175-177).

Never slow to spot an opportunity, theatre producers had the temerity to put on productions that portrayed the plight of the child performer (Varty, 2008: 161). Some may see this as theatre courting its own downfall (Varty, 2008: 229), others may argue that theatre was simply showing characteristic resourcefulness in making the best of the inevitable.

Those with a foot in both camps could be ambivalent. Dickens waived in the face of concerns about middle class sensibilities, objecting to dressing Tiny Tim in bandages and leg irons lest the extra realism upset members of the audience (Varty, 2008: 224).

A series of Acts of Parliament were introduced from 1819 onwards seeking to regulate education and the hours and conditions of employment. However theatre children were

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<sup>83</sup>An argument foreshadowing criticisms levelled at some of today's films and video games.

<sup>84</sup>Reminiscent of the 'Clifton case' of 1600.

the last to be protected, and there were major loopholes in the legislation that limited its effectiveness (Varty, 2008: 178-179). Enforcement by the courts was weak and patchy (Varty, 2008: 179,182,185); the outcome tended to be a compromise negotiated with theatre managers rather than a prosecution. Unfavourable comparisons were drawn with the situation in Europe and in America (Varty, 2008: 166,220). The Act of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was eventually put in place in 1887, and in the same year a Royal Commission on elementary education was held taking evidence from campaigners who argued for the tightening of employment legislation governing children (Varty, 2008: 173). Later legislation is described in detail in AA Strong's 'Dramatic and Musical Law' (Varty, 2008: 219).

As well as lobbying Parliament and waging information campaigns, reformers intervened directly, corresponding with young theatre performers, and inviting them into their homes for tea and religious instruction (Varty, 2008: 156-159,169,173,181,215,217). They established the highly regarded theatrical mission (Varty, 2008: 157), and offered chaperoning (Varty, 2008: 207), having noted that this had proved helpful when done by performers' parents. There was in fact a general consensus about the value of parental support for theatrical children, particularly when the parents themselves worked in the industry (Varty, 2008: 206-207). That said, reformers understood the economic pressure on parents and the attendant risk of collusion (Varty, 2008: 182,207), and the resentment about state interference in the parent/child relationship (Varty, 2008: 220).

### 2.5.3 Economics

Children's theatre had many admirers amongst the aristocracy including Queen Victoria (Varty, 2008: 1), but it was very much a commercial enterprise. Theatres were expensive to maintain (Varty, 2008: 170), and productions costly to mount. Then as now, impresarios were pivotal figures. The productions of D'Oyly Carte and Augustus Harris were spectacular affairs, sometimes employing as many as 200 children (Varty, 2008: 125,185).

Incomes had remained stable until the 19th century, but then rose rapidly as a result of the industrial revolution, making luxuries like theatre available to a larger cross-section of society<sup>85</sup>. However it took a while for the rise in incomes to percolate through to theatre performers. Five shillings a week was typical for Penny theatre performers (Sheridan, 1981: 19); Grant cites instances of performers squabbling on stage over a crust of bread used as a prop (Sheridan, 1981: 14). Performers in mainstream theatre fared better, and certainly the remuneration for children made it a compelling occupation (Varty, 2008:

<sup>85</sup>See Figure 2.9 on page 45. Data are taken from (Clark, 2004).

209). In 1887 juvenile performers could earn two shillings per performance if they were trained, though only half that if not. Star performers did better still, with the nine year old Ellen Terry commanding a salary of 30 shillings as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1856 (Varty, 2008: 1).

Despite the scale of the productions, or perhaps because of it, they were a commercial success (Varty, 2008: 97), though interestingly commercial success offered no guarantee of longevity. “*Bluebell in Fairyland* was a huge hit, with up to nine performances a week” delivering a total of 294 performances but then was taken off (Varty, 2008: 109).

Toy theatre brought theatre to the home, and was an early example of merchandising ((Varty, 2008: 234,241), (Pollock’s Toy Museum, 2013)).

Theatre was now within the reach of almost everyone, with Penny theatre asking “one penny for the gallery, twopence for the pit and threepence for the boxes” (Sheridan, 1981: 41). Perhaps with one eye on placating reformers and the other on developing their future market, half price tickets were sometimes offered to children and free seats occasionally made available to children’s charities (Varty, 2008: 138). Prices for seats in American theatre remained stable throughout the 18th century (Mates, 1962: 47).

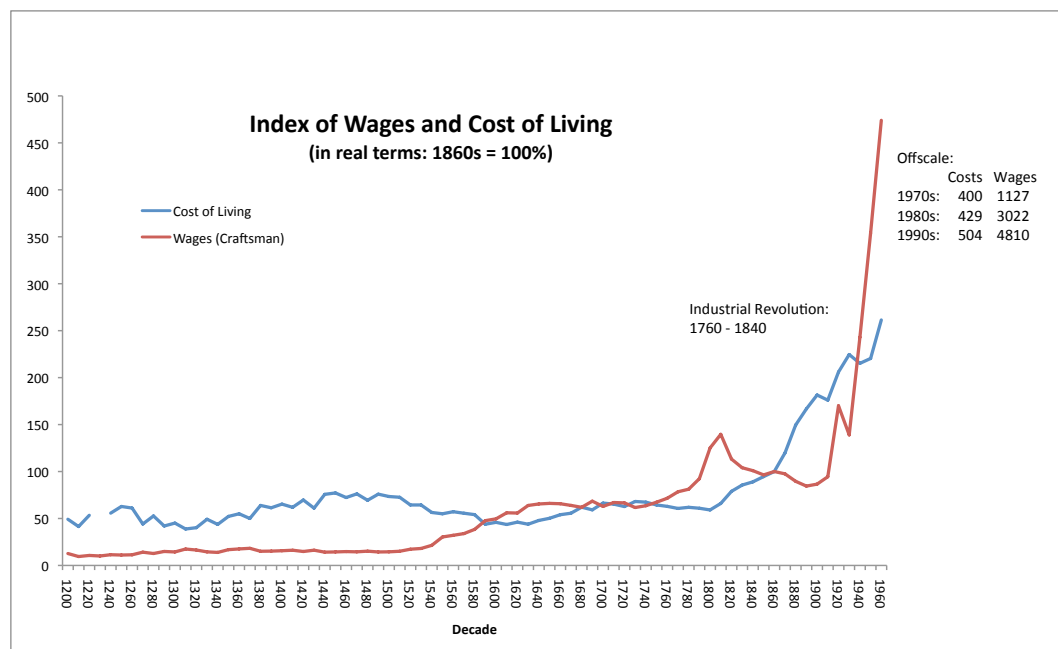


FIGURE 2.9: Wages and living costs in real terms



### 2.5.4 Education

Music and drama had been taught in schools from Medieval times, but in England there were no institutions dedicated to training for theatre until the 19th century. For the most part, preparation for theatre was through on the job training, an arrangement that gave the children in the theatre dynasties of the day a marked advantage over others (Varty, 2008: 7,9,29-32,207,233).

The training performers received was highly variable even in mainstream theatre, much of it provided either in rehearsals, or courtesy of individual actors who offered private tuition; later this was supplemented by training arranged by agents (Varty, 2008: 22). Ballet schools were established to meet the needs of the mainstream theatres for juvenile performers, the training varied according to whether the child was expected to perform as an individual or in the chorus. Katti Lanner's national training school for dancing (Varty, 2008: 32) established in 1876 was perhaps the best known of the theatrical schools established in London, not least because of her collaboration with Augustus Harris, but there were others such as that of Mr Steadman, who specialised in training boys, and those of Mr Nolan, Mr Fitzgerald and Mr Francesco (Varty, 2008: 36,37); and there were others outside London (Varty, 2008: 24) such as that opened in Margate in 1885 by Sarah Thorne. For the most part, theatre schools favoured a 'mechanical' style relying on rote learning (Varty, 2008: 13-14), which attracted criticism (Varty, 2008: 30,120). However the more adept pupils managed to deploy their skills to convey emotion; more natural emotional performance came more easily to the children of theatre families. Training at some schools began early, with children as young as four being signed up for nine-year apprenticeships (Varty, 2008: 33).

Elocution was considered a priority by all; a cockney accent was considered to be a major impediment to a successful career in the theatre (Varty, 2008: 22, 25); it was not uncommon for aspiring performers to improve their diction and delivery using book-based systems such as that devised by Comstock (Varty, 2008: 21,24, 25).

Stage adaptations for children were published for performances at home and at school. These included music and extensive advice on directing, choreography, conducting rehearsals, and, of course, elocution<sup>86</sup>.

Training was not cheap. Lanner charged her pupils a shilling a week, and a similar fee was charged by the private school that children attended to receive their general education. Training was not a guarantee of success as a performer (Varty, 2008: 23), and only around 10% of child performers could look forward to a career as an adult actor (Varty, 2008: 7). Despite this, and the fact that performers were not paid for

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<sup>86</sup>Those written by Bell in 1888 required performers to learn scripts in French (Varty, 2008: 1, 240).



rehearsals, theatrical schools had little difficulty in attracting students. For those who were successful, remuneration was good: as much as £4 and 18s even for small children. Participation in theatre also helped children develop a range of practical skills, built self-confidence and team-playing skills, and helped rid them of their cockney accent (Varty, 2008: 239).

## 2.5.5 Creative

### 2.5.5.1 Plays and playwrights

There were plays, such as those written by Bell, Milman, Parsons and others (Varty, 2008: P241, 243-244, 246, 249), designed for children to perform at home or at school and which had an explicit educational purpose. There were also the dumbed-down versions of the classics that were presented at Penny theatres (Sheridan, 1981: 23-24), where audiences included large numbers of children. Leaving these aside, roles played by children fell into four broad categories<sup>87</sup>.

It was common for children to be cast in comic roles (Varty, 2008: 109, 235). Like its Renaissance counterpart, 19th century theatre exploited the fact a child performer could get away with saying things on stage that an adult performer could not, and they could therefore deliver political messages in a way that was deemed acceptable. This included parodying political figures (Varty, 2008: 81,123). It also included plays that carried messages of social reform (Varty, 2008: 134-136,149-150,153,155-156) including, ironically, about its own reform. In addition there were plays, such as *The Spoiled Child*, which carried the kind of moralising messages associated with Victorian culture (Varty, 2008: 114). Child performers were themselves subject to parody (Varty, 2008: 4-5).

Precocity is a quality that writers have always been ready to make use of when it is available, either by exploiting the incongruous (sometimes compounded by casting girls in the part of masculine roles (Varty, 2008: 83)), or simply parading virtuosity. Child performers were sometimes cast in tragedies and histories, as was the case for William Betty in the UK, and also around the same time in America where boys were given parts in *Coriolanus* (Mates, 1962: 181).

The mawkish sentimentality that is often associated with Victorian society and the interest in the supernatural seems to have manifested itself in an appetite for themes that were well-suited to child performers such as fairies, and all things Arcadian (Varty, 2008: 9,19,70-71,74-75,77,98), and children were sometimes used as ‘living puppets’ (Varty, 2008: 104). In addition the dramatisation of classic texts such as *Gulliver’s Travels*

<sup>87</sup>Namely: Those exploiting opportunities for comedy, precocity, sentimentality and ‘people effects’.

(Varty, 2008: 78), *Peter Pan* and *Alice in Wonderland* (Varty, 2008: 101) featured children as the main characters and were therefore tailor-made for child performers. Many of these have survived the test of time and are still performed today<sup>88</sup>. Knapp argues that building on foundations laid by *The Black Crook*<sup>89</sup>, child-oriented operetta exemplified by *the Wizard of Oz* and *Babes in Toyland*, had become a viable sub-genre by the early 20th century, echoing ballet counterparts like *Hansel and Gretel* (1893) and the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1897) (Knapp, 2006: 121-123).

Pantomimes and other large-scale productions used large numbers of performers to create spectacular people effects that were made practicable, and indeed commercially viable, only through the use of child performers. D'Oyly Carte's *Children's Pinafore* which opened in 1879 and ran in tandem with its adult counterpart, was a huge success<sup>90</sup>, and may have been the inspiration behind the *Billy Youth Theatre* productions (Hall and John, 2005). Although initially not aimed exclusively at young audiences, pantomimes, particularly those written by E.L. Blanchard, featuring large numbers of child performers and sometimes lasting five hours, became the success story of 19th century theatre (Varty, 2008: 139,143-146).

Interestingly there was to be a marked contrast between Victorian and Edwardian theatre, in that the latter tended to prefer the unashamedly popular style of musical comedy (Pearsall, 1975: 1,61), and this style of theatre was popular with young audiences. "The musical production . . . held a special place in the American theatre, spreading its conventions and pleasures throughout the world. It is no wonder that its applicability to child and youth audiences was so soon recognised" (Wood and Grant, 1997: 99).

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<sup>88</sup>e.g.(Mitchell and Warbeck, 2001).

<sup>89</sup>Mates questions the claim of *The Black Crook* (1866) to be the first musical, arguing that it offered nothing different from *The Archers* (1796) (Mates, 1962: 230).

<sup>90</sup>"*The Children's Pinafore* was not extraordinary . . . but was instead part of a long tradition of all-child productions that enjoyed great popular and critical success on both sides of the Atlantic as early as the 1840s, earning plaudits from such well-known figures as Walt Whitman, Lydia Maria Child, Charles Dodgson, and Louisa May Alcott" (Gubar, 2012).

### 2.5.5.2 Performance

#### Acting:

Child performers made a big contribution to 19th century theatre (Varty, 2008: 9). In part this was because they were cheap, plentiful, and easy to mould; they were often small cogs in a big wheel. Yet amongst them were some ‘stars’, and they were big stars; in 1804 Master Betty earned £2,000 for a two-week tour (Varty, 2008: 78). Some, like Betty and Clara Fisher, were child prodigies who did not make the transition into successful adult actors (Varty, 2008: 6-7,78)<sup>91</sup>. Others, like Ellen Terry and Marie Wilton, went on to enjoy distinguished careers as adults (Holroyd, 2009: 1). Many successful child performers were the product of theatrical dynasties, born and bred into theatre. America also had its child stars (Mates, 1962: 119). It was not uncommon for child performers to play scenes from Shakespeare (Davis, 2006), “Child stars are an American tradition ... but no period surpasses the mid-1800s for the sheer number of children appearing in live theatrical events or the degree of seriousness with which they were taken. And, unlike their modern counterparts, they more often than not drew recognition by playing adult roles” (Hanners, n.d.). Despite its own reputation for low-grade entertainment, it is interesting to note that Penny theatre was able to produce future stars; Robert Lorraine began his career as a child performer in a ‘dive’ and went on to become one of England’s greatest actors (Sheridan, 1981: 91-94).

The roles played by these child prodigies were often very demanding, with young actors like Harry Grattan, Augustus Fitzgerald<sup>92</sup>, and Constance Gilchrist singled out for praise in the *Children’s Pinafore* and *Little Goody Two Shoes*, respectively (Varty, 2008: 93-94,125). Betty took on roles like Norval, Selim and Hamlet, delivering performances that matched his adult counterparts (Varty, 2008: 78, 91). The nine-year old Phoebe Carlo delivered 215 speeches in *Alice in Wonderland*. Child performers liked to show off their versatility, with young performers like Jean Margarets and Clara Fisher vying for the title of actress who could play most roles (Varty, 2008: 118).

Some were uncomfortable with precocious child performers taking on adult roles (Varty, 2008: 78, 81). However the detractors were in the minority, and it was clear at any event that, whether in large groups or as individual performers, performances from children were of very good quality, and were highly regarded (Varty, 2008: 86,93-95), and the fact that children made a huge contribution to 19th century theatre is indisputable<sup>93</sup>.

<sup>91</sup>There are instances of more recent child stars, such as Mark Lester and his co-star Jack Wild who were a huge success in *Oliver*, but who were unable to convert their success as child performers into success as adult actors.

<sup>92</sup>The death of Augustus Fitzgerald who, at the age of six, played ‘Midshipmite’ in *Pinafore*, prompted an outpouring of national grief (Varty, 2008: 125).

<sup>93</sup>Varty provides examples of favourite child roles in the Victorian repertoire (Varty, 2008: 17).

**Music:**

Music was an essential ingredient of theatre in the 19th century in both Britain<sup>94</sup> and America (Mates, 1962: 102); actors were expected to sing and dance, and so were the members of the band (Mates, 1962: 75). The quality of the orchestras is reported to have been a key factor in the growth of the American musical (Mates, 1962: 71), though they found themselves having to plead to audiences to refrain from trying to evoke their favourite tunes by throwing things into the pit. In Britain it was not unheard of for several different versions of a song from a musical to be published separately (Varty, 2008: 112). In America child prodigies were used to boost audiences ((Bridenbaugh, 2008), (Drummond, 2008: 53)). In Britain, there were child stars, like the Irish Roscius Master Burke, who became more famous for his musical ability than for his acting (Varty, 2008: 115).

The work of Francois Cellier to rearrange the music from *Pinafore* to make it suitable for the children performing was an important factor in making the *Children's Pinafore* the success it was (Varty, 2008: 93).

**Dance:**

By the end of the 18th century, dancers had established themselves as an important part of lyric theatre, many of the parts filled by children, very often the children of adult performers (Mates, 1962: 128). Dancing was in some cases the child performer's main contribution. In the 1862 production of *Little Goody Two Shoes*, child performers had no dialogue at all. John McCormack devised and arranged all the ballets and general action of the piece (Varty, 2008: 86). The standard of dancing, at least from the pupils of Ms Lanner's national training school of dancing, appears to have been very high (Varty, 2008: 83).

**2.5.5.3 Staging and spectacle****Stage and scenery:**

Staging and scenery in 19th century theatre ranged from the rudimentary to the elaborate. Scenery in Penny theatre took the form of a few pieces of painted cloth (Sheridan, 1981: 13). In contrast those used for *Alice in Wonderland* were rather sophisticated, and were "the influence of contemporary staging of both Shakespeare's comedy, and Gilbert's fairy plays" (Varty, 2008: 107). Illuminated gauzes had been used since 1850

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<sup>94</sup>The end of the 19th century saw the emergence of the first professional female composers trained at the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

to effect transitions into depths of the enchanted wood. In *Alice* these effects were enhanced, making use of “dissolving view effects to elide the scenic shifts of the acausal narrative” (Varty, 2008: 107)<sup>95</sup>.

### **Machinery and Stage Effects:**

19th century audiences were captivated by stage effects and producers responded to the demand (Rees and Wilmore, 2010); (Wilmore and Rees, 1996). Effects ranged from the magic of “Harlequin who employed mechanical tricks to transform a palace into a hut, men and women into wheelbarrows and chairs, and colonnades into beds of tulips or serpent” (Bates, 1906: 78-81), to the elaborate effects utilised by Gilbert (Varty, 2008: 104).

### **People effects:**

An especially lavish example of use of large numbers of child performers for the purposes of creating spectacle was the Augustus Harris’ production of *40 Thieves* in 1886-7 to mark Victoria’s Jubilee (Varty, 2008: 2-3). But this was by no means the first, the *Goody Two Shoes* (1876), *Gaiety Gulliver* (1879), the *Children’s Pinafore* (1879), *Mother Goose* (1880-1) and *Sinbad the Sailor* (1882) all employed large numbers of singing and dancing juveniles (Varty, 2008: 15,83). In Garrick’s 1757 adaptation of *Gulliver’s Travels*, Garrick had been the only adult in the cast (Varty, 2008: 77) though this would not have been able to compete with Harris’ productions in terms of showy spectacle. Neither were the productions restricted to London theatres. Equally spectacular pantomimes were offered by the Theatre Royal, Glasgow from 1860s onwards (Varty, 2008: 192). John Douglas Jnr employed 250 children (as well as a dozen horse-drawn wagonettes) in his play *Silver Wedding* (1886) ‘staged’ on a Sunday school treat in Epping Forest.

## **2.6 Establishing its identity: The modernisers**

### **2.6.1 Transition**

By the late 19th century the popularity of child performers in Britain began to decline<sup>96</sup>. Theatre productions became more professional and the ‘homemade feel’ of productions involving children was no longer attractive to the middle-class audience:

<sup>95</sup> A reference to the Jungian idea of synchronicity: meaningful coincidence, without implying causality (Jung, 1993; Koestler, 1972).

<sup>96</sup> “In 1886 former child performer Marie Bancroft wrote jubilantly, if not somewhat prematurely, that the fashion for child prodigies was finally over, declaring ... ‘Fortunate children, fortunate public!’ ” (O’Connor, 2008: 46).

*“A chorus sung by children, how shrill, tuneless and unpleasing, and last, but by no means least in fact, by far the greatest infliction of all – the child actor or actress. Every attitude is the result of laborious study and practice. It is not the children on that stage that need our sympathy... it is the unfortunate playgoers doomed to sit out these pigmy efforts who are really deserving of commiseration.”*

(LS, 1889)

However, while the popularity of child performers appeared to wane in Britain, this was not the case in America. During the gold-rush men would live away from their homes and families, and as a result there was a ready audience for travelling productions. Child performers (known as ‘fairy stars’) were used shamelessly to remind the men of their own children. When Vaudeville took over the American stage the use of child performers continued. However rather than marvelling at their talent and performance ability, audiences revelled in sentimentality (O’Connor, 2008: 49).

By the 20th century the demand in Britain and America for child performers recovered momentum. In an article written in 1904 a journalist for the New York Times recorded that where “there was one youngster acting ten years ago there are fifteen or twenty to-day” (New York Times, 1904). Audiences were drawn to the ‘untaught, natural genius’. Ironically however, such ‘natural genius’, ... “was often the result of fierce rearing and training techniques” (O’Connor, 2008: 42).

It had become fashionable to include at least one part for a child actor in each performance, and any production which eschewed this format was considered to be old-fashioned and of little interest to theatre audiences. Supply met demand and while in 1896 “only 187 applications for permission to use child actors were filed with the New York Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children ... seven seasons later, with many popular melodramas calling for a child heroine to tug at audience heartstrings, over 4,000 were submitted, the most ever in this age” (McArthur, 1995). Some theatre managers chose not to use children for their performances, but instead employed a youthful looking adult who could be dressed as a young child<sup>97</sup>. Generally, though, this did not ‘wash’ with the discerning theatregoing public.

<sup>97</sup>This foreshadowed the use of adult performers to play the Ballet Girls in *Billy Elliot*.

### 2.6.2 Socio-political

The controversy around working conditions for child performers continued into the 20th century<sup>98</sup>. While there is evidence of very good working conditions for some child performers there are also accounts of abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Edith Taliaferro, who began work at two years old and went on to be described by Henry Arthur Jones as the greatest child actress, was a supporter of stage children: “Here is my daily routine when I was 9 years old: I went to the theatre at 7.30 in the evening. I was home at 11. When I got home after the performance I used to have a glass of milk and some crackers, and then I got to bed by 11.30. At 9 in the morning I was up. I had lessons from 10 to 12. Then I lunched, studied till 2, and from 2 to 4 played or did what I liked. I had an afternoon nap from 5 to 5.30, went out to walk till 6, had dinner, and got ready for the theatre. Moreover, we generally had a week’s vacation at Christmas, often another week at Easter, and we closed for the season on May 1. Seven months work and five months vacation-up in the mountains or down at the seashore. Killing wasn’t it?” ([New York Times](#), 1910).

The rosy picture painted by this account is supported by many others. In fact there are few extant written accounts of poor or harmful treatment of child actors<sup>99</sup>. However those who were opposed to the use of child performers believed that long hours and other demands such as the combination of rehearsals, performance, and the legal requirement for school hours constituted unreasonable treatment, particularly as the general education of the child was bound to suffer. The view was that by appearing on stage as a child, the potential for an alternative future career was at risk. Moving between the structure and routine of schooling and the freedom and flexibility of life on the stage was said to be unsettling for a child ([Iris](#), 1888). Evidence from modern studies suggests that the long rehearsal days combined with late evenings would have had an adverse impact on the general health of the stage child ([D’Silva](#), 1993).

Supporters of stage children contended that the Education Acts in Britain and America were enough to protect their education, and that theatrical training provided children

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<sup>98</sup>Notable supporters of stage children included: Lewis Carroll (playwright); John Coleman (Theatre Manager); Lady Bancroft (Theatre Manager for the Prince of Wales Theatre and the Haymarket Theatre); Ellaline Terriss (actress and singer); James Rodgers, John Lobb, and General Sim of the London School Board. The opposition counted among their members Charles McEvoy, The Archbishop of Canterbury, and Doris Arthur Jones, and in America were led by the formidable Gerry Society. Hundreds of letters penned by them (and by many others) can be found in the pages of newspapers, magazines and theatrical publications that have survived from the late 19th and early 20th century.

<sup>99</sup>It is perhaps less likely that negative accounts would have been made public in a form that would survive until today.



with life skills<sup>100</sup>. They believed it could also serve as an apprenticeship, preparing the child for a career on the stage as an adult. The playwright Augustus Thomas went as far as to say that positions for child actors were “as valuable for a child as a scholarship for Oxford is for a young man” ([New York Times, 1911a](#)).

A stage child could earn excellent rates of pay, acting as the breadwinner for their family when necessary. To many supporters of the industry this was seen as a positive contribution to society and a far better fate than that suffered by the average child employed in a factory or workshop. However opponents felt that the average remuneration (4 to 5 shillings per week) didn’t warrant the inevitable sacrifice of education; their view was that allowing a child to support its parents financially was immoral and would inevitably lead to the child growing apart from its parents.

Fears over safety were well-founded, with countless children’s physicians providing accounts of injury and illnesses related to performance<sup>101</sup>. Lord Everett<sup>102</sup> believed safety was neglected due to an abundance of child performers, meaning that “the theatrical manager has no particular reason for exerting himself to take care of these children”. He went further in his indictment, claiming that many child actors had been “traced to various reformatory institutions and many others were forced to leave the stage because of physical disability. In short ... instead of developing and fostering genius, the stage was the means of forcing these children into oblivion and disrepute” ([Lord Everett, 1910](#)). Others pointed to the possibility of mental illnesses and nervous disorders developing in the stage child, often exacerbated by pressure, adrenaline, stage fright, and exhaustion. Mabel Love’s<sup>103</sup> suicide attempt after absconding to Ireland aged fourteen was often cited as a warning ([The Star, 1889](#)).

Defenders of the status quo argued that only resilient children could get through the rigorous audition processes, ensuring that the selected children would be able to cope with the pressures associated with appearing on the stage. The auditions incorporated a short interview where children were asked a series of questions; children who hesitated in their response or who appeared to be shy or nervous were not selected ([New York Times, 1904](#)).

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<sup>100</sup>Including understanding the value of team work, manners, punctuality and discipline, in addition to broadening the child’s knowledge of culture, literature, and in some cases history. Mark Twain recognised that the benefits of children’s theatre could go further than just the child: “The educating history-study does not stop with the little players, but the whole school catches the infection and revels in it. And it doesn’t even stop there; the children carry it home and infect the family with it – even the parents and grandparents; and the whole household fall” ([Twain, 1907 – 1910: 8](#)).

<sup>101</sup>Including: broken limbs, swollen legs and ankles, extreme fatigue, and even brain fever.

<sup>102</sup>In conversation with Mrs Henry Fawcett: ([Iris, 1888](#)).

<sup>103</sup>Mabel Love was born in 1874 and first went on stage aged 12. In 1894 Winston Churchill wrote to her asking for a signed photograph ([The Library of Nineteenth-Century Photography, n.d.](#)).



Similarly, there was no concrete evidence to support the claim that “excessive dramatic study had an ill effect on the child” (Carroll, 1889), and supporters were quick to draw attention to the instances of mental collapse of ordinary school pupils. There was also no real evidence of physical harm, and in fact many school children were treated for curvature of the spine, a problem which did not occur in stage children who were taught the importance of posture and deportment (Carroll, 1889). Moreover there was a view that in order to get the best out of a child performer it was important to take great care of each individual child<sup>104</sup>. However, Shirley Temple also recalls one of the most startling example of poor treatment, when stage children “who misbehaved were shut in a big dark box with only an enormous block of melting ice to sit on” (Gee, 2008: 195). The child actor was expected to perform like an adult, but was not treated like one.

The moral well-being of the stage child was another concern. Some felt that, deprived of the guiding religious influences enjoyed by other children, stage children were likely to become spoilt and precocious, and they would be exposed to bad language, alcohol, tobacco and, potentially, to immoral men. Conversely proponents believed they would be immune to such influences because their attentions were elsewhere. “The Reverend Dr. William Van Allen, at the Church of the Advent in Boston said that in all his travels, and he has met lots of children of royalty, he has found theatre children to be the most unprecocious and unselfish” (New York Times, 1910). However some viewed the early maturation of child performers to be an unhappy consequence of life on the stage<sup>105</sup>.

It is clear that by any modern standard, some of the practices of the day were reprehensible. For example Shirley Temple made her debut in the *Baby Burlesks*, “hour long parodies of grown-up movies, with all roles played by pre-school children, clothed waist up in adult dress, waist down in oversize nappies. Titles included *Polly Tix in Washington*, the story of a call girl attempting to corrupt an honest politician” (Gee, 2008: 195). However the ‘common child’ was also exposed to late nights, cold air and unsuitable influences. Much of the available surviving evidence appears to come from parties with a vested interest, and for that reason the picture that emerges about the quality of life of stage children relative to their peers employed in other industries is not clear cut. However on balance it appears that the overall variability in the quality of

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<sup>104</sup>One letter to the New York Times said that: “Their speaking parts demand that they be well poised and in good health, and they would be unsuccessful if this were not made a prime consideration” (New York Times, 1910).

<sup>105</sup>In a letter to The Daily Mail in 1905, Doris Arthur Jones commented on how quickly stage children lose their child-like qualities: “At a children’s party on the stage of one of the West End Theatres I overheard the following conversation: Small child of eight: ‘Oh, how d’ye do? I admired your performance immensely this afternoon.’ Small child aged five: ‘Thanks, you’re very kind; When I get a matinee off I’ll look in and see your show if I can’ ” (Arthur Jones, Doris, 1905).

life of children at the time was at least as great as the difference between children who worked in the theatre and those who did not.

Italia Conti was recognised for her work as a director and teacher of children of the stage and became known as the “British Theatre’s Governess” (Conti, n.d.). Conti was involved with the debates regarding the 1903 Employment of Children Act, and in 1918 she was consulted by the Minister for Education regarding legislation which affected children in the theatre. Her involvement and ideas helped to shape the licensing legislation which followed (Conti, n.d.).

While practitioners such as Alice Minnie Herts recognised that the future of theatre audiences depended upon the exposure of children to the dramatic arts, they also believed that child actors should be kept off the professional stage<sup>106</sup> (New York Times, 1911c).

Throughout the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, the arguments over the use of children in professional theatre in America and Britain was at the centre of political debate. A war was waged between the self-styled child protectors and the theatrical community. The debate was very much in the public eye and led to a number of changes to American and British legislation regarding child labour, and was chronicled in hundreds of articles in the press.

Charles Loring Brace’s Children’s Aid Society was founded in 1853, but the fight over child actor labor laws did not begin in earnest until 1870. Figure 2.10 on page 57 shows some of the key milestones in the contest<sup>107</sup>.

The campaign in America to ‘rescue’ children from the stage was spearheaded by the New York Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC). Founded in 1874 and nicknamed the ‘Gerry Society’, after its co-founder Elbridge Thomas Gerry, it first took an interest in the employment of children in the theatre during the 1900s. Gerry disagreed particularly with the popular all-children companies and fought to close them down (McArthur, 1995: 2). The Society believed that singing and dancing for the entertainment of adults was degrading and exploitative of a child’s innocence and vulnerability. This view was borne out of Gerry’s personal experience of child actors in saloons and music halls (McArthur, 1995: 2). The society was also concerned about children watching productions they deemed to be inappropriate, and hoped that removing children from the stage would result in them being removed from the audiences also (Ott, 2009: 13). In 1876 Gerry “sponsored one of the first laws designed to regulate

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<sup>106</sup>In 1917 Thomas Dickinson, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, proclaimed that children’s theatre could not serve “any good purpose, unless and until it attracted and sustained ‘the mature intelligences of men and women’ as a commercially viable enterprise” (Klein, 2012).

<sup>107</sup>In New York the system of permits introduced as a result of the battle and subsequent reforms remained in place until the 1940s, with managers continuing to complain of erratic treatment by the New York Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC) and the mayor’s office.

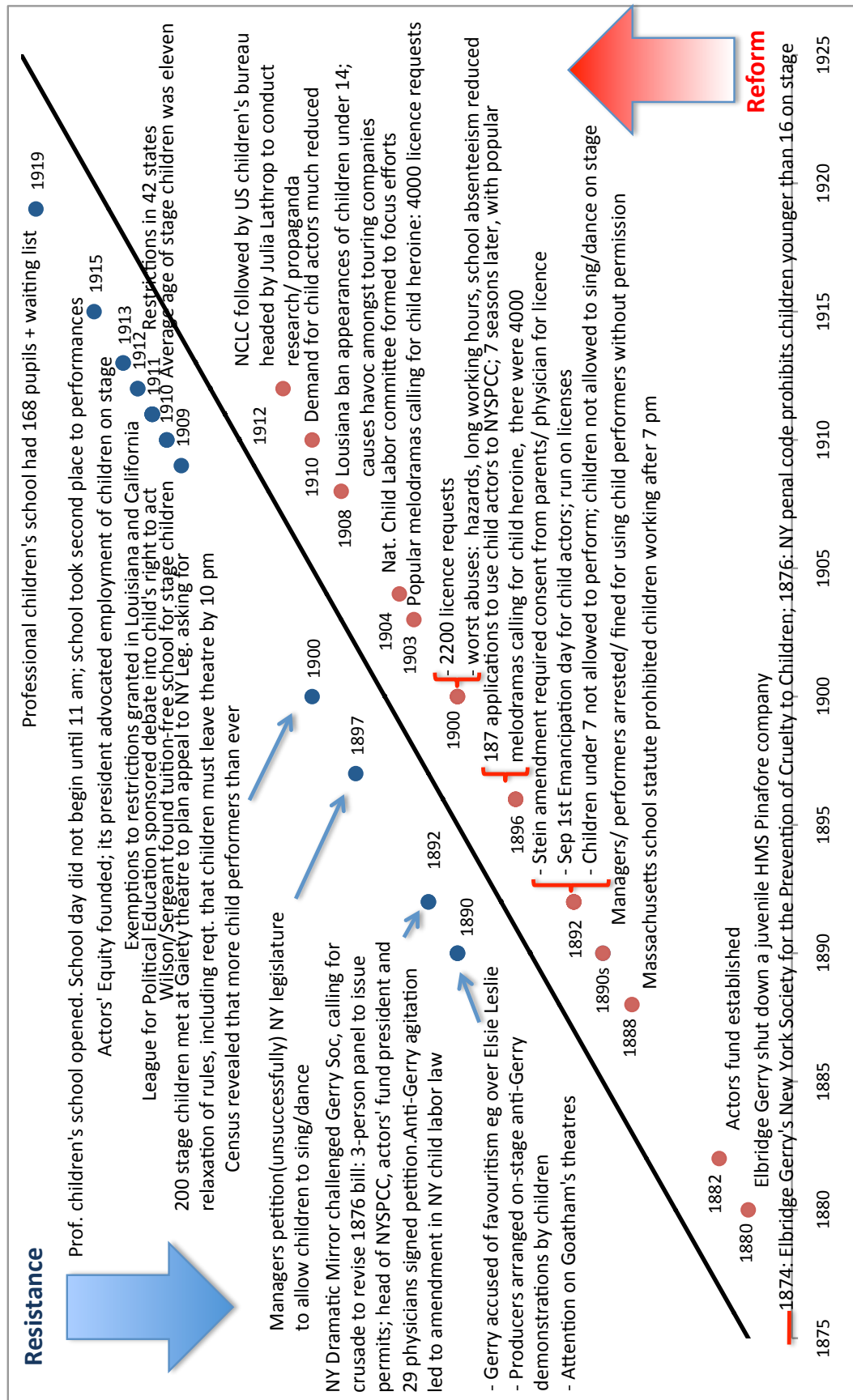


FIGURE 2.10: Child labour: the balance of argument

the employment of children” (Zelizer and Rotman, 1985: 86) and the society became responsible for assessing the risks associated with child performers. Subsequently legislation was passed which prevented children from singing or dancing on stage: a serious blow for theatre managers and stage children.

Child performers became wary of the ‘Gerrys’, as is illustrated by the following anecdote. “A very small child was being questioned by a manager. ‘How old are you?’ he asked. ‘Five for the street car conductor, seven for mamma, and ten for ‘the Gerries’ (sic), replied the youngster, promptly’ ” (New York Times, 1904).

The National Alliance for the Protection of Stage Children (1910) was established in response to the work of the Gerry Society. In 1911 the Alliance published a document entitled “Stage Children of America”: a call for the recognition of the legitimacy of acting for young children (Zelizer and Rotman, 1985: 88).

Between 1910 and 1912 the focus on stage children intensified and gained national newspaper coverage. Campaigners fought for legal exemption for stage children, and national and state labour committees attempted to fight back against what they felt was an “unacceptable and dangerous challenge to child labor legislation” (Zelizer and Rotman, 1985: 88).

The dispute lasted for nearly fifty years, and by 1923 there had been many attempts to change the legislation concerning child performers. The national survey of stage children observed that, “by 1923, only seventeen out of forty-eight states, and the District of Columbia, required a minimum age limit of fourteen or sixteen for the appearance of children in theatrical performances” (Zelizer and Rotman, 1985: 89). Despite the best intentions of the law makers, the raft of new Bills, amendments, and modifications served only to confuse those responsible for the employment of stage children. It seemed that nobody could come to a definitive conclusion.

Stage children in Britain had a similar experience. Britain saw the passing of various pieces of legislation designed to protect children from exploitation and poor conditions at work. The first act to significantly affect stage children was The Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act 1889. The act caused some controversy amongst members of Parliament, theatre managers, and the general public. In a Parliamentary meeting in 1889 the Earl of Dunraven presented arguments gathered from research, articles, and personal letters from supporters. He secured an amendment which allowed children between seven and ten to be employed on the stage. He contended that no similar law existed in any other European country and that in France the law actually compelled “the managers of the state subsidised theatres and the Grand Opera to employ children under 10” (Parliament, 1889). He also fought for licences to be issued by

sessional courts and argued that in the Bill's current form, all children would be required to produce their birth certificate at the cost of one shilling, which was a considerable sum for most families.

A subsequent Act was passed in 1904: The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act, but this seemed only to confuse the British public. For example, many people thought the Bill meant that every child performer under the age of fourteen required a performance licence. Consequently a great number of theatre managers applied for licences unnecessarily. It seemed that when cases were brought to Court even the magistrates had not fully understood the legislation. In an article in *The Stage Yearbook* in 1913, Bernard Weller attempted to set out the rules more clearly (Weller, 1913)<sup>108</sup>.

The Children & Young Persons Act (1933) was designed to unite all existing child protection legislation for England and Wales and had a specific section on Entertainment and Performance. New points were included in response to cases of neglect, exploitation, and poor treatment of stage children. Paragraph 23 prohibited "persons under sixteen taking part in performances endangering life or limb". Paragraph 25 placed restrictions on persons under eighteen going abroad for the purpose of performing for profit (HMG, 1933).

It is interesting to note that the same battles about child performers rage today, and, as can be seen in the section on child licensing laws, there are those who fully support (and in some cases, advocate) the participation of children in the professional theatre, and those who think it is irresponsible and exploitative.

During the 20th century war had a major impact on theatre, forcing changes in theatre personnel, but at the same time generating new audiences, fostering creativity and influencing the subject matter of musicals.

In 1917 the American government formed the Committee on Public Information (CPI). The agency employed 75,000 speakers as 'four-minute men', who gave speeches (which incorporated song) during the four minutes between reel changes in cinemas (Ewen,

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- "A child under ten must not be employed in any stage performance or exhibition in public.
- A child between ten and eleven can only be employed under a magistrate's or similar license.
- A child between eleven and fourteen may be employed without license up to nine o'clock at night, or up to such hour as has been fixed by the local authority (provided that the Education Acts are not infringed in any way).
- A boy under fourteen or a girl under sixteen must not be in any street or in any premises licensed for sale of intoxicating liquor other than premises licensed according to law for public entertainments, for the purposes of singing, playing, performing, or the like after 9 p.m., or after hours fixed by local bye-laws (sic)". This list is not exhaustive and more details can be found in (Weller, 1913).

1977: 2). The ‘four-minute men’ also visited music halls, schools and other public places frequented by children (Ewen, 1977: 2). In this way, musical theatre was used as a vehicle for political messages and reached children it might not otherwise have reached.

The Second World War in particular affected theatre for and by children in Britain and America<sup>109</sup>. Many people went off to war and many of those who were left were displaced from towns and cities, reducing the number of professionals within the industry and depleting audiences. London experienced the most disruption and, despite the best efforts of producers and directors like Donald Wolfit<sup>110</sup> who tried to keep the theatre alive with afternoon showings, performances were infrequent and often interrupted by air raids, blackouts and curfews. The situation was compounded when, at the beginning of World War II, Neville Chamberlain announced the “closing of all London theatres and cinemas” (Whitehouse, 2005)<sup>111</sup>.

Theatre audiences changed. Since the First World War “children had been encouraged to go to the Old Vic with special matinees at low prices” (Wood and Grant, 1997: 9). However with the closure and then relocation of the Old Vic<sup>112</sup> in addition to the loss of so many children from the capital, this could not continue during the Second World War.

The outbreak of the Second World War had an impact on drama schools (as it did ordinary schools). Student numbers diminished and London was no longer a safe place for a drama school to operate; consequently many schools relocated to other parts of the country. The relocation of some of London’s best-known drama schools is summarised in Figure 2.11 on page 61. Moves like this would have been costly and influenced the way in which drama schools would develop.

Although these moves had a detrimental effect on opportunities for children who remained in London, they offered opportunities to new audiences, aspiring performers

<sup>109</sup>Productions began to focus on uplifting stories, designed to boost morale. “With few exceptions, diversionary fluff was the order of the day for book musicals from the turn of the century through World War I and beyond” (Jones, 2003: 47). Many of the performers and musicians from the West End were offered work with the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) or through the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), a Government-backed initiative to preserve and promote cultural activities in wartime (Musicians’ Union, 2010). American citizens turned their backs on the operettas of the enemy (Austrian operettas had been very popular until World War I), and American and British musical theatre flourished.

<sup>110</sup>Wolfit staged a very successful series of abridged versions of Shakespeare’s plays in London during World War II in the early afternoon for lunchtime audiences. (Baer and Antonio, 2000: 2).

<sup>111</sup>Although the statute was retracted, the damage was done, and theatre began to feel the loss of men in its casts, creative teams, orchestras and backstage crews. Austerity measures made things even more difficult: props and costumes were harder to obtain/produce under the ‘make do and mend’ regime since paint and materials were rationed during the war and for some years after it, making it difficult to put on a production.

<sup>112</sup>The Old Vic was badly damaged during the Blitz, and the war-depleted company spent all its time touring, based in Burnley, Lancashire at the Victoria Theatre during the years 1940 to 1943, the company was re-established in London (Old Vic, 2013).



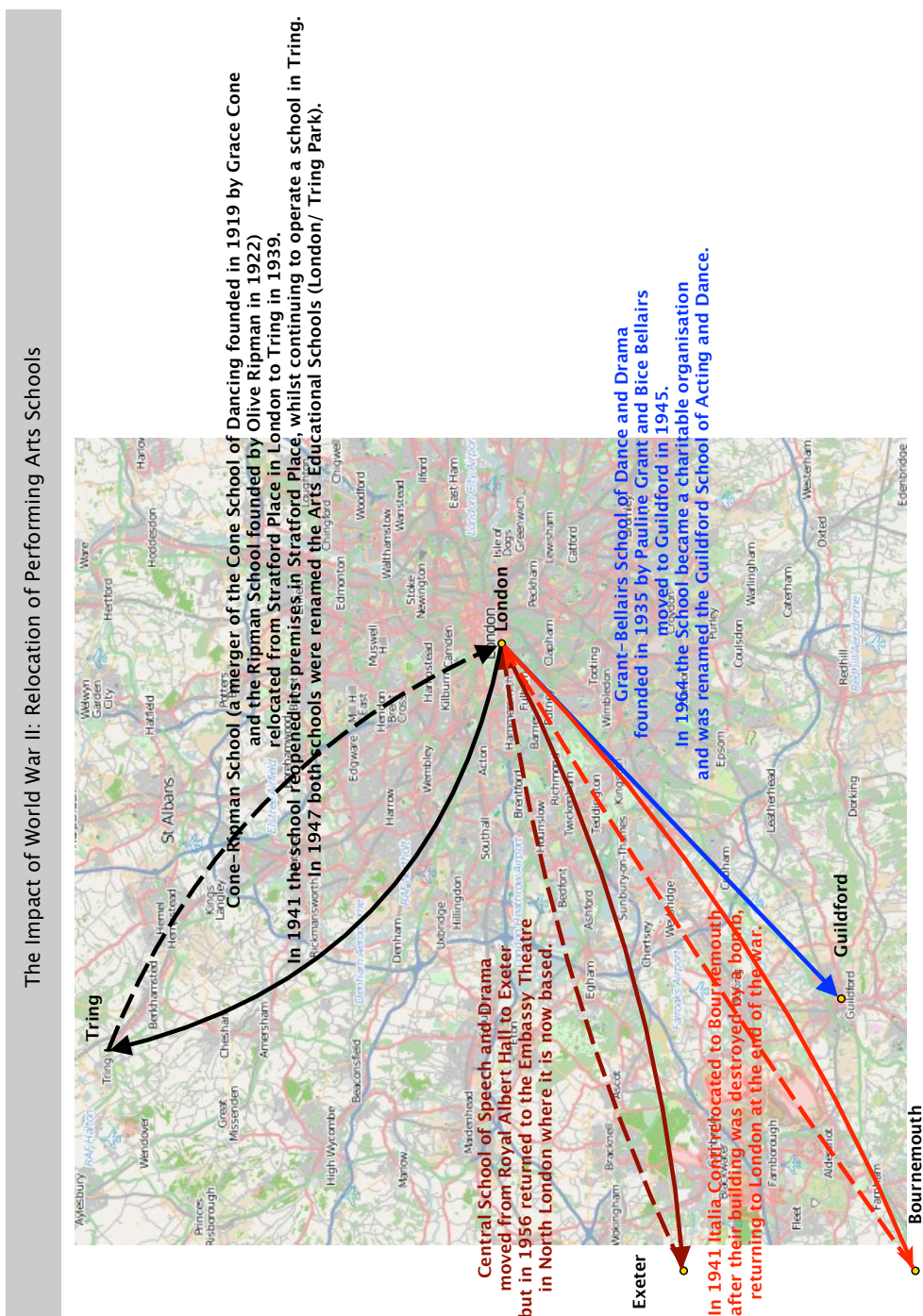


FIGURE 2.11: The relocation of performing arts schools

across the country, and the 1.9 million evacuated children. In addition, large cultural events, such as the Grand Theatre in Leeds show, *Youth Marches On*, were used as a distraction for children, playing to packed audiences every night and were "...a tribute to youth, designed to show that the future lay on the shoulders of the young" ([My Learning, 2011](#)).

Not only did many of the drama schools that were established during the Second World War continue after the war but, in the years following, many new institutions opened too<sup>113</sup>. This might be due in part to the dissemination of musical theatre during the war years. Now that drama schools had relocated to other parts of the country there was a market for new audiences and potential students.

Figure 2.12 on page 62 illustrates the resourcefulness and resilience of performing arts teachers and their students during wartime ([Historicaldis, n.d.](#)).



FIGURE 2.12: Coping with the effects of war: WWII Russian ballet class

The Second World War had an impact on the development of children's theatre in Britain and America and America's Youth Theatre movement had to make significant changes in order to survive. The reach and popularity of children's theatre across America during the 1930s and 1940s can be attributed in part to the work of the New Junior League's theatre group, known as 'The Players', and their partner group, the 'Glee Club'<sup>114</sup>. Not only did they recognise the social and educational benefits of theatre for young audiences and participants, but they also held the view that children's theatre "played an important role in civilian defence. The best way to keep a people [adults

<sup>113</sup>The Romford branch of the Bush Davies School managed to grow in numbers. Many of the girls aged eighteen were called-up for the war effort to carry out jobs such as preparing aircraft parts; "They would come back ... with horrid glue on their hands, very tired, but still went in to evening class" ([Harrison, 2009](#)).

<sup>114</sup>The Junior League was founded in 1901 in order to "improve child health, nutrition and literacy among immigrants living on the Lower East Side of Manhattan" ([Association of Junior Leagues, 2009](#)). By 1920 there were 30 leagues across the United States of America, all with similar goals.



or children] brave is to keep them entertained” ([New York Junior League, 2008](#)). The Players performed as volunteers in schools, hospitals, and immigrant settlements.

Despite the performers giving their time for free, the touring children’s theatre program struggled during the Second World War due to a loss of its members to the war effort, the shortage of petrol, and an increasing difficulty in sourcing properties and scenery. Consequently some branches of the Junior League found that it was not economically viable to continue to tour their productions, and focussed instead on performances in their home towns. The New York Junior League adapted their style, introducing puppetry to their shows, sourcing props from the home. The puppet shows were a resounding success and became a staple of the League’s work continuing long after the war was over, and the idea was adopted by many other branches of the Junior League ([New York Junior League, 2008](#)). So, although the changes had in many ways been forced on the company, it served to strengthen the resolve of the members and provide them with the impetus to grow and develop.

The effects were greater in the UK (particularly in London), due to the physical threat of war and the associated disruption in people’s lives, but also because theatre did not have the benefits of the government subsidies enjoyed by the counterparts in the US. That said, the number of original musicals produced for Broadway dropped substantially in the 1930s<sup>115</sup>, following the seven-fold surge at the start of the 20th century: Figure 2.13 on page 63.

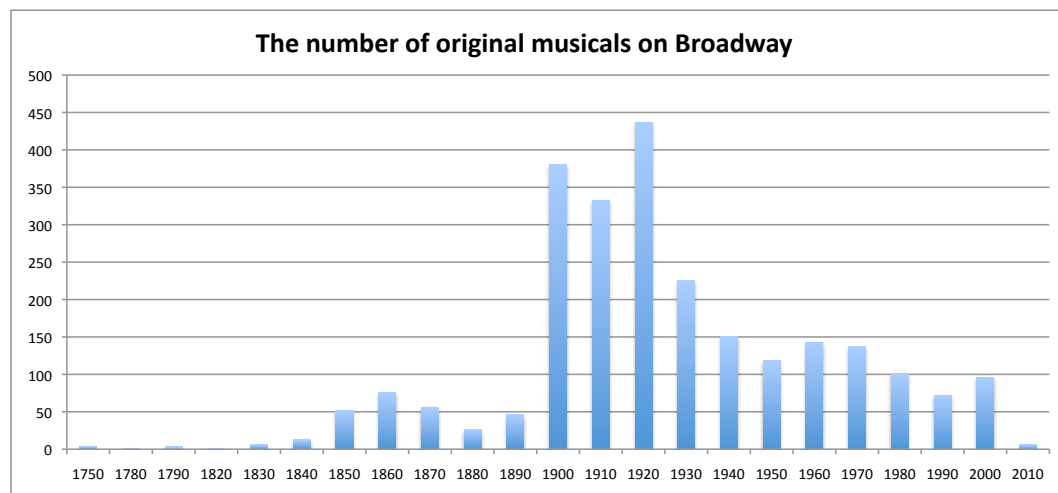


FIGURE 2.13: Original musicals on Broadway

<sup>115</sup>And continued its fall until the 1960s. The chart shows the results of an analysis of 2,507 musicals on the IBDB database ([IBDB, n.d.](#)) (downloaded in 2010).

### 2.6.3 Economics

With such a demand for child performers, wages for children on the stage were much higher than in any other industry<sup>116</sup>. Child agent Anna Taliaferro noted that “some of them get excellent pay. Fifty dollars a week for a child actor is not very rare, though many a man makes less and thinks he is living well. Thirty-five or forty dollars a week to a youngster ... is even common now that the demand for stage children is so great. The manager ... does not think such a wage exorbitant if he gets what he is looking for” ([New York Times, 1904](#)).

This level of remuneration was not limited to America. The infant prodigy Elise Craven who won fame “in a Christmas pantomime by her wonderful dancing” earned her the equivalent of \$500 per week at the London Coliseum ([New York Times, 1909](#)).

It was not uncommon for parents to send their children out to work to help support the family, and a profession on the stage was as good an option as any<sup>117</sup>. However the census from the early 1900s revealed that child actors came from all social backgrounds. For example, “Durant Rose who created a hit in *April Weather*, was the son of a New York society matron” ([McArthur, 1995](#)).

Other parents were motivated by ambition for their children and perhaps enjoyed the reflected glory.

Then there were children who were born into the profession and toured the country with their performer parents, becoming part of the act as soon as they were able<sup>118</sup>.

It was not uncommon for a child to choose a career on the stage for themselves<sup>119</sup>. “A Parliamentary report written as part of an investigation into child performers asserted that all stage children had an ‘insatiable thirst for admiration’ ” ([O’Connor, 2008](#): 45).

“Occasionally an odd case appeared, as with five-year-old Gracie Faust who reportedly went on stage by order of her doctor; he believed that the stimulation and excitement of theater life would energize her frail constitution” ([McArthur, 1995](#)).

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<sup>116</sup>Benjamin McArthur said that “in budget companies child players often were featured and sometimes were the highest paid performers at \$100 a week” ([McArthur, 1995](#)).

<sup>117</sup>One article in the *New York Times* in 1904 made the point that a “seven-year-old son, if he has talent, can make more money than his workingman father” ([New York Times, 1904](#)). There were many instances of child performers being “the breadwinners of poor families. Mary Pickford went on the stage at age four, and, when her father died the following year, she supported her mother and younger siblings” ([McArthur, 1995](#)). Mary was billed as Baby Gladys Smith and was able to “move the audience to tears with maudlin songs about love and loss” ([O’Connor, 2008](#): 49).

<sup>118</sup>A further example of the role played by theatrical dynasties.

<sup>119</sup>“To the children the short stage life every evening is one continual delight ... cared for like a delicate flower, the joy of the audience and the pet of the company, why should not the little actor or actress be happy?” ([New York Times, 1904](#)).

### 2.6.4 Education

During the first part of the 20th century, the arts were not a central part of state education in America, but theatre companies began visiting US public schools to deliver performances and to hold classes and workshops. One of the earliest examples is the Education Players, who began to work with schools in 1911. “They adhered to a definite policy of educating [their] members and audience, through an insistence of the best in both dramatic literature and standards of public performance. This led to the introduction of plays written for public schools” (Gordon, 2007: 12).

Some school teachers began to use drama and the arts to aid their teaching. In 1910, for example, Margaret Love Pierce was influenced by the work of Emma Sheridan Fry who had “developed the idea of dramatizing stories in her elementary reading classes”. Pierce “developed a new method of using the acting out of stories to teach literature” (Gordon, 2007: 12).

By the 1930s, drama had begun to be integrated into the school curriculum. “The focus was on informal and creative dramatics. It was also in this decade that there was an increase in the number of programs for audiences of children” (Gordon, 2007: 13).

While Britain and America saw a number of performing arts training establishments open during the first half of the 20th century, the nations approached the education of budding performers in very different ways. America’s schools were business-led, working in pursuit of, and in preparation for, professional work for their students. Britain took a different approach and the emphasis was on the training itself, rigorous standards, and expecting students to achieve excellent technical work and excel in their examinations<sup>120</sup>. In short, Britain favoured skills education and teacher training while America valued ‘on the job’ instruction.

By the early 1900s in Britain there were already a number of part-time dance schools which offered tuition in a range of dance styles, in addition to providing music, elocution, and deportment lessons. During the early part of the 20th century Britain saw

<sup>120</sup> “In 1892 the British Association of Teachers of Dancing (BATD) was founded and became the first Dancing Association to encourage the professionals of the day to organise themselves into a society to improve and develop the art of dancing, in many forms.” (BATD, n.d.).

“The International Dance Teachers Association (ITDA) began in 1903 as the Manchester and Salford Association of Teachers of Dancing. By the late 1930s it had amalgamated with four other associations (the English Association of Dancing Masters, Premier Association of Teachers of Dancing, Universal Association of Teachers of Dancing, and the Yorkshire Association of Dancing Masters) to form the International Dancing Masters’ Association. In 1961 the Midland Dance Teachers’ Association was also added and the body became known as the International Dance Teachers’ Association. The IDTA conducts examinations qualifying teachers of dancing and entry to the Association is by examination only” (IDTA, n.d.).

The Imperial Society of Dance Teachers (ISTD) began in 1904.

the founding and development of a series of associations designed to formalise dance education, including the BATD, ITDA and ISTD<sup>121</sup>.

During the early part of the 20th century the popularity of dance in America was ever-changing and dance schools saw fluctuations in their student numbers. This was due in part to the negative view of dance held by the Protestant Church, in addition to the association of dance with alcohol and the low grade entertainment found in saloons and on the Vaudeville stage. A number of things made dance more socially acceptable; firstly prohibition, which separated mainstream dance from alcohol, and secondly the introduction of classical dance to America in the 1920s by European Ballet companies. Thanks to these companies, the American population found a new love for Ballet and Modern dance ([Ballet Russe, 2007](#)). By the 1920s, dance in all forms was very popular. “Many commercial dance palaces were set up during this period, and in New York City alone, dance halls had revenues of \$8 million” ([HighBeam Business, 2012](#)).

One of the first franchise models was beginning to flourish by the 1920s. Eighteen year old Arthur Murray opened his school in 1912 and “was among the first to use advertising techniques considered cutting edge at the time. His concept of selling dance lessons by mail . . . took the use of direct mail to a new level. In March of 1920 . . . Murray arranged to have music transmitted to a group of his dance students a few miles away. This was the world’s first radio broadcast of live dance music for dancing” ([Arthur Murray Dance Studios, 2011](#)).

As dance schools became increasingly popular, the need for quality assurance became more important as a large number of poor quality institutions were opened by those wanting to make a ‘quick buck’. In 1932 a group of 38 dance teachers congregated at the Sammy Burns Studio in New York to formulate “a set of ethical rules and regulations regarding teaching and advertising in the field of dance” ([Dance Educators of America, 2012](#)). The group became known as the Dancing Teachers Business Association of New York City (DTBA)<sup>122</sup>. America also developed its own dance teacher associations, but rather than offering structured syllabi and examination pathways, the associations were designed to ensure quality of teaching<sup>123</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup>These associations continue to play an important role in dance education offering students the opportunity to undertake examinations in various dance disciplines.

<sup>122</sup>Gradually more and more teachers were inducted into the Association in order to “take advantage of its unique teacher’s program designed to further and promote the education of their students in the performing and stage arts” ([Dance Educators of America, 2012](#)).

<sup>123</sup>The first of this kind was the result of a merger of the American National Association Masters of Dancing (1884) and the International Masters of Dancing (1894) in 1926. The new Association was known as the Dancing Masters of America and went on to develop the Teachers Normal School in New York City (1918) which gave teachers the opportunity to gain a certificate of teaching in their chosen specialism ([Dance Masters of America, 2010](#)).

American dance schools focused heavily on acquiring work for their students and often worked alongside child agents<sup>124</sup>. For those children who did undertake professional stage work, schooling needed to be built into their schedules. This was not always possible and many children ran the risk of contravening compulsory education laws. Various solutions were put forward including summer schools which were designed to top up the stage child's education once the performance season had finished. One such attempt took place in 1911 when the stage children's Christmas Tree Association and producers Leibler & Co. opened a six-week summer school at the Century Theatre. The school was free of charge to those children who had appeared on stage during the previous season ([New York Times, 1911b](#)).

In 1910 Francis Wilson and Franklin Sargent had established a free school for stage children next to the American Academy for Dramatic Arts. While this school did not survive, an institution known as the 'Professional Children's School' fared much better. It was established by Jean Greer and Jane Hall in 1915 and was designed to accommodate regular pupils as well as touring children who would have their lessons sent to them by post. By 1919 the school had 168 pupils, and was receiving further applications all the time<sup>125</sup> ([McArthur, 1995](#)).

The development of dance education in America seemed to be, then, that the child would attend dance schools on a part-time basis with the intention of gaining a coveted position on the stage, at which point schooling would need to be managed around rehearsals, training and performances. To counter complaints from those concerned about interruptions to education, a series of specialist schools were established.

In Britain, the system developed very differently. By the 20th century it had become the fashion in Britain to send one's daughter to dance lessons to "exercise all their options in developing a well-rounded demeanour: ballet: deportment and etiquette: a musical instrument and social graces were prerequisite" ([Harrison, 1993](#)). To meet the demand, countless dance schools were set up across the country. While most of these remained as part-time schools, some developed into full-time vocational training institutions.

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<sup>124</sup>Perhaps this is why dance lessons were not always considered to be an appropriate pastime for children. In Britain the general consensus was that dance lessons were a valuable part of the social education of the child, with tutors expecting hard work, discipline and adequate preparation for difficult examinations, whereas in America, they were seen as a means to an end – to get the child on to the professional stage.

<sup>125</sup>Funded by "private contributions, benefit performances and a few yearly subscriptions" ([New York Times, 1922](#)), by 1922 the school was able to take its students "through their grades, as well as through two years of high school. Diplomas from the Professional Children's School now admit the recipients thereof to the third-year term of any high school in the country" ([New York Times, 1922](#)).

Today there are twelve full-time vocational schools in Britain<sup>126</sup>. These will be covered in more depth in the Education chapter, but it is worth noting that eight of them opened during the first half of the 20th century. This period is particularly important in the history and development of vocational training, and the current model for a full-time school which combines vocational and academic studies came about as a result of the experiences of these early schools.

The Corona School is one of the earliest established full-time performing arts schools to still survive today<sup>127</sup>. The school was founded in 1924 by Rona Knight who had taken ballet lessons as a child and took a keen interest in the style of tap dance made famous by Hollywood films. Rona made her first stage appearance at age 11 when she put on a show for the benefit of a local Sunday School. By the time she was 14, Rona was giving dance lessons in her front room and put on shows at a cinema in Richmond and on stage at Chiswick Town Hall<sup>128</sup>.

As the school grew Rona expanded the timetable: “Each child has an average of six months training, dancing and singing, and then I pick out those who should specialise in one particular branch. All are advised to keep to a diet which excludes starchy foods” (Roe, 1996). While the children travelled, they were required to continue with their school education, attending schools in whichever town they were visiting at the time.

The school moved premises several times and underwent a number of name changes<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>

- Italia Conti (10 - 16, 16+), 1911
- The Hammond School (11 - 16, 16+), 1917 academic studies and boarders in 1965
- Elmhurst School of Dance (11 - 16), 1920s
- Corona Theatre School, 1924
- Arts Ed (11 - 16), 1939
- Tring Park (8 - 18), 1939
- Barbara Speake Stage School (3½ - 16 the only stage school catering for children in what is now the Early Years and Lower Juniors), 1945; 1963 it became a full-time school providing academic and artistic training.
- Redroofs (10 - 18), 1947 (established as a full-time school in 1964)
- Pattison College, Coventry (3 - 16), 1949
- Sylvia Young Theatre School (10 - 16), 1981
- Susi Earnshaw Theatre School (11 - 16), 1989
- The Brit School (14 - 19) 1990

<sup>127</sup>Since the time of writing, a major financial backer withdrew funding and in consequence the school closed in 2013.

<sup>128</sup>A review in the local paper said of the performance: “A remarkably good dancing display, half of the artists were under four feet in height and some could not have been more than three feet” (Roe, 1996). The school produced a troupe who toured professionally across the country.

<sup>129</sup>In 1950 to ensure that she was able to offer her students the best possible tuition, Rona sought further training at the Paris School of Mime, Dance and Drama. Following this she extended her curriculum and renamed the school The Corona Academy of Stage Training (Roe, 1996).

but nonetheless is one of the longest running schools of its kind<sup>130</sup>, retaining its original uniform style and the system of academic lessons taking place during the morning and vocational lessons running during the afternoon ([Corona Theatre School, 2012](#)).

In light of its longevity, notable alumni, and the fact that several significant performing arts schools owe their origins to it, it is worth considering the Bush Davies school in more depth. The school was opened in Henrietta Street, London, in 1930 by Noreen Bush and her husband Victor Leopold. Noreen's mother Pauline had her own dance school, 'Fishponds', which opened in Nottingham in 1914. Noreen developed into an excellent dancer, attending Fishponds and then the British Normal School of Dancing in London (later the headquarters of the British Ballet Organisation) under the tuition of Edouard Espinosa ([British Ballet Organisation, 2012](#)). In addition to carving out a career for herself on the stage, Noreen became respected as an excellent teacher. She was one of only a few candidates to pass the Advanced Executants examination and subsequently the new Solo Seal examination with the Association of Operatic Dancing<sup>131</sup> ([Royal Academy of Dance Faculty of Education, 2008](#)). As a result, Noreen was invited to teach at the Association and soon became a Professor of Dancing at the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music. With such prestigious positions held at such a young age, it is not surprising that Noreen decided to open her own school.

During the 1930s, there was demand for dance school places following the inception of the Ballet Rambert (1926) and The Royal Ballet Company (known then as the Vic-Wells Ballet 1931) and the popularity of music theatre entertainment. There was a rapid growth in the number of dance schools and studios<sup>132</sup>.

Noreen recognised the importance of a broad curriculum, offering Ballet (Operatic and Cecchetti), Central European, Greek, National, Spanish, Musical Comedy, Ballroom and Elocution. Noreen's school was growing all the time and had a good intake of boys as well as girls. By 1934 the intake was so large that the school moved to larger premises on the 2nd floor studio at Imhof House (New Oxford Street) where they could install a curtain to create two studio spaces. In 1939 Noreen and Victor incorporated into their business a dance school in Romford owned by ex-student and Head Assistant Teacher, Marjorie Davies, creating the 'Noreen Bush and Marjorie Davies Schools Limited'. When

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<sup>130</sup>The school proved to be very successful, with students appearing in all areas of the performing arts. The school supplied the "young cast for Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* and consistently fed the Royal Shakespeare Company with new young talent" ([Roe, 1996](#)).

<sup>131</sup>Interestingly Eouardo Espinosa was a founding member of the Association of Operatic Dancing (later the Royal Academy of Dance).

<sup>132</sup>The Town and Country News reported on this trend, asserting that many of the establishments were owned by "fashionable and therefore expensive teachers...it must be remembered that the cleverest artiste is not always the best teacher. There are many whose fees are quite reasonable and yet who have the qualifications and ability to give instruction of the highest order ...Noreen Bush must certainly be included for her studio ...has been the cradle of a number of successful artists in all branches of ...dance" ([Town and Country News, 1934](#)).



war was declared in 1939 Noreen, Victor and Marjorie moved the school to a friend's home, Felden Croft, in Hertfordshire. Parents of the students supported the move and some even went with their children and worked or volunteered at the new boarding school which initially housed 26 students<sup>133</sup>. The war obliged the school to become more formal - Noreen introduced uniforms and a full timetable which included basic academic studies<sup>134</sup>.

The next step in the development of the Bush Davies School was to introduce a more comprehensive level of general education into their curriculum<sup>135</sup>. The Education Act (the 'Butler Act') of 1944 was responsible for overhauling the education system in Britain, and Bush Davies needed to prove that they were able to provide a good all-round education for their students. In the report, 'Dance Education and Training in Britain', Peter Brinson wrote: "The immediate post-war period saw the development of the idea of independent schools combining general education with classical ballet and stage training ... The pioneer was the Bush School" (Brinson, 1980). The Bush Davies school was well respected but needed to maintain progress so that it could continue to compete with its rivals the Elmhurst Ballet School and Arts Educational School.

The need for high standards in general education in addition to vocational teaching and student welfare procedures intensified when the Bush Davies School sought 'recognition' from the Department of Education and Science in 1953 to enable them to receive financial support from the Local Education Authority<sup>136</sup>.

The Bush Davies School continued to thrive until 1989 when it was forced to close due to a loss of local authority grants available both to the school and to individual students. Until that time grant support had been available for around twenty vocational performing arts schools around the country and Bush Davies relied on this type of support for over two thirds of its income, but during a difficult economy, this support could no longer be justified. When the school closed, 330 students and 120 staff needed to find new 'homes'.

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<sup>133</sup>Before the war was over, the growing reputation, and hence number of applicants, meant that Bush Davies needed to find yet another new home. Noreen and Victor settled on an Edwardian estate, Charters Towers, in East Grinstead.

<sup>134</sup>The uniform was white tunics and woollen tights for Ballet and black slacks for Modern (Harrison, 2009). The senior students were allowed to wear their own clothing - a practice which is still adhered to in performing arts schools today.

<sup>135</sup>Prior to this, students took basic classes at Bush Davies and were able to attend local schools for part-time education. However parents were beginning to demand that their children leave Bush Davies with School Certificates in core academic subjects as well as with a thorough training in the performing arts, realising that a career in performance could not be guaranteed (Harrison, 2009).

<sup>136</sup>"School was all morning and until 3.30 after lunch when we had dancing until about 6. If one was taking a major ballet exam it was common practice to be called out from school at any time for extra coaching ... Ballet always came first but, after recognition, all that came to a grinding halt!" (Harrison, 2009).



The closure took its toll on the development of performing arts training in Britain. “Following the closure there were fewer places available for students to access a full-time course of study in performing arts; LEAs tightened their belts; criteria for public support were more demanding, and the fewer places were more prized and ‘outstanding talent’ properly assessed . . . the approach to the concept of publicly supported vocational theatre training programmes” had to be reviewed (Harrison, 2009).

In one way or another, the Bush Davies School was instrumental in the founding of a number of important establishments, and played a crucial role in the development of vocational training and education for thousands of performers and teachers. Figure 2.14 on page 72 illustrates the extent of Bush Davies’ influence on both people and institutions<sup>137</sup>. As many as half of the country’s accredited institutions<sup>138</sup> were established by people who had ‘cut their teeth’ at Bush Davies, and the school’s alumni played important roles in many other important institutions, such as the ISTD.

It is clear that the first half of the 20th century was an important time in the creation and development of influential performing arts establishments, including Italia Conti which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2011. However, whilst Italia Conti is a household name, the pioneering was done by the Bush Davies School which blazed the trail in the development of vocational education. Not only was Bush Davies the first to achieve recognition from the Department of Education and Science in 1953<sup>139</sup>, they were arguably the first to combine academic studies with a vocational curriculum. In 1930 Italia Conti was quoted as saying that “her day-dream is for some nice, kind millionaire to come along and offer to ‘back’ her, and then she would start a real academy, a type of boarding school where everything from the three R’s to stagecraft would be taught . . .”. By 1939 the Bush Davies School was doing exactly that.

Several of the most well-known drama schools were already established by the early 1900s<sup>140</sup>. The American Academy of Dramatic Arts (1884)<sup>141</sup> is said to have set the standards for conservatory training throughout the world. In 1896, AADA founder and former Harvard University professor Franklin Haven Sargent stated, “I take pride in the fact that nearly every one of the many schools established in the main cities throughout the country is under the direction of either a graduate or a former teacher” (American

<sup>137</sup>The people and institutions that could be included in the Figure are a small subset of the total.

<sup>138</sup>A number of the others were either contemporaries of Bush Davies, or located outside the South East.

<sup>139</sup>Italia Conti lays claim to being the first but in fact did not receive their recognition until 1968.

<sup>140</sup>UK schools founded by 1900: Royal Conservatoire of Scotland RSAMD in 1845, LAMDA in 1861, Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 1880.

American schools founded by 1900: The Boston Conservatoire in 1867, The University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and Drama 1867, The Philadelphia Musical Academy 1870 (which became the University of the Arts, Philadelphia in 1985), American Academy of Dramatic Arts - AADA 1884, Emerson College Performing Arts 1880, Institute of Musical Art (now known as Julliard) 1905.

<sup>141</sup>Originally known as the Lyceum School of Acting.

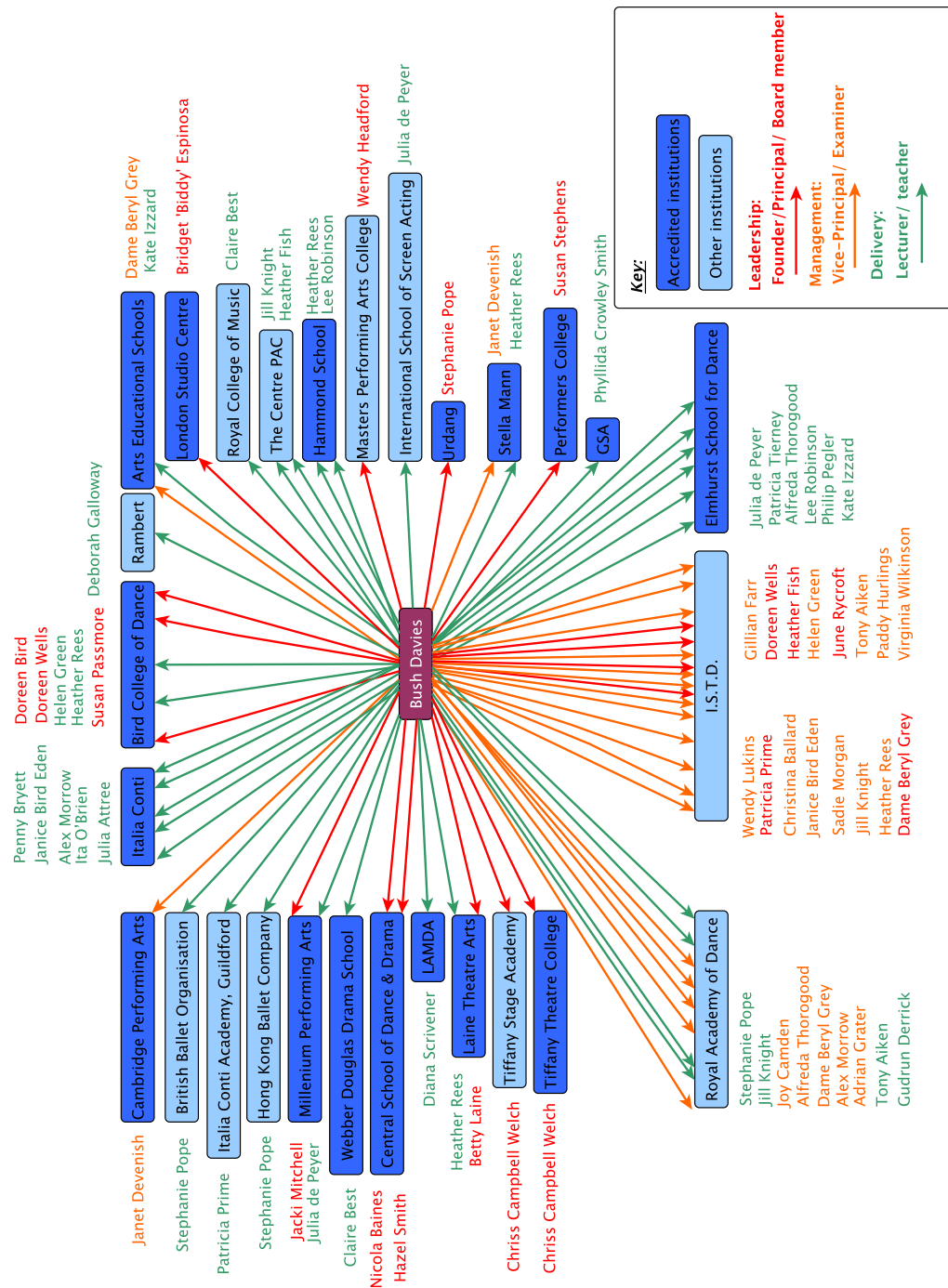


FIGURE 2.14: The influence of Bush Davies

[Academy of Dramatic Arts, 2012](#)). However university programmes to train acting and directing teachers did not appear until later. In 1912 Elsie Fogerty established a teaching diploma as part of the London University Diploma in Dramatic Art. Fogerty had been campaigning for the “recognition of drama and drama teaching as subjects worthy of serious academic study” ([Central School of Speech and Drama, 2013](#)).

Between the turn of the century and the late 1930s a number of important institutions were founded<sup>142</sup>. See Figure 2.15<sup>143</sup> on page 74.

With the market for child performers being what it was, together with the growth of further and higher education establishments devoted to theatre and the arts, it is not surprising to see that in 1919 Emerson College (Boston) developed “the nation’s first collegiate level program in Children’s Theater” ([Emerson College, 2012](#)). A few years later a Children’s Theatre program was set up by Winifred Ward in conjunction with Northwestern University. Subsequently a number of similar programs were established in union with universities and colleges ([Davis and Evans, 1982: 4](#)), designed to “prepare teachers, directors, performers, and playwrights in children’s theatre and drama. With this leadership came textbooks, scholarly articles, and conferences on regional and national levels” ([Wilmet and Miller, 1996](#)). By 1932 the first masters degree in Children’s Theatre had been awarded, and “the first doctorate in the field was conferred on Kenneth L. Graham by the University of Utah in 1947” ([Davis and Evans, 1982](#)).

### Theatre for Children

Many of the early attempts to introduce theatre to young people were designed to educate rather than to entertain<sup>144</sup>. “The significant rise of the middle class . . . brought with it an interest in instructive children’s theatre. An important lesson we can learn from history is that, from the very beginning, the theatre for young people was invoked in an effort to educate children, sometimes even with no artistic pretensions at all” ([Schonmann, 2006](#)). This was certainly true in Britain where children were introduced

<sup>142</sup>The Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theatre boasted influential practitioners as its teachers such as Martha Graham, Louis Horst, Laura Elliott, and Agnes DeMille. Sanford Meisner used his time at the school to develop the Meisner Technique ([Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theatre, 2012](#)). Sisters Irene and Alice Lewisohn studied acting and dance at their finishing school and soon started volunteering at the Henry Street Settlement House, running a series of acting and dance classes for young people which led to the formation of a company of ‘Festival Dancers’ in 1912. In 1915 the sisters opened the Neighborhood Playhouse which was one of the very first Off-Broadway theatres. Many community productions were staged at the Playhouse and in 1928 the Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theatre opened its doors to nine students. The school is still in operation today.

<sup>143</sup>Webber Douglas was founded in 1926 but has not been included in this diagram because it was absorbed into the Central School of Speech and Drama in 2006.

<sup>144</sup>These early beginnings went on to satisfy Mark Twain’s prophecy: “It is my conviction that the children’s theatre is one of the very, very great inventions of the 20th century; and that its vast educational value – now but dimly perceived and but vaguely understood – will presently come to be recognized” ([Twain, 1907 – 1910: 8](#)).

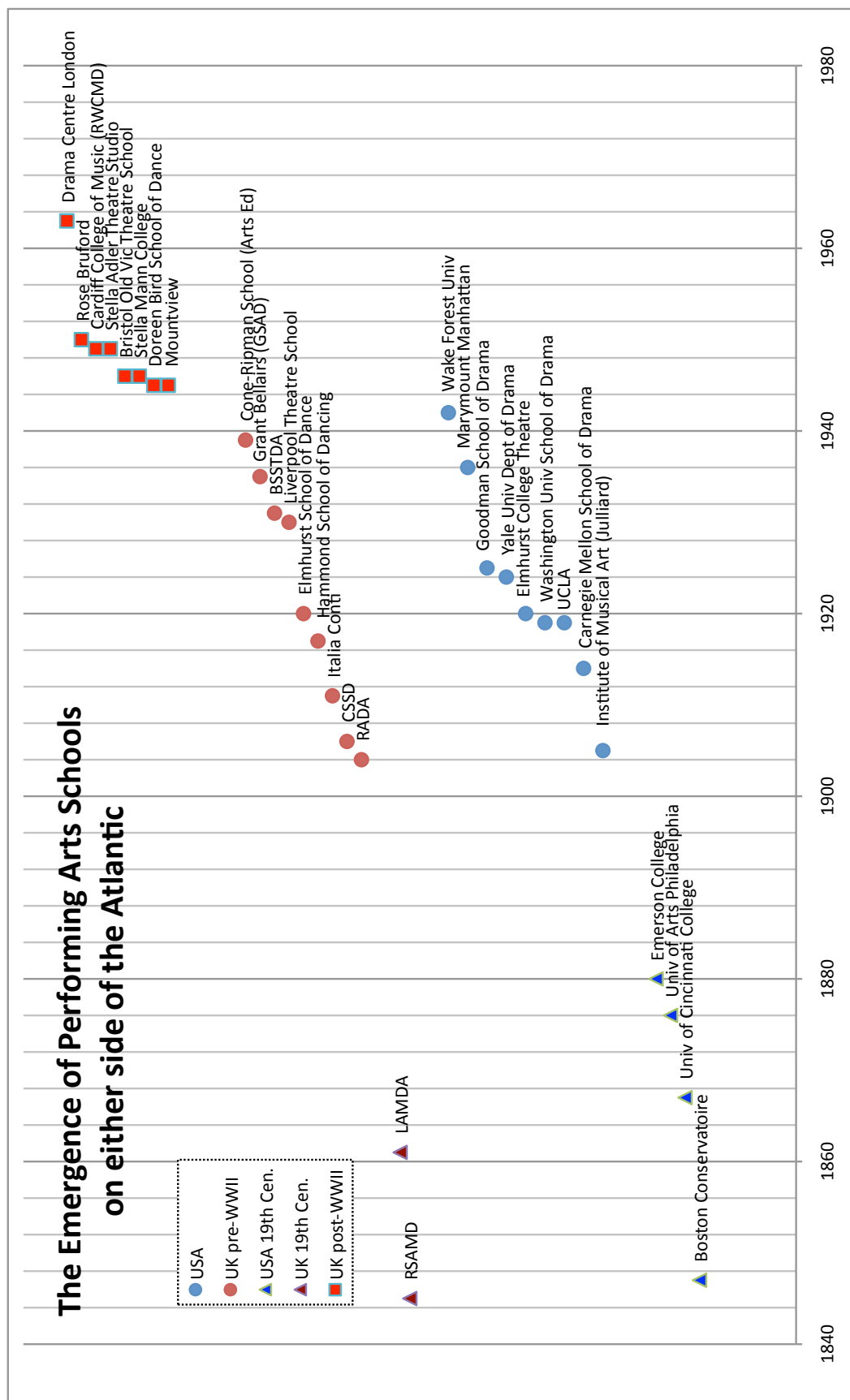


FIGURE 2.15: The emergence of performing arts schools

to theatre as audience members for educational purposes. The idea of participating in performance as a hobby was not explored until much later.

Franklin Sargent created what is considered to be the first Children's Theatre in 1899. Graduates from his School of Acting performed in afternoon pantomimes aimed at children but the playwright Alexander Hume Ford noted that "the fickle little New Yorkers soon wearied of fairy stories and demanded real dramas such as their parents enjoyed" (Klein, 2012: 130). The Children's Theatre also invited children to perform in their productions. In order to maintain the interest of their intended audience, the Children's Theatre spent large sums of money in trying out different performances. Unfortunately they could not find pieces that would appeal to children of all ages, and the new legislation regarding child audiences, combined with the lack of sponsorship and financial support from external donors, forced the Children's Theatre to close in 1903 (Klein, 2012: 130).

However the idea for a children's theatre was revived by Alice Minnie Herts, Recreation Director for the Educational Alliance, who was keen to explore the concept (New York Times, 1911c), and she invited Emma Sheridan Fry (who had previously taught for Sargent) to work with her on the project. Herts wanted to develop a theatre for young people which could help immigrant children learn the English language, gain an understanding of American culture, and would improve the lives of families in the community by providing them with something they could share.

Herts established the Children's Educational Theatre in 1903, and the company revisited pieces which had been written for or used by Sargent's Children's Theatre. The ticket prices were nominal (10 cents) and the performances were held on Sunday afternoons to encourage family audiences to attend<sup>145</sup>.

The projects developed into classes for young people<sup>146</sup>. Participants could learn the art of performance and were able to gain an understanding of the backstage roles required to mount performances.

Unfortunately Herts was also unable to secure external financial support which made things increasingly difficult for the company. In 1909, new legislation in New York put an end to performances on the Sabbath, and this move signalled the end for the Children's Educational Theatre (Klein, 2012: 130). Herts' venture with Fry left its legacy. In 1913 Fry created her system of 'educational dramatics'. "Codified as a system of 'laws' and

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<sup>145</sup>The performances were hugely popular, and the group "received rave reviews from authors such as Frances Hodgson Burnett, author of *The Little Princess* and *The Secret Garden*, and Mark Twain who had an adaptation of *The Prince and the Pauper*" (Gordon, 2007: 11).

<sup>146</sup>"The theatre program developed an educational policy that lasted for six years. The benefits gained included fine values, social graces, confidence, self-confidence, and a sense of fellowship" (Gordon, 2007: 11).

directed at teachers, club leaders, and amateur players, educational dramatics stressed ‘living’ rather than ‘acting’, was tested out at the Children’s Educational Theatre . . . , and drew the attention and approval of a number of cultural leaders” (Harris Smith, 2006: 136).

Herts had made her mark and similar projects were soon developed in other major cities across America, notably in conjunction with the Junior League<sup>147</sup>. A particularly successful example was the Children’s Theatre of Portland (1923) which is the “oldest continuously operating children’s theatre in the United States” (Children’s Museum & Theatre of Maine History, n.d.)<sup>148</sup>. It began by creating pieces specifically for young audiences and by the 1930s had started to include children in their performances. The company designed their seasons around school terms and by the mid 1940s were working in collaboration with the City of Portland Parks and Recreation Department in taking a collapsible stage to parks and playgrounds in an effort to reach thousands of children from all backgrounds. The concept was subsequently taken up by many other theatre companies worldwide. In 1949 the company were invited to perform at the annual Children’s Theatre Conference in New York<sup>149</sup> and by the mid 1950s new partnerships had been formed with local dance and music schools.

In the 1920s, the Junior League of Chicago founded a Children’s Theatre Company and endeavoured to make their productions accessible to all by giving free tickets to inhabitants of the local settlements (Junior League of Chicago, 2012). In 1926 a Children’s Theatre Committee was established and plays like *The Secret Garden* and *The Emperor’s New Clothes* were performed up to four times per year (Oliver, 2008: 1). The Children’s Theatre Company model was adopted by more than 100 Junior Leagues across the nation (Junior League of Chicago, 2012) and each company seemed to develop a resilience and creative spirit which allowed them to survive not only the Great Depression, but also the Second World War. In fact during these difficult times, the plays were “designed to give children a form of diversion and artistic stimuli [of which] they might otherwise be deprived” (Oliver, 2008: 1).

The touring (or ‘trouping’) model beginning to be developed by the Junior League was temporarily abandoned by some branches during the Second World War, but was revisited in later years. “Each trouping unit presented one play each season to several different schools [free of charge] within the troupes designated area” (Oliver, 2008: 4). In this way, each production could reach thousands of children.

<sup>147</sup> Initially the volunteers at the Junior League would work with the children, imparting their own knowledge and skills which included art, dancing and singing. There are accounts of Eleanor Roosevelt teaching movement and dance to the children of the settlements close to the New York Junior League during the early part of the 20th century (Association of Junior Leagues, 2009).

<sup>148</sup> The Children’s Theatre of Portland was renamed as the Children’s Theatre of Maine in 1974.

<sup>149</sup> The first conference had been held in 1945.

As the children's theatre movement spread, the Junior League was able to support similar projects. For example in 1938 they helped to establish the Lexington Children's Theatre in Kentucky<sup>150</sup>.

Other projects appeared which were unconnected to the work of the Junior League. In 1931 in Palo Alto, California, a cast of nearly 50 children was used to present a Christmas production. The performance was so well received that it marked the beginning of the Palo Alto Children's Theatre. The company was supported by the city's recreation department and became the first municipally operated and funded Children's Theatre in the United States, encouraging children to perform and create pieces of theatre ([Friends of the Palo Alto Children's Theatre, 2010](#)).

An early example of a theatre company designed specifically for young audiences is the Clare Tree Major's Threshold Players (1921) which performed "such favourites as *Treasure Island*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Pinocchio* ...expanding in 1928 to the first nation-wide touring programme and Academy" ([Davis and Evans, 1982: 4](#)). Prior to this, Clare Tree Major, formerly the Head of the London Academy of Dramatic Art, headed a drama school called the Washington Square Players which offered pupils small parts in the plays presented by the organisation to give them experience ([New York Times, 1916](#)). The touring company was "one of the first and longest-lived professional touring companies performing for children and teenagers" ([Fisher, 2011](#)) and survived until the 1950s.

As part of the 'New Deal' program, the American Government pledged to support out of work theatre artists and created the Federal Theatre Project (FTP)<sup>151</sup>. The directors of the FTP recognised the importance of introducing theatre to children at a young age in order to build new audiences and encourage them to grow up with theatre as a part of their lives<sup>152</sup>. As a result, children's theatre became a large part of the work done by the FTP and by the 1940s was also included as part of university drama curricula ([Guthu, 2009](#)). A children's unit was set up to oversee the children's theatre programs and was designed to offer inexpensive, high quality drama to young audiences and their parents, many of whom had never been to the theatre before. Most of the productions were based on classic material like *Cinderella*, *Aladdin*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Peter Pan*,

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<sup>150</sup>The Lexington Children's Theatre was designed to "present educational entertainment for children and to provide the opportunity for creative expression" ([Lexington Children's Theatre, 2013](#)) and by 1939 the company had a full season of plays for and by young people. By 1947 they were able to offer workshops for young people and were touring with their professional company.

<sup>151</sup>The program worked slightly differently from state to state, and the focus in Washington was on developing new audiences and establishing a place for drama as a subject in its own right at universities.

<sup>152</sup>From the 1930s theatre had to compete with cinemas in order to attract the attention of young people, and the FTP attempted to win them over using "light drawing-room fare in the Penthouse staging (and later in the Penthouse Theatre), a small Art-Deco-style arena theatre space" ([Guthu, 2009](#)).



and *Treasure Island* (Cech, 2007). In addition to entertaining young audiences, the FTP also sought to educate, and produced shows which contained social and moral lessons within their stories<sup>153</sup>.

Despite the success of its many projects, the Federal Theatre Project lost its funding in 1939 and was forced to close after only nine years<sup>154</sup>. Whilst the closure of the FTP was a great loss, the program inspired individual states to begin their own programs, many of which still run today<sup>155</sup>.

Theatre companies aimed specifically at child audiences developed across the globe during the early 1920s and 1930s<sup>156</sup>. “There was little communication about this movement between the nations until the middle of the 20th century, and yet children’s theatre seems to have gotten started simultaneously in most areas of the world” (Goldberg, 1974: 54).

In England in 1914, Jean Sterling Mackinlay produced a series of children’s plays in place of that year’s Christmas pantomime (Goldberg, 1974: 60). Between 1914 and 1918 Director of The Old Vic, Ben Greet, used his company to perform Shakespeare for schools in London<sup>157</sup>. In addition to selecting professional actors for his productions, Greet employed his “promising and valuable students”. “So popular were Ben Greet’s companies that even young girls hoped to join them and one was Penelope Loader Maffey who . . . cut off her hair and once ran away hoping to join the troupe of actors”<sup>158</sup>. Greet was awarded a knighthood in 1929 (Walters, 2012).

In the early 1920s, following her graduation from the Academy of Dramatic Arts, Australian-born actress Joan Luxton opened her Children’s Theatre in Covent Garden. Luxton wanted to create a theatre designed entirely for children, and whilst hers was one of the smallest theatres in England, she included the requisite staging, seating, lighting, and curtains to create a full theatre experience. A scaled down version of a

<sup>153</sup> “One of the Federal Theater for Youth’s most celebrated clashes with America authority figures occurred over a play called *The Revolt of the Beavers*, about the struggle of hard-working beavers who are being tyrannized by their bosses. One well-known drama critic labelled the drama ‘Mother Goose Marxism’ ” (Cech, 2007). Unsurprisingly, the play did not run for long.

<sup>154</sup> The FTP did not go quietly. Its final performance was a production of *Pinocchio* by FTP supporter and practitioner, Yasha Frank (Frank’s *Pinocchio* was the inspiration for Walt Disney’s cartoon version (Lauer-Williams, 2010)). Rather than the usual happy ending, *Pinocchio* the puppet died and was placed in a wooden coffin which was passed from the stage to the audience and out into Times Square. Accompanied by a chorus of “who killed *Pinocchio*?”, a list was read out of the congressmen who had voted to shut down the Federal Theatre Project (Lauer-Williams, 2010).

<sup>155</sup> “The Federal Theatre Project introduced professional theatre artists to young audiences on a large scale. And artist/managers such as John Clark Donahue developed comprehensive theatres and schools to entertain and to train young people” (Bedard and Tolch, 1989: 2).

<sup>156</sup> Even though each company used its own model and style of delivery, the fundamental intentions were the same. The growth of these companies was halted temporarily during the Second World War, but they soon picked up where they had left off.

<sup>157</sup> Prior to his appointment at The Old Vic, Greet had worked as a schoolmaster and created a company who mounted open air plays inspired by Greet’s experience at school of putting on out-of-door performances.

<sup>158</sup> (Walters, 2012) Angela Walters was married to the grandson of one of Greet’s company.



box office was built so that the children could book their own seats, with prices ranging from 3d to 1/2d ([Queenslander, 1929: 48](#)). The performances were approximately 15 minutes long ([Glasgow Herald, 1930: 1](#)), and accounts described bright colours and attractive costumes used to capture the children's imagination. As the only theatre of its kind, it attracted a lot of attention, particularly because it was "unique in being the smallest theatre in England to be licensed by the Lord Chamberlain and the London County Council". Joan Luxton became known as a "real theatrical fairy godmother"<sup>159</sup> ([Queenslander, 1929: 48](#)).

In his book 'Drama in schools: its theory and practice' ([Allen, 1979](#)), John Allen refers to a company called the West of England Children's Theatre, founded by Brian Way, which opted for a more minimalist production style, engaging child audiences through the use of intimate playing spaces and close contact rather than elaborate sets and costumes. The performances were held in community and school halls and their formula was subsequently adopted by children's theatre companies.

While it is clear that there were a number of companies producing theatre for young audiences during early 20th century Britain, the concept of youth theatre is relatively recent<sup>160</sup>. Most child participation in theatre was 'professional' until this point, but following the Children and Young Persons Act (1933) new focus was given to the development, health and safety and protection of children. Greater importance was placed on education so it is conceivable that theatre in education projects and opportunities for children to perform in safe, non-exploitative environments (and for performance sake, rather than training for future employment) would have developed fully in the following decade, had war not intervened.

Following the end of the Second World War, a number of children's theatre companies were established<sup>161</sup>. The Glyndebourne Children's Theatre was founded when John and Audrey Mildmay decided to use part of their home for musical performances. Working in collaboration with the Toynbee Hall Children's Theatre project they established a company designed to produce shows for children and helped to subsidise the company which went on to perform for over half a million children during its short life span ([Glyndebourne, 2013](#)).

<sup>159</sup>In the 1930s, Luxton began to broadcast radio transmissions of her productions. The programmes were described as "entertainment for children of all ages" ([Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, 1934: 11](#)) and offered new performances in addition to old favourites. By the late 1930s, this progressed to television performances ([Radio Times, 1937: 3](#)), extending her reach.

<sup>160</sup>It wasn't until 1956 that the National Youth Theatre was established, one of the earliest examples of youth theatre as we recognise it today.

<sup>161</sup>These included the Glyndebourne Children's Theatre, the Young Vic Theatre Company, Bertha Waddell's Scottish Children's Theatre, the Osiris Players, and Caryl Jenner's Company. Each company had its own style and strategy for introducing theatre to young people.

The Glyndebourne Company took performances paid for by the Local Education Authority into schools<sup>162</sup>. The company was known to perform up to ten times per week and commanded a fee of at least £450 per week (a particularly large sum given that the country was still recovering financially from the war).

Director George Devine did not approve of this model, and deemed it inadequate to take productions into schools and community venues which were not geared up for theatrical performances. He felt that the children were not getting a proper experience by watching productions which could not use appropriate lighting, seating, and scenery<sup>163</sup>.

Devine decided to form the Young Vic Theatre Company in connection with the Old Vic Theatre School with the intention of producing performances for young people. The company were able to use the Old Vic's reputation for producing high quality work in order to sell shows aimed at older children and their parents. Unfortunately while the productions did attract the children of regular theatregoers, the company was unable to capture a completely new audience, and performances stopped in 1948 ([Young Vic, 2013](#)).

In 1953 Brian Way created the Theatre Centre<sup>164</sup> which built on the work he had done with the West of England Children's Theatre. The Centre opened in London and was established in connection with his project to help unemployed actors. Way continued to use small playing spaces where children could become completely immersed in the performances, and Way strove to educate as well as to entertain. It is possible to see the beginnings of Theatre in Education in the work done by Brian Way and his contemporaries at the Theatre Centre, and Brian Way is considered to be an influential figure in the development of theatre for children. The Arts Council have renamed their Children's Award (which exists to celebrate the accomplishments and raise the profile of theatre for young people and most especially playwrights who work in this field) The Brian Way Award ([Theatre Centre, 2013](#)).

Another important group were the Osiris players, a handful of women who sought to ensure all young people had the opportunity to experience live theatre. The company was created by Nancy Hewins in 1927 and ran for nearly forty years as a real team effort; every member of the company had a responsibility outside of their acting roles (which

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<sup>162</sup>It is conceivable that Local Education Authorities were only prepared to support such schemes in order to satisfy certain social reforms set out in the Education Act of 1944 (and in the revised versions in 1946 and 1948) ([HMG, 1944](#)).

<sup>163</sup>"It was difficult to discourage teachers from pacing up and down the aisles before the performance telling children to behave themselves, not to rush for the lavatories in the interval, and once, before a morning performance of *She Stoops to Conquer*, not to laugh. It was this kind of episode that created a profound suspicion throughout the theatrical profession of all teachers" ([Allen, 1979](#): 3).

<sup>164</sup>A donation from Dorothy Sayers was instrumental in launching the Centre, and she became a member of the board ([Harbottle, 2006](#)).

required doubling work because the cast was so small)<sup>165</sup>. During the war years, the numbers of performances actually rose, totalling more than 1500 performances between 1939 and 1945 and with the company performing in as many as five different venues every day.

Hewins maintained that theatre companies should not rely on public subsidy, and was determined to function using only the money they earned from performances (Barker, 1995)<sup>166</sup>. The work carried out by the women of Osiris was revolutionary; not only did they design their performances for young people, but they endeavoured to reach every part of the country, however remote<sup>167</sup>. However there came a point when the company were viewed as old fashioned in their style of delivery, and the Osiris Players disbanded in 1963.

In 1947 Caryl Jenner set up the Mobile Theatre. A three-ton second-hand civil defence van was used to move actors, props and scenery around the country, taking plays into schools and out to children in isolated communities all over Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire (Unicorn Theatre, 2013). The Mobile Theatre was renamed several times, finally settling on The Unicorn Theatre<sup>168</sup> and taking over the Arts Theatre in the early 1960s. The Unicorn Theatre now has its own custom-built building and is the first full-time professional theatre for children in London to still be in operation today (Unicorn Theatre, 2013).

While most children's theatre projects originated in London where most professional actors were located, there is evidence of other major cities exploring the possibilities of introducing their children to live theatre. During the 1950s, Frank Price, a local Councillor in Birmingham, put plans in motion to create an arts centre for children and young people (MAC Arts, 2013). Price worked in conjunction with the theatre director and playwright John English to create the programme which eventually included a puppet theatre. By "1962, Birmingham City Council granted 8.6 acres of land in Cannon Hill Park and The Midlands Arts Centre for Children and Young People opened its doors for the first time" (MAC Arts, 2013). The centre later housed the Birmingham Youth Theatre, and recently underwent a £14.8 million refurbishment (MAC Arts, 2013).

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<sup>165</sup>Initially the group transported their cast, scenery, and costumes in two Rolls-Royces, but during the war the women had to scale down their operation, instead using a horse and cart to move between performance venues (and according to one account, even by canoe!) (Stubbs, 2004).

<sup>166</sup>As a result, the wages for the cast were low, and the women would be required to stay in modest surroundings, including barns, school floors, and even a park café (Barker, 1995). When money got tighter the women took on second jobs to help the company to continue.

<sup>167</sup>In her (unpublished) autobiography, Hewins wrote: "I dare say if the company had had a Russian name, it would have been regarded as a remarkable experiment" (Barker, 1995).

<sup>168</sup>"Caryl Jenner gave it the name of Unicorn Theatre because she said the Unicorn was a symbol of the imagination - it only exists if you believe in it" (Unicorn Theatre, 2013).

During this period a number of key practitioners played a vital role in the development of children's theatre.

Constance D'Arcy Mackay was particularly interested in the idea of using theatre to deliver educational objectives, and in 1915 she explored this subject in her book "How to Produce Children's Plays". Mackay's book is recognised as one of the "first widely disseminated sources on children's theatre in the U.S." (Van de Water, 2012: 12). It is possible to see the beginnings of the Theatre In Education movement in Mackay's work. Above all else Mackay believed that theatre for children should be separated both from theatre for adults, and also from theatre for commercial audiences (Van de Water, 2012: 12).

Winifred Ward created for herself a great reputation in the area of theatre for children<sup>169</sup>. Ward believed that children's theatre should be divided into theatre for child audiences (children's theatre), and theatre for child participants (creative drama)<sup>170</sup>. Ward believed that it was possible to train school and university students in the art of performance, while at the same time providing high quality entertainment for children. She created the Children's Theatre in Evanston in 1925. The first production, *Snow White*, which involved university students and local children, was a big success, and paved the way for many more productions. The Children's Theatre ran until 1986 (Northwestern University, 1993).

Ward wrote her seminal work 'Theatre for Children' in 1939. The book was intended to provide advice on the "the production of artistic and beautiful plays for the joy of child audiences" (Van de Water, 2012: 13). The book supports the guidelines given in Mackay's books<sup>171</sup>. Both Mackay and Ward dismissed the idea that professional commercial theatre had a place for theatre for children (Van de Water, 2012: 12)<sup>172</sup>. While working as a professor at Northwestern University, Ward established the American Alliance for Theatre and Education and founded the National Children's Theatre Conference in 1944. The Alliance "guided the development of professionals and educators in the broad field of children's theatre and creative dramatics" (Fisher, 2011: 151). The Alliance remains in operation today.

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<sup>169</sup>Ward was instrumental in beginning a program of training for classroom teachers. Her efforts led to subsidised classes and workshops becoming a fundamental part of the children's theatre company by the 1950s.

<sup>170</sup>Ward described Creative Drama as a "classroom teaching method that places a heavy emphasis on self-expression, literature appreciation, and proficiency in spoken English. It is noted for having a complete lack of scripts. In her own words, "instead of memorizing set speeches and acting parts in the way the teacher directs, the children develop plays out of their own thoughts and imaginations and emotions" (Northwestern university, 2007).

<sup>171</sup>'How to Produce Children's Plays' and 'Children's Theatres and Plays'(1927).

<sup>172</sup>Others disagreed: Children's author Montrose Moses was concerned about placing too much emphasis on the educational value of theatre for children, and the fact that very quickly the "educational and social value of children's theatre started to take precedence over aesthetic concerns" (Van de Water, 2012: 15).

Peter Slade (1912 – 2005) is considered to be a pioneer in British children's theatre. In addition to creating theatre companies designed for child audiences, Slade opened his own theatre school in the 1930s. Interestingly while Slade worked as a school drama adviser, his ideas on children's theatre were far removed from the practices of teachers of drama at the time. While Slade shared many of Ward's aspirations, for instance the "natural expression and creation" of children, he also explored techniques which went against Ward's style, including scripted performances and playing in the round (O'Toole, 2009: 74). "For over 60 years, he . . . campaigned on behalf of educational drama, drama therapy and children's theatre" (University of Manchester, 2004).

George Pierce Baker (1866 – 1935) was responsible for founding the Yale School of Drama in 1925. Prior to this he delivered workshops in playwriting at Harvard University. His series of lectures covered the staging of plays for child audiences (Bedard and Tolch, 1989: 2). Unsurprisingly, a number of Baker's students<sup>173</sup> went on to create theatre for child audiences.

Charlotte Chorpensing (1873 – 1955) is recognised for her huge contribution to the canon of children's plays<sup>174</sup>. She is also considered to be one of America's first children's playwrights. Chorpensing used fairytales as her starting point, believing that children would be more drawn to things they recognised, and felt that authors should treat children as a serious audience. In 1931 she was made Director of Children's Plays at the Goodman Theatre of Chicago, and in 1954 she set out her rules for writing for children in the book 'Twenty-One Years With Children's Theatre' (Van de Water, 2012: 8).

In addition to training together under the supervision of George Pierce Baker, Edith King (1884-1975) and Dorothy Coit (1889-1976) also worked together on a number of children's theatre productions at the Buckingham School, Massachusetts. The pair decided to open a specialist part-time theatre school and children's theatre in 1923 in New York. In a similar vein to Ward and Slade, King and Coit were interested in the 'naturalness' of a child performer. In order to make sure the children were at ease with the material they were performing, and could therefore give a natural performance, "Students were immersed in the time period of the chosen story, including intensive study of its music and artworks". However unlike Ward, there was no room for error or experimentation. King and Coit believed in scripted work which could be rehearsed and repeated until it was flawless<sup>175</sup>. Unfortunately despite good reviews, the King-Coit

<sup>173</sup>Including Charlotte B Chorpensing, Edith King, and Dorothy Coit.

<sup>174</sup>Since 1956 the American Alliance for Theatre and Education has given an annual award to a children's dramatist, known as the Charlotte Chorpensing Cup (American Alliance for Theatre and Education, 2013).

<sup>175</sup>Interestingly, though, they encouraged all the children to learn the full script, and did not award individual parts until just before the performance. In this way, they set high expectations of the children at their school (Rodman, 2002).

school and theatre could not sustain itself through ticket sales alone, and the model relied instead upon grants and donations. The school and theatre finally closed in 1959 (Rodman, 2002).

In 1935 Sara Spencer created the Children's Theatre Press which was the first publisher to "concern itself primarily with quality theatrical literature for young audiences". It was later renamed Anchorage Press (Anchorage Press, 2013)<sup>176</sup>. During a visit to England, she "was urged by several people to establish a branch of the Children's Theatre Press", and learned from "John Allen, former director of Children's Theatre, Ltd., that an international children's theatre conference was proposed for Paris in December 1951" (Bedard and Tolch, 1989: 147). Spencer became a regular speaker at the Children's Theatre Conferences, presenting her research and encouraging attendees to learn from the work being done internationally in the field of children's theatre<sup>177</sup>. One of her first speeches was published in the Educational Theatre Journal in 1951. Spencer later said "our new international associations have led us to take our profession seriously" (Bedard and Tolch, 1989: 147).

During her time in England, Spencer was impressed by the work she saw from producer Gerald Tyler. Husband and Wife Gerald Tyler and Emily Briggs took a keen interest in children's theatre and undertook a variety of roles including actor, director, and teacher. In 1936 Tyler established the Leeds Children's Theatre, and by 1946 he had opened the Brighouse Children's Theatre. "Brighouse quickly earned a reputation for producing excellent children's theatre, utilising regular children and teenagers as their company, achieving with zest and enthusiasm high standards of dramatic excellence" (Eek, 2008: 314).

### 2.6.5 Creative

Personal accounts show a division of opinion amongst theatre managers and directors on working with child performers.

London director Francis Neilson found that children "did not need any special training ... they needed no more directions than ... grown actors. In fact, they proved much more apt (sic) than the older people. They seemed to learn their lines with less effort and to pick up the 'business' quicker" (Klauber, 1903).

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<sup>176</sup>By the 1950s, Spencer felt that she needed to make international connections in order to learn from other models of children's theatre, and also so that she could find new children's plays to publish, and new authors for textbooks on the subject of children's theatre.

<sup>177</sup>Spencer also had a role in the inaugural children's theatre delegation at a 1952 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) meeting (Bedard and Tolch, 1989: 147).

Writing about child actress Alice Pierce, Arthur Hornblow remarked on the child's ability to imitate those around her. "She saw Madame Duse in 'Fedora', and when she went home she gave an exact imitation of the celebrated actress, even to the Italian tongue, of which she does not know a word. Her gesture and intonation, showing all the emotion of the grown woman in a frail little body hardly in its teens, may well be termed extraordinary" (Hornblow, 1895).

The idea that children were more open to direction and were able to pick up detail faster than their adult counterparts was a common theme, but some argue that these skills could not outweigh the problems associated with working with child performers. One of the biggest issues seemed to stem from trying to hold the child's attention for the duration of a rehearsal<sup>178</sup>.

It was also tough to ensure that the child fully understood what was required of them during rehearsals and performance. A child does not have the maturity to be able to perform at their best no matter how they are feeling, and often theatre managers and directors "had to resort to little tricks in order to preserve propriety" (Klauber, 1903).

However the main complaint from theatre managers and directors was not the behaviour of the child performers, but that of their mothers<sup>179</sup>. Hugh Ford recalls his experience of stage mothers: "I would straighten out the scenes, and have the youngsters working beautifully. Then next morning they would be all wrong again. The mothers had been telling them how they thought the scenes ought to be played ... Each one thought the part played by her youngster was the most important. If I gave a dance to one, the mothers of the others would be telling me how well their children could dance" (Ford, 1913)<sup>180</sup>.

One reason for the popularity of the child actor was the innocence and naïvety they could bring to the stage, and in this respect it was important for directors to elicit a natural performance from the child. The mothers of stage children did not fully grasp

<sup>178</sup>Director Hugh Ford recounted that if one child were rehearsing a scene but could see another child playing in the corner, then the child would ultimately become distracted and restless. Furthermore, "it was practically impossible to have a rehearsal with properties. When I was rehearsing ... I had to have one room for play and another to go through the scenes ..." (Ford, 1913).

<sup>179</sup>That said, it is clear that the children could be as determined as their mothers:

"Alice longed to go on the stage in a real part, and finally she obtained the position of understudy to little Margaret Field in 'Roger La Honte' ... One night Margaret sent word to the theater that she was sick and unable to play. Alice, overjoyed, hastened to the dressing room, made up for the part, and was just leaving to take her cue when she heard on the stairs the step of Margaret Field, who had recovered and concluded to play. In her fury at this disappointment, and resolved not to be balked in her ambition, Alice picked up her rival's dresses and flung them out of the open window, thus putting little Field out of all possibility of playing. Then she went down and on calmly with her part." Subsequently Alice was given a ten year contract by the Rosenfeld Theatre Managers (Heighton, 1903).

<sup>180</sup>The same traits are evident in some mothers of today's child performers.



this concept and continued to ‘train’ their children in an attempt to improve their employment prospects<sup>181</sup>.

The fact that some mothers exploited their children for fame, reward, and a vicarious sense of achievement, should not overshadow the genuine concerns of other mothers and their need to protect their children, either because they were the main source of income for the family, or because they wanted to shelter them from the competitive, demanding, and often ruthless environment of the theatre. Not only might managers and directors look to exploit vulnerable children, but other children and their parents would seize any opportunity presented by weakness. Mothers had to be ‘hard-nosed’ in order to protect their children and to enable them to meet their full potential (Heighton, 1903).

There are also accounts of mothers restricting how much work their child would undertake. Of her daughter Maria, a child performer during the early 20th century, Mrs Lohr said: “My daughter always evinced a great fondness for the stage, and as a wee mite acted and danced at a theatre owned by her godfather . . . For the past six years, however, most of her time has been taken up with her education, and I have only allowed her to act during the holidays” (Heighton, 1903).

### 2.6.5.1 Plays and playwrights

Historians do not seem to be able to agree on when children’s theatre came into its own as a new genre of theatre. Some point to the first performances of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* in 1888<sup>182</sup>, while others argue that the author Frances Hodgson Burnett did not want the piece to play for an audience made up entirely of children, and consequently included material which would be more suited to a mixed audience in the pantomime tradition, “often centred around precocious child characters played by precocious child actors” (Gubar, 2009: 189). When the piece was first performed there was no reference made to children in either the billing material or the reviews, but when it was revived in 1901, a number of reviewers mentioned how popular the performances were with the children in the audience<sup>183</sup>. At the beginning of the 20th century “critics began to insist that children needed their own specially simplified sanitized shows” (Gubar, 2009: 189).

<sup>181</sup>A journalist for the New York Times wrote about his experience of the audition process for child performers: “Dozens of little ones come primed with bright, witty sayings, which they have rehearsed over and over again in the presence of doting mothers . . . Their questioner laughs knowingly, for he is on to the wiles of mothers. He keeps on with his questions until the stock of prepared answers has run out and then he gets to the child’s own personality” (New York Times, 1904).

<sup>182</sup>Others cite J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* as the first widely successful children’s play (Wood and Grant, 1997: 9).

<sup>183</sup>The Illustrated London News described the performance as a “veritable treat for all youngsters” (Gubar, 2009: 193).



It is clear that there were two periods which have become associated with the birth of children's theatre. The first is the 1870s - 1880s when plays were performed for mixed audiences. Theatre companies would include pieces for children in their Christmas season, but did not exist solely to produce performances for child audiences<sup>184</sup>. Some reviewers might make reference to the response of children to the performances, but nobody went as far as to suggest that a new genre had been created. In reviewing *Alice in Wonderland* in 1888, the Times said "it is, of course, eminently a children's play" (Gubar, 2009: 190). In hindsight, it is surprising that more was not made about what we now consider to be huge steps in the development not only of children's theatre, but in theatre in general. In this respect, one wonders whether more productions of a similar nature were being played in England and America, but were at the time not deemed important enough to feature in newspaper reviews, or to leave any other lasting footprint.

The second period of interest is the early 1900s when revivals of previously successful shows, such as *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Peter Pan*, and *Alice in Wonderland*, 'kick-started' the development of children's theatre as its own distinct genre. Perhaps the support for this view<sup>185</sup> stems from the fact that a number of children's theatre companies were established during this period, with the result that children's theatre had a higher profile and was given more attention.

During this period, performances were publicised as being intended for child audiences far more often than had been the case in the 19th century. However, while the number of productions intended for child audiences grew in the first few decades of the 20th century, the most successful offerings were based on revivals of earlier successes.

As the century progressed, and children's theatre made links with education, playwrights tended to produce pieces based on literature studied at school. This, combined with the acknowledgement of the success of dramatised adult novels, and the feeling that children preferred to see things they recognised, meant that few completely new pieces were written for child audiences<sup>186</sup>.

Figure 2.16 on page 88 summarises some of the key productions in children's theatre in the first half of the 20th century.

<sup>184</sup>Interestingly, despite the growing feeling that children should be kept 'innocent', the Victorian society did not seem to recognise the need for a completely separate style of theatre for children. If they had, the content of the plays might have been modified, and could have developed into a series of productions designed entirely for child audiences.

<sup>185</sup>"At the beginning of the 20th century, no distinct theatre for children existed" (Zipes, 2005: 1294).

<sup>186</sup>This was further exacerbated during war years, particularly in Britain, as the output of theatre writers slowed.

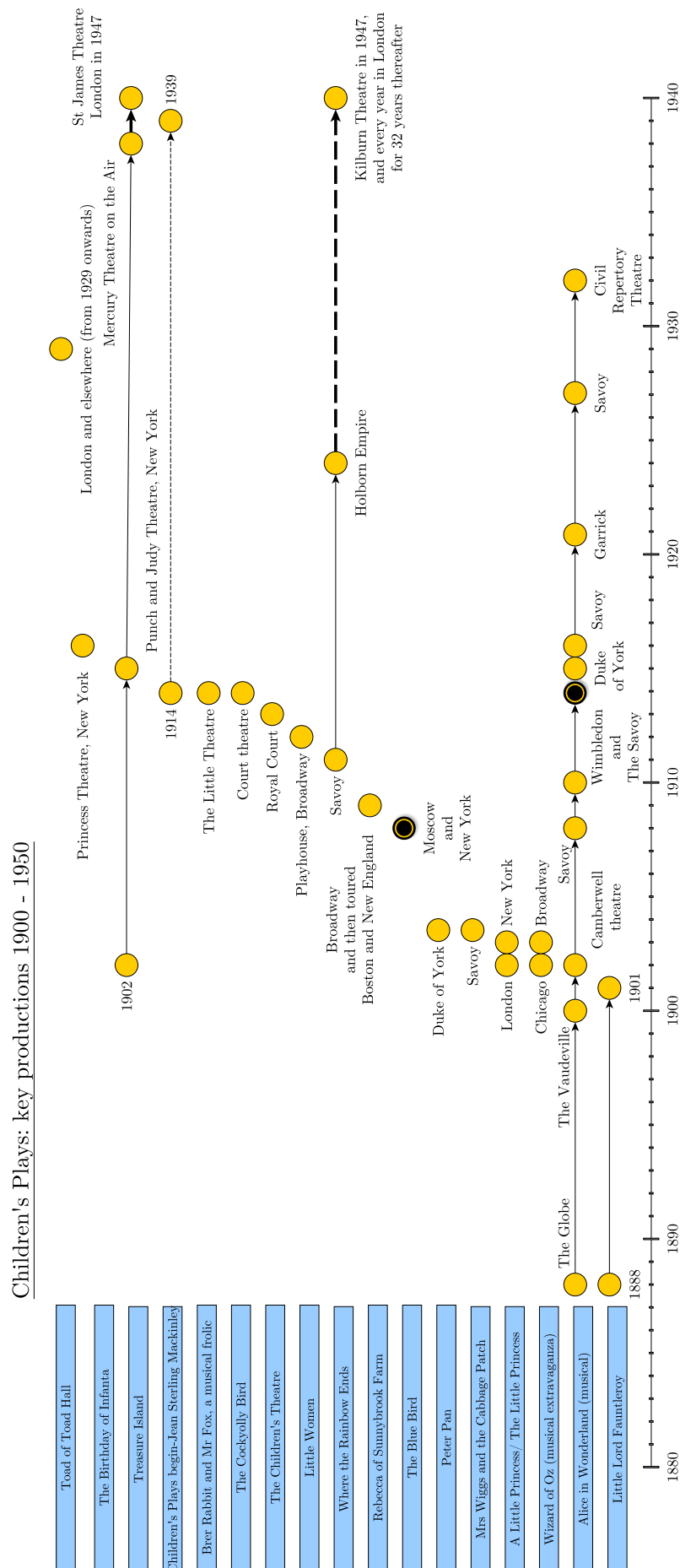


FIGURE 2.16: Key productions in children's theatre

A number of those who began performing or creating for professional musical theatre at a young age are renowned for the quality of their work, the esteem in which audiences of the time held them, as well as for the sheer volume of their output. The list of people mentioned below is by no means exhaustive, but they are singled out because the pivotal role they had in shaping the course of musical theatre is beyond question.

The first was Irving Berlin (1888–1989), who “dropped out of school at age thirteen” and swiftly rose from “newspaper boy to singing waiter to song-writer” (Kenrick, 2008: 143).

Cole Porter achieved success at a young age too, writing his first operetta at the age of ten (Bell, 2011). “Porter’s Mother encouraged his musical prowess and even altered his recorded birth date, changing it from 1891 to 1893 to make him appear more precocious”. She published Cole’s first song when he was just eleven (Kenrick, 2008: 175).

George Gershwin (1898 – 1937) started to learn the piano when he was twelve, and it wasn’t long before he was earning fifteen dollars a week demonstrating songs on Tin Pan Alley (Kenrick, 2008: 183)<sup>187</sup>.

Richard Rodgers was first inspired to pursue a career in the theatre after watching a performance of Columbia University’s annual varsity show in 1917. Richard was only fourteen at the time, and following the show, he was introduced to the show’s lyricist, Oscar Hammerstein II (Kenrick, 2008: 177). Rodgers went on to have his first Broadway credit at the age of seventeen.

At the same time, Ivor Novello and Noel Coward were making their mark on the West End. Novello began composing songs in his teens. “Novello’s success was all the more impressive considering that this one-time boy chorister could barely sing a note as an adult” (Kenrick, 2008: 218).

As a child Noel Coward attended the Italia Conti Academy, and made his West End debut at the Garrick Theatre in *Where the Rainbow Ends* (1911), aged eleven. In addition to performing, Coward began to write his own plays and songs, publishing over 50 plays from the age of seventeen. Coward went on to compose hundreds of songs and many musical theatre works. Unusually for many child performers, his career lasted for six decades.

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<sup>187</sup>When George was seventeen he played through numbers for seventeen-year-old Fred Astaire (1899 – 1987). The two young men discussed their dreams of making it to Broadway, and George said, “Wouldn’t it be great if I could write a musical show and you could be in it?” (Astaire, 1960: 65).

### 2.6.5.2 Performance

“No adequate sources exist on the exact number of children employed in theatrical productions. The 1920 census listing of 400 children between the ages of ten and fifteen under the category of Actors and Showmen is clearly an underestimate” (Zelizer and Rotman, 1985: 243). It appears that at the turn of the century, young girls were more likely to appear on stage than boys, often taking male parts (Zelizer and Rotman, 1985: 1).

In summary during the early 20th century a number of practitioners who are considered to be central to the development of children’s theatre, began their work in America and Britain. Some were visionaries who saw the possibilities of targeting commercial theatre directly at children (as opposed to mixed audiences as had been seen before), others were philanthropists who recognised the benefits of theatre for young people. And there were those who were interested in the business of education<sup>188</sup> and strove to develop school and university programmes to include studies of theatre and to introduce training programmes for teachers of the arts.

## 2.7 The rebellious years: The iconoclasts

### 2.7.1 Transition

After the hiatus associated with the Second World War, there was a significant rise in the number of musicals showing in theatres on both sides of the Atlantic: Figure 2.17 on page 91<sup>189</sup>.

The late 1950s marked the beginning of a series of professional musical theatre productions with children in leading and supporting roles. Ironically, the first was a musical about the definitive stage mother, Rose Havoc<sup>190</sup>. Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim and Jule Styne wrote *Gypsy* in 1959 and the show ran for 702 performances<sup>191</sup>. Table 2.1 on page 91 includes 50 of the most famous musicals with young people in the leads.

<sup>188</sup>One of the policies of the Federal Theatre program was that no plays for entertainment purposes only were to be allowed (Gordon, 2007: 14).

<sup>189</sup>The chart uses data on over 5,000 musicals extracted (in 2010) from the Musicals101 database (Kenrick, n.d.).

<sup>190</sup>June Havoc, billed as ‘Baby June’, was a child performer in the 1920s, danced on pointe from the age of two and was taught and managed by her mother. “When June tried to elope with Bobby Reed, a dancer from her act, it transpired that she had no idea how old she was. June’s mother had forged an impressive collection of birth certificates . . . so she could work illegally young” (Gee, 2008).

<sup>191</sup>The role of Rose was a demanding one, and Ethel Merman suffered a burst blood vessel in her throat during the run (Kenrick, 2008: 302).

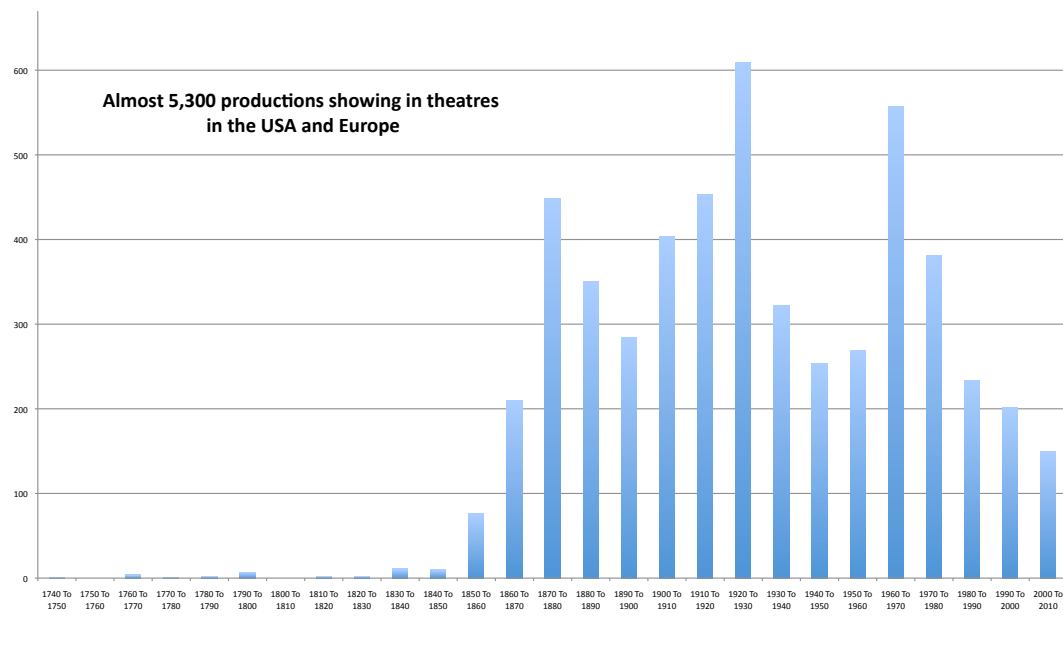


FIGURE 2.17: Musicals in America and Europe

TABLE 2.1: Musicals with child performers in leading and supporting roles

Production	Year	Child performers
Gypsy	1959	Baby June, Baby Louise, Boys, performing children
The Sound of Music	1959	Brigitta, Kurt, Marta, Gretl
Oliver	1960	Oliver, Artful Dodger, orphans
Bye Bye Birdie	1960	Randolph
Here's Love	1963	Susan Walker
Anyone Can Whistle	1964	Baby Joan
Fiddler on the Roof	1964	Schprinze, Bielke
Anne of Green Gables	1965	Secondary characters, and a chorus of school children
Mame	1966	Patrick
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat	1970	Large children's chorus
Pippin	1972	Theo
A Little Night Music	1973	Fredrika Armfeldt
Annie	1976	Annie (Lead Role), Molly, Kate, Tessie and Pepper, orphans
Bugsy Malone	1976	Full cast
Sweeney Todd	1979	Tobias
Nine	1982	Young Guido
Sunday in the Park with George	1984	Louise, little girl and small boy
Big River	1985	Huck Finn (Lead Role), Tom Sawyer
Les Miserables	1985	Gavroche, Cosette, Eponine
Into the Woods	1987	Red Riding Hood (young teen),

Continued...

Production	Year	Child performers
		Jack (young teen)
Miss Saigon	1989	Tam
Once on this Island	1990	Ti Moune, The Little Girl, Daniel's Son
The Secret Garden	1991	Mary Lennox, Colin
Children of Eden	1991	Young Cain, Young Abel
Falsettos	1992	Jason
Tommy	1993	Tommy at ages 4 and 10, Sally at age 4
Ruthless	1993	Tina
Beauty and the Beast	1994	Chip
Whistle Down the Wind	1996	Clarence, Louis, Brat, Poor Baby, Charity, Curly, Ramona, Winnie/Winston, La Vonne, Jackie
Big: the musical	1996	Josh, Cynthia, Billy
Ragtime	1996	"Little boy" role
The Lion King	1997	Young Simba, Young Nala
The Full Monty	2000	Nathan
Seussical	2000	Jojo Who, Baby Sour Kangaroo
Chitty Chitty Bang Bang	2002	Jemima Potts, Jeremy Potts, sewer kids
The Boy from Oz	2003	Young Peter
Caroline or Change	2003	Noah
Mary Poppins	2004	Jane and Michael Banks
Billy Elliot	2004	Billy, Michael, Debbie, Tall Boy, Small Boy, Ballet Girls
A Little Princess	2005	Sara Crewe, children.
The Color Purple	2005	Young Celie, Young Olivia
Priscilla Queen of the Desert	2006	Benjamin
Thriller - Live	2007	Young Michael Jackson
13 (musical)	2007	Mostly child cast
Shrek	2008	Young Fiona, Teenage Fiona
Matilda	2011	Matilda, Bruce, Lavender, other children
Newsies	2011	Les, ensemble boys
Kinky Boots	2012	Young Charlie
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	2013	Charlie Bucket, Violet Beauregarde, Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, Mike Teavee
Motown the Musical	2013	Young Michael Jackson

Alan Parker took the idea a step further in 1976 when he wrote *Bugsy Malone* which had a cast entirely made up of children.

The proliferation of musicals involving children and young people over the past 50 years suggests a sustained appetite for child performers. However there are some examples to the contrary. "A musical stage adaptation at Drury Lane in 1972, featuring a young

Bonnie Langford and a horse that defecated on stage during press night, prompted Noël Coward to opine: ‘They should cut the second act - and the child’s throat’ It closed quickly” (Curtis, 2008).

## 2.7.2 Socio-political

### 2.7.2.1 Demographic

The change in demographic following the Second World War in particular had a significant impact on the development of musical theatre.

Due to the post-war baby boom, the 1960s have become synonymous with the ‘age of the teenager’. The change in demographic meant that a large number of young people had spending power, and what interested them had an impact on all parts of social and cultural life. Young audiences were not interested in musicals with traditional, conservative, storylines involving a love story and a happy ending. They also “disapproved of the [Vietnam] war and expressed their displeasure through radical fashions and music filled with a spirit of protest” (Kenrick, 2008: 314). The demand was for more substance to the plot, and writers adapted quickly<sup>192</sup>; the 1960s saw an increase in the number of issue-driven musicals with hard-hitting storylines like *Cabaret* and *Fiddler on the Roof*.

The musical tastes of the teenage market had a lasting effect on musical theatre<sup>193</sup>. In order to retain young audiences, musical theatre writers incorporated rock and pop into their scores<sup>194</sup>.

The production of *Hair* (1967) used a rock score and tackled issues relating to the lives of teenagers. “Hair was an ‘American Tribal-Love Rock Musical’, a free-form, definition-smashing celebration of the hippie counterculture” (Kenrick, 2008: 314).

<sup>192</sup>Critics recognised the appeal of *West Side Story* (1957) to young audiences, “*West Side Story* [combined] the classic and the hip. Robbins’ energetic choreography and Bernstein’s grand score accentuated the satiric, hard-edged lyrics of Sondheim, and Laurents’ capture of the angry voice of urban youth” (Time magazine, 1957).

<sup>193</sup>“Instead of listening to show music or more conventional popular music, teens were turning to rock and roll ... this ‘sanitized’ black music aimed to attract a listenership of teenaged white, mainstream, middle-class Americans. And attract them it did, with the effect of further shrinking present and future generations of musical theatre audiences” (Jones, 2003: 162).

<sup>194</sup>Examples include: *Bye Bye Birdie* (1960); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970); *Grease* (1970); *Godspell* (1971); *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973); *The Wiz* (1975); *Evita* (1976); *Little Shop of Horrors* (1982); *Chess* (1984); *Starlight Express* (1984); *Return to the Forbidden Planet* (1989).

Sondheim expressed concern that the rise in rock music would lead to the demise of musical theatre<sup>195</sup>, and others agreed, resulting in a bifurcation of musical theatre into two distinct camps, the artistic and the commercial – perhaps best defined by the work of composers Stephen Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Almost all of Lloyd Webber’s musicals had a rock/pop score, and his musical based on the life of Eva Peron is cited as the first example of a ‘mega-musical’<sup>196</sup>. The mega-musical form has been copied by countless other writers/composers, and has proved to be commercially very successful<sup>197</sup>. While the mega-musical is often criticised for the lack of substance, the key to its success as a genre was its ability to draw family audiences. “*Cats* was ... that increasing rarity, a musical that one could take children to. The tykes might die from vapidty poisoning, but at least there was no danger of them being exposed to anything dangerous, like an idea ...” (Kenrick, 2008: 348).

While the demographic effects of the baby boom have been played out, young audiences have remained important. The findings of a survey by Ticketmaster concluded that those most likely to attend were in the 16–24 age group, and that the average spent on a ticket was £53 (Smith, 2013b)<sup>198</sup>.

Regional statistics are available, for Scotland for example (Scottish government, 2009); research commissioned by the Arts Council attempts to characterize audiences, dividing them into groups such as ‘culture vultures’ (Arts Council England, 2011), and other research examines community theatre. However relatively little is available on children’s

<sup>195</sup> “I can’t predict the future, but I do know that what’s happened is, obviously, a split between popular and theatrical music. It has widened over the last twenty years because the notion of popular music, which has to do with relentless, electric amplification and a kind of insistence, is, I think, anti-theatrical, anti-dramatic, to be a little more accurate ... Pop music has as strong a hold as ever, and it weakens the theater audience. I mean, so many young people miss in the musical theater what they can get on a record. How can I tell them that the musical theater is just a different way of looking at things? They haven’t been exposed to it, so it seems wishy-washy and unsatisfying to them because it is not what they require from music” (Jones, 2003: 162).

<sup>196</sup> “The key characteristics of megamusicals:

- Megamusicals are sung through, with little if any dialogue
- The songs and emotions are big, loud, and bombastic
- Characterisation is often explained rather than dramatized: characters tell you who they are rather than showing who they are by their action
- The plots are melodramatic, with minimal humour” (Kenrick, 2008: 340).

<sup>197</sup> Revenues for *The Phantom of the Opera* far “surpass the world’s highest-grossing film *Avatar* (at \$2.8 billion), as well as such other blockbusters as *Titanic*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Jurassic Park* and *Star Wars*” (DPAC, 2014).

<sup>198</sup> However this was later robustly challenged by David Brownlee (Brownlee, 2013) who points to other evidence that it is the 45–64 age group who are most likely to attend, with the average price for a ticket being much less than that suggested by the Ticketmaster survey. This is supported by the results of market research conducted by Minitel, published in 2011, which, in common with other surveys, concluded that those attending performing arts events tended to be higher income, middle-aged and predominantly female.



theatre, whether it be theatre by children or theatre for children, except inasmuch as children form part of the audiences for (some) West End musicals.

Projections by the Office of National Statistics suggest a substantial increase in the child population in Britain over the next 20 years (ONS, 2008). However other studies indicate a reduction in audiences and level of child participation in the performing arts<sup>199</sup>.

ONS estimates of net migration show that numbers have grown substantially since 1990, but are forecast to stabilise (ONS, 2010). The effects of new cultures can be both enriching as demonstrated by the Bollywood musicals, and inhibiting<sup>200</sup>. Under its Young Artistic Associates Programme, the Lyric Hammersmith appointed four young people including those from ethnic minority groups and women as part of their determination to address “the real disconnect between those young people who attend theatre groups, and those who go on to work full-time in the industry” (Woolman, 2011c).

### 2.7.2.2 Subsidy

There is little by way of government subsidy for musical theatre (Equity, 2007: 4), something that is of particular concern to smaller, more innovative theatres like the Bridewell (HoC, 2003). In contrast, music is quite often subsidised, notably in the form of subsidies from local councils for orchestras run by regional music services<sup>201</sup>. Theatre does receive support from businesses and individuals (Mermiri, 2010)<sup>202</sup>. However overall levels of philanthropic donations are rather lower in the UK than in the US ((Mermiri, 2010: 41), (The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2009)).

Plainly not a fan of musicals, Billington points to the “ascendancy of the musical in the 80s and its capacity to marginalise other theatrical forms being a product of the Thatcherite time. Musicals had the potential to make bucketloads of money” (Billington, 2009: 286), “Mackintosh’s power is a reflection of subsidised theatre’s chronic shortage of funds and our slavish obeisance to musical”. In Billington’s view, “Something in the culture radically changed in 1985; and changed for the worse” (Billington, 2009:

<sup>199</sup>The RAND study on the performing arts concludes that in the US, sociodemographic trends are likely to dampen future demand for live performances (McCarthy et al., 2001). The DCMS ‘Taking Part’ survey reported a fall of more than 10% between 2008/9 and 2011/12 for 5-10 year olds attending performances, as well as a fall in the level of participation; the corresponding figures for 11-15 year olds also revealed a drop.

<sup>200</sup>In 2010 there were reports of Muslim children being withdrawn from music lessons for religious reasons (Ross, 2010), though subsequent reports showed that the numbers involved were small.

<sup>201</sup>The orchestra I played in for six years is subsidised by Redbridge Council, and provided its members with opportunities to play at venues like the Royal Albert Hall, and with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Barbican. Similar organisations operate in different parts of the country: I spent some time working for the Hampshire Music Service, providing peripatetic music tuition in schools.

<sup>202</sup>Although unlikely to compensate for the reduction in subsidies from government, Mermiri predicts that philanthropy is likely to make a bigger contribution in the future, substantially exceeding previous estimates by the Funding Commission (The Stage: Biz 2 Biz, 2010b).

291). In contrast, things were different under the Blair administration<sup>203</sup>, the Boyden Report led to a substantial increase in funding, e.g. the subsidy for the Tricycle theatre more than doubled from £291,576 in 2000 to £633,149 by 2003 (Billington, 2009: 377). “Interestingly actors’ remuneration remained largely the same, but the theatre was able to put on about six additional productions a year” (Billington, 2009: 377). Jordan makes the point that in transferring productions like *War Horse*<sup>204</sup> to the West End, subsidised theatre like the National Theatre can play an important role in making commercial theatre successful (Jordan, 2010a). A report for the Arts Council in 2003 considered the age-old question of ‘commercial v subsidised’ theatre (Cogo-Fawcett, 2003), and revealed that subsidy arrangements have sometimes been complicated by suspicions of abuse on one side, and the frustrations about the perceived opacity of the arrangements on the other.

There have been a number of schemes to interest young people in theatre. Starting in 1998 (de Souza, 2010), *Kids Week* provides free tickets for children between 5 and 16 accompanied by an adult, and delivers workshops and other show-related activities over the summer holidays (Quinn, 2010); in 2015 229,143 tickets were sold, with more than 114,384 sold within 24 hours of going on sale (SOLT, n.d.). Figure 2.18 on page 97 shows the marked rise in ticket sales since its inception<sup>205</sup>. A £2.4m DCMS scheme which ran from February 2009 to March 2011 to get young people into theatre<sup>206</sup> (Arts Council England, 2012) proved to be a success not only in its primary objective, but also in advising theatres on how to reach young people (Herbert, 2012). Other schemes are designed to provide support for aspiring performers and creatives<sup>207</sup>; for example, the BBC’s ‘Young People’s Musical Theatre Scheme’ launched in September 2010 offered £200,000 funding to non-professional theatre groups raised from phone votes from shows like ‘I’d Do Anything’, and ran alongside the annual ‘Training in Musical Theatre Scheme’ (Hemley, 2010a). An £8,000 bursary for young directors was launched in 2010 by the Out of Joint theatre company, funded by the Arts Council (Elkin, 2010a). Sky Arts launched a £150,000 scheme (including, but not limited to those aspiring to work in musical theatre) aimed at supporting artists at the beginning of their careers (The Stage, 2011c). However not all initiatives intended to support young people hoping to work in the theatre industry have been well received. There has been criticism of the Stage One apprentice scheme (Elkin, 2013c) by those who consider it exploitation

<sup>203</sup>The Boyden report (Boyden, 2000) argued that attributional funding is counterproductive and that an increase in subsidy would produce much better value for money.

<sup>204</sup>Based on the children’s novel by Michael Morpurgo.

<sup>205</sup>Data taken from (SOLT, n.d.) and (Wicker, 2015).

<sup>206</sup>Over 200 theatres participated in A Night Less Ordinary offering free theatre tickets for people aged under 26 introduced by the Arts Council in response to the McMasters Report.

<sup>207</sup>In addition websites exist for those seeking sponsorship (not restricted to sponsorship of the arts): <http://www.uksponsorship.com/subj1.htm>

of the young<sup>208</sup>, and essentially just a source of free/cheap labour for producers/general managers (Letter, 2011).

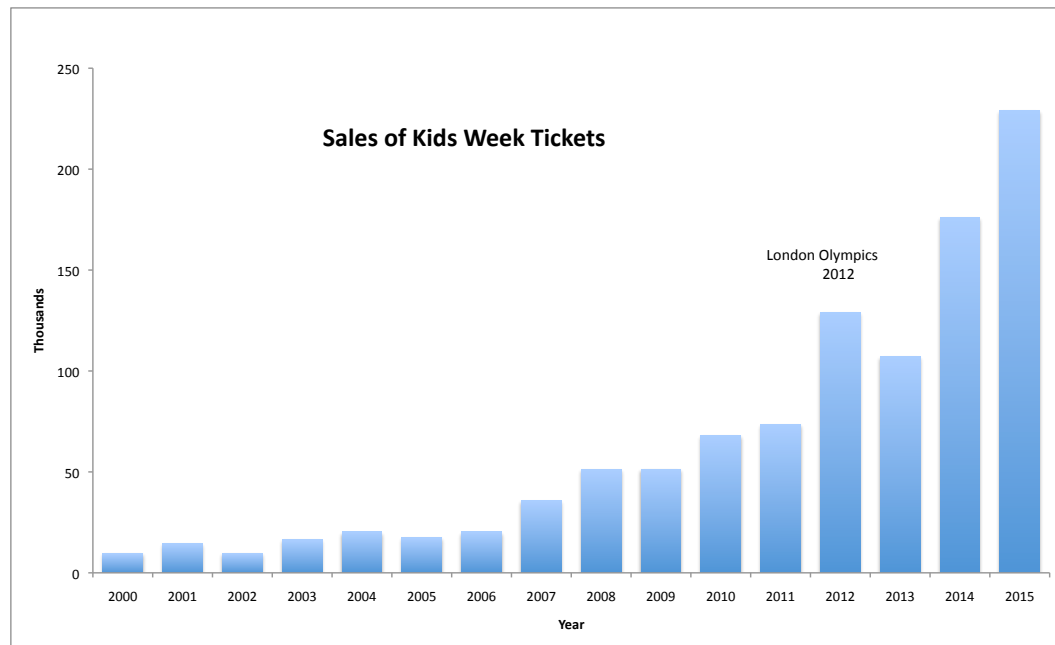


FIGURE 2.18: Sales of Kids Week tickets

### 2.7.3 Economics

The 1980s and 1990s saw musical theatre becoming much more commercialised<sup>209</sup>, and due to the success of productions like *Oliver!* (1960, 2,618 performances), *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (1967, 1,597 performances), and *Annie* (1977, 2,377 performances)<sup>210</sup>, producers recognised that family audiences brought in a lot of revenue<sup>211</sup>.

<sup>208</sup>Subsequently BECTU, Equity and the Musicians' Union all voiced similar concerns about the growth of unpaid internships, which they argued displaced employment opportunities for young people (Merri-field, n.d.).

<sup>209</sup>More recently claims that musicals were taking over the West End were rebutted based on evidence from the 2010 SOLT report which stated that their share had actually fallen each year between 2008 and 2010, and the number of musicals running dropped by 17.5% to 33 and the number of new musicals opening fell from 18 to 15 between 2009 and 2010; that said, musicals commanded almost 60% of the market (Smith, 2011c).

<sup>210</sup>In addition to being professional successes, these family-friendly musicals have subsequently been performed by thousands of youth groups and schools. Other examples include *Godspell* which is a revue style adaptation of the Christian gospels with a rock score written by Stephen Schwartz. "The production opened in 1971 and ran for 2645 performances ... Simple to stage, *Godspell* became a budget-friendly favourite at schools, community theatre and church groups" (Kenrick, 2008: 321). Lloyd Webber and Rice's musical version of the Bible story of Joseph and his brothers, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, is particularly interesting because it was originally written as a cantata for children's choirs for a school production but went on to become a successful professional production in the West End running for 747 performances in 1982. The musical has subsequently become a firm favourite with schools and youth groups, and thousands of productions have been mounted.

<sup>211</sup>Not unlike their Victorian counterparts.

“People with no interest in the theatre happily paid top dollar to bring their children to [*Beauty and the Beast*. If the price tag added up to a few hundred dollars, no problem – it was still cheaper than taking the family to a Disney theme park” (Kenrick, 2008: 319)<sup>212</sup>.

In the US the way that tickets were priced helped to make musical theatre more attractive to families. “In 1973, the newly formed Theatre Development Fund set up a temporary trailer in the middle of Times Square to sell unused tickets at half-price on the day of performance, making it possible for the general public to purchase an orchestra seat for less than ten dollars ... The TKTS trailer became a permanent fixture, and theatregoers kept coming” (Kenrick, 2008: 319).

Audiences for plays may be inflated as a result of subsidies whereas musicals are usually wholly commercial ventures, though there have been schemes to make West End musicals like *Billy Elliot* more accessible to young people with limited resources. Take-up was high (peaking at 90% in 2009/10) for the free ticket scheme for the under 26s introduced by the Labour government, but the scheme was dropped by the coalition government that followed (Woolman, 2011e).

For people unable to see ‘live’ performances in person, there are the televised ‘live’ shows like ‘X factor’<sup>213</sup>. Many of the contestants on these ‘live’ shows<sup>214</sup> are the products of performing arts institutions, and in some cases such as the BBC/Andrew-Lloyd Webber productions, their purpose was to select someone for the principal role in a new West End production. These TV shows reach audiences worldwide<sup>215</sup>, and generate huge revenues<sup>216</sup>. There is evidence that these talent shows stimulate an interest in musical theatre<sup>217</sup> ((Arts Council of Wales, 2009),(Milburn, 2008).) implying, in this sense at

<sup>212</sup> “Kids who loved the animated movie were delighted, parents were relieved to find a clean show, and billions rolled in. Souvenirs became a bigger moneymaker than ever. If the British wrote the book on auxiliary marketing, Disney built the library. Disney invented the corporate musical, a genre of shows built, produced, and managed by multifunctional entertainment corporations. These shows may begin as the idea of the composer or writer, but their development is corporate approved and sponsored” (Kenrick, 2008: 319).

<sup>213</sup> Thaler points to ‘conformity experiments’ conducted in 17 countries which testify to the influence that TV shows like X factor can have (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009).

<sup>214</sup> My ex-students ‘The Loveable Rogues’ are but one example.

<sup>215</sup> 70 million viewers who tuned in to watch the Chinese edition of the X factor saw a British student from Sheffield University win the competition (John, 2010).

<sup>216</sup> £400,000: the price per minute for advertising during the X Factor final (All Business, 2009).

<sup>217</sup> Research results concluded that the musical theatre reality shows which have been shown on BBC1 (*How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria?*, *Any Dream Will Do* and *I’d Do Anything*) and ITV1 (*Grease Is The Word*) boosted audience attendance, see also Figure 2.19 on page 100. They can also stimulate an interest in working in the musical theatre industry as a performer. *Over the Rainbow* winner, Danielle Hope, had to pull out of her A-Level in Dance to compete in the BBC show but the experience made her determined to undertake training in musical theatre (Hemley, 2010b).

The research, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Society of London Theatre during the second half of 2008, found that amongst theatregoers who had watched the popular television shows 47% had been more likely to see the production featured, 34% said they were more likely to see musical theatre in general and 23% said they would be more likely to see a non-musical production. (Whether in the

least, a symbiosis exists between TV and theatre<sup>218</sup>.

A levy on West End productions means that some money finds its way back into new productions, (Cogo-Fawcett, 2003), but the amounts involved are small relative to the estimates of the sums generated by industry quoted by Travers and Shellard. There is evidence of a ‘trickledown’ effect from televised ‘live’ shows in terms of bigger audiences and increased participation. The findings from a survey of theatre patrons asked what they would like to see more of, showed that 28% wanted more musical theatre (Arts Council of Wales, 2009)<sup>219</sup>; the same report observed that more young people voted in talent shows than in general elections. “TV talent shows are having an impact on applications and of course this is great news for the performing arts. We are seeing a huge increase in applications which reflects the national trend” (Milburn, 2008)<sup>220</sup> “According to UCAS, Performing arts have seen 23% increase nationally between 2003-2007, with the biggest rises being in Music Theatre. This is the same period of time where the talent shows became an omnipresent beacon for TV entertainment.”

Alas not everyone is a fan of the process (Jordan, 2010b), and doubters would claim to be vindicated by the reviews for Lloyd Webber’s re-worked *Wizard of Oz* (The Sunday Times, n.d.).

McCarthy points to evidence of a growing polarisation in the fortunes of both plays and performers. Plays are now either very successful, in which case show runs are very lengthy, or if they are not, they are removed much more quickly than in the past (Moore, 1968). ‘Star’ performers can command big rewards, whereas others have to content themselves with low, intermittent wages (McCarthy et al., 2001: xix-xx). The SOLT/Equity agreements (SOLT, 2011) are an attempt to ‘standardise’ fees for creatives, but a lot of people working in theatre receive rather less, many working on a ‘profit share’ basis (a euphemism for ‘unpaid’).

form of films of musicals or talent shows, we are used to a flow of talent from stage to screen. In so-called ‘TV-theatre’ which is aimed specially at children, the opposite happens: theatre productions are modelled on TV shows (Goldfinger, 2009).) Speaking about the findings to The Official London Theatre Guide, Cameron Mackintosh, producer of *Oliver!* and many other West End Musicals, said “There is no doubt that searching for the star of a musical on prime time Saturday night TV has had a tremendously beneficial effect on the West End, not only for promoting a particular show but, just as importantly, exposing new talent who find great opportunities in other productions in the West End and around the country. So the theatre industry has every reason to be grateful to Andrew Lloyd Webber and the BBC for putting musical theatre centre stage and the current buoyant state of the West End is living proof of the benefits” (Jesse, 2009).

<sup>218</sup>The ability for musicals to appeal to a wide audience was proved in 2008. Box office figures show the musical *Mamma Mia* became the highest grossing film ever released in the UK, surpassing *Titanic*’s record (UK Film Council, 2008). It is continuing to reach audiences in homes, 1,669,084 DVDs were sold on its release date, breaking the previous record held by *Titanic* (BBC News, 2008).

<sup>219</sup>The survey was a relatively small one. Findings were: Musical Theatre 28%, Pantomime 9%, Drama 17%, Dance 7%, Music 15%, Comedy 16%, Community Shows 5% and Welsh Language 3%.

<sup>220</sup>Others, like Iain Duncan-Smith have been critical of what he describes as the ‘get rich quick’ celebrity culture exemplified by *The X Factor*.

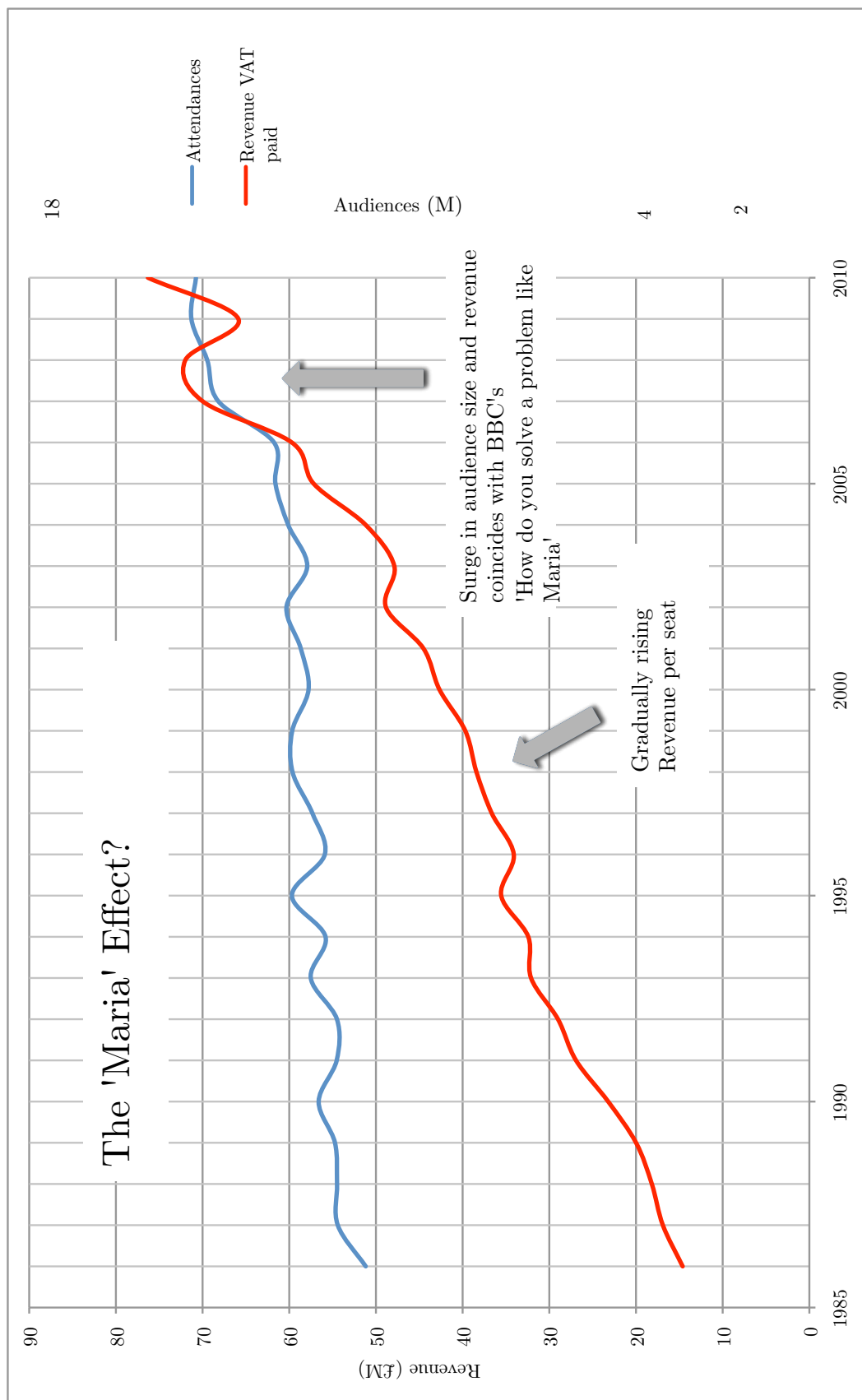


FIGURE 2.19: Maria Effect

TABLE 2.2: Key institutions

Institution	Year established
East 15	1961
Drama Centre London	1963
Drama Studio London	1966
The Urdang Academy	1970
Laine Theatre Arts	1974
London Studio Centre	1978
Cygnnet Training Theatre	1980
Oxford School of Drama	1988
Performers College	1988
Bodyworks (Cambridge Performing Arts)	1990
Brit School	1991
Masters Performing Arts	1995
Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts	1996
Millenium Performing Arts	1997
CPA Studios	1999

## Legal

The regulations surrounding child performers have been a matter of controversy for some time and during this period there were a number of key developments. The most recent piece of legislation affecting children working in musical theatre focused on chaperoning. The Independent Safeguarding Authority was established in November 2010 to vet all adults who work with children. Many people in amateur theatre regarded the system as disproportionately onerous, and in 2012 the new government moved to introduce relaxations. However matters were complicated by a number of high-profile child abuse scandals, and government plans were stopped in their tracks. The impact of regulation covering child performers is covered more fully in the Professional Theatre chapter.

### 2.7.4 Education

The formal education opportunities during this period have been covered in depth in the Education chapter, but it is worth noting the number of key institutions which were established from 1960: see Table 2.2 on page 101.

## Theatre In Education

In the early part of the 20th century much of the theatre designed for child audiences in America and England had some sort of educational content, and (as discussed previously), it was as early as 1915 that companies were exploring the idea of Theatre in Education as a genre in its own right. The work conducted by Brian Way helped to



make theatre in education an accepted part of the education system and of professional theatre ([Harbottle, 2006](#)) and paved the way for later developments.

The Theatre in Education (TiE) movement really took hold in the UK in the mid-1960s following the Belgrade Theatre's 1965 project *Pow Wow*. The project was designed to be entertaining as well as educational, and was interactive in order to fully engage young audiences. The children became part of the story as they were allowed to decide the fate of one of the characters and were invited to participate in a discussion before they finally made their decision. "The project had successfully merged theatre and education together in a new way that had never been seen before" ([Beyond the Door, n.d.](#)).

The post-Second World War revolutionary spirit contributed to this new style of theatre for young audiences. "Education was moving away from the talk and listening methods that had been used for many years. Instead, these old methods were being replaced by learning and doing through experience ... And in the theatre, things were changing too. There was a desire to push away the fourth-wall and to try new ideas and styles, looking at new topics for the content and exploring theatre outside of the theatres themselves" ([Beyond the Door, n.d.](#)).

The Belgrade Theatre company continued to expand, and during "1975, in one half of one term alone, it reached over 6800 students" ([Belgrade Theatre Coventry, 2010](#)). A number of practitioners from the original Belgrade Theatre company went on to establish successful TiE companies elsewhere<sup>221</sup> and numerous other companies began to produce TiE across England, adopting a common model which was fully funded by the Local Education Authorities so that the services could be provided to schools free of charge. The companies employed a handful of practitioners who travelled to schools to perform and conduct classes as well as running pre- and post- performance workshops as part of an education package. The TiE projects in the late 1960s and early 1970s were comprehensive; practitioners would make regular visits to the same school and the projects would often run for a full term. In 1973 the Standing Conference of Young People's Theatre (SCYPT) was founded in order to "create an arena for TiE and young people's companies to share ideas, support each other's work and contribute to the continued growth of TiE" ([Belgrade Theatre Coventry, 2010](#)). By 1977 "there were around ninety companies in the country doing work specifically for children and young people" ([Belgrade Theatre Coventry, 2010](#))<sup>222</sup>.

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<sup>221</sup>For example, Paul Harman ran the Liverpool Everyman Priority Community Theatre Project and set up the Merseyside Young People's Theatre company, and Michael Jones set up the Watford TiE company.

<sup>222</sup>Theatre in Education was (and is) praised for its ability to engage young people both in the arts, and in educational topics. "TiE utilises the ability of theatre to make connections with subject areas in the humanities and sciences. Indeed the effectiveness of theatre as a way of communicating the principles and practices of scientific thinking continues to be widely recognised" ([Reason, 2010](#): 5-6). "It also supports learning in personal, social and health education, citizenship and environmental studies. . . with



The progress of the TiE movement was halted by funding cuts during the Thatcher administration in the 1980s ([Beyond the Door](#), n.d.). Companies were required either to find sponsors or to charge the schools directly<sup>223</sup>. The result was pared down projects which usually took the form of a single performance and a separate workshop supported by study packs, a structure which remains common today. The most significant change was a shift away from participatory theatre, and as a result the “distinction between the TiE movement, originating in the 1960s, and professional theatre for children is becoming blurred” ([Reason](#), 2010: 4).

While there are still some examples of successful TiE companies (including Kneehigh, Hobgoblin, and Bigfoot Theatre Arts), most of the TiE output is now conducted by theatre production companies, rather than by dedicated TiE companies<sup>224</sup>. Almost all West End musicals have an Education Department offering educational discounts, backstage tours, education packs, workshops, and post-performance Q&A sessions.

### Youth Theatre

Youth Theatre developed alongside the TiE movement. “The activity grew out of schools’ drama, enlightened amateur theatre and community drama initiatives” ([Continuum](#), 2006: 855). Youth theatre groups were (and are) run “on a full or part-time basis by leaders from a wide range of backgrounds - for example, education, theatre and youth work” ([Continuum](#), 2006: 855). In the 1970s and 1980s local government authorities recognised the benefits that youth theatre brought to communities, and local education authorities in Leicestershire, Devon and Northumberland were the first to establish county youth theatres ([Arrowsmith](#), 2002: 18). “New groups and organisations ... emerged steadily since the early 1980s and by 1999 there were an estimated 700 groups” ([Continuum](#), 2006: 855).

The NAYT was established in 1982 as an educational charity designed to support and promote the youth theatre sector<sup>225</sup>. By 2014 the NAYT was working with over 1,300 groups ranging from youth sections of amateur societies to large, well-resourced,

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productions and activities designed to increase awareness of the issues, stimulate empathy and encourage self-reflection and development” ([Bennett](#), 2005: 23). However there were those who believed that Theatre In Education was not a good way to introduce young people to the theatre ([Reason](#), 2010: 6). In 1974, American Sara Spencer was critical of the quality of Theatre In Education in the UK, which she found “rich and exciting and contemporary [but] the scripting was often of poor quality, scenery scuffed, costumes grubby. TiE has many values. I would just hope that our children would not grow up to think this was theatre” ([Swortzell](#), 1993: 240).

<sup>223</sup>Those that were able to do neither were forced to disband. According to a report of the National Campaign for the Arts (NCA) in 1997, of the TiE companies left in full operation, few were supported sufficiently to provide their work as a free service ([Sextou](#), 2003: 177).

<sup>224</sup>The Royal Shakespeare Company were the first to explore this in a coordinated way. The work started in the early nineties and today the RSC has had contact with nearly 100 schools and has reached around 20,000 pupils. In addition to this, the RSC trains the teachers in theatre based approaches and offers the opportunity to do a Postgraduate Certificate in the Teaching of Shakespeare ([Elkin](#), 2010*d*).

<sup>225</sup>The NAYT is operated according to a clearly defined set of principles ([NAYT](#), n.d.):

professionally-led groups attached to theatres, and was responsible for founding the National Resource Centre for Youth Theatre.

Two of the largest and most successful youth theatre companies are musical theatre companies: Youth Musical Theatre UK (YMT) and the National Youth Music Theatre (NYMT).

The National Youth Music Theatre was originally known as the Children's Music Theatre, and was established in 1976 by director and playwright Jeremy James Taylor. Interestingly, the National Youth Music Theatre was borne out of the story of Elizabethan child actor Salomon Pavy. Jeremy James Taylor worked with a school company of 11 to 13 year olds on the piece and "following its school performance, an adventurous and enlightened headmaster allowed his ambitious director to take the whole thing to the Edinburgh Fringe where it won fine reviews, excellent audiences, a Fringe First Award and an invitation to bring it to London as part of Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee Celebrations" ([Jeremy James Taylor, n.d.](#)). Their success subsequently inspired many other schools and youth groups to take productions to Edinburgh, and this practice continues today.

Jeremy's company provided opportunities for young people in the form of workshops, masterclasses, and residential courses which culminated in full scale productions. The company drew its cast from schools across the UK and quickly developed a reputation for excellence, with high profile creatives like Richard Stilgoe, Howard Goodall and Charles Hart asking the company to premier their new material. With its growth in scope came a name change which better reflected the age-profile of the cast. In 1985 the company was re-named the 'National Youth Music Theatre'. Since its inception,

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- "All young people have a right to participate in high quality, engaging, challenging and meaningful theatre experiences.
  - Young people and those who work with them have the right to work in safe environments.
  - Youth theatre and all of its practitioners have the right to platforms of equal value and importance as other forms of theatre.
  - Youth theatre has the power to influence, inform, challenge and change theatre practice.
  - Youth theatre has the right to the same resources as other forms of theatre.
  - Youth theatre has the right to work with high quality artists and theatre practitioners.
  - Youth theatre is at its best when it provides opportunities for young people to take risks in safe contexts.
  - Youth theatre is vital to the personal, social, political, aesthetic and educational development of young people. The theatre art is a universal expression of human kind and helps young people to find their place and voice in society.
  - Youth theatre practitioners have the right to high quality professional development.
  - Youth theatre recognises young people as artists in their own right.
  - Youth theatre should access a diverse range of cultures, genres, art forms and approaches.
  - Youth theatre should reflect and represent the diversity of all young people taking part."

the company has commissioned thirty new musicals, had a residency at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival for 17 years, producing over fifty productions in the process, created pieces for the BBC and Granada Television, has an annual residency at Sadler's Wells, has toured outside the UK, and has had runs both in the West End and on Broadway (Jeremy James Taylor, n.d.)<sup>226</sup>. Over the years the NYMT has benefited from financial support from private sponsors, including Andrew Lloyd Webber, as well as receiving grants from the Department for Education. The company has continued to benefit from support from high profile patrons including Jude Law and Tom Chambers, and boasts impressive alumni. It is telling that a large number of the creative team for *Matilda* cut their teeth at the NYMT.

Youth Music Theatre (YMT) (an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and sponsored primarily by the NASUWT (NASUWT, 2011: 10)) was founded in 2004 as an offshoot of the NYMT when it looked like it was going to fall into administration due to a withdrawal of funding from major sponsors. YMT works with new writers to mount productions at regional theatres during their summer holiday projects<sup>227</sup>. By 2014 the YMT had trained over 6,000 young people and had “devised and commissioned over 100 pieces of new music theatre, with more than 50 world premieres performed at top theatre venues across the UK” (YMT, n.d.)<sup>228</sup>. The quality of the company's output has led to their being the “first arts organisation to be awarded the Department for Education's Learning Outside the Classroom kite mark” (YMT, n.d.). What sets the YMT apart from the NYMT is the company's commitment to new writing and to giving opportunities to young writers, creatives, musicians and technicians, as well as to performers.

The National Youth Theatre (NYT) also produces musical theatre work, although not exclusively. The company lays claim to the title of the first youth theatre in the world (NYT, n.d.a) and began in 1956 with a production of Shakespeare's *Henry V* directed by Michael Croft with a cast made up of pupils from Alleynes School in Dulwich. In recent years the company has introduced a programme which bridges the gap between their youth theatre projects and full-time training. The NYT's 'Playing Up' course enables young performers to train with leading practitioners from (high profile) companies over

<sup>226</sup>The achievements of the company have been recognised at the highest level and in 2010 Jeremy James Taylor was awarded an OBE in recognition of services to Young People and Musical Theatre, and in 2011 the company received an invitation from “Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh to perform for a reception at Buckingham Palace celebrating Young People in the Performing Arts” (NYMT, n.d.a). (This echoes the invitation from her namesake to the boy players to perform at the palace.)

<sup>227</sup>*Loserville*, written by James Bourne and Elliot Davis, subsequently transferred to the West End (and was nominated for Olivier, Whatsonstage and BroadwayWorld UK awards), allowing a host of young people to say they created roles in the original production.

<sup>228</sup>YMT have also established a connection with Trinity College London so that participants of their summer school projects are awarded a certificate in Musical Theatre in Production at Grade 8 Level.

the course of a year. It is a vocational, rigorous, and demanding course for participants and it is free to students. It thus provides a route into theatre for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Hescott, 2011). The NYT has also launched a repertory company which “offers free, practical, industry-based training in drama and performance over nine months to 15 talented NYT members” (NYT, n.d.b)<sup>229</sup> culminating in three months of performing in the West End. All participants of the 2014 scheme secured agency representation and are working professionally, and both programmes are now being viewed as an alternative to drama school training, by applicants and by employers (Hescott, 2011).

Youth theatre companies have been established across the world, and in 1982 “the first European Children’s Theatre Encounter was held in Belgium with 120 children aged 11-16, and in 1987 200 young people aged 16-25 from 19 European countries attended the first European Youth Theatre Encounter in Stratford-upon-Avon” (Continuum, 2006: 856)<sup>230</sup>.

Youth theatre companies acted as training grounds for many professional performers, and the growth of the youth theatre sector in the 1980s and 1990s led to the development of a large number of small semi-professional performance companies created by former members of youth theatre groups. The Arts Council’s Theatre 1986 Enquiry Report, ‘Theatre is for All’, recognised the significant impact of youth theatre on the overall development of theatre in general, classifying youth theatre as part of ‘The Wider Theatre of Tomorrow’. However despite the success of the youth theatre movement, to date no national programme of coordinated government support/funding has been established.

### 2.7.5 Creative

Not all children’s theatre is designed to be educational, and the past 50 years has seen a growth in professional theatre designed specifically for young audiences.

<sup>229</sup>It is worth noting that in order to become a member of the National Youth Theatre, applicants must attend a two-week training masterclass. Some masterclasses are free and others incur a charge, but fundraising information packs are sent out as standard in order to help students to finance their places. Membership of the NYT allows members to audition for the two full-time training programmes as well as the numerous full scale shows mounted each year in professional theatres.

<sup>230</sup>These events have subsequently been hosted by a number of European countries. In addition, there are many other festivals of theatre for and by young people and children including: UK: Imagine Festival which attracts 120 delegates from across the world (<http://www.imagine.org.uk>); The Spark Children’s Arts Festival ([www.sparkfestival.co.uk](http://www.sparkfestival.co.uk)); Take Off Festival ([www.takeofffestival.org.uk](http://www.takeofffestival.org.uk)); Big Imaginations Festival ([www.bigimagination.co.uk/festival/](http://www.bigimagination.co.uk/festival/)); Holland: Tweetakt Festival (<http://www.tweetakt.net>); USA: World Festival of Children’s Theatre ([www.worldfestivalofchildrenstheatre.com](http://www.worldfestivalofchildrenstheatre.com)), and Serbia: International Festival of Children’s Theatre ([www.lutfestsubotica.net/](http://www.lutfestsubotica.net/)).

In America “the social upheaval of the 1960s affected children’s theatre . . . and challenged the dominance of the ‘well-made’ adaptations and fairy-tale plays. The success of the Paper Bag Players, a company founded in 1958, introduced a new and imaginative format that was imitated by a number of groups within the next few years” (Wilmeth and Miller, 1996: 150). The Paper Bag Players had succeeded in breaking the mould of the traditional structure for children’s theatre which had been formalised by practitioners like Charlotte Chorpenning. Other companies continued to push the boundaries by doing away with productions based on familiar stories. During this period a number of seminal companies were established: the Children’s Theatre Company of Minneapolis (mid–1960s)<sup>231</sup> which offered a wide variety of productions for all ages; the Seattle Children’s Theatre (1975) which commissioned, produced and published new plays, and the Metro Theatre Company (1973) in St. Louis which created original work (Wilmeth and Miller, 1996: 151). Key writers for children’s theatre included Laurie Brooks, Suzan L. Zeder, and Aurand Harris.

Aurand Harris wrote a large number of children’s plays which have become well-known across the world. He was the first person to direct a piece of theatre for children in China and is the only person to twice receive the Charlotte B. Chorpenning Playwright Award which “honors a nationally known writer of outstanding plays for children”. To date he is the “most produced children’s playwright in the USA” (McCaslin, 1984). Perhaps one of the reasons for his success was that his plays did not talk down to the audience, and instead sought to make them think about the content and draw some conclusions.

Suzan Zeder is an award winning playwright responsible for a large body of work which was written for child audiences. Zeder’s plays have been performed across the world and have been translated into a number of different language. Her success has been attributed to her approach to writing for children and the way she incorporates into the storylines issues faced by children and young people<sup>232</sup>.

In America financial support for children’s theatre became available in the 1960s through targeted programmes including the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities (Gordon, 2007: 14).

In England the children’s theatre companies established in the years following the Second World War continued to flourish, and gradually more were created. Ted Hughes, Adrian Mitchell, Peter Terson and Joan Aiken wrote successful plays for children. But the work

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<sup>231</sup>The company also offered classes and operated as a fully accredited school of the arts (Wilmeth and Miller, 1996: 152). “Their production of the musical *A Year with Frog and Toad* (2003) moved to Broadway and the company won the regional Tony Award, the first children’s company so honored”.

<sup>232</sup>Zeder said that she endeavoured to use her stories to help children to make sense of these issues (Klein, 1997).

was still being produced by dedicated pioneers. There was no real pattern or integrated policy (Wood and Grant, 1997: 10).

During this period funding provision for children's theatre was erratic as government departments could not agree over who should be responsible for the sector<sup>233</sup>. Those working in children's theatre felt that the lack of government support both in terms of funding provision, but also in the absence of a coordinated national strategy, hindered the development of the sector. Caryl Jenner, said " 'It makes me blind with rage when I think that Yugoslavia has 123 state-subsidised children's theatres, the Soviet Union 300'. America had even more. The Ministry of Education favoured local education authority support for children's theatre companies, rather than seeing it as a national strategic goal" (Bennett, 2005: 77).

In 1965 Arts Council funding became available for children's work for the first time (Wood and Grant, 1997: 9) which aided the development of many companies and allowed children's theatre to grow as a genre in its own right<sup>234</sup>.

As the sector grew, so did the interest of professional playwrights and other practitioners who turned their attention to theatre for young people. However despite these developments during the 1990s there were "few theatre buildings exclusively for children. And it [was] hard to persuade the managements of 'adult' theatres to make productions for children an integral part of their programming" (Wood and Grant, 1997: 9).

2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Youth (ASSITEJ) which was established by a group of professional practitioners and has grown to include over 80 nations in Europe, the middle East, the Far East, and North and South America (ASSITEJ, n.d.). Most of the major associations of theatre for children and youth are branches of the ASSITEJ, including the Theatre for Young Audiences association in the UK.

The Children's Theatre Foundation of America (CTFA) was founded in 1958 to "advance the artistic and professional interests of theatre for children and youth, and theatre education for the young. The Foundation pursues its goals by funding proposals of artists, scholars, and special projects of national import to the field" (CTFA, n.d.). The

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<sup>233</sup>In 1961 the Arts Council claimed that adult theatre was their remit, [and that] theatre for children should be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (Bennett, 2005: 77).

<sup>234</sup>"Polka Theatre, founded by Richard Gill, is a unique purpose-built children's theatre in Wimbledon. The Young Vic has presented several splendid productions for children. The National Theatre has occasionally included a children's play in its programme. Guy Holland's Quicksilver Theatre Company has toured successfully and David Holman's splendid plays have been presented both in schools and theatres. Some regional theatres regularly present children's plays, including the Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, Contact Theatre in Manchester, and the Birmingham Stage Company" (Wood and Grant, 1997: 9). David Wood formed the Whirlygig Theatre in the 1970s to "mount major tours in large touring theatres which would preserve the high standard of production values that increased subsidy had brought to the reps and the specialist children's theatre companies" (Continuum, 2006: 855-856).



CFTA has funded research programmes and other activities undertaken by the ASSITEJ. There are UK foundations which offer financial support to children's theatre<sup>235</sup>, but they are wider bodies supporting the arts in general. There is no UK equivalent to the CFTA.

### 2.7.5.1 Technological

Technological advancement had a significant impact on musical theatre during the latter half of the 20th century.

Once a big selling point in theatre, one might expect theatre now to be outdone by film when it comes to gadgetry and special effects. Musical theatre is after all a 'live' medium; there is no CGI, no 'green screen'. Spectacle remains important nonetheless, whether this is delivered through effects (exemplified by the plummeting chandelier in *Phantom of the Opera* (ZFX, n.d.) and the stage illusions of Paul Kieve in *Ghost* (Kieve, n.d.), (Liversedge, 2013)); lavish staging (the production costs for *Lord of the Rings* when it opened in Toronto in 2006 was reported to be around \$27m (Burkeman, 2006)<sup>236</sup>, *Spider-Man*<sup>237</sup> went one better coming in at \$75m (BBC News, 2012b)<sup>238</sup>); or 'people effects' achieved by using a large cast. Musical theatre seems to do best when it resists the temptation to ape the world of cinema, and sticks to its core values – *The Lion King*, *War Horse* and *Matilda* are all examples of musicals that have managed to secure both critical acclaim and commercial success with smaller budgets<sup>239</sup>. This is perhaps because theatre audiences buy into metaphor more readily than cinema goers, and perhaps because it is 'live'<sup>240</sup>. This allows directors to get their message across with much simpler staging; in the staging of *the Mennymys*, director, Joey Summers, employed a vertical bed to give the audience a view of 'grandpa Mennym', allowing the actor to sing properly, and obviate the need for scaffolding (Waugh and Barnbrook, 2007). Theatre historian Sarah Woodcock has noticed that today's musical theatre audiences tend to cheer most for the dancing. She believes this is because it has to be real. Dance is one of the few things left on the stage which is not enhanced by technology (Belter, 2008).

<sup>235</sup>For example: The Esme Fairbairn Foundation; The Jerwood Foundation, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and the BBC Performing Arts Fund.

<sup>236</sup>The 'cut down' version staged in the West End cost £12.5 million.

<sup>237</sup>One might imagine that the imposition of health & safety regulations would eliminate the kind of accidents that were all too frequent on the Victorian stage, but accidents do still occur: reports suggest that the Spider-Man stage has been a particularly hazardous place (Stevens, 2013a) - though there is some comfort in the fact that accidents of this kind are nowadays reported, and not swept under the carpet as they once were.

<sup>238</sup>Interestingly, neither was a huge success critically or commercially.

<sup>239</sup>Although these are still large by the standards of plays that aren't musicals.

<sup>240</sup>The willingness of child audiences to accept theatre as if it were reality is amply demonstrated by the faces of French children at the point at which the dragon is slain in a puppet show - see Figure 2.20 on page 110 (Life, 1963).

Touring/TiE productions are of course further limited in terms of staging/effects – nonetheless they are still capable of generating an emotional response from the audience. For example in CPA's production of *Titanic* (Ahmet, 2012) when portraying conditions in the lifeboats, performers were illuminated only by torches; in their production of *Honk* (Stiles and Drewe, 1993), one little girl was reduced to tears, and was inconsolable.



FIGURE 2.20: 'The moment the dragon is slain' puppet show Paris 1963

With the advent of the digital age, the tentacles of technology are not restricted to creating stage effects<sup>241</sup>. *The Book of Mormon* hammered home the value of marketing to the theatre industry<sup>242</sup>; but even before that, producers were becoming more imaginative about marketing musicals, using 'electronic press kits', and trailers are distributed via e-shots, websites, social media and on TV and in the cinema (Smith, 2011*d*). Social media is now especially important in promoting/marketing smaller productions (Richardson,

<sup>241</sup>An unusual application of off-stage technology is in helping to 'pick winners' for the stage. IT systems have been developed whose designers claim can predict whether pop songs are likely to be 'hits' (see (Ni et al., 2011) and (Score a hit, n.d.)). It is not inconceivable that a similar system could be developed to help producers guide their investments, offering an answer to the age-old question 'what makes a musical successful'. Of course it is not impossible that the answer turns out to be 'Cameron Mackintosh'. Andrew Lloyd Webber and Cameron Mackintosh were 2nd and 3rd on the 2011 Sunday Times 'music rich list', so they are obviously doing something right. The risk then is that the use of such a system might make it even more difficult to get new material on to the stage, and further reduce the variety that is available. The predictions thus become a self-fulfilling prophecy, but this is an area that might benefit from further research, for the purposes of analysis, if not prediction.

<sup>242</sup>This prompts a question about how much (commercial success) is determined by writers, creatives and performers, and how much by marketeers, as some might argue has often been the case for cinema and the pop music industry.



2011); the marketing for *Betwixt!* (Mcfarlane, 2008) relied exclusively on social media advertising.

There has been a growth in broadcasts of live theatre. The 25th anniversary production of *Phantom of the Opera* performed at the Royal Albert Hall on 2nd October 2011 and broadcast to 250 cinemas in the UK and 500 in the USA is an example of musical theatre extending its reach geographically and socially (The Stage, 2011b). However broadcasts are not just to cinemas (Merrifield, 2013d); in 2012 the RSC broadcast live to schools where performances were followed by Q&A sessions with the production team (Smith, 2012).

Daniel Mullensiefen (Goldsmiths College) designed an experiment to assess people's musicality, and concluded that many misjudge their own musical ability (BBC news, 2012a)<sup>243</sup>, and there is software on the market which claims to improve this. However my own experience of working in a number of performing arts institutions<sup>244</sup> is that most performers benefit a lot more from face-to-face tuition than they do learning from books or computer screens<sup>245</sup>.

### 2.7.6 Reflections on the age of the iconoclasts

During this period there were a number of key developments in theatre for and by children. Theatre for Young Audiences was recognised as a successful genre in its own right, with its own professional organisation, festivals, journal, and specialised degree programmes in theatre for young people at universities and conservatoires. It was the first time professional companies performed works intended exclusively for young people (Fisher, 2011: 151), and Arts Council funding, albeit limited, became available for children's theatre.

The period saw the TiE sector flourish and decay due to the fluctuations in local authority and state funding. The demise of a solid TiE genre coincided with an overall reduction in arts provision in schools: "the arts in schools, which had been gaining momentum since the 1960s, were set back as successive governments established a national curriculum based on traditional core subjects and values" (Continuum, 2006: 856).

<sup>243</sup>A number of tests have been devised over the years to test musical ability, see for example (O'Connell, 1974).

<sup>244</sup>This is true of all the age groups I have worked with from pre-school to postgraduate.

<sup>245</sup>Recently FE colleges are being asked to convert 25% of their course into an online offering. The recommendation for performing arts is to record melody and harmony lines and upload them to a website so that students can learn them at home rather than at college [Source: Nicola Brown, Course Leader New College, Swindon].

## 2.8 Into the new millennium: A seventh age?

The beginning of a new millennium seems an appropriate juncture to reflect on how children's musical theatre has evolved over time<sup>246</sup>, and what the future might hold. Figure 2.21 on page 113, attempts to pick out the key milestones to provide an overview of some of the most influential events.

There was a surge in musicals in which children played important roles in the years on either side of the start of the new millennium<sup>247</sup>; a number of these were based on children's books<sup>248</sup>, or based on themes important to young people<sup>249</sup>. At first sight, this<sup>250</sup> might suggest a new direction (and increased momentum) for children's musical theatre, although it is perhaps too early to tell whether this heralds a new seventh age.

A number of themes emerge from the historical analysis in this chapter. Young people feature strongly in musical theatre, both as consumers and suppliers, with the balance between the two changing over time. Expectations of children performing alongside adults goes back centuries, and 'impressment' was not uncommon<sup>251</sup>. It is interesting that even before there was a sense of professional theatre, children were employed as performers. However the idea of children doing for fun what adults get paid for is a recent phenomenon (post-Second World War) and is a practice that is now being called into question by funding bodies. Indeed exploitation of child performers has been the subject of on-going debate<sup>252</sup>, in terms of financial exploitation (low levels of remuneration, and indirect subsidy from parents), child welfare, and political exploitation<sup>253</sup> to convey difficult messages.

There have also been recurring themes in terms of content and subject matter; comedy has always played a large part in theatre for children and in musical theatre more generally, and sentimentality is a theme that has been evident in children's theatre since Victorian times, and probably before that.

<sup>246</sup>Both in terms of influential events, and patterns emerging from the historical analysis.

<sup>247</sup>See Table 2.1 on page 91.

<sup>248</sup>For example *Matilda* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

<sup>249</sup>For example *Billy Elliot*.

<sup>250</sup>And the rapid growth in part-time theatre schools.

<sup>251</sup>'Impressment' in its various guises was not unique to England. In the 18th century, the theatre at Kuskovo featured the children of serfs (Smith, 2008: 138-140); singing castrati can be traced back to the Middle Ages, coming to the fore in Italy in the 16th century (Barbier, 1998).

<sup>252</sup>Since the social reforms of the 19th century (and indeed before) arguments have raged over the use of children in professional theatre.

<sup>253</sup>Child performers have been used to deliver difficult political messages (such as in Renaissance theatre), and more generally to allow producers to present material that might otherwise be deemed unacceptable. In the musical *Gypsy* a theatre manager welcomes the child performers to the Burlesque House because they will 'keep the cops out'.

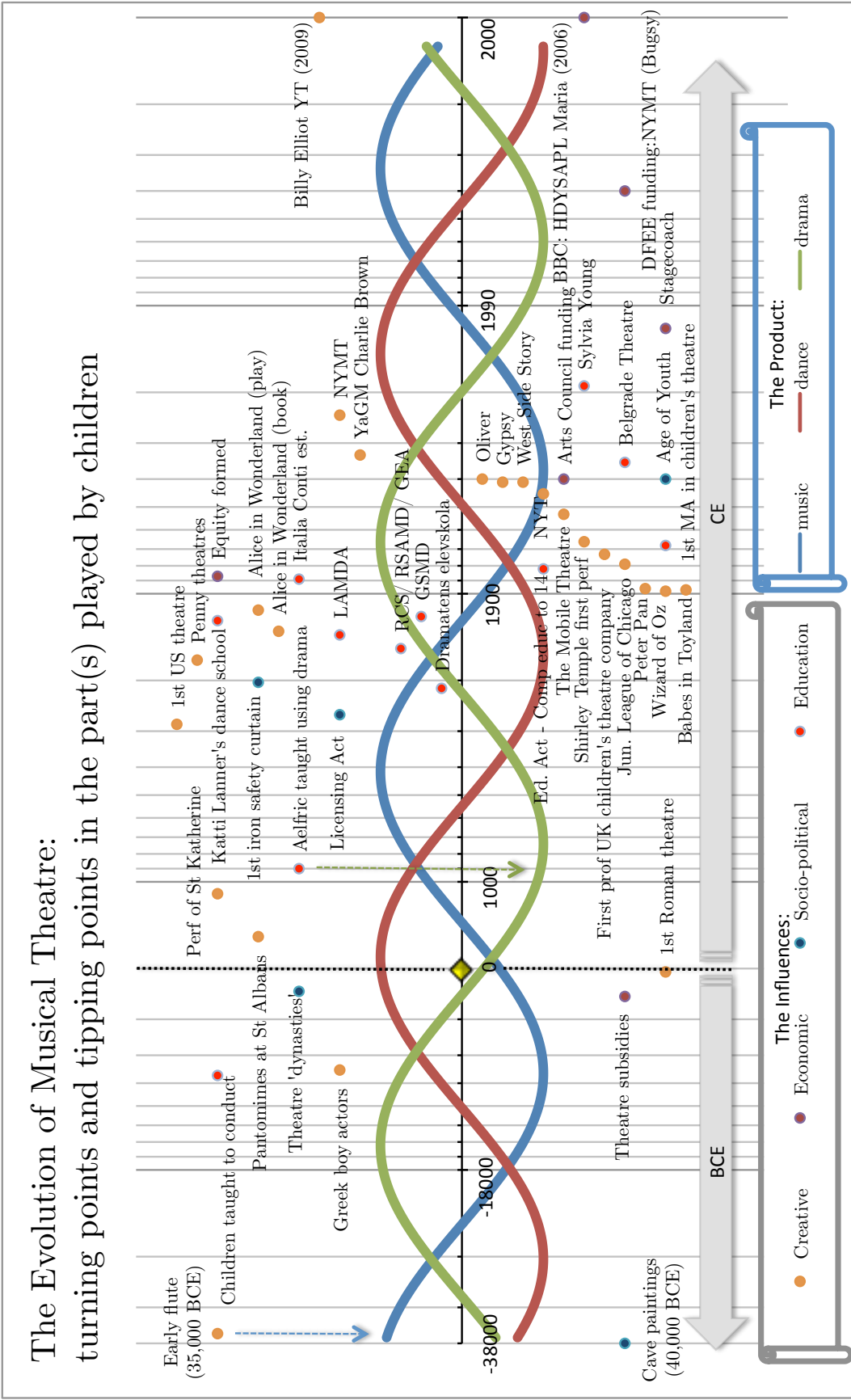


FIGURE 2.21: The part played by children in the evolution of musical theatre

Every era has produced child prodigies who have drawn audiences to the theatre, but more recently the polarisation in terms and conditions between the ‘stars’ and the rest has increased the gap between the highest paid adults and young performers<sup>254</sup>.

There is a view that ‘theatre is for posh kids’<sup>255</sup>, although the evidence for this is perhaps stronger in the worlds of (non-musical) drama, classical music and ballet.

Musical theatre is often characterised by the undeniable tension between art and box office, but for children’s musical theatre at least, the reality is more complex<sup>256</sup>; and contrary to popular opinion, psychological factors such as the yearn for stardom and the post-performance endorphin rush are not exclusively modern phenomena.

Throughout history, theatrical ‘dynasties’ have played an important role in training child performers, although more recently education (with contributions from both the formal and informal sectors) and the readily available access provided by agents, have tended to level the playing field. In fact, educators (and entrepreneurs) have played a pivotal role in the development of musical theatre as a whole, and this will be explored in more detail in the chapters that follow.

What is most clear from this analysis is that much of musical theatre history involves children in one way or another, and arguably could not have happened without them.

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<sup>254</sup>It is worth noting that while child ‘stars’ were often well paid in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, today’s performers in leading roles including *Billy Elliot* and *Matilda* are paid relatively little, even though the shows could not run without them. This is very different to the television and film industry where child performers are generously paid.

<sup>255</sup>This was also the case for the ancient Greeks.

<sup>256</sup>Political intervention extends beyond direct subsidy of theatre productions. The politics of the day govern the extent of state intervention in musical theatre, whether through regulation, subsidy or ‘information campaigns’. (These are usually thought of in terms of media campaigns on health, road safety etc., but with the emergence of ‘behavioural economics’ in recent years (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009), the options available for ‘information-giving’ have been more subtle in form and in content. This is welcomed by those who prefer guidance to regulation, while critics have branded it as manipulative ‘social engineering’). Thus the impact that a particular government has on the industry can be gauged by examining the level of subsidy it provides, the regulation imposed, and its attempts to effect change through advice and guidance.

## Chapter 3

# The education system

The historical analysis in the previous chapter showed that children's theatre has always been closely linked with education, and it is a relationship that has been of mutual benefit; theatre has been used to educate, and education has stimulated and sustained theatre. In the last 50 years especially, the UK education system, and drama schools in particular, have been crucially important in enabling the industry to prosper even through a difficult economic period. It seems unlikely that, without it, the West End would exist in the form and at the standard that we observe today. In this chapter I examine how well young people and the musical theatre industry are served by the education system as a whole.

The education system underpinning musical theatre can be divided into seven parts, which broadly align with age groups<sup>1</sup>:

- Pre-school
- Primary
- Secondary
- Further Education
- Foundation
- Degree
- Postgraduate

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<sup>1</sup>Some institutions, such as specialist schools, straddle the age groups.

### 3.1 Pre-school

Music and movement permeate a child's early experiences<sup>2</sup>. Most toys for babies and toddlers involve a musical element, and many children will attempt to sing along with the melody before they can communicate verbally. Almost all television programmes aimed at very young children will incorporate music and singing, encouraging the children to participate<sup>3</sup>. Historically, many traditional children's games<sup>4</sup> involved singing and rehearsed movement akin to dance (Opie and Opie, 1985). In short, music and movement are both innate and socially important.

Many parents choose to send their children to performing arts classes from an early age<sup>5</sup>. The average age of children attending these classes has been falling; in part this may be due to successful marketing. On the other hand, lowering the starting age goes hand in hand with the ethos behind government thinking, with the Children's Centre Sure Start encouraging some form of learning activity in children from birth onwards (HoC: Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2009 - 2010).

In some cases performing arts classes cater for children as young as six months and are often marketed as an opportunity for parents to develop communication with their child<sup>6</sup>. In addition to running their own classes, some of these companies are bought in by nurseries<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup>Some believe that playing music to a child in the womb can affect its disposition claiming that playing Mozart will increase the child's level of intelligence (known as The 'Mozart Effect') (Sweeney, 2013). All carers know instinctively that singing and movement have a soothing effect on a baby, and are effective in sending it to sleep; music and movement thus become an important part of the parents' communication with the child.

<sup>3</sup>Unsurprisingly many advertisements for children's TV presenters encourage applications from musical theatre performers.

<sup>4</sup>Mellers defines drama as "an imitation of human action" (Mellers, 1965: 132) and it has much in common with play.

<sup>5</sup>The motivations for this are many and varied: some parents see the dance aspect as an opportunity for weekly exercise; some like the opportunities for creativity afforded by these classes; some see them as confidence builders and a way to make friends (both for the children and the parents); and others simply see the classes as better value than other forms of childcare.

<sup>6</sup>Companies offer sessions such as Baby Ballet, Gymboree, Sing and Sign, Baby O Opera, Theatrebogs and Caboodle Creative and Performing Arts. Jigsaw Performing Arts offers classes to young children. The classes are delivered by one teacher and are 1.5 hours long, comprising 30 minutes of dance, 30 minutes of drama, and 30 minutes of singing in preparation for shows and class work sharing. Most of these companies hope that children will continue on to the main school; in some cases children attend from three to eighteen years. (Further details are given in chapter 4.)

<sup>7</sup>Theatrebogs are used by large nursery chains as well as independent nursery schools, and can be booked for home visits for individual children. Greenway Kindergarten in Woodford (for children aged 2-5) employs a ballet teacher and a live pianist several times a week (a luxury many full-time drama schools cannot afford – 'drama school' is a generic term used to refer to full-time performing arts vocational training at FE/HE specialist institutions), and the children put on regular shows for the parents which involve music, singing and dance. With more and more focus on the quality of care and the opportunities provided by nursery schools (both by government bodies and by parents who pay not insignificant sums to send their children to day care), nurseries are forced to compete. Many performing arts companies (for example (Caboodle Arts Company, 2013)) claim that their schools help to develop language and

Musical theatre in one form or another thus plays a part in the early experiences of many children; and nurseries, classes, and clubs seek to integrate music, dance, and drama in their activities. The National Strategies compiled by the Department for Education and Skills in 2006 aimed to provide “practical materials designed to help teachers and schools focus on the core business of improving teaching and learning” and its guidance on the performing arts for children under five is summarised in Figure 3.1 on page 118<sup>8</sup>. However whilst music, dance, and drama feature in the national curriculum for Early Years<sup>9</sup>, they are, at best, taught as separate subjects, failing to exploit the synergies.

There are examples of the performing arts industry working with schools to introduce pre-school children to the arts in a form that many might have dismissed as beyond the reach of young children<sup>10</sup>. Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre is running a drama project for children as young as three, working with local Southwark schools (Coughlan, 2012). The touring production of ‘My First Cinderella’ by the English National Ballet School (sponsored by the Leverhulme Trust) was aimed at children from the age of three, and provided a valuable opportunity for 3rd year musical theatre students to perform (Elkin, 2013a).

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communication skills, observation skills, problem solving and decision making skills, team work and thought sharing, social skills, and confidence building.

<sup>8</sup>(DfEE, 2011).

<sup>9</sup>And also Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

<sup>10</sup>Helen Lever, a deputy head at a small rural one-form entry primary school in Yorkshire, decided in 2006 to introduce the children to Gilbert and Sullivan, for which she has a real passion. It has now become a staple part of the year. “One afternoon a week, both the Year 5 and Year 6 teachers were released on PPA time and a G&S conductor and pianist were brought in.” The school performed at the Gilbert and Sullivan youth festival. Although Gilbert and Sullivan remains the principal inspiration, they are broadening their offering to include more modern musicals too (Davis, 2009).

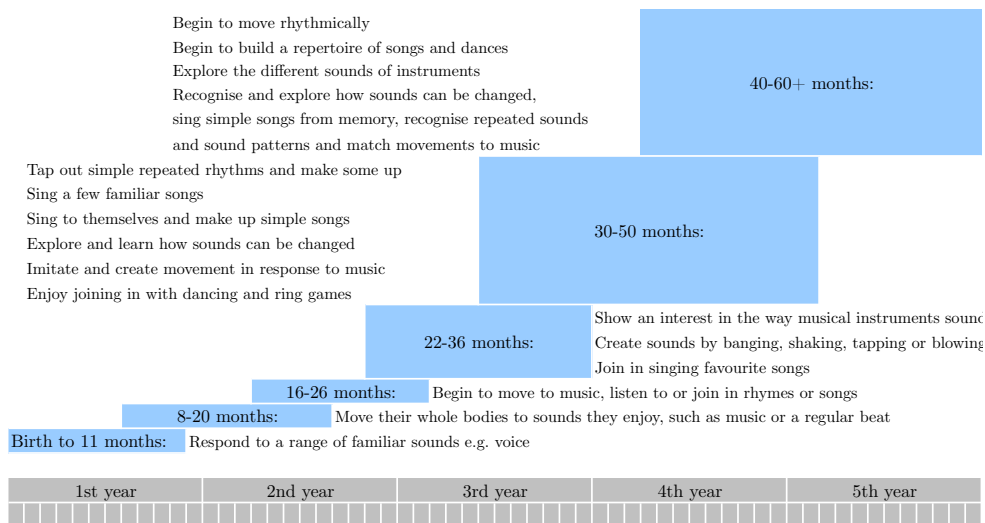
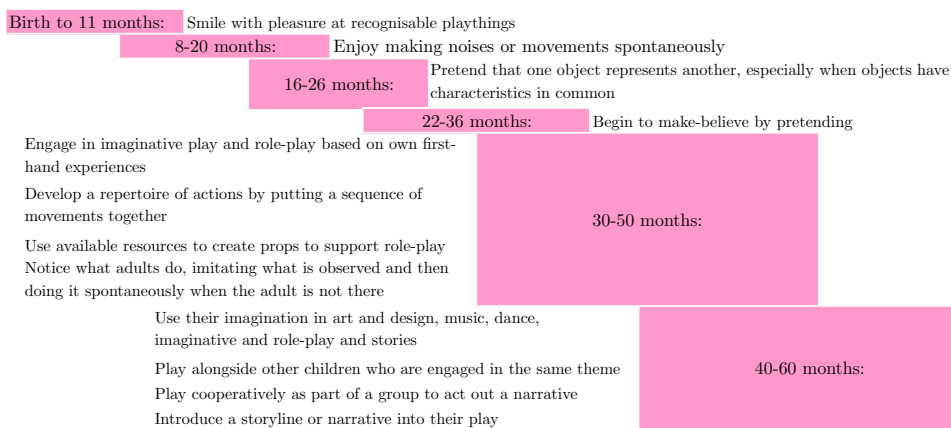
**EARLY YEARS MUSIC, DANCE AND DRAMA****Being Creative - Responding to Experiences, Expressing and Communicating Ideas**Creating music and dance:Developing Imagination and Imaginative Play:

FIGURE 3.1: DfES National Strategies: Early Years for music, dance and drama (2006)



## 3.2 Primary school curriculum (Key Stage 1 and 2)

*“Primary teachers have two broad responsibilities in the arts. The first is to establish them, as soon as possible, as part of the daily habit of education ... Second, the teacher must promote increasing confidence and competence in these activities”*

(Robinson, 1985: 67).

The guidelines for Music, Dance and Drama are set out in the 1999 National Curriculum document (QCA, 1999) and the fundamental principles have persisted despite a number of subsequent revisions to the curriculum.

### 3.2.1 Music

The curriculum for music in Key Stage 1 states that pupils should be able to: listen and respond/recall; create and explore musical ideas and patterns; “use their voices expressively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes” (QCA, 1999: 124); perform with others, and evaluate their work. Pupils should be introduced to the musical elements of pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture and silence, and how these elements can be “organised and used expressively within simple structures” (QCA, 1999: 125). At Key Stage 1 it is recommended that music should be used in combination with other curriculum subjects and to improve key skills. For example, pupils should be given the opportunity to use ICT to capture, change and combine sounds and be exposed to a range of live and recorded music from different times and cultures.

During Key Stage 2 pupils continue to play tuned and untuned instruments and should be taught how to sing in unison and in two parts, with “clear diction, control of pitch, a sense of phrase and musical expression (QCA, 1999: 126). “Pupils will improvise, and develop their own musical compositions, in response to a variety of different stimuli with increasing personal involvement, independence and creativity” (QCA, 1999: 126). Pupils will investigate how music can be “... used to communicate different moods (QCA, 1999: 126), and will discover how music is produced in different ways and described through established and invented notations” (QCA, 1999: 126).

The recommendations contained in the national curriculum were underlined by a series of experiments conducted in 2003 by the Royal Conservatory of Music which revealed that learning an instrument raised a child’s IQ (Cowing, 2012: 4). As Dame Evelyn Glennie puts it, “Music is such a huge subject, there are so many avenues to it ... it’s about a form of expression. It’s about linking up with other subjects, it’s about the social aspect, it’s about so many things” (Glennie, 2012: 5).

In practice, despite the exhortations in the national curriculum, the reality fell short of the aspiration. Music is a specialist subject which can only be taught adequately by a teacher with sufficient music training and ability, and not all schools have one. In order to deliver music lessons, many schools employ peripatetic staff from external companies and/or Local Education Authority music services. Between 2007 and 2010 the government-backed ‘Sing Up’ campaign<sup>11</sup> was introduced in order to offer all children “at least one positive singing experience a week”. Local Music Services like the Redbridge Music Service, Southampton Music Service, and Hampshire Music Service, trained their bank of singing teachers to help to deliver this initiative. Unfortunately many schools had neither teachers of their own with the necessary expertise<sup>12</sup>, nor the financial resources to enable them to buy it in; furthermore buying in expertise may not be a practical proposition for schools in those boroughs where no music service exists.

The deficiencies in primary school music education led to marked (and avoidable) disparities in levels of musical ability amongst children entering the secondary school system. Many music specialists are concerned about the future of Music in the national curriculum. In 2011 Darren Henley was commissioned by the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport to conduct a review of music education. “His 36 recommendations include several pragmatic and cost-effective suggestions for making some music education available for every child” (Elkin, 2011e: 6). One of his recommendations included the development of a comprehensive national plan covering music education. Even though (the then) Education Secretary Michael Gove and Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey appeared to be championing the scheme, it was feared that progress would be challenged once the national curriculum came under its next review (Smith, 2011b: 4).

### 3.2.2 Dance (Physical Education)

In April 1992, Dance was made a statutory part of the Physical Education section of the national curriculum for Key Stage 1 and 2 (Harrison, 1993: 128). However relatively little of it was dance-specific. Instead its recommendations include: encouraging team and individual work; developing movement and coordination skills; exploring sequences,

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<sup>11</sup>The Sing Up research suggests that “being able to sing competently and confidently is likely to bring additional, wider benefits ... including benefits to their physical health (through improved cardiac and respiratory function, as well as boosts to the immune system)” (ABRSM, 2011: 11).

<sup>12</sup>There have been various initiatives to upskill teachers. For example, “the Royal Opera House hosts an annual ‘Write an Opera’ course at a stately home in Devon, showing school teachers how to help their students create an original work ... During the week the teachers devise and present their own opera from scratch as a way of learning how to run an opera project with children ... The whole point of Write an Opera is to get the children to take responsibility for every aspect of the work at all levels” Opera Education Manager Hannah Griffiths (Elkin, 2011f).

rules, and tactics; the value of observation and copying; and encouraging evaluation and critique (Harrison, 1993: 128).

By 1999 the general principles remained unchanged: during Key Stage 2 pupils should enjoy being active and using their creativity and imagination in physical activity. They should consolidate existing skills, develop more control, but also learn new skills, find out how to use them in different ways, and link them to make actions, phrases and sequences of movement<sup>13</sup>. Pupils should be taught to communicate, collaborate, and compete with each other. They should develop an understanding of how to succeed in different activities and learn how to evaluate and recognise their own success (QCA, 1999: 133).

### 3.2.3 Drama

“The most valuable asset a nation has is the creativity of its children” (Alan Plater quoted in (Arts Council England, 2003)).

The National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching (1998) is a non-statutory curriculum framework for reading and writing. Since its introduction “there have been a number of initiatives, each of which have increasingly recognised the value of drama within the primary school and add weight to it having a place of its own on the timetable” (DfES, 2003).

Teaching drama is a statutory requirement of the national curriculum for English as part of the ‘speaking and listening’ strand (QCA, 1999: 44). At Key Stage 1 Drama should “encourage pupils to use language and actions to explore and convey situations, characters and emotions” (QCA, 1999: 44). Pupils should be given the opportunity to present stories to their peers and be taught how to speak confidently and with a specific audience in mind. Pupils should learn how to incorporate a variety of drama techniques in order to engage an audience, and should be able to do so individually and as part of a group. Pupils should learn how to reflect on the process and be critical about their own performance, and the performance of others (QCA, 1999: 44). Downing observed that “theatre is taught less frequently in primary schools than music and the visual arts, and is the most neglected in Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development. Schools make more use of theatre companies than any other outside professional arts organisation” (Downing et al., 2003: 37–49).

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<sup>13</sup>Dance activities set out in the curriculum include the imaginative use of movement, responding to stimuli, and performing basic skills (for example, travelling, being still, making a shape, jumping, turning, and gesturing). Guidance on Dance lessons was that they should involve changes in the rhythm, speed, level and direction of movements; the creation of dances using simple movement patterns, including those from different times and cultures, and the expression and communication of ideas and feelings (QCA, 1999: 132).

The curriculum for Drama in Key Stage 2 is designed to build on the work done in Key Stage 1; pupils should be taught how to create, adapt and sustain different roles, individually and in groups, in devised pieces and in script work. More emphasis is given to language and text, and its context.

Integrating the performing arts into primary education has the advantage of ‘working with the grain’. As Peter Kennedy, drama specialist and teacher, says: “observing children playing without adult intervention reveals innate ‘drama’ skills such as the ability to create, adopt and sustain roles, to interact with others in an imagined setting and to communicate feelings and atmosphere. “Dramatic play and subsequently drama in itself are effective in early development, at a stage when simply sitting and reading appears abstract and often purposeless” ([The Stage, 2012b](#): 6). It is of course important not to overlook the part that the performing arts can play in winning and retaining children’s attention, “NFER<sup>14</sup> underplay the importance of pleasure, despite it appearing a close third (behind ‘creative and thinking skills’ and ‘communication and expressive skills’) rated by teachers amongst ‘purposes’ for teaching of the arts” ([Reason, 2010](#): 10).

“Many primary schools already include drama in their curriculum, without formally recognising that the activities the children are involved in are actually drama. The value of drama activities is that ...not only do they enhance structured learning, but also develop social and personal learning too” ([Arts on the Move, 2007b](#)). Yet regardless of whether drama teaching is formally recognised as such, there is concern about its quality. A convener for the ‘Shakespeare Day Campaign’ argues that it is important that the right sort of drama is being taught in schools, advocating the learning of Shakespeare as drama enough for the primary school curriculum. “Shakespeare provides young minds with the building blocks of the three Rs before they can grasp more complex notions” ([Hines, 2012](#): 8). She expresses her concern that young people’s experience of drama is that it is a “stairway to fame and fortune” ([Hines, 2012](#): 8).

Despite a raft of revisions and additions, the overall aims set out in the original strategy have survived intact. However in 2012 the draft of the latest version of the National Curriculum suggested a removal of the Speaking and Listening Strand altogether, something that was not universally welcomed. Patrice Baldwin, chair of National Drama, said: “this new English programme of study is heftily, ridiculously narrow. It has knocked out drama completely. The position we are in now is where we were 30 years ago. Drama had started to flourish [in schools] and yet all that development has been ignored. The draft curriculum does include information on how drama can benefit young learners but the problem lies in the fact it is no longer listed as a requirement. Lizzie Crump, joint manager of the Cultural Learning Alliance, argues that ‘the lack of drama

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<sup>14</sup>National Foundation For Educational Research.

in the draft curriculum would lead to a disparity in teaching’ ” (Merrifield, 2012a: 2) because only those teachers with experience and an interest in drama would include it in their teaching.

### 3.2.4 Creative Curriculum

An increasing emphasis on creativity in the classroom is not a new idea. In ‘The Republic’ (Plato, 380 BCE) Plato argued that “enforced exercise may benefit the body but enforced learning will not stay in the mind. Therefore avoid compulsion and let your children’s lessons take the form of play” (Arts on the Move, 2007a).

The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education’s report entitled ‘All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education Stage’ (NACCC, 1999: 90) set out guidelines on creativity in the national curriculum and highlighted opportunities for cross-curricular activities<sup>15</sup>: “there are schools and teachers who have used the literacy hour as a starting point for a wide range of creative activities in reading, writing, drama and in the other arts. We see great value in integrating the objectives of high standards of literacy with those of high standards of creative achievement and cultural experience. To ensure this, it would be of great value to many schools to have access to materials, ideas and strategies in the imaginative implementation of these strategies” (NACCC, 1999).

In May 2003, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills launched ‘Excellence and Enjoyment - A Strategy for Primary Schools’ (DfES, 2003). The strategy was a vision for the sector where “high standards are obtained through a rich, varied and exciting curriculum which develops children in a range of ways” (Arts on the Move, 2007b).

Schools were attracted by the idea of tying together subjects rather than imposing artificial divisions, and music, dance and drama could play an important part in this. In 2008 the Government of the time promised five hours a week of high quality arts teaching (Dickson, 2008). However with the pressure of annual reviews, Ofsted inspections, and

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<sup>15</sup>Singing, for example, has been used for many years as a memory aid for things such as the alphabet, times tables, and foreign languages. Music can incorporate the use of Information and Communication Technology, ranging from the basic (recording a song or instrumental piece for appraisal by the children) to the complex (sequencing and programming music using composition software). In addition to this, the study of World Music can introduce children to other cultures and traditions. Music and Science can be taught in tandem; in the study of the way sound is created and investigating timbres and textures. Design and Technology can also be introduced, with the creation of home-made instruments. Drama can be tied in with English, History and Religious Studies, and integrated into Physical, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons, using role-play to tackle difficult issues. PSHE usually covers healthy eating and the importance of exercise, something which can be incorporated into Dance lessons. Learning about muscle groups in Science can be applied in Dance lessons while the children explore how their bodies can move. Class assemblies, key stage productions, and other performances very often take the form of musical theatre productions, and are valuable in building a sense of community within the school as well as for the skills acquired by the participants.

frequent testing of the children, teachers found it hard to fit this in to an already congested timetable<sup>16</sup>. The approach proposed in the Creative Curriculum guidance offered the opportunity to ‘square the circle’.

Theatre Journalist Lyn Gardner appealed for a bigger input from the industry and a more visible lead from headteachers, “the artistic directors of the major arts institutions must take an active lead in implementing education programmes and theatre for younger people” (Gardner, 2008). She reports her experience of a conference on working with young people through theatre, held by the John Lyons Charity<sup>17</sup>: “what was ... clear from the discussion is that the Primary Review and the government’s promise of 5 hours a week of high-quality arts experience for every child could offer significant opportunities for the sector (Dickson, 2008), and that in primary schools the single most important factor in whether a school really does engage in the arts is the attitude of the head teacher” (Gardner, 2008)<sup>18</sup>. Prominent pressure groups added their voice to the debate. In 2008 Action on Children’s Arts created the ‘Children’s Arts Manifesto’ which was presented at a conference at The Unicorn Theatre. The Manifesto makes reference to the place of the arts in education: “member governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity” (Action for Children’s Arts, 2012).

### 3.2.5 PPA

Since Autumn 2005, a workload agreement guaranteed teachers in ‘maintained schools’ in England and Wales 10% of their timetabled teaching to be set aside as Preparation, Planning and Assessment (PPA) time (BBC News, 2005). In practice this means that there is a minimum of a two and a half hour session each week where the classroom teacher is away from their class. This created the opportunity for specialist companies to supply teachers to cover PPA time. Companies such as Bigfoot Education, Artis Education, Xeno Performing Arts, and Mainstream Theatre Arts (and many more)

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<sup>16</sup>Informal discussions with primary school teachers suggest that the pressure on schools to produce strong SATs results and to prepare students for the 11+ and other secondary school examinations means that the arts tend to be sidelined during Key Stage 2.

<sup>17</sup>The John Lyon’s Charity is a foundation which is responsible for much of the educational work in London’s theatres and schools. “The charity gives small grants of under £2,000, but it also makes substantial contributions to schemes such as the National’s education programme, the Royal Court’s Young Writers programme and initiatives at the Unicorn, Tricycle, Lyric, Soho and the Globe. In 2007 it gave about £1.75 million to these organisations” (Gardner, 2008).

<sup>18</sup>A survey of the arts in primary schools in England was published by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 2003. The survey highlighted that during teacher training there was a clear lack of focus on teaching arts subjects and recommended that headteachers made it their priority to improve the situation by buying in teachers and training in music, dance, and drama (Downing et al., 2003).

were established to meet the demand. These companies offer tailor made performing arts classes (either in the separate subjects of Music, Dance or Drama, or as a combination of the three disciplines) to be delivered either alongside a school's own teaching or as a substitute for it. Many teachers do not feel sufficiently equipped to deliver those parts of the curriculum which cover music, dance, and drama, and so bringing in external companies to deliver these lessons can be helpful.

Hampshire Music Service and Southampton Music Service (and no doubt many other Music Services) run programmes where a teacher is brought into schools to lead singing and music sessions with groups of children of primary school age<sup>19</sup>.

Companies like Solo Teachers<sup>20</sup> who provide teachers to cover PPA time also offer an INSET day<sup>21</sup> service whereby their facilitators spend a day with teachers in mainstream schools to help them to weave performing arts into the core curriculum. This arrangement works well, in that resident teachers are able to develop their skills so they feel better equipped to teach arts subjects, without the school incurring ongoing additional costs.

### 3.3 Secondary school curriculum (Key Stage 3 and 4)

Speaking at the 'Worlds Together' conference on 8 September 2012 (Heath, 2014), Shirley Brice Heath (linguistic anthropologist at Stanford University and a cultural adviser) emphasised the importance of arts participation by teenagers in schools: "It is so important to keep the arts going – not to have arts stop with young children. Research across several disciplines shows that arts participation builds within adolescents a reservoir of strategies for managing anger, foreshadowing outcomes realistically and avoiding circumstances likely to bring trouble" (Merrifield, 2012b). Failure to provide opportunities for arts participation has long-term consequences, "arts education enfranchises students who would be otherwise debarred" (Asthana and Thorpe, 2007)<sup>22</sup>. Reason observed that young people who are denied early exposure to the arts can grow up feeling excluded; they felt "unwelcome, uncomfortable, out of place, un-entitled", and that "theatre is for snobs" (Reason, 2010: 25).

<sup>19</sup>I was employed by Southampton Council to work with a Catholic primary school, leading an Early Years and Key Stage 1 choir with all of the children in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes. I taught simple melodies in a call and response way, combining them with storytelling and actions. Initially the choir was created to learn and perform songs for Mass Services, but it developed into a weekly session for the children and covered a range of musical material with no specific performance outcome in view.

<sup>20</sup>I worked for Solo Teachers for a time.

<sup>21</sup>In-Service Training day introduced in 1988, sometimes referred to as a 'Baker day'.

<sup>22</sup>Further, Downing cites testimonies from headteachers who vouch for the fact that the arts improve motivation, behaviour, attendance and self-esteem, arguing also that the arts can prompt pupils to recognise aesthetic quality, and broaden their outlook, raising their expectations and increasing confidence (Downing et al., 2003: 15,19).



The increased emphasis on league tables means that, despite the widely accepted benefits of participation in the arts, the performing arts in particular are not always promoted and celebrated by schools in the same way as more ‘academic’ subjects. When they are, they are very often presented in a rather apologist fashion, in terms of the associated benefits rather than in their own right<sup>23</sup>.

Although musical theatre is not itself taught as a separate subject in secondary schools<sup>24</sup>, its component parts (music, dance, drama) are, albeit with varying levels of expertise and success. Moreover, even where they receive dedicated lessons in Music, Drama and Dance in secondary schools, the reality is that pupils might well be less exposed to lessons with performing arts content than they were at Key Stages 1 and 2, especially where primary schools have implemented the Creative Curriculum ([Creative Curriculum, 2014](#)).

Teaching the performing arts is made particularly challenging by the discontinuities between primary and secondary education, and the fact that there are substantial disparities in the experience and opportunities accumulated by children before they reach secondary school<sup>25</sup>.

Another major challenge for schools is the scarcity of specialist resources, and in particular teaching staff with the skills to teach Music, Dance and Drama to a high standard. The relaxation in the requirement for teachers to hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in 2012 has helped to address this ([Baldwin, 2012](#)). Specialists without QTS often bring with them experience of working in the performing arts industry as well as expertise and enthusiasm<sup>26</sup> and can be particularly adept at running workshops, even though they are not necessarily as effective as qualified teachers at classroom management and in devising and managing structured and coherent programmes of learning. The specifications at KS 1, 2 and 3 for performing arts subjects are expressed only in very broad terms<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>23</sup>Ken Robinson’s report ‘All Our Futures’ ([NACCC, 1999](#)) was critical of the rigid divisions between academic, vocational and practical learning, arguing that drama, dance and music should have the same status as other subjects in the curriculum: “everybody has immense creative capacities, but for the most part, education does not reveal them. Most of us only really succeed in life when we have recovered from our education” ([Smurthwaite, 2009](#)). The statistical correlation between arts engagement and academic attainment, particularly for children from a low socio-economic status background (([Reason, 2010](#): 8-9), ([Burton et al., 1999](#): 36), ([Catterall et al., 1999](#))) lends support to Robinson’s views.

<sup>24</sup>Although a GCSE in Performing Arts was introduced in 2009 ([WJEC, 2009](#)).

<sup>25</sup>Surveys in Scotland ([Scottish government, 2009](#)) have sought to explore early cultural exposure and the levels of encouragement children receive; the survey sponsored by the Scottish government revealed that almost half of children received no encouragement at all to sing/play instruments, and only 9% had been encouraged to participate in musical theatre.

<sup>26</sup>“Specialist teachers often have high levels of personal involvement, real passion and commitment to the art form – some of the qualities which were identified as being linked to effective practice in teaching in the important research study *Arts in education in secondary schools: effects and effectiveness* published by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 2000” ([Cogo-Fawcett, 2003](#): 46).

<sup>27</sup>Some might even say ‘woolly’ in the case of the Drama syllabus; contrasting the Edexcel Drama syllabus with its counterparts for other subjects, such as Science or History, shows that the former is vague by comparison.



Whilst this might appeal to some teachers, it is not as helpful to those with less experience/creativity, and carries the risk of discontinuities between stages. Where this is the case, it means students may be left poorly placed to take a GCSE in these subjects. More specific detailed guidance may well be helpful to inexperienced teachers to help them to ensure topics are covered at the appropriate time and in the most effective and engaging way.

Resources are available to teachers both in printed form<sup>28</sup> and online<sup>29</sup>. Initiatives like the QCA's Arts Alive and Creativity projects were designed to support teachers who lacked experience or confidence, and those who were just interested in new ideas. A website was created in 2003 to allow teachers to share good practice, and to "identify ways in which the contribution of the arts to pupils' education can be maximised" (TES, 2003). Alas a failure to maintain momentum meant that this initiative, and others like it, petered out. It is of course important that web resources are properly structured, maintained, and moderated to maximise their utility and to ensure that they remain engaging to busy teachers.

### 3.3.1 Music

The benefits of a musical education are widely recognised<sup>30</sup>, not least by universities and medical schools who are reputed to take participation in choirs, bands, orchestras etc., as evidence of good social skills and therefore take this into account in the selection process (UCAS, n.d.b)<sup>31</sup>. Since 2012 Grade 5/8 music certificates have been counted as the equivalent of GCSE and A-Level respectively (UCAS, 2014b).

The disparities in musical competence when pupils enter secondary education are greater than in most other subjects. Moreover these disparities are the result of variation in opportunity rather more than differences in innate ability. Pupils who have been able to participate in instrumental and/or singing lessons, at school or through private tuition, begin their secondary education with an understanding of musical notation; those who have not had this musical foundation have a lot of ground to make up, and this has been a source of concern for Ofsted, "all children have a right to group music tuition but all

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<sup>28</sup>(Smith and Williams, 2002).

<sup>29</sup>The West Sussex Council website includes resources which could be used by secondary music teachers (West Sussex Music, n.d.).

<sup>30</sup>Careers open to musicians are not of course restricted to performance. Music offers opportunity for further study and careers in music history; reviewing; managing; the music copyright and performance rights industry; composition; orchestration and arranging; sound engineering; instrument design and technician work, to name but a few.

<sup>31</sup>The corollary to this is that a government that is genuinely interested in equality of opportunity must also be interested in ensuring that music education is inclusive and that opportunities are available to all, and not limited to those with access to private tuition.

too often they miss out ... A quality music education only reaches a minority of pupils in England's schools" (Richardson, 2013).

Concerned about the wider ramifications of the disenfranchisement of young people in disadvantaged areas, Andrew Lloyd Webber backed a campaign in 2013 for compulsory instrument lessons for school pupils<sup>32</sup>. Another partnership consisting of Musical Futures and NUMU sought young musicians to champion music-making in schools (Elkin, 2010a).

The Music syllabus for 11–14 year olds is very broadly expressed, and leaves much open to the interpretation of individual teachers. At one end of the spectrum are imaginative interpretations that fulfil the curriculum for Year 7 students through the study of Medieval music<sup>33</sup> and plainchant (exploiting its simple structures and rhythms)<sup>34</sup>. At the other end of the spectrum, teachers struggle to teach the blues scale to Year 8/9 students who do not have a firm understanding of tonality. I have worked in schools<sup>35</sup> where an entire year is devoted to exploring the keyboard using the twelve bar blues structure, which is far from ideal. Ofsted observed (Richardson, 2013) that “despite a shake-up of music services supporting schools<sup>36</sup>, there is a lack of rigour and depth to school music in England ... Musical notation and classical music for example were seen as too difficult by most schools”. Schools told inspectors they did not know how to develop group singing or how to seek expert help. Too often schools expected very little of pupils, “they failed to ensure that all pupils understood, and could use practically, common musical features such as notation, time signatures, scales, chords and key signatures ... Many primary schools considered, without good reason, that pupils were not ready for such learning involving musical theory, and believed they would not enjoy it” (Richardson, 2013).

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<sup>32</sup>“Together with the Charles Wolfson Trust, the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation will donate £2 million over four years to establish the ‘Music in Secondary Schools Trust’, a charitable body that has been created to roll out a new scheme called the Andrew Lloyd Webber Programme ... under which every child in a participating school will study a classical musical instrument for a minimum of three years”. The scheme gives priority to schools in deprived areas, and the programme is modelled on a scheme initially developed by Truda White, former head teacher at Highbury Grove school in Islington, North London. Through the scheme, Highbury Grove raised its Ofsted rating from ‘inadequate’ to ‘outstanding’ (The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, 2015).

<sup>33</sup>According to their websites, schools offering Medieval music as part of their Year 7 syllabus include: Sir John Gleed School, Lincolnshire; Blackfen School, Sidcup; St. Catherine’s Catholic School, Bexleyheath; Sion-Manning Roman Catholic School, Ladbroke Grove; Willington School, Wimbledon.

<sup>34</sup>This is not a formula that would work well in every school.

<sup>35</sup>I have worked as a peripatetic music teacher in a number of secondary schools in Essex, West Sussex and Hampshire.

<sup>36</sup>Under the government’s ‘Music Plan’, 150 local authority music trusts were re-organised into 120 music hubs which included music trust staff, voluntary groups and private firms who provide music services to schools in specific areas. The accompanying government announcement said that funding would increasingly be targeted at the less well-off in a bid to close a ‘musical divide between rich and poor’. But at the same time music service budgets were severely cut, by as much as 25% in some cases. Diane Widdison, national organiser for teaching at the Musicians’ Union, claimed that the music hubs had “made great efforts to make the new system work”, but bemoaned the fact there was no compunction on schools to play their part, “schools have no duty to engage with music education or music hubs at all” (Richardson, 2013).

The Ofsted report confirms the views of many in the music profession, which is that too much of the music provision in secondary schools is lamentable, a situation that leaves music teachers frustrated, able students bored, and others feeling excluded. In many schools what pupils learn (or rather fail to learn) in their first years at secondary school makes it very difficult to achieve good grades at GCSE without private tuition, let alone at A-Level when students are expected to be able to read, write, play and analyse music. This situation is unlikely to change unless a way can be found to cover material earlier in a child's school career.

'Streaming' generally requires more resources than does whole-class teaching and is therefore rarely an option, although it has been suggested that the same end can be achieved through the judicious use of peer support. Seeking to exploit possible connections between young people's interest in music and their extracurricular activities, and the music they study at school, the Music Manifesto<sup>37</sup> encourages identifying "peer and adult role models for young musicians" ([Department for Education and Skills \(DfES\), 2004](#): 8). In this way, "those with musical talent can also contribute in general music lessons if we devise activities in which their specialist skills can be used alongside the non-specialist work of other pupils, and for the talented pupils this experience could add something of musical worth normally absent from the standard GCSE and A-Level courses" ([Paynter, 1982](#): 27).

As Gareth Malone and others<sup>38</sup> have shown, singing is arguably the easiest and most effective way to engage people in music. Many people initially find the idea of (solo) singing daunting, yet school singing clubs and musical theatre productions are often popular with students at both school and university regardless of previous musical experience, perhaps due to the camaraderie (and perhaps a sense of 'safety in numbers'). Ensemble singing teaches students: aural skills; rhythm and tempo; ensemble skills (beginning and ending together, keeping time, and blending the sound appropriately); basic notation and score reading, and gives students an understanding of their voice as an instrument. It also provides the opportunity to explore a variety of genres of music,

<sup>37</sup>The Music Manifesto is a government-supported campaign to improve young people's music education in England. It promotes a 'music for all' agenda and wishes to see more musical opportunities for more young people ([Department for Education and Skills \(DfES\), 2004](#)).

<sup>38</sup>Another example is the week long youth festival run by the Buxton International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival. In fact "for nearly 30 years, director of music John Skinner has mounted an annual summer opera, mostly Gilbert and Sullivan, in just three weeks as a post-exam project ... The standard they achieve is extraordinary. And, unusually, the majority of the pit musicians are pupils too". ([Elkin, 2010b](#)). Elkin makes the point that "the material is such fun and so robust that you can do almost anything with it. The singing range works well for young voices and most of those choruses ... cry out for teenagers. You can accommodate large casts and there's oodles of scope for community links ... Gilbert and Sullivan does wonders for diction and vocabulary". The festival's organisers "are working hard to promote Gilbert and Sullivan in schools ... they are, for example, gradually publishing reduced versions of the scores with simplified dialogue ... to encourage schools – even primary schools – to have a go."

exposing students to music from different periods and cultures. Musical theatre introduces students to acting through song, helping to boost confidence through character work. In many ways, ensemble singing (particularly in the form of musical theatre) would seem the obvious vehicle for making in-roads into the deficiencies of music teaching in secondary schools.

### 3.3.2 Dance

Countries like Canada have taken steps to establish dance as a stand-alone subject<sup>39</sup>. However in the UK at Key Stage 3, dance continues to form part of the Physical Education curriculum. NCC's the 'Physical Education Working Group' was appointed to identify the activities that would be included in the national curriculum, and dance was included because: "... a broad and balanced programme of Physical Education, sensitively delivered, can help extend boys' restricted perception of masculinity and masculine behaviour" (NCC, 1991). In practice most schools make dance optional on the recommendation of the NCC which had been "persuaded by agony stories from schools about boys having to do dance when they don't want to" (TES, 1992).

In the past dance qualifications have had their critics. In the early 1990s, Minister for Sport Robert Atkins stated: "I think there is a possibility of dance as a cop-out – a sixth form disco as a substitute for physical education" (McFee, 1994: 76). In 2011 Universities Minister, David Willetts, argued that A-Level Dance should be given fewer points in university applications and in school league tables than more 'academic subjects' ((Smith, 2011a: 2), (The Stage, 2011a)). An article written by Michael Gove suggests that including dance at A-Level could make entry onto more academic courses harder<sup>40</sup>. 'Leading universities' are of course not the only influence on teenagers making decisions about what they should study, as demonstrated by IFS<sup>41</sup> research conducted on behalf of the DfE into how and why secondary school pupils make the choices they do (Jin et al., 2011). Ofqual were quick to defend their qualifications<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> "The Ontario Ministry of Education has published a revised arts curriculum that acknowledges dance as a stand-alone subject in elementary schools" (Mehra, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> "Our leading universities have made it clear that taking soft subjects such as Media Studies or Dance at A-Level harms candidates' chances of admission" (Gove, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies.

<sup>42</sup> "... from the GCSE in Dance pupils not only learn about dance/movement, they develop knowledge of good nutrition and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and an understanding of energy transference, and the muscle and bone structure of the body. GCSE Dance pupils need to perform a set study and have the ability to use their own ideas for the composition unit. The Dance GCSE units require the pupils to be able to communicate through the written word as well as through movement. It provides a worthwhile course for candidates of various ages and from diverse backgrounds in terms of general education and lifelong learning ... The GCSE Dance specification actively engages students in the process of dance in order to develop as effective and independent learners and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds" (Ofqual, 2011).

Arlene Philips, the government's 'dance tsar' in 2009 under the Labour administration was "shocked and outraged" by Willetts' comments ([Woolman and Hemley, n.d.](#)), and reminded people of the benefits of studying dance at GCSE and A-Level ([Smith, 2011a: 2](#)). Tracey Tickle, chief examiner for A-Level Dance, said "the written examination engaged students in the same way that papers in English Literature or History did". Caroline Miller, director of the professional association, Dance UK, said that she "feared schools would 'disinvest' in dance as a result of the comments" ([Woolman and Hemley, n.d.](#)).

Its proponents argue that dance offers physical, psychological, social and educational benefits<sup>43</sup>. Dance can help pupils to think artistically; they develop creative thought and action; and the ability to make an informed and critical judgement<sup>44</sup>. It provides the opportunity to create and appreciate artistic forms; develop performance skills, and introduce pupils to dance as an art form. Jane Hackett, Vice Chair of Dance UK, claims that research has shown that creative study "gives young people a greater chance of success in future employment" ([Arts Professional, 2009](#)). "It is estimated the dance economy employs around 30,000 people; dancers, teachers, choreographers, technicians and managers. In addition to this, people work in dance as community dance practitioners, promoters, producers, designers, publicists, technicians, physiotherapists, medical and alternative practitioners, therapists, writers and academics" ([Dance UK, 2014](#)). Others take the view that Dance deserves a place on the curriculum simply on its own merit. "The inclusion of dance in the curriculum may have to be fought for or justified although dance as a recreation in itself should be justification enough" ([Leese and Packer, 1980](#)).

Veronica Jobbins, the Chairperson of the National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA) would like to see Dance taught as a separate subject ([NDTA: Memorandum Submitted by](#)

<sup>43</sup> Its physical benefits "include promoting a responsible attitude to the body; developing coordination, strength, stamina, and mobility; strengthening muscles and bones, and reducing the risk of osteoporosis; improving balance and spatial awareness; making young people aware of posture and alignment so as to avoid sustaining injuries in exercise and in everyday activities, and helping to keep the heart and lungs healthy" ([Arts Council England, 2006: 4](#)). Research has linked dance to psychological well-being through an improvement in self-esteem and confidence ([NDEO, 2013](#)), and by giving people an opportunity to express themselves, it can alleviate feelings of frustration and depression. It provides an opportunity for teamwork, allowing participants to develop their collaborative and communication skills, but at the same time it also encourages individuality and independence. "The lessons ... therefore will be more than academic; they will have an impact not only on dance as an art form, but on the way we perceive, treat and respect each other as human beings" ([Jordan and Grau, 2002: 203](#)). "Dance in education also can help those with learning difficulties because Dance offers the opportunity to communicate through movement. This can help to build self-confidence and self-esteem, not only in this subject but within other areas of their education. Often those with Dyslexia and other learning difficulties excel in practical arts subjects" ([Key4Learning, n.d.](#)). Dance can be used across the curriculum and to teach students about different time periods and cultures ([NCC, 1991](#)). "We live in a multicultural society. Dance is a prime expression of culture, of heritage, identity and achievement" ([Smith-Autard, 2002: 37](#)).

<sup>44</sup> "Creating dance provides people with the opportunity to make individual responses to their world" and "... because of its expressive and creative nature [dance] stands apart from other physical activities" ([NDTA: Memorandum Submitted by the National Dance Teachers Association, 2003](#)).

*the National Dance Teachers Association*, 2003). And Jobbins is not alone. The demand for dance has grown substantially in recent years amongst the general public<sup>45</sup>. The Arts Council England concluded that “dance is the fastest growing art form, with over 13% of the population now attending dance performances”<sup>46</sup>. According to the Central Council for Physical Recreation, dance is a popular activity for five million participants. Over 4.8 million people participate in community dance each year<sup>47</sup> (*Dance UK*, 2014).

Despite the negativity from politicians, this growth in popularity is reflected by the increase in those taking GCSE and A-Level between 1990 and 2000, the number of students taking Dance at GCSE level grew by 235% (to 6,469) and 229% (to 808) at A-Level<sup>48</sup>. By 2007 the number taking GCSE in Dance had increased further to 18,866 (*Assessment and Qualifications Alliance*, n.d.). As well as reporting that the number of pupils choosing Dance has risen 83% in four years, Arts Council research observed that a third of these were boys (*Lightfoot*, 2009); this has been attributed to the ‘Billy Elliot’ factor (*The Stage*, 2012a: 8). More generally, Research by the ‘PE and School Sport Club links (PESSCL) scheme’ shows Dance is second only to football as the most popular activity of school children (*Dance UK*, 2014).

In spite of the huge surge in interest in recent years and the fact that the benefits of dance have been widely recognised, the reality is that in the majority of secondary schools dance is taught by Physical Education teachers who are not dance specialists, which makes it difficult for schools to offer high quality teaching at GCSE and A-Level. For those schools without the resources to bring in dance specialists<sup>49</sup>, this ‘postcode lottery’ means that those who want to pursue a career in dance or a dance-related discipline must do so outside the school environment; doing a GCSE or A-Level in Dance is, for them, not an option.

In 2011 the Artistic Director of Sadlers Wells, Alistair Spalding, complained that dance was “severely underfunded” (*Woolman*, 2011a), asking that the government promote

<sup>45</sup>Substantial increases in audiences for dance were reported in the 1990s: e.g. The Target Group Index (TGI) rose by 18% between 1998/99 and the previous year, and bigger increases still for contemporary dance: “comparing TGI figures for contemporary dance for the five-year period of 1990/01 to 1994/95 with those for the period 1995/95 and 1999/2000 shows an increase of 28.8%” (*Dance UK*, 2014).

<sup>46</sup>Television means that dance performances of all kinds reach much bigger audiences than before, with audiences of hundreds of thousands, often surpassing those for televised opera. Indeed the BBC’s *Strictly Come Dancing* was regularly watched by 10.5 million viewers. Research commissioned by Barclays shows that 76% of men now think dancing is a great way to keep fit and one in ten have actually taken up dance as a direct result of the ‘Darren Gough effect’ (*Dance UK*, 2014).

<sup>47</sup>Foundation for Community Dance.

<sup>48</sup>According to the 2007/08 HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) Student Returns, 1220 pupils graduated with a degree in Dance (*HESA*, n.d.a).

<sup>49</sup>Schools can minimise the cost of this by collaborating with others, for example with independent schools, stage schools, and even individual performing arts professionals, perhaps exchanging recitals and workshops for rehearsal space and/or marketing opportunities. An example of such a partnership is that between Turnford School, Cheshunt, and CPA Studios, whereby a CPA tutor delivers part of Turnford’s ‘enrichment programme’ in exchange for the opportunity to promote the CPA school/college at major school events.



dance in education through an initiative similar to Darren Henley's review of music in schools<sup>50</sup>. In Spalding's view, dance is "not represented enough in our school systems". His argument was that dance was as popular as music with young people, and so they should be given equal access to learning about it. According to research published by Youth Dance England – which had its core funding from Arts Council England cut in April 2012 – 58p per head was spent on youth dance during 2008–11, compared with £38 per capita on youth music during the same period (Woolman, 2011a: 2).

### 3.3.3 Drama

Drama seems to be treated more generously than dance by critics of the performing arts, perhaps because of its association with English<sup>51</sup>. Although as Sir Peter Bazalgette, TV producer and chairman of Arts Council England, observed (BBC News, 2014a) "state school pupils have too few opportunities to forge careers in the arts". Sir Peter argued that "visual performing arts have been marginalised in some areas in the curriculum as the curriculum becomes more instrumentalist and focused on what's known as the STEM agenda - science, technology, engineering and maths". His views were echoed by Dame Helen Mirren who mourned the fact acting was becoming the "prerogative only of kids who have money", and by Shakespeare's Globe artistic director Dominic Dromgoole, "It's becoming harder for children and young actors without means to get into drama school and I think that's an enormous shame" (Masters, 2013). More recently these claims have been contested by drama schools who claim that overall 80% of their intake is from state schools (Hemley, 2014a).

The Arts Council exhorts secondary schools to build on the work done at Key Stages 1 and 2, and there is further encouragement in the National Curriculum which advocates that Drama is built into the English Speaking and Language strand in Key Stage 1, 2, and 3 (Arts Council England, 2003). In many schools Drama enjoys a symbiotic relationship with English<sup>52</sup>. As Reason puts it, "theatre brings alive a text in a way that TV cannot, and for those who find reading inaccessible, a visit to the theatre can help bring a good deal of sense to something that may otherwise have remained a distant blur" (Reason, 2010: 20).

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<sup>50</sup>Following the publication of the review by Henley, the Classic FM managing director, Education Secretary Michael Gove pledged £82.5 million for music education in 2011/12, matching the total given in 2010/11. The government also said it planned to publish a comprehensive national plan for music in schools. Henley then moved on to working on a review of cultural education, similar to his investigation of music provision. It will define what a "solid cultural education" should include.

<sup>51</sup>Coincidentally the subject studied by Michael Gove at university.

<sup>52</sup>For example English and Drama teachers can work together to deliver units on Shakespeare and other classical texts, helping students to develop skills in a mutually reinforcing way (Arts Council England, 2003). Students learn in different ways and benefit from different styles of teaching, so this connection between subjects could be particularly valuable in reaching more young people. Drama can stimulate an interest in English by bringing text to life and making it easier to understand.

The Framework for teaching English in years 7, 8 and 9 sets out the requirements for drama, whilst making it clear that these are a minimum and should be built on and developed as part of a weekly Drama lesson (DCSF, n.d.). Over the course of the three years at Key Stage 3, pupils should be taught a range of drama techniques and should learn how to respond to a variety of texts, situations, and stimuli. More specifically, students should have contact with “two plays by Shakespeare, a drama by a major playwright, recent and contemporary drama written for young people, and drama by major writers from different cultures and traditions” (Arts Council England, 2003: 52). The Arts Council recommends combining drama teaching with work done in other subjects including Foreign Languages, IT, PSHE, and History (Arts Council England, 2003: 21).

There is much to be gained from the study of drama in secondary schools, in terms of improvements in fluency, literacy, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and so on. However, initially there are hurdles to overcome. Like singing, participating in drama can leave young people feeling exposed and self-conscious, which in turn can lead to behavioural challenges that teachers have to be able to manage<sup>53</sup>.

Even though in many schools, pupils will not necessarily have seen a live performance in a theatre, they will invariably have seen drama of various kinds at the cinema and on television. Moreover, acting is something that is a close relation of play, and as such is something that comes naturally to many young people. Their appetite for drama is evident in the fact that after-school drama clubs are often oversubscribed. Although these are not a substitute for the structured learning pupils do at school<sup>54</sup>, they are very popular. They provide opportunities not just for performance, but also for back-stage work which might involve direction; lighting and sound design and control; stage management; and costume, prop, and set sourcing and design.

### 3.3.4 Outlook for performing arts education in secondary schools

The performing arts offer many opportunities for collaboration both within a school and beyond its boundaries. Over the years there have been some excellent initiatives, which have become victims of austerity measures. The Creative Partnerships scheme launched in 2002, with the aim of helping to connect schools with professionals working in the creative industries, came to an end in 2011 when annual support of £38.1 million was withdrawn by the Arts Council, despite claims that it delivered a 15:1 return on

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<sup>53</sup>Drama games and ‘ice-breakers’ are commonly used to build confidence, and help ‘ease them in’.

<sup>54</sup>Not least because not everyone is in a position to attend them, and it is important therefore that they are not used as a justification by schools with scarce resources to squeeze drama out of the school syllabus.



investment because of its impact on GCSE grades<sup>55</sup>. CCE chief executive, Paul Collard argued that the termination of the scheme meant that “children and young people, particularly those from the most disadvantaged communities, [were being] expected to bear the brunt of the cuts in the arts” (Woolman, 2010a).

Even within a school, there is much to be gained from more linkage between subjects across the school curriculum<sup>56</sup>, and between different key stages, and in particular between KS3 and KS1/2 on one hand and between KS3 and KS4 on the other.

However, far from strengthening the teaching of the arts in secondary schools, there have been concerns that they might be gradually squeezed out of the school syllabus to make room for subjects considered to have greater economic worth. Many voiced concerns about the English Baccalaureate which Education Secretary Michael Gove planned to introduce in 2015 to replace GCSEs. Sir Nicholas Serota warned the UK could lose its “leading edge in creativity . . . We know that there is a great body of evidence now that has been gathered over the past 20 or 30 years which demonstrates that, where you have schools which give time to cultural learning, there is benefit both in that sphere and also to the other disciplines” (Burns, 2012). The ‘Bacc to the Future’ campaign gathered signatures from 50,000 people who felt as Sir Nicholas did, and there was huge relief when this prompted a change in policy by the government<sup>57</sup>.

In the past, students interested in making quantifiable (and hence demonstrable) progress, have turned to examination bodies outside the school system<sup>58</sup>. These bodies are well-respected and offer syllabuses that are clear, well-structured and demanding. The school system now seems ready to follow their example.

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<sup>55</sup>The estimate was independently verified by research from PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) which revealed that Creative Partnerships, then the flagship creative learning programme for schools, was expected to generate nearly £4 billion net positive benefit for the UK economy (The Creative Partnerships Programme, 2012).

<sup>56</sup>This was demonstrated by ‘teacher of the year’, Richard Spencer, who used music and dance to successfully engage his students in Science (The Guardian, 2015a).

<sup>57</sup>Deborah Annetts, Chief executive of the Incorporated Society of Musicians Coordinator for the ‘Bacc to the Future’ campaign, said that “the change in policy means that the new EBacc will not be introduced and we will not end up with a two-tier system of EBCs and GCSEs, with creative subjects such as music firmly put into the second tier . . . There is clearly cause to celebrate. Headteachers should now feel emboldened to deliver arts subjects right across KS4 at GCSE level, knowing that they will not be criticised for doing so, and their students’ successes will be reflected in the new performance measures. However, there is more to do. ‘Bacc for the future’ will now turn its attention to persuading government to abolish the existing EBacc league tables – and their A-Level equivalent – which continue to devalue creative subjects in schools” (Annetts, 2013).

<sup>58</sup>For example the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), Trinity College London, the London College of Music (LCM), the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD), the British Association of Teachers of Dancing (BATD), and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA).

Gove's plan to make exams more rigorous<sup>59</sup> was welcomed by Deborah Annetts ([Coughlan, 2014a](#)). Darren Henley backed the plans for arts subjects: "I strongly believe that all children can and should benefit from receiving a wide-ranging, adventurous and creative cultural education. Studying subjects such as art and design, dance, drama and music helps young people grow into well-rounded, knowledgeable and skilled individuals" ([Henley, 2012](#)). Henley proposed a 'cultural passport', and that a cultural subject like Music, Dance or Drama be included in the English Baccalaureate ([Elkin, 2012a](#)). The Education Secretary said: "I am passionate about great art, drama, dance, music and design, and I am determined to ensure every child enjoys access to the best in our culture. I also want all schools to be able to nurture creative talent in every child. That is why I am delighted that new high-quality qualifications in creative and cultural subjects will be made available to all students" ([Gove, 2015](#)).

Amen to that.

### 3.4 Specialist performing arts schools

This section provides an overview of specialist schools and what they offer in terms of performing arts education, as well as mainstream 'academic' subjects, something that is invariably important even to those parents who choose to send their children to a specialist theatre school. The section will touch on the available options; their locations and catchment area; entry requirements; tuition fees; facilities and core offering; timetable structure and staffing; academic and vocational results; and professional opportunities.

It is important to determine the factors which contribute to distinguishing a specialist school from other independent schools. There are a number of independent schools and (more recently academies) which have excellent performing arts facilities, but which do not describe themselves as specialist stage/theatre schools. Facilities (including dance studios with good ceiling heights and sprung floors, and some form of performance space) are plainly important, but of equal importance is the emphasis placed on performing arts tuition in the regular timetable. Good facilities are necessary, but not sufficient. The qualifications and experience of the teachers at specialist schools are also key to the success of the school. In short, in a specialist theatre school, performing arts has to be given as much emphasis as the academic curriculum.

In 2014 there were eleven specialist theatre schools in the United Kingdom. Prominent amongst these are: Sylvia Young Theatre School ([Sylvia Young Theatre School](#),

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<sup>59</sup>This includes new GCSEs in Art and Design, Music, Drama and new A-Levels in Music, Drama and Dance.

n.d.), Italia Conti ([Italia Conti, n.d.a](#)), and Arts Educational Schools London<sup>60</sup> ([Arts Educational Schools London, n.d.b](#)).

Most of the schools offer academic and vocational education to students between the ages of 11 and 16, but there are some which extend their offering to include A–Levels, BTECs, and diplomas, and there are four which include a preparatory and lower school. The Barbara Speake Stage School ([Barbara Speake Stage School, n.d.](#)) market themselves as the only specialist school to cater for Early Years<sup>61</sup>, admitting children from the age of three and a half.

As might be expected, the majority of schools are located in and around London, but there is some provision elsewhere. The Hammond School ([Hammond School, n.d.](#)), located in Chester, has been in operation since 1917; in 1947 the Redroofs Theatre School ([Redroofs School for the Performing Arts, n.d.](#)) opened in Maidenhead; in 1949 Pattison College ([Pattison College, 2014](#)) opened in Coventry; and in 2006, the Arabesque School ([Arabesque School of Performing Arts, n.d.](#)) opened in Chichester. In 2015 there were no specialist schools in the North East, the South West of England, in Wales, Scotland, or Ireland. This lack of provision means that young people from these areas must look to relocate in order to attend a specialist school. Some schools offer the opportunity to board, and others arrange accommodation with host families, but a number offer no arrangements for boarding. In fact Susi Earnshaw ([Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, n.d.](#)) go as far as to state that they will only offer places to those living with close family in close proximity to the school, and the Sylvia Young Theatre School will only take on boarders from Year 7 onwards ([Sylvia Young Theatre School, n.d.](#)). Whilst some schools offer host houses or other forms of boarding, most take a maximum of 12 lodgers, meaning competition for accommodation is stiff, further reducing the opportunities for young people from an area without specialist school provision<sup>62</sup>.

All specialist schools endeavour to keep intake numbers low in order to offer the best opportunities to students<sup>63</sup>. Entry requirements vary from school to school, and while

<sup>60</sup>The other options are: The Hammond School, Tring Park School for Performing Arts, Barbara Speake Stage School, Redroofs Theatre School, Pattison College, The Brit School, Susi Earnshaw, and Arabesque School.

<sup>61</sup>In fact Pattison College also take pupils from the age of three. Pattison claim to have seen a shift in the priorities of parents who are attracted by the very small class sizes, and the stability offered by the fact that their children can attend the school from the age of three to 16.

<sup>62</sup>The parents of Adam Scotland, who was the recipient of the Sylvia Young Stage Scholarship in 2013, chose to relocate the entire family from Liverpool to Ilford in order for Adam to take up his place [Source: Personal conversation between author and Mrs Scotland in May 2014].

“One pupil commutes weekly to [the Susi Earnshaw school in] Barnet from Stockton-on-Tees and there’s a girl there from New Zealand whose parents take it in turns to live with her in London” ([Elkin, 2012b](#)). Relocating is a huge commitment and can be a burden, both financially and in terms of a lifestyle change for the rest of the family.

<sup>63</sup>On average the annual intake is between 12 and 15 students.

some choose to put applicants through a full day audition process involving the presentation of solo material and participation in group performance classes, others, like the Barbara Speake Stage School, make their selection on the basis of an interview with the applicant and his/her parent/guardian. Almost all schools undertake some form of academic assessment of the applicant, either through a written test or through the evaluation of the child's previous academic reports and results. Entry to all schools is based on potential shown at the audition/interview stage, and applicants are not required to have had previous formal training.

For the most part, tuition fees at specialist schools are comparable with non-specialist independent schools, and have many of the same benefits, including smaller class sizes and excellent facilities. Most of the schools can boast their own fully operational theatre in addition to numerous fully-equipped rehearsal studios.

As of 2014, Arts Ed, the Hammond School, Italia Conti, Redroofs, Susi Earnshaw, and Sylvia Young all charged between £12,000 and £14,000 per year for day pupils<sup>64</sup>. Fees for the Arabesque school, Barbara Speake, and Pattison College were rather lower at between £6,870 and £7,500 per year, whereas fees for day pupils at Tring Park ([Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, 2014](#)) were £19,245 (though these were lower at £13,380 per year for pupils in the junior school)<sup>65</sup>.

Specialist education is often regarded as expensive, but if the costs of extra-curricular vocational training is taken into consideration, overall costs may in fact turn out to be lower for specialist schools than for other independent schools. According to the UK Independent Schools Fees Advice Organisation, in 2014 there were 2,300 independent schools in the UK and the average fees were £10,200 per year ([Independent Schools Fees Advice Organisation, 2014](#): 1), and these can be a lot higher, particularly in the south of England<sup>66</sup>. If parents want their children to participate in performing arts classes and individual music or drama tuition, this could add at least a further £1,500 to their yearly outgoings<sup>67</sup>.

Of the eleven specialist schools available, only one is free of charge for students<sup>68</sup>. The Brit School ([The Brit School, 2014](#)) was established in 1991 and is financed by a mixture of state funding from the Education Funding Agency, and donations from the British

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<sup>64</sup>There are additional costs. For example, Italia Conti school students are required to buy their uniform from Harrods ([Harrods, 2014](#)).

<sup>65</sup>Like the rest of the independent school sector, specialist schools increase their fees as students progress through the school.

<sup>66</sup>Fees for independent schools in Essex are at least £15,000 per year and a large number of schools in the surrounding counties charge more than £30,000 per year.

<sup>67</sup>Prices based on average prices for three hour sessions at part-time theatre schools, and for weekly one to one lessons for half an hour per week based on Musicians' Union recommendations.

<sup>68</sup>In October 2013 the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts announced plans to open a free primary school ([LIPA, 2013](#)).

Record Industry Trust ([The Independent](#), 2014). The school accepts students aged 14 and above on its GCSE, BTEC, A–Level, and diploma courses and operates a catchment area system as part of its application procedure.

Although not strictly a specialist school in the same sense as the others, but one which is equipped to allow students to specialise should they so wish, Chobham Academy ([Chobham Academy](#), n.d.), situated on the Olympic Park site, is unusual in that it makes performing arts a centrepiece of secondary education and has facilities to rival the Brit School<sup>69</sup>. In addition to offering A–Levels and a BTEC extended diploma in a number of performing arts subjects, students are given free access to tuition on a musical instrument as well as to LAMDA examinations. The Academy also has its own in-house agency in order to encourage and facilitate part-time professional work for all students. There are other examples of schools with excellent facilities, although the experiences of King Solomon High School in Barkingside ([King Solomon High School](#), n.d.) demonstrate that having excellent facilities is not always a guarantee of success<sup>70</sup>.

The eleven specialist schools adopt different models in timetabling their courses, but all claim to give equal emphasis to the academic and vocational education of their students. There are three main models used in specialist schools. The first is a complete integration of academic and vocational teaching, the second is a division of the timetable for each day between academic and vocational subjects, and the third is to deliver all academic teaching on some days, and all vocational lessons on others.

Institutions offering primary and junior school education tend to opt for an integrated approach, combining academic subjects with creative subjects. Redroofs celebrates this style of teaching, stating that they are “a full-time theatre school where participation and practical learning lead, through participation in classroom learning from re-enactments in History, to a rap in Science and iPads in the classrooms” ([Redroofs School for the Performing Arts](#), 2014: 1). This approach has echoes of the creative curriculum followed by some mainstream primary and junior schools in the state system. Leading educators support the use of the creative curriculum and claim that the teaching method gives greater access to all subject areas that are covered in the process for students with a range of learning styles ([Ofsted](#), 2014: 1), reinforcing the education model used by the best specialist theatre schools.

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<sup>69</sup>The school has the capacity for 2,000 pupils aged from 3 to 18 and “facilities are excellent: performing arts have their own building, including a 270-seat theatre, two magnificent studios which would be the envy of any drama school, and a state of the arts computer room complete with shining rows of brand new Macs set up with Sibelius music composition software and other programmes . . . music technology rooms, a recording studio and rows of soundproofed practice rooms, each with a piano” ([Elkin](#), 2013*d*).

<sup>70</sup>The Performing Arts Department closed after the school lost key members of staff. A subsequent BTEC partnership with the company Make Believe proved to be unsuccessful.

Pattison College choose not to have a separate vocational timetable, but instead opt to take the usual Music, Dance, and Drama subjects a step further. The school also offers a wide variety of free dance and performing arts classes during lunchtime, after school, and at the weekend. In the lower school, what is described by the school as physical exercise is an integral part of the timetable, with lessons in Ballet, Tap, Disco, Gymnastic Dance, Production, and Speech and Drama included on the curriculum. Students are taught Music, Dance, and Drama from the age of three by specialist teachers. Interestingly Music is not offered as a GCSE subject but still remains part of the weekly timetable. In addition to building foundations for a career in performing arts, the school states that the lessons “enable pupils to develop into confident, articulate members of society” (Pattison College, 2014: 1). The school claims that their approach enables them to “differentiate very accurately to bring out the best in our pupils so that everyone, no matter what their academic ability, has the chance to succeed” (Pattison College, 2014: 1). The school encourages students to make their own choices about which performing arts lessons to attend, in order to take into consideration each pupil’s interest and personal ability level.

Other specialist schools choose to teach both academic and vocational subjects every day, but do not integrate the teaching. Tring Park prefers a mixture of the two approaches, opting for an integrated timetable for pupils aged 8 to 11, and a separation of vocational and academic classes for pupils aged 11 to 16. In the lower part of the school, students are given a technical foundation in vocational subjects including Ballet, Jazz, Tap, Drama, and Singing. Once pupils reach secondary school age, they are given the option to pursue either a Dance or a Theatre Arts Pathway. From Year 7 to 9, pupils undertake their vocational training every morning for three and a half hours, but in Years 10 and above, academic studies take place in the morning session, leaving four and a half hours each afternoon for vocational classes (Tring Park School for the Performing Arts, 2014: 1).

Arts Ed choose to keep vocational and academic subjects separate on the timetable but do seek to make links across the curriculum by teaching academic topics through singing, dance, and drama, and theoretical work is viewed as an important part of the delivery of the vocational training<sup>71</sup>. Vocational subjects include a core offering of Classical Ballet, as well as classes in Choreography, Contemporary, Jazz, Modern, Tap, Drama, and Singing. Students are given the opportunity to undertake vocational examinations and to participate in several public performances each year.

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<sup>71</sup>In addition to building the technical and performance skills of pupils, Arts Ed highlight the wider benefits associated with their style of performing arts training, pointing to the fact that skills gained through this type of education can be applied in a broader context. “A full and rich curriculum, delivered to small classes by specialist teachers, ensures that every pupil achieves to the very best of their ability” (Arts Educational Schools London, 2011).

The examining boards at the Council for Dance and Education Training (CDET) and Trinity College London have strong views about the way vocational teaching timetables are structured<sup>72</sup>. It is considered to be good practice to begin a working day with Ballet classes, which prepare the body for the physical demands of other subjects. It is also recommended that schools try to include a mix of music, dance, and drama on the timetable each day in order to encourage the transference of skills between disciplines. Finally they advise that acting classes, which require analytical and improvisational skills, should not be put at the end of the day. Not all of the models used by specialist schools allow strict adherence to the CDET recommendations.

Sylvia Young is the only specialist school to deliver its academic timetable on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and confine the vocational teaching to Thursday and Friday. This approach has a number of benefits. The separation of the academic and vocational lessons allows the students to focus their efforts more effectively. Students do not have to move between practical and theoretical subjects, which advocates believe improves levels of concentration. Similarly, scheduling all vocational subjects on two consecutive days also means that the timetable can be structured so that it is complementary and progressive, helping students to learn to transfer skills between classes.

There are also administrative advantages to the approach used by Sylvia Young: separating the academic and vocational teaching can make timetabling less complicated, and confining vocational classes to two days per week can make staffing easier because freelance teachers can be given a full day of work<sup>73</sup>. The school is also able to hire out their studio facilities for three days per week which increases overall revenue.

There are advantages to running together classes with greater physical demands because it ensures that students are properly warmed up, and consequently are better prepared for safe and productive classes. Moreover experienced teachers would testify to the fact that students can become progressively tired and restless toward the end of week, and for that reason alone, some regard it as good practice to timetable lessons that involve physical activity<sup>74</sup> at the end of the week. Conversely it may be argued that placing physically demanding classes at a time when children are tired and have lower levels of concentration, could increase the risk of accident or injury. And of course there is always the risk of more absences on ‘academic’ days.

Regardless of the timetable model used by the individual school, the large majority of schools place their emphasis on building a solid technical foundation for students by

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<sup>72</sup>CDET and Trinity meetings.

<sup>73</sup>It is interesting to note that Susi Earnshaw manage with a full-time staff of only 8; small compared to an equivalent preparatory school.

<sup>74</sup>And, more generally, those which the students particularly enjoy.



including weekly technical classes in their timetable, and running performance projects as set blocks in the calendar year.

In contrast, the Barbara Speake Stage School places its focus on performance, and their timetable reflects this. The school works towards an annual show which involves every student, “regardless of their ability” ([Barbara Speake Stage School, n.d.](#)). The shows are professionally filmed in order for staff, students, and parents to track progress, and “industry professionals and casting agents are invited to attend” ([Barbara Speake Stage School, n.d.](#)). In addition to this, students work towards medal examinations, festival competitions, and perform in troupes at professional events. The Sylvia Young Theatre School is similarly outward-looking, having “a programme of themed choirs which perform at corporate and charity events. Students are selected for these events by the Musical and Artistic Director in conjunction with the Principal. The schools performance choir take part in professional events and charity galas” ([Sylvia Young Theatre School, n.d.](#)).

Six of the eleven specialist theatre schools operate in-house agencies<sup>75</sup>. The schools include agency representation as part of their main offering and cite the opportunity for students to audition for, and potentially secure, professional engagements as an integral part of performing arts education<sup>76</sup>.

The remaining schools do not offer an agency service because they want to encourage students to achieve the best results both in their vocational and academic work in order to progress to high quality further study once they leave. On their website the Brit School makes it very clear that they take the long-term careers of students very seriously: “We are unique and pioneering in our approach to education, but we are not a stage or fame school. We recognise that most of our students intend to make a career in the arts, entertainment and communications industries, but the school expects all to follow full-time courses to completion. We also pride ourselves on providing an excellent general education that helps prepare young people for the future. We encourage our students to go on to specialist colleges and universities or into employment in the creative industries. Indeed the majority do so” ([The Brit School, 2014: 1](#))<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>75</sup>Sylvia Young Theatre School Agency, The Redroofs Agency, Barbara Speake Agency, Susi Earnshaw Management, Italia Conti Agency, Arabesque’s Asparations (sic) Agency.

<sup>76</sup>The 1975 report ‘Going on the Stage: A Report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on professional training for drama’ expressed major reservations about schools operating their own agencies ([Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1975: 25](#)).

<sup>77</sup>The Brit School is very proud of the fact that, unlike other specialist schools, two thirds of its students live within a 5-mile radius of the school. Its academic record has improved markedly in recent years ([Tominey, 2013](#)). In 1997, pass rates for A-Levels and GCSE at A\*– C grade were 86% and 43% respectively; by 2013 they had risen to 100% and 99% respectively ([The Brit School, n.d.](#)).



In addition to ensuring students do not miss out on any of their valuable time at the school, teachers are also often concerned that when working professionally in an environment where ‘time is money’, young people could pick up bad habits, or receive instruction which is inconsistent with what is being taught at the school.

Another reason that some schools discourage students from working before completing the course, is that a sub-standard performance risks damaging the school’s reputation. This policy is also applied at post-16 level. For example, students on the Level 6 Musical Theatre course and the Musical Theatre degree course at Arts Ed are not allowed to work professionally while in training, and only perform to the public in their final year on the course.

In 2013 the national average for five or more GCSEs at A\* - C grade (including English and Maths) was 68.1%. Many of the specialist schools produce results which are comparable with this average, and some fare much better, with over 80% of students achieving five or more A\* - C grades. On their website Italia Conti boast that their GCSE “pass rate is excellent with the Academy topping the local borough in the annual DFES league table of results” ([Italia Conti](#), n.d.a: 1). Arts Ed also claim that their academic standards are high, “with examination results regularly making the school the highest ranked performing arts school in the national league tables” ([Arts Educational Schools London](#), 2011: 1). On the other hand, the results at Barbara Speake Stage School are rather lower, with only 21% of students receiving five or more A\* - C grades at GCSE. See Figure 3.2 on page 144<sup>78</sup>.

There is information available from school inspection reports by Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate, which is comprehensive in the assessment of educational standards. What is assessed at specialist theatre schools is broadly similar to other independent schools<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup>([DfEE](#), 2011).

<sup>79</sup>As of 2014, this included evaluation of pupils’ achievement; pupils’ behaviour and personal development; quality of teaching; quality of curriculum; pupils’ welfare, health and safety, and leadership and management.

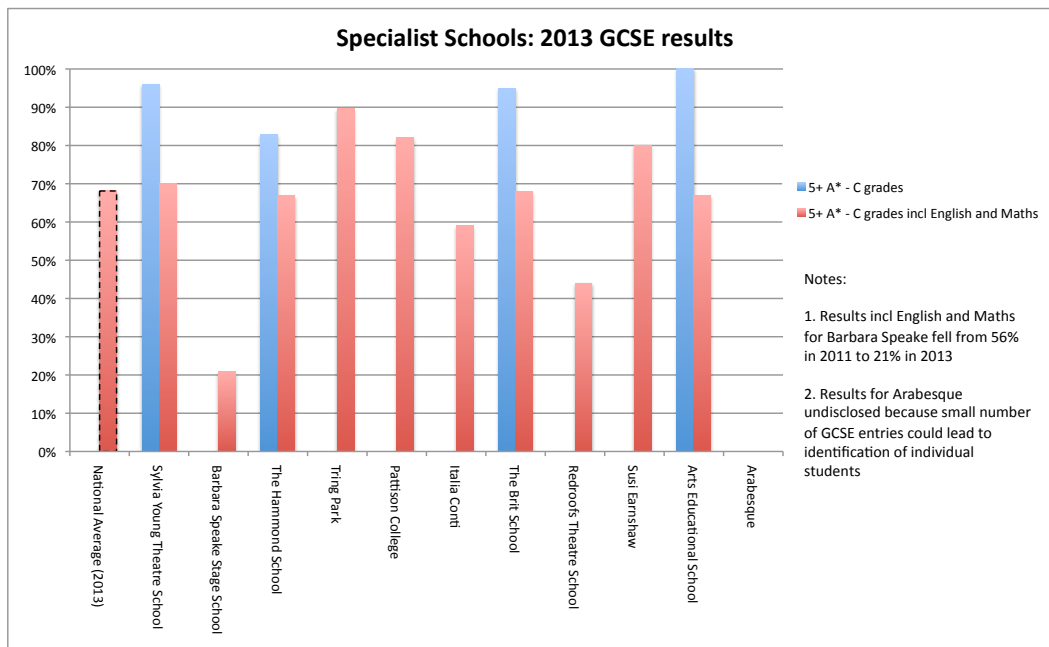


FIGURE 3.2: Specialist schools: 2013 GCSE results

### 3.5 Post-16 education in the performing arts

In 2004 “Mike Tomlinson, the former inspector of schools in England, proposed replacing GCSEs, A-levels and the ‘soup’ of vocational qualifications with a four-part diploma for 14 to 19 year olds” (BBC News, 2004). But at the time of writing, students wishing to pursue post-16 musical theatre training have four options: A-Level, Baccalaureate, BTEC, and specialist vocational training.

#### 3.5.1 A-Level

Only 37% of 18 year olds take A-Levels in any subject (Chalabi, 2013). In Summer 2014, 833,807 A-Levels were taken, of which 13,080 were in Drama, 8,375 were in Music and 2,546 were in Performing/Expressive Arts (JCQ, 2014).

Many schools have sixth forms which means that students can continue their formal education until the age of 19, free of charge. It is possible to take A-Levels in Music, Dance, Drama, and Theatre Studies, although none of these subjects offer the opportunity to study musical theatre in any detail. Examination boards OCR, and Edexcel have developed an A-Level in Performing Arts which covers music, dance, and drama as separate subjects in addition to exploring the connections between them. This allows students to develop their skills in each of the three disciplines before combining them in performance. Interestingly, both boards place more emphasis on devising and creativity

rather than the interpretation of established material. This may be due to the costs involved with acquiring the rights for existing musicals, but does limit the experience students gain from performing pieces of musical theatre from different genres and time periods. Many schools choose to mount musical theatre productions as extra-curricular activities, and the possibility of building these productions into the A–Level syllabus is something that examination boards might usefully consider.

Some schools choose not to offer the A–Level in Performing Arts in favour of offering more ‘academic’ options; others may not have the resources to offer A–Level Performing Arts. When it is offered, the subject is delivered differently from school to school, and the choice of department to lead the course (usually Music or Drama) will have an impact on the way the A–Level is delivered and the areas of study explored by the students.

### 3.5.2 International Baccalaureate

An alternative to A–Levels is the International Baccalaureate. There has been a lot of debate about replacing the current examination system in Britain with the International Baccalaureate (IB)<sup>80</sup>, and indeed some schools and colleges have chosen to offer the Baccalaureate qualification in place of A–Level courses<sup>81</sup>.

During the IB, students “pick one subject from each of six subject groups . . . and study three of these to a higher level. In addition, they take a course in ‘the theory of knowledge’ (TOK), write an extended essay and participate in ‘creativity, action, service’ – a non-examined module that focuses on – yes – creativity, sport and community service” (Cartwright, 2013). The subject groups are as follows: Group 1: Language; Group 2: Second Language; Group 3: Individuals and Societies (Humanities and Social Sciences); Group 4: Experimental sciences; Group 5: Mathematics and Computer Science, and Group 6: The Arts (Cartwright, 2013). Interestingly Group 6 is the only group which may be omitted and replaced with another option from Groups 1 to 5 (Cartwright, 2013). This implies that even though the IB stresses the importance of breadth, the arts are not seen as an essential part of this wider learning.

While the qualification does allow students to opt for Music, Dance, or Theatre, the three disciplines cannot be combined. The IB Theatre option does make reference to musical theatre, but it is only a very small part of the course as a whole. Hence the IB does not offer any more than traditional A–Level courses for those who wish to pursue

<sup>80</sup>David Miles, Deputy Head at Gresham’s School in Norfolk, explains the difference between the two qualifications: “the IB is more about an ethos of an educational style, while A–Levels place more emphasis on individual subject knowledge” (Rowan, 2010).

<sup>81</sup>It seems that the International Baccalaureate is slowly becoming more popular. According to UCAS figures, International Baccalaureates “made up about 1.2 percent of pending qualifications for university applications – up from 0.8 per cent in 2008” (Cartwright, 2013).

musical theatre training. In fact the IB provides fewer opportunities because students are required to take subjects from six different groups and therefore would have to choose between the IB Music, Dance, and Theatre. Arguably then, a student taking A–Levels in these subjects would be better prepared to move on to further musical theatre training than a student taking the IB qualification.

### 3.5.3 BTEC

Edexcel’s BTEC in Performing Arts offers a Musical Theatre pathway and it is possible to take this qualification at some school sixth forms as well as at further education colleges. There are a number of different qualifications a student interested in Musical Theatre may take through the BTEC system, but the most common at this level is the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (equivalent to NVQ Level 3). See Table 3.1 on page 146.

TABLE 3.1: National Qualification Framework levels

BTEC level	Equivalent standard
Introductory	Alternative to GCSE all grades for age 14+.
Firsts	Equivalent to GCSE A* - C, Level 2 on the National Qualifications Framework.
Nationals: Nat. Award Nat. Cert. Nat. Dip.	Level 3 qualifications equivalent to A–Levels on the National Qualifications Framework. Basic groundwork. More advanced skills training. Specialist work-related focus which can be counted towards higher qualifications.
HND and HNC	Higher National Diploma and Higher National Certificates Level 5/4 on the National Qualifications Framework, equivalent to part of a degree. Students often go on to top up to a foundation or full degree.
Foundation Degree	2-year Level 5 qualification, which can be built up to a full degree ( <a href="#">The Stage, 2010: 22</a> ).

BTEC qualifications are graded on a Pass, Merit, and Distinction basis and contribute to UCAS tariff points for entry to university courses in the same way as A–Level results.

Critics of the BTEC system point to a lack of rigour and low expectations set out in the assessment and grading criteria. For example in the documents for Unit 30: Singing Skills for Actors and Dancers, students are required to participate in ensemble pieces which should include “unison work as well as pieces in two or more parts” ([Edexcel, 2010: 5](#)). The national curriculum for Music in Key Stage 2 says something very similar. While both syllabuses are designed to give tutors flexibility and freedom in their teaching of the subject, it plainly is important that the course documents demonstrate a sense of

progression between Key Stage 2 (which covers students aged between 7 and 11) and BTEC level (which is designed for students aged 16 and over). Another example can be found in the grading criteria for BTEC Level 2: “At pass level, learners will not forget their lines or moves or bump into the furniture” (Edexcel, 2011: 116)<sup>82</sup>.

On the other hand, the flexibility of the BTEC means that each institution can play to the strengths of its staff and cater to the interests and needs of its students. The basic BTEC Level 3 course requires students to take a mandatory core unit, but then allows the institution to choose from a wide range of specialist units for the remainder of the course (50 options for Performing Arts in general, 36 for Performing Arts with a Musical Theatre pathway<sup>83</sup>). The Extended BTEC Level 3 course is equivalent to three A-Levels (allowing a student to achieve a greater number of UCAS tariff points) and requires the student to take six mandatory units, and choose eleven elective units from a list of forty. If the size, structure, and facilities of the institution allows, the full range of options are offered to the students.

This degree of flexibility works well at further education level because it allows each institution to deliver a course best suited to its students and to make best use of the resources they have on offer. It also gives scope to teachers who stay abreast of developments in the industry to adjust their course content to take into account these changes. This is particularly useful if students are looking to move on to drama school training following the completion of the BTEC course, and will therefore need to meet the audition standards set by these schools.

There are over 200 BTEC Performing Arts courses on offer across the country (Association of Colleges, 2013), not including privately run schools and specialist private colleges. BTEC courses are usually free of charge to under 19s because they are considered to be part of mainstream education. Conversations with BTEC students suggest that generally students choose their course based on the reputation of the institution<sup>84</sup>, the facilities on offer, and from the students’ own experience during open and taster days<sup>85</sup>. However most BTEC students tend to confine their choices to a handful of courses in their local area, rather than relocate.

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<sup>82</sup>Admittedly the Level 2 BTEC is a closer relation of the GCSE than the A-Level, but nevertheless the expectations appear to be very low.

<sup>83</sup>Whether this much variety is necessary, or indeed helpful is a moot point. In practice the range of options offered will be limited by the available resources.

<sup>84</sup>Although only the keenest students are likely to investigate destination data for themselves.

<sup>85</sup>Although there is evidence of variability in standards amongst institutions (see later discussion), I know of no evidence of students ‘gaming’ the situation by choosing a college which is more generous in awarding grades; indeed for musical theatre at least, it would be counterproductive because what is important to drama schools are the levels of skill demonstrated at an audition, rather than BTEC grades.

There are courses with better reputations and results than others. The success of a BTEC rests on a number of factors including the quality and experience of the teaching staff; the facilities and resources on offer; the support and resources invested in the course from the college as a whole, and the calibre of applicants. Whilst the quality of a college's facilities will be evident to prospective students, making judgements about the quality of teaching is plainly more difficult<sup>86</sup>.

The calibre of student intake is of course a key determinant in the success of a college. There have been a number of studies which indicate that students from poorer areas tend not to do as well as those from more affluent backgrounds (Kerr and West, 2010: 7). On this basis colleges located in poorer areas might be expected to struggle due to the ability, attitude and application of its students. However it is true to say that those colleges with a better reputation seem to draw students from a wider area which would contradict this argument.

It is instructive to compare two colleges that were geographically close but which were in a very different place in other respects. I had the opportunity to work with BTEC students from two colleges in the same county, Eastleigh College and South Downs<sup>87</sup>, which gave me the opportunity to compare the two. The colleges were very different. South Downs enjoys a very strong reputation, and claims to prepare its students for places at the top drama schools (something that is borne out by its destination data with many students not only going on to win highly prized places at institutions such as Arts Educational, Guildford School of Acting, and Mountview Theatre Arts, but also receiving full scholarships which cover the fees for the full three years of training through the government Dance and Drama Award scheme). South Downs has become the 'go to' college for students in the South East who are serious about musical theatre as a career. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the college has excellent facilities including seven dance studios, most with sprung dance floors and two with a floor suitable for tap dance, and a fully functional Theatre and Studio Theatre with air conditioning and "... a state-of-the-art lighting rig. There is also a digital programmable sound system, lending performances real professionalism" (South Downs College, n.d.). Students also have access to excellent music facilities and a large costume wardrobe. South Downs showcases are well attended and draw audiences outside of the usual circle of friends and family. In 2012 a student at South Downs achieved a triple distinction for her BTEC and was awarded the highest mark in the country for her Trinity Guildhall Grade 8 in Musical Theatre (South Downs

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<sup>86</sup> Although it is possible to find examples of excellent teachers everywhere, they are more likely to be attracted to a college with a high success rate, better facilities, and more investment (and therefore more security and more job satisfaction). Generally speaking teachers with the strongest technical expertise and most direct experience of the performance industry are to be found nearer to London, in the areas surrounding the big drama schools, or in places where there is a thriving regional producing theatre.

<sup>87</sup> I taught on the Eastleigh course, and I worked with many BTEC students from the South Downs course whilst working as the musical director for STP Musicals.

[College, 2012](#): 2). Some BTEC colleges, including South Downs, organise trips to New York for their students, offering the opportunity to see a number of productions on Broadway and to participate in musical theatre workshops with Broadway performers and creatives<sup>88</sup>. This combination of good facilities, excellent results, strong destination data, and extra-curricular opportunities, has meant that South Downs is able to attract high calibre students from a wide catchment area<sup>89</sup>.

The local competition is another factor that can have a major impact on the success of a particular course. Eastleigh College is next door to another college, Barton Peveril, which has a good reputation for the performing arts, and Eastleigh struggled to compete for good students. For the most part those students that it did attract to its performing arts course appeared to be doing the course because it was relatively easy to get on to and because it qualified them for 'Education Maintenance Allowance', rather than because they had a particular interest in the course. In addition many students were battling with personal problems<sup>90</sup>, and consequently levels of motivation were low, and there was a sizeable problem with attendance and punctuality. Staff turnover was high, facilities were not as good as at its competitor institutions<sup>91</sup>, and there was little money available to invest in things like performing rights for established pieces of musical theatre. The college's apparent lack of commitment to the course may have been because it did not view it as part of its core offering, but whatever the reason, a downward spiral in its fortunes led to the closure of the course<sup>92</sup>.

Importantly, the standards applied to Performing Arts students at South Downs and Eastleigh were very different. Most BTEC assessments happen internally (although there is external moderation at various points), and so a department can sometimes end up scoring students based on how far they have come as individuals, rather than in relation to a national standard. In Eastleigh's case, some students had to overcome huge personal barriers in order to demonstrate an understanding of very basic concepts, and many 'merit' and 'distinction' grades were awarded on this basis<sup>93</sup>. Three distinctions awarded for the BTEC Extended Diploma is equivalent to three A grades at A-Level, and on paper, a 'distinction' is a 'distinction' ... until it meets the cold hard reality of

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<sup>88</sup>New College Swindon ran a trip to New York in June 2013. While the students had to contribute substantially to the cost of the trip, there was subsidy available from the college, and group and educational discounts reduce the overall cost [Source: Nicola Brown, Course Leader at New College Swindon].

<sup>89</sup>The South Downs College website boasts students from Basingstoke, Andover, Farnham, Farnborough, Guildford, Southampton, Winchester, Chichester, Selsey, Worthing, Bognor Regis, Alton, Petersfield, Portsmouth, Southsea, and the Isle of Wight ([South Downs College, 2013](#)).

<sup>90</sup>When I taught at Eastleigh College a number of students had problems at home, two were facing criminal charges, one was a young mum, and some were struggling with problems associated with alcohol and substance abuse.

<sup>91</sup>Although a dance studio was created towards the end of my time at Eastleigh.

<sup>92</sup>Although subsequently the college re-established a BTEC National Diploma course in Dance.

<sup>93</sup>The answer to this conundrum might be to score a student's effort and progress separately from attainment.



an audition<sup>94</sup>. In the case of performing arts students, auditions/destination data are the ‘acid test’.

Not all BTEC courses are delivered by mainstream schools and colleges. Spotlights Theatre Company offers six BTEC courses in practical, work-based settings<sup>95</sup>. There are also some specialist institutions who choose to offer A-Levels and/or BTECs in Performing Arts in addition to other courses<sup>96</sup>. Some commentators have argued that this is seen as a marketing opportunity and/or fundraising exercise. State schools and further education colleges receive money from the government for each student under the age of 19 on a BTEC course, and this extends to drama schools which offer the course. This sort of guaranteed income is attractive to drama schools which, as privately run institutions, rely on fees from students on their vocational courses. Furthermore attracting students to BTEC/A-Level courses produces a pool of students who are likely to move on to 3-year diploma and degree courses at the same institution.

The Brit School offers a BTEC in Musical Theatre. The staff are able to combine the work done in each department to produce full scale musicals, helping to keep costs down and academic standards up. The Brit School offers two 2-year Musical Theatre training course options: one at Key Stage 4 (KS4) for students in Year 10 and 11, and the other at post-16 for students in Years 12 and 13. “Both follow a BTEC qualification that is delivered by a diverse team of experienced industry specialists” ([The Brit School, n.d.](#)).

In an effort to ensure that the BTEC course is relevant and adequately prepares students for further training and ultimately a career in the performance industry, The Point Theatre in Eastleigh worked in conjunction with Pearson Publishing ([Pearson Education Limited, 2013](#)) to provide “advice and content for their BTEC course guides and learning materials”. The theatre also “offers BTEC focused workshops and support for students and teachers” ([The Point Eastleigh, n.d.](#)).

This arrangement helps to ensure that Pearson can draw on the expertise of those people best placed to comment on the syllabus, i.e. those currently working in the industry.

<sup>94</sup>Plainly there is a parallel here with the arguments about whether a degree at one university is worth the same as at another. However when John Hood, vice-chancellor of Oxford University, was asked whether a degree from Oxford University had the same value as a degree from Oxford Brookes, he said: “At Oxford, we apply a consistent standard in awarding degree classifications. We use external examiners and we take their assessments very, very seriously”. Janet Beer, vice-chancellor of Oxford Brookes University also commented to say: “It depends what you mean by equivalent and worth. We know our 2:1 is of a national standard” ([Shepherd, 2009](#)).

<sup>95</sup>“The Spotlights package includes the chance to get involved with 20 different shows a year, combat training, singing lessons and plenty of practical work in the environment of a working theatre”. Most students go on to attend 3-year courses at drama schools ([The Stage, 2010: 24](#)).

<sup>96</sup>These include Tiffany Theatre College; The Hammond School; Birmingham Theatre School; Arts Ed, and Italia Conti. For schools like The Hammond School and Arts Ed, the BTEC is a natural progression from their 11–16 day school, but for others like Tiffany Theatre College, it is run in parallel with their 1 and 3-year vocational courses.



This is a model that might be usefully applied more widely, for example, through the creation of a panel of performing arts specialists acting as an advisory committee to government and to grant-awarding bodies on syllabus content. It is important that what is being taught on vocational courses reflects the trends of the performance industry at the time and ensures that students on the courses are adequately prepared for further study, and eventually for a career in performing arts, notwithstanding the fact that not all students will choose to pursue a career in performance, and these students need to develop transferable skills which will enable them to move on to other areas of study or employment.

### 3.5.4 Specialist Further Education colleges

The final option for students choosing to pursue post-16 Musical Theatre training is a vocational college<sup>97</sup>.

Vocational institutions fall into two categories: those which operate completely independently, and those which have been accredited, validated, or endorsed<sup>98</sup> by quality assurance bodies and/or higher education institutions.

The high costs of training and a challenging job market have led to a call for more openness by training providers. “Unwelcome financial commitments followed by low returns on income are assumed by those applying for drama school courses. However further cuts by Local Authorities with less support for theatre will mean that employment opportunities will decline further” (*The Stage: Stage Talk*, 2013). Whilst Drama UK has reiterated the need for colleges to be more open in disclosing statistics, it is not always in their interests to do so. Despite this the numbers applying for vocational courses appears to be undiminished, and in many cases far exceed the number of places available. For example, the CDET<sup>99</sup> report for 2013–14 stated that there were over 8,000 applicants, 6,691 were auditioned, 2,251 places were offered<sup>100</sup> and 1,036 are now training at a CDET institution (772 females and 264 males).

#### Private colleges

Drama schools have talked about a move away from the state sector (*Grimston, 2011a*). RCSSD Principal, Gavin Henderson, said that “Acting courses cost about £15,000 to

<sup>97</sup>Many of the colleges now offer the opportunity to earn a degree, and so straddle the FE and HE sectors.

<sup>98</sup>In this context ‘accreditation’ refers to quality assurance by CDET, and ‘validation’ refers to Trinity’s requirements for a Level 6 Diploma.

<sup>99</sup>Council for Dance Education and Training

<sup>100</sup>The number of applicants who took up places were fewer than this because some people were offered a place at more than one institution.

deliver (and more than £15,000 for puppetry (as used in *War Horse*)”, and considered taking RCSSD out of the state system “despite it being against all that we stand for”. Rose Bruford’s Michael Earley was of a similar mind, “the simple advantage of going private is that you can strike off in all kinds of ways with new businesses and partnerships with institutions both in this country and overseas”. There are already a number of institutions in the private sector<sup>101</sup>. Pearson, which owns Edexcel, planned to apply for powers to award its own degrees through FE colleges, with Bradford College to become the first FE institution to offer degrees in its own right (Matthews, 2012).

In 2014 there were 16 independent performing arts colleges which offered in-house musical theatre diplomas. Generally these courses run over three years and are designed to prepare students for a career in the performance industry and, more specifically, for a career in musical theatre. These courses have not been accredited by a recognised body and are delivered by privately run institutions with no access to government funding. As a result the fees for these courses can vary widely.

See Table 3.2 on page 152.

TABLE 3.2: Private colleges (Aug 2014)

Institution	Location	Fees	Duration	Recognition
American Musical Theatre Academy	London	£10,000 for Year 1 £10,500 for Year 2 (£20,500 in total)	2 Years	
The Brighton Academy	Brighton	£5,600 per year (£16,800 in total)	3 Years	
D & B Performing Arts	Kent	£7,875 per year (£23,625 in total)	3 Years	Endorsed by CDET
DNA Studios	Herts	£7,500 per year (£22,500 in total)	3 Years	Endorsed by CDET
Liberatus School of Performing Arts	Swindon	Undisclosed	3 Years	Endorsed by CDET
London Theatre School	London	£10,796.40 per year (£21,592.8 in total)	2 Years	
Mandy Ellen Performing Arts College	Kent	£6,600 per year (£19,800 in total)	3 Years	Endorsed by CDET
MGA Academy of Performing Arts	Edinburgh	£5,385 per year (£16,155 in total)	3 Years	
Musical Theatre Academy (The MTA)	London	£14,000 per year (£28,000 in total)	2 Years	
Performance Preparation Academy (PPA)	Guildford	£8,400 per year (£25,200 in total)	3 Years	
(Continued on next page)				

<sup>101</sup>Examples include Buckingham University, Richmond University, Regent’s College, as well as specialist colleges such as the College of Law and BPP University College.

**Table 3.2 – continued from previous page**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Fees</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Recognition</b>
Performing Arts Theatre College	Sutton	£6,000 per year (£12,000 in total)	2 Years	
Phil Winston's Theatreworks	Blackpool	£5,160 per year (£15,480 in total)	3 Years	
Reynolds Performing Arts	Kent	Undisclosed	3 Years	Endorsed by CDET
Sage Academy of Performing Arts	Newcastle	£5,655 per year (£11,310 in total)	2 Years	Endorsed by CDET
Scene II Performing Arts Academy	Essex	£7,500 per year (£22,500 in total)	3 Years	
Tiffany Theatre College	Essex	£10,500 per year (£31,500 in total)	3 Years	

### Accredited/Validated courses

Courses that are accredited or validated tend to be more popular with prospective students (and their parents) for a number of reasons: the processes of accreditation and validation provide a stamp of approval; validated courses offer students a qualification that is the equivalent to Level 6 and which can subsequently be converted into a BA (Hons) on completion of a separate 1-year course; accredited/validated courses are more widely recognised by potential employers in the musical theatre industry, and they provide greater access to funding.

In the discussion that follows I review the historical background to the accreditation/-validation process and the financial ramifications for both students and the institutions they attend. After an overview of the courses on offer and the audition process, the discussion goes on to explore the way in which institutions can be assessed, using CPA Studios as a case study in order to examine the options in some detail. The discussion concludes with a proposal for a new measure which allows vocational institutions to be compared in terms of their value to students rather than student experience, which is the criterion used currently.

The 1975 Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation report on professional training for drama entitled 'Going on the Stage', examined the opportunities available to students who wished to pursue a career in drama. The report concluded there was a clear need for a recognition system, see Table 3.3 on page 154.

TABLE 3.3: Conclusions from the ‘Going on Stage’ report

Recommendation	Method/Rationale
The creation of a body which would be known as the National Council for Drama Training.	The council would regulate professional drama training to ensure a high quality offering which would adequately prepare students for careers in the industry.
Establish clearer funding opportunities and distribute funding on a fairer basis.	Without a secure system of financial support in place many of the best drama schools would inevitably be forced to close because they would be unable to meet increasing running costs through fees alone.
Reduce the number of young people seeking to enter the performance industry.	<p>Without recognition, providers would be less attractive to prospective students, leading to a drop in numbers and ultimately the closure of a number of institutions (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1975: 63).</p> <p>The report asserted that there was “a continuing pressure on an already crowded profession from people outside anxious to get in” (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1975: 13) and that a reduction in numbers at the entry point would help to alleviate pressures on an already saturated industry.</p> <p>(In reality the ‘pressure’ was on the performers already working in the industry, rather than their employers, who would no doubt see an abundance of high quality performers as a good thing since a surplus would not only increase availability/choice but would also put downward pressure on pay, and thus reduce costs.)</p>
Allow successful students to graduate from the course with an Equity card.	It was noted that “sometimes ... even students from the best drama schools are offered a job, but cannot obtain an Equity card” (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1975: 62).

Following the publication of the report, the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT) was established in 1976, and the formal recognition process began. Prior to this there had been funding awarded sporadically by Local Education Authorities and by the Department of Education and Science to institutions they felt were worthy of financial support, and there had been a sort of self-appointed recognition given to those institutions that elected to belong to the Conference of Drama Schools<sup>102</sup>, but there had been no unified recognition system. The publication of the Calouste Gulbenkian report proved to be a turning point in the development of performing arts training.

<sup>102</sup>The CDS was established in 1969 and was made up of 22 schools which offered courses in Acting, Musical Theatre, Directing and Technical Theatre. “The CDS existed to strengthen the voice of the member schools, to set and maintain the highest standards of training within the vocational drama sector, and to make it easier for prospective students to understand the range of courses on offer and the application process” (Drama UK, 2014: 1).

Shortly afterwards, in 1979, the CDET was created in response to the growing number of dance schools in the UK. The CDET was formed by representatives of the performing arts industry, was designed to give students (and their parents) quality assurance by regulating vocational institutions, and was to be governed by the Dance and Education Training Board (CDET, 2014: 1).

Italia Conti's Principal, Eve Sheward, was the first to highlight the problems associated with having one body to regulate dance provision and another to regulate drama provision. Institutions like Italia Conti offered courses which combined dance, drama, and singing, and it was not clear which organisation was best suited to their needs. Sheward was particularly concerned that the introduction of the separate bodies could mean that students would have to study for three years in the subject of Dance, and then for another three years in the subject of Drama, and that neither of the bodies were equipped to regulate Singing training. Pressure from Sheward led to the consideration of a joint accreditation system. The NCDT declined to take on the mantle of overall assessor for all three disciplines (Italia Conti, 2014: 1), but the CDET agreed to increase its scope in order to accredit both Dance and Musical Theatre courses.

In 2014 there were 24 vocational performing arts institutions accredited by the Council for Dance and Education Training (18 of which offer Musical Theatre) and the process of accreditation is a rigorous one. The key terms and conditions required by CDET for beginning the accreditation process are summarised in Table 3.4 on page 156.

The final stage of the accreditation process includes a site visit (from one to three days) by industry consultants and CDET staff to scrutinise the quality of the programme of training (CDET, 2014: 1). Applicant institutions are also required to submit course documentation including: course outlines; schemes of work and lesson plans; a staff hierarchical map, DBS certificates, staff CVs, and staff development plans; timetable structures and studio capacities; student information including induction plans, a student handbook; recruitment procedures; student retention data; quality assurance and self assessment information; destination data, and policy and procedure documentation (Barnbrook, 2011). Once accredited, institutions are required to submit updated course documentation on an annual basis and receive regular visits from CDET inspectors. Key staff members from each institution are also invited to attend a conference on a quarterly basis in order to discuss issues pertaining to accredited schools.

TABLE 3.4: CDET basic requirements

CDET Basic Requirements ( <a href="#">CDET, 2014</a> : 1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Aims to prepare students for career in the performing arts, as performer or teacher</li> <li>b. Has been running for at least four years</li> <li>c. Offers a full-time course of between two and four years</li> <li>d. Delivers at least 900 hours of contact time per year</li> <li>e. Demonstrates clear aims and objectives related to the needs of the dance profession</li> <li>f. Has a clear and coherent management structure</li> <li>g. Possesses appropriate public liability insurance</li> </ul>

Whilst accreditation with the CDET offers assurance that what is being delivered by an individual institution is safe, fair, and of high quality, validation from Trinity College London demonstrates that the subject of Musical Theatre is being delivered in a particular way and that certain areas of study are included in every course.

The validation system with Trinity College London was originally established in order to secure government funding for performing arts institutions. The Dearing Review of 1997 included 93 recommendations to the government regarding higher education. Recommendation 77 was for the Government to establish permanent arrangements for the equitable support of students of Dance, Drama and Stage Management at institutions which are not in receipt of public funds ([Dearing, 1997](#): 308). This was followed in 1999 by the Hosier and Myerscough reports on specialist higher education providers. The reports served to highlight the pressures on performing arts institutions which operated either completely independently or received small and ad hoc grants.

In 1999 the Department for Education and Employment announced a programme of financial awards to enable talented young people to have access to high quality training in Acting, Dance, and Stage Management and Production ([Trinity College London, 2014](#): 1). The NCDT<sup>103</sup> and the CDET worked together to create new qualifications which would qualify for the funding awards. What developed was the series of Professional Diplomas awarded by Trinity College London. The qualifications were designed to be delivered by a number of institutions, and while these institutions would be able to retain a level of independence, particular skills and techniques would have to be covered in the core offering. The funding awards attached to these qualifications became known as the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA) and were initially given to 29 providers. Over the past 15 years, 17 providers have retained the right to offer the awards but two providers have been taken off the scheme after receiving poor Ofsted inspections in 2003. The remaining 10 providers moved from the further to the higher education sector in 2004 and were no longer eligible for the awards.

<sup>103</sup>In 2012 the NCDT and the Conference of Drama Schools merged to create Drama UK ([Drama UK, 2014](#): 1).

Table 3.5 on page 157 provides a summary of the courses on offer, together with their costs<sup>104</sup> and the DaDA grants available. Those institutions with conservatoire status<sup>105</sup> receive HEFCE premium funding, and three institutions<sup>106</sup> receive Music and Dance scholarships. A number of the original members shown in the table have since left the scheme<sup>107</sup>. Accredited schools tend to be concentrated geographically<sup>108</sup>, and with a few notable exceptions, close to London.

TABLE 3.5: Profile of providers and courses 2000-2006

Provider	Joined	Left	Courses	Ofsted		Cost of training	Awards '06	New DaDA '06
				Teach	Mgt			
ALRA	2000		Acting	1	1	£8,161	71	31
Arts Ed. (London)	2000		Acting/MT	1	1	£8,195	170	65
Arts Ed. (Tring)	2000		Ballet	2	1	£8,971	35	19
Bird College	2000		MT	1	1	£7,161	118	49
Birmingham Sch of Acting	2000	2003 - UCE	Acting					
Bristol Old Vic TS	2000	2003- CDD	Acting/ Stage Mgt					
Cambridge Perf Arts at Bodywork	2003		Prof Dance / MT (D)	1	2	£5,526	63	26
Central School Ballet	2000	2004- CDD	Prof Dance / Ballet					
Elmhurst	2000		Ballet	1	2	£8,476	56	24
Eng. Nat. Ballet School	2000		Ballet	1	2	£9,811	36	18
GSA	2000		Acting/ MT/ Stage Mgt	2	1	£7,747	100	50
Hammond School	2000		Prof Dance	1	2	£8,974	69	25
Italia Conti	2000		MT(D)	1	2	£8,224	95	41
(Continued on next page)								

<sup>104</sup>Cost of training includes £1,175 student contribution (2005-6), some or all of which may be paid by LSC for students receiving fees and maintenance income assessed student support.

<sup>105</sup>These are: Bristol Old Vic, Central Ballet School, LAMDA, LSCD, RADA, Rambert and RAD.

<sup>106</sup>Arts Ed., Elmhurst and Hammond School.

<sup>107</sup>Merseyside School of Dance & Drama and the Midlands Academy of Dance & Drama withdrew (though the latter are re-applying); and the Birmingham School of Acting, LABAN and the London Studio Centre all moved to the HE sector.

<sup>108</sup>This is to some extent true of universities also (Coughlan, 2014b), but the overall effect is not as great, simply because there are more universities and their location may better reflect the population distribution.

Table 3.5 – continued from previous page

Provider	Joined	Left	Courses	Ofsted		Cost of training	Awards '06	New DaDA '06
				Teach	Mgt			
Laban Centre	2000	2003-Trinity Laban	Dance Theatre / Contemp Dance					
Laine Theatre Arts	2000		Prof Dance / MT (D)	1	2	£6,921	108	38
LAMDA	2000	2003-CDD	Acting/ Stage Mgt.					
Liverpool Theatre Sch	2003		MT (D)	1	2	£7,194	49	18
LSCD	2000	2003-CDD	Contemp Dance					
London Studio Centre	2000	2003-HE	Dance					
Merseyside Sch of D&D	2000	2003-Indt	Prof Dance / MT (D)					
Midlands Acad of D&D	2000	2003-Indt	Prof Dance / MT (D)					
Mill. Dance	2000		Prof Dance / MT	2	2	£5,411	75	30
Mountview Academy	2000		Prof Dance / MT / Stage Mgt	1	1	£8,761	127	72
Northern Ballet School	2000		Professional Dance	1	1	£6,901	62	21
Oxford Sch of Drama	2000		Acting	1	1	£6,729	52	27
Performers College	2000		Prof Dance / MT (D)	1	2	£5,280	76	25
RADA	2000	2003-CDD	Acting/ Stage Mgt.					
Rambert School	2000	2005-CDD	Ballet/ Contemp Dance					
RAD	2000	2003-HE	Ballet Ed./ Dance Ed.					
Stella Mann	2000		Prof Dance / MT (D)	2	1	£5,908	42	14
Studios La Pointe	2000		MT (D)	2	2	£6,210	58	22



**Table 3.5 – continued from previous page**

Provider	Joined	Left	Courses	Ofsted		Cost of training	Awards '06	New DaDA '06
				Teach	Mgt			
Urdang Academy	2000		Prof Dance / MT (D)	2	2	£6,561	95	34
Webber Douglas		2003-Closed	Acting/ Stage Mgt.					

In 2003 three new providers were given access to the Trinity scheme ([Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, 2006: 1](#)). “In 2005 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority approved the Trinity Professional Diplomas at Level 6 on the FE National Qualifications Framework”; this increased appeal to students seeking to gain a formal qualification as well as vocational training ([Trinity College London, 2014: 1](#)). However this classification meant that the qualification was placed between the further and higher education sectors, causing a number of problems when trying to access funding. For example students on courses at Level 4 or above are not eligible for housing benefit, and their parents can no longer claim child benefit. However because the course is not considered to be part of the higher education sector, students are unable to apply for financial support from the Student Loan Company<sup>109</sup>. In fact, other than the Dance and Drama Awards scheme (which is not available at every college, and certainly not to every student<sup>110</sup>), the only financial support available to students is a Career Development Loan which will pay out a maximum of £10,000 (not usually enough to cover even one year’s fees) and which students must begin to repay as soon as they graduate from their course (unlike student loans which are only payable when income levels reach a certain point)<sup>111</sup>. The DaDA scheme was designed to ensure that individual students could access training, rather than to provide institutions with financial stability ([Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, 2006: 1](#)), although in practice, institutions in receipt of DaDA rely on the money as their main source of income.

<sup>109</sup> “On 25th of November [2015] the Chancellor announced that advanced learner loans will be expanded to include those aged 19–23 and those studying at level 5 and level 6” [Source: Partner Services Management Team Student Loans Company].

<sup>110</sup> An alternative to making allocations via institutions would be to make awards to individual students through a more centralised UCAS-style system overseen by Trinity/CDET, where Ofsted assessments are publicised, and students would be free to ‘spend’ their DaDA at any of the accredited institutions. This would be a major change for institutions and the practical implications of conducting auditions through a central panel etc., would of course need to be thought through, but it may be worth further exploration if it has not been considered already.

<sup>111</sup> Although it is possible for institutions and individual students to apply for bursaries from charitable bodies. A recent example is the Leverhulme Arts Scholarship which in 2012 awarded £240,000 over three years to the London Studio Centre ([London Studio Centre, 2013](#)).

Figure 3.3 on page 160 shows the allocations made to eligible institutions by the Education Funding Agency.

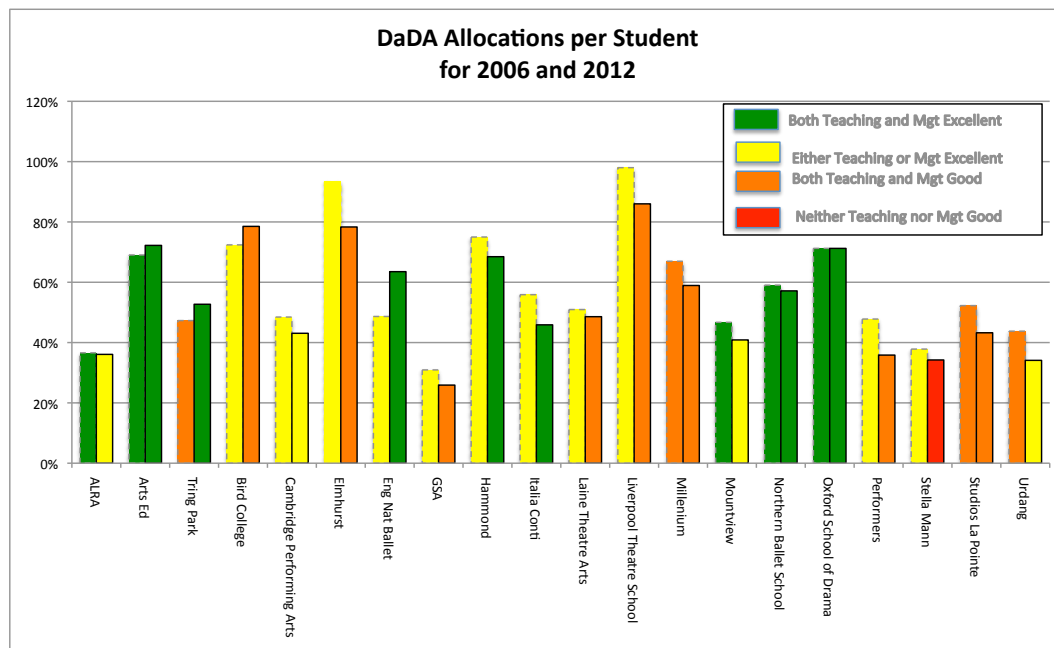


FIGURE 3.3: DaDA allocations

The evaluation of the DaDA scheme observed that the basis of the original allocations was determined by “historical factors”<sup>112</sup> and this seems to be borne out by Figure 3.4 on page 161 which reveals no obvious relationship between DaDA allocations and the underlying Ofsted ratings<sup>113</sup>.

Ofsted<sup>114</sup> collect information on the personal attributes of students<sup>115</sup> which enables them to draw conclusions about access to musical theatre courses for minority groups<sup>116</sup>. The fact that DaDAs are now means-tested allows them to consider socio-economic status also. The DaDA evaluation study<sup>117</sup> conducted by Warwick University on behalf of the Arts Council ([Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, 2006](#)) found evidence to suggest that Musical Theatre drew a smaller proportion of students

<sup>112</sup> “The map of providers and courses supported by the Awards is the result of historical factors rather than being a planned programme of provision” ([Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, 2006](#)).

<sup>113</sup> Other than the fact that one institution was adjudged not to meet the minimum standard required, and therefore received no new DaDA awards that year.

N.b. For the purposes of this analysis, it was assumed that student numbers remained at the same levels for each institution between 2006 and 2012.

<sup>114</sup> And CDET.

<sup>115</sup> Gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status.

<sup>116</sup> This information is taken into account in Ofsted assessments.

<sup>117</sup> Tables 4 and 6.

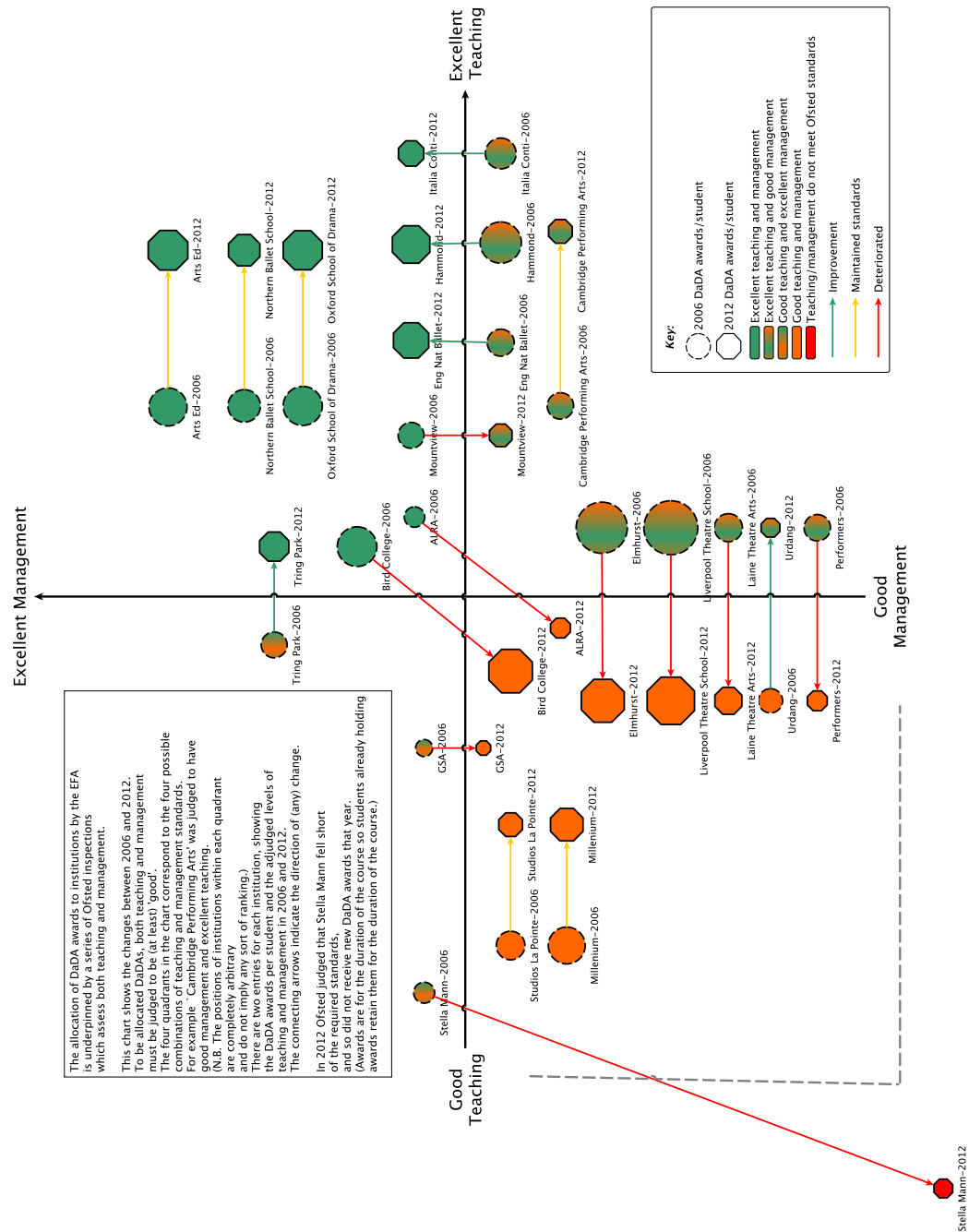


FIGURE 3.4: DaDA: Changes between 2006 and 2012

from wealthiest socioeconomic backgrounds than corresponding courses at conservatoires, ballet schools and institutions that offer drama courses<sup>118</sup>.

Before 2013, the DaDA were distributed as full<sup>119</sup> awards which were passed on directly to students, but there has always been some contention over the disparity in the number of awards each institution received<sup>120</sup>. Some colleges were able to offer a DaDA to the majority of their students, whereas others could offer only one or two fully funded places on their course. In 2013 the awards became means-tested<sup>121</sup>, with each institution being allocated a sum of money which they are able to distribute to students depending on levels of house-hold income<sup>122</sup>. While the total sum of money was not changed, there was concern that institutions would lose students who do not meet the means-test criteria but who would have previously met the ability criteria and would have been awarded a scholarship under the old system (Merrifield, 2013c: 1).

Figure 3.5 on page 162 summarises the DaDA allocations for 2014-15.

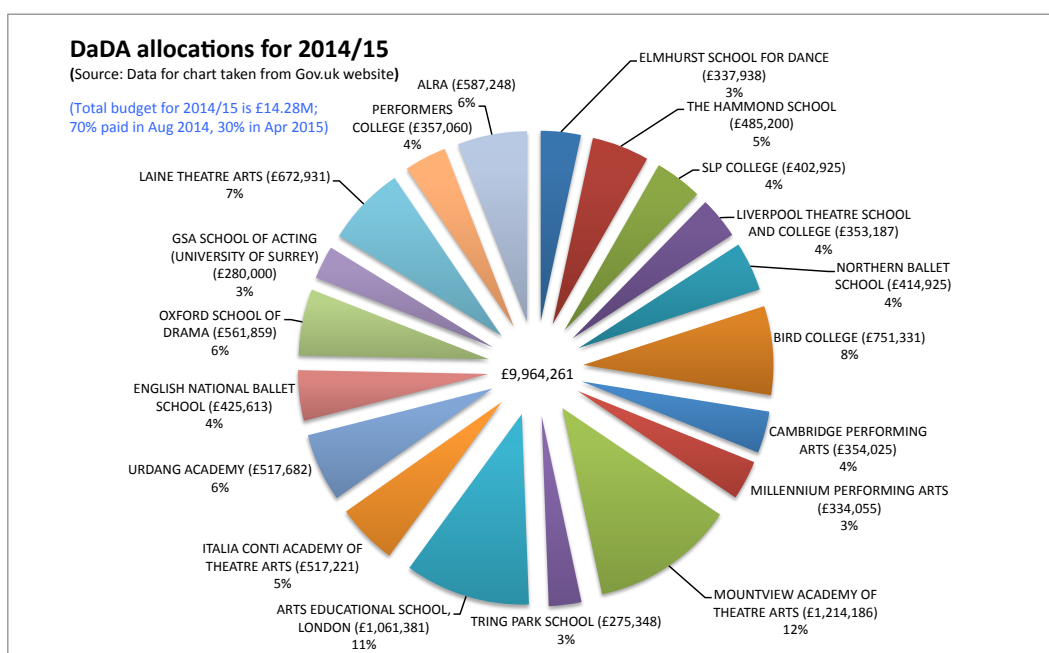


FIGURE 3.5: DaDA allocations for 2014-15

EFA provide a high-level regional analysis of the allocations made. However it is important not to read too much into this because, like university students, drama school

<sup>118</sup>i.e. courses that do not offer musical theatre.

<sup>119</sup>i.e. non means-tested.

<sup>120</sup>The basis of allocations is currently under review. The review will be conducted by EFA, supported by a group consisting of EFA, Ofsted and accredited institutions; I am a member of that group.

<sup>121</sup>Darren Henley's independent review for DCMS, 'Cultural Education in England', recommended that DaDA remain but be means-tested (Henley, 2012: 53).

<sup>122</sup>Details of 2015/16 scheme, including information on the student contribution and the income bands that apply, is published at (DaDA organisation, 2015).

students very often re-locate from different parts of the country<sup>123</sup>; hence to infer conclusions about regional access, it would be necessary to analyse data for individual students.

As costs rise with inflation, and colleges are required to improve their offering to stay competitive, there is an increasing pressure on all, including those institutions fortunate enough to receive a large portion of the DaDA pot. In 2014 there were seven more validated institutions than members of the DaDA scheme, and with pressure from these institutions to enter the scheme, it will not be long before the money pledged by the Government (some £14 million) does not go far enough<sup>124</sup>. There is concern that if the DaDA were to be spread too thinly or abolished altogether, a number of high quality institutions would be forced to close<sup>125</sup>.

Despite drama schools having to satisfy the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) that students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be able to gain access, there is concern that they will be under-represented at drama schools. Some schools received designated ‘exceptional funding’ – an additional levy granted by HEFCE to those schools it considers to “engage in activities which produce additional public value over and above that produced by other institutions not in receipt of the funding”<sup>126</sup> (Colman, 2011).

In 2014 fees for 3-year courses at vocational institutions ranged from £16,800 to £50,985, and the fees were not regulated by external bodies. Most institutions find themselves having to offer their own scholarships<sup>127</sup> which are drawn from a student hardship fund built over time through fundraising events, donations, and through the institutions’ own saving schemes, or by finding ways to reduce costs<sup>128</sup>.

<sup>123</sup>CPA students are drawn from all parts of the UK and Ireland, and even from mainland Europe.

<sup>124</sup>In 2016 GSA chose to withdraw from the scheme due to conflicts with other government funding streams and KS Dance elected not to bid for consideration during the DaDA review.

<sup>125</sup>The current allocation system is underpinned by a system of Ofsted inspections, but their findings seem to be used currently only as a ‘gateway’ to DaDA allocations. If the purpose of the DaDA system is to reward/incentivise, and thus maintain, excellence (and at the same time to broaden the choice available to students), an alternative might be to consider a stronger link between DaDA allocations and Ofsted ratings, shifting the balance of resource toward institutions which are adjudged to be operating at a higher standard. More radically, raising the cut-off in standards would allow the EFA to ration awards, whilst avoiding the risk of resources being spread too thinly when the overall DaDA budget is insufficient to support all accredited institutions.

<sup>126</sup>Information on HEFCE exceptional funding allocations is published ((HEFCE, 2015), (CSSD, 2008)).

<sup>127</sup>In 2010 there were in all 11 scholarships promoted by ‘The Stage’ in conjunction with performing arts schools; for example Stella Mann and Reynolds each offered scholarships covering tuition fees for the 3-year course. These were worth £30,000 (Vale, 2010) and £22,500 (Elkin, 2010e) respectively. All prospective students pay an audition fee, and the fact that prospective students also have to pay a fee to be added to the reserve list for some schools is not popular with applicants: “You have to pay to stay on the standby list of most schools, the costs for that are extortionate”, Ben Hames, a student applying for a place (Vale, 2010).

<sup>128</sup>Students are encouraged to find their own ways of supporting themselves, including: running their own fundraising events; applying for grants from organisations like the Arts and Sports Trust; taking a gap year to earn enough money to support themselves for the duration of the course; undertaking part-time jobs while training, and auditioning for high paid performance work which often takes them

Organisations like the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation and the BBC Performing Arts Fund<sup>129</sup> offer grants to individual students, as well as to institutions, but the demand far outweighs the supply. Beneficiaries tend to have long-standing relationships with donor organisations, and award grants accordingly. For example, the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation made a donation of £3.5 million to Arts Ed in 2011, making it possible for them to build a new theatre and cinema complex ([Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, 2014: 1](#)). Other institutions have benefitted also, but it is not a scheme that is open to all<sup>130</sup>. The majority of vocational institutions offering Musical Theatre courses are accredited by the CDET or Drama UK and are validated by Trinity College London, and this has been the case since the inception of the Trinity Professional Diplomas. However, in recent years concerns have been raised over duplication between the organisations involved<sup>131</sup>, harking back to the battle Eve Sheward had when the CDET and the NCDT were first established. Glyndwr Jones, who replaced Sean Williams in 2012 as the Director of the CDET, was Head of Qualifications and Standards at Trinity College London, and played a key role in designing the Trinity Professional Diplomas<sup>132</sup>. Jones made the point that in the current system, much of the administrative work associated with the accreditation and validation processes is duplicated, and that the majority of examiners and assessors work for both organisations and are required to write separate reports for each<sup>133</sup>. What Jones proposed is an alignment between the CDET and Trinity which would streamline the process and make it easier for the organisations to spend their time really scrutinising member institutions. Given that the CDET helped to create the Trinity qualifications, and that institutions are advised to obtain accreditation with the CDET before they apply for validation with Trinity, it seems wholly appropriate for the two bodies to work together more closely.

Most institutions do complete the accreditation process before they begin the validation process with Trinity, but accreditation does not guarantee success at the validation stage. In 2014 there were four institutions which had been accredited by the CDET but which had not been validated by Trinity. CPA Studios was the first musical theatre institution since 2003 to be given validation from Trinity.

See Table 3.6 on page 165.

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out of the training that they are so desperate to finance. ‘Crowdfunding’ has also become increasingly popular across the Performing Arts Sector.

<sup>129</sup>The BBC Performing Arts Fund closed in May 2015.

<sup>130</sup>The allocation of grants is in the hands of Casting Director David Grindrod who relies on his own personal experience of working with graduates when deciding which institutions will benefit from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation.

<sup>131</sup>In September 2015 five of the 18 members of Drama UK, including RADA and Bristol Old Vic theatre school, decided to end or suspend their membership due to rising costs and what was perceived to be a dilution of the accredited brand arising from the addition of a ‘recognised school’ category.

<sup>132</sup>Jones’ experience means he is well-placed to consider the roles of each organisation and how they can work together.

<sup>133</sup>Glyndwr Jones’ meeting with CPA Studios following his appointment with the CDET.

TABLE 3.6: Accreditation (as of 2014)

	<b>Drama UK</b>	<b>CDET</b>	<b>Trinity</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Fees p.a.</b>
Arts Ed	X		X	DEGREE City of London University	£13,720 <b>£41,160</b>
Bird College of Dance		X	X	DEGREE University of Greenwich	£11,250 Dip £9,000 BA (Hons) <b>£33,750</b>
Cambridge Performing Arts (Bodyworks)		X	X		Undisclosed
The Centre Performing Arts College		X			Undisclosed
CPA Studios		X	X		£10,270 <b>£30,810</b>
Expressions Academy of Performing Arts		X		BTEC	£7,800 <b>£23,400</b>
Guildford School of Acting	X		X	DEGREE University of Surrey	£9,000 <b>£27,000</b>
The Hammond School		X	X		£16,695 <b>£50,085</b>
Italia Conti	X	X	X	DEGREE University of Greenwich	£15,990 <b>£47,970</b>
Laine Theatre Arts Ltd		X	X		£16,995 <b>£50,985</b>
Leicester College of Performing Arts			X		£7,500 <b>£22,500</b>
Liverpool Theatre School and College		X	X		£10,500 <b>£31,500</b>
London Studio Centre		X		DEGREE Middlesex Uni- versity	£13,250 <b>£39,750</b>
Masters Performing Arts College		X			£10,200 <b>£30,600</b>
Midlands Academy of Dance and Drama		X			£8,500 <b>£25,500</b>
Millennium Performing Arts		X	X		£11,325 <b>£33,975</b>
Mountview	X		X	DEGREE University of East Anglia	£13,250 <b>£39,750</b>
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>					

Table 3.6 – continued from previous page

	Drama UK	CDET	Trinity	Other	Fees p.a.
Oxford School of Drama	X		X		£14,925 <b>£44,775</b>
Performers College		X	X		Undisclosed
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	X			DEGREE University of London	£9,000 <b>£27,000</b>
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	X			DEGREE University of Glasgow	£9,000 <b>£27,000</b>
SLP College		X	X		£11,400 <b>£34,200</b>
Stella Mann College		X	X		£9,345 <b>£28,035</b>
Tring Park School for the Performing Arts		X		A-Level/ BTEC	£21,330 <b>£42,660</b>
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance				DEGREE City University	£9,000 <b>£27,000</b>
Urdang Academy		X	X		Undisclosed
WAC Performing Arts and Media College		Endorsed by CDET	X		Undisclosed

The fees for a 3-year course range from £22,500 at the Leicester College of Performing Arts, to £50,985 at Laine Theatre Arts. Interestingly SLP College in Leeds (established in 1991) charges more than some of the colleges in and around London, but this may be because there are fewer courses on offer in the north of England; SLP has the monopoly on musical theatre training for that area.

A White Paper jointly produced by Universities Minister David Willetts and Business Secretary Vince Cable revealed that universities would be compelled to tell prospective students how many hours of tuition they would receive, and how well graduates did in the job market ([Grimston, 2011b](#)). Information on contact hours is readily available for vocational institutions.

The Trinity Professional Diplomas stipulate the required balance of contact hours across departments. The Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre has a Singing focus and requires that providers assign at least 600 hours of contact time (across the three years) to delivering the Singing part of the course. Each provider must assign 700 hours of contact time to their ‘key skill’, which could be either Acting or Dance, and should assign



300 hours of contact time to their ‘supporting skill’<sup>134</sup>. In addition to this, providers must deliver 900 hours of contact time on ‘Performance’, 400 hours of contact time on ‘Additional Professional Skills and Practice’, and 100 hours on ‘Integrated Professional Skills’<sup>135</sup>. Within each subject area there are compulsory technical skills which must be delivered, as well as a range of other areas of study from which a selection can be made. The Trinity framework thus ensures consistency amongst providers while still allowing them to remain distinctive and to play to their strengths.

Most vocational institutions offer a full-time programme of at least 30 hours of contact time per week for 30 to 36 weeks of the year, and in that respect there is little difference in contact time between validated and non-validated institutions. Institutions are run by a Principal and are operated on a daily basis by a handful of full-time staff members who work as Course Leaders and Heads of Department. Banks of specialist tutors are employed as freelancers to deliver technical classes and to work as the creative team for productions and event performances. The detail of what is delivered varies by provider, and will depend on the particular expertise of the teaching staff, and to some extent, on the student intake. As a result, each institution will deliver a course in musical theatre in their own way. Some choose to focus on Dance, others on Singing or Acting, but in recent years what has united training providers is the ambition to produce the elusive ‘triple threat’<sup>136</sup>.

Providers want to ensure that students secure high quality and sustained employment upon graduation, and are keen to recruit students with the right potential, usually with expertise in at least two of the three disciplines. There is no formal academic requirement for entry, and Dance, Drama or Music Examinations are generally not taken into consideration in the decision making process. Most colleges run full audition days which allow applicants to participate in a Ballet and Jazz class, as well as some form of Drama and Singing workshop, before presenting solo song, acting, and dance pieces. Often it is necessary to run a number of rounds of auditions either to award places on the course when auditioning numbers are high, or to confer funding. Mountview cap their audition numbers at the first 2,000 applicants ([Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, 2014: 1](#)). The average price of an audition is £35, and with students auditioning at a number of institutions, and potentially travelling across the country to do so, auditioning can be an expensive business. A number of colleges have started to take their auditions out to sixth forms, further education colleges, and part-time performing arts schools across the UK in order to promote themselves to prospective students and,

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<sup>134</sup>i.e. that not chosen as the ‘key skill’.

<sup>135</sup>Including health & safety, critical reflection, independent research, and research methodologies analysis.

<sup>136</sup>A ‘triple threat’ is the expression used in the musical theatre industry to refer to a performer who is strong in singing, dance and acting.

at the same time reduce the cost for applicants. This process is leading to greater numbers of students relocating for their training, meaning that the total cost for the three years grows considerably. Satellite auditions act as a valuable marketing tool in that they introduce the college to teachers and to students in lower years. Accurate and up-to-date information regarding specialist training has been slow to filter into the careers advice available at most secondary schools and sixth forms<sup>137</sup>.

For the past ten years the three day event ‘Move It’ has been held at Olympia Exhibition Centre in London. The event is designed as a trade show for vocational institutions, as well as for other companies associated with the dance industry, and has become a regular outing for performing arts schools across the country. In addition to trade stands there are classes, workshops, and industry talks, as well as opportunities for institutions to perform on the Main Stage and in the Showcase Theatre, in order to showcase their wares. In fact ‘Move It’ has become an opportunity for colleges to compete with one another, and is an important part of the performance calendar for most institutions, attracting approximately 20,000 visitors each year ([Move It](#), n.d.: 1).

The main aim for vocational institutions is to secure high quality employment for graduates. Published destination data includes work in: holiday parks; music videos; short and full length films; television programmes; Theatre in Education projects; regional theatre; touring theatre (both national and international); on cruise ships, and, perhaps most sought after, in the West End. Institutions build their reputations on their destination data, and a number of colleges choose to have an in-house agent to help to secure work for current students as well as for graduates.

That said, not all students will be able to acquire work in musical theatre straight away, or on a sustained basis, and it is becoming more important to students and their families for courses to offer formal qualifications which can be used to increase job prospects in a non-performance context.

In addition to offering Level 6 diplomas, some colleges choose to offer A-Levels and BTEC courses which are either built into the regular timetable or can be taken after college hours<sup>138</sup>. These qualifications are free of charge to the student, and the institutions receive a bursary from the government for every student taking the qualification. These courses can be particularly valuable to those students choosing to enter vocational

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<sup>137</sup>Discussions with interested young people revealed that they tend to rely on what information they can get from performing arts teachers at part-time schools, as well as publications like *The Stage*, the UK Performing Arts Magazine (now online only), and *Dance UK*.

<sup>138</sup>In their marketing Reynolds Performing Arts College and Tiffany Theatre College emphasise the fact these qualifications are an available option. Reynolds claim that “any student with below a C grade in Maths and English will be tutored to that standard to make them employable”. They also offer other courses such as the “Advanced Apprenticeship in Achieving Sporting Excellence” (NVQ Level 3); and in partnership with Trinity, offer a Foundation degree and from 2009 a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre ([Elkin, 2010e](#)).

training at 16 with only GCSE level qualifications behind them. However with the move to encourage young people to remain in mainstream education until the age of 18, it may become more likely for students to defer entry into vocational training until after taking a BTEC or A-Levels (HMG, 2014b: 1).

Students who graduate with the Trinity diploma, and/or (following a new ruling in 2012<sup>139</sup>) students who are graduating from a CDET accredited course, are able to convert their qualification into a BA (Hons) degree by completing further study at a number of institutions. The most common route is to undertake the BA (Hons) in Professional Practice at Middlesex University. The course is part-time, costs £10,125 and takes 15 months to complete (Middlesex University, 2014: 1). Guildford School of Acting, in partnership with the University of Surrey, offers a BA (Hons) in Theatre, which is achieved on completion of a 1-year distance learning course at the cost of £9,000. The final option is the Post-Diploma BA (Hons) in Performance Studies with Arts Ed. The course costs £2,500, is run one evening per week for three terms, and is open only to those with a minimum of three years of professional experience.

Whilst rival institutions can exhibit at ‘road shows’, end of year shows and events like ‘Move It’, a key question for all institutions is how to demonstrate their worth to assessors, to the industry and to prospective students. A coherent, properly run system of assessment is of course the bedrock to a credible arrangement for measuring student progress and achievement<sup>140</sup>.

At CPA Studios the course is divided into four subject areas: Drama, Dance, Singing and Associated Studies, each made up of a number of separate modules. The progress of the students is assessed in each module by two members of staff/external tutors (most of whom are themselves West End performers) in mid-year and end of year assessments. Students’ overall performance is also assessed separately at an end of year show performed in a theatre in front of a live audience (which includes theatrical agents/producers) (Barnbrook, 2007, 2013a,b; Berry, 2012, 2013b).

As might be expected, in the early part of the course there is a strong correlation between overall performance and the technical elements of the course in drama, dance

<sup>139</sup>Source: personal conversation between author and CDET Head of Education Liz Dale in June 2012.

<sup>140</sup>There are various options for measuring growth in ‘core’ skills e.g. singing range (something that is required on a performer’s CV), ballet technique, voice projection etc. There have been a plethora of tests developed to measure musical ability (O’Connell, 1974: 37), e.g. Seashore battery of tests; two Kwalwasser-Dykema tests; three devised by O’Connell himself and another by Lowry. Grade examinations represent another widely used and independently moderated method of measuring musical ability (both instrumental and in singing). There are similar examinations for dance, run by boards including the ISTD and BATD, and for acting, run by LAMDA, and there has been research into developing competence metrics for acting which included basic measures such as the ability to remember lines (Myford, 1991). That said, it is perhaps telling that few vocational institutions choose to rely on previous examination results for selection, instead preferring information collected at first hand during the audition process.

and singing. For example Figure 3.6 on page 170 shows the relationship between the student's performance in the 1st year show and the assessment of their technical ability in drama<sup>141</sup>. Figure 3.7 on page 171 shows the corresponding relationship between the student's performance in the 2nd year show and the assessment of their technical ability in singing.

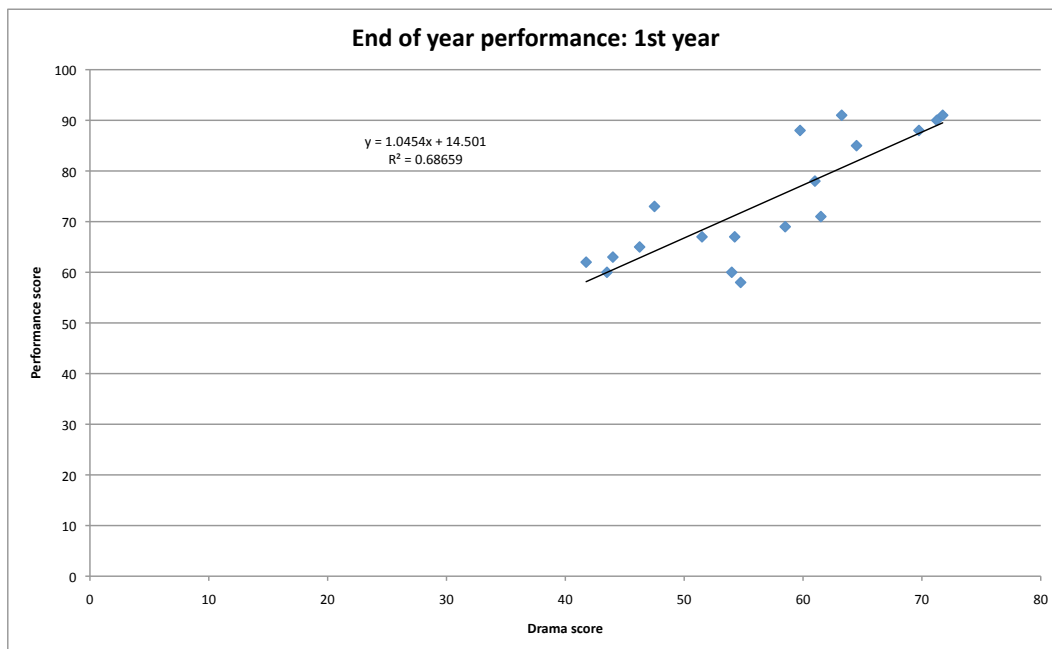


FIGURE 3.6: Relationship between overall performance and technical competence in Drama

Initially students often find the Associated Studies modules (which cover subjects like Music Theory, Professional Practice and so on), a bit 'dry', preferring the practical parts of the course. Interestingly however, by the end of the course, the factor that best 'explains' the variation in their performance in the end of year show (which is their opportunity to 'sell' themselves to agents and producers) is their score in Associated Studies. See Figure 3.8 on page 171.

To be successful as a musical theatre performer, it is important to be competent in each of the three disciplines; to be a so-called 'triple threat'. To be effective therefore, the assessment system used to measure performance needs to consider not only how students perform in individual disciplines, but also how well 'balanced' the student is as a performer. Figure 3.9 on page 172 shows how well balanced the students' skillsets are<sup>142</sup>.

<sup>141</sup>The equation shown on the chart is the equation corresponding to the line of 'best fit' shown on the chart as a solid line.  $R^2$  is a measure of the proportion of the variation in students' performance scores that is 'explained' by the student's drama assessment; the closer that  $R^2$  is to 1, the better the 'fit'.

<sup>142</sup>This chart plots the share of the student's overall score contributed by drama, dance and singing respectively, the sum of the three adding up to 100%. The closer the student is to one of the vertices, the

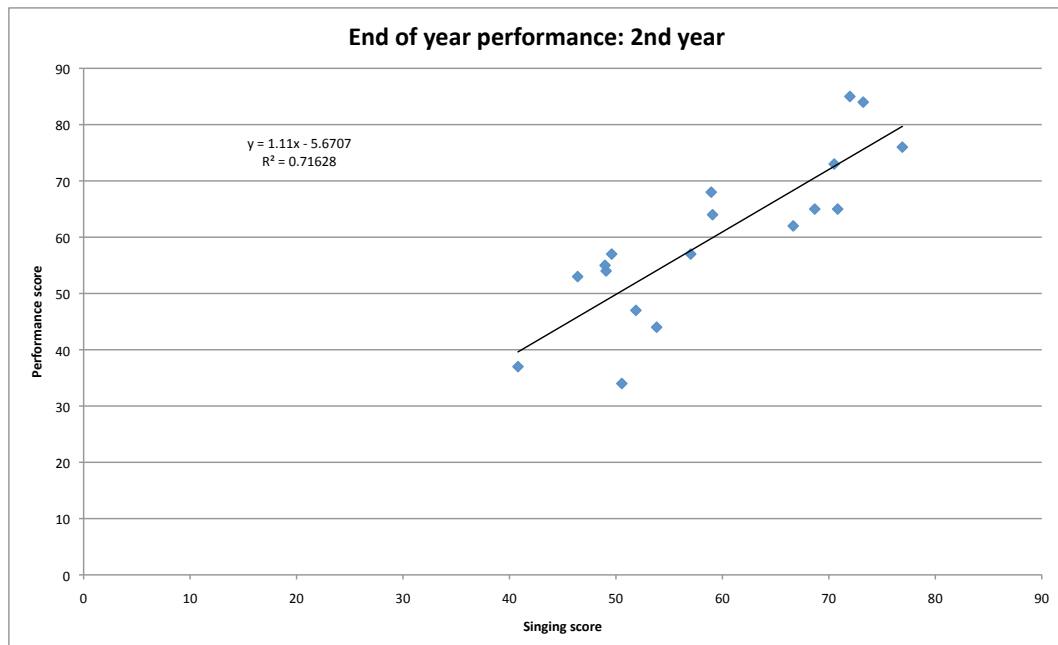


FIGURE 3.7: Relationship between overall performance and technical competence in Singing

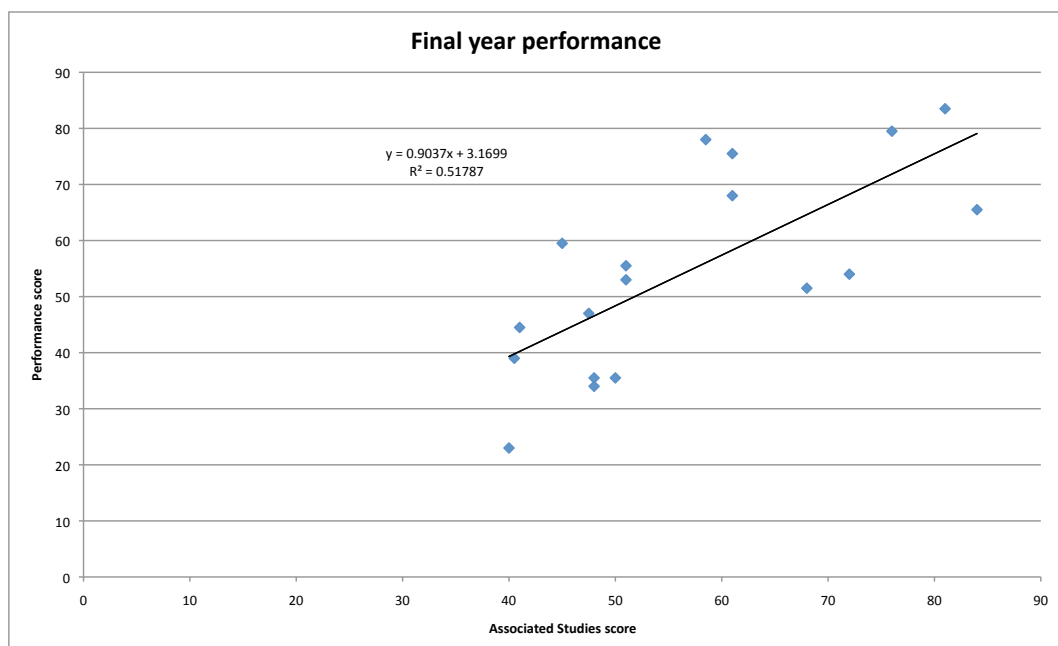


FIGURE 3.8: Relationship between overall performance and Associated Studies score

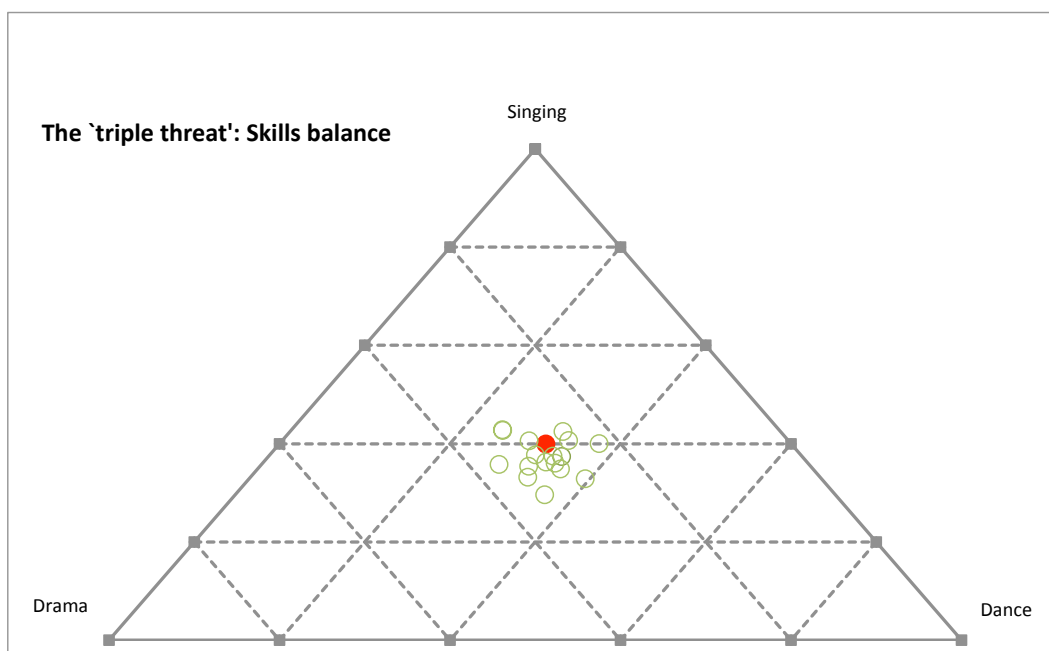


FIGURE 3.9: Skills balance

Accredited colleges are required to submit detailed destination data<sup>143</sup> to CDET by 30th September in the year students graduate<sup>144</sup>. Over 95% of students graduating from CPA in 2014 had found work in the performing arts industry by the end of September<sup>145</sup>. Half had contracts in theatre or pantomime (usually both), and just over 15% had worked in film or TV. Over a quarter had been engaged in commercials, promotional work, functions or worked in music videos, and just over 10% were working as teachers<sup>146</sup>. In theory it would be possible to investigate the correlation between destination data and course assessment, but the form of destination data may make this challenging for Musical Theatre graduates.

The Times Higher Education rankings ([Times Higher Education, 2015](#)) compares university courses, but it tends to be based on research record, and does not really cover

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stronger the student is in that discipline relative to the other two disciplines. A student who is equally strong in all three disciplines will appear in the centre of the triangle. It is perhaps no coincidence that the student performing best in the final end of year show (the assessments based on the end of year shows can be regarded to some extent as the equivalent of final examinations taken at universities, and provide an indication of the growth in overall '(musical) theatrical competence' throughout the three years of the course (indicated by the red circle on the chart) also proved to have one of the most balanced skill sets.

<sup>143</sup>It is worth noting that for most performers, work is very often intermittent, and tends to be interspersed with other work such as teaching.

<sup>144</sup>In addition updates are provided on students graduating in previous years.

<sup>145</sup>In general the information that is publicly available is much more broadly based, and arguably less useful as a guide to prospective students.

<sup>146</sup>Overlaps between the categories mean that the figures quoted are not additive.

vocational institutions<sup>147</sup>. The rankings produced by the Guardian ([The Guardian, 2015b](#)) are better in that their focus is on teaching<sup>148</sup>, and include ‘value-added’ measures. However these are based on growth in ‘academic’ qualifications<sup>149</sup>.

By no means all of the major drama schools are covered in Times Ed. or Guardian rankings, and so these are not especially relevant for students who want to pursue a career in musical theatre. Indeed not everyone is convinced measures of achievement based on academic qualifications are relevant to vocational courses. Joanna Read, the Principal of LAMDA, takes issue with Rose Bruford Principal, Michael Earley, who advocated that drama schools become more academic ([Read, 2013](#)), “LAMDA is a conservatoire, a specialist institution that delivers vocational training for a profession. LAMDA’s training is vocational – because drama is a vocation – and we are training students for the industry. The training is practical because drama is about doing and being. Actors (and technicians) do not need to write essays to be critical thinkers.”

Student satisfaction data are routinely collected by many universities/colleges, and websites exist which make comparisons available in consolidated form ([Grove, 2014](#)). However these fall short of the comparisons available for university courses published by The Times, for example.

The importance that drama schools attach to student satisfaction surveys<sup>150</sup> is demonstrated by the reaction in the stage press to the publication of the results of the National Student Survey. Michael Fry, Deputy Director of East 15, challenged the article in The Stage ([Merrifield, 2013a](#)) which had reported findings from the National Student Survey showing that Rose Bruford and Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD) came out top with 87% ([Fry, 2013](#)). Fry made the point that the corresponding results for East 15 had been incorporated into the overall figure for the University of Essex<sup>151</sup>, but when disentangled, as it would be in the HEFCE Unistats statistics ([UNISTATS, n.d.](#))<sup>152</sup> published in late September, the figure for East 15 would be shown to be 97%.

Student satisfaction survey figures are of course based on the views of students who are studying currently, and therefore say something about the experience of studying at a particular institution (although most students will not be in a position to compare their

<sup>147</sup>Although many, including CPA, carry out exercises of their own to allow them to analyse feedback from students.

<sup>148</sup>Another option for musical theatre courses would be to use Ofsted assessments, but these are available exclusively for accredited institutions, and are undertaken only on a 6-year cycle.

<sup>149</sup>They compare final degree results with qualifications on entry. No attempt is made to weight the rankings by an institution’s reputation; the assumption is that a 2.1 from Oxford Brookes has equal worth to a 2.1 from Oxford.

<sup>150</sup>The weight attached to the results of student satisfaction surveys is perhaps because they are one of the few publicly-available means of comparison.

<sup>151</sup>East 15 is part of the University of Essex.

<sup>152</sup>These provide a breakdown of NSS results by institution and course.

institution with others). Arguably though, only after they have completed the course are they well placed to say how valuable the course was in helping them to find high quality employment.

Statistics on student degree classifications are available for all UK universities, but the corresponding statistics for musical theatre courses more generally are less readily available, and perhaps less relevant anyway. Arguably, for performing arts students, where you trained carries more weight than the grades achieved. There are various ways of measuring the success of an institution: accreditation/qualifications are one measure, ‘added value measures’ are another. Many institutions gauge their success by how long it takes for their alumni to secure a job of some kind<sup>153</sup> (UNISTATS, n.d.)<sup>154</sup>. However for vocational subjects like the performing arts, what matters most to the majority of students is whether they are able to secure a good quality job in the industry after completing their course. Most musical theatre students aspire to a job in the West End, so one way to compare institutions is to analyse data for West End performers to see which institutions provide the most.

Below I propose a new method of ranking Musical Theatre courses based on securing employment in the West End.

To begin with, performer data (who they are, the roles<sup>155</sup> they are playing, and where they trained) were taken from the websites of the musicals that are in the West End currently<sup>156</sup>, supplemented by data from elsewhere<sup>157</sup>. Approximately 450 roles for the 13 shows were considered<sup>158</sup>. The results<sup>159</sup> are shown in Figure 3.10 on page 175. Figure 3.11 on page 176 allows us to explore the possibility of special relationships between training institutions<sup>160</sup> and individual shows<sup>161</sup>.

<sup>153</sup>It is worth noting that both anecdotal evidence and the limited statistical evidence available (HESA, n.d.b) suggest that a relatively small proportion of performing arts students end up working in areas directly related to the subject they studied at university, unsurprising given that most university degrees are about giving people a broadly-based education rather than preparing them for a specific career.

<sup>154</sup>For some courses, information on average salary six months after completing the course is also available.

<sup>155</sup>In some cases the same person fulfils more than one role. In fact, at the time when the data for the research were gathered, two performers were listed in the casts of two separate shows.

<sup>156</sup>September 2014.

<sup>157</sup>In particular the Spotlight casting directory. The data assembled in this way are given in Appendix A.

<sup>158</sup>Only adult roles are included. Remuneration for child performers is covered in the chapter on Professional Theatre.

<sup>159</sup>For the sake of clarity, only those institutions with more than one performer in the West End are included. Overseas institutions are excluded for the same reason.

<sup>160</sup>For the sake of clarity, only the biggest contributors are included.

<sup>161</sup>For example, it shows that performers who trained overseas make an especially large contribution to *The Lion King*.



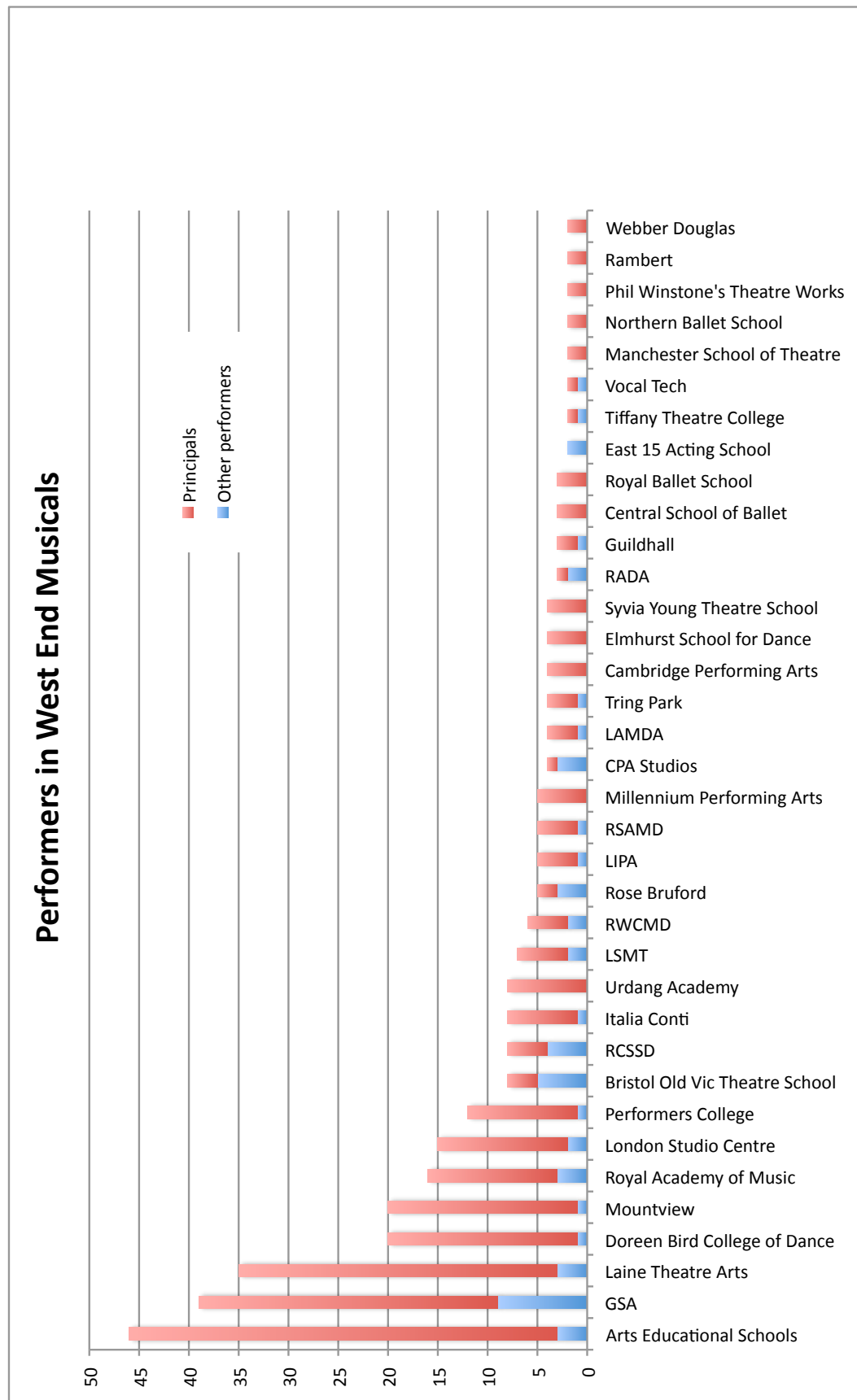


FIGURE 3.10: Performers in West End musicals

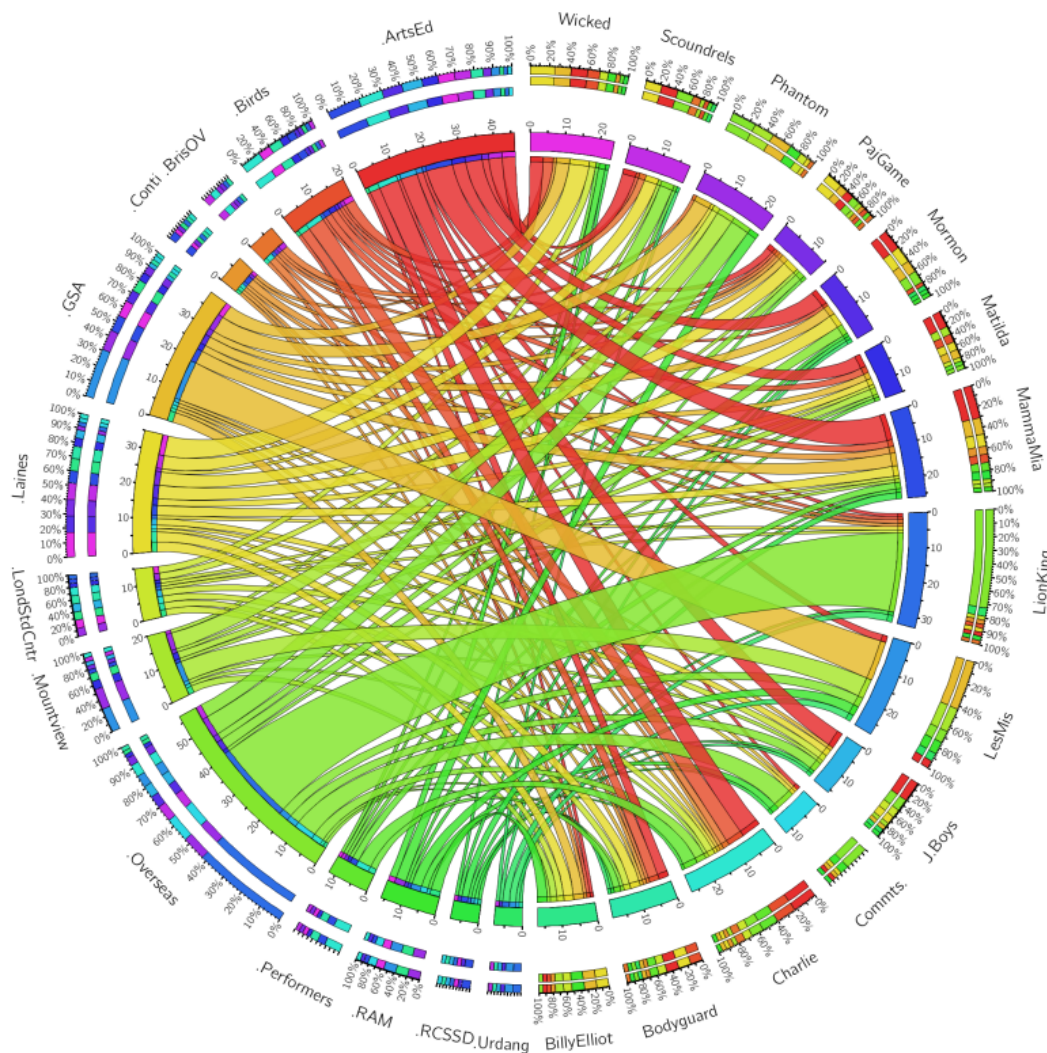


FIGURE 3.11: Relationship between institutions and productions

However senior roles are prized more highly (and are better remunerated) than others. Figure 3.10 shows the total number of performers trained at each institution<sup>162</sup>. It also shows the number of principals provided by each institution, and this tells a different story; for example CPA Studios, which is a relatively small college, is only 19th in the league table when judged according to the total number of performers, but rises to (joint) 4th<sup>163</sup> when judged according to the number of principals.

Pay rates for senior parts can be much greater than for ensemble members, particularly where roles are played by celebrities: Michael Ball commands £30,000 p/w for example. Broadway pay is generally higher than that in the West End; Broadway star, Gavin

<sup>162</sup>The number of institutions supplying performers to the West End is large (not least because of the number of child performers), and only those institutions supplying more than one performer are included in the analysis. Overseas institutions which trained approximately 10% of the performers are excluded for the same reason.

<sup>163</sup>Only GSA, Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and RCSSD had more.

Creel, received £25,000 p/w for playing Elder Price in the *Book of Mormon*, but the pay for his British counterpart was £10,000 p/w. ‘Jukebox’ musicals seem to pay well<sup>164</sup>. Scaramouche in *We Will Rock You* is paid £2,000 p/w, and Joe Casey and Sarah (male and female lead) in *Our House* are paid £2,000 p/w. Interestingly, there can be differences in the rates for male and female leads: in *Grease*, the male lead, Danny, is paid £1,500 p/w, whereas the female lead, Sandy, is paid only £800 p/w<sup>165</sup>. However currently the ‘going rate’ for principals in the West End seems to be around £1,000 p/w, with the rate for Bill Kenwright’s (touring) productions at £800 p/w<sup>166</sup>.

The proposition presented here is that senior roles should be weighted more heavily than junior roles, and one way of doing this would be to weight the number of performers by their cost to the producers. To do that each role was classified according to the categories used by Equity/SOLT when negotiating pay rates for West End performers, which can be taken to represent the relative value that the industry attached to each role. Hence by calculating the weighted<sup>167</sup> sum of the performers who trained at each institution, it is possible to produce an estimate of the overall contribution that each institution makes to West End musicals (in economic terms and in terms of kudos for the institutions), and the results are summarised in Figure 3.12<sup>168</sup> on page 178.

As the chart shows, the biggest players in the West End at the moment are Arts Ed, GSA and Laine’s, but the chart also demonstrates the aggregate contribution of a large number of smaller providers (denoted as ‘Others’ in the chart), which proves to be substantial, as does that of overseas institutions.

The measure could (and arguably should) be adjusted to take into account the fact that annual output of graduates varies from institution to institution<sup>169</sup>, and the result could be refined in various ways<sup>170</sup> which takes into account the date of graduation; fees charged by institutions could be taken into account (although this would be complicated by DaDA and scholarship awards); separate sub-measures could be used for different specialisms to reflect the fact that institutions specialise (e.g. Urdang specialises in

<sup>164</sup>This is presumably because they are more commercial and so already have a following.

<sup>165</sup>This may be due to the forces of supply and demand. Analysis of the gender split in the roles considered for Figure 3.10 on page 175 indicated that around 60% of the parts were for men and only 40% for women (though this will of course vary according to the mix of shows on at the time). Set against this CDET statistics show that in 2014/15 of the 1,036 taking up places to study musical theatre at accredited institutions 772 (almost 75%) were female and 264 male.

<sup>166</sup>Source: personal conversations with West End performers and agents.

<sup>167</sup>The weights used are the pay rates quoted in the Equity/SOLT agreement ([Society of London Theatre, 2014](#)) except for that for Principals which is not covered by the agreement, and is here assumed to be £1,000 p/w, which is considered to be the current non-celebrity ‘going rate’ in the West End.

<sup>168</sup>Only the top 20 contributors are shown separately; with the rest grouped together under ‘Others’.

<sup>169</sup>That said, preliminary investigation into a small subset of institutions did not suggest that variations in the contribution they make to the West End could be explained by the size of institution alone.

<sup>170</sup>For example, the measure could be converted into a series consisting of, say, quarterly estimates.

Contribution that training institutions make to the West End  
(The top 20 contributors account for approximately 63% of the total)

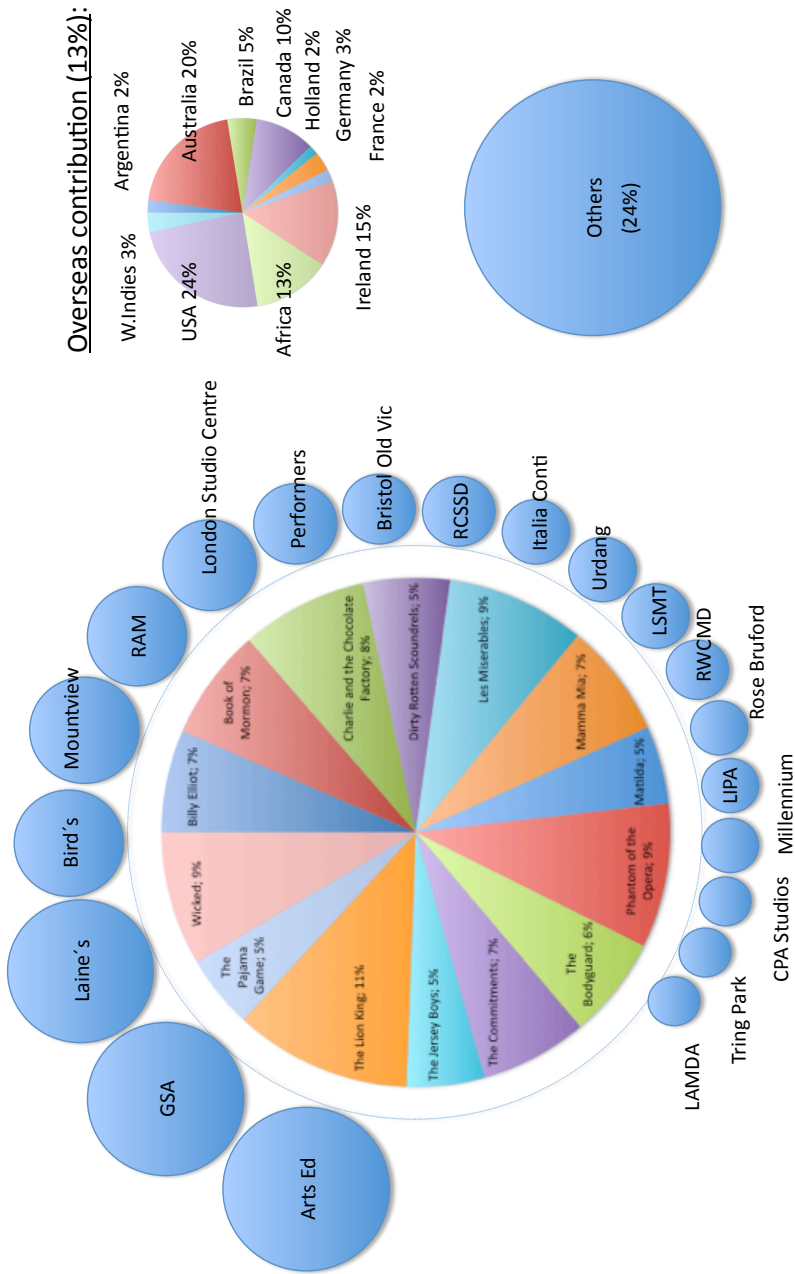


FIGURE 3.12: Contribution of training institutions to West End musical theatre

dance). Here the measure is presented in its most basic form for the sake of clear exposition.

It is interesting to speculate about why some institutions appear to contribute so much more than others to West End theatre<sup>171</sup>. Figure 3.13 on page 179 indicates that contributions rise in direct proportion to an institution's resources<sup>172</sup> perhaps suggesting that it might be able to serve as a proxy for a range of factors<sup>173</sup> which determine an institution's success<sup>174</sup>. The chart also suggests that those institutions which specialise in dance<sup>175</sup> exert more economic 'leverage' than other institutions<sup>176</sup>, although the effect will be to some extent offset because dancers tend to have shorter working lives in the West End than those for actors and musicians.

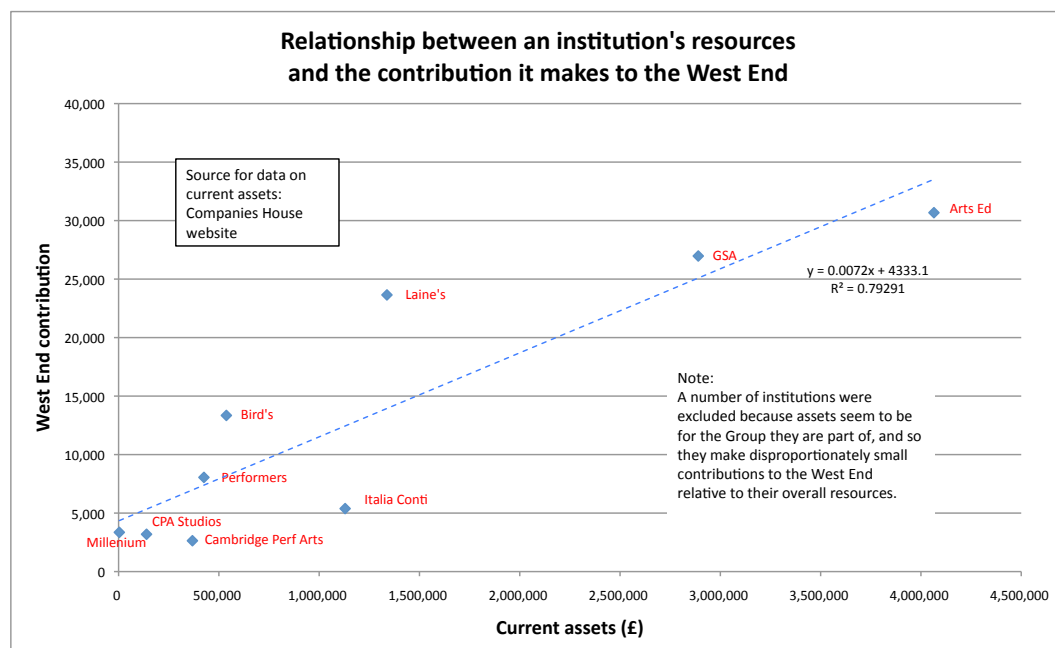


FIGURE 3.13: Effect of an institution's resources on its contribution to the West End

Research commissioned by the Royal Academy of Music, the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music, with Universities UK, produced estimates

<sup>171</sup>A number of factors might influence the contribution an institution makes: standards of teaching and management, student numbers, quality of intake, facilities available, location, how well 'connected' an institution is (Andrew Lloyd Webber is the president of Arts Ed for example).

<sup>172</sup>Financial information on each institution was taken from the Companies House website. Only a small proportion of institutions file full accounts, with most submitting only abbreviated accounts, and the only financial measure consistently available for all institutions is 'current assets'; information on 'fixed assets' is also available, but harder to be confident that it is defined consistently for all institutions. Here 'current assets' is used as a proxy for available resource.

<sup>173</sup>Reflecting student numbers, expenditure per student and, indirectly, intake quality.

<sup>174</sup>One might speculate that Italia Conti produce fewer West End performers per £ of current resources because they run a school for children as well as a drama school. The contribution for Cambridge Performing Arts (Bodywork) may be lower partly because it is located outside the London area.

<sup>175</sup>For example, Laine's, Bird's, Performers.

<sup>176</sup>By virtue of the fact that ensembles are populated mostly by dancers.

of the wider contribution that conservatoires make to the national and local (London) economy (LSE, 2012)<sup>177</sup>.

### 3.6 Foundation courses

Foundation courses<sup>178</sup> generally act as a bridge between further education and higher education (or the equivalent vocational course). They can be an attractive option for a number of reasons. Firstly they can help students with less experience (and expertise) to establish the basic groundwork necessary to successfully audition for drama schools. Secondly, if a student is weaker in one area, they can spend a year developing these skills so that they have all three disciplines to offer at audition. Foundation courses can also help students to decide whether Performing Arts is definitely the career for them, before they commit to a 3-year course. Many parents seem to prefer this option due to the high costs involved in training<sup>179</sup>, and an understandable concern that students may not find the more rigorous regime of full-time training to be as enjoyable as the extra-curricular experiences most young people have had previously. Some drama schools will not accept students straight out of further education because they like them to have a more mature perspective and a little life experience behind them. Students turned away from 3-year programmes for this reason very often take up places on foundation courses because they cannot see themselves doing anything else in the meantime. Most foundation courses thus serve as a ‘prep school’ to the real thing, offering the incentive that students will then be well placed to win scholarship places at drama school. This is evidently attractive to students even though most foundation courses at the sought after institutions charge fairly high fees (in addition to audition costs, registration fees, and associated fees). There are also no sources of government funding currently on offer to students on foundation courses.

See Table 3.7 on page 180.

TABLE 3.7: Foundation courses (as of 2014) - Degree where indicated

Institution/ Course	Fees
Amersham & Wycombe College 2-year Foundation in Musical Theatre Course	Nil for 16 - 18; £11,000 for 19+
(Continued on next page)	

<sup>177</sup>Whilst response rates to surveys seeking destination data were not high, the findings of the research were consistent with there being a higher proportion of conservatoire graduates going on to work in the industry than those studying Music at university. The overall cost of studying at a UK conservatoire is higher than at a university, but substantially less than at US counterparts such as Juilliard.

<sup>178</sup>Also known as ‘pre-vocational’; these courses are different from foundation degrees.

<sup>179</sup>Perhaps hoping that their children will decide that the performing arts is not the career for them after all.

**Table 3.7 – continued from previous page**

<b>Institution/ Course</b>	<b>Fees</b>
ArtsEd. London - School of Musical Theatre Foundation Course - Musical Theatre London	£9,000
Bird College Pre-Vocational Foundation Year in Dance and Theatre Performance Sidcup	N/A
Birmingham School of Acting Foundation Course (Including Musical Theatre) Birmingham	£5,750
The Brighton Academy 1-year Pre-Vocational Course	N/A
Bucks New University 2-year Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre, High Wycombe	£11,000
Cambridge Performing Arts at Bodywork Company 1-year Intensive course Cambridge	N/A
Canterbury Christ Church University and K College Foundation Degree in Performing Arts Canterbury	£5,600
Chicken Shed Theatre Company Foundation Degree in Inclusive Performance London	£8,000
Colchester Institute 2-year Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre Colchester	£16,000
CPA Studios 1-year Pre-Vocational course Romford	£5,135
CTA Performing Arts London 1-year Intensive Musical Theatre Course Chiswick	£8,250
Dance Reality College Intensive Course (Musical Theatre) Reading (Last updated in 2009)	£4,800
Directions Theatre Arts Chesterfield Ltd 1-year Foundation Course Chesterfield	N/A
Dorset School of Acting 1-year Acting & Musical Theatre Course (3 days per week), Dorset	£4,750
Dudley College 2-year Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre Dudley	N/A
Evolution Foundation College 1-year Foundation Course Colchester	£6,500
Guildford School of Acting (GSA) 1-year Musical Theatre Foundation Course Guildford	£9,000
Jason Thomas Performing Arts Cornwall	£7,200
KSA Academy of Performing Arts 1-year Musical Theatre Diploma Course & 2-year Musical Theatre Diploma Course Beckenham	£8,250
Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts 1-year Foundation Course London	£9,402
Laine Theatre Arts 1-year Foundation Course Epsom	£8,000
Liverpool Community College Foundation Course in Performing Arts Liverpool	N/A
Liverpool Theatre School 1-year Foundation Course Liverpool	£3,450
London Studio Centre 1-year Foundation Course London	£9,000
Mandy Ellen 1-year Foundation Course Maidstone	£6,660
MGA Academy of Performing Arts Pre-Vocational Musical Theatre Course Scotland	£3,900
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>	



**Table 3.7 – continued from previous page**

<b>Institution/ Course</b>	<b>Fees</b>
Midlands Academy of Dance & Drama (MADD) 1-year Intensive Foundation Diploma in Musical Theatre Nottingham	£3,300
Millennium Dance 2000 Theatre School 1-year Foundation Course	£5,250
Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts 1-year Foundation in Musical Theatre, North London	£8,000
Northbrook College 2-year Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre, Sussex	N/A
North London Dance school (NLDS) 1-year Foundation Course Winchmore Hill, London	£7,200
Oxford School of Drama 6-month Acting in Musical Theatre Foundation Course Oxford	£7,000
Performing Arts Theatre College Foundation Course in Performing Arts; 2-year Professional Diploma in Performing Arts or Musical Theatre Sutton	£4,200; £6,300
Performers College Foundation Course Essex	N/A
Performance Preparation Academy (PPA) 1-year Intensive Course in Musical Theatre; 2-year Musical Theatre Preparation Course Guildford	£8,856; £17,700
Read Dance and Theatre College 1-year Intensive Course Reading	£7,050
SLP College 1-year Foundation Leeds	£6,000
Tiffany Theatre College 1-year Foundation Course Leigh-on-Sea	£10,500
Tring Park 2-year Performance Foundation Course Tring Hertfordshire	N/A
Urdang Academy 1-year Foundation Course in Dance and Musical Theatre	N/A

Foundation courses are offered by the main drama schools (including Mountview, GSA, Italia Conti, and more recently Arts Ed, who opened their full-time foundation course in Autumn 2013 ([The Stage, 2013a: 14](#))). These courses are also offered by specialist colleges who deliver only a foundation programme; these colleges argue that they are the better option because they have no bias; their aim is to get students into drama schools in general and not simply act as feeders for their own institution<sup>180</sup>. There does not appear to be information which is readily available on whether foundation courses are a significant advantage to people applying for places at drama schools.

The Performance Preparation Academy (2008) in Guildford initially offered a course designed for 16 – 19 year olds “leading to the equivalent of three A–Levels or a Level 4 diploma” and aimed at getting all its graduates into drama schools. So successful was

<sup>180</sup>These institutions are likely to be judged only on the proportion of their students who go on to secure places at the top drama schools, which means that there is perhaps even more pressure on them to be highly selective in their audition process. However since there is no financial support from the state, there has to be a trade-off between recruiting only the highest quality applicants, and accepting students of lower ability to ‘balance the books’.



the institution that it expanded to run a number of other courses, including a 3-year diploma in Musical Theatre which is run by Gerry Tebbutt (former Head of Musical Theatre at GSA). PPA's course claim is distinctive because it also includes instrumental lessons, so that students learn to be 'quadruple threats', and each student is assigned an industry mentor. PPA's diversification does not seem to have an adverse effect on quality, with "95% of all students gaining places at leading colleges such as Bristol Old Vic, Rose Bruford, Mountview, Arts Ed, ALRA, Bird College, Royal Welsh and our own 3-year course" ([Performance Preparation Academy, n.d.](#)).

Stageworks in Cambridge operate an interesting business model: students who have not previously undertaken similar qualifications have access to government funding, meaning that they only pay £825 towards registration and examination costs for Stageworks' 2-year Audition Preparation Course. Students not eligible for this funding are required to pay £9,000 in total for the 2-year Level Three Diploma in Musical Theatre. The course was designed as a stepping stone between school and 3-year drama school courses, and a key part of Stageworks' marketing strategy is to cite the drama schools that its alumni go on to. Like PPA, Stageworks have developed a Professional Performer Course, but in an attempt to offer something different from the competition, Stageworks runs this course over two years, but claim that it should be considered as "an alternative to attending a higher education vocational course for 3 years" ([Stageworks Performing Arts, 2013](#)). Because the course is run over two years rather than three, Stageworks charges £15,000 for the course, and its website is able to claim that students on their course "can expect to save between £12,000 and £23,000 on comparative fees" ([Stageworks Performing Arts, 2013](#)).

Foundation courses are not the sole preserve of drama schools. There are a number of colleges who have chosen to move away from BTEC and Higher National Diploma courses and instead offer Foundation Degree programmes. "This is partly because the college or university has a lot more latitude over the content of a foundation degree than it does about an HND, whose syllabus is dictated by Edexcel, the examining body" ([The Stage, 2010](#): 23). Amersham and Wycombe College decided to take this route because they felt that the Edexcel syllabus was slow to respond to the ever changing needs of the industry<sup>181</sup>. The advantage to students on the foundation degree course is that it is possible to convert the qualification into a full degree, and often the final year can also be taken at the same college ([UCAS, n.d.a](#)). The fees for these courses are also substantially lower than fees for drama school and university courses.

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<sup>181</sup>Source: Personal conversation between the author and Jo Roots, Head of Dance at Amersham and Wycombe College.

A number of universities offer top-up courses for students with Foundation Degrees or Higher National Diplomas. Amersham and Wycombe College is an example of an institution where it is possible to study for a Foundation Degree or Higher National Diploma (HND) at a further education or higher education college, and the courses take two years to complete. The difference between taking the HND route and the Foundation Degree route is similar to the difference between BTEC and A-Level qualifications: one is vocational, and one is more academic, but both are equivalent to 240 points on the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme and can be a stepping stone towards a full degree (UCAS, 2014a: 1).

The HND is practice based and usually leads on from BTEC courses at further education colleges, whereas the Foundation Degree<sup>182</sup> involves more academic work and is often undertaken by students who have taken A-Level qualifications either in addition to, or instead of, a BTEC course. The Higher National Diploma follows a syllabus set by Edexcel and as such is a nationally standardised qualification, and in theory might therefore claim greater consistency in standards than those found in Foundation Degree courses which are designed and assessed by a particular university. On the other hand Foundation Degree courses are designed with employment in mind<sup>183</sup>, and often representatives from the industry in question are asked to contribute to the design of the course.

Tuition fees for a Foundation Degree or a Higher National Diploma vary by institution<sup>184</sup>, and range from £500 to approximately £6,000 (NIDirect, 2014: 1), but students on both courses are eligible for financial support from the Student Loan Company. Even at their most expensive, both courses are cheaper than two years at university on an undergraduate programme, and the top-up fee is usually below the £9,000 tuition fees set for each year on a full degree course. City College in Southampton points out that studying for a Higher National Diploma with them is “70% cheaper than studying for a degree at university for three years” (City College Southampton, 2014: 1).

### 3.7 Higher Education

Musical theatre training at higher education level comes in two forms: the first is the opportunity to obtain a BA (Hons) degree at a vocational institution, the second is to follow the more traditional university route. In 2013 (university) Drama degree

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<sup>182</sup>The Foundation Degree is a form of degree qualification, and qualification holders are able to use the letters FdA (or FdSC) upon completion of the course.

<sup>183</sup>Ironic given that the HND falls into the vocational category.

<sup>184</sup>Depending on what is on offer – for example some courses include research trips.

applications increased by 7.3% (up to 50,000), and applications for Music degrees rose by 20.5%, whereas Dance degree applications fell by 1%<sup>185</sup> ([Merrifield, 2013b](#)).

### 3.7.1 Vocational institutions

Mountview cap the number of students auditioned at the first 2,000 applicants ([Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, 2014: 1](#)), and Arts Ed auditions 1800 students but offers only 50 places on the Musical Theatre course ([Arts Educational Schools London, 2014: 1](#)). In 2007 The Stage published an article stating that the competition for places at drama school was “fiercer than for Oxbridge”<sup>186</sup>. Statistics gathered in 2005 from the 21 members of the Conference of Drama Schools revealed “a total of 11,184 applicants for 1,550 places, meaning that on average only one in every seven applicants gained entry. This compares to a level of around one in four for both Oxford and Cambridge” ([Smith, 2007: 1](#)).

A number of vocational institutions have become affiliated with universities in order to be able to offer a degree qualification in-house. It is unusual for institutions to be granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers<sup>187</sup>, and instead they must form a partnership with a university in order to offer a degree course. This partnership can be operated in a number of ways.

The first partnership model is akin to the Trinity validation system in that the institution functions as it did before, but pays an annual fee to a university. The institution will be subject to an initial full validation inspection which is followed by re-validation visits after fixed periods of time. A university is of course likely to require the institution to put in place measures to ensure standards. External examiners will review performances and assessments and may be involved in the marking of some academic work, particularly third year dissertations. This is financially attractive to institutions because students are able to apply for Student Loans in order to fund their tuition fees, and at the same time the institution is able to control the content and delivery of their course. Not unreasonably, a university might insist on measures to ensure quality (such as more stringent requirements regarding the qualifications of teaching staff). However the course content, timetable structure, and contact hours will remain unaffected by this type of

<sup>185</sup>However this needs to be set against the fact that they had fallen by 14%, 8% and 18%, respectively in 2012 following the increase in tuition fees to £9,000 ([Merrifield, 2013b](#)).

<sup>186</sup>Although it must be said that there is a certain amount of pre-selection that takes place in respect of university applications on the basis of predicted examination grades, this does not take place in the case of vocational institutions who select on the basis of auditions.

<sup>187</sup>The Guildhall School of Music and Drama who were awarded Taught Degree-Awarding Powers in 2014 is an exception ([Guildhall School of Music and Drama, 2014: 1](#)).

partnership. Bird College of Dance follows this model, and was the first college of its kind to offer a professional dance degree<sup>188</sup>.

A second model involves students paying their tuition fees directly to the university and the university in turn awarding a fixed sum of money to the institution. While this model gives some stability to the institution in that the sum of money they have access to is guaranteed, there are ramifications. Institutions need to account for their spending and to justify choices to people who do not necessarily understand the specific needs of a vocational course. East 15 Acting School is validated by the University of Essex and has seen this partnership affect their budgets. In 2014 East 15 was told that in addition to an overall cut in its budgets, the number of visiting tutors would need to be reduced, one MA course was to be withdrawn altogether, and another stream should be added to courses which were oversubscribed<sup>189</sup>.

A third model involves a merger so that the institution becomes a department within the wider university. This allows staff to teach on a number of courses within the university and gain access to staff development opportunities like the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. There is also an opportunity for cross-collaboration between departments<sup>190</sup>. With larger budgets available, universities often have better resources and facilities than vocational institutions, although of course competition for them may be greater by virtue of larger student numbers. Guildford School of Acting merged with the University of Surrey in 2010 and has subsequently seen a complete restructuring of the senior faculty, access to new buildings and facilities including the Ivy Arts Centre and student accommodation, and “collaboration with other disciplines including Music, Dance, Film and Digital Media” (GSA University of Surrey, 2014: 1).

Whichever partnership model is adopted, offering a degree course will require changes. Firstly, the entry age for the course will be raised to 18, meaning those students wishing to pursue musical theatre training at the age of 16 will have to wait for a further two years before beginning their training. Dance specialists will argue that students need to begin their training while their bodies are still developing, and that there is a ‘shelf-life’ for dancers<sup>191</sup> (as for any athletes) because of the physical demands placed on the body by eight shows per week. In this respect, it is important for students to enter the profession as early as possible. Acting and Singing specialists take a different view. Acting tutors feel it is important for students to have had some life experience before

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<sup>188</sup>The BA (Hons) Degree in Dance and Theatre Performance was established in 1997 (Bird College, 2014: 1).

<sup>189</sup>Since writing this, Thomas Hescott wrote an article on the same theme (Hescott, 2014).

<sup>190</sup>Solent University’s Performance department uses students on courses in Music Technology, Make Up and Hair Design, and Public Relations and Communication, to help to mount their productions.

<sup>191</sup>Conversations with West End performers indicate that a dancer’s stage career typically ends at around 35.

they begin their training, and prefer that they enter the course with the maturity and dedication that comes with age. The voice does not settle until young people reach their early twenties (and in some cases, not until mid-late twenties), and as such, later entry to vocational singing training is preferred by tutors<sup>192</sup>.

As well as imposing limitations on the age of entry, degree courses also require evidence of academic ability<sup>193</sup>. In order to have reached the level of technical expertise needed to win a place at a vocational institution, young people will very often have had to focus their attention on the practical, at the expense of their academic studies. Hence the imposition of academic entry requirements could make it difficult for students to access vocational training at this level, regardless of their practical/technical ability; this in turn can affect, and in some cases weaken, the mix of ability levels on the course<sup>194</sup>. On the other hand, the opportunity to earn a degree may appeal to students<sup>195</sup> who want to study a subject they particularly enjoy but do not necessarily aspire to a career as a performer. Destination data show that relatively few students from university degree courses end up working in musical theatre in the West End.

Some institutions choose to offer a Level 6 diploma alongside a degree course. In this case, students follow the same syllabus, but the students on the degree course are required to complete a dissertation style research project towards the end of their three years. A parallel can be drawn with other vocational diploma courses like nursing where it is possible to graduate with a degree by completing additional assignments and/or having their work marked against a different set of criteria<sup>196</sup>.

A student's course choice is likely to be influenced by the funding available. Students studying for a degree may apply for student loans, but are not eligible for a DaDA. While the student loan will usually cover the costs of tuition fees, and possibly some of the living costs, the money must be repaid over time once income reaches the stipulated level. A DaDA, on the other hand, does not have to be repaid. If a student knows he or she will not be eligible for a DaDA because their household income is too high, they might choose to take a place on the degree course. It is in fact possible to undertake the Level 6 diploma and a BA (Hons) degree concurrently, and a number of institutions allow students to do this so that they are able to benefit from a DaDA but still graduate with

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<sup>192</sup>Child performers are of course a special case and must be treated accordingly.

<sup>193</sup>Introducing a degree course is also likely to have an impact on the mix of staff members. If the course is designed to be run entirely in-house, staff members will need to be equipped to deliver all parts of the course, including supervising the academic parts. This is likely to necessitate an increase in the number of staff members with Masters level qualifications, and, depending on the requirements of the validating university, an obligation for staff to work towards the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (and to become members of the HEA).

<sup>194</sup>Joanna Read's comments come to mind here (Read, 2013).

<sup>195</sup>And their parents who are invariably party to the decision.

<sup>196</sup>There are perhaps some similarities with the Foundation degree route.

a degree<sup>197</sup>. Conversely, in order to simplify their offering, once in a position to offer a degree, some vocational institutions moved away from the Level 6 diploma altogether.

Of course institutions are motivated to seek validation not just because it allows students to more easily secure the finance they need (which in turn increases student numbers), but simply because they feel the course warrants the recognition that comes with having degree status.

These courses are designed to equip students with the skills and expertise necessary to have a long and successful career in the performance industry; training can be intense and requires as much effort from students as university degree courses. Graduates from Level 6 diplomas (or equivalent) are able to gain a BA (Hons) on completion of a conversion year which involves a number of theoretical modules. Another option might be to incorporate these modules into the 3-year courses to reduce overall costs for students, and to strengthen the connection between the practical and the theoretical. There is perhaps an argument for relabelling degrees earned via a vocational route to acknowledge the large proportion of practical work<sup>198</sup>, as is the case for other vocational courses such as medicine and law.

### 3.7.2 Universities

Vocational institutions tend to be the preferred choice for students aspiring to be top flight performers, but competition is fierce, and many students instead choose performing arts courses at universities. While the competition for places on musical theatre courses at mainstream universities is not as strong, there is evidence that these courses are still very popular.

“According to UCAS, Performing arts have seen 23% increase in applications nationally between 2003-2007, with the biggest rises being in Music Theatre<sup>199</sup>” ([Cumberland News, 2008: 1](#)). “Despite the cost of studying at university increasing considerably over the last four years, 2,240 new students still chose Performing Arts over Maths, Science and Engineering – courses with a much higher chance of employment after graduation” ([Cumberland News, 2008: 1](#)).

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<sup>197</sup>Both GSA and Arts Ed advertise this on the admissions pages of their websites.

<sup>198</sup>Perhaps introducing a BVoc category.

<sup>199</sup>The article points out that unsurprisingly this is the “same period of time where the talent shows became an omnipresent beacon for TV entertainment” ([Cumberland News, 2008: 1](#)).

The UCAS website reveals that, in 2014 there were 25<sup>200</sup> universities offering full degree courses in Musical Theatre or similar. Interestingly, even those universities which do not offer courses in Musical Theatre, still choose to subsidise it, in some cases heavily<sup>201</sup>.

In 2014, typical course fees for musical theatre courses at universities were £9,000 per annum, the maximum that can be charged for a degree course. Students are able to apply for tuition fee loans and maintenance loans from the Student Loan Company and may also be eligible for maintenance grants (which do not have to be repaid), depending on parental income<sup>202</sup>.

Course content on full degree courses varies widely. Some universities offer high numbers of contact hours with a very practical focus and others choose to concentrate on the theoretical and academic side of musical theatre, allowing students time for personal research. However even those with high numbers of contact hours cannot compete with the hours delivered by vocational institutions who are in general better connected with the industry, and therefore better positioned to respond to changes in its demands. What is taught at universities is determined by the subject specialism of faculty members, whereas in vocational institutions the content of the course is built around a core syllabus which is then customised as necessary to respond to the changing expectations of the industry<sup>203</sup>.

Three-year courses at vocational institutions culminate in a showcase performance to help students to obtain representation. This is not a central part of most university courses and instead the third year builds towards final assessment work and the submission of a dissertation or research project. However there are performance opportunities during the course which could be used for show-reel purposes and also to add credits to a performance CV, and while the university itself might not make connections with industry representatives, it is possible for students to use the performances as showcase opportunities<sup>204</sup>.

The application process for university is made through UCAS, and students are required to satisfy the grade requirements (sometimes expressed as a minimum number of UCAS points). Most universities also audition students, but the selection process is not as

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<sup>200</sup>Excluding vocational institutions and 'top up' courses.

<sup>201</sup>Oxford University gives annual support of £32,000 to the Musical Theatre Society. Source: Personal conversation with Musical Theatre Director and Oxford Graduate, Lotte Wakeham in March 2009, and also (Mitchell, 2011).

<sup>202</sup>The maximum tuition fee loan was £9,000, and the maximum maintenance loan is £7,675 for those living away from home in London, £5,500 for those living away from home outside of London, and £4,375 for those living with their parents (www.slc.gov.uk). Maintenance grants of £3,387 were available to those with a household income of under £25,000.

<sup>203</sup>For example, West End productions like *Bend it like Beckham* have introduced aural tests to early audition rounds, prompting CPA Studios to include an intensive aural skills module in its course.

<sup>204</sup>It is worth noting that this tends to work best if the university is in close proximity to London because that is where musical theatre agents tend to be based.



rigorous as for a vocational institution. Universities tend to ask to see solo material from two of the three disciplines but few require applicants to spend a full day participating in classes and workshops in the way that vocational institutions do. Greater weight is given to personal statements, graded music, dance and drama examinations (which contribute towards UCAS points), and previous experience of performance, than at vocational institutions where potential is assessed through the audition process.

It is not uncommon for university students to be academically stronger, but weaker in terms of technical skills, than those training at vocational institutions, and in general, students applying for courses at university do not have the same career expectations as those applying for places at vocational institutions, something which is reflected in destination data. Universities do not use their destination data<sup>205</sup> to promote their courses<sup>206</sup> in the way vocational institutions do, and it is unusual to see students from university courses performing in the West End. Universities do publicise the links they have with the performance industry and this is built into the delivery of the course, but focus on a more broadly based set of career opportunities<sup>207</sup> and the transferable skills the students will acquire during the course which can be used to increase general employability<sup>208</sup>. Arguably these skills will also be acquired by students at vocational institutions, but they are not valued as highly by the students as the technical skills developed during their training.

For those students passionate about a career in performance there is the opportunity to undertake a Masters level qualification at a vocational institution.

### 3.8 Postgraduate courses

Unlike the 3-year diploma/degree courses at vocational institutions which, by and large, share a common purpose, postgraduate courses vary considerably.

The main options for studying musical theatre performance at Masters level are listed in Table 3.8 on page 191, which also includes the Postgraduate Diploma offered by the Royal Academy of Music, and the postgraduate certificate in performance offered by the University of Chichester.

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<sup>205</sup> Although in general university students find it more difficult to acquire agency representation, there are exceptions. Blackpool & Fylde claims that 80% of its 2012 graduates secured agency representation within six months (Blackpool & Fylde College, 2014).

<sup>206</sup> Except in the most general sense, e.g. in terms of the percentage of alumni who found some sort of employment after studying at the university.

<sup>207</sup> For example, teaching, arts administration, arts marketing, venue management, public relations, and work in the public sector.

<sup>208</sup> These include: team work, creative thinking, problem solving, presentation, research, and self-evaluation.



TABLE 3.8: Postgraduate courses (Aug 2014)

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Fees</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Validating University</b>	<b>Entry Requirements</b>
Royal Academy of Music	£13,800	Musical Theatre PG Dip.	University of London	The normal minimum entrance qualification is: a high level of performance as determined at audition, normally, but not necessarily, a first degree or undergraduate performance diploma, or an equivalent standard of performing ability and professional experience.
GSA	£14,980	MA Musical Theatre	University of Surrey	Post-18 FE/HE level professional training at an accredited drama school or conservatoire. Alternatively, five years professional experience in the performance industry may be considered.
RCSSD	£12,900	MA in Music Theatre	University of London	A degree or equivalent qualification and/or significant and appropriate professional experience, as well as relevant performing experience. An offer will normally only be made after interview/audition.
Mountview Theatre Arts	£14,724 + £1,675 for MA	MA in Performance (Musical Theatre) Postgraduate Diploma in Performance (Musical Theatre)	University of East Anglia	Entry is determined through audition or interview. A first or second class degree is normally required for MA study, although consideration is given to those with significant practical experience but without formal qualifications.
Royal Academy of Music	£14,200	MA in Performance (Musical Theatre)	University of London	Good honours degree and high level of performance attainment as determined at audition.
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>				

**Table 3.8 – continued from previous page**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Fees</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Validating University</b>	<b>Entry Requirements</b>
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	£11,106	MA Musical Theatre Performance	University of Glasgow	All ‘on-time’ applications are guaranteed an audition. Audition areas: intellectual/imaginative strength, acting skills, singing skills, dance and movement, enterprise. Candidates will have substantial performing experience in two or more areas, and trainable potential in all. Candidates for MA Musical Theatre are normally expected to hold a good honours (at least 2:2) degree, or its overseas equivalent, in a subject area relevant to the demands of the programme. Auditions at worldwide locations (major cities including New York, Singapore, Toronto, Chicago, Beijing, and London).
University of Chichester	£10,500	Advanced Performance Course and Postgraduate Cert. in Performance	University of Chichester	BA (Hons) degree or equivalent (usually in music, performing arts, musical theatre or a related discipline), normally at 2:1 or above. High level skills in instrumental or vocal performance demonstrated at audition, or for musical theatre applicants vocal, dance and acting performance, demonstrated at audition.
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	£11,900	MA Musical Theatre	University of South Wales	Minimum entry requirements include either an undergraduate degree (BA, BMus, BSc) or equivalent qualification. The College is able to consider applications from people without formal qualifications who have an exceptional level of ability, practical experience and a good understanding of the musical theatre profession. Working in a professional company/ies for at least three years would substantiate this.
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>				

**Table 3.8 – continued from previous page**

Institution	Fees	Course Title	Validating University	Entry Requirements
University of York	£6,200	MA in Music – Music Theatre. (Part of the Music Department)	University of York	Normally applicants will need a first degree in Music, but each application is considered on its merits.

Recognising that the motivation for some students is more to do with ‘topping up’ their training, increasing performance opportunities and/or securing agency representation than with acquiring a qualification, some drama schools offer 1-year courses for ‘mature’<sup>209</sup> students<sup>210</sup>. Fourth Monkey Theatre Company offers an ‘apprenticeship’ which is often taken up by graduates who are trying to enter the performance industry. The course is particularly useful for students who studied at universities away from London and were not given the opportunity of a London agents’ showcase. Fourth Monkey offers 1-year and 2-year courses where students receive technical training and also form part of a professional repertory company which performs on tour, at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and in London ([Fourth Monkey, 2013](#)).

Some drama schools run a postgraduate diploma and a Masters course in parallel, with the only real distinction being the added cost associated with the Masters which requires validation from a university. For example Mountview Theatre Arts charge £14,724 for their postgraduate diploma in performance, and £16,399 for their MA in Performance ([Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, 2013](#)).

Because prospective students will very often have done vocational training, rather than following a more academic route, many ‘postgraduate’ courses do not require a first degree<sup>211</sup>. More significantly, the use of the ‘postgraduate’ descriptor might suggest that students accepted for a postgraduate course in performance have reached a standard equivalent to that demonstrated by a graduate from a 3-year vocational course. However, discussions with colleagues suggest that this is not necessarily the case. There is a view that applicants deemed unsuitable for the 3-year vocational course tend to be channelled into the pools for either the foundation course or the postgraduate course; ‘mature’<sup>212</sup>

<sup>209</sup>i.e. people who already have a first degree or a number of years of relevant experience.

<sup>210</sup>The London School of Musical Theatre recognises “that for many mature students, a three-year course is unnecessary and that with intensive, focused training within the right environment, talented individuals can become employable within a year” ([London School of Musical Theatre, 2013](#)).

<sup>211</sup>In any subject, let alone the performing arts.

<sup>212</sup>Anyone over 25.

students are usually routed on to postgraduate courses, regardless of qualifications or ability.

The purpose of most performance-based postgraduate courses is to prepare students for a career in the industry. The audition process<sup>213</sup> is intended to filter out those for whom a 1-year course would be insufficient to enable them to become a successful performer. Most institutions require applicants to prepare two contrasting songs and two monologues, and to demonstrate expertise in two of the three disciplines and show potential in the third ([GSA University of Surrey, 2013](#)). At postgraduate level students should excel across the board, and the audition process should be designed to test this. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's audition process is one of the more rigorous. Applicants are required to prepare four songs (two up tempo, two ballads), one Shakespeare and one contemporary monologue, and one two minute devised piece. Applicants will also participate in a dance call and an interview ([Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, n.d.: 5](#)).

Performing Arts courses (at both undergraduate and postgraduate level) appeal to international students for a number of reasons. The West End's strong reputation can be a lure for international students of musical theatre (and indeed those from other parts of the UK), who see London's drama schools as a good way to increase performance opportunities and to foster relationships with good quality agents. Others just want to work on their accent<sup>214</sup>.

Musical Theatre training in the US is much more expensive than in the UK<sup>215</sup> which makes the UK an attractive place to study for aspiring performers from the US. Another added benefit is that students at drama schools in the United Kingdom accredited by The CDET, Drama UK and/or validated by Trinity College London, receive automatic entry into Equity. The American Equity system does not operate in the same way: "the Equity Membership Candidate Program (EMC) permits actors in training to credit theatrical work in certain Equity theatres towards eventual membership in Equity" rather than automatic enrolment upon graduation from training ([Actors' Equity Association, 2013](#)).

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<sup>213</sup> Auditions are of course not infallible. For example prospective students may be able to offer one or two heavily practised, and therefore highly polished, songs at audition, but lack the broader range of skills that would be acquired by those who have completed the 3-year course. In these cases a student might have a relatively narrow vocal range, have difficulties in picking up new material, have serious problems with intonation, or have confidence issues. Classes are held in groups, which means that without the necessary skill set, students can feel under pressure from the outset. Deficiencies can be exacerbated by teachers expecting to move on at pace, and some teachers can be unforgiving toward stragglers.

<sup>214</sup> One student at CPA Studios moved to England from Spain at the age of 26 specifically to improve his RP accent.

<sup>215</sup> Source: Conversations between the author and US students I taught at the British American Drama Academy (BADA).

Options are not limited to performance-based degrees. For example Middlesex University's MA in Professional Practice (Arts) costs £6,150 and, requiring five years of full-time professional experience, is aimed at people from a performance background who want to add some academic weight to their CV, and thus widen their employment options.

There is a range of other courses which specialise in particular areas of musical theatre aimed at students seeking to develop a career in a niche market. A good example is the MA in Theatre for Young Audiences run by Rose Bruford in collaboration with the Unicorn Theatre. The Unicorn's Tony Graham is attracted by the idea of making the industry's tacit knowledge more explicit and more visible: "We need some good research in this branch of the industry, because although we all know young people's theatre work, there is very little properly presented evidence to demonstrate how and why it is important" (Elkin, 2010*d*), whilst Rose Bruford's Michael Earley believes that "by working alongside our TYA creative partners, [students] will explore, through practice-based research, a range of theatrical techniques and theories that will enrich [their] ability to create theatre for audiences of all ages" (Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance, 2013). The course also includes work placements which helps students to build relationships with potential employers.

In addition there are courses available in Choreography, Direction and Musical Direction. The Arts Ed MA in Musical Theatre Creative Practice "will give [students] all the skills [they] need to become a successful musical theatre choreographer, director or music director" (Arts Educational Schools London, 2013)<sup>216</sup>, and postgraduate courses in these areas are offered by a number of other institutions, including the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Mountview Theatre Arts, and LAMDA.

The MA in Musical Theatre at Goldsmiths University offers two pathways as either (a) producer or (b) writer or composer (Goldsmiths University of London, 2013), and the Bristol Old Vic provides postgraduate courses in Theatre Arts Management and Theatre Production Management.

The emphasis on the creative, technical and management of musical theatre at postgraduate level is hardly surprising, given that the target market is experienced professionals; in some cases prospective students will have been inspired during their performance

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<sup>216</sup>The course is validated by City University London, costs £10,170 for the year and applicants "must submit a portfolio of written work comprising a journal reflecting on a recent professional engagement, a 500-word personal statement and a CV outlining their professional credits" (Arts Educational Schools London, 2013).

career to deepen their understanding and expertise in particular aspects of musical theatre, in other cases the motive will simply be to make themselves more attractive to employers, or allow them to take up a teaching post<sup>217</sup>.

To summarise, there are some strong offerings in musical theatre at postgraduate level, particularly those with a specialist focus, notably the MA offered by Rose Bruford in conjunction with the Unicorn theatre. However, whilst one might naïvely assume that a postgraduate qualification in musical theatre performance indicates that the holder has reached a level that is demonstrably better than someone graduating from a 3-year diploma/degree course, this is not necessarily the case.

### 3.9 Reflections on performing arts education in the UK

*“The arts fit easily and successfully into all areas of educational planning and each child should have the right to be exposed to quality arts at the earliest possible age. The arts are not frills and extras, nor are they primarily suited for special children and populations. The arts belong in every life. They provide us with vast pleasure. They give us a stronger self-image. They open new windows on the world. They teach and enrich all at once and we become engaged and enchanted for a lifetime”.*

(Education in dance, n.d.)

Figure 3.14 on page 197 summarises the routes to the West End stage for musical theatre performers.

The UK, and London in particular, enjoys a reputation for high quality musical theatre, and since most of its performers trained in the UK, it follows that the education system as a whole must be effective. However there are question marks over the efficiency and the equity<sup>218</sup> of the system. The UK boasts some first rate vocational conservatoires/drama schools. However there is growing concern in the profession about their exclusivity.

Musical Theatre is not taught as an independent subject before students enter into further education. In fact it is not until secondary school level that Music, Dance and Drama are taught as subjects in their own right, and even then, dance is often delivered as part of Physical Education. Although academics, psychologists, and education experts have underlined the value of the performing arts as an important part of a child’s wider learning, they rarely find the recognition they deserve in the state education system.

<sup>217</sup>Whilst not essential for all posts, a teaching qualification such as a PGCE or an MA is advantageous when applying for teaching posts, particularly at further and higher education level.

<sup>218</sup>No pun intended.

## Routes to the West End stage

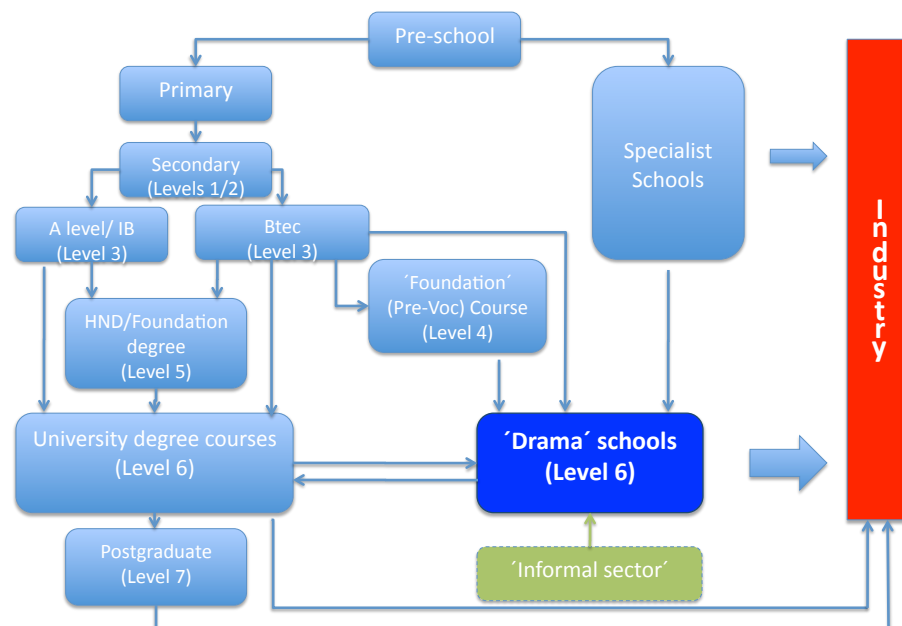


FIGURE 3.14: Routes to the West End stage

The provision available in state schools<sup>219</sup> is invariably under-funded and poorly focussed which means that the resources are all too often not used to best effect. Thus opportunities are missed, in terms of the performing arts, and more generally in terms of what the performing arts can contribute to helping students to develop self-confidence and in the teaching of other subjects. As can be seen in Chapter 4, the plethora of companies offering musical theatre tuition to children is testament to the appetite amongst children themselves and the value placed on it by parents who pay for it<sup>220</sup>. Furthermore Ofsted reports suggest that much of the provision is of a high standard<sup>221</sup>. Provision in schools (both primary and secondary) and FE colleges is patchy; in the best, it is excellent, but in many it lacks, commitment, ambition, coherence and funding.

The variation in standards is especially evident amongst BTEC courses. Whilst flexibility is attractive in many ways, the lack of rigour in assessment is behind the criticisms levelled by some politicians; the absence of effective standardisation runs the risk of undermining the entire system, and with it, some excellent courses.

<sup>219</sup>The evolution of the English education system in general is described by Derek Gillard (Gillard, 2011), but is not subject specific.

<sup>220</sup>Although it is worth noting that some local authorities choose to subsidise places at Stagecoach Theatre Arts, for example.

<sup>221</sup>Based on my own personal experience of inspections at Stagecoach Theatre Arts, where teaching was very often graded as 'outstanding'.

The 3-year Musical Theatre course (be it diploma or degree) is the ‘flagship’ of the musical theatre education system, and places at the best (vocational) institutions are highly prized by those aspiring to become musical theatre performers. However the high level of contact time means that courses are expensive to deliver, and therefore expensive for students, unless they are able to secure a DaDA/scholarship. The majority of performing arts students are ineligible for student loans because these are available only at HE establishments. Many of the best vocational establishments now have arrangements in place to enable students to undertake supplementary academic studies to ‘top up’ their diploma in order to earn a degree, should they so wish.

The extension of ‘advanced learner loans’ due to be introduced in September 2016 could have major implications, but, in its current form, fails to meet the needs of drama school students; three points<sup>222</sup> that I raised<sup>223</sup> with BIS<sup>224</sup> are that:

- as proposed<sup>225</sup>, loans would not be available to 18 year olds and so most drama school applicants would be ineligible<sup>226</sup>;
- loans would not be available to all accredited institutions, but only to those already receiving DaDA<sup>227</sup>;
- the maximum loan for a course would be £22,185<sup>228</sup>; and the fees may not exceed the loan size<sup>229</sup>.

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<sup>222</sup>There are other points affecting drama schools, both policy issues such as the impact of ‘Brexit’ on applicants from Eire etc., and also a variety of operational issues.

<sup>223</sup>At the Advanced Learner Loans Policy Expansion Seminar hosted by BIS/ Skills Funding Agency, held on 4th March 2016.

<sup>224</sup>Apparently these were points that had not been raised previously and BIS/SFA colleagues appeared to be sympathetic; I was asked to make the case for the changes in writing to the Skills Funding Agency, which I did on 7 March 2016.

<sup>225</sup>The proposal is for an extension of the ‘24+’ scheme to cover Level 5/6 qualifications, but would be available only to people aged 19 or over. Initially at least, there is no provision for maintenance loans.

<sup>226</sup>This would mean that many young people would forgo the chance of a place at drama school and instead seek unskilled work, or apply for Jobseeker’s Allowance.

<sup>227</sup>This was something that was not mentioned in the original announcement, but only emerged at the seminar. It affects only a small number of institutions, but it seems perverse to exclude students unable to apply for DaDA. It also means that applicants (and their parents) for the 2016 entry to courses at (some) drama schools may not in fact be eligible for loans, as they had understood would be the case.

<sup>228</sup>This equates to £7,395 per year. It is hard to see how any drama school could deliver a course at this cost given the requirement to deliver the prescribed guided learning hours (at least 1,000 hours contact time p.a.), much more than universities, for which the student loan limit matches fees.

<sup>229</sup>There is to be an ‘area uplift’ applied for locations like London, and bursaries for ‘disadvantaged learners’, but neither is likely to be large enough to deal with what is a fundamental structural problem in the scheme. However, because the limit applies not on an annual basis, but to a course as a whole, it may be possible for drama schools to address the problem by dividing a 3-year musical course into two parts: the first year being Level 4 and the next two years being Level 6. In many ways this reflects the way in which courses are delivered already, and would mean that, like their counterparts, students at drama schools would have access to loans that would cover all of their fees.



Eleven institutions passed the ‘due diligence’ assessments for Advanced Learner Loans, but following the ‘capacities and capabilities’ assessments, only four were rated as ‘eligible to tender’, one of which was CPA Studios.

The demand for places on prestigious conservatoire/drama school courses has prompted a growth in (1-year) ‘foundation courses’ designed to prepare students for auditions at drama schools. These courses have similar levels of contact time to diploma/degree courses, and so the annual cost tends to be similar.

West End roles tend to be dominated by performers who have trained at a vocational institution. Although a large number of university performing arts courses are available, for the most part these seem to be designed to deliver a more broadly based offering with more academic content and fewer contact hours; they are thus better suited to students whose priorities are to get a degree, but who do not necessarily aspire to work as a performer.

Postgraduate courses are many and varied and are able to cater for specialist requirements, but are not designed to be a substitute for a 3-year vocational course.

The performance of schools is typically measured through examination results and Ofsted inspections. Most, if not all, reputable third tier institutions will have soundly-based arrangements in place to measure progress and attainment at their own institutions. However comparing one with another is less easy, save for the ubiquitous student satisfaction survey which assesses student experience rather than value. With that in mind, a new method is proposed for comparing institutions which uses publicly available data on employment and (published) industry standard guidance on remuneration. Whilst not definitive, it is presented as the kernel of an approach that would have practical value to prospective students, and, perhaps more contentiously, as a factor to be taken into account when subsidies are decided.

Perhaps what is most significant in policy terms is that musical theatre options for young people at Key Stage 1 to 4 are worryingly restricted. The formal education system alone does not remotely prepare a young person for vocational training at Levels 4, 5 and 6. In order to obtain the skills they require, young people (and their parents) have to turn to the informal sector to plug the gap. Conversely, intermediate and advanced orchestral training, for example, is typically provided at borough or county level, on an extra-curricular basis, but progression routes leading from school into county youth orchestras are well signposted. Each year Music Education Hubs make millions of pounds of Arts Council funding available to county youth orchestra organisers. Young people interested in musical theatre have to manage without most of the signposts and without public subsidy: they have to pass family income and parental energy tests right at the

start. This is unfair, and from a policy point of view, economically illiterate. Publicly subsidised training opportunities are available to young people preparing for careers in music sectors which are critically reliant on continuing public subsidy, while young people hoping to work in the commercial sector get little or no official encouragement. Established educational systems and subsidy patterns herd talented young instrumentalists toward subsidy-dependent adult employment while ignoring equally talented young musical theatre performers with clear potential to support themselves.

## Chapter 4

# The informal sector

Many would argue there are better opportunities available for children for performing arts tuition outside the formal education system than in it. These include part-time theatre schools which combine Acting, Singing and Dance lessons; schools which focus on one particular discipline but explore it in more depth<sup>1</sup>; youth theatre and amateur dramatics; short courses; summer schools, and private tuition<sup>2</sup>. In this chapter I provide an overview of the huge array of options available to children outside the formal education system and seek to gauge the contribution they make collectively.

### 4.1 Part-time theatre schools

Part-time theatre schools for children are not a new idea; many of the biggest drama schools began as part-time schools in teachers' living rooms. Some independent part-time schools have long histories, and have been passed down through the family<sup>3</sup>, or to teachers at the school in order to continue long after the retirement of the founders<sup>4</sup>. Most towns in the UK have at least a handful of privately run dance and theatre schools, and almost all have at least one branch of a large franchised business like Stagecoach Theatre Arts or Theatretrain.

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<sup>1</sup>for example dance schools which cover a number of dance styles.

<sup>2</sup>I have worked in four different Stagecoach schools (as a coach and acting principal) over the course of 10 years, Perform, and Jigsaw Performing Arts, as well at a variety of other smaller schools and youth theatres, and the standard is often high, particularly in youth theatre. A number of my students have gone on to work in the West End.

<sup>3</sup>This is reminiscent of the patterns of performer 'dynasties' evident throughout history and dating back to the Greeks.

<sup>4</sup>An example is the Buckhurst Hill and Woodford School of Dancing which was founded by Maisie McDougall in 1922, celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2012 as a thriving school with 350 children in attendance on a weekly basis. The school was passed to teacher Doreen Locks in 1957, and subsequently to her children Juliet Locks and Sonia Bond in 1967. The school offers pupils the opportunity to perform in local and West End theatres, and has good connections with the performing arts industry with students winning places in professional West End musicals ([Attlesey, 2012](#)).

Stagecoach Theatre Arts is the first (and to date the largest) franchised performing arts school business in the UK; 40,000 children attend its classes on a weekly basis (Elkin, 2011d)<sup>5</sup>. The company was founded in 1988 by Stephanie Manuel and David Sprigg, and opened as one school, with three franchises opening shortly afterwards in 1991 (Stagecoach, n.d.). When it first launched, Stagecoach devised a model of a three hour session involving three groups of children rotating between Dance, Drama, and Singing classes. Both the model and the franchise system have subsequently been adopted by almost all other performing arts school businesses, meaning that Stagecoach's influence extends far further than just to its own franchisees. The closest competitor is Theatretrain which opened shortly after Stagecoach in 1992 using a very similar structure, and in 2014 had 80 branches across the UK.

Other significant companies include the Pauline Quirke Academy (PQA) which has grown rapidly in the seven years since its inception in 2007<sup>6</sup>. The PQA put their own stamp on the three hour model by running classes in Musical Theatre, Comedy and Drama, and Film and Television<sup>7</sup>.

Perform implemented a slightly different model: they do not run as a franchise business, but instead interview<sup>8</sup> and train their teachers centrally, and maintain sole responsibility for the 300 venues in operation across the UK. Perform do not use the three hour structure but instead classes are held on weekdays and at the weekends for either an hour or an hour and a half depending on the age of the child, and run for 44 weeks of the year, rather than following the academic calendar of 36 – 39 weeks<sup>9</sup>.

Summary information about some of the more prominent schools<sup>10</sup> is given in Table 4.1 on page 203.

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<sup>5</sup>In 2014 Stagecoach had 320 franchises across the UK, most with multiple schools running over each weekend, and branches in ten countries including Australia and the USA (Stagecoach, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup>By 2014 PQA had 72 branches across the UK and a small number in Mallorca (Pauline Quirke Academy, 2014).

<sup>7</sup>In 2014 PQA won a contract with Virgin Holidays to deliver free classes and workshops as part of children's holiday activities at a resort in Barbados (Hemley, 2014b).

<sup>8</sup>Or, rather, audition, in the case of this company.

<sup>9</sup>Unlike most other companies which offer training to young people up to the age of 18, Perform cater only for children up to the age of 12.

<sup>10</sup>Prices and details quoted are correct as of December 2014.

TABLE 4.1: Prominent part-time theatre schools

Company	Age Range	Offering	No. of Franchises and locations	Fees	Founder/ Founded
<b>Stagecoach Theatre Arts Limited Company</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-5 Early Stages</li> <li>• 6-18 Main School</li> <li>• 16-18 Further Stages</li> </ul> Main School 3 hours per week for 36 weeks Early Stages 1.5 hours per week for 36 weeks Further Stages 2 hours per week for 36 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Performance Arts Awards group exams (fee based)</li> <li>★ Performance in West End Shows</li> <li>★ Easy Stages - Stagecoach students can audition to be part of a professionally directed musical in the West End</li> <li>★ Collaboration with Disneyland Paris - Stagecoach schools can participate in the Disneyland Parade</li> <li>★ Stagecoach choirs and performance troupes</li> <li>★ Stagecoach Agency</li> <li>★ Stagecoach Parties</li> <li>★ Partnership with RADA for Further Stages for workshops, short courses, and examinations</li> <li>★ Annual reports</li> <li>★ Inspections - Ofsted Inspectors for Jean Harding Associates</li> <li>★ 15-20 per class</li> </ul>	Worldwide (10 countries including USA and Australia)  320 franchises most with multiple schools (Stagecoach say that there are over 700 schools in total)	Early Stages £486 p.a.  Main Stages £972 p.a.  Further Stages £648 p.a.	Stephanie Manuel and David Sprigg 1988
(Continued on next page)					

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Company	Age Range	Offering	No. of Franchises and locations	Fees	Founder/ Founded
<b>Theatretrain</b> Limited Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6–9</li> <li>• 9–12</li> <li>• 13–18</li> </ul> 3 hours per week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ West End Shows</li> <li>★ Performances at the O2 Exhibition centre</li> <li>★ Summer Schools</li> </ul>	80 branches (franchise business)	£16 pw £12 pw for siblings 36–39 weeks per year	Kevin Dowsett 1992
<b>Perform</b> Private Limited Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4–7 1 hour</li> <li>• 7–12 1 hr Mon-Fri 1.5 hrs Saturdays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ 44 weeks of year</li> <li>★ Perform for Schools</li> <li>★ Summer Schools</li> <li>★ Parties</li> <li>★ Termly reports</li> <li>★ Staff recruited and trained centrally</li> <li>★ Private lessons (£100 per hour)</li> <li>★ 22 per class</li> </ul>	300 venues (not a franchise business)	Not disclosed	Will Barnett and Lucy Quick 2000
(Continued on next page)					

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Company	Age Range	Offering	No. of Franchises and locations	Fees	Founder/ Founded
<b>Pauline Quirke Academy</b> Limited Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4–5 Poppets</li> <li>• 6–18 Main School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ 3 hours per week for 44 weeks</li> <li>★ Reports twice per year</li> <li>★ TCL group exams (free)</li> <li>★ West End Shows</li> <li>★ Film festivals</li> <li>★ Cinema screenings of student work</li> <li>★ Quirky Kids Agency</li> <li>★ Holiday workshops</li> <li>★ Poppets 1.5 hours per week for 44 weeks</li> <li>★ Delivered in modules: Musical Theatre, Comedy &amp; Drama, Film &amp; Television</li> </ul>	72 – some with multiple schools (Nationwide and Mallorca)	Main School 1st child £88.00 per month  Main School sibling £66.00 per month  Poppets £44.00 per month	Pauline Quirke 2007
(Continued on next page)					

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Company	Age Range	Offering	No. of Franchises and locations	Fees	Founder/ Founded
<b>Razzmatazz</b> Limited Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tots 2–3</li> <li>• Razz Minis 4–5</li> <li>• Juniors 6–8</li> <li>• Inters 9–11</li> <li>• Seniors 12–18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ 1 hour per week for 36 weeks</li> <li>★ Razzmatazz Theatre School Juniors 2 hours per week for 36 weeks</li> <li>★ Seniors and Inters 3 hours per week for 36 weeks</li> <li>★ Razzmatazz Pantomimes</li> <li>★ Razzmatazz Parties</li> <li>★ Partnership with First Choice in 13 countries</li> </ul>	38 Franchises - some with multiple schools – Nationwide	£700 p.a.	Denise Hutton – Gosney 2000
(Continued on next page)					



Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Company	Age Range	Offering	No. of Franchises and locations	Fees	Founder/ Founded
<b>Jigsaw Performing Arts Academy</b>  Limited Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3–6</li> <li>• 7–18</li> <li>• 16–20 (Youth Theatre)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ 3–4 1.5 hours for 36 weeks</li> <li>★ 5–6 1.5 hours for 36 weeks</li> <li>★ Youth Theatre for 16–20 year olds at RADA Studios for 2 hours per week 36 weeks of the year</li> <li>★ Birthday Parties</li> <li>★ Summer Schools</li> <li>★ Jigsaw Arts Management</li> <li>★ 18 per class</li> </ul>	19 Franchises – some with multiple schools – South East England	3–6 Years £150 per term (Sibling discount £115 for 2nd child then £75 thereafter) 7–18 Years £280 per term (Sibling discount £210 for 2nd child then £140 thereafter) Youth Theatre £150 per term	Nicola Lander 1995
(Continued on next page)					

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Company	Age Range	Offering	No. of Franchises and locations	Fees	Founder/ Founded
<b>LIPA 4:19 Franchising Limited</b> Limited Company	4–19 3 hour classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Linked to an established performing arts school and designed to complement, develop, and enhance themes in the key stages of the National Curriculum</li> <li>★ Summer Schools</li> <li>★ Extra classes available in Ballet, Tap, Pointe, Singing Company, Dance Company, Drama Company</li> <li>★ Annual Summer Show at the Paul McCartney Auditorium</li> <li>★ Performances with Paul McCartney</li> </ul>	6 franchises in the UK, 1 in Bulgaria	4–6 yrs £150 per term  7–19 yrs £295 per term	Kerry Watkins Programme Leader 2008
(Continued on next page)					

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Company	Age Range	Offering	No. of Franchises and locations	Fees	Founder/ Founded
<b>Make Believe Group</b> Limited Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infants 3–5</li> <li>• Juniors 6–9</li> <li>• Seniors 10+</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Infants: 90 minutes per week for 44 weeks</li> <li>★ Juniors: 3 hours per week for 44 weeks</li> <li>★ Seniors: 3 hours per week for 44 weeks</li> <li>★ Agency</li> <li>★ Extra Tap and Ballet classes available</li> <li>★ Summer School</li> <li>★ Tour of London's suburban theatres</li> <li>★ Parties</li> <li>★ Events division</li> </ul>	31 franchises.  2,500 children	Infants £39.50 per month  Juniors/Seniors £59.50 per month	Joel Kern 2004

There seem to be two distinct approaches to performing arts teaching in the informal sector. One favours an inclusive style where the emphasis is on the student and their progression, while the other focuses on the end product (the performance). In the discussion that follows I use Stagecoach Theatre Arts and Songtime Theatre Arts as case studies to draw out the differences between the two approaches. The two companies originated within twelve months of each other but while Stagecoach continues, Songtime Theatre Arts closed in 2010.

Each branch of Stagecoach is steered by its principal, but the general ethos of the company is to “inspire and enrich young people through performance” (Stagecoach, n.d.) in a safe and creative environment<sup>11</sup>. Stagecoach discourages schools from using musicals which involve main parts, and instead have a bank of shows which have been specifically written for the structure of Stagecoach, giving all children equal opportunity to shine<sup>12</sup>.

West End performer Freyja Westdal ran the Newbury branch of Stagecoach for nearly 18 years, and firmly believes that students progressing to further training and professional performance work should be a by-product, rather than the sole reason for their time at Stagecoach<sup>13</sup>. Freyja created an environment where young people can feel safe and supported, and ultimately where they can be themselves; something she insists is one of the most important elements of performance. Working as part of a company of performers can encourage young people to establish relationships with their peers<sup>14</sup>.

Other schools encourage competition and feel that it is important to teach young people about the harsh realities of the performance industry from an early age. Principal of Songtime Theatre Arts, Matthew Chandler, argued that “to be able to cope with success

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<sup>11</sup>Stagecoach believes that every child is talented, and that performance can help young people to flourish, even if they do not aspire to be professional performers. This is reflected in the company’s approach to the structure of its sessions, including awarding pupils medals and certificates on the basis of the length of time they have studied with Stagecoach, rather than by singling out the individual achievement of only a handful of children.

<sup>12</sup>Stagecoach pride themselves in ensuring that every child at their main schools is given equal opportunities in class and during performances, thus avoiding the risk that individual children feel marginalised, as can sometimes be the case.

<sup>13</sup>Freyja believes that “talent is not an issue. There is obviously a huge amount of talent within the students in my classes, but this is not my main point of interest. I make sure that the children are respectful to one another and encouraging in all aspects of their performing.” Freyja ensures that the parents know how she runs her schools before they sign up their children for classes, and she does not actively encourage her students to aspire to work in the performance industry: “If that’s what they want to do, then they can do it, but I refuse to tell the parents that their kids will be famous if they come to my school ... Stagecoach Newbury’s focus is very much on giving students skills for life; using the performing arts to build self confidence and improve self esteem, generally giving young people a better sense of who they are and what they want to be” (Source: Personal conversation).

<sup>14</sup>“Positive peer relationships provide children with an area of support outside the family, in which they can experiment, develop attitude, skills and values and learn to share, help and nurture one another” (Ungar, 2005: 8).

and rejection with equal clarity is a very special life skill – best learned when young and in the company of others for whom the experience is ‘normal’ ”<sup>15</sup> (Songtime, 2009).

The opportunity to perform in West End theatres is common to a number of the major performing arts school companies, and almost all of them offer some form of agency representation. As a large independent company, Stagecoach has the scope and the scale to introduce new initiatives regularly to ensure that they remain the leading force in the sector<sup>16</sup>. Most recently they collaborated with the Really Useful Group to mount a production of *Cats* at the Birmingham NEC to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the show, and of Stagecoach itself. In 2015 Stagecoach began a partnership with Disneyland Paris which gives Stagecoach students the opportunity to perform in the famous Disneyland Parade. Other companies have their own ways to distinguish themselves from the competition. The Pauline Quirke Academy, for instance, has introduced ‘red carpet event film screenings’ at local cinemas to give students and their parents the opportunity to see their finished films, and a number of companies have established links with highly respected institutions like GSA and RADA for workshops and masterclasses. The major companies incorporate specialist workshops into their core offering, widening the range of opportunities available to students, and almost all have introduced performing arts parties, both for children who attend the school and also for those who don’t. Some companies, like Perform, issue a syllabus from headquarters, meaning that all branches are delivering the same programme of educational material. Others, like Stagecoach and Theatretrain, allow the teachers to create their own schemes of work with some guidance from the principal of the franchise<sup>17</sup>.

Despite their varied approaches to class and performance work, all the major companies recognise that young people (and their parents) will expect to be able to observe progression. This progress is measured and conveyed in a number of ways, through demonstrations of class work, end of term productions, termly or yearly reports, and examinations (both individual and group-based) with boards including Trinity College

<sup>15</sup>Matthew Chandler marketed his school as a “professional company training young people in a theatrical environment that leads the way in the entertainment industry”. He says that the school is only interested in “those young people who wish to pursue a career somewhere in the entertainment industry and who, through the professional staff enlisted to share their knowledge will benefit in aiming high for a very tough disciplined career. At Songtime we take the training very seriously. We do not encourage people to join our company for a fun night out, nor do we allow our company to be used as a babysitting service. We expect those members selected to be part of the company to work hard and dedicate their time with us to gain the full potential that can be achieved by a committed future professional” (Songtime, 2009).

<sup>16</sup>For example the company create a number of performance opportunities which are offered free of charge to students who wish to pursue further performing arts activities. Many of the franchises run performance choirs and troupes which perform at charity and corporate events. Stagecoach also host performances at Her Majesty’s Theatre and the Haymarket several times per year and invite individual schools to perform a piece using 18 students chosen by their teachers.

<sup>17</sup>In many ways the latter approach would seem more appropriate for the teachers in this sector who more often than not come from a creative background as performers, rather than being trained teachers who are more used to working from a syllabus.

London and LAMDA. Stagecoach provides quality assurance to parents through regular visits from Ofsted inspectors<sup>18</sup>.

The benefits of an education in performing arts are discussed in detail in the Education chapter<sup>19</sup>. Some argue that the performing arts can contribute toward greater social cohesion. In a statement to the House of Commons, Chairman of the National Youth Music Theatre, Maggie Semple, cites the results of research carried out by the Arts Council in conjunction with the Youth Justice Board, which showed that participation in performing arts activities by young people who might otherwise have been out on the streets, increased participants' confidence and gave them a positive focus for their energies. A direct correlation between these activities and a reduction in crime was also identified: the 'Splash Extra' project "targeted young people between the ages of nine and 17 at risk of crime" and an evaluation of the initiative showed that the areas in which it ran were associated with a 5.2% decrease in crime, compared with areas without a Splash Extra scheme ([Parliament, 2003](#)).

Performing arts classes can have an impact on a child's wider learning<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore there is evidence that participation in the performing arts can have profound therapeutic effects, even when conventional medical/psychological treatments have proved ineffective. I had personal experience of working at a part-time theatre school where one mother enrolled her six year old child who would not or could not speak. She had taken the child to see doctors and educational psychologists and nothing had worked. The girl spent a term with us just going through the motions in rehearsals for a production of *Annie Junior*. One day the child playing Molly was absent, and when it came to her lines and before anybody could 'read in', the girl recited every line, word perfectly. Of course we continued as though nothing unusual had happened, but we all knew it was a monumental turning point in her life ([Barnbrook, 2009](#)).

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<sup>18</sup>Inspectors are provided by Jean Harding Associates and take place least once per year, which is very frequent relative to the new six year cycle that is being introduced for schools and colleges ([CDET Course Providers Meeting 6th Nov 2014, 2014](#)).

<sup>19</sup>To recap these include: the opportunity for personal and social development; cultivating social skills and the ability to connect with people from a variety of backgrounds; building confidence; fostering presentation skills including encouraging good articulation and diction; developing the ability to work under pressure; teaching young people to apply themselves to a task or process; physical exercise; providing young people with an emotional and physical outlet; nurturing an appreciation and understanding of art and culture; drawing out a young person's imagination and creativity, and giving them something they can take pride in.

<sup>20</sup>Education Journalist Susan Elkin said that she once "interviewed a puzzled but pleased mother, whose nine year old daughter was thoroughly enjoying Saturday morning dance classes. 'And since she's been coming here, it sounds odd, but her maths has got better too' she said. It doesn't sound odd at all. Performing arts helps to build confidence, discipline, perseverance, and other qualities which work as well for maths as they do for drama" ([Elkin, 2014](#)).

Although the value for money for this type of training is generally very good<sup>21</sup>, fees<sup>22</sup> can still be difficult to find for some parents, and, unlike other extracurricular activities, there is little or no government subsidy available. In contrast, a number of primary and secondary schools work in partnership with council run music services to provide subsidised music tuition for pupils. For example Redbridge Music School and Southampton Music Service allow young pupils in receipt of music tuition from the service to participate on a subsidised basis in bands, orchestras, and choirs<sup>23</sup>.

In addition, there are examples of government financial support for young people who demonstrate high levels of ability in music and dance. Initially, support was directed towards young people who wanted to train at a full-time specialist school, but in 2013 21 centres were added to the Music and Dance Scheme<sup>24</sup>, allowing young people to undertake specialist music and dance training at the weekends on a means-tested basis (HMG, 2015b). In 2014, there were over 2,300 young people supported by the scheme (CDET, n.d.b).

The Music and Dance Scheme justify the continued financial support from the government: “There is a need to educate and train, from an early age, children who are exceptionally talented in the two fields of artistic endeavour - music and dance - if Britain is to maintain a world-class pool of talent for future generations. The need for early training, in particular the primary development of the physical and intellectual disciplines required of dancers and musicians, is recognised by many to be greater than for some other forms of artistic endeavour” (Yehudi Menuhin School, 2014).

There is not an equivalent support system in place for performing arts training which combines singing, dancing, and acting. That said, there are some isolated examples of support from Local Education Authorities for families as part of a respite care package for parents who foster, have adopted, or whose children suffer from physical or learning

<sup>21</sup>Most babysitters charge more per hour for their services.

<sup>22</sup>In December 2014, these ranged from £192 per term (Theatretrain), to £324 per term (Stagecoach) for three hours of training per week for 36 weeks of the year. It is worth noting that most of the prominent companies offer discounts for siblings.

<sup>23</sup>Redbridge Music Service also operates a policy whereby students whose parents are “in receipt of Income Support, Income based Job Seeker’s Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, or where annual family income does not exceed a specified amount” (Redbridge Music Service, 2015) can receive further discounts or even free tuition, free examination entry, and free membership to ensembles. “Music School pupils studying AS or A level music attending a London Borough of Redbridge maintained school are [also] entitled to a free 30-minute individual weekly lesson” (Redbridge Music Service, 2015).

<sup>24</sup>“Before 1973, support for pupils at schools such as those currently in MDS schools was provided by local education authorities under discretionary powers provided in Sections 55 and 81 of the 1944 Education Act. In 1973, the Royal Ballet (Lower) School and the Yehudi Menuhin School were admitted to a fee remission scheme funded by the Department in recognition of their position as Centres of Excellence for the Performing Arts. The fee remission income scale governing the means-testing of parents mirrored that of the old direct grant grammar school scheme with some modification to account for the higher costs of boarding and specialist tuition” (Yehudi Menuhin School, 2014).

disabilities. One Stagecoach I worked for had a number of students who were supported in this way.

Financial support for families on low incomes is left to the business owners to address, and some principals I have worked for have indeed chosen to subsidise talented, or sometimes just particularly ‘nice’, children<sup>25</sup>. Whether the motivation for this comes from a desire to offer opportunities to all children, regardless of their personal circumstances, or because talented children improve the quality of the output of the school as a whole, thus making their school more attractive to paying customers, matters not – the outcome remains the same.

Two of the larger companies, Stagecoach and Razzmatazz, have teamed up with The Stage newspaper to offer full scholarships (the equivalent of at least one year’s fees) for young people, but these scholarships are audition based, and are designed to attract new students, rather than to help those already at the schools ([The Stage, 2013b](#)).

Founder of Theatretrain, Kevin Dowsett, does not agree with the idea of government-awarded free places for under privileged children at part-time theatre schools. Dowsett argues that individual businesses are able to assist parents where they see fit. In support of this view, Dowsett quotes as an example Theatretrain’s Stratford branch which had been in operation since 1994 and charged only £10 per week for three hour sessions in singing, dance, and drama, but which was forced to close in 2011 because it could not compete with the free and subsidised classes on offer before and during the London Olympic Games. These classes were no longer on offer once the Games had finished, meaning that the young people who had been pulled out of their regular classes in 2011 had nowhere to go by 2013. Dowsett also says Theatretrain makes it their rule never to offer free classes: “assisted places are offered at £2 per week and the reason for this is that we long ago discovered that when you give something away for nothing, it often gets undervalued and taken for granted” ([The Stage, 2011d](#)).

In summary, some part-time theatre schools place emphasis on personal development and the health and social benefits that accrue from the experience of attending a part-time theatre school and which they believe transfer to other areas of life. Other schools argue that taking part in performance is the best way of learning, on the grounds that there is much to be gained from participation in full scale productions, including building an understanding of how the separate components come together to form the end product; working on something until it is at performance standard, and taking pride in the end result. Both approaches have their pros and cons, and providing that a school is run ethically, safely, and the children are enjoying themselves and showing progress socially, and/or technically, the best choice will vary from child to child. However it is

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<sup>25</sup>It is worth noting that this is a policy which is commonly applied by drama schools.



important everything a school does in practice lives up to its rhetoric. Accreditation by regulation bodies like the Council for Dance Education and Training, who introduced a system of ‘recognition’ in 2006, is designed to provide assurance to students and parents. In order to achieve recognised school status, the school must meet nine basic requirements, including “having appropriate health and safety, equal dance opportunities and staff development policies in place, employing only qualified teachers, having adequate insurance and keeping formal accounts” (CDET, n.d.c).

Part-time theatre schools are commercial businesses, and their success relies on delivering what their customers value, and doing so in a way that is felt to be good value for money. Thus the commercial success of a school is a reflection of its ability to deliver what their customers want<sup>26</sup>.

## 4.2 Youth theatre

A rather different measure of success would be applied to youth theatre groups. The National Association of Youth Theatres (NAYT) defines ‘youth theatre’ as a group of young people who “come together regularly to participate in theatre/drama and performing arts related activities...Youth Theatre is a local activity rooted in the community and facilitates the creative interaction of young people. It has a youthful energy with the empowerment of young people at the core of its reason to exist” (NAYT, n.d.).

The NAYT was established in 1982 as an educational charity designed to support and promote the youth theatre sector. By 2014 the NAYT was working with over 1,300 groups ranging from youth sections of amateur societies to large, well-resourced, professionally-led groups attached to theatres.

Youth theatre has much in common with theatre schools, offering opportunities to children as young as two<sup>27</sup> and running weekly classes for two to three hours per week with professional tutors/workshop leaders. However while almost all of the major theatre schools give equal attention to singing, dance, and acting, youth theatres tend to focus on drama<sup>28</sup> but include musical productions as part of their annual programme. Models of practice vary, but what sets youth theatre apart from theatre schools is its focus is usually on performance, with participants garnering technical skills in the process, rather than skills training with a performance at the end. Working towards a show which is designed to be performed to the public (rather than for a partisan audience of

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<sup>26</sup>In this sense the continuing dominance of the Stagecoach brand since its inception in the late eighties, speaks volumes.

<sup>27</sup>Marlow Youth Theatre has classes for young people aged 2 – 19 (Marlowe Theatre, n.d.).

<sup>28</sup>An exception is STP Musicals with whom I worked for three years as a musical director for a number of musicals.

family and friends) requires a different style of working, and means that there tends to be a greater emphasis on production values, and participants have the opportunity to acquire a broader understanding of the production as a whole. Full scale performances also give participants a sense of performing in a professional venue, delivering week-long runs in big theatres in front of sizeable audiences. Most youth theatres have one or two permanent members of staff who then buy in the services of professional directors, choreographers, and musical directors to work alongside them for its major productions; this affords participants the opportunity to work with a variety of people. In working towards a production as part of a team, participants learn a lot about musical theatre, but the learning happens as a by-product rather than being an end in itself.

Unlike theatre schools, youth theatre is rarely financially self-sufficient. Fees for places in youth theatre groups are on average a fifth of the cost of equivalent places at part-time theatre schools, with prices remaining low for some years. For example, companies that I have worked with (the Nuffield Theatre, the Youth Theatre at Eastleigh's Point Theatre and Chichester Festival Youth Theatre) have managed to keep their fees the same since 2009 (at £85, £57/£68 and £60 per term respectively), and youth theatres invariably offer bursaries to those who need them. At most youth theatres, competition for places is fierce, and although the Chichester Festival Youth Theatre has over thirty groups running each week in order to cater for as many young people as possible, they still need to operate a lottery for places to ensure fair distribution of opportunity. Similarly, Hampshire Youth Theatre has to audition for some of its projects because it cannot accommodate the sheer number of applicants.

Youth theatres attached to venues are able to charge very low fees because they are heavily supported by the venue itself, sometimes assisted by subsidies they in turn receive from local or central government. Groups which operate as a section of amateur dramatic companies are funded through ticket sales, and by virtue of cross-subsidy from membership fees of the society as a whole. Other groups meet the shortfall through grants, fundraising activities including donation schemes, and private funding. For example, the leaders of youth theatre group STP Musicals took out a series of personal loans and even re-mortgaged their home in order to fund the company. The group has had a series of very successful productions, and following its participation in the Billy Youth project where youth groups competed to perform in a production of *Billy Elliot* in the West End's Victoria Palace Theatre, the child from STP who played Billy was awarded the role in the professional production.

Research has been useful in drawing attention to the contribution that youth theatre makes, and in identifying areas where subsidy would add most value. For example, in 2007 the Arts Council England worked in partnership with the National Association

of Youth Theatres to undertake “the first comprehensive mapping of the youth and participatory theatre sector” ([Arts Council England, 2014](#)). The resulting ‘Paving the Way’ report provided “a baseline assessment of youth and participatory theatre activity across England” ([Arts Council England, 2014](#)) and was used to develop the Young People’s Participatory Theatre Project, which reached more than 13,500 young people across England ([Arts Council England, n.d.](#)). The project was designed to prove the importance and reach of youth theatre to support the case for continued (and further) subsidy.

In addition to regional companies, there are a number of national companies which audition across the country and provide high quality training and opportunities to thousands of young people each year<sup>29</sup>.

As well as youth theatre groups which meet regularly, there have been a number of specific projects which have caught the interest of the performing arts industry and have attracted the attention of the media. These projects have pushed boundaries and have demonstrated the versatility and reach of youth theatre.

The National Theatre’s Connections festival<sup>30</sup> has been running annually since 1994 and celebrates youth theatre and new writing. The 2014 project involved 5,000 young people in 230 theatre companies, and played to 25,000 audience members ([National Theatre Connections, n.d.](#)). The festival is designed to give young people experience of professional theatre.

The National Student Drama Festival includes a musical award which is sponsored by Cameron Mackintosh. The annual festival, which is open to all young people aged between 16 and 25, began in 1956 and takes place in Scarborough every March. Over the years, thousands of young people have taken part in performances (both as performers and as audience members), workshops, and discussions (([Ideastap, n.d.](#)) ([National Student Drama Festival, n.d.](#))).

In an imaginative collaboration with St. Paul’s School, the Hammersmith Lyric theatre mounted a performance of *FAME!* involving performers from both organisations, which opened up new methods of funding youth theatre<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup>The National Youth Theatre, National Youth Music Theatre, and Youth Music Theatre have launched the careers of many high profile performers, including Sheridan Smith who cites her time with the National Youth Music Theatre as her only real training ([NYMT, n.d.b](#)).

<sup>30</sup>The youth companies select one of ten new plays and work with professional directors, composers/-musical directors, and set and costume designers to mount a full scale production in a regional theatre and compete to perform their version at the National Theatre ([Burke and Barnbrook, 2006](#)).

<sup>31</sup>The theatre offered Gold and Silver Gala Evening tickets in addition to standard tickets for the show, and the partnership sought additional financial support from parents and St. Paul’s alumni ([Turner, 2011](#)). Following the success of the project, the Lyric mounted a professional production of *Bugsy Malone* in Spring 2015 with a cast made up of professional actors and talented young people; as

In 2014 Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House announced a three-year learning programme called Grand Futures Leeds. The project will incorporate an arts festival produced by young people, a city-wide apprenticeship scheme, work experience opportunities, participation programmes, and the creation of a model arts academy ([Leeds Grand Theatre, n.d.](#)).

The York Theatre Royal operates an exchange programme which has enabled performers to participate in a number of projects with youth theatres across the world.

Youth theatre productions are held in high regard, and are able to attract repeat audiences. For ten years the Chichester Festival Youth Theatre has worked alongside high profile creatives including Bryony Lavery and Matthew Scott to present Christmas productions to large audiences. Where youth theatre is closely associated with a theatre venue, as is the case at Chichester, participants often get to experience some of the professional work that is going on around them, and sometimes are even given the opportunity to watch rehearsals, dress runs, and even the show itself for free or at a discounted rate<sup>32</sup>.

Youth theatre productions are invariably of very high quality and it is not unusual for them to out-do the work of amateur dramatic companies (even where the creative personnel, venue, and budget/production values are the same), and this is not because plays are in some sense ‘dumbed down’ for youth companies. It is true that changes are made to reduce the length of a production in order to fit with what is usually a shorter rehearsal and performance window (and sometimes because the lower age, and therefore the attention span, of the youngest participant or audience member makes a two hour show difficult to rehearse), and also to sanitise the language and content of a piece in order to satisfy popular convention. However comparisons of adult and youth versions of scores and librettos for the same musical<sup>33</sup>, reveal that the material is not simplified and that the same expectations are placed on principals and the ensemble in both adult and youth versions.

An analysis of 184 shows published for the youth theatre market<sup>34</sup> is shown in Figure 4.1 on page 219 and indicates that the market is dominated by French<sup>35</sup>.

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part of the casting process, the theatre held open auditions in association with children’s casting director Jessica Ronane ([Evening Standard, 2014a](#)).

<sup>32</sup>Chichester Festival Youth Theatre did this during the Oklahoma Summer School we ran in 2009 when *Oklahoma* was running in the main house at the time. I was Musical Director for the summer school.

<sup>33</sup> I compared the following versions: *Billy Elliot* and *Billy Youth*; *Honk!* and *Honk! Junior*; *Into the Woods* and *Into the Woods Junior*; *Seussical the Musical* and *Seussical the Musical Junior*.

<sup>34</sup>Data are taken from the Guide to musical theatre website ([Guide to Musical Theatre, n.d.](#)).

<sup>35</sup>Samuel French were established in 1830.

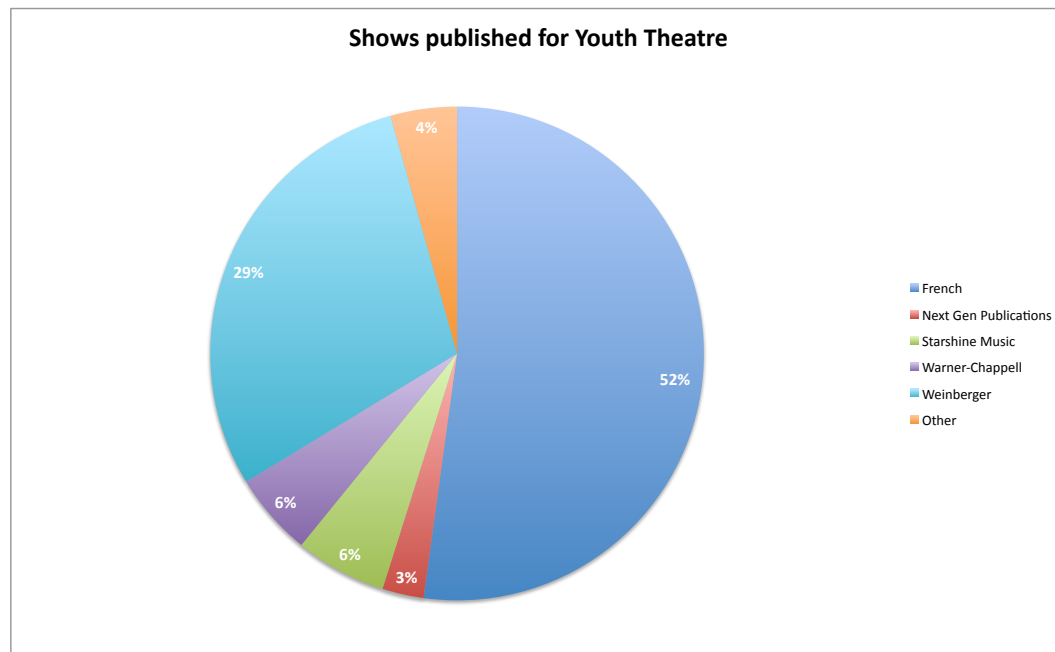


FIGURE 4.1: Number of shows published for youth theatre

My own firsthand experience of working with young performers<sup>36</sup> is that audiences tend to be dominated by friends and relatives of the cast, but are far bigger for the better known musicals, and week-long runs in local theatres can attract quite big audiences (as many as 500 on a good night). However performances by young performers are by no means limited to well-known musicals; indeed much of the work in theatre groups and academia focuses on less well-known material, and can be quite experimental.

In summary, youth theatre plays a vitally important role in the development of young performers. Despite the low fees, participants in youth theatre benefit from a range of excellent opportunities, including working with experienced practitioners and writers and composers who produce bespoke pieces for the group; residential theatre projects; connections and partnerships with professional companies, and full scale shows with high production values performed in professional venues.

<sup>36</sup>These include: (Ahmet, 2012; Barker and Barnbrook, 1998; Barsocchini and Lawrence, 2007; Blow, 1683; Bolton et al., 1934; Brecht and Ritchie, 1932; Brecht and Weill, 1928; Brown et al., 1974; Burke and Barnbrook, 2006; Cross and Heneker, 1963; Curtis, 2010*a,b*; DiPietro and Roberts, 1996; Edgar and Oliver, 1980; Eliot et al., 1981; Elton and Queen, 2002; Fernandez et al., 1988; Fleming and Barnbrook, 2007; Gibbs and Barnbrook, 2009; Golding, William adapted by Lynda Fleming, 1954; Gordon and Gesner, 1967; Hall and John, 2005; Jacobs, 2007; LaChiusa, 2003, 2004; Limberg, 2012; Mcfarlane, 2008; Meehan and Strouse, 1977; Mitchell and Warbeck, 2001; Parker and Williams, 1971; Pitchford et al., 1998; Rice and Lloyd-Webber, 1970; Rodgers and Hammerstein, 2009; Sams et al., 2002; Shakespeare, 1598; Shakespeare and Barnbrook, 1602; Stagecoach Theatre Arts, n.d.; Stiles and Drewe, 1993; Tebelak and Schwartz, 1971; Waugh and Barnbrook, 2007; Westdal and Batchelor, n.d.; Wheeler and Sondheim, 1979; Wilson et al., 2006; Wing, 2011).

### 4.3 Other opportunities

There are offerings which do not fit into either the category of part-time theatre schools or youth theatre but which offer good opportunities for young people seeking performing arts training.

Most major drama schools offer some form of part-time classes both for children and for people who want to pursue professional performing arts training but cannot afford to do so on a full-time basis<sup>37</sup>. Part-time training can take a number of forms: regular evening or weekend classes, summer schools, or even distance learning<sup>38</sup>. Whatever the format, training done through a series of short courses is likely to have gaps and/or overlaps, and in general will not have the cohesion and coherence of fully-integrated courses in musical theatre, and may turn out to be a more expensive option overall than its full-time counterpart. On the other hand, because costs can be spread over a longer period, and because it may be easier to fit training around employment (and other commitments), it can represent a more affordable option than a full-time course<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore it allows students to focus on areas of greatest need; for example it might appeal to actors who want to improve their singing or movement, but who do not necessarily want to pursue a career in musical theatre.

While most of the schools offer classes for people of all ages, others, like Bird College, restrict entry to students aged 14 and over who demonstrate a real drive for professional training ([Bird College, n.d.](#)). In addition to Saturday classes for children, Mountview run three focused programmes which operate at different levels of ability and intensity, with the idea that students can work their way up through the system. As the work gets harder, the courses require more contact time and the fees increase. The most advanced course is the Foundation Course<sup>40</sup> which runs for nine hours per week over three evenings and is accessed by audition. Most students are aged between 17 and 28 and come from all over the country to attend the course ([Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, n.d.](#)).

These courses tend to focus on the skills students need to acquire, and, in some cases, on preparing students for Drama School auditions, rather than on qualifications, although

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<sup>37</sup>As part of their Continuing Professional Development programme, Arts Educational Schools offers over 25 courses in two-hour evening classes for young people aged three upwards. Some of the classes are available to any applicants, whilst others may be accessed only by audition ([Arts Educational Schools London, n.d.a](#)).

<sup>38</sup>Some classes are offered once a week while others are more intensive, running for several evenings as well as at the weekend, allowing participants to gain the sense of camaraderie and the ‘feel’ of a professional company, similar to the experience they could expect from a full-time course.

<sup>39</sup>Weekly classes also allow participants the opportunity to practise what they learn before they attend the next class. However for some, the pressures of daily life make practice, and consequently progress, more difficult.

<sup>40</sup>Although this is described as a ‘foundation course’, it is altogether different from foundation courses referred to in the education system chapter.

there are exceptions. Students at Birkbeck can work towards the Certificate of Continuing Education which involves studying for one evening per week for a total of 96 hours, and the Certificate of Higher Education which requires attendance on two evenings per week for a total of 192 hours ([Birkbeck College, n.d.](#)).

Intensive Easter or summer schools are available at most institutions<sup>41</sup>. Usually these courses are run for a week or two and culminate in a show project, rather than focusing on building technical skills. The two or three term structure of most drama schools means that the resident faculty are available to teach on holiday programmes, and often the institutions use the courses as a marketing opportunity as well as a fundraiser. There are examples of young people being offered places on full-time courses following attendance at summer school projects.

A number of regional theatres, including the Mayflower Theatre and HQ Theatres, also run summer schools based on particular musicals, and the company West End Summer Schools take over the Guildhall School of Music and Drama each summer for its series of summer schools which culminate in a performance at Her Majesty's Theatre and include a trip to a West End musical as part of their package ([WestEndStage, n.d.](#)).

In addition to masterclasses and short courses, some companies run their courses intensively for a number of months, offering the benefits of full-time intensive training without the commitment of a full year away from work or other forms of education. For example, Associated Studios in London runs a four month intensive Musical Theatre programme for up to 16 students<sup>42</sup>. The company also offers an individual mentoring service whereby a professional performer or creative is assigned to each student for a period of 6 – 12 months.

One-to-one tuition in individual subjects, as well as in Musical Theatre as a whole, is also available either from private tutors, or as a supplement to performing arts classes and courses. Companies like Theatrebugs offer individual Drama, Singing, and Musical Theatre lessons to children of nursery school age at a rate of £30 per hour ([Theatrebugs, n.d.](#)), and Perform charge £100 per hour for individual lessons with children under the age of 12 ([Perform, n.d.](#))<sup>43</sup>.

West End Kids operates as a 'show choir', a concept which is quite common in America, but is relatively new to the UK. The introduction of television series *Glee* increased the reach and popularity of show choirs, and places at West End Kids have since become

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<sup>41</sup>For day students and also on a residential basis.

<sup>42</sup>Students are "given appropriate projects to complete monthly, as well as practice schedules, one-to-one coaching, access to group workshops and continued checkups to monitor progress and development" ([Associated Studios, n.d.](#)).

<sup>43</sup>Prices taken from websites in August 2014.

highly prized. In addition to raising income through tuition fees, West End Kids are hired out for corporate gigs as well as for charity events.

West End Masterclass developed their business ‘Sing with the Stars’ in 2007 which tours regional theatres and gives young people the opportunity to undergo “three days’ intensive training leading to a performance at a professional theatre in a concert with West End Stars” ([West End Masterclass, n.d.](#)). In addition to charging the young performers for the workshops, income is generated through ticket sales at the theatres, with the by-product of stimulating and sustaining an interest in theatre amongst young people. More recently West End Masterclass have established courses of weekly classes designed to “train a group of exceptionally talented students from ages 12-30 with the aim of helping them achieve successful entry into top Musical Theatre and Drama colleges” ([West End Masterclass, n.d.](#)). In addition to running technical classes and offering one-to-one coaching, at the end of every year the company hosts a presentation in front of an invited audience of casting directors, agents and producers.

Kids Week was established by the Society of London Theatre in 1997 as a week-long initiative which encourages young people to attend professional productions and to participate in associated performing arts activities. Kids Week allocates a free ticket for any participating show to every child when accompanied by an adult, and parents are able to “purchase up to two extra children’s tickets at half price” ([Kids Week, n.d.](#)). Each year the project has grown and in 2014 reportedly was responsible for the sale of 175,000 tickets and gave thousands of families the opportunity to take part in more than 60 activities, workshops and events across London during August ([Kids Week, n.d.](#)).

Many of the opportunities tend to be concentrated in or near London, partly because of the extensive performing arts infrastructure that exists in London, but in some cases because the long theatre runs for West End shows make collaborations easier than for touring productions, which tend to have relatively short runs in any given location, making it difficult for them to build a ‘brand’ and/or develop an audience in the same way.

Although the individual offerings discussed above are on a rather smaller scale than part-time schools like Stagecoach, their sheer diversity means that it is possible for anyone with an interest in the performing arts to find an opportunity to suit them which is both accessible and affordable.



## 4.4 Teacher training

It is important, not only to the 5,000+<sup>44</sup> employees themselves that teachers are well-equipped to teach properly, but also to the 75,000+<sup>45</sup> young people (and their parents) who expect to be taught safely and effectively. Many of the teachers come from a performer background and it is therefore important to consider the provision for teacher training specifically for performing arts graduates.

With an average of one principal and three teachers per school, Stagecoach alone employs over 3,000 teachers, and in practice this figure could be significantly higher<sup>46</sup>, and the jobs in theatre schools offer a combination of flexibility and stability that is so important to many in the performance industry. Teaching work enables performers to supplement their income when times are lean, something which is all too often the case in the musical theatre industry, and it thus helps to support a larger pool of performers than might otherwise be the case.

Teachers with a performance background will usually have strong technical skills. However the large majority of performers teaching do not have formal teacher training, and unlike headteachers at a school, principals are themselves very often ex-performers rather than teachers. Yet there is currently no nationally recognised teaching qualification designed specifically for performing arts teachers in the informal sector.

Deficiencies identified by inspections (by Ofsted, CDET and Trinity) are invariably things that could be obviated by effective teacher training ((HMG, 1993), (CDET, n.d.a), (Trinity College London, n.d.b)). Ex-performers tend to excel at demonstration, facilitating workshops etc., but some seem to find more difficulty with skills that come more naturally to trained teachers such as planning a comprehensive programme of material, working with groups of mixed ability/ages, and with varying their teaching style when ‘plan A’ does not seem to be working<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>44</sup>5,000 is a conservative estimate based on the principle of four teachers working at each part-time theatre school (Singing, Dance, Drama plus a principal/manager) multiplied by the number of branches of the prominent companies listed in table 4.2 on page 227. In practice this figure could be significantly higher because most schools have more than one session either running concurrently or at other points during the week, and many also employ assistant teachers. It also does not include any of the teachers in the smaller companies or those working in youth theatres.

<sup>45</sup>This figure is based on the teacher: pupil ratio of 1:15 which is standard practice in theatre schools. Stagecoach Theatre Arts alone accounts for 40,000 young people.

<sup>46</sup>Comparing this figure with the number of staff teaching the performing arts in the state school network puts this into context. According to the 2012 school census (Ref: Table 2a (in ‘Main tables’) (HMG, 2014a) there were 3,268 state-funded secondary schools. Assuming that each school has 2 or 3 teachers working in music or drama (with dancing usually covered by PE teachers), a rough estimate of the number of performing arts teachers employed in the entire national network of state-funded schools might be as few as 7,000.

<sup>47</sup>These issues also surface in drama schools where many of the teachers are current/ex-performers, with little or no teacher training.

Continuing professional development is important to keep teachers fresh and enthusiastic, but outside the state education sector it is largely self-funded, and consequently can be neglected with the result that those who have trained some years previously are not necessarily up-to-date with current practice and trends in the industry.

Having a well-qualified workforce of teachers is important for other reasons also. A portable qualification conferring Qualified Teacher Status would facilitate interchange between the informal sector and the state sector, improving the prospects for teachers, enlarging the pool of employees available to employers, and enriching the skill sets available to both the state education system and the informal sector. Having access to a flexible and highly skilled pool of music, drama and dance teachers would help schools to address some of the problems identified in the Education chapter.

The experience of teaching can also improve personal performance: teaching can reignite passion for a subject and gives teachers the opportunity to sharpen their skills. The founder of the Herbert Justice Academy, Alan Justice, believes that “when you learn how to teach you look at your own technique and your development in a much more intense way” (Berry, 2013a). Principal of the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Janet Smith, describes teaching as a way of “sharing your practice, rather than merely teaching it ... as you teach you learn, as you articulate what you practise, to help someone get it, you learn more about it. You learn by having to translate it in different ways” (Berry, 2013a).

Having made the case for teacher training, we need to consider what is currently on offer in order to fully understand what works well and to address the deficiencies.

Many performing arts teachers begin their careers by training as performers at drama schools. A number of institutions offer teacher training as part of their 3-year musical theatre diploma courses, but this usually extends only to the Diploma in Dance Instruction (DDI) with the ISTD exam board. The DDI equips teachers with skills in injury care and prevention; ethical practice; basic anatomy, health and safety, and nutrition for dancers. The course also affords participants the opportunity to observe experienced teachers, requires them to undertake teaching practice in a number of settings, and tests knowledge and application of the ISTD dance syllabus<sup>48</sup>. While all are very important components, what is missing is a unit on teaching skills, including how to differentiate and maintain interest from students of all levels and backgrounds, how to plan programmes of material, and how to feedback constructively to ensure the continued progression of learners.

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<sup>48</sup>The ISTD course is designed for those teaching the ISTD dance syllabus, and is less relevant to other environments (ISTD, n.d.).

There are some institutions that incorporate teacher training in their courses and offer the opportunity to acquire Qualified Teacher Status in performing arts subjects as part of the training ([Italia Conti, n.d.b](#)), but these are few and far between. If performing arts students choose to undertake a separate Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), usually they will be required to specialise in one subject<sup>49</sup>. While there are a number of PGCE courses in Drama and Music (though not singing specifically)<sup>50</sup>, and a handful in Dance ([Postgraduate Search, n.d.](#)), the only university in the UK to offer a PGCE in Performing Arts closed its course in September 2014<sup>51</sup>. Even if performing arts graduates were to undertake a PGCE, because these courses are designed for teaching at secondary school level in statutory education, they do not necessarily prepare graduates well for teaching at vocational institutions or in the informal education sector. Vocational training is very different from mainstream education – rather than learning about a variety of genres within the broad areas of music, dance, and drama, students need to learn about rehearsal and performance techniques for singing, dance, and acting in traditional and contemporary musical theatre, and how they combine to form a genre in its own right. In this respect, teachers must have a solid understanding of how to deliver their subject alongside the other two disciplines<sup>52</sup>.

In an effort to equip graduates with teaching skills and experience, some institutions have introduced MA courses which cover education in the performing arts. These courses go some way towards closing the gap between traditional teaching qualifications and vocational training in that learners are taught specifically how to teach their subject effectively and safely. GSA's MA in the Practice of Voice and Singing ([GSA University of Surrey, n.d.](#)) has become popular with Voice and Singing teachers, and even those who have been teaching for a number of years have chosen to return to education to complete the course. However there isn't yet a direct equivalent for Drama or Dance teachers<sup>53</sup>, and this type of MA course does not provide learners with a formal teaching qualification at a recognised national standard<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup>This requirement poses problems for performing arts graduates in the sense that they would be competing for places with Music, Dance, or Drama graduates who have spent three years specialising in their subject area, giving them a far greater depth of knowledge in that one subject.

<sup>50</sup>PGCE performing arts teaching courses: 27 universities in the UK offer 47 PGCE courses in performing arts subjects.

<sup>51</sup>Liverpool Hope University – personal conversation with 2014 graduate from the course, Kirsty Peacey Wyatt on 16th December 2014.

<sup>52</sup>I have worked on projects with choreographers and dance teachers who have taught complex and high energy dance routines to an ensemble who are expected to be singing a full piece involving several harmony lines at the same time. In professional shows this conflict is resolved through pre-recording of vocals and booth singing from other cast members.

<sup>53</sup>Although there are a number of MA courses in dance or drama education, they do not serve the same purpose as the MA in the Practice of Voice and Singing, and tend to deal with the arts in community settings, rather than performing arts training.

<sup>54</sup>The courses are held only at a handful of institutions which means that participants would need to relocate to attend them, and this, combined with the high course fees and inflexibility of a full-time course can also make it difficult for most people to access this level of training.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCertHE) is “designed for full and part-time teachers and those who support learning in higher education in performing arts disciplines”<sup>55</sup>. The course allows learners to reflect on their own teaching practice and to discuss learning and teaching issues in peer learning groups, but the course is only for those teaching in higher education and is designed to work as a distance learning programme, with one evening contact session per month, affording less opportunity for the participants to observe and learn from experienced, and high quality, teachers. It is widely acknowledged that teaching is “‘caught’ by being on the receiving end of inspirational teaching” and so it is important to “expose students to workshop of the highest possible calibre to enable and to inspire” ([The Stage, 2008](#)). The PGCertHE is a stepping stone towards HEA fellowship, but is gradually being phased out and is only offered by a handful of institutions, so is not an option for teacher training in the longer term.

Another option is a part-time diploma course with recognised examination boards like Trinity College London and the Royal Academy of Music ([Trinity College London, n.d. a](#)), ([ABRSM, n.d.](#)). However the diplomas tend to cover just one of the three subjects, and focus mostly on establishing a level of proficiency and knowledge in the subject area, rather than testing the teaching skills of those on the course. More positively, the diplomas validate existing skills and afford teachers the opportunity to reflect on their current practice. Importantly, although they offer a teaching qualification of sorts, they do not confer Qualified Teacher Status.

In 2007 a series of teaching diplomas were introduced which were intended for those teaching vocational subjects in the ‘Lifelong Learning Sector’ ([Clancy, 2007](#)). The three diplomas are pitched at Levels 3, 4, and 5, and lead to Qualified Teacher Status in a specific subject area (Preparing for Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector, Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector). However, while the PTLLS, CTLLS, and DTLLS courses offer guidance on topics like classroom management and effective planning, they do not usually focus on delivering lessons in specific subject areas<sup>56</sup>. Teachers need to be given strategies for how to deliver the subject of musical theatre, and understand the limitations and possibilities involved, how to integrate the individual disciplines, and inform practice through contextual knowledge. Furthermore these courses are intended only for

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<sup>55</sup>The Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE: Theatre and Performing Arts (PG-CLTHE) offered by Rose Bruford College is the main course of this type in that it was written specifically for those teaching theatre and performing arts. However it is possible to complete a more general PGCertHE at a number of universities in conjunction with a specific department.

<sup>56</sup>There are some exceptions: the British Ballet Organisation offers the PTLLS, CTLLS, and DTLLS qualifications, but while the delivering body specialises in the subject area, the structure of the qualifications still limits what can be taught, meaning that the course still falls short ([British Ballet Organisation, n.d.](#)).

teachers who will be working with students aged between 14 and 19, and there is nothing which adequately prepares people to teach performing arts at all levels. To date there is no general teaching course which spans both primary and secondary level because the material covered would be too broad, but in a specialist area like performing arts, a teaching course which covers learners from 4 – 18 would be a valuable addition.

Table 4.2 on page 227 outlines the courses currently on offer, and in so doing exposes the gaps.

TABLE 4.2: Teacher training

Course Title and Institution/Awarding Body	Course Content and Entry Requirement	Level on the NQF	Programme of study	Fees
<b>Diplomas (p/t)</b>				
<b>Performance Arts Awards/Rock School /Stagecoach Theatre Arts</b>				
Associate Diploma in Performance Arts Level 4	The Associate Diploma in Performance Arts (ADPA) is designed for teachers working with young people in part-time performing arts schools.  The course includes workshops as well as one-to-one tutoring, and covers: class-room management; preparation and planning of lessons; how to support and enable SEN children; child development; diversity and inclusivity awareness; child protection issues, and health and safety issues.	Level 4	Two week course.	£1050
<b>Trinity College London</b>				
Trinity Level 4 Certificate for Music Educators (CME)	The Trinity CME assesses learners in: understanding how young people learn; planning, facilitating, and evaluating; reflective practice and professional development; equality, diversity; inclusion, and safeguarding.	Level 4	Must be completed within two years. Flexible programme of learning.	Centre sets fees.
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>				

Table 4.2 – continued from previous page

Course Title and Institution/Awarding Body	Course Content and Entry Requirement	Level on the NQF	Programme of study	Fees
The Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning (Children and Young People)	The Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning is the first qualification of its kind, designed for practitioners working with young people outside formal education. It has been developed at the request of the major national dance organisations and led by Youth Dance England on behalf of Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP). The course covers teaching and learning in dance; professional knowledge of dance teaching; critical reflection; dance teaching in practice.	90 credits towards Level 6	Flexible programme of learning - weekend and holiday courses.	Full course at Trinity Laban £4019 TCL fees: £810.
<b>Associate Level</b> Trinity ATCL in Teaching: Theatre Arts	The course covers theoretical work in the form of a written paper, reflective practice, and practical performance work. Entry Requirements: normally a Grade 8 or equivalent.	Level 4	Must be completed within three years.	£304 (TCL fees, not course fees).
<b>Licentiate Level</b> Trinity LTCL in Teaching: Musical Theatre Theatre Arts	This qualification is evidence that the candidate can plan and deliver programmes appropriate for a range of learners and settings and can evaluate their effectiveness. The course covers theoretical work in the form of a written paper, reflective practice, and practical performance work. Entry Requirements: The LTCL is usually taken at least two years after the ATCL.	Level 6 and recognised by Ofqual/C-CEA/AC-CAC as teaching qualifications.	Must be completed within three years.	£397 (TCL fees, not course fees).
<b>Fellowship Level</b> Trinity FTCL in Education Studies: Musical Theatre	The course covers theoretical work in the form of a written paper, reflective practice, and practical performance work. Entry requirements: a standard comparable to at least LTCL Teaching and should have at least two years full-time verified teaching experience.	Level 7	Must be completed within three years.	£647 (TCL fees, not course fees).
<b>Royal Academy of Music</b>				
(Continued on next page)				

Table 4.2 – continued from previous page

Course Title and Institution/Awarding Body	Course Content and Entry Requirement	Level on the NQF	Programme of study	Fees
Level 4 Certificate for Music Educators	The CME has been developed by the Arts Council England for musicians who are involved in musical learning activities for children and young people. It is designed to encourage all music educators, from those who are new to the workforce to those who are highly experienced, to develop new skills, consolidate their understanding of the purposes of music education, and encourage best practice in their contribution to children and young people's knowledge, skills and understanding of music.	Level 4	Must be completed within two years. Flexible programme of learning.	Centre sets fees.
<b>London College of Music (University of West London)</b>				
<b>Diploma Level</b> DipLCM in Early Childhood Music Teaching	This diploma requires the candidate to demonstrate the fundamental skills and understanding required by a competent music teacher. Candidates will exhibit solid basic teaching skills, performance technique, and the ability to communicate appropriate knowledge and understanding.	Level 4	Candidate discretion.	£165 (LCM fees excl. tuition fees).
<b>Associate Level</b> ALCM in Early Childhood Music Teaching	This diploma requires the candidate to demonstrate the skills and understanding required by a competent and proficient music teacher. Candidates will exhibit accomplished and confident teaching skills, performance technique, and the ability to communicate appropriate knowledge and understanding. Entry requirements: Dip LCM.	Level 5	Candidate discretion.	£239 (LCM fees excl. tuition fees).
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>				

Table 4.2 – continued from previous page

Course Title and Institution/Awarding Body	Course Content and Entry Requirement	Level on the NQF	Programme of study	Fees
<b>Licentiate Level</b> LLCM in Early Childhood Music Teaching	This diploma demands a fully professional standard of teaching, musician-ship and educational skills. Evidence of experience and expertise as a teacher, a secure and versatile performance technique, and the ability to communicate a tangible sense of understanding and insight into the teaching process, will be expected. Entry Requirements: ALCM.	Level 6	Candidate discretion.	£399 (LCM fees excl. tuition fees).
<b>Diploma Level</b> DipLCM in Teaching (Music Theatre)	This course covers teaching, presentation, performance, and discussion.	Level 4	Candidate discretion.	£165 (LCM fees excl. tuition fees).
<b>Associate Level</b> ALCM in Teaching (Music Theatre)	This course covers teaching, a written submission in the form of an essay, presentation, performance, and discussion.	Level 5	Candidate discretion.	£239 (LCM fees excl. tuition fees).
<b>Licentiate Level</b> LLCM in Teaching (Music Theatre)	This course covers teaching, a written submission in the form of case studies, a dissertation, and an analysis, presentation, performance, and discussion.	Level 6	Candidate discretion.	£399 (LCM fees excl. tuition fees).
<b>Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD)</b>				
Diploma in Dance Instruction (DDI)	This course covers observing and understanding teaching and learning techniques; health and safety in dance; practical proficiency; dance practice and the relationship between dance and music.	Level 3	Must complete within five years. Guided learning hours 505. Notional learning hours 680.	£442.50 (ISTD fees excl. course fees).
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>				



Table 4.2 – continued from previous page

Course Title and Institution/Awarding Body	Course Content and Entry Requirement	Level on the NQF	Programme of study	Fees
Diploma in Dance Education (DDE)	This course covers planning techniques and evaluation of dance training; dance teaching practice; lifespan development in dance; dance practice and the relationship between dance and music; the contextual study of dance.	Level 4	Must complete within five years. Guided learning hours 630. Notional learning hours 920.	£661.50 (ISTD fees excl. course fees).
<b>LAMDA</b>				
LAMDA Diploma in Communication, Speech and Drama Education	Unit 1: Theoretical and Subject Knowledge Unit 2: The Application of Professional Knowledge Unit 3: Demonstrating Practical Teaching Skills Entry requirement: LAMDA Certificate in Speech and Drama or equivalent.	Level 5	180 guided learning hours and 380 notional learning hours.	£773
<b>Diplomas (F/t)</b>				
Italia Conti 3 Year Performing Arts Course with Teacher Training  Supported by Guildford College and validated by The University of Greenwich	This unique 3 year course offers teacher training in: Diploma in Dance Instruction, Diploma in Dance Education, PGCE and PCE (CTTLS and DTTLS).	QTS	Three years full-time.	£35,712
<b>Performing Arts Theatre College</b>				
(Continued on next page)				

Table 4.2 – continued from previous page

Course Title and Institution/Awarding Body	Course Content and Entry Requirement	Level on the NQF	Programme of study	Fees
Theatre Arts Drama Teaching Qualification Trinity Guildhall	The qualification enables students to open their own theatre school, teach extra curricular lessons at schools, work in community theatre or become teachers of stage/drama schools. Candidates sit a written paper on principles of teaching related to their discipline, submit prepared written materials including case studies, and teach a practical demonstration lesson which is then discussed with the examiner.	Level 5	One year part-time – 12 hours per week (not all contact based).	£6300
Dance Teacher Training Course International Dance Teachers Association (IDTA)	The Dance Teacher Training Course trains the student to an advanced standard of dance technique whilst gaining practical work experience and IDTA teaching qualifications. The qualifications are recognised worldwide and enable the student to teach in schools, gyms, the community, or open and run a dance school. Choosing ballet as a core dance style would entitle qualification holders to become a recognised teacher with the RAD.		One year intensive full-time, or two year full-time. Approx. 20 hours per week (not all contact based).	£6300
<b>PGCE and QTS</b>				
PGCE Drama	This course aims to develop an understanding of the place of drama in secondary education and to provide a firm foundation from which to teach.	QTS	Full-time one year.	£9000
PGCE Music	This course aims to develop an understanding of the place of music in secondary education and to provide a firm foundation from which to teach.	QTS	Full-time one year.	£9000
PGCE Dance	This course aims to develop an understanding of the place of dance in secondary education and to provide a firm foundation from which to teach.	QTS	Full-time one year.	£9000
Schools Direct	Dance, Drama, Music, Performing Arts.	QTS	Full-time one year.	Paid position
<b>PGCE and QTLS</b>				
<b>(Continued on next page)</b>				

Table 4.2 – continued from previous page

Course Title and Institution/Awarding Body	Course Content and Entry Requirement	Level on the NQF	Programme of study	Fees
PTLLS CTLLS DTLLS	Since 1 April 2012, further education teachers who have been awarded QTLS by the Institute for Learning (IfL) are recognised as qualified teachers in secondary schools.	QTS	Two years.	Example cost: £2178 with the BBO.
<b>Masters Courses</b>				
Guildford School of Acting: MA in Practice of Voice and Singing University of Surrey	This practice-based programme is informed by a theoretical understanding and critical awareness of historical and current practices, and seeks to develop a personal style of coaching in its graduates. BA in relevant subject and demonstrated professional knowledge.	MA	One year.	£9345
<b>Estill Voice International</b>				
Certified Estill Voice Teacher Estill Voice International	There are 3 possibilities for certification in Estill Voice Training: 1) Certificate of Figure Proficiency, 2) Certified Master Teacher, 3) Certified Course Instructor.	N/A	Two five-day courses, one three-day course and six practice group meetings.	£2020
<b>VIDLA– Vocals International Distance Learning Academy</b>				
Diploma in Teaching Children (Contemporary Vocals)	This course deals with teaching children between the ages of 7 and 11 and covers rhythm and movement, songs and strategies, practical group teaching, and teaching practice.	N/A	Ten months distance learning.	£681
Diploma in Teaching Adolescents (Contemporary Vocals)	This course deals with teaching adolescents and covers working with adolescent voices, warming up, songs and strategies, practical group teaching, and teaching practice.	N/A	Ten months distance learning.	£681

Table 4.3 on page 234 summarises the information in the previous table.

TABLE 4.3: Overview of teacher training

	Assoc. Levels 4/5	Lic. Level 6	Degree	QTS	Fellow Level 7	Subject specific	General teaching practice	Subject
Rock School/ Perf. Arts Awards/ Stagecoach Theatre Arts	X					X	X	Performing Arts
Trinity College London	X	X				X		Musical Theatre
Royal Academy of Music	X					X		Music Education
London College of Music	X	X				X		Music Theatre
ISTD	X					X		Dance (various genres)
LAMDA	X							Drama Education
Italia Conti		X		X		X	X	Performing Arts
PAT	X X							Drama/ Dance
PGCE/ DTLLS				X			X	Music Drama Dance
Middlesex University/ GSA			X		X	X		Voice and Singing
Estill/ VIDLA	Highly regarded singing teacher qualification					X		Singing

Despite the raft of qualifications available, none meet the needs of those wanting to become teachers at part-time theatre schools, in the youth theatre sector, or those teaching at the vocational institutions that do not follow national examination boards<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Teachers on BTEC and other National Diploma courses are taught to deliver these courses as part of some of the PGCE courses in (secondary) Drama, but those coming from a Music or Dance PGCE would not have encountered the BTEC in Performing Arts before being required to teach on the course.

The lack of qualified teachers in the informal sector has previously been identified. The 1975 report, ‘Going on the Stage’ for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation concluded that “apart from elementary health and fire safety regulations, the government places no obstacle in the path of any individual who decides either to set up an ‘academy of dramatic art’ or to set himself up as a private tutor” (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1975). The report expressed concern about the “myriad of ‘brass-plate’ academies, run by untrained and undistinguished principals, not to train actors for a career on the stage, but as a commercial enterprise often catering for foreign students or giving Saturday morning lessons to school children” (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1975). The report revealed that 30% of actor entrants into Equity trained in the informal sector, highlighting the need for good quality teachers in this type of education.

In the Education chapter I noted that the ‘Going on the Stage’ report was a major influence on performing arts education in the UK and was responsible for the development of the Trinity College London Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre and the associated Dance and Drama Awards which currently amounts to an annual government investment of £14 million (DaDA organisation, 2015). It is surprising, therefore, that teacher training for vocational subjects was not also addressed, and whilst the CDET’s system for Recognised Schools, designed to address the concern over lack of professional standards, is a step in the right direction, there is more to do.

Currently there are huge numbers of committed and passionate teachers with a lot of experience in performance, and consequently an excellent understanding of solid and safe technique, but who have little or no formal experience of classroom management and discipline, differentiation, or of planning programmes of material<sup>58</sup>. There is a need for a qualification system which embraces these areas and which allows practitioners to develop further skills, in addition to validating existing ones.

Table 4.4 on page 235 outlines a possible specification for a new teacher training qualification.

TABLE 4.4: Teacher training qualification

Teacher Training Specification:
Aims and Objectives
1. Relevant and accessible professional development.
2. For less experienced teachers, theoretical and practical knowledge and skills.
3. For more experienced teachers, the opportunity to reflect and develop personal skills and practice.
4. The opportunity to share best practice.
(Continued on next page)

<sup>58</sup>“I think even if you are a good dancer, this doesn’t make you a good teacher, as quite often the understanding isn’t there on how to break things down and build things up to achieve a rounded dancer.” (Burns, 2015).

**Table 4.4 – continued from previous page**

5. A step forward for teaching in the performing arts sector in the UK. 6. An industry standard for teaching performing arts to children and young people. 7. Quality control. 8. Evidence to employers and parents/carers that a practitioner has the expertise to teach young people in the specific subject area. 9. A nationally recognised teaching qualification for the informal sector. 10. A portable qualification which will enhance the career opportunities of holders.
<b>The qualification designed for:</b>
1. Anyone working with children and young people beyond/outside statutory education, and also within the formal sector for those working at a vocational level. 2. Practitioners with a variety of teaching backgrounds, from those new to teaching to those with many years of experience. 3. Practitioners with experience in a variety of performance styles. 4. Teachers who have qualifications or appropriate relevant experience in their chosen subjects (i.e. not limiting the qualifications available to learners with first degrees).
<b>The qualification should cover:</b>
<i>Duty of Care</i>
1. Health and Safety - extending to looking after the bodies and voices of learners by ensuring proper warm up and cool down routines are in place (considering the age, development, and capability of the individual when planning lessons; dealing with injuries, and risk assessment of rehearsal and performance spaces). 2. Ethics and codes of conduct. 3. Child protection. 4. Diversity awareness - understanding the personal needs of individual learners. 5. Behaviour management and dealing with potential social issues.
<i>Planning, delivery and evaluation</i>
1. Learning to plan effectively, with long-term goals in mind. 2. Planning appropriately for each age group (considering the physical and mental capabilities of learners at each stage, choice of subject matter, and the interests and frame of reference of the individual learner). 3. Planning for a group of mixed abilities. 4. Report writing communicating with parents in order to give them a good understanding of the progress of their child. 5. Dealing with differentiation considering: the experience and talent of individual students, how to inspire and engage with children from all backgrounds, and how to deal with a turnover of students (new students can join an established group, and so you are rarely in a position where you can plan to move a full cohort forwards). 6. Being clear about what you want individual learners to achieve, and developing a strategy for progression. 7. Reviewing teaching methods and material. 8. Responding to feedback from children, parents, employers, and external assessors.
(Continued on next page)

**Table 4.4 – continued from previous page**

<i>Teaching in a Performing Arts context</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classroom management in a performing arts environment.</li> <li>2. Assessing the potential, the limitations, and the needs of individual learners, and adjusting teaching style as necessary.</li> <li>3. Covering basic groundwork and instilling technique in a performance context, and learning to build technical work into lessons in all areas.</li> <li>4. Building key skills including confidence and team work.</li> </ol>

As discussed previously, the informal performing arts education sector encompasses part-time theatre schools, youth theatre, and a variety of performing arts projects and schemes. In all of these settings a good understanding of performing arts as a whole and the way the individual disciplines relate to one another is important. The ideal qualification would cover music, dance, and drama in a broad sense, and then would allow learners to focus on one specialist area. People teaching in the informal sector come from a variety of backgrounds, have a range of experience, and will have different types of existing qualifications. As a result the emphasis should be on flexibility rather than a ‘one size fits all’ structure. For example a tiered system would have the advantage that learners enter into the assessment structure at an appropriate level, and all components should focus both on testing proficiency in the specialist subject as well as building and evaluating teaching skills.

It would be possible to incorporate existing qualifications. For example, the current Associate Diploma in Performing Arts Teaching offered through the Performance Arts Awards in conjunction with Rockschoool is pitched at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework<sup>59</sup>. This course could act as the first component of an assessment structure which relates to each level on the National Qualifications Framework and which would ultimately build towards a qualification that conferred Qualified Teacher status<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>59</sup>This qualification is currently delivered by Stagecoach Theatre Arts and was developed because the company identified a need to provide training for its teachers. The company’s then Head of Education, Veronica Bennetts, said that Stagecoach have “many talented practitioners who have honed and crafted their subject over years. We also have students who have spent many successful years in Stagecoach classes and wish to share their learning with others” (Bennetts, n.d.).

<sup>60</sup>One option would be for the qualifications to be validated by the Institute for Learning and by a university in order to allow for a top up for Level 6 qualifications to a full BA (Hons), progression on the National Qualifications Framework to postgraduate level, and to allow teachers to gain Qualified Teacher Status which would give them more opportunities for teaching across both the formal and informal education sectors.

“Teaching is a skilled craft. Anyone who has done it, knows it”<sup>61</sup>. Given the clear need for performers to be trained to teach effectively, inclusively and safely, it is surprising that it is something almost entirely neglected by the education system.

## 4.5 Reflections on the informal sector

The informal sector adds considerable value both in economic terms and in terms of its social benefits through its contribution to the development of young people. Interpersonal skills are widely recognised as critically important in the workplace and, more broadly, in building and maintaining social cohesion. But it is perhaps at the individual level that the benefits of performing arts training can be most striking.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the informal sector is important, influential, and far-reaching, yet its contribution is frequently overlooked in analyses of performing arts education. Part-time theatre schools and youth theatre provide the opportunity for large numbers of young people to receive performing arts training that simply isn’t available from the state education system. They build an enthusiasm for the arts, and more importantly, for participation in the arts (and in so doing help develop performers and audiences of the future). Theatre schools and youth theatres provide a means of giving young people self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and resilience that research has shown to be so important in any career. They employ a lot of people and provide a bridge between the industry and young people, in that young performers are being taught by people who are themselves strong performers. The informal sector is also economically important: collectively turnover is substantial<sup>62</sup>, and this excludes the unpaid work done by those running Youth Theatre companies like STP Musicals, who in many ways epitomise David Cameron’s ‘Big Society’.

The informal sector came about to address the shortfall in performing arts education in state schools. The opportunities offered are significant not only in the specific context of musical theatre, but also in the wider sense of equipping young people with the skills that are so important in people’s working and personal lives ([BBC News, 2015b](#)). However private education can be expensive, for example Stagecoach fees are typically £1,000 per annum. Whilst this is competitive compared with instrumental tuition, it is not within everybody’s reach.

Inadequate standards within the state sector and uneven access to forms of private tuition have led to a situation where inequalities have become entrenched. Given that

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<sup>61</sup>Veronica Bennetts, Head of Education for Stagecoach Theatre Arts ([Bennetts, n.d.](#)).

<sup>62</sup>Stagecoach alone brought in revenues of over £12.9 million in 2012. <http://www.thebusinessdesk.com/northwest/stagecoach-theatre-sees-revenue-fall.html>.



‘soft skills’ are thought to be highly influential in determining people’s life chances, this risks exacerbating social equality at the time and in the future; thus an inadequate state offering runs the risk of impeding social mobility.



## Chapter 5

# Professional theatre

Having considered how children are trained in both the formal and informal sectors it is also important to look at the working life of a child performer and assess whether the current education system is fit for purpose in order to fully prepare a young person for professional work in the musical theatre industry. The research, e.g. ([Borgonovi, 2004](#)), indicates that it is participation that is the driver in determining the likelihood of being a ‘consumer’ in later life. Consequently it is important to consider how a child performer’s professional life is shaped by their education and training, and how the demands (perceived or real) of the professional industry sets the direction of travel for education and training.

However it is also true that many performers cite early theatrical experiences as the reason they chose to pursue a career in the arts, and exposure to professional or amateur theatre as a young audience members can inspire young people to participate in musical theatre.

This chapter explores the world of professional theatre and the way young people fit into it. It is divided into two parts: theatre for children and theatre by children, and discusses access, quality, and value. In each case, the discussion covers the product itself, the people who produce it and the people who ‘consume’ it. In both cases, I consider not only theatre that is exclusively for/by children, but also theatre where children are ‘co-consumers’ as part of family audiences or ‘co-producers’ as part of a cast made up of both adults and children, as is the case in *Matilda* for example.

## 5.1 Theatre for children

It is not uncommon for scholars to link the growing impetus of the theatre for children movement occurring in the early part of the last century with the emergence of the concept of childhood<sup>1</sup> itself (Reason, 2010: 3).

According to Reason, “Theatre for children ... is enjoying a period of thriving activity and interest in the UK.” (Reason, 2010: ix). He attributes this to “increased recognition of the social and educational benefits that theatre (and the arts in general) offers to young people”<sup>2</sup>.

Theatre for children ranges from small local productions aimed exclusively at children, to extravagant West End productions like the *Lion King* and *Matilda*. Theatre differs from TV and film because, in general, children rely on adults for access to it, and have less control over what they see<sup>3</sup>; therefore theatre does not benefit from the epidemic-like effects of playground conversations which have the potential to boost audience size.

In the past, theatre for children has fallen into two broad categories: productions that gave children what is ‘good for them’ and productions which keep them ‘good’<sup>4</sup>. Unashamedly escapist entertainment in the form of pantomimes is especially popular with family audiences in school holidays. From the Middle Ages to the present day, from passion plays to panto, theatre, particularly children’s theatre, has always been especially prominent at Christmas time<sup>5</sup>.

The lower ticket prices for children’s theatre make it difficult to operate on a wholly commercial basis; it therefore relies on subsidy, which is invariably contingent on meeting educational objectives. Thus the divide between escapist entertainment and educationally-inspired productions that has been evident in theatre for children is simply a reflection of musical theatre, ever responsive to its market, giving people what they are prepared

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<sup>1</sup>Although not without its critics ((Evans, 1997: 63), (Hendrick, 1992)), the seminal work on childhood was done by Aries (Aries, 1979), who draws out a number of central motifs, including innocence and vulnerability and hence the need for protection and nurturing. These were common themes for Victorian theatre (for adults), and were the driving force behind the social reforms of the nineteenth century. Andrea Gronemeyer notes that the rise of the middle-class “brought with it an interest in instructive children’s theatre” (cited in (Schonmann, 2006: 35)).

<sup>2</sup>“Marketing seeks to ‘infect’ people with the theatre-going bug through simple exposure, but at its best education work tries to go beyond this, enriching and underpinning the experience through workshops, lectures, participation or other activities” (Reason, 2010: 23). The research done on the subject points to the benefits of taking children to the theatre ((Borgonovi, 2004), (Andreasen and Belk, 1980) for example). Because musicals are generally more accessible and memorable, they represent a good way into theatre for young people.

<sup>3</sup>Regional surveys have explored the level of support and encouragement received by children for both watching and participating in theatre (and other performing arts) (Scottish government, 2009).

<sup>4</sup>Or at least keep them occupied.

<sup>5</sup>Accounts from the 18th and 19th centuries indicate that these were equally popular with performers because it allowed them to make extra money for Christmas (Byrne, 2010).

to buy; whilst it is children who ‘consume’ the product, it is adults who pay for it, whether those adults are parents or subsidy providers.

However, there is evidence of attempts to challenge the status quo. Tony Graham, Artistic Director of the Unicorn which has a reputation for producing high quality productions for children, prefers the term ‘theatre from children’s perspectives’ to ‘theatre for children’ which he says “encourages all manner of nonsense: didacticism, moralising (what Carol Miller calls “theatre of ought”), low standards (theatre of nought?), the cheap, the cheerful, the simplistic, the infantile. Such ideas have nothing to do with children and everything to do with well-meaning adults” (Reason, 2010: 31). The Unicorn claims to gauge scripts according to five criteria (Reason, 2010: 31):

- poetry,
- substance,
- transcendence,
- dramatic potential,
- a child’s perspective.

Other influential figures in children’s theatre like Caryl Jenner have expressed a similar view (Reason, 2010: 37); many are sceptical of the educational ‘wrapper’ that comes with theatre for young people<sup>6</sup>. Reason argues that the “NFER underplay the importance of pleasure”<sup>7</sup> (Reason, 2010: 10), taking the view that the arts “have value in a child’s development beyond its immediate instrumental function and beyond anything that might be empirically demonstrated ... engagement with the arts is a ‘good thing’, something that should be fostered without the need for concrete, measurable evidence” (Reason, 2010: 12).

“Lyn Gardner is critical of productions being too closely tied to the National Curriculum [which] turns them into a decoding exercise of spotting themes [with children] responding accordingly” (Reason, 2010: 113). “Resource packs can thus flatten and homogenise experience/responses” (Klein, 2005: 46); “they can preempt/spoil the surprise”. But Reason is more pragmatic (Reason, 2010: 113), recognising that it is sometimes necessary

<sup>6</sup>Some go as far as to argue that it can be counterproductive (Tulloch, 2000: 98,104), “we are raising generations of spectators who perceive theatre as an incomprehensibly abstract medium intended primarily for school trips” (Klein, 2005: 53). Schonmann argues against the “tyranny of the didactic uses of children’s theatre” (Schonmann, 2006: 10), “It has to stop struggling to define legitimacy as an educational endeavour, it would be better to concentrate on its artistic form and its own aesthetic merits.”

<sup>7</sup>“Despite it appearing a close third (behind ‘creative and thinking skills’ and ‘communication and expressive skills’) rated by teachers amongst ‘purposes’ for teaching of the arts” (Reason, 2010: 10).

because some children lack the cultural capital to engage with the production. It is of course always easier, cheaper and less time-consuming just to present information to students rather than to let them discover by themselves. On the other hand getting children to apply what they have learnt (through participation, for example) provides an acid test.

Indeed the values espoused by those working in children's theatre appear to be closely aligned with those associated with adult theatre, suggesting a discrepancy between how proposals must be presented to satisfy education policy, and the underlying objectives of those in the industry ((Reason, 2010: 14-15), (Brosius, 2001: 75), (Goldberg, 1974: 3), (Pullman, 2004)). Partly for that reason, there is a view that cultural education is too important to be left to the state education system. Education is now taken much more seriously by theatre companies than in the past, and Arts Council England funding often requires a commitment to education (Elkin, 2011c). By 2011 the RSC's education department had worked with 1,640 teachers and 65,000 students. The RSC's 'Right Here, Right Now' project is an example of an imaginative scheme for encouraging active engagement of young people in theatre. Schools are invited to submit songs and scenes written by children aged eight to thirteen, which are performed by the cast of *Matilda* for the winner's class and 270 children from seven other schools (Elkin, 2013b).

Theatre companies, like the RSC, are becoming much more forward-looking, and investing in subscribers of the future (Tulloch, 2000: 88); and they are not alone in this ((Morag Ballantyne Arts, 2001: 4), (Downing et al., 2002: 26)). However it would be a mistake to think of taking young people to theatre merely in terms of audience development (Reason, 2010: 30), "Children are not the audience of the future. Rather they are the citizens of the here and now ... An 8 year old is not a third of a 24 year old. There are understandings and meanings particular to being 8" (Drury, 2006: 151).

The "right to culture resulted in free admission to galleries and the desire to keep theatre prices low for young people ... But wanting the right to be there is of course not the same as wanting to be there"<sup>8</sup> (Reason, 2010: 26-27)<sup>9</sup>. "Children do not control what they see at the theatre" (Reason, 2010: 17). Children are a captive audience. "They don't choose to come, they are brought" (Schonmann, 2006: 60-61). Thus one might argue that adults can choke off access to theatre in the way that they don't for films (e.g. because of access through TV). "Many schoolchildren who attend theatre give only a fifth of their attention to what goes on on stage, and are obsessed with the grandeur

<sup>8</sup>Arnold argues that the arts are available to people but people choose not to exercise their right (Arnold, 2005) – perhaps the real issue is that there is too big a gap (at least as perceived) between the 'high art' that is normally on offer and people's previous experience/expectations. Might musical theatre have a role to play as a bridge between the two?

<sup>9</sup>There is perhaps an analogy here with voting in the general election.

of the surroundings, the behaviour of their fellow theatre-goers and their own unease at an unfamiliar experience” (Naysmith, 2005: 12).

### 5.1.1 Quality

Stanislav is quoted as saying that “it is necessary to act for children as well as for adults, only better” (Goldberg, 1974: 23). Yet in the past, musical theatre for children has often had its critics.

According to Reekie, prior to the 1990s, most theatre for children in Scotland was “cheap, under-produced, under-rehearsed variations on pantomime” (Reekie, 2005: 38), and the problem was not limited to Scotland, “theatre for young people is underfunded, critically ignored and denied a central place in culture” (Gardner, 2002: 32). Stuart Mullins, creative director of ‘Theatre Is . . .’ voiced concern that the impact of austerity measures would make matters worse, fearing that children’s theatre may be considered a luxury we cannot afford<sup>10</sup> (Mullins, 2010). Roger Lang, ex Independent Theatre Council’s Young People’s officer described the image of Young People’s theatre in unflattering terms, “the perception that TYA (Theatre for Young Audiences) consists of a couple of actors turning up in a small van and performing on a sparse set that looks as if it’s been run up by their auntie” (Thaler and Shefrin, 1981). Clark felt that part of the problem was that theatre for children is regarded as an add-on to a company’s work, one which produces less income due to lower ticket prices. Consequently the work becomes “marginalised, limiting the child’s experience [and it] becomes synonymous with small-scale, school and education” (Clark, 2002: 27-28).

Audience participation can cover up a lot. Much as the inclusion of sex, violence, spectacle or virtuosity in adult productions allows producers to get away with low-quality productions, audience participation can cover up a lot in children’s productions (Reason, 2010: 36-37). If children appear to enjoy it, there is an argument that a production is ‘good enough’. On the other hand, if theatre really is not ‘good enough’, money spent to further educational goals is wasted. This perhaps exposes a flaw in grant-giving where money is triggered by ‘buzzwords’ rather than ‘effectiveness’; an alternative might be funding through a ‘payment by results’ model<sup>11</sup>.

More recently, commentators have been more optimistic. “Reviewing the children’s fringe over the past decade, certain trends have struck me. The amateurism, the often slapdash productions and inadequate understanding of children’s audiences - all very

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<sup>10</sup>Mullins is critical of “the mass of companies seeing commercial opportunities in schools and meeting them with low-rent didacticism or panto” (Mullins, 2010).

<sup>11</sup>Where the scale of investment is influenced by past performances, with latest performances weighted most heavily.

evident only a few years ago - have now almost completely vanished. Youthful companies bursting with energy and stagecraft ideas, usually highly professional and fully focused on the distinctive demands of kids' entertainment, are now the norm - and this is as it should be" (Cooper, 2012). Thain points to new theatre to be proud of including the new Unicorn Theatre and the growth of theatre for early years (Thain, 2010), and Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' which was very well received (Reason, 2010: 34).

It is clear that those who specialise in children's theatre are passionate about it. "The thing that this theatre has - that few adult plays have - is a breadth and depth of extraordinary characters", Neal Foster, who runs the Birmingham Stage Company<sup>12</sup> (Watson, 2012).

Once a barely-mentioned add-on to the Edinburgh Fringe adult programme, children's theatre has expanded substantially over the years with 95 shows scheduled at the festival in 2010 (Cooper, 2010), and the quality is now much higher with child audiences taken much more seriously than in the past<sup>13</sup>. That said, companies inexperienced in children's theatre can go awry with mistakes as simple as holding up song boards or instructions to children who cannot yet read<sup>14</sup>. Mike Kenny has done much to raise expectations of children's theatre. A prolific writer, Kenny stresses that plays for children must not be limited to panto; he sees one of theatre's main purposes as dealing with the dark and dangerous, and he has "an aversion to tweeness" (Berry, 2010).

Many in theatre empathise the importance of being outward-looking. Having visited the Imagine Festival of performing arts for children and young people in Edinburgh, Mullins argues that there is much to be learned from the Scots<sup>15</sup>; something that the Unicorn's Tony Graham attributes to their willingness to borrow from continental Europe (Mullins, 2010). Lang is adamant that children and young people should not be defined purely in terms of education, and that there is a need to focus on the quality of the art and its potential to inspire young people (Thain, 2010). Baba Israel believes

<sup>12</sup>"Children's writers are often interested in the fantastical, the grotesque. You end up as a producer of children's plays, dealing with characters and situations that are just out of the realm of most adult writers. That's what I live for" (Watson, 2012).

<sup>13</sup>A re-imagined version of *Pericles* directed by Natalie Abrahani at the Open Air Theatre, Regents Park was one of four re-imagined Shakespeare plays designed for audiences of six years and over (Elkin, 2011a). The accompanying workshops delivered in schools are interactive and the production's sea shanty is taught so that many in the audience already know it by the time they see the play - echoes here of English Renaissance theatre.

<sup>14</sup>Cooper is critical of "over-complicated productions, elaborate scenery changes in darkened stage every few minutes ... productions require vivid story lines with clear-cut characters, lots of laughs, catchy songs and easy-to-follow lyrics, good rapport with lots of participation and the creation of a special mood of wonder, surprise and delight ... Youngsters adore curious larger than life characters", which he argues should never be over-nasty and never threatening" (Cooper, 2012).

<sup>15</sup>Mullins observed that in Scotland the best work is kept in repertory, supported by structures to develop its artists and given platforms on which to be seen internationally (Thain, 2010).



that the answer is to “see young people as collaborators and consultants not just beneficiaries or participants . . . and that this approach would bring to England what the Scots and colleagues across the channel do so well”. (Mullins, 2010). It is worth making the point that theatre for children is sometimes thought of as a training ground for young performers, and providing performances are properly supervised so that quality does not suffer, this can represent a ‘win-win’ for both young performers and young audiences.

### 5.1.2 ‘Dumbing down’

Those in children’s theatre make the point that performances necessitate just as much energy and commitment as those for adults, and stress the importance of not patronising children and not trying to avoid ‘difficult’ subjects (Byrne, 2013).

Although the *Billy Elliot* script was toned down for the young performers’ version, Hall said about the inclusion of the gay character Michael in the script, “about 6.5 million people have brought their kids to see *Billy Elliot* and we’ve not had a single comment that that might be inappropriate over the last six years” (Jury, 2011).

The arts can provide a powerful and “distinctive way for children to make meaning, to make sense of their (sic) selves and of the world” (Drury, 2006: 151), yet opportunities can be missed because children are too often underestimated (Boon, 2005: 175). Manscher argues that “theatre provides an opportunity for ‘social dialogue between children and adults’: a space somewhere outside of others such as education or parenting, where a different kind of conversation can take place” (Reason, 2010: 101-102). Yet that opportunity can be stifled by poor productions; “Thoughts, ideas and solutions emerge from complex, perplexing, uncomfortable situations. Shallow scripts, banal themes, an explicit message, and the absence of irony and ambiguity make for bad theatre” (Clark, 2002: 29), something that is borne out by Reason’s observation that children did not respond to moral lessons about greed, deceitfulness or ambition contained in plays drawing on folkloric or fable-like traditions (Reason, 2010: 105). Conversely Artibus’ *The 4th Commandment* about child abuse demonstrates the potential of theatre to address difficult moral/social issues (Reason, 2010: 101-102).

On the other hand, *Psst* is an example of a production which, despite the quality of the performance, proved to be “too novel, complex, surprising” for children to ‘get’, even though it had worked with children in Europe, something that Reekie attributed to differences in levels of theatrical experience (Reason, 2010: 93).

### 5.1.3 Crossover

When asked about moving on from writing for children to writing for adult audiences Pullman is reported to have made the point that no one ever asks a paediatrician when they think they will be ready to operate on adults. Nevertheless there are those who think of theatre for children as something separate from theatre for adults. However there are many examples of crossover from one to the other. Dennis Kelly, who adapted ‘*Matilda*’ for the stage, is hardly a specialist in children’s theatre ([Smurthwaite, 2010](#)). Royal Court artistic director, Dominic Cooke, put on that theatre’s first-ever children’s show<sup>16</sup>, commissioning Anthony Neilson to write it; having “made his name in the 90s with disturbing, violent and sexually explicit offerings”, Neilson claims that he had always wanted to write for children ([Calvi, 2010](#)).

Asked if there is a difference between designing a family show and an adults’ show, Howell, the designer for *Matilda*, said “no, the right decision is the right decision, regardless of your audience. With *Matilda* we haven’t made a single decision based on the fact that there will be children in the audience” ([Howell, 2010](#)).

Even writer David Wood, considered by many as synonymous with theatre for children, collaborated with composer Richard Taylor on a stage version of *The Go-Between* at West Yorkshire Playhouse, described by Wood as his first ‘grown-up’ project for 35 years ([Martland, 2011](#)). It is interesting in that the story is told through a little boy’s eyes - an example of the way using children as performers can throw up new creative opportunities.

The Little Angel Theatre is an example of a theatre group which has succeeded in staging children’s theatre alongside mainstream theatre ([Mayer, 2013](#)).

### 5.1.4 Value

There are few in the industry who would dissent from the view that it is vitally important for young people to experience theatre<sup>17</sup>.

Goldberg ([Goldberg, 1974](#): 14) suggests there are five ways in which engaging children in theatre can have value:

- entertainment,
- psychological growth,

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<sup>16</sup>A Christmas show called *Get Santa*.

<sup>17</sup>A view summarised succinctly by Richard Pullman “Children need to go to the theatre as much as they need to run about in the fresh air” ([Pullman, 2004](#)) cited in ([Reason, 2010](#): x).

- educational exposure,
- aesthetic appreciation,
- development of a future audience.

Unsurprisingly most focus on the educational/therapeutic benefits to the child<sup>18</sup> and/or the tangible benefits to the industry in terms of developing future audiences<sup>19</sup>. It is not difficult to conceive of ways of measuring the engagement, whether on an individual level (using biometrics such as heart-rate or pupil metrics<sup>20</sup>) or at an aggregate level (e.g. through noise levels or by means of post-performance surveys). The research done by Matthew Reason is interesting in that it seeks to understand how children engage with theatre, and the extent to which they engage. “What do children remember and talk about after a theatre performance? What kinds of things do they value, consider important or forget? What theatrical competences and interpretative strategies do they bring to the task of watching a performance? How do children identify and construct narrative or character? How do children interact within an audience? What levels of illusion and reality do young children perceive in theatrical performances?” (Reason, 2010: xi)<sup>21</sup>.

An indication of the level of engagement is given by the length of time that a theatrical experience endures, which is in part determined by the mental effort expended in understanding a performance and integrating the experience into existing knowledge (Klein,

<sup>18</sup>In an analysis of a large scale US database of school children – the study also compares and contrasts with UK research into TiE projects – Catterall confirms the widely-held view that there is a strong correlation between musical and mathematical competence (Catterall et al., 1999), and also finds discernible benefits for individuals and for the community from involvement in theatre. Catterall observes that the biggest effects are seen in socially disadvantaged groups (Catterall et al., 1999). In fact many authors have pointed to the benefits of participation in the performing arts to those from disadvantaged groups, and to its therapeutic value to individuals with behavioural problems (Weare and Gray, 2003), but it is also commended to the parents of ‘gifted and talented’ children, where early involvement is considered especially important for children who may seek a career in the performing arts (Karnes and Karnes, 1982).

<sup>19</sup>Interest in the arts in later life appears to be driven by an individual’s involvement as a child. Andreassen concludes that “early exposure is a major determinant of arts attendance” (in the US) (Andreassen and Belk, 1980), quoting Bradley Morison, a marketing consultant to many arts organisations, in saying that “an active children’s theater program at the Guthrie Theater Minneapolis was largely responsible for a drop of five years in the average age of attenders at Guthrie between 1963 and 1973”. Others disagree: both Harland and Morrison both found that being taken to the theatre does not significantly affect future attendance (Harland et al., 2000: 184) and (Morrison and West, 1986: 22). In my own experience it is not unusual to come across students who have enrolled for a three year vocational course in musical theatre who have never been to see a live performance of a professional musical theatre production. In a rigorous quantitative analysis of the performing arts in the UK, Borgonovi is more specific, arguing that it is participation that matters; she found that “participation in arts education is much more important in determining attendance than any other personal characteristic, including general educational attainment” (Borgonovi, 2004).

<sup>20</sup>Extensive research has been carried out into the use of pupil metrics to measure engagement, e.g. (Christoforou et al., 2015) in general, if not for theatre specifically.

<sup>21</sup>It may be an interesting exercise to compare judgements of ‘quality’ made by experts and children themselves (and perhaps those of parents and teachers) to explore the correlation between the two.

2005: 44-46). The effort someone is prepared to invest is in turn related to the quality of the performance. As Reason puts it, “quality in a cultural experience is in its enduring resonance as it engages us intellectually, imaginatively or emotionally. A marker of quality in a work of art is its ability to make us look for longer” (Reason, 2010: 38). That said, one might argue that other factors, such as shock or novelty, can help lodge an experience in a child’s mind. Accounts of Victorian children acting out melodramas after watching ‘low-quality’ performances at a Penny Theatre might suggest that quality is something that must be judged relative to the child’s other experiences. There are of course other factors which have a bearing on the level of engagement. There is evidence that pupils remembered more/engaged with discussion more if the performance takes place in a theatre (Reason, 2010: 95-96). It would be interesting to explore the extent to which other factors, such as the inclusion of music, and in particular singing, serve to increase the extent of children’s engagement, regardless of other aspects of ‘quality’<sup>22</sup>.

The level of engagement can also be affected by the audience’s ‘theatrical competence’, that is “whether children have the intellectual and emotional resources to interpret and appreciate (to ‘get’) the performances they watch” (Reason, 2010: 85). Pullman makes the point that “the very limitations of theatre allow the audience to share in the acting. In fact they require the audience to pretend. It won’t work if they don’t” (Reason, 2010: 86). Theatrical literacy requires an ability to pick up on and understand dramatic symbol systems (Reason, 2010: 85). Reason found that children were able to comprehend the semiotic shorthand<sup>23</sup>, perhaps picked up through their own play and/or watching TV/film, and were able to fill the gaps (Reason, 2010: 87-88, 97-98). The understanding that results is “an empowering pleasure, as it places the audience in an active, commanding and interpreting position” (Reason, 2010: 139)<sup>24</sup>.

Children’s perceptions differ significantly from those of adults, responding instinctively and with wonder, whereas adults respect skills and try to work out how things are done (Bogatyrev, 1984: 62), yet as Rhoda Kellogg observed, “children may accept adults’ responses and assessments rather than offer independent interpretations of their own” (Coates, 2004: 7). There is therefore a risk of a ‘Hawthorne effect’ (The Economist, 2008) coming into play when trying to disentangle children’s views from others’. Circumventing

<sup>22</sup>Psychologists argue that involving more of the senses can enhance retention. Bandura believes that emotive music adds dramatic intensity and increases attentional involvement in entertainment-education, leading to greater impact. Comparisons could potentially be made between musical and non-musical treatments of the same subject to investigate this question (e.g., *Pygmalion* vs. *My Fair Lady*, or *Romeo and Juliet* vs. *West Side Story*) (Bandura, 2004). The Jorvic centre in York uses smells as well as sound to engage visitors to the exhibition.

<sup>23</sup>Reason gives examples of how some objects can signify different things in different contexts e.g. red rose = connotations of love, England, Lancashire, English rugby team, Labour Party and others (Reason, 2010: 149).

<sup>24</sup>The process of seeing and interpreting signs is a fundamental pleasure of theatre (Ubersfeld, 1982: 129), but so is talking about it afterwards; theatre is a social event which “is reflected on/reverberates through others” (Ubersfeld, 1982: 128).

this and related problems, Reason employs “projective techniques” such as drawings (Reason, 2010: 47) to elicit information from audiences of primary school age children. As Reason says, “talking about a performance after the event can be as significant to the experience of theatre as the production itself. The urge to share memories, interpretations and experiences is in some ways heightened by the ephemeral nature of theatre” (Reason, 2010: 137). Post-event discussions are of course an integral part of properly executed TiE projects for much the same reasons.

## 5.2 Theatre by children

### 5.2.1 The opportunities

There are many opportunities for children in professional theatre, ranging from small parts in one or two scenes, to title roles in musicals like *Billy Elliot* and *Matilda*.

Musicals which involve children in a small number of scenes with relatively few lines offer them the chance to participate in professional theatre without feeling the pressure of intensive audition and rehearsal processes. *Miss Saigon* offers the opportunity for a young boy to play the role of Kim and Chris’ son, Tam. While the role is integral to the plot, the part is non-speaking, and requires little rehearsal or practice time. *Miss Saigon* is not a musical designed for family audiences, and at some points the storyline has the potential to be frightening and inappropriate for young children, but the actors playing the part of Tam seem oblivious to this, describing the experience as a “big adventure”<sup>25</sup> (Harpers Bazaar, 2014: 1). Cameron Mackintosh says that the children are chosen because of their strong characters and robustness, “they have to not get worried at appearing in front of thousands of people with guns going off. They have got to be unfazed by what happens on stage. Some kids take to it; others get shy or forget what to do” (Evening Standard, 2014b: 1).

There are teams of children who operate as an ensemble, supporting children in lead roles. Opportunities include the workhouse boys in *Oliver!*, the sewer kids in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and the choir in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. In many ways these roles involve a greater amount of responsibility than small solo parts, in that the children are required to remember specific blocking which must mirror the other children in the scene; the singing tends to involve some form of harmony work,

<sup>25</sup> “Between scenes, I would play pat-a-cake or hide and seek with the cast, darting around backstage between huge North Vietnamese placards. I remember everything being so big ... Then, as Kim sang upstage, I would lie on my front with crayons and scraps of tea-stained paper and draw whatever I liked, anything from my own hands to pictures of my family ... The only time I felt scared was during the curtain call, when I ran out to take my little bow and thought I might fall into the orchestra pit” (Harpers Bazaar, 2014: 1).

and the children will not be working as closely with an adult cast that they can learn from. Despite this increased responsibility, the teams are often chosen as a collective from a part-time theatre school, and are not auditioned as individuals.

There are roles which involve solo lines and solo songs, but only require a small amount of time on stage. For example the children who play Cosette, Eponine and Gavroche in *Les Misérables* are only needed until such a time in the plot when the characters have aged enough to be played by the adult cast, or, in the unfortunate case of Gavroche, until they are killed off. The character of Benji is not presented until the end of *Priscilla Queen of the Dessert*; and Tall Boy and Small Boy are comedy roles which bring some light relief to serious moments in *Billy Elliot*, and they only appear in a handful of scenes.

Finally there are those characters around whom an entire musical is constructed<sup>26</sup>. Roles of this type require children to be on stage for substantial lengths of time, and entail hours of rehearsal and practice in order to learn lines, songs, and routines, and to hone their performance technique.

For the most part, productions in the West End which involve children, use a mixed cast of adults and children, although there are a few examples of productions where casts are made up almost entirely of young performers. In February 2015 the Lyric Theatre<sup>27</sup>, Hammersmith, announced the casting for its new production of *Bugsy Malone*, which had children aged between 9 and 18 in the leading roles and an ensemble comprising recent musical theatre graduates ([Evening Standard, 2014a](#)).

### 5.2.2 Paths followed by child performers

Children in professional theatre productions come from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of experience. Some attend full-time theatre schools, and have access to technical training, audition preparation, and an agency which is actively seeking (and being sent) opportunities for child performers. Others go to part-time theatre or dance schools which have associated agencies operating in a similar way to the full-time schools.

There are some who enter the performance industry through membership of a modelling agency. While this is mainly the case for children appearing on screen rather than on

<sup>26</sup> Amongst many others, parts include: Oliver (and arguably the Artful Dodger) in *Oliver!*; Charlie Bucket, Veruca Salt, Augustus Gloop, Mike Teavee, and Violet Beauregarde in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; Jane and Michael Banks in *Mary Poppins*; Jeremy and Jemima Potts in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*; Annie and Molly in *Annie*; and Liesl, Friedrich, Louisa, Kurt, Brigitta, Marta, and Gretl in *The Sound of Music*.

<sup>27</sup> The Lyric is an example of a theatre that has developed a ‘Young people’s strategy’ to support and encourage interest in the theatre ([Mayor of London, 2013b](#)).

stage, there are examples of young people securing stage contracts as a result of their work with a modelling agency.

Some parents respond to adverts for open auditions<sup>28</sup> printed in industry newspapers like *The Stage* and magazines like *Young Performer*, and *Dance UK*. Some West End productions also advertise their search for a particular role in their programmes, and others are advertised at dance and theatre events like *Move IT!* ; examples are shown in Figure 5.1 on page 254.

The producers of musicals like *Billy Elliot* and *Matilda* have chosen to select their cast by visiting specialist and mainstream schools in order to audition large numbers of children at a time<sup>29</sup>. In addition to discovering untapped talent, this approach also widens the reach of the musical, potentially increasing ticket sales as a result. There are children who move from one professional production to the next, particularly if the productions are cast by the same casting director<sup>30</sup>.

### 5.2.3 Motivations

Some children display a clear interest in performance from an early age, while others are encouraged by their parents to participate in classes, auditions, and performances. Discussions with child performers suggest that for the children, their influences include the tastes and interest of those around them, early encounters with theatre, film and television, and their own practical experience of musical theatre in school and as part of extra-curricular activities<sup>31</sup>. Some take pleasure in the attention that performing brings, enjoying eliciting a positive response from an audience, whatever the size. Some children enjoy the opportunity to leave their lives behind and to escape to another world: “theatre is an escape from normal life for children, just as it is for adults. You get to play at being someone else in a world where everyone treats you as an equal” (Scott, 2008: 1). Finally there are those who enjoy being good at something which sets them apart from their peers and which affords them the opportunity to belong to new groups. Author of the book ‘Stage Mum’, Lisa Gee, argues that “in the main, its not about

<sup>28</sup>Where agency representation is not necessary.

<sup>29</sup>“Since the auditions began for *Billy Elliot* in the autumn of 2003, over 5,000 children have been seen” (Bailey, 2006: 22).

<sup>30</sup>Children’s casting director Jo Hawes, “who has cast children in more than 70 shows over the past 14 years, begins by contacting around 150 children’s agencies within the M25. ‘Its easy to find children, far less easy to find outstanding ones. About a third of the boys have done stuff for me before, the rest are new, and, long in the tooth as I am, I still find that exciting’ ” (Scott, 2008: 1).

<sup>31</sup>Some children enjoy the act of singing, dancing, and acting, and simply want to participate in these activities as often as they can. Others want to emulate performers they have seen in theatre productions and on screen.



### CHILDREN'S CASTING

for the West End Production of



**CHARLIE BUCKET**  
8 – 12 yr old boy, under 4ft 8in  
A talented actor with innocent appearance, lean frame and natural singing voice

**VERUCA SALT**  
9 – 12 yr old girl, under 4ft 8in  
A charismatic actress and excellent ballet dancer (grade 4 or above)

**VIOLET BEAUREGARDE**  
9 – 12 yr old girl, under 4ft 8in  
A skilled rapper with a brash attitude  
Non-white and able to do an American accent

**MIKE TEAVEE**  
9 – 12 yr old boy, under 4ft 8in  
A highly physical street dancer with lots of energy  
Able to do an American accent

**AUGUSTUS GLOOP**  
9 – 12 yr old boy, under 5 ft  
A corpulent boy and a good singer

### Les Misérables

QUEEN'S THEATRE

- Gavroche under 4' 7 any nationality, very strong singing and acting. Streetwise, tough but likeable kid about 10 years old, unbroken voice.
- Cosette under 4' 4, fair skin, sweet soprano voice.
- Eponine who does not sing but she understudies Cosette.
- All children to be within an easy commute of London (45 miles approx)
- Girls sing Castle on A Cloud. Boys sing 'Ow Do You Do My Name's Gavroche

### RSC AUDITIONS

Roald Dahl's

## Matilda

THE MUSICAL

The RSC is looking for boys and girls to play Matilda, Bruce, Lavender and their classmates for its production of *Matilda The Musical* at the Cambridge Theatre, London. There is lots of singing involved, as well as acting and even more dancing!

- All children must be between the ages of 8 and 13, and must be under 4' 10" tall.
- Boys must have unbroken voices.
- All children must live within the M25, as we would like them to live at home and attend their own schools.
- However, for the roles of MATILDA and BRUCE only, we welcome children from further afield. The RSC assist with accommodation and tutoring where necessary.
- For the role of Matilda, children must be under 4ft 3".

### AUDITIONS @ MOVE IT

Want to play the next Billy Elliot in the West End?

Young Billy – 9 to 13 years (11th March)  
Older Billy – 13 to 30 years (10th March)  
MORE AUDITIONS @ MOVE IT  
Disneyland Paris – 13+ years (10th March)  
West End Kids – 10 to 13 years (10th March)  
Register at [www.moveitdance.co.uk/auditions](http://www.moveitdance.co.uk/auditions)

### MARY POPPINS

OPEN AUDITIONS APRIL 6TH & 7TH 7:00PM-10:00PM  
Arts Center Theatre of the Thomaston Opera House  
No appointments needed...call (860) 283-8558 with any additional questions or concerns

### PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT

The Musical

No 1 UK TOUR  
CARDIFF and BRISTOL

Company: David Ian Productions and the Ambassador Theatre association with Nullarbor Productions and MGM STAGE

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December in Bristol



**CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG UK**  
Tour from January 2016

Jeremy and Jemima - fair skinned, about 10 years old, London commutable, good singing, movement and acting, under 4' 7, available from May 2016 for 6 months to tour on a rota of three pairs.  
Auditions in the spring.

### AUDITIONS

## FINDING NEVERLAND

THE MUSICAL

Academy award-winning  
Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein is casting boys to appear in the theatre production of *Finding Neverland*.

- Boys must be under 5 foot 2 with strong singing voices.
- Aged between 6 and 13.
- Voices must be unbroken.
- Boys will be considered from anywhere in the UK.
- Auditions will be held in London.

Production period: Mid July - End of October 2016

For further information, please contact :  
Jo Hawes, Children's Casting Director at  
[jo.hawes@virgin.net](mailto:jo.hawes@virgin.net)

**AUDITIONS**

Based on the Oscar winning movie *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* the musical tells the funny and moving story of three drag performers who set off to cross the Australian desert in a battered old tour bus, christened Priscilla. The show contains over 20 classic disco hits such as *I Will Survive* and *I Love The Nightlife*.

We are looking for ONE JUVENILE ROLE only.

We would like to cast 2 boys to share the role in Cardiff and Bristol:  
CARDIFF : Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016. We will be holding auditions for rehearsal for one day prior to this – date and venue TBC.  
BRISTOL : Monday 30<sup>th</sup> May – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2016

CHILDREN MUST LIVE IN CARDIFF/BRISTOL OR VICINITY – within 30 minutes travel time of BOTH venues.

Children will live at home. Parents/guardians will be required to get children to the rehearsal and performance venues, but chaperones will be provided for the rehearsals and performances.

**BENJI**  
Son of Tick/Mitzi (Drag Queen) and Marion (Hotel Entertainment Manager). Brought him up to be sweet and open-minded. Tick makes the journey across the desert with him, having been away in Sydney for his early years.

Male aged 7-10 years, playing age 7-8 years. Maximum Height 4ft 5in (133cm). Acting and some singing - nice clear singing voice. Dance ability optional, not essential. Innocent and sweet, but with a natural cheekiness. Slight build. Needs to be confident, good energy and concentration.

Please send recent photo and cv, which must include details of age, height and experience or training (Saturday school, drama/dance classes etc) AND MUST include INFORMATION ABOUT WHERE THEY LIVE WITH REFERENCE TO THE VENUES by email to :



## THE LION KING

THE AWARD-WINNING MUSICAL

### CHILDREN

In the stage version of THE LION KING there are two children's roles: Young Simba and Young Nala, and we are always looking for children who can act, sing and move well to play these roles.

#### Role Descriptions

**YOUNG SIMBA (YOUNG LION)**  
Young Simba is tough and energetic.

**YOUNG NALA (YOUNG LIONESS)**  
Young Nala is tough and energetic.

Applicants must be between ages 7 and 11 and below 148cm (4'10") in height.

FIGURE 5.1: Audition adverts



attention-seeking. If anything, its quite the opposite: its about fitting in and being part of something, the desire to contribute, and so to belong, rather than to stand out” <sup>32</sup>.

However those with a more cynical view are concerned that the ambition to become an actor/actress has little to do with a desire to perform. In his article ‘Celebrity is the death of childhood’, Andrew O’Hagan describes the response he received when he asked a classroom of girls what they wanted to be when they grew up. The girls had very different aspirations from those of his generation: “ordinary girls once wanted to be nurses or hairdressers, or heaven forbid, that glamour job of the 1970s, an air hostess, but the point was they wanted jobs. Three quarters of the girls I gave the paper to just wrote a single word: ‘famous’ ” (O’Hagan, 2007). Interest in performing arts lessons are “fuelled, I’m certain, by having had [their] nose[s] pressed to the screen throughout the BBC’s talent-search . . . not to mention the knock-on effect of the phenomenally successful film *High School Musical* [and later TV series *Glee*]. It’s what Frank Thompson, the resident children’s director of *The Sound of Music*, calls the ‘X-Factor syndrome’. I’d be lying if I said it doesn’t affect us. We’ve had children audition who see it as a way to instant stardom. But when you add in school and the travelling, children in these shows often work 13-hour days” (Scott, 2008: 1).

#### 5.2.4 Auditions

The process of selecting performers for West End shows is rigorous, protracted and the experience can be daunting, even for those who are ultimately successful (Foster, 2011). Children who attend part-time or full-time theatre schools have an advantage in that they will be used to preparing songs, rehearsing lines, and picking up dance routines on a regular basis. They will also have access to tutors who can advise them on the selection of audition material and can rehearse chosen and prescribed material for each round of the audition process. Children’s casting director Jo Hawes makes the point that children are taught to sing, act and dance, but not how to audition, and in 2010 she launched a series of masterclasses to bridge the gap (Elkin, 2010c). ‘The Art of Auditioning’ workshops are run in venues across the country and are designed for classes of 25 children aged 7 and over. Hawes claims that her masterclasses “empower children and . . . help them understand what creative teams are looking for, how to behave and how to use their nerves” (Hawes, 2015).

In order to make the process fairer and more accessible for children with little or no experience of performing arts training, most initial rounds require children to perform

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<sup>32</sup>She goes on to quote Catherine Hindson, Performance Studies lecturer at Bristol University: “Performance is something that human beings do, very naturally. Its something they share. So, any kind of ritual, any social occasion or event involved human performance.’ Performing is a natural part of what it means to be human” (Gee, 2008: 238).

nursery rhymes or ‘Happy Birthday’ instead of a fully rehearsed musical theatre song with accompanying sheet music. Hearing pieces sung a cappella allows the audition panel to test the intonation of singers as well as their ability to stay rooted in one key, and ‘Happy Birthday’ is particularly useful because it requires the performer to complete an octave leap which demonstrates range and exposes the *passaggio* in the voice. The second round or recall stage of the audition process involves a new set of requirements, usually asking candidates to learn a particular song and scene from the show<sup>33</sup>.

Shows with more involved parts, unsurprisingly, have more involved audition processes<sup>34</sup>. Success at the first round of auditions for the parts of Young Simba and Young Nala in the *Lion King* only guarantees entrance to Cub School: a 14-week training programme during which candidates receive dance, singing, and acting training from teachers associated with the show. At the end of the programme successful participants are invited to progress to Cub Camp where they begin rehearsals, but even progression to this stage does not guarantee that they will go on to play the roles in the show ([The Lion King, 2015: 1](#)).

Advertisements for auditions almost always include a height and age restriction, and set out requirements for girls not yet to have started puberty and for boys to have unbroken voices. Period shows demand that children do not have fixed braces, and some shows are race-specific. Some adverts also include specific character or ability requirements. For example, an advert for the lead role in the 2012 – 2013 touring production of *Oliver!* read: “around 10 years old and no taller than 4’7”, fairish, fabulous treble singing, unbroken voice, vulnerable but tough and feisty. Oliver does not really dance but must be co-ordinated” ([Hawes, 2015](#)).

Generally West End productions ask that children live within commuting distance of London, but children playing some lead roles can live in specially run boarding houses like the ‘Billy House’ or Donna’s Boarding House ([Donna’s Boarding House, 2015: 1](#)). Children playing lead roles in touring productions will tend to tour with the show<sup>35</sup>,

<sup>33</sup>This is the case for *Annie* tour, *Gypsy*, *Les Mis*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* tour.

<sup>34</sup>For example at the first stage of the audition process for the parts of Billy and Michael in *Billy Elliot*, candidates undergo a series of dance calls including a Jazz class, a Ballet class, a Contemporary class, and a Commercial class. Successful candidates move on to recalls where they workshop some of the script with the resident director and sing through ‘Electricity’. The next round takes the form of a five day summer school which includes work on ‘Angry Dance’, ‘Expressing yourself’, and ‘Electricity’, as well as time spent with a gymnastics coach. The final team are chosen at the end of this week. And even then, the children attend Billy School and can be let go during this part of the rehearsal process if they are not meeting expectations. Ballet Girls are required to learn a short ballet sequence and are asked to perform a time step. The recall involves more detailed work on the ballet sequence, a more complicated tap sequence, and the jazz sequence from ‘Shine’. The final round involves character improvisations, three routines, and singing Happy Birthday to Billy.

<sup>35</sup>Daniel Dasek-Green who played Simba in the tour of the *Lion King* was required to commute regularly from London to Birmingham, Bristol, Dublin, and Belfast.

but the chorus will be drawn from the area local to the theatre<sup>36</sup>. The 2011 UK tour of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* sourced its sewer kids from local theatre schools like Stagecoach Theatre Arts. The theatre school was required to rehearse the material with the children and make a first cut selection before an audition day run by the production company which cast the final teams and allocated solo lines to individual children. The theatre school was then responsible (at their own expense) for rehearsing the children in the weeks running up to the show, and for arranging licences and chaperones for the rehearsals and performances at the theatre. They were also required to discreetly prepare particular children as understudies without revealing that they had been given this role.

In instances where children are not required to live within commuting distance of London, auditions are held in a number of locations across the country in order to widen the search as much as possible. There have also been examples of rather more unconventional audition processes. For example in 2010, to celebrate the show's fifth birthday, *Billy Elliot* launched a project called Billy Youth which, for a small fee, allowed schools, dance schools, theatre schools, and youth theatre companies to mount their own production of a specially designed youth version of *Billy Elliot*. The organisations were then invited to compete to win the opportunity to put on their production at a large regional theatre, or to have a segment of their show form part of a gala performance at the West End home of *Billy Elliot*, the Victoria Palace Theatre, in July 2010. At the beginning of the process the creative teams were invited to a weekend seminar at the Victoria Palace, where they were given practical advice and workshops to assist them in creating their own versions of the show<sup>37</sup>. In addition to raising the profile of *Billy Elliot*, and attracting new audiences, several West End cast members were found during the process. Southampton's STP Musicals were successful for two years running and performed sections of their version at the Brighton Dome and at the Victoria Palace theatre, and Redmand Rance, who played Billy, was subsequently invited to take on the role in the West End production.

### 5.2.5 Agents

Across the UK there are hundreds of agencies whose business is to secure professional theatre contracts for children and young people (Poynton, 2014). Some agencies are attached to theatre schools (part and full-time), others work under the umbrella of a

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<sup>36</sup> In addition to saving transportation, tuition, and chaperoning costs, the introduction of new children to each production will increase ticket sales in that area.

<sup>37</sup> The success of Billy Youth persuaded the organisers to run the scheme for a second year, and since the inception of the project, 10,000 young performers between the ages of 10 and 19 have taken part (Jury, 2011).

larger agency designed for performers over the age of 18, and some operate solely as an agency for children.

Agency representation is arguably even more important for child performers than for their adult counterparts. Not only will agents find and secure auditions for productions<sup>38</sup>, they will liaise with casting directors in order to advise auditionees and help them to select appropriate audition pieces; they will make the necessary arrangements for auditions, rehearsals, and performances; they will handle and negotiate the terms of contracts, including pay, expenses and perks like transport to and from the theatre and the provision of hot meals on a two show day; they will collect and pass on payment quickly so that they can take their cut in the process, and they will manage child licensing procedures.

There are casting directories designed specifically for young performers. One such directory ([Kids casting call pro](#), n.d.) connects casting directors with aspiring young performers, but will register only those with agency representation. Another casting service provided by Spotlight<sup>39</sup> includes a Children and Young Performers directory<sup>40</sup>.

Agencies vary in quality and effectiveness, and it is not possible to be certain how successful or well established an agent's office is just by looking at its advertising material. The measure of success most commonly employed by parents is the destinations of current and past clients<sup>41</sup>, as well as the association an agency has with other well-respected and trusted organisations. Spotlight undertakes a process of approval before accepting agencies onto their books, and this can be a useful indication of an agency's reputation.

### 5.2.6 Working with child performers

The *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* musical was five years in the making. Lead actor Jonathan Slinger<sup>42</sup> said "I have to say, I think because of how many sides to him there are and because of how multi-faceted he is, I'd say the part that is closest to Wonka probably is Hamlet" ([Slinger, 2015](#)).

<sup>38</sup>And indeed find work which otherwise would not be available to the general public.

<sup>39</sup>"Spotlight was founded in 1927 and is the UK's leading casting resource with unrivalled knowledge and contacts at the heart of the industry. Today, over 60,000 performers appear in Spotlight, including actors and actresses, child artists, presenters, dancers and stunt artists" ([Spotlight, 2015](#): 1).

<sup>40</sup>This "features casting details for children from the UK's leading theatre schools and agencies" ([Spotlight, 2015](#): 1). Spotlight claim to run "the UK's definitive database of performers aged 5–20 [and say that they offer] the best way for any young performer to promote themselves to casting opportunities" ([Spotlight, 2015](#): 1). Spotlight membership for children and young performers costs £96 per year, and gives them access to hundreds of casting opportunities which have been posted by "vetted casting and production teams" ([Spotlight, 2015](#): 1).

<sup>41</sup>Publicised on agents' own websites and also in theatre programmes and TV/film credits.

<sup>42</sup>Jonathan Slinger is a well-known Shakespearian actor.

As well as differences for creatives (and other performers) between working with children and working with other adults, there are also additional challenges for the production team to ensure the welfare of the children<sup>43</sup>. But perhaps the most significant differences for creatives, fellow performers and the production team arises from the need for multiple casts, which typically in effect multiplies all the challenges by three.

### 5.2.6.1 Creatives' viewpoint

To get the best out of child performers, creatives need to make adjustments to their working practices. Perhaps the easiest mistake for creatives unused to working with children is to underestimate them<sup>44</sup>.

Child performers are treated as just that, performers, and allowances are not made simply because they are children<sup>45</sup>. However while most adult performers will have undergone years of training and will be able to respond quickly and easily to established techniques and rehearsal methods, this is not the case with child performers, and some form of training needs to be incorporated into the schedule. Training can take the form of intensive sessions woven into the standard rehearsal period, or can extend to a fully timetabled programme lasting for as long as two years.

“It takes 18 months or two years to build up the skills and enough stamina to get into the show. Playing Billy is like doing Hamlet while running the New York marathon”<sup>46</sup>. *Billy Elliot* isn't alone in its use of a lengthy and comprehensive rehearsal programme,

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<sup>43</sup>Some required by law, others designed to militate against the risks to the production, or simply to safeguard their reputation as good employers.

<sup>44</sup>*Billy Elliot* choreographer, Ellen Kane, goes as far as to say that the achievements of child performers alters people's perception of what is possible. “It is difficult when new adults come into the show, because their first reaction is no, the kids are never going to be able to do it, but I know from the experience of being here for so long, that they can. Slowly their perception of what a child is capable of changes. This show is such a unique thing, because of the intensity of the work, and the choreography being so difficult, it is not child-friendly at all. It is made for adults, really. There is no way that you can possibly comprehend or believe as an adult professional that what you are watching is being done by a child. If you had no experience of the show, and you had just walked in, you would say it is impossible” (Bailey, 2006: 22).

<sup>45</sup>“I have learnt that children are remarkably talented, and you should never cater to the lower end of what to expect. Inevitably, it is their determination and their naiveté to fear, they are fearless. If you encourage that fearlessness, and you know that what you are asking of them is possible, and not dangerous, you will probably achieve what you want ... I would say the universal lesson is not to underestimate the skill of the child” (Bailey, 2006: 22). “The children do their vocal warm-up around a piano, and their musical director, Ros Jones, is remorselessly tough: ‘Yasmin, make sure you listen to the orchestral!’; ‘Chloe, is that the sweetest we can do?’ ” (Scott, 2008). It is the approach, rather than the expectations, which is altered. “Some of the boys have never set foot on a stage before, and choreographer Geoffrey Garratt admits [to a] fair degree of competitive rehearsing. ‘Come on Micawbers, the Farthings routines are much tighter than yours...’ Some respond better than others. If they get wobbly lipped, I don't push it” (Scott, 2008).

<sup>46</sup>Stephen Daldry on the *Billy Elliot* training (Kirsta, 2006: 1).

but it was among the first to invest so heavily<sup>47</sup> in the personalised training of its child performers.

Director Julian Webber has worked with a number of the Billys and has used his experience to put together a (yet unpublished) guide to working with child performers, entitled ‘How to Teach Stanislavski to 12 year olds’ (Bailey, 2006: 22). During the rehearsal process he covers areas like “truthfulness, the creative objective, and internal and external action” (Bailey, 2006: 22) in both spoken and sung text, and asks that the boys ‘think it’ rather than ‘show it’<sup>48</sup>.

Webber teaches the boys not to be self-conscious and tells them that paying attention to something else will help them to stop thinking about themselves (Bailey, 2006: 8). He employs techniques which are explored in a three year acting course, including exercises to help the boys to really feel the emotions of the scene<sup>49</sup>.

It is clear that the young performers quickly absorb these lessons: “The boys described to me their first time in front of an audience. What struck them most was the laughter, having rehearsed the scenes repeatedly in front of production staff who had heard all the jokes before. One boy described the difficulty this presents with timing . . . you just have to sit there and wait. But you have to try to do it not for them, but do it for yourself, so it’s really hard to ignore. Because if you do it for the audience, do the jokes towards the audience, then it’s not really natural, and it’s less funny. . . you’re really acting rather than trying to be funny” (Bailey, 2006: 17). However just as quickly as the children pick up material, they can forget it, and they are far more susceptible than adult performers to ‘guidance’ from other adults<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>47</sup>In terms of both time and money.

<sup>48</sup>Webber “spent considerable time with one boy explaining that the show has lots of rude words, and he would be required to swear. . . and a lot. This proved initially to be an uncomfortable experience for the boy, whose most rude expression to date had been ‘criminy cream cracker!’ By the end of the hour, however, Julian had the boy staring him in the face, six inches away, spitting out ‘I hate you. You’re a bastard!’, which Billy screams at his father at the end of Act One” (Bailey, 2006: 22).

<sup>49</sup>“He asked the boy to open a letter which said he’d won a million pounds and again to shout ‘Bloody Hell!’ Julian told him to make it louder, more exciting and excited. He was trying to work towards truthfulness: ‘Theatre is not about pretending – really read the letter’, and when the boy wouldn’t wait to finish the scene before self-criticising his performance, Julian told him to ‘finish the moment’ ” (Bailey, 2006: 8).

<sup>50</sup> “Jo sent me an email to say that Dora was ‘deviating from the blocking’, and asking if anyone had come to watch her in the show and had been ‘coaching’ her afterwards. Remembering Jo’s warning about a child she’d had to release from her contract because her mum had been telling her to upstage everyone else, I panicked and sent back a long email saying that no one had been contradicting the director’s instructions, and even if anyone had been, Dora wouldn’t listen to them.’ I asked [Dora] about where she’d been on stage and where she thought she ought to have been, and she definitely thought she’d been doing it right. In some cases she thought she’d been the only person getting it right and everyone else had been wrong. Jo emailed back . . . reminding me that Dora was six years old and that in the course of a two-and-a-half-hour professional show, it’s not actually surprising if a six year old makes mistakes and that it can actually increase the ahhh factor. I didn’t tell Dora that bit. I didn’t want to give her any ideas” (Gee, 2008: 196).

Children can be braver than their adult counterparts, and often react faster in the event of a problem because they will not be bound by fear of ramifications. The Stage Manager of *Billy Elliot* noticed that on his first night as Billy, Oliver Taylor circumvented two prop malfunctions with ease: “It was very good to see him pick up the lid of the biscuit tin from the floor after Tony accidentally knocked it over, whilst making it look totally natural and planned – the mark of a true professional. He also did his best when the Maggie Thatcher curtain didn’t open properly, only giving up when he absolutely had to” (Adzhiev, 2010: 88).

More generally, though, children cannot always be relied upon to ‘think on their feet’ and the often unpredictable world of theatre needs to be planned meticulously when child performers are involved in a production.

### 5.2.6.2 Production challenges

The number and length of rehearsals are limited by child employment laws, and consequently rehearsals must end at the prescribed time, even if the work has not been finished. Similarly there is less flexibility for holding a show in the event of technical difficulties/other unforeseen circumstances because child performers need to leave the theatre by 10pm<sup>51</sup>.

Child performers each have their own individual ‘maintenance regime’ (Scott, 2008: 1) and the production company needs to put in place resources for chaperones; accommodation (both during rehearsal periods and during the run itself<sup>52</sup>); tutoring and/or extra support from the school; rehearsals in multiple locations in order not to disrupt the child’s routine; transportation, and lunches/dinners on two show days.

Some West End production companies request that children live within the M25 in order for them to continue at their home schools, but where this is not the case they employ a pool of tutors who liaise with the schools to coordinate schemes of work and exchange regular progress reports. Production companies often invest in extra members of staff to oversee these arrangements in order to make sure that a performer is not at risk of being pulled from the production because their school work is suffering.

The production company ‘Working Title’ takes seriously its responsibility for the welfare of the children in *Billy Elliot* and manages to maintain a balance between the needs of

<sup>51</sup>Indeed the children involved in *Les Misérables* never get to bow because the running time of the production is so long.

<sup>52</sup>At any one time there are 13 children living in the Billy house (Scott, 2008: 1).



the production and the needs of the children<sup>53</sup>. The company also puts strategies in place to help with the transition back to ‘normal life’ once the contract has ended, and pays for private tutors to help the boys readjust to their school lives (Bailey, 2006: 20).

Clearly child performers need to be properly looked after to make sure that they are happy and healthy and can therefore give their best performance<sup>54</sup>. “Billy is all about the children”, says casting director, Jessica Ronane. “If the kids aren’t happy and cared for, we don’t really have a show” (Scott, 2008: 1).

### 5.2.6.3 Multiple casts

Perhaps the most significant difference between rehearsing an adult and child cast is the need for multiple casts of child actors to satisfy child employment laws<sup>55</sup>. Productions with more than one cast face a series of logistical challenges, and require more rehearsals than a piece with a company made up entirely of adults.

It is not unusual to have quite an age range in the teams of children employed for professional productions. Rebecca Orwell was part of the child ensemble in the West End production of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* in 2005. She recalled that the children in one team were all roughly aged 10 and those in the other were aged between 14 and 15. As a result the company decided to rehearse the casts separately because the teams would progress at different rates and would respond in different ways<sup>56</sup>.

Child casts tend to be auditioned as individuals and are celebrated for their unique talents, but this in itself presents difficulties. The boys playing the role of Billy Elliot arrive with a variety of experience, excelling in particular areas like tap, street, or contemporary dance, and the choreography will be adjusted accordingly. The boys will also have varying vocal capabilities, and so the keys of the musical numbers will be

<sup>53</sup>There have been examples of children suffering from stage fright or a lack of confidence who have been taken out of the production and put back into Billy School to give them the opportunity to work on the areas which are troubling them before they return to the professional stage (Bailey, 2006: 19).

<sup>54</sup>That said, the children need to learn how to behave appropriately in a professional theatre environment. Children’s casting director, Joanne Hawes, put out the following statement in advance of the tour of *Oliver!*: “We had lots of problems with discipline in London so we must say this – touring 12 boys will be difficult and will place a lot of strain on the chaperones. We will expect all boys to be well disciplined and to behave impeccably. They will be travelling on trains and staying in hotels. They will be expected to remember that people will know that they are in *Oliver!* and we do not want to attract any negative comments from members of the public. Any bad behaviour will incur heavy sanctions straight away. Please note that the use of mobile phones and computers will be strictly supervised especially in the hotel at night. Children who performed at Drury Lane and whose behaviour was less than good will not be considered for the tour. I want to be sure that the boys and their parents are fully aware of this from the start” (Hawes, 2015).

<sup>55</sup>The musical’s American songwriters, Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman contrast the way musicals are produced in the US and the UK (Hemley, 2013). In the UK there are multiple actors for child parts, but this is not the case in the US.

<sup>56</sup>Source: Personal conversation with Rebecca Orwell at CPA Studios.



decided based on their own tessitura. Consequently slightly different versions of the musical will be created for each Billy. “Director Stephen Daldry acknowledged that the need to tailor each production to three children’s individual talents would turn into what he called a ‘logistical nightmare I am in effect directing three different shows simultaneously’ ” (Kirsta, 2006: 1). The adult cast are required to adapt to “different choreography and two musical keys, depending on the Billy with whom they would be performing” (Bailey, 2006: 6).

In addition to needing to rehearse the children separately, and then again with the principals, their understudies, and for swing/cover runs, additional sets of principal children are required at each performance to provide cover. For each rehearsal and performance the number of chaperones is stipulated, and responsibility for the children extends further than just the time spent rehearsing or performing. Plans need to be made for between shows or rehearsals (including factoring in a lunch or dinner stop) and up to the point when the children are reunited with their parents. Productions which involve children need to ensure that there is enough backstage space to house the extra bodies. *Billy Elliot*, for example, involves three teams of 15 children and on any one night at the theatre, 18 children need to be chaperoned and accommodated separately from the adult cast<sup>57</sup>.

“The most difficult [issue] for the people managing the press relations is the fact that whereas an adult role is undertaken by one person, a child’s part is shared between several. Who do they choose to advertise the show?” (Gee, 2008: 181). Perhaps one factor in the decision process is the ability of the child to undergo interviews and to cope with large crowds at promotional and press/media events. ‘Working Title’ prepare their child performers for this part of the job by giving them (and their parents) some basic media training. This “consists of short mock interviews to camera followed by analysis and discussion. The boys [...] learned not to answer reporters’ questions with yes or no, but to offer a small story which answers the question” (Bailey, 2006: 20).

While most contracts run for at least six months, production companies can be faced with difficult decisions when a child is no longer suited to the part. Channel 4’s documentary ‘The Sound of Musicals’ revealed that the 12 year old boy chosen to play the part of Augustus Gloop was dropped from the show because his voice had started to break (Stevens, 2013b). Similarly when children in other shows have undergone growth

<sup>57</sup>The West End production of *Oliver!* involved “132 boys aged from 7 to 15... The boys are organised into three gangs of 34 and two of 16: Tanners, Shillings, Farthings, Micawbers and Wickfords work through the week on rotation, while a backstage crew of six chaperones is crammed into four dressing rooms, each with wide-screen TV, computer and board games. Anyone who has tried getting small boys organised in the morning might wonder how on earth this is going to work. I’m imagining half the workhouse paralysed in front of the TV an hour before curtain up, each with one sock on, having lost a vital bit of costume” (Scott, 2008: 1).

spurts, needed fixed braces, or have started puberty, they have been asked to break their contract early. “It strikes me as not unreasonable to question in the first place the wisdom of propelling children into a profession in which rejection and pain is almost inevitable... And the end, when it comes, is brutal. ‘Children change,’ says Shaw–Young. ‘They look very cute one year, then, suddenly, they don’t’ ”(Scott, 2008: 1).

### 5.2.7 Pay/Trade Union (TU) representation

As a general rule child performers in theatre productions receive little or no payment<sup>58</sup> for their work, and even the best examples do not match Equity’s recommendation of fees equivalent to half the adult minimum wage<sup>59</sup> (Society of London Theatre, 2014) see Table 5.1 on page 264.

TABLE 5.1: Child performer rates

Production	Rehearsals	Performances	Expenses (travel)
<b>Lion King</b>			
(Simba/Nala– lead roles)	£180 p/w	£60 per show	£25 p/w
2 shows, 2 covers p/w	either as performer or understudy		
<b>Billy Elliot</b>			
Ballet Girls	£15 per rehearsal	£30 per show	£15 p/w
Billy Elliot	£200 p/w retainer	£200 p/w retainer and £30 per show	Travel, accommodation, food, education provided
<b>Oliver</b>			
Fagin’s Gang	£15 per rehearsal	£30 per show	Paid directly to parents
Ensemble	£12.50 per rehearsal	£25 per show	Paid directly to parents
Workhouse (opening scene)	£0	£0	Coach provided
<b>Joseph</b>			
Choir	£0	£0	Coach provided
<b>Matilda</b>			
Matilda/Bruce	£22 per rehearsal	£44 per show £22 per standby	£50-120 p/w rehearsal £30-75 p/w show (depending on Zone)
Ensemble	£18.99 per rehearsal £12.50 top up rehearsal	£37.98 per show	£50 p/w rehearsal £30 per show

Continued...

<sup>58</sup>Some regional theatres and leading pantomime companies do not pay child performers, ask that the parents become chaperones (a process which is subject to a fee), and require the children to pay for their own costumes.

<sup>59</sup>Towse investigated the factors governing the market for singers (Towse, 1993), having amassed a wide variety of information specific to that market, but the market for child performers is perhaps less amenable to economic analysis.

Production	Rehearsals	Performances	Expenses (travel)
<b>Once</b>	£150 p/w (6 weeks)	£50 per show	Travel for child and parent
		£25 per standby	
<b>Sound of Music</b>	£26 per rehearsal	£26 per show	
<b>Wizard of Oz</b>	£17.50 per rehearsal	£35 per show	£25 p/w
<b>Les Miserables</b>	£12.50 per rehearsal	£25 per show	
<b>Chitty Chitty Bang Bang</b>			
Jeremy and Jemima Potts	£175 p/w rehearsal	£25 per show	Travel for child and parent
Sewer kids	£0 per week rehearsal	£0 on tour, £28.70 per show in West End	
<b>Priscilla</b>	£25 per rehearsal	£50 per perf.	£10 p/w

In 2007 Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Really Useful Group was publicly criticised when parents complained that their children were not going to be paid for performing in the West End production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Tapper, 2007: 1). The Really Useful Group made the decision to make donations both to the children’s theatre school (Carmel Thomas Youth Singers), and to the ‘Children In Need’ campaign. The company claimed that they made it their business to ensure that parents were not left out of pocket in that coaches were laid on to transport the children to and from rehearsals and performances, and a hot meal was provided for children performing in both matinee and evening performance. However parents argued that given that the children had been “rehearsing for 10 hours a day, 6 days a week until the show started, [and that they] now do 8 shows within 7 days, the free hot meal is not a huge benefit considering they are out from 1pm – 11:30” (Tapper, 2007: 1). Other parents felt that the success of the show (which sold out and took £10 million at the box office) warranted fair payment to all cast members, including the children (Tapper, 2007: 1).

Low levels of remuneration for child performers has become the norm, and producers often rely on the ambitions of the children (and their parents) who view the experience of performing on a professional stage as payment enough. The situation is different on Broadway. The children in the West End production of *Matilda* are paid £60 per performance, and £30 for being a standby, there is a small fee for rehearsals, and on average the children can earn £250 per week in total – “nearly £1,000 less than their

American counterparts will be paid when the musical opens in Broadway ” (Gore, 2012)<sup>60</sup>.

Unlike their adult counterparts, child performers do not have to be Equity members in order to participate in Equity shows until they are aged 14, and even then, some production companies use non-union children to avoid paying Equity rates. Over the years Equity have made a number of recommendations regarding child performers, but have been unable to follow them through, or intervene in contractual disputes because they do not represent the performers involved. Arguably some form of mandatory representation might help to secure fair payment and royalties for child performers.

However the extension of Equity membership to children under the age of 14 could present problems of its own. “Equity’s main disadvantage ... is the inability to do non-union theatre once you join. If a child ... keeps their non-union status, they can continue to work both non-union community theatre and Equity shows as a non-union performer. Once a child joins, they must either temporarily withdraw from Equity to do a school play or community theatre ... or they must ask special permission of Equity to do the project” (BizParentz Foundation, n.d.: 1).

### 5.2.8 Licensing

The restrictions imposed by legislation can affect young performers in a number of different ways. The pioneering work to put in place laws governing the employment and working conditions for children was done in the early part of the 20th century, with the most recent legislation dating back to the 1960s. Issues remain around the interpretation, implementation and application of the regulations. Censorship in theatre was the responsibility of the Lord Chancellor until 1968, but censorship in respect of young audiences is not applied in the same way as it is for TV and cinema for example, even though there have been productions staged in recent years that have been considered by some to be offensive on religious/moral grounds of ‘bad taste’. The law on equality and diversity applies in the same way in the theatre as it does elsewhere, but is no easier to enforce.

However the issues that have been most topical in recent years in relation to children are those concerning chaperoning. One chaperone is required per twelve children, but

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<sup>60</sup>Similarly, there was criticism over the low fees paid to child performers in the 2009 West End production of *Oliver!* (Thorpe, 2013). An article in the Guardian reported that the hit musical, which broke all records for advance booking records, taking £15 million in ticket sales before the curtain went up, paid child actors less than £20 per night. The article expressed the concern amongst parents of the difficulty in meeting travel costs to and from the West End.

it depends on the circumstances and can be one to one; some claim to do eighty hours per week during rehearsals (Hawes, 2012).

The regulations relating to child performers were set out in the 1968 Children (performance). Regulations have been widely criticised, and these were reviewed in the Thane report<sup>61</sup>, commissioned by the DCMS (Woolman, 2012b) (Arrowsmith, 2010). Thane's recommendations included a relaxation of regulations covering amateur and young people's theatre, and the establishment of nationally agreed criteria on chaperones (Woolman, 2012b). Whilst rules governing 'village hall' productions remain tight, they are more relaxed for television (The Stage, 2012c). The Independent Safeguarding Authority was established in November 2010 to protect children from predatory paedophiles. It was estimated that up to 9 million adults could fall under the new 'vetting and barring scheme', which was criticised for being expensive, bureaucratic and ineffective<sup>62</sup>. Critics like Ian McKellen were particularly concerned about the impact on amateur theatre (The Stage, 2012c).

There were criticisms also about inconsistencies in interpretation and implementation by local authorities (The Stage, 2012c). The same article argues that the amount of red tape applied to the 'village hall' show is disproportionate. The chaperone vetting process is very different for Redbridge local authority and the adjoining county of Essex, for example: Essex requires an enhanced CRB check to be undertaken, as well as the completion of a one page 'Personal Information' form, whereas Redbridge requires the completion of a long document involving a personal statement which must include examples of previous work with children; an enhanced CRB check; three references, and a probing interview. One dance school in Redbridge reported that a child's grandmother (who also worked as a teaching assistant in a local school) was reduced to tears during her interview for the voluntary position of chaperone for a one off charity performance<sup>63</sup>. Inevitably the outcry in the wake of the 'Operation Yewtree' investigations was bound to cause people to think again about arrangements for protecting children.

<sup>61</sup>On 30th March 2010, Sarah Thane published the findings from her review of the Children and Young Persons Act, which she found to be "inflexible and inappropriate" (DCSF, 2010). However in the end, after a consultation exercise, the government decided to drop the proposals based on the Thane report, leaving campaigners feeling very frustrated (Smith, 2013a).

<sup>62</sup>Anyone who planned to work or associate with children for the first time had to pay £64 to register with, and submit to checks by, the new ISA (which replaced the old Criminal Records Bureau), with a £5,000 penalty for non-compliance.

<sup>63</sup>Similarly, when the school wanted to take a group of children to perform at the *Voice in a Million* concert (which raises money for Adoption and Fostering charities), a specific CRB check had to be requested for adults accompanying the children to the event, and even a teacher from a school within the same authority was not allowed to take on this role without the specific check. (This was so even though she was CRB checked to teach in the local primary school). In the end a chaperone from an agency had to be employed at a cost of £250 per day.

The investigation, and others like it, suggest that, in spite of the associated bureaucracy, the chaperoning arrangements were not always effective; and some see Equity's industry-specific knowledge as important in getting the balance right (Scoble, 2012).

The plan to streamline "complex and outdated" child licensing laws dating back to the 1960s was welcomed<sup>64</sup>, particularly the decision to scrap the requirement for a medical certificate which could cost as much as £150, and the alignment of the restrictions on working hours for children working in theatre, TV and film. However there was concern at the plan to remove the requirement for chaperones for amateur theatre (Woolman, 2012a).

Child performers are required to have a licence from their local authority in order to perform in professional stage work; the majority of jobs arise at very short notice. Rather than licensing the companies who employ them, every child has to be licensed for each production (The Stage, 2012c). Turnround times vary between local authorities, but in most cases licences are free. Anger erupted over Islington's proposals to charge a fee for issuing licences (Woolman, 2010b), which attracted criticism from Stagecoach and the National Network for Children in Employment and Entertainment (NNCEE) as well as from children's casting director, Joanne Hawes (Hawes, 2011), convincing Islington to reverse their original decision (Woolman, 2011d). The concern was that production companies would simply avoid using children from the borough of Islington, denying them the opportunity to perform professionally. Despite the reaction to Islington's proposals, in 2011 Richmond council decided to impose a £50 fee for issuing a child performance licence within 5 days, prompting widespread criticism (Woolman, 2011b).

There are also examples of local authorities refusing to issue licences because a child has performed too many times. A child from a dance school in Redbridge was not allowed to participate in the annual show because she had been involved in too many school productions that year<sup>65</sup>. Licensing restrictions are not confined to the UK. The Broadway production of *Billy Elliot* circumvented the "problem of children's licensing by casting adult ballet girls who look like children. One is 18, another 27" (Scott, 2008: 1).

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<sup>64</sup>The system required organisations like Stagecoach to keep 150 different forms on file. The new system replaced the requirement for a medical certificate with a statement of fitness from the parents.

<sup>65</sup>Yet, Essex County Council's document states that: "Good practice for Amateur Theatrical Organisations" states that no licence is needed for mainstream school productions (Essex County Council, 2007: 13).

### 5.2.9 Support from parents

To quote Richard Pullman, “As Jane Austen might have put it: it is a truth universally acknowledged that young protagonists in search of adventure must ditch their parents” (Bobby, 2012: 72). But support for child performers is important when they are trying to break into West End theatre. As stage mum Alison Child says, “there are lots of hours and expense involved for the parents...the remuneration is £25 per week so you are out of pocket inevitably”, but also the cost of buying tickets. “The amount you spend at the box office is enormous, you get one pair of comps for the entire run. Our friends and family have spent over £10,000 over these three productions at the box office” (Shenton, 2011).

Jo Hawes, makes it clear to parents that while the children will thoroughly enjoy their experience of rehearsals and performances, the parents will not. “Tech week would be sheer hell, and before the end of it at least one of us would be on the phone screaming at her about how terrible it all was” (Gee, 2008: 87). Parents need to be prepared for the intensive rehearsal and performance schedule which can be altered at a moment’s notice<sup>66</sup>.

That said many of the parents of stage children do enjoy their experience of the process and the opportunity it presents to form new friendships with other families<sup>67</sup>. Parents comment on the irreplaceable feeling of seeing their offspring performing in a professional production and of seeing them being well received by an audience. “It is very easy to see how you could get hooked on your child being up there . . . You suddenly see your child from a completely different perspective, with most, but not quite all, of the familiarity stripped away. It was breathtaking and awe-inspiring. There she was, a person entirely in her own right, doing something I could never have done, not at her age, or since” (Gee, 2008: 87).

Over the past five years casting directors, producers, and theatre schools have noted a marked rise in the number of young people seeking to enter the profession. Theatre producer Kim Poster describes this surge in interest as a problem: “we now have a generation of tiny people who have grown up with TV talent shows, so the interest in performing is greater, but the capability is not” (Scott, 2008: 1). Head of casting at Stagecoach’s Agency, Tarquin Shaw-Young, echoes Kim’s concerns: “years ago, there were a few children at the back of the adults’ sections. Now they have their own directory . . . This industry does attract very pushy parents. If I see parents berating kids because

<sup>66</sup>A parent of one of the Ballet Girls in the 2015 run of *Billy Elliot* recalls cast changes taking place on the day of the performance, meaning a parent has to leave work, pull their child out of school, and get them to the theatre in time for the matinée (Source: Personal conversation with Joy Fairbrother).

<sup>67</sup>Children’s chaperone David Russell describes the sense of community which is built by the parents: “they have barbecues in the summer, and all the actors come along” (Scott, 2008: 1).



they haven't done well in an audition, I will say something, because that to me is a kind of child abuse" (Scott, 2008: 1). When asked how he finds suitable children for auditions, " 'they find me' he says wearily. 'I'll put a casting notice up on our website and within 10 seconds a parent will be on the phone. I'm sure they've got their BlackBerries linked to the site' " (Scott, 2008: 1)<sup>68</sup>. In such a competitive industry, it is easy to see how parents shift from being supportive to 'pushy'<sup>69</sup>, and sadly it soon becomes clear that the child is living the parents' ambitions rather than their own<sup>70</sup>. I worked with a boy who was auditioning for the role of Gavroche in *Les Misérables* and was moving through each round successfully. However as the process went on the boy's agent received feedback that although he had been selected initially for his raw talent (which was ideal for the role), he was becoming more and more 'stagey'. It transpired that the boy's mother had been ignoring the advice of his tutors and agent and had been giving him her own 'choreography' to take into the audition. Needless to say he wasn't given the part.

### 5.2.10 Good experience

Adele Bailey<sup>71</sup> argues that the Billys in the show surpass the prodigy they are portraying, "Do you boys ever think about the fact that you have gone well beyond Billy's achievement? Billy Elliot manages to overcome financial and social constraints and through his skill and promise in ballet earn a place to train at the Royal Ballet School. You have all been up against similar hurdles, often being the only boy in your early dance classes, but have actually achieved far more. Not just ballet, you West End Billys have had to master extremely difficult choreography, tap, jazz and street dance, back-flips, front-flips, cartwheels, plus acting and singing. You have developed the stamina to carry a three-hour musical, with two performances a week. And all this at the ages of 13 and 14 – at least four years before Billy Elliot himself could have expected to appear before a paying audience. In the process you have received the best musical theatre training that money can buy, and in less than two years have been prepared to be able

<sup>68</sup> "Three thousand children queued for the initial auditions ... 18 were finally chosen. It's rumoured that when the measuring stick went up and down the road, parents nudged their children off the kerb to get past the height rule" (Scott, 2008: 1).

<sup>69</sup> Parental support, however well-intentioned, can also jeopardise opportunities for children. "The director [was] very concerned that the children should treat the rehearsal process as a big secret from us until we saw them on stage. Parental influence on their performance had to be kept to a minimum" (Gee, 2008: 94).

<sup>70</sup> There's even a website devoted to them: [www.notapushymum.com](http://www.notapushymum.com).

<sup>71</sup> Chief Executive of the National Council for Drama Training, now Drama UK.



to headline a successful West End musical. I think your journeys are much bigger than Billy's" (Bailey, 2006: 2)<sup>72</sup>.

While young performers enjoy their experience of professional theatre and often look to renew contracts or move on to other shows, they do not all aspire to become professional performers as adults. The Education chapter explored the wider benefits that performing arts training can bring, and these apply here too. Runs in professional productions give young people the opportunity to develop their auditioning and performance skills, but also they foster confidence, hard work, physical and mental well-being, and a sense of responsibility: "commitment, attitude and stamina is as important as acting ability" (Elkin, 2011e).

Teachers who have recorded comments for the Billy Elliot Education Department, describe it as a "wonderful teaching tool" and "a lot more than theatre", not only does it teach children that "you can stand up for yourself and be an individual and succeed" it also teaches something about history and politics<sup>73</sup>.

It is possible for young people to use their early experiences of professional theatre to build a lifelong career<sup>74</sup>. Some do this by making contacts with creative teams and moving from one project to the next<sup>75</sup>, others use their experience to help them to win highly-prized places at full-time theatre schools like Sylvia Young, and others complete their statutory education in mainstream schools and move on to specialist training post-16/18. "Many adult Olivier nominees gave exceptional performances when they were just children... in my experience most children I have come across who have displayed extra special talent have fulfilled expectations, if not surpassed them" (Piper, 2012).

<sup>72</sup>"I believe that the Billys aren't just gifted children with a potential. They have already managed to fulfil that potential at their tender age – working professionally on the most prestigious stages. Moreover: the role of Billy is more than just a role: it requires a great determination and a high sense of responsibility, duty and work ethic, which is something not normally associated with children of that age, even gifted. In other words, for some years in the most formative age these children had lived – another life dissimilar to – normal life. I believe that all the aspects of that life (professional auditions and training, immersion into the fictional world of the play as well as into backstage world of the major production company with a lot of unusual people – all that coexisting with – a normal childhood with parents, friends, school...) needs to be properly documented because it can contribute to expanding the body of knowledge about some important aspects of human life in general and development of talented children, in particular" (Adzhiev, 2010: 5).

<sup>73</sup>At any one time four boys between 10 and 13 rotate in the role of Billy; each summer around six to eight boys are brought to London for an intensive summer school lasting five to six weeks, living in the 'Billy House'. "They have workshops in the afternoon and the progress they make is astounding... Many parents see the one to one teaching the boys receive as a real bonus", Jessica Ronane, children's casting director.

<sup>74</sup>In 2010 the English Touring Opera worked with children from 22 schools in its search for local school children to take part in its version of *Fantastic Mr Fox*. In the corresponding Los Angeles Production two of the children went on to become professionals as adults (Elkin, 2011b).

<sup>75</sup>Sheridan Smith began her career at the age of 13 playing Tallulah in the National Youth Theatres production of *Bugsy Malone*, but she is known to lack confidence because she has had no formal training.

Of course there are also some downsides. Taking up a place in a professional production is a huge commitment for a child and for their parents. Not only will their schedule for the next six to twelve months be dictated by the production company, parents are also advised to cancel all other extra-curricular activities so that the child is able to use all their energy and concentration for schooling and for the show. Removing them from extra-curricular activities, and disrupting their school timetable, can impact on the child's development in other areas, can compromise existing friendships, and can mean that children lose their place in some activity groups altogether. Holidays and trips away are not advisable because production schedules can change with little notice, and family life is affected and can be under increasing pressure as parents focus on one child, potentially at the expense of others, and little time is available for the family to be together as a unit.

Some worry that exposure to professional work and the recognition that it can bring can cause other problems. "After Connie Talbot didn't win the final of Britain's Got Talent, writer Andrew O'Hagan - the author of 'Personality', a novel based on the life of Lena Zavaroni - wrote an impassioned and sensible feature in the Telegraph. Under the headline *Celebrity is the death of childhood*, he wrote, 'What a mercy Connie Talbot, aged six, was not allowed to win ... It would have made a lot of people happy for five minutes, and a little girl sad for the rest of her life'. It is a sentiment that the US organisation A Minor Concern, led by people who were famous TV stars as children, would echo. Childhood fame is rarely a precursor to a happy adult life" (Gee, 2008: 155).

## Chapter 6

# Conclusions

Musical theatre has its critics, so it is perhaps worth pausing to reflect on why it matters, and why it is something that is worthy of academic interest.

Musical theatre is economically and socially important (particularly to young people)<sup>1</sup>, and contrary to views sometimes expressed by its detractors, it is artistically challenging.

- Theatres in the UK made more than £1 billion<sup>2</sup> in ticket sales alone<sup>3</sup>; musicals contributed around 40%, with family musicals doing especially well<sup>4</sup>.
- Musical theatre is accessible and is the entry route into the arts for a large number of young people. Furthermore it delivers measurable benefits to young people and communities, particularly in areas of social disadvantage.
- It is artistically challenging, something which is demonstrated by the number of crossover artists moving into musical theatre<sup>5</sup>, and by the fact that a number of conservatoires, including the Royal Academy of Music (1993) and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, whose singing courses would once have focused on opera and lieder, now offer courses in musical theatre.

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<sup>1</sup>And likely to become more so, given the increasing importance of the service industries, of leisure time, and of social cohesion.

<sup>2</sup>“UK Theatre member venues – predominantly theatres outside London – recorded £29 million at the box office in 2014. When added to the box office for theatres that are members of the Society of London Theatre in 2014 (£624 million), it reveals that theatre across the whole of the UK recorded a total box office of £1.05 billion” (Snow, 2015).

<sup>3</sup>The total contribution to the British economy is very much higher – see, for example (Shellard, 2004).

<sup>4</sup>“An increase of almost £30 million between 2013 and 2014 at the box office for family musicals makes the genre the best performing category of all those analysed. The report estimates that for every £4 taken at the box office in 2014, £1 was spent on family musical tickets” (Snow, 2015).

<sup>5</sup>Examples include Dame Judi Dench who did *Cabaret* (in the original London production, 1968) before Minelli, and more recently Emma Thompson and Bryn Terfel in *Sweeney Todd* at the ENO, and Bryn Terfel in *Fiddler on the Roof* at The Grange Park Opera.

Despite its cultural significance, musical theatre<sup>6</sup> is an area not well covered by academics, and knowledge within the industry remains tacit. Like most research, my work includes ‘book research’, updated with information gleaned from theatre journals and industry publications. However because knowledge within the industry is not well documented, much of the information used in my analysis is information I have gathered as part of my professional work and from colleagues working in the industry.

My experience of working in youth theatre, theatre schools and teaching all ages from pre-school children to postgraduate students (most recently as Course Director at a drama school which has performers in the West End) meant that I felt well-placed to conduct research into the ways in which young people develop into performers in professional theatre.

## 6.1 History of young people in musical theatre

The research reported here presents, for the first time, a historical analysis of the involvement of children in theatre from its earliest beginnings to the present, divided into seven ages. It is clear from this analysis that the role children played in the evolution of theatre has been both substantial and influential, with evidence of a number of recurring themes. Children have made significant contributions in terms of music, dance and spectacle, and have been especially prominent in musical comedy.

The size and form of those contributions are dictated largely by adults and have been heavily influenced by socioeconomic conditions. Only by tracing them chronologically in their historical context can those contributions be properly understood.

Some of the emerging themes are highlighted below.

Young people have featured strongly in musical theatre, both as consumers and suppliers, with the balance between the two changing over time. Expectations of children performing alongside adults goes back centuries. Much of musical theatre history involves children in one way or another, and arguably could not have happened without them; it is striking that even before there was a sense of professional theatre, children were employed as performers. The close association of the Elizabethan boy actors with the Court helped to stabilise and make more comprehensive the social record on musical theatre at the time<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>Particularly children’s musical theatre. Perhaps unsurprisingly, American musicals tend to receive more attention from academics than their British counterparts.

<sup>7</sup>More generally, at a time when levels of literacy were low, musical theatre served as a vehicle for mass communication.

Access to theatre by children wishing to be performers has been restricted for various reasons, including socioeconomic factors. In ancient Greece, acting tended to be the preserve of the wealthier classes; in recent years senior figures in the industry have expressed a concern<sup>8</sup> that funding restrictions might make this so in the future<sup>9</sup>. Conversely at those times when acting was regarded as a disreputable profession<sup>10</sup>, it was generally left to the less affluent<sup>11</sup>. In ancient Greece, and in professional theatre throughout history, theatrical dynasties have played an important role in training child performers. When available, education and, to some extent, the emergence of agents, have tended to level the playing field. Educators (and entrepreneurs) have played a pivotal role in the development of musical theatre.

It is interesting to reflect on what it is about productions featuring child performers which makes them popular and distinctive. A number of themes stand out. Every era has produced child prodigies who have drawn audiences to the theatre, although, interestingly, the polarisation in remuneration between the ‘stars’ and the rest that is found amongst adult performers (and historically amongst child performers also) does not prevail in today’s theatre.

Comedy has always played a large part in theatre by children<sup>12</sup>, with writers and directors eager to exploit incongruities and precocity for comic effect. In the past children have been used to deliver material that writers and producers simply would not have been able to get away with if delivered by adults; something that child protection regulations would make more difficult today.

Sentimentality has at times featured heavily; child performers frequently go down well with family audiences.

Until the early part of the 20th century, children provided producers with a ready source of cheap labour<sup>13</sup>, and to a large extent they still do (especially when the indirect subsidy from parents, relatives and friends is taken into account)<sup>14</sup> although the strengthening of child protection legislation in recent years can make the logistics of putting on a production involving child performers much more challenging. The reality is that children are willing victims; despite the obstacles and the poor levels of remuneration, the desire of young people to perform has proved irrepressible.

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<sup>8</sup>There is a view that ‘theatre is for posh kids’, although the evidence shows this is perhaps stronger in the worlds of (non-musical) drama, classical music and ballet than for musical theatre.

<sup>9</sup>The closure of subsidised music services is of particular concern.

<sup>10</sup>Roman, Elizabethan, Victorian.

<sup>11</sup>On the other hand, gentlemen continued to write and to compose, regardless of the status of performers.

<sup>12</sup>And in musical theatre more generally.

<sup>13</sup>‘Impressment’ was a recurring theme throughout history, both in England and across Europe.

<sup>14</sup>That said, the idea of children doing for fun what adults get paid for is a recent phenomenon (post-Second World War) and is a practice that is now being called into question by funding bodies.

Different forms of exploitation are common in today's industry: self-exploitation by performers working hard and earning little; exploitation of children by parents living out their own fantasies; exploitation of children and their parents by some in the training business, preparing hopeful students for careers they'll never be able to afford to have. There are instances where graduates have been unable to pursue opportunities due to financial constraints. Something I discovered when conducting post-course discussions with CPA graduates is that many felt the need to seek (non-performer) employment immediately after leaving the college to reduce their debts. (This is because, unlike student loans, the terms of a career development loan dictate that they must begin to repay the loan as soon as the course ends.) This meant that they had not been able to accept (low paid) career building roles that they had been offered in high quality musical theatre productions.

## 6.2 The education system

Musical theatre and education have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship over the years: musical theatre has been used to educate<sup>15</sup>, and education has stimulated and sustained musical theatre.

In the last 50 years especially, the UK education system, and drama schools in particular, has been crucially important in enabling the industry to prosper even through a difficult economic period<sup>16</sup>. It seems unlikely that, without it, the West End would exist in the form and of the standard that we observe today.

Successive governments have frequently promoted the STEM subjects at the expense of performing arts on the grounds that they have greater economic value<sup>17</sup>. However commentators point to the fact that a disproportionately large number of those in high office (in all walks of life) are the product of the public school system<sup>18</sup>. With that in mind, it is interesting that Dr Anthony Seldon, former master of Wellington College, argued that the relative success of those who attend independent schools is due not to examination results per se, but to the personal skills/qualities<sup>19</sup> that students acquire

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<sup>15</sup>Michael Scott ([Scott, 2014](#)) credits (musical) drama with a key role in the development of democracy, and in that sense, helped to develop the syllabus as well as helping to deliver it.

<sup>16</sup>Evidence that the DaDA subsidies paid to students represent good value for money.

<sup>17</sup>This despite the scale of the performing arts industry and its role as a magnet for tourists, providing a buoy for the service industries during difficult economic times.

<sup>18</sup>And very often themselves have studied non-STEM subjects at university.

<sup>19</sup>Although expressed more tersely, a similar point was made by Richard Mulcaster in the sixteenth century when he argued that [musical] drama helped to "remove all useless modesty" and "taught students good behaviour and audacity".

while they are there (BBC News, 2015b). The value of the performing arts in helping young people develop ‘soft skills’ is well established<sup>20</sup>.

The education system can be divided into seven parts, which align broadly with age groups. Although there have been studies that have examined individual elements of the performing arts education system, piecemeal scrutiny cannot provide assurance that the system as a whole is both effective and equitable for young people and for the performing arts industry<sup>21</sup>, and that it is efficient for taxpayers and others who provide support. To successfully develop and take forward a strategy that best serves young people (and their employers), it is important to understand how the education system functions as a whole.

Relatively little seems to have been done to assess the system in its entirety, taking into account both state and private provision, let alone the part played by the ‘third sector’ in the form of youth theatre and theatre schools. The research reported here considers the contributions made by the various elements of the performing arts ‘eco-system’ and the coherence and cohesiveness of the system as a whole. It considers how the education system<sup>22</sup> feeds the industry it is designed to serve, and whether new metrics might be helpful for the purposes of providing better transparency to young people and firmer foundations for resource allocation.

The UK, and London in particular, enjoys a reputation for high quality musical theatre, and since most of its performers trained in the UK<sup>23</sup>, it follows that the education system as a whole must be effective. But there are question marks over the efficiency and the equity of the system. The UK boasts some first rate vocational conservatoires/drama schools. However concern has been expressed by senior figures in the profession about their exclusivity.

Provision in schools (both primary and secondary) and FE colleges is patchy. In the best, it is excellent, but in many it lacks, commitment, ambition and coherence. The plethora of companies offering musical theatre tuition to children outside school is testament to the appetite amongst children themselves and the value placed on it by parents who pay for it<sup>24</sup>. However the provision available in state schools is very often under-funded<sup>25</sup> and poorly focussed which means that the resources are all too often not used to best effect. Thus opportunities are missed, in terms of the performing arts, and more generally in

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<sup>20</sup>It is interesting to note that girls, who participate in musical theatre in greatest numbers, are very often credited with better social skills than boys.

<sup>21</sup>And its audiences who buy the tickets.

<sup>22</sup>Strictly speaking, those elements of the education system that are relevant to musical theatre.

<sup>23</sup>Almost 90%, on the basis of analysis of data on West End productions given in Appendix A.

<sup>24</sup>The same is of course true for youth orchestras and youth theatre.

<sup>25</sup>Austerity measures will continue to have an adverse effect on what schools are able to spend on TiE and other arts projects, including trips to see West End shows.

terms of what the performing arts can contribute to helping students to develop self-confidence and in the teaching of other subjects. The challenges for secondary school teachers are exacerbated by the disparities in levels of knowledge and expertise resulting from the variation in the experience of children arriving from primary schools. The variation in standards is especially evident amongst BTEC courses. Whilst flexibility is attractive in many ways, the lack of rigour in assessment is behind the criticisms levelled by some politicians; the absence of effective standardisation runs the risk of undermining the entire system, and with it, some excellent courses. Closer integration with the external bodies like ABRSM would be one way to sharpen focus, increase efficiency and improve the rigour of courses offered at schools and FE colleges.

New rulings which require young people to remain in education until they are 18 will have an impact on applications to musical theatre courses<sup>26</sup>, as will changes in funding arrangements to be introduced in late 2016.

University courses are very effective in delivering broadly-based academic courses, providing the deeper theoretical understanding required for composers, conductors, writers etc. For those seeking a career as a performer in the West End, the most fruitful option is a course at a drama school. The three year musical theatre courses at accredited drama schools are the ‘engine room’ of the West End, in that drama schools are by far the most important contributors in supplying the West End workforce. Places are highly prized by those aspiring to be West End performers. However the high level of contact time (at least 1,000 hours per year) means that they are expensive to deliver, and therefore expensive for students. The majority of students are ineligible for student loans<sup>27</sup>, and unless they are able to obtain a DaDA (or other scholarship), many<sup>28</sup> are obliged to take on part-time work in the evenings and weekends to cover the costs of the course<sup>29</sup>.

Implicit in the fact that policy makers invest public money in performing arts training in the form of DaDA, HEFCE grants and the Music and Dance scheme is a belief that there is societal and economic value. However national level policy, for example DaDA allocations in their current form, condones continuing inequality and fails to ensure that students with the most talent can embark via fringe shows on the West End careers

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<sup>26</sup>On the one hand, there could be an influx of applications from 16 year old students because they are now obliged to continue with some form of education or training. On the other hand, the entry age of students might be pushed up as the natural progression for young people is to remain in free education at their own schools until the age of 18.

<sup>27</sup>“On 25th of November [2015] the Chancellor announced that advanced learner loans will be extended to include those aged 19–23 and those studying at Level 5 and Level 6” [Source: Partner Services Management Team Student Loans Company].

<sup>28</sup>Indeed almost all students at CPA.

<sup>29</sup>As well as taking out career development loans which, unlike student loans, they must begin to repay as soon as the course is complete.



they would flourish in. Hence national policy because it condones continuing inequality fails to provide the West End with the best available trained-up talent – an economic indictment as well as a moral one.

Public information on the performance of drama schools focusses on student satisfaction, and sometimes on the percentage of students getting some sort of a job when they graduate, neither of which provides students with the information they need to select the best course for them. As part of this research, a new measure of performance (using publicly available data) is proposed which provides a stronger link with desired outcome: work in the West End<sup>30</sup>. Three factors emerge from a preliminary investigation of why it is that some institutions appear to contribute more than others to the West End workforce. First, there appears to be evidence of a strong relationship between an institution's West End contribution and the scale of its resources. Second, institutions that specialise in dance appear to exert more 'leverage', by virtue of the numbers of performers required for ensembles<sup>31</sup>. The third factor is location: institutions based in or around London tend to have a bigger proportion of alumni in the West End than other institutions. The 'golden ticket' for a West End performer is to be a so-called 'triple threat', proficient in acting, singing and dance. All accredited drama schools measure progress in each of the three disciplines. As part of this research, an additional measure is suggested to summarise the extent to which institutions are producing students with a balanced set of skills, distinguishing all-rounders from specialists.

CDET estimated that in November 2015, almost 80% of cast members had been trained by an institution receiving DaDA<sup>32</sup>. The process of allocating DaDA to institutions is underpinned by a series of Ofsted inspections. Institutions which failed to meet minimum standards were denied DaDA allocations. However for those institutions who received awards, I could find no evidence of a link between the size of the allocations and the Ofsted ratings. The latest round of Ofsted inspections is currently underway and is due to report early in 2016. An alternative to making allocations via institutions would be to make awards to individual students through a more centralised UCAS-style system overseen by Trinity/CDET, where Ofsted assessments are publicised, and students are free to 'spend' their DaDA at any of the accredited institutions. This would be a major change for institutions and the practical implications of conducting auditions through a central panel etc. would of course need to be thought through, but it may be worth further exploration if it has not been considered already.

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<sup>30</sup>The idea of using an analysis of West End performers as a measure of effectiveness was adopted by CDET/EFA in a submission for government ministers in November 2015 supporting the case for the continuation of the DaDA scheme.

<sup>31</sup>Although this effect will be offset to some extent by the fact that the working lifetime for a dancer tends to be shorter than for actors and singers.

<sup>32</sup>Source: CDET briefing for submission requested by Minister of State for Skills (BIS), Nick Boles November 2015.

It is often argued that an Oxbridge qualification attracts a premium in terms of future employment prospects. Analysis of the West End labour force suggests that the same is true of the top drama schools. However, notwithstanding the fact that the QAA oversees universities, there is a view that standards are higher at some universities than others, course content varies, teaching staff are different, exams are different, external examiners are different etc. In contrast, at drama schools course structure and content hours are largely the same (stipulated by Trinity), assessments are essentially the same, external examiners are the same, and there is a good deal of commonality in teaching staff in that teachers very often work at a number of institutions concurrently (and most work at a number of schools during their careers). What varies are intake and resources, and these vary markedly. Ironically, those who have had least access to resources in the past (at school, and through private tuition), and so, in general, need the most, get the least both in terms of institution resources and state support.

Like other academics, O'Brien ([O'Brien and Oakley, 2015](#)) expresses concern about the quality and availability of data. It is therefore that much more important to wring out maximum value from the data that do exist. There are data there to be mined and what there are need to be fully exploited. And there is learning to be gained from considering structures: there are three layers of inspection (CDET, Trinity, Ofsted) as well as the HEFCE and QAA, and two funding agencies (EFA and SFA) and with that different funding arrangements (DaDA, Student Loans, Advance Learner Loans, grants etc). Government agencies plainly feel the need to have some means of allocating state subsidy and evaluating the results, but it is important that policy questions are framed effectively. The DaDA system is a case in point.

Statistics that are collected by the EFA focus on DaDA recipients, and can lead to specious conclusions. For example,

- geographical data relate to the institution rather than the student, and so neither provides information on access, nor are they sensitive to change.
- data relating to students in non-DaDA schools are not collected, so not only do they not provide a comprehensive reflection of the (Level 6) qualification as a whole (let alone the drama school sector), neither do they allow policy makers to build an understanding of the extent of the deadweight associated with state funding (DaDA, student loans, HEFCE grants) against the background of private resources.

Whilst there is of course merit in fostering excellence, deadweight is likely to mean that the marginal benefit to the 'haves' is much less than it would be to the 'have nots'.

Plainly it is administratively easier to collect data on subsidised institutions, but this is (very nearly) the right answer to the wrong question.

### 6.3 The informal sector

Education in musical theatre is by no means bounded by the formal education system in the way that most other professions are. Informal education makes a substantial contribution to the performing arts in building enthusiasm and by providing training opportunities that are simply not available through the state education system.

Options are many and varied, and unlike accredited drama schools, institutions are not restricted to cities (and certainly not restricted to London). Many of the established drama schools have sidelines in the form of evening and weekend classes and there are numerous smaller scale ventures; but by far the most important are youth theatre and part-time theatre schools, and there is evidence to suggest that there are benefits to be had from both.

Part-time theatre schools have a long history but witnessed a step-change in the late 1980s with the emergence of Stagecoach and others. They are invariably run on a fully commercial basis<sup>33</sup>, although there are instances of schools offering subsidies<sup>34</sup> of various kinds to talented children whose parents are unable to find the fees. Part-time schools are big business with over 40,000 children attending weekly.

Operating models vary: some are hierarchical, in others control is decentralised; some have an elitist approach to their teaching, others are more inclusive. All seek to demonstrate achievement through shows, exams and reports.

Youth theatre differs from theatre schools in that it is expressly focussed on productions, and not generally commercially self-sufficient. Fees are typically much lower than those for theatre schools, and sometimes cross-subsidised by ‘parent’ adult theatre. Many tend to focus on drama rather than musical theatre, but there are exceptions (e.g. STP). Quality is often very high – in general youth theatre has a better reputation than adult groups. Comparison of scripts/scores with corresponding youth versions indicates that youth productions are no less demanding than the ‘full’ versions.

There is a variety of options available to teachers/would-be teachers. However despite it being highlighted as a problem 35 years ago ([Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1975](#)), until very recently there was nothing that adequately met the needs of the 5000+ people

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<sup>33</sup>Some actively opposed to subsidy from government.

<sup>34</sup>Akin to scholarships offered by independent schools.

teaching in theatre schools. The training outlined here was presented to the Managing Director and other members of the senior management team at Stagecoach<sup>35</sup>, and subsequently they have launched a course modelled on the ideas presented here, and the course is now available to their national network of teachers.

## 6.4 Professional theatre

Whilst professional musical theatre is by no means the only ‘product’ of the education system, professional theatre is the inspiration and the aspiration of many young performers.

Theatre for children differs markedly from adult theatre in a number of respects. One of the most striking differences relates to the way the market operates for audiences and for participants.

Access to theatre is controlled by adults<sup>36</sup>, and is further limited by location and by cost. In the past the struggle to make theatre for children pay has resulted in productions that were seen as low quality, damaging its reputation within the industry. Where theatre is subsidised it invariably comes with ‘strings attached’ in the form of an explicit educational objective – something that has attracted criticism from those within the industry for some time, and there are now initiatives (e.g. Unicorn, Lyric) that attempt to address this. The ‘crossing over’ of highly regarded creatives to work in children’s theatre gives grounds for optimism that theatre for children is on the up.

The challenge for the industry is to justify the cost to subsidy givers, or to find new ways of funding. Although few theatre companies are themselves awash with funds, there have been instances of theatre managers seeing theatre for children as an investment for the future, developing strategies/with cross-subsidy from adult production groups.

Theatre for family audiences has been strong since the early part of the 20th century (and arguably much longer than that). Pantomimes are of course a welcome source of income to performers at Christmas time.

Another important difference from adult theatre is the way performers are sourced, rewarded and managed.

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<sup>35</sup>11th April 2014 and 15th August 2014 at Stagecoach HQ in Walton.

<sup>36</sup>Research has highlighted the importance of introducing children early to the arts. Much is made of the role of the media in supporting STEM subjects but rather less on the importance of their role in supporting the arts – although there are some very welcome counter examples ((Dowell, 2015), (BBC News, 2015a)). Yet it is clear from the impact of talent shows like *Maria* (the so-called ‘X factor effect’) that TV and cinema can have a powerful ‘priming’ role in stimulating interest in the performing arts.

The remuneration for child performers is low compared to adult pay<sup>37</sup>; at best, no more than half Equity rates. In fact, in many cases there is a net subsidy provided by parents, who provide their time/transport, and friends and relatives who buy tickets to see the children perform<sup>38</sup>.

Most adult performers in musical theatre have received intensive training at one of the established drama schools<sup>39</sup>. Child performers have not (yet) had that opportunity, which means a much greater degree of on-the-job training. To mitigate some of the challenges, child performers are sometimes recruited in ‘batches’ from their schools.

Once recruited, there are a whole raft of considerations related to child welfare (chaperoning, limitations on timing/length of rehearsals and performances), and there are particular challenges associated with the requirement to operate with multiple casts.

Despite all the obstacles and the poor terms of employment<sup>40</sup>, there seems to be no shortage of children (aided and abetted by doting parents) ready and willing to tread the boards. Whether this is child exploitation, or just an example of the unsentimental hand of the law of supply and demand at work, is a matter for debate.

In general, ‘access’ is different from ‘consumption’. “Wanting the right to be there is of course not the same as wanting to be there” (Reason, 2010: 26–27). To realise cultural value, people need to have been given the opportunity to develop the ‘competence’ to appreciate/understand/enjoy/derive meaning. One of the strengths of musical theatre is that young people find it accessible, and it therefore provides a gateway to the arts in a way that other forms of music theatre might not. However there are barriers: West End musical theatre is unsubsidised and is therefore expensive, and it is concentrated in London where the market is strong enough to enable a fully commercial operation, in a way that is more difficult in other parts of the country<sup>41</sup>.

Consumption is not restricted to the people in the audience. Arguably those participating in the product, or learning how to produce the end product are ‘consuming’ culture just as much as (if not more than) those in the audience. O’Brien (O’Brien and Oakley, 2015) recognises the scale of inequality in the industry, but the inequalities manifest in Arts education are that much greater in that they rob young people of ‘cultural value’ at the time and in the future. Other research (discussed earlier in the thesis) indicates

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<sup>37</sup>Young workers aged 16 to 17 are entitled to at least £3.87 per hour, but there is currently no minimum wage for school children (HMG, 2015a).

<sup>38</sup>Young performers are perhaps one of the earliest forms of internship.

<sup>39</sup>Typically, this involves 3 years of training with 30 hours of contact time per week.

<sup>40</sup>Even by the standards of jobbing musical theatre performers.

<sup>41</sup>London is where the infrastructure is, but festivals like the Edinburgh Fringe demonstrate that it can be made to work in a different way in a different place.

that participation is the most important driver in determining interest in theatre as an adult.

As Oscar Wilde put it, “a cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing”. Governments often find it easy to count the cost of the performing arts, but more difficult to recognise its worth despite authoritative assessments of its economic and social value. There are often complaints about what seem like unreasonably generous levels of remuneration in certain parts of the entertainment industry<sup>42</sup>, but theatre performers are not often amongst them, and many drama schools operate on the very edge of profitability and ill-focused austerity cuts run the risk of driving institutions to the wall.

There is much to celebrate in the musical theatre industry and the education<sup>43</sup> system that underpins it. And it is something that deserves looking after.

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<sup>42</sup>Premiership footballers are amongst those most often mentioned.

<sup>43</sup>Education in its broadest sense, including the contributions from the informal sector.

## Appendix A

# Data sources for the Figures included in the thesis

The purpose of this appendix is to give the information needed to allow others to reproduce the Figures presented in this thesis (where it is not given in the main text).

For most of the Figures included in the thesis, the underlying data can be read directly off the charts and so are not considered further here. However there are exceptions; these fall into three categories and are explained more fully below.

### A.1 The change over time in the number of musicals in the West End and on Broadway

Figure 2.13 on page 63: Original Musical on Broadway

Figure 2.17 on page 91: Musical in America and Europe

Data for these charts were publicly available and downloaded (in 2010) from the IBDB database ([IBDB, n.d.](#)) and Musicals101 database ([Kenrick, n.d.](#)) respectively into an Excel spreadsheet which allowed the relevant data to be extracted from each record and the musicals grouped into years. Data are not reproduced here because they are publicly available, subject to copyright and the sheer volume of data (in excess of 5,000 records in one case) would make it impractical (and ecologically irresponsible!).

## A.2 Measuring performance at a drama school

Figure 3.6 on page 170: Relationship between overall performance and technical competence in Drama

Figure 3.7 on page 171: Relationship between overall performance and technical competence in Singing

Figure 3.8 on page 171: Relationship between overall performance and Associated Studies score

Figure 3.9 on page 172: Skills balance

The (anonymised) data needed to reproduce the Figures in this category are given in Table A.1 on page 287.



TABLE A.1: Student achievement

Final year					2nd year		1st year	
ASSOCIATED STUDIES	DANCE	DRAMA	SINGING	PERFORMANCE	SINGING	PERFORMANCE	DRAMA	PERFORMANCE
40	49	38	48	23	52	47	52	67
48	65	60	57	47	59	64	59	69
51	68	71	61	53	71	65	70	88
68	54	70	56	52	54	44	44	63
48	62	54	56	34	59	68	54	67
41	69	65	46	39	49	55	54	60
41	41	53	55	45	51	34	44	60
61	64	64	62	68	67	62	65	85
84	70	73	78	66	72	85	72	91
72	64	56	54	54	50	57	48	73
51	60	51	48	56	46	53	55	58
45	62	39	53	60	57	57	46	65
61	61	78	82	76	77	76	60	88
59	70	73	58	78	69	65	61	78
50	59	48	62	36	49	54	62	71
48	63	45	43	36	41	37	42	62
76	74	61	65	80	71	73	63	91
81	69	64	71	84	73	84	71	90

Note: Grades are assessed against the standard expected for that year.

### A.3 Outcome-related performance measures

Figure 3.10 on page 175: Performers in West End Musicals

Figure 3.11 on page 176: Contribution of Training Institutions to West End Musical Theatre

Figure 3.12 on page 178: Effect of an institution's resources on its contribution to the West End

Data were extracted for productions showing in the West End in October 2014, from show websites, the 'Spotlight' casting directory and supplemented by general web searches. Data on pay for West End performers were taken from the (publicly available) Equity/SOLT agreement, supplemented by conversations with colleagues within the industry for confirmation/ clarification. Data on the current assets of accredited institutions were taken from the Companies House website; these are publicly available data, but are given below for convenience.

Data are given in a number of separate tables:

For each of the 450+ roles, Tables A2 - A19 give the names of the shows, the roles, the pay category, the name of the actor playing it, and where s/he trained. In those cases where a performer had attended more than one training institution, precedence was given to courses offering Level 6 qualification, or equivalent.

In two cases, the same actor was listed amongst cast members on show websites for two separate productions.

TABLE A.2: West End Actors - Billy Elliot

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Billy Elliot (Victoria Palace)	Mrs Wilkinson	P	841	Ruthie Henshall	Laine's	F
	Dad	P	841	Deka Wamsley	Rose Bruford	M
	Tony	P	841	Chris Grahamson	LIPA	M
	Grandma	P	841	Ann Emery	Tring Park	F
	George	Perf	633	Howard Crossley	Rotherham Tech. College	M
	Mr Braithwaite	Perf	633	David Muscat	Overseas	M
	Dead Mum	Perf	633	Claudia Bradley	Tring Park	F
	Older Billy	Perf	633	Barnaby Meredith	RAM	M
	U/S George	U/s P	668	Craig Armstrong	Unknown	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Paul Bassleigh	London Studio Centre	M
	U/S George	U/s P	668	Spencer Cartwright	Mountview	M
	U/S Grandma (2nd cover), Swing	Sw+U/s P	720	Lucinda Collins	Unknown	F
	Alternate Grandma	P	841	Gillian Elisa	RWCMD	F
	U/S Older Billy	U/s SP	656	Lee Hoy	Italia Conti	M
	U/S Tony	U/s P	668	Ruri James	RAM	M
	U/S Tony	U/s P	668	Chris Jenkins	GSA	M
	U/S Dead Mum	U/s SP	656	Charlie Martin	London Studio Centre	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Alan Mehdizadeh	Aberystwyth Uni.	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Steve Paget	Arts Ed.	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Ben Redfern	GSA	M
	U/S Mrs Wilkinson & U/S Dead Mum	U/s P+U/s SP	690	Charlotte Riby	Laine's	F
	U/S Older Billy	U/s SP	656	Mark John Richardson	Laine's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Mike Scott	No training	M
	U/S Mr Braithwaite	U/s SP	656	Phil Snowden	Bird's	M
	U/S Mrs Wilkinson	U/s SP	656	Wendy Somerville	RAM	F
	U/S Mr Braithwaite	U/s SP	656	Spencer Stafford	GSA	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	David Stoller	Uni. of Hertfordshire	M
	Alternates: Dad & U/S George	P	841	David Bardsley	Mountview	M

TABLE A.3: West End Actors - The Book of Mormon

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Book of Mormon (Prince of Wales Theatre)	Elder Price	P	841	Billy Harrigan Tighe	Overseas	M
	Elder Cunningham	P	841	A J Holmes	Overseas	M
	Nabulungi	P	841	Alexia Khadime	Overseas	F
	Moroni/Elder McKinley	Perf	633	Stephen Ashfield	RAM	M
	Mafala Hatimbi	Perf	633	Kevin Harvey	Everyman Liverpool YT	M
	Harrison Price's Dad/Joseph Smith/Mission President	Perf	633	Hugo Harold	GSA	M
	General	Perf	633	Chris Jarman	LAMDA	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Mark Anderson	GSA	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Benjamin Brook	Arts Ed.	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Christopher Copeland	Central School of Ballet	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Ashley Day	Stoneland School	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Keisha T Fraser	RSAMD	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Patrick George	Laine's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Nadine Higgins	Arts Ed.	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Evan James	Arts Ed.	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Aisha Jawando	Urdang	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Michael Kent	Laine's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Sia Kiwa	Northern School of Cont. Dance	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Joshua Liburd	Arts Ed.	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Daniel McKinlay	Arts Ed.	M
	Swing and Dance Captain	DC+Sw	769	David McMullan	Bird's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Felix Mosse	RCSSD	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Tanya Nicole Edwards	Tricycle Theatre	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Terel Nugent	SYTS	M
	Standby Elder Cunningham	P	841	David O'Reilly	CPA Studios	M
	Swing and Assistant Dance Captain	Sw	686	Lucy St Louis	Laine's	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Ashley Samuels	GSA	M
	Standby Elder Cunningham	P	841	Rhys Taylor	LSMT	M

TABLE A.4: West End Actors - The Pajama Game

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
The Pajama Game (Shaftesbury Theatre)	Babe Williams	P	841	Joanna Riding	BOVTS	F
	Sid Sorokin	P	841	Michael Xavier	Manchester Met. Uni.	M
	Vernon Hines	Perf	633	Gary Wilnot	No training	M
	Gladys	Perf	633	Alexis Owen-Hobbs	Arts Ed.	F
	Mabel	Perf	633	Claire Machin	SYTS	F
	Hasler/Pop	Perf	633	Colin Stinton	Overseas	M
	Prez	Perf	633	Eugene McCoy	Arts Ed.	M
	Max	Perf	633	Sion Lloyd	GSA	M
	Mae	Perf	633	Jennie Dale	Laine's	F
	Poopsie	Perf	633	Sharon Wattis	GSA	F
	Brenda	Perf	633	Keisha Amponsa Banson	Mountview	F
	Charlene	Perf	633	Lauren Varnham	Laine's	F
	Martha	Perf	633	Helen Tement	Phil Winstone's	F
	Rita	Perf	633	Jo Morris	Millennium	F
	Charley	Perf	633	Nolan Frederick	Overseas	M
	Frank	Perf	633	Richard Jones	Italia Conti	M
	Earl	Perf	633	Dan Burton	Laine's	M
	Joe	Perf	633	James O'Connell	Performers	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Pippa Raine	Laine's	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Stuart Winter	Bird's	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Molly May Gardiner	Millennium	F

TABLE A.5: West End Actors - Matilda

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Matilda (Cambridge Theatre)	Resident Choreographer/Swing	Sw	686	Fabian Aloise	Overseas	M
	Cook	Perf	633	Verity Bentham	Bird's	F
	Mr Wormwood	P	841	James Clyde	RADA	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Joseph Davenport	Mountview	M
	Henchman	Perf	633	Mike Denman	Northern Ballet School	M
	Acrobat	Perf	633	Lara Denning	Mountview	F
	Miss Honey	P	841	Haley Flaherty	Laine's	F
	Miss Trunchbull	P	841	Alex Gaumont	GSA	M
	Henchwoman	Perf	633	Juliet Gough	Bird's	F
	Escapologist	Perf	633	Anthony Lawrence	GSA	M
	Rudolpho	Perf	633	Joshua Lay	Arts Ed.	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Katie Lee	Arts Ed.	F
	Children's Entertainer/Sergei	Perf	633	Antonio Magro	RADA	M
	Assistant Dance Captain/Swing	Sw	686	Gary Murphy	Preston College Dance Centre	M
	Mrs Wormwood	P	841	Kay Murphy	Arts Ed.	F
	Mrs Phelps	Perf	633	Lisa Davina Phillip	Academy Drama School	F
	Henchman	Perf	633	David Rudin	Performers	M
	Doctor	Perf	633	Tommy Sherlock	Liverpool Theatre School	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Hollie Taylor	Arts Ed.	F
	Dance Captain/Swing	DC+Sw	769	Any Thornton	Laine's	F
	Michael Wormwood	P	841	Joshua Wyatt	London Studio Centre	M

TABLE A.6: West End Actors - Jersey Boys

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
The Jersey Boys (Piccadilly Theatre)	Frankie Valli	P	841	Michael Watson	Tiffany	M
	Frankie Valli	P	841	Sandy Moffat	London Studio Centre	M
	Tommy Devito	P	841	Jon Boydon	Loughborough Uni.	M
	Nick Massi	P	841	Matt Nalton	RCSSD	M
	Bob Gaudio	P	841	Edd Post	Arts Ed.	M
	Mary Delgado (and others)	Perf	633	Nicola Brazil	Mountview	F
	Francine (and others)	Perf	633	Sophie Carmen-Jones	Laine's	F
	Swing/Assistant Dance Captain	Sw	686	Lucinda Gill	Arts Ed.	F
	Barry (and others)	Perf	633	Thomas Goodridge	Jackie Palmer	M
	Norm Waxman	Perf	633	Matthew Hunt	Overseas	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Mark Isherwood	Unknown	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Charlotte Jeffrey	London Studio Centre	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Ben Jennings	Urdang	M
	Hank Majewski	Perf	633	Stuart King	Arts Ed.	M
	Bob Crewe	Perf	633	Sean Mulligan	Overseas	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Tom Senior	Arts Ed.	M
	Lorraine (and others)	Perf	633	Emma Stephens	Laine's	F
	Joe Pesci (and others)	Perf	633	Matt Thorpe	Phil Winstone's	M
	Gyp Decarlo (and others)	Perf	633	Graham Vick	Overseas	M
	Swing/Dance Captain	DC+Sw	769	Ben Wheeler	Arts Ed.	M
	Donny & Knuckles (and others)	Perf	633	Rob Wilshaw	GSA	M

TABLE A.7: West End Actors - The Commitments

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
The Commitments (Palace Theatre London)	Deco	P	841	Killian Donnelly	Overseas	M
	Derek	P	841	Mark Dugdale	GSA	M
	Joey	P	841	Ben Fox	East 15	M
	Jimmy	P	841	Denis Grindel	RCSSD	M
	Outspan	P	841	Matthew Wycliff	Arts Ed.	M
	Billy, Dave	P	841	Brian Gilligan	Overseas	M
	Dean	P	841	Andrew Linnie	RAM	M
	Imelda	P	841	Sarah O'Connor	CPA Studios	F
	Natalie	P	841	Stephanie McKeon	Overseas	F
	Bernie	P	841	Jessica Cervi	RAM	F
	James	P	841	Barnaby Southgate	Rose Bruford	M
	Mickah	P	841	Joe Woolmer	East 15	M
	Jimmy's Da	Perf	633	Sean Kearns	Overseas	M
	Alice/Ensemble	Perf	633	Riona O'Connor	LIPA	F
	Jimmy's Ma/Outspan's Ma/Ensemble	Perf	633	Julia Worsley	Sunderland Uni.	F
	Hot Press	Perf	633	Thomas Snowdon	The Science Of Acting	M
	Female Ensemble	Perf	633	Natalie Hope	Laine's	F
	Sharon/Female Ensemble	Perf	633	Clodagh Long	RWCMD	F
	Female Ensemble	Perf	633	Sharon Sexton	Overseas	F
	Female Ensemble/Swing	Sw	686	Hollie O'Donoghue	LSMT	F
	Male Ensemble	Perf	633	Padraig Dooney	Overseas	M
	Male Ensemble	Perf	633	Christopher Fry	GSMC	M
	Male Ensemble	Perf	633	Ryan Gibb	LIPA	M
	Ray/Male Ensemble	Perf	633	Ian McIntosh	Masters	M
	Male Ensemble/Swing	Sw	686	Mark Irwin	LSMT	M
	Male Ensemble	Perf	633	John McLarnon	RSAMD	M
	Male Ensemble	Perf	633	Glenn Speers	No training	M
	Male Ensemble	Perf	633	Alex Tomkins	Rose Bruford	M



TABLE A.8: West End Actors - Dirty Rotten Scoundrels

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (Savoy Theatre)	Lawrence Jameson	P	841	Robert Lindsay	RADA	M
	Christine Colgate	P	841	Katherine Kingsley	BOVTS	F
	Freddy Benson	P	841	Rufus Hound	No training	M
	Muriel Eubanks	P	841	Samantha Bond	BOVTS	F
	Ensemble and U/S Freddy Benson	U/s P	668	Gavin Alex	Performers	M
	Ensemble and Gerard/Nikos	Perf	633	Darren Bennett	(Unspecified) Ballroom training	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Niamh Bracken	Laine's	F
	Ensemble and Usherette	Perf	633	Lisa Bridge	Arts Ed.	F
	Swing and Associate Choreographer	Sw	686	Darren Carnall	Laine's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Andy Conaghan	Overseas	M
	Jolene/Ensemble	Perf	633	Lizzie Connolly	Arts Ed.	F
	Swing and First Cover 'Usherette'	Sw	686	Phoebe Coupe	Overseas	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Clare Doyle	Laine's	F
	Ensemble and Renee	Perf	633	Alice Fearn	Mountview	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Selina Hamilton	Elmhurst	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Ian Knauer	Overseas	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Lisa Mathieson	Arts Ed.	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Zak Nemorin	Millennium	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Genevieve Nicole	Laine's	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Javier Santos	Urdang	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Todd Talbot	Bird's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Dominic Tribuzio	The McMahon School of Ballet and Theatre Dance	M
	Swing and Dance Captain	DC+Sw	769	Jon Tsouras	Overseas	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Zara Warren	Arts Ed.	F

TABLE A.9: West End Actors - Mamma Mia Pt 1

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Mamma Mia (Novello Theatre)	Sophie Sheridan	P	841	Alice Stokoe	Italia Conti	F
	Ali	Perf	633	Rosanna Bates	Arts Ed.	F
	Lisa	Perf	633	Brodie McBride	Arts Ed.	F
	Tanya	P	841	Kim Ismay	Uni. of Kent	F
	Rosie	P	841	Rebecca Lock	RCSSD	F
	Donna Sheridan	P	841	Diane Pilkington	GSA	F
	Sky	Perf	633	Lloyd Green	RCSSD	M
	Pepper	Perf	633	James Alexander Gibbs	Bodywork	M
	Eddie	Perf	633	James Evans	Performers	M
	Harry Bright	Perf	633	Alasdair Harvey	Arts Ed.	M
	Bill Austin	Perf	633	Charles Daish	Unknown	M
	Father Alexander/Ensemble	Perf	633	Stephen John Davis	GSA	M
	Alternate Donna/Ensemble	P	841	Shona White	RAM	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Matthew Barrow	Bird's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Dawn Buckland	SYTS	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Adam Clayton-Smith	Performers	M
	Swing/Assistant Dance Captain	Sw	686	Katy Day	GSA	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Maria Garrett	Laine's	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Karina Hind	Arts Ed.	F

TABLE A.10: West End Actors - Mamma Mia Pt 2

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Mamma Mia (Novello Theatre) contd.	Ensemble	Perf	633	Nikki Maye	Mountview	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Liam Marcellino	London Studio Centre	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Sorelle Marsh	GSA	F
	Swing/Dance Captain	DC+Sw	769	Billy Mitchell	Tiffany	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Katy Osbourne	Laine's	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Heather Scott-Martin	Bird's	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Toby Alexander-Smith	Arts Ed.	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Courtney Stapleton	Arts Ed.	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Joshua Steel	Italia Conti	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Scott Sutcliffe	Arts Ed.	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Richard Taylor Woods	Oxford College of Further Ed.	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Brad Veltch	Arts Ed.	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Sasha Wareham	Laine's	F

TABLE A.11: West End Actors - Wicked Pt 1

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Wicked (Apollo Theatre)	Elphaba	P	841	Kerri Ellis	Laine's	F
	Glinda	P	841	Savannah Stevenson	GSA	F
	Fieryo	P	841	Jeremy Taylor	GSA	M
	Madame Morrible	Perf	633	Sue Kelvin	(Unspecified) Drama school	F
	The Wizard	Perf	633	Martyn Ellis	RCSSD	M
	Nessa Rose	Perf	633	Katie Rowley-Jones	GSA	F
	Boq	Perf	633	Sam Lupton	Manchester School of Theatre	M
	Dr Dillamond	Perf	633	Paul Clarkson	LAMDA	M
	Standby Elphaba	P	841	Emma Hatton	LSMT	F
	Standby Glinda	P	841	Sophie Linder-Lee	Performers	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Ashley Andrews	Laine's	F
	Ensemble/Chistery	Perf	633	Kyle Anthony	Bird's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	William Bozier	Tring Park	M
	Swing/Understudy Dr Dillamond	Sw+U/s P	720	Oliver Brenin	Arts Ed.	M
	Ensemble/U/s Nessa Rose	U/s P	668	Phillipa Buxton	RAM	F
	Ensemble/U/s Boq	U/s P	668	Philip Catchpole	Elmhurst	M
	Ensemble/U/s Madame Morrible	U/s P	668	Lucyelle Cliff	LSMT	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Aisling Duffy	London Studio Centre	F
	Ensemble/U/s Fieryo	U/s P	668	Samuel Edwards	Arts Ed.	M
	Ensemble/U/s Madame Morrible	U/s P	668	Kerry Enright	LSMT	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Sheila Grant	Bird's	F

TABLE A.12: West End Actors - Wicked Pt 2

Wicked (Apollo Theatre) contd.						
Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex	
Swing/U/s Elphaba	Sw+U/s P	720	Jacqueline Hughes	GSA	F	
Ensemble/U/s Glinda/U/s Nessa Rose	Perf	633	Lauren James-Ray	SYTS	F	
Ensemble/U/s Boq	U/s P	668	Marc McBride	RAM	M	
Ensemble	Perf	633	Stacey McGuire	Hammond School	F	
Ensemble/U/s Elphaba	U/s P	668	Natalie McQueen	CPA Studios	F	
Ensemble	Perf	633	Greg Miller-Burns	Arts Ed.	M	
Ensemble	Perf	633	Tom Muggeridge	ENBS	M	
Ensemble	Perf	633	Rachel Muldoon	Laine's	F	
Swing/U/s Dr Dillamond	Sw+U/s P	720	Sean Parkins	Italia Conti	M	
Ensemble	Perf	633	Charlie Stemp	Laine's	M	
Swing/U/s Glinda	Sw+U/s P	720	Lauren Stroud	Laine's	F	
Swing/U/s Fiyero	Sw+U/s P	720	Justin Thomas	D&B	M	
Swing	Sw	686	Hannah Toy	London Studio Centre	F	
Swing	Sw	686	Matt Turner	Bird's	M	
Ensemble/U/s Dr Dillamond/U/s The Wizard	Perf	633	Russell Walker	Arts Ed.	M	
Ensemble	Perf	633	Jenny Wickham	Laine's	F	

TABLE A.13: West End Actors - The Phantom of the Opera Pt 1

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
The Phantom of the Opera (Her Majesty's Theatre)	Phantom of the Opera	P	841	Geronimo Rauch	Overseas	M
	Christine Daae	P	841	Harriet Jones	Royal College of Music	F
	Christine Daae	P	841	Olivia Brereton	GSA	F
	Raoul, Vicomte de Chagny	P	841	Sean Palmer	Overseas	M
	Carlotto Giudicelli	Perf	633	Lara Martins	GSA	F
	Monsieur Firmin	Perf	633	Andy Hockley	No training	M
	Monsieur Andre	Perf	633	Martin Ball	Webber Douglas	M
	Madame Giry	Perf	633	Jacinta Mulcahy	Overseas	F
	Ubaldo Piangi	Perf	633	Jeremy Seacomb	Overseas	M
	Meg Giry	Perf	633	Kat Lane	London Studio Centre	F
	Standby Phantom	P	841	Scott Davies	RSAMD	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Emma Barr	Bodywork	F
	Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Nicole Cato	Royal Ballet School	F
	Page	Perf	633	Meshell Dillon	RAM	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Peter Dukes	GSA	M
	Wild Woman (Hannibal)	Perf	633	Janet Fischer	Royal Northern College of Music	F
	Princess (Hannibal)	Perf	633	Ashleigh Fleming	Overseas	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Lyndsey Gardiner	Mountview	F
	Monsieur Rayer/Auctioneer	Perf	633	Phillip Griffiths	Royal Manchester College of Music	M
	Soldier (Hannibal)	Perf	633	Anthony Hansen	Mountview	M
	The Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Layla Harrison	London Studio Centre	F
	Joseph Buquet	Perf	633	Hadrian Delacey	BOVTS	M
	Monsieur Lefevre	Perf	633	Tim Laurenti	GSA	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Leo Miles	RAM	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Tim Morgan	RW/CMD	M
	Madame Firmin	Perf	633	Sheena Sanders	Overseas	F
	The Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Fiona Morley	Rambert	F
	Jeweller/Slave	Perf	633	Ben Morris	Mountview	M

TABLE A.14: West End Actors - The Phantom of the Opera Pt 2

The Phantom of the Opera contd.						
Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex	
Wardrobe Mistress	Perf	633	Ellen Jackson	RSAMD	F	
Policeman in the Pit	Perf	633	Richard Munday	Mountview	M	
Porter/Lion Man	Perf	633	Matthew Powell	Rambert	M	
Slave Master (Hannibal)	Perf	633	Simon Rackley	Central School of Ballet	M	
The Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Charise Renouf	Laine's	F	
Confidante (Il Muto)	Perf	633	Fiona Finsbury	Mountview	F	
The Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Anna Shircliff	Elmhurst	F	
Swing	Sw	686	Simon Shorten	GSA	M	
Don Attilio (Il Muto)/Firechief	Perf	633	Duncan Smith	RSAMD	M	
The Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Danielle Stephens	Elmhurst	F	
The Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Claire Tilling	Northern Ballet School	F	
Passarino/Hairdresser	Perf	633	Marc Vastenavondt	RAM	M	
The Ballet Chorus of the Opera Populaire	Perf	633	Georgia Ware	Royal Ballet School	F	

TABLE A.15: West End Actors - The Lion King Pt 1

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
The Lion King (Lyceum Theatre)	Scar	P	841	George Asprey	LAMDA	M
	Mufasa	P	841	Shaun Escoffery	Barking College	M
	Rafiki	Perf	633	Brown Lindiwe Mkhize	Overseas	F
	Zazu	Perf	633	Howard Gossington	Webber Douglas	M
	Timon	P	841	Richard Frame	BOVTS	M
	Pumba	P	841	Keith Bookman	RCSSD	M
	Simba	P	841	Jonathan Andrew Hume	Bodens	M
	Nala	Perf	633	Carole Stennett	Vocal Tech	F
	Shenzi	Perf	633	Sarah Amankwah	Manchester School of Theatre	F
	Banzai	Perf	633	Taofique Folarin	Italia Conti	M
	Ed	Perf	633	Mark McGee	Birmingham Conservatoire	M
	Swing	Sw	633	Tiago Sequeira Alves	Bodywork	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Lauren Alexandra	Arts Ed.	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Daniel Bailey	Urdang	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Hugo Batista	Overseas	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	David Blake	Overseas	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Yolanda Burke	Laine's	F
	Ensemble	Perf	686	Arielle Campbell	Tring Park	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Jorge Cipriano	Overseas	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Trey Cohen	Uni. of Wolverhampton	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Azola Diamini	Overseas	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Joanna Francis	Overseas	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Ian Yuri Gardner	Overseas	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Enyonam Gbesemete	Overseas	F
	Standby Timon, Zazu & Pumba	Perf	633	Jamie Golding	No training	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Calvyn Grandling	Overseas	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Martina Isibor	Uni. of Westminster	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Makoto Iso	Central School of Ballet	F



TABLE A.16: West End Actors - The Lion King Pt 2

Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Ensemble	Perf	633	Sindiwe Khumalo	Overseas	F
Ensemble / Sarabi	Perf	633	Gemma Knight Jones	Identity Drama School	F
Swing	Sw	686	Tramaine Lamy	Overseas	F
Swing	Sw	686	Stephanie Laughlin	Overseas	F
Ensemble	Perf	633	Francesco Lins	Overseas	M
Standby Scar & Pumba	P	841	Andy Mace	Unknown	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Scott Maurice	Hertford Regional College	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Shelley Maxwell	Overseas	F
Ensemble	Perf	633	Phumlani Mazibuko	Overseas	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Mduduzi Mkhethi	Overseas	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Phumlani Mkhize	Overseas	M
Swing	Sw	686	Sello Molefi	Overseas	M
Swing	Sw	686	Candice Morris	Overseas	F
Ensemble	Perf	633	Crystal Nicholls	Overseas	F
Ensemble	Perf	633	Darcel Osei	Overseas	F
Swing	Sw	686	Kella Panay	London Studio Centre	F
Ensemble	Perf	633	Alick Senells	Overseas	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Charlie Simmons	Bird's	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Jahrel Thomas	Liberatus	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Kamilah Shawnte Turner	Overseas	M
Swing	Sw	686	Nic Vani	Overseas	M
Ensemble	Perf	633	Craig Williams	Urdang	M

TABLE A.17: West End Actors - Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Pt 1

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Theatre Royal Drury Lane)	Willy Wonka	P	841	Alex Jennings	BOVTS	M
	Grandpa Joe	P	841	Barry James	GSA	M
	Mr Salt	Perf	633	Clive Carter	LAMDA	M
	Mrs Gloop	Perf	633	Jasna Mir	Overseas	F
	Mr Beauregard	Perf	633	Paul J Medford	Italia Conti	M
	Mrs Teavee	Perf	633	Josefina Gabrielle	Arts Ed.	F
	Grandpa George	Perf	633	Billy Boyle	Overseas	M
	Grandma Josephine	Perf	633	Ronni Page	Royal Ballet School	F
	Grandma Georgina	Perf	633	Myra Sands	GSMD	F
	Mrs Bucket	Perf	633	Kirsty Malpass	Mountview	F
	Mr Bucket	P	841	Jack Shaloo	CPA Studios	M
	Mrs Pratchett	Perf	633	Rebecca Seale	LIPA	F
	Jerry, Lovebird Man, U/S Willy Wonka	U/s P	668	Ross Dawes	Arts Ed.	M
	Cherry, Lovebird Man	Perf	633	Kate Graham	RAM	F
	Mr Teavee and Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Derek Hagen	BOVTS	M
	Chocolate buyer and Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Anthony Reed	Middlesex Uni.	M
	Mr Gloop and Oompa-Loompa DJ and Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Joe Allen	LSMT	M
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Meg Astin	Bird's	F
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Dan Cooke	Performers	M
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Divine Cresswell	Performers	F
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Connor Dowling	Overseas	M
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Nia Fisher	Bird's	F
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Mark Iles	Arts Ed.	M
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Matt Jones	Laine's	M
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Natalie Moore-Williams	Bird's	F
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Matthew Rowland	Arts Ed.	M
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Gregory Sims	Arts Ed.	M
	Oompa-Loompa	Perf	633	Laura Tyrer	London Studio Centre	F

TABLE A.18: West End Actors - Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Pt 2

Charlie and the Choc. Factory					
contd.					
Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
Swing	Sw	686	Alex Louize Bird	London Studio Centre	M
Swing	Sw	686	Simon Campbell	Bodywork	M
Swing	Sw	686	Collette Coleman	Bird's	F
Swing and Dance Captain	DC+Sw	769	Gemma Fuller	Millennium	F
Swing	Sw	686	Robert Jones	Performers	M
Swing	Sw	686	Ben Oliver	Arts Ed.	M
Swing	Sw	686	Paulo Teixeira	Performers	M
Swing and Assistant Dance Captain	Sw	686	Robert Tregoning	Bird's	M

TABLE A.19: West End Actors - The Bodyguard

Show	Role	Pay Cat.	Estd. Pay	Actor	Institution	Sex
The Bodyguard (Adelphi Theatre)	Rachel Marran	P	841	Alexandra Burke	No training	F
	Frank Farmer	P	841	Tristan Gemmill	Overseas	M
	Nicki Marran	P	841	Carole Stennett	Vocal Tech	F
	The Stalker	P	841	Michael Rouse	Bird's	M
	Bill Devaney	Perf	633	Richard Lloyd King	Italia Conti	M
	Tony Scibelli	Perf	633	Stephen Marcus	Arts Ed.	M
	Sy Spector	Perf	633	Dominic Taylor	BOVTS	M
	Ray Court	Perf	633	Stuart Reid	LIPA	M
	Alternate Rachel Marran	P	841	Joelle Moses	Institute of Cont. Music	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Gareth Andrews	Performers	M
	Ensemble/Jimmy/Bobby	Perf	633	Kimball Armes	Method Studios	M
	Ensemble/Assassin/Cameraman/Terry	Perf	633	Christopher Birch	Rose Bruford	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Hannah Fairclough	Arts Ed.	F
	Ensemble/Klingman/ Herb Farmer	Perf	633	Robert Gill	RWCMD	M
	Ensemble/Assistant Dance Captain	Perf	633	Nicky Griffiths	Bird's	F
	Ensemble/Rory	Perf	633	Ben Harrold	London Studio Centre	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Jamie Hughes-Ward	Laine's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Alex Jackson	Urdang	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Genesis Lynea	Arts Ed.	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Fergal McGoff	Bird's	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Sara Morley	Laine's	F
	Ensemble/Douglas/ Stage Manager	Perf	633	David O'Mahony	RCSDD	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Maria O'Mahony	GSA	F
	Swing/Dance Captain	DC+Sw	769	Stuart Rogers	Laine's	M
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Kyle Seeley	Performers	M
	Swing	Sw	686	Danielle Steers	SLP	F
	Ensemble	Perf	633	Katy Stredder	London Studio Centre	F
	Swing	Sw	686	Christopher Terry	The Actors Company	M

Table A.20 on page 307 presents a (simplified) distillation of pay rates based on the pay agreement negotiated by Equity/ SOLT.

TABLE A.20: West End pay

		(£)	
Equity Min. Performer rate (Ensemble or Sub-Principal)	Weekly	633.40	
<b><u>Additional Payments (including Weekly responsibility Payment (WRP)):</u></b>			
Principal	Weekly	207.27 (WRP + 8 perfs/wk)	
Head Boy / Girl / Dance Captain	Weekly	83.40 (WRP only)	
Swing	Weekly	52.22 (WRP only)	
<b><u>Understudy Responsibility Payments (Assume one U/S perf. every 2 weeks):</u></b>			
one sub-principal role (musical)	N/A	14.97	
up to three featured parts within an ensemble role (as defined)	N/A		
leading role (play) or principal roles (musical)	Weekly	23.03	
supporting role / sub-principal role for second and subsequent roles	Weekly	14.97	
<b><u>Understudy Performance payments:</u></b>			
leading / principal role, per performance	Paid if perform	23.03	
non-leading / sub-principal role, per performance	Paid if perform	14.97	
<b><u>Others (Ignored for the purposes of this research):</u></b>			
Performer with stage management duties	Weekly	18.42	
Appearance on stage for Stage Managers	Paid when appear	6.62	
Minor or crowd roles performance	Paid if perform	7.50	
Emergency cover or understudying	Paid if perform	8.50	
		Pay per week (£)	
<b><u>Pay Categories:</u></b>	Basic Pay	Additional	Total
Performer (Ensemble or Sub-Principal)	633.40		633.40
Principal		207.27	840.67
Dance Captain		83.40	716.80
Swing		52.22	685.62
Understudy Principal		34.55	667.95
Understudy Sub-Principal		22.46	655.86

## Notes:

- Source: FINAL SETTLEMENT FOR NEW WEST END AGREEMENT APRIL 2013  
- based on April 2014 (Weekly) rates for Cat A productions + SOLT/Equity Agree for 2013-2015
- Other conditions e.g. Employer Contribution to Pensions (5% with max of £55.42), Overtime, Sunday payments, Sick pay, Cancellation payments etc. disregarded for present purpose.
- Rates used assume once nightly performances in CAT A theatres
- 'Additional payments' additive where performers fulfil multiple roles eg 'Swing/Dance Captain'
- Nothing added for Assistant choreographer role
- Nothing added for Assistant Dance Captain
- Assume understudy performs once every two weeks
- Discussions with agents/ performers suggest that remuneration for Standby/ Walking U/s seems to ``be a grey area`` at present, so for the purposes of this analysis, for clarity. these roles have been categorised according to the role for which they are standby.

Table A.21 on page 308 presents information on the current assets (for 2014) of accredited institutions<sup>1</sup>, taken from the Companies House website (HMG, n.d.).

TABLE A.21: Training institution assets

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Current Assets (£)</b>
Arts Ed	4,064,843
Bird's	537,324
CPA Studios	139,355
CPA-Bodywork	368,085
Expressions Academy	9,043
GSA	2,889,907
Hammond	244,251
Italia Conti	1,129,462
Laine's	1,337,869
Leicester college of Perf Arts	55,318
Liverpool Theatre School	64,440
Masters	49,959
Midlands Academy	80,798
Millenium (MMM Ltd)	3,655
Mountview	7,141,548
Oxford School of drama	487,708
Performers	425,420
RCSSD	9,977,000
RSAMD	2,297,000
SLP	N/A
Stella Mann	454,023
The Centre	N/A
Tring Park	2,236,917
Trinity Laban Conservatoire	1,667,872
Urdang	3,118,113
WAC	11,395

<sup>1</sup>There were two institutions for which I was unable to find the data, but those institutions did not feature in the analysis using current assets information presented in chapter 3.

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