The Economics Of A Young Audience

Cicely Bosley
University of Central Florida

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THE ECONOMICS OF A YOUNG AUDIENCE

by

CICELY JO BOSLEY

B.A. Education Fairmont State University, 2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre
in the Department of Theatre
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2010

Major Professor: Earl Weaver
ABSTRACT

As a theatre for young audiences’ (TYA) teacher, artist, and administrator, I seek to explore where and how TYA fits into business and economic models to open a dialogue between TYA practitioners and business administration professionals. Through this qualitative study, I endeavor to foster a new language for TYA practitioners to enhance fundraising and audience development. By its own definition, TYA is a hybrid field that strives for both artistic form and educative function. With a dual focus of form and function, administrators struggle to advocate for TYA organizations within existing models. To move through this challenge, I look to analyze select extant models in an effort to address a new hybrid model that better suits a hybrid field.

This project arises from the persistent challenges found within the TYA field of defining and valuing our work for and with young people, so I approach this research as a TYA practitioner seeking tools for advocacy. Through my work as a teacher and artist moving into a business office, I observed marketing and development directors from the non-TYA fields challenged by the nature of our work. Paralleling that challenge, I struggle to articulate the necessity of my work with young people as equal to the importance of artistic excellence. My research leads me to believe that TYA does not neatly affix to any business model, but an analysis and marriage of several models may create a working model which TYA practitioners can employ.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Warmest gratitude to: my mentors through this process, Earl Weaver and Kim Peter Kovac; those who mentored me before, Francene Kirk, James Matthews, and Megan Alrutz; my classmates and comrades, Amie Elizabeth Dunn, Elizabeth B. Horn, and Amanda H. Kibler; Lauren V. Nelson who inspired me to start and Lucy Lynn Bryson who never let me quit; Stephen; my generous friends; Dad, and my loving family.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS, ACRONYMS, AND ABBREVIATIONS
The Association of Junior Leagues of America Inc. (AJLA): Also known in short as the Junior League, the AJLA is a charitable organization established at the turn of the 20th Century by wealthy unmarried women.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC): A U.S. work relief program for young men.

Cultural Economics: The study of the relationship between money and the arts and humanities.

Federal Theatre Project (FTP): A program of the Works Projects Administration (WPA) enacted during the New Deal in the U.S. to employ theatre artists.

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA): The chief federal funding institution for the arts in the U.S. established in 1965.

Theatre for adults: The study and practice of live performance art that is not specifically created for people under the age of 18.

Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA): The study and practice of live performance art for and/or with people under the age of 18 for educational and/or entertainment purposes. A broader definition includes all audience ages who previously have limited exposure to the theatre arts. Historically, TYA was called Children’s Theatre.

Theatre for Young Audience Practitioner: A professional who works in production, publishing, education, and/or administration in TYA. TYA practitioners trend toward having multiple skill sets in the field (i.e. teach as well as perform and administrate).
INTRODUCTION

“Speak a new language, so the world will be a new world.” Rumi

Teaching and theatre share an inherent bond of being both structural and spiritual endeavors. As an emerging professional in both fields, I continue to explore the interplay between spiritual and organizational motives in theatre. For instance, as a teacher, it is my duty to communicate necessary lessons per the organization, but my spiritual drive to inspire young people gets me out of bed each day. Similarly, theatre remains more structured and organizational than visual artistry, but theatre practitioners compose their art with the same spiritual passion as any artist. When considering how to begin the endeavor of this documentation of research, I continue to vacillate between the warmth of spiritual ruminations and the colder facts and points. Rather than abide by an either/or situation, I approach this process with Rumi’s theory of language as stated above. Rumi’s quote speaks spiritually to achieve a practical end. I endeavor to write of the spiritual abstractions of theatre and education, as well as their practical and organizational tangibles in order to craft a new language that represents both, thus creating a new understanding of their interplay.

Theatres for Young Audiences (TYA) model their fundraising and marketing after education institutions or a theatre arts venue, but neither is wholly adequate to support the entirety of TYA’s functions. TYA companies attempt to use both models, but without full understanding of the interplay between them, and the result proves ineffective. TYA companies fail to prove themselves as valued education systems or legitimate producers of art. Rather than changing the function of TYA by advocating only art or education, how can TYA articulate its value as a hybrid field? I posit that in order to concretely articulate its value, TYA needs its own language. The conundrum of business, education, and artistry inspires in me the question: What can the history of theatre funding and contemporary practices in business and economics offer in
determining the valuation of TYA as a field? To introduce my research process, I explain the basics: who, what, why, and how. Specifically, what is TYA? Who am I as a TYA practitioner? Why this question? How will I approach the research? Finally, I address some of the challenges I anticipate in this research process.

I.1 What is TYA?
For the purpose of this research, I define TYA as the umbrella term for theatre with young people (as in a production with an all youth cast), theatre for young people (which is a production specifically created for an audience of youth), and theatre as a process (which is theatre that occurs in the classroom featuring creativity, community, and confidence building activities that often coincide with and support core content teaching and/or citizenry). While TYA artists postulate complex nuances of our field and its title, the intricacies are better discussed outside the realm of this analysis. TYA hybridizes the theatre arts and education to an audience of children. Each of these ingredients exists as an essential element to the definition of TYA. Thus, TYA does not exist in a hierarchy with one of these elements at the top; rather, the elements of TYA exist on a single plane.

I.2 Why Ask this Question?
The definition of TYA I provide arises from a persistent and historic struggle in TYA to define its value within the theatre and education worlds. I observe this challenge in an administrative context when attempting to market TYA to individual patrons, philanthropic organizations, and corporate partners. TYA practitioners argue that it is inherently educative and artistic in nature. Non-TYA practitioners inside the art world often contradict that the work of TYA is art. Similarly, non-TYA professionals external of theatre question the educative value of TYA practices. The burden of proof falls to the TYA practitioner to become artist, educator, and advocate.
To prove the value of TYA as a field, the question arises: is TYA valued by its educative value or its artistic merit? If focused on marketing the educative value of a TYA company or project, its artistic merit stands undefined, thus nonexistent. The same can be said for a situation where the art is celebrated without discussion of education; it is not educational. TYA practitioners argue that they produce both art and education simultaneously, and funders expect them to prove as much. However, the languages of educative and artistic proofs do not support each other. As I have witnessed administration and advocacy, to speak both the languages of artistry and education simultaneously remains ineffective yet necessary to attain the philanthropy and partnerships necessary to sustain a nonprofit TYA organization. How does TYA communicate its artistic and educative integrity to a third party?

In the early decades of the 20th century, TYA occurred as a social service in settlement houses, the Junior League, and as a means of escapism for poor urban youth prescribed by wealthy bleeding hearts. However, throughout its history, TYA practitioners have advocated for higher artistic standards arguing that art exists independent from social service. Currently, TYA largely find their support within the public education system by maintaining a reactionary relationship with school curriculum to determine season programming. It is this relationship that many argue prevents legitimate artistry in TYA. Still, others posit that TYA can produce quality works of art while maintaining a healthy relationship with the primary clientele of schools. Regardless of where each TYA practitioner falls in his/her ideology and judgment of the artistic credibility of work with the schools and other social services, it is the worlds of corporate partnerships, government funding, and consumer-based marketing that occur outside the field of TYA that provide sustainability. Thus, how the business world values TYA determines TYA’s definition. The ideological debates within the field regarding TYA’s valuation have yet to
resolve after a hundred years, so rather than an attempt to unite the field under either art or education, I posit that TYA needs a language that speaks to its complex hybrid nature.

1.3 Who am I as a TYA Practitioner?

As a young person, I grew up within a fortunate and rather unique environment where the arts were valued without question, and to be an artist was not only a career but also a way of approaching the entirety of life. I pursued theatre because it includes the most comprehensive use of arts disciplines. As I aged, I found myself more inclined to share my perspective of the arts and inspire young people. I began to translate my experiences as an artist to the classroom. I had a great deal of assistance from the scores of artists turned teachers who came before me and documented their journeys in education training texts and higher education courses. Now, as a practicing teacher and artist, I find my path leading toward the next logical step: administration. As an obedient higher education devotee, I sought my graduate degree. Through two years in administration offices and classroom training, I discovered that the translation of artist and teacher languages to one comprehended and utilized in administration fails to effectively serve the involved parties. I did not seek a degree in theatre management. Rather, I chose to continue advancing my arts as a theatre practitioner and teacher while I explored administration, so I sought an MFA in Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). My personal struggle to articulate the definition and function of TYA marks the beginning of my research in the valuation of TYA.

As a creative and spiritual practitioner, I intrinsically know the work I do remains relevant, powerful, and thus, valuable. However, after spending a year in a development office of a professional non-profit theatre for young audiences, I look to prove the value of TYA to a different audience – one of corporate sponsors, government funds grantors, foundations, and individual givers. My journey as a teacher enacting a spiritual calling to serve young people leads me now to a position that requires communication of that need to an audience of business
executives scrutinizing financial worth of my field’s work. In that journey, I find that my colleagues and I lack the vocabulary of business to translate to advocacy. Equally, I witness administrators in theatre management unable to synthesize the nature of our work into their own worlds. Therefore, I seek a vocabulary that serves both worlds producing a mutually beneficial relationship between the spirit of TYA and the practicality of business.

1.4 How Will I Approach This Question?
As an artist, educator, and scholar, I boast no deep understanding of theatre management, marketing, or business administration, so I approach this research as a practitioner seeking tools for advocacy. I move through this process with the lens of both historical and contemporary TYA scholarship. To look forward, I first look back at the preceding hundred years of performing arts funding as it aligns with TYA’s history. Specifically, I examine some of the major movements in theatre funding and TYA such as the Federal Theatre Project, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Association of Junior Leagues of America. Then, I explore contemporary business models and tools of valuation that speak to the equal parts of TYA. Though there is a deficit in extensive literature regarding financial valuation of theatre for young audiences, research in business and economics offer a variety of models to investigate the value of the performing arts as a whole. TYA seems to align most closely with other performing arts products examined in business and economics models; however, many studies also include a more comprehensive view of the arts surveying visual, orchestral, dance, in addition to theatre arts. Valuation of product-specific arts, (i.e., visual art and performance) has been examined in a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods of research in the world of finance, but for the purpose of this study, I look to a few qualitative studies that indicate philosophies adopted by business and economics. Finally, I seek to cross analyze and synthesize each component with the hopes of developing a new language that speaks directly to the valuation of TYA.
I.5 Challenges I Anticipate

This research process requires that I continually assert my position that I am pursuing an MFA in TYA and not an MBA, and I foresee challenges in research and comprehension of theories and practices in business. Additionally, because TYA is a hybrid field encompassing a varied body of theories and practices, I will inevitably exclude a moment, player, or ideology that remains imperative to someone’s practice. I strive to speak to the essence of the field of TYA, so I anticipate difficulty in honing in on that essence as I immerse myself in the research. As I move through the chapters of this document, I hope to organize and situate the chaotic pieces and parts of the research into a more comprehensible document, thus clarifying the often amorphous nature of TYA.
CHAPTER 1: HOW DO THE MAJOR MOVEMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF FUNDING ALIGN WITH THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES’ HISTORY?

The quote from Rumi I use to open this research process posits that if we change our language, we can affect change in our world, so in this chapter, I argue that in order to understand how to change our current language, we must grasp the languages that come before us. For instance, TYA is a contemporary title, and before the last decade, theatre with and for young people was called Children’s Theatre. That shift in language marks a major shift in how theatre with/for young people is viewed by its umbrella: theatre. This chapter explores the question: How do the major movements in the history of funding in the U.S. align with TYA’s history? Specifically, I examine the early commercial entertainment for children at the turn of the 20th Century, the settlement house movement, the Junior League, the Federal Theatre Project, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Because TYA is a young and still developing field, few texts study its history, so I primarily reference Roger L. Bedard and C. John Tolch’s collection of essays, Spotlight on the Child: Studies in the History of American Children’s Theatre, which addresses each of the above-mentioned subjects excluding the NEA. I structure each section according to the subject’s primary objective from the trinity of art, social service/education and financial stability.

1.1 Commercial Theatre for Children at the Turn of the 20th Century

The children’s entertainment theatre productions of the early 1900s were for-profit and yielded positive financial gains for producers and presenters. Tickets were inexpensive, so productions attracted a wide audience. Additionally, as Salazar documents, children of means hosted birthday parties with full productions mounted for their guests. Salazar notes in one example that the 1903-1904 New York production of The Wizard of Oz proved so successful, it remained open through an entire summer to accommodate the hundreds of patrons turned away during the regular season (Salazar 27).
The aesthetic that colors the beginning of TYA in the first decade of the 20th century is one of marked fun and escapism. Plays for young people in the early 20th Century served as visual and dramatic retellings of familiar stories. Playwrights for children’s theatre productions did not exist in a legitimate sense. Laura Gardner Salazar writes about productions in NYC from 1900 to 1910, and she describes the “extravaganza” or “spectacle,” which was the primary form of family entertainment at the time. The extravaganzas took after English pantomime theatre with a mish mash of music, humor, and elaborate scenery. The extravaganzas included a familiar storyline, such as Humpty Dumpty and Mother Goose, throughout the spectacle. Salazar writes, “…theatre for children had to be jolly and not too complex. The entertainment value of a piece was the ultimate criterion for judging a production for children: the sillier the piece, the more the children would like it” (Salazar 34). While Realism and Naturalism in playwriting and production emerged in the theatre for adults world, productions for children birthed an aesthetic of vaudevillian inane fantasy.

While at this time theatre for an audience of children remained a highly commercialized enterprise, adults nodded to theatre’s elements of educational and social service value. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show remains a clear demonstration of this point. Despite the fact that the Wild West show used little or no historical facts within its production, adults were said to be glad to share historically educative theatre experiences with children, with instances cited of children attending the play during school hours as supplementary education. In addition to the supposed educational value of the rodeo variety show, Salazar writes that the show played to some 4,000 orphans in 1900. She observes, “This was the age of the flowering of philanthropy, and society women developed many amusements to ease the burden of poverty among New York’s poor” (Salazar 31).
1.2 The Settlement House Movement: Karamu and Henry Street

Simultaneous to but extending beyond the above-mentioned theatre experiences, settlement houses were founded all over the U.S., and many of them employed community arts. Social service within the community stood as the primary objective of the settlement houses at the turn of the 20th century. Henry Street Settlement House and the Karamu House remain influential in American theatre history for their endeavors in the community arts. How the houses came to be known for their theatre and social work differ considerably, but their objective remained the same: serve the immediate community of immigrants and minorities. Using Melanie Blood’s essay, *Copper Heiresses Take The Stage: Alice and Irene Lewisohn*, and Norena Abookire and Jennifer Scott McNair’s essay, *Children’s Theatre Activities at Karamu House, 1915-1975*, I compare the artistic social service objectives of the two settlements while examining their funding models.

For sisters, Irene and Alice Lewisohn of the Henry Street Settlement House, Melanie Blood remarks, “settlement work provided a venue for educated and upper-class women to explore their interests and use their talents within the socially acceptable realms of social work and philanthropy” (Blood 41). The theatre work with the Lewisohns evolved from dramatic work with young girls at Henry Street into the avant-garde little theatre, the Neighborhood Playhouse. A significant impact of their work extends into the product-centered theatre work discussed a little later in this section.

The Lewisohns fell into settlement house work, but Rowena and Russell Jelliffe of the Karamu House built their entire life around it. Noerena Abookire and Jennifer Scott McNair write of the children’s theatre activities at Karamu in Roger L. Bedard’s book, *Spotlight on the Child*, and they observe that the Jelliffe’s saw that their work in the community had to begin by gaining the trust of the children of the neighborhood. In the early years, children would gather
each evening for Russell to play guitar while Rowena told stories. Abookire and McNair cite Rowena’s philosophies that guided the evolution of informal storytelling to full scale productions and classes with children: the process took precedence over the product; encourage culturally and racially diverse collaboration; stories were told by ensembles not individuals; always use color/age/gender blind casting. Even as the theatre work of Karamu moved into the national spotlight, the Jelliffe’s continued their dedication to “fostering interracial appreciation through group work in arts projects” (Abookire and McNair 81).

Out of the strong connection to their communities, both Henry Street and Karamu fostered nationally acclaimed artistry. Henry Street’s Neighborhood Playhouse explored the coming of age avant-garde aesthetic. As the theatre grew, so did its reputation for artistic integrity and experimentation. In her essay, Melanie Blood’s focus shifts from the commitment to the immediate community served by the Henry Street Settlement House to “noncommercial, innovative fare” of the little theatre aesthetic (Blood 49). Considered more traditional than the experimental work of the Lewisohns, Rowena Jelliffe’s goals for the children’s theatre at Karamu House were advanced by Ann Flagg in the 1950s. Abookire and McNair state that Flagg “brought the Karamu Children’s Theatre to its zenith” promoting Rowena’s philosophies while maintaining high artistic standards for the productions, as well. Like the Lewisohns at the Neighborhood Playhouse, professional theatre artists worked beside community members at Karamu. Melanie Blood stresses that the Lewisohns maintained a small space and produced experimental work to small audiences. The theatre work of Karamu undoubtedly expands beyond the numbers of Henry Street. Karamu’s theatre companies, Karamu Student Theatre, the Children’s Theatre, and the Gilpin Players, toured extensively as well as performing in the Karamu theatre spaces. In 1958, the Children’s Theatre offered twenty-three performances to an
audience of 2,048 (Abookire and McNair 80). Both Henry Street and Karamu maintained an objective to serve the community, and both evolved into advanced theatre artistry.

How Karamu and Henry Street funded their theatre endeavors proves as interesting and integral to their stories as their social service and artistic objectives. In addition to Melanie Blood’s research on the Lewisohns, throughout this section of research, I look to Mark Sharfman’s essay, *Changing Institutional Rules: The Evolution of Corporate Philanthropy, 1883-1953* as well as Andrew Fearnley’s *Writing the History of Karamu House: Philanthropy, Welfare, and Race in Wartime Cleveland*. These essays look at the time and work of the settlement houses through a unique lens of financial stability. Unlike the theatrical extravaganzas performed for children in the first years of the 1900s, Neighborhood Playhouse/Henry Street and Karamu House were non-profit institutions relying on the generosity of others to sustain them.

Prior to the 1920s, court rulings maintained corporate philanthropy mostly illegal. Mark Sharfman states that late in the 19th century, firms supported “services that would directly benefit their workers and indirectly aid the firm,” but philanthropy as a tool for a social agenda was not practiced (Sharfman 244). Between 1900 and 1915, Sharfman explains that the rising concern for social welfare pushed forward the legitimacy of corporate philanthropy, but the legal precedents still held it back. Additionally, Sharfman cites a debate of the ethics of taking potentially unclean money. Despite the resistance and the legal questions, by 1913 charities began to organize themselves in group fundraising attempts. The outbreak of World War I changed the needs of the country, and the Red Cross pushed corporate philanthropy forward with a new funding model that adapted to the legal issues. Philanthropy’s legitimacy received a boost with the support of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 1924, but the debate over tax deductions for corporate giving remained heated until 1932 when the IRS relaxed its guidelines.
In the case of the Neighborhood Playhouse, the Lewisohns supported their theatre work individually, so the ups and downs of wartime, recessions, and the laws of philanthropy seemed to pass over them without much note. With the relative financial stability of a joint inheritance of $4 million in 1902, the Lewisohn sisters were able to hold fast to their “experimental aims and a commitment to the Lower East Side community” while “everyone but the Lewisohns was concerned with making enough money...” (Blood 42). Blood compares the Neighborhood Playhouse to other NY little theatres of the time, and she observes that Provincetown and the Washington Square Players used a social club like model where members paid dues and donated money. The Neighborhood Playhouse used the settlement house model, “whereby those who have money and expertise donate them, and they work side by side with the poor and the immigrants served by the settlement” (Blood 44). Despite their growth and success in legitimacy, the Lewisohns continued to be the primary financial support for the little theatre.

As recent graduates in social work, Russell and Rowena had no wealth of their own on which to rely. Andrew Fearnley writes of the Karamu House’s financial health in his article marking the 90th Anniversary Address of the Karamu House in 2006. He focuses on the years between 1939 and 1949, a time when Sharfman writes that corporate donations to charitable ventures increased substantially. The legitimacy of corporate philanthropy advanced at this time, Sharfman notes, not because of an overwhelming social concern, but rather a new excess profits tax made “philanthropy a bargain that prospering corporations could not pass up” (Sharfman 253). Whatever the reasoning, Fearnley’s research into the Jelliffes’ solicitation of funds produces an important trend in giving: the use of celebrity star power to diversify funders. Repeatedly, the Jelliffes and their trustees sought their public friends within Cleveland, as well as more nationally-recognized figures such as the Rockefeller Foundation, Langston Hughes, and a
host of corporate giants and performers. Nationally-recognized artists supported the Jelliffes for their artistic contribution to American theatre, and corporations gave to sustain the integrity of the social work. While private benefactors made the Neighborhood Playhouse and the Henry Street Settlement House possible, Fearnely brings to light that the Karamu House was funded by “federal programs, and more significantly, philanthropic foundations, namely the Rockefeller Foundation,” in addition to private benefactors (Fearnely 100). The diverse work of Karamu brought a variety of parties interested in funding, and the Jelliffe’s star solicitation of funds kept Karamu afloat.

Many settlement houses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries cite use of theatre and the arts as part of their programming, but Henry Street and Karamu remain unique and integral examples. The integrity of artistic production and commitment to social service prove inspirational to theatres for young audiences later in the century. Namely, the Association of Junior Leagues of America approached their children’s theatre work with objectives similar to the settlement houses, but with much different organizational models. Roger L. Bedard’s essay, *Junior League Children’s Theatre: Debutantes Take the Stage*, serves as the most well-known historical account of the Junior League’s work with young people. Bedard cites a host of aesthetic, professional, and philosophical problems the Junior League perpetuated in their work, but asserts that their influence “can still be seen in virtually every aspect of the field [TYA]” (Bedard 48).

1.3 The Junior League

The AJLA evolved from artistically trained debutants facilitating informal theatre work with children to relying “upon professional groups to augment their programs” in an effort to turn “more attention to the professional theatre scene” while also creating extensive training for league members (Bedard 43). Bedard cites that the Junior League intended their work to echo
that of the Little Art Theatre movement, but they continued to perpetuate single-storyline adaptations of familiar stories. By 1932, 109 of the 114 leagues had children’s theatre activity, and Bedard cites impressive numbers of performances and attendance. While many current TYA professionals turn their noses at the recycled adaptations of traditional stories done by the Junior League, the league explicitly pushed for increased publications, training, professionalism, and artistic integrity in theatre for and with children.

In addition to the artistic objectives of the Junior League’s Children’s Theatre, they maintained a commitment to the social service and educative value of their work. The foundation of the Junior League began in the settlement house movement, so the groundwork for the organization remained social service. The Junior League fostered TYA into being, founded many of the professional TYA theatres still in existence today, and contributed to much of the professional training at colleges and universities. The Junior League’s conferences, training, and other adult education elements brought a professionalized view to children’s theatre directors and facilitators.

Roger L. Bedard does not directly examine the specifics of the Junior League’s funding of the children’s theatre. Bedard observes that the work with children’s theatre naturally came from the charitable work of the leagues, so there was a pre-existent network and organization of individual benefactors. Additionally, debutantes had unlimited talents in throwing galas and events with influential and wealthy individuals. One can conclude from the lack of financial discussion, the Junior League did not see profitability as an object of concern.

I.4 The Federal Theatre Project: Children’s Theatre and the Civilian Conservation Corps

Funding for TYA experienced marked shift from individual benefactors to the Federal government with the formation of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935. According to research, the FTP served youth through their
Children’s Theatre division as well as through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which enlisted boys ages 17-26 to a work and training camp in order to better prepare them for manhood. Doreen B. Heard’s essay in *Spotlight on the Child*, titled *Children’s Theatre in the Federal Theatre Project* remains pivotal to understanding Children’s Theatre activities in the FTP. Additionally, Drew Chappell closely examines the notorious Children’s Theatre performance that brought the FTP under intense scrutiny in his article, *Constructions of ‘Revolt of the Beavers’ and Notions of the Child Audience: Controversy In the Federal Theatre Project*. To understand the role of the FTP in the CCC, James Wilson, in his article, *Community, Civility, and Citizenship: Theatre and Indoctrination in the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s*, he explores the performance, organization, and playwriting at the CCC. An examination of both the Children’s Theatre and the CCC demonstrates ideological and organizational differences, which I highlight through this section. Because the objectives of the CCC and the Children’s Theatre differ so vastly, neither art nor social service can be placed in priority.

Because the Children’s Theatre companies were funded equal to the other FTP initiatives, theatre for children was taken from the hands of “educators and amateurs” and professionalized and legitimized (Heard 114). As Doreen B. Heard repeats throughout her essay, Hallie Flanagan and the Children’s Theatre’s objective was to foster new audiences to contribute to the overall health of American theatre. The FTP Children’s Theatre employed adult professional actors to perform plays “suitable for children,” ticket prices were low or free, and FTP Children’s Theatre companies would “develop new material and techniques to supplant the traditional plays and methods that then dominated children’s theatre” (Heard 100). Heard states that the Children’s Theatre initiative stands as the first attempt by “theatre professionals to create a theatre for young audiences on a scale large enough to reach the thousands of children who had never seen a play”
Prior to the FTP, the objectives of children’s theatre remained either as highly commercial entertainment or social services driven by amateurs, but for the first time in professional theatre, the child audience was surveyed and play content was carefully developed. They asserted that the work of the Children’s Theatre companies fell into two categories: ones that are “humorous, imaginative, and fantastic” and ones that are more realistic to help the “youngster gain a greater awareness of himself as a personality” (Chappell 45). The Children’s Theatre aimed to produce new works for young audiences, but according to Doreen B. Heard’s descriptions, those plays largely maintained the extravagant and fantastic visual spectacle of early 1900s children’s theatre. While new plays were written, the FTP Children’s Theatre perpetuated the status quo of producing mainly familiar stories from children’s literature.

Contrastingly, the CCC’s scripts were tailored to the camps, so they were entirely original works. Also, because performances toured to camp barracks, CCC performances remained minimalistic. The Children’s Theatre and CCC meet aesthetically in interactivity of the performances. The CCC used interaction from the boys in the audience to drive home the educative effects and sense of community. The Children’s Theatre used interactive techniques to delight and amuse the children in the hopes they would visit the theatre for life. The artistry of the Children’s Theatre rests in the professional treatment of playwriting, technical elements, and performance. The CCC’s artistry exists primarily in the humor used to drive home the educative points or indoctrination.

Keeping in line with CCC’s rigid indoctrination of their enrollees, the FTP wrote and produced plays specific to the needs of and life in the camps. James Wilson published that the FTP upheld the CCC’s “goal to improve the moral and spiritual fiber of the boys,” so theatre “should not consist simply of escapist mass entertainment, but should contain some evidence of
cultural and educational merit” (Wilson 78). Specifically, Wilson states about one play, “The play’s primary purpose was to validate the organization and produce a sense of commonality among the enrollees” (Wilson 85). Those objectives repeat overtly throughout the CCC’s theatre work, and the involved agencies (FTP, CCC, and WPA) remained satisfied with the success of the theatre projects.

The Children’s Theatre operated with an opposing platform. When the Children’s Theatre came under intense scrutiny for allegedly propagating communist doctrine to children in *Revolt of the Beavers*, Flanagan and others in the FTP denied their theatre had that power with young people. In Youth Theatre Journal, Drew Chappell argues that “By framing *Beavers* as a fable or fairy tale, the FTP drew upon cultural constructions of children’s literature as innocuous, innocent, and certainly not worth the committee’s time” (Chappell 45). Thus, it stands that the CCC overtly used theatre to indoctrinate their youth enrollees while the Children’s Theatre aimed to avoid propagating socio-political agendas. *Beavers* contributed to the demise of the FTP because content became so scrutinized by the Federal government. Ironically, the FTP’s ability to successfully indoctrinate youth resulted in a highly successful relationship with CCC, but simultaneously it contributed to the cessation of governmental funding of professional theatre through the WPA.

The sensitivity surrounding the malleable minds of young people comes to light during the FTP Children’s Theatre. Thus, Chappell states, “This leaves children open to being used as pawns in an adult struggle over ideologies, and theatre for youth generally open to different constructions from proponents of multiple political agendas” (Chappell 52). That sensitivity seems to have been amplified and complicated by the government’s involvement. When the funding for the FTP and the Children’s Theatre ceased, theatre for children held on to some
professional grounds, but they struggle to unify, professionalize, legitimate, and extend children’s theatre’s reach across the country. While the FTP marks a time of great growth in children’s theatre, it also pushed to the forefront the difficult navigation of financial and parental gatekeepers. The governmental agent as potential gatekeeper leaves the TYA scene until the 1960s with the National Endowment for the Arts.

1.5 The National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the government agency newly made in 1965, vowed to “embody a hope” rather than “solve a problem” (Bauerlein 10). The first granting years of the NEA supported the avant-garde and innovation of strictly for adult performance and gradually moved toward arts education. The extensive research and criticism available on the founding and operations of the NEA leaves little doubt where their objectives for theatre and young people rest. The NEA’s funding objectives through the 1990s focused on adult theatre work and legitimizing arts education.

In Roger L. Bedard’s collection of definitive historical studies of American children’s theatre, Spotlight on the Child, the appendix lists only one mention of the NEA throughout the entire text. The note comes in John V. Hicks’ essay about the development and evolution of the Children’s Theatre Company of Minneapolis (CTC). While CTC and the rest of American children’s theatre were building aesthetic credibility, CTC built an educational empire in Minneapolis. The NEA did not fund the innovation of CTC’s productions, but they subsidized the education programming. According to Bill O’Brien, NEA Theatre Director, the NEA’s mission with theatre remained to build audiences. The NEA approached audience development in a variety of ways one of which was to educate children in a culture of the arts, so they would one day be adult patrons. This tactic from the NEA boosted the profile of arts education in public schools as well as education programming by regional theatres.
The NEA demonstrated a commitment to artistic excellence with their expert panels of artists renown in their fields, but TYA artists were excluded from this process assumedly because their artistry was not known or respected. At the onset of the NEA and through most of the 1990s, professional TYA companies were excluded from granting, but the cities that the NEA poured the most funding into also supported some of the most active TYA theatres: Children’s Theatre Company of Minneapolis, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Dallas Children’s Theatre, and Stage One of Louisville, for instance. Morally and artistically controversial grants that were “prospective, meant to support the future work of promising artists” did not go to the hands of TYA artists (Lewis and Brooks 2). Casually, TYA artists argue that this exclusion arises from the marginalization of TYA, but an alternative explanation suggested by perhaps more pragmatic professionals in the field is that TYA did not really exist as a legitimate professional theatre field until the last decade.

Conclusion

The NEA stands as the last major shift in how theatre is funded. After the conclusion of the FTP, theatre for young audiences continued to seek funding in the same basic avenues found at the Karamu House. A combination of institutions, corporate partners, and individual benefactors make up the majority of non-profit funding. While the field of TYA has shifted considerably since the Jelliffes’ settlement house theatre, the modes of funding have not. The evolution of aesthetic still represents a struggle to produce original plays with artistic integrity and contemporary cultural relevance. The commercial for-profit ventures with no educative value existed in the 1990s almost as a mirror to the turn of the last century. Now that we understand how TYA is valued historically, I can move on to understand how it is valued currently.
CHAPTER 2: CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL ECONOMICS AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO YOUNG PEOPLE

“I know that children often see things that aren’t there. But I would remind you that adults often fail to see what is there.” Orlin Corey

Corey’s quip calls to attention the challenges that come with creating and evaluating theatre for a young audience. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, TYA’s energies are typically pulled in three directions: creation of art, a social service agenda, and modes of finance. Historically, these three facets have a reputation of not easily working in a fair balance. TYA practitioners often discuss these points at length formally and informally, so in this research I seek a theoretical framework in which we can discuss valuation of TYA. To create this new framework that will hopefully indicate practical applications, I explore and cross analyze extant theories. I move forward with three imperatives to explore: money, art, and audience. At the root of the art there must be funding. Whether acquired through charitable giving or season subscription holders, financial capital is the fuel for theatre. The subsector of economists studying culture and art provide illuminating theoretical insights into the role of the market in the performing arts. These economists focus on the umbrella of performing arts, but I seek to take their theories a step further by applying them to what we know about TYA. I combine the economic research with research about children, their adult counterparts, and their interaction with art and the market. Through this cross-analysis, I seek to understand how the variables and constants of TYA interact.

2.1 The Young Audience

Who is a TYA production for? For what audience do TYA professionals produce? The simple and immediate answer seems to be children, but the simple answer does not suffice when discussing who patrons TYA companies. It is not the credit card of an eight year old that purchases a ticket. Nor does that eight year old have the ability to drive herself to the theatre. Our
hypothetical eight year old needs the decision of an adult to purchase tickets and escort her to the
theatre. Additionally, what do we know about children cognitively? What do we know about
their relationship with their parents? So, who is TYA for? Throughout this section, I examine the
adult/child audience of TYA primarily using Shifra Schonmann’s invaluable research in *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People: Images and Observations*.

2.2 Defining the Audience: Child, Childhood, and the Relationship to Adults

In order to discuss how to evaluate children’s theatre, we must understand who the
audience is. What is a child? What is childhood? And what is the relationship between adults and
children? In his article titled, *If it is good for the child’s development then I say yes almost every
time: how parents relate to their children’s consumption*, Ragnhild Brusdal defines children as
“being” and “becoming” (391). In short, children have opinions, needs, desires, and rights
separate from the adult world, as well as a need for guidance and protection as they are ushered
into adulthood (Brusdal 391). Shifra Schonmann of the University of Haifa, Israel explores the
definition of children more extensively in her book. She looks at education, psychology, and
cultural constructs for definitions. Specifically, she explores and responds to A.W. Forshay’s
research. Through Forshay, Schonmann defines the child in the classroom as the following: a
blank slate/slave, devoid of rights; “an enemy to be controlled;” a machine “educated to do what
is expected of him/her;” a chameleon with the ability to adapt to ever changing environments; or
a miniature adult (Schonmann 174-5).

Brusdal and Schonmann also define childhood. Brusdal simply states that childhood
should be protected yet challenging and fun yet “containing the right things” (391). Schonmann
examines childhood with much more depth and challenge. She considers the historical creation
and development of childhood and how adults have shifted these definitions over time. She
concludes that the advent of childhood “implies that children are excluded from the cultural life
of adults” (Schonmann 36). What is important to consider as I move forward with my research is that children and childhood are not universal concepts and that how we market to, talk about, and make art for children and their adult counterparts reflects these complex interactions. Additionally, children and childhood are constructs from an adult perspective, and all scholarship and discussion about children are created and perceived by adults.

2.3 Evaluating TYA as a Cultural Event

Shifra Schonmann provides a pivotal piece of literature in Theatre for Young Audiences by examining how we culturally understand children, how theatre is evaluated aesthetically, and how those elements complicate producing theatre for children. I begin with a brief overview of her book as a lens through which I assess future sections of my paper. Throughout Schonmann’s book, she asserts her opinions regarding how we should best manipulate TYA to meet her conclusions. Often times I agree with her stance, but I strive to use her research as a lens through which we can problematize the field and discuss it using some of her language.

To begin, Schonmann positions TYA as a unique art form separate from children’s literature and theatre for adults. Schonmann argues that TYA is often compared to other children’s culture such as children’s literature, but she posits that, “Children’s theatre should be regarded as a unique semiotic art phenomenon” because it reflects an experience in a public situation as opposed to reading, which is private and individual (40). In short, Schonmann points out that the social and psychological needs differ vastly between experiencing a live performance and reading a piece of literature. She goes on to discuss the premise that theatre for children is “extracted from what we consider to be good theatre for adults” which she refutes and argues, “that theatre for young people, like illustrations in children’s books, is an art form that should develop its own characteristics, aesthetic language, and invent its own artistic forms to create meaning and excitement” (Schonmann 42). She concludes that to create a unique theatre
experience for children, we must consider theatrical elements, cultural, psychological, and educational aspects (Schonmann 42). To further establish TYA as an art form meritorious of its own discussion, Schonmann goes on to discuss the nature of the audience. She argues that “theatre for young people has been a reflection of adult conceptions of childhood and education” (Schonmann 44). She introduces the phrase “double circle of audiences” to describe the “two groups who share some points in common but also have conflicting interests” (Schonmann 44). Adults make the decisions, but the productions are aimed at the child’s artistic, psychological, and educational development. Thus, TYA cannot just reflect the needs and desires of a child in the way children’s literature can. Nor can TYA cater only to the adult perceptions.

Because TYA is an art form separate from its adult and literary counterparts, Schonmann questions how to evaluate TYA. She uses historic and contemporary forms of art and aesthetic evaluation and repeatedly notes a disparity between adult and children’s perspectives of ‘good’ theatre. She notes that as far back as Winifred Ward’s audience research we see that young people enjoy plays for the “wrong reasons,” such as slapstick or flash-and-trash (Schonmann 63). At length, Schonmann discusses how we shape a child’s experience at the theatre, and she references the centuries old concept of catharsis and its role with children. She posits that there are competing forces at work: one being that children should be protected from reality and the other being that they should be prepared for the adult world. To what degree can or should theatre try to change a child in the audience? Schonmann writes, “when we want to examine how the theatre affects the child, we must consider how the child identifies with the stage reality. How does the child perceive her/himself and how does s/he perceive the figures on stage (84)?” Schonmann reaches few conclusions regarding catharsis; rather she advocates that we talk and think about catharsis as a variable when producing work for children.
From Schonmann’s comprehensive research, she proposes a criteria for evaluating TYA: The first criterion is aesthetic and artistic, and she states that “the spectator must be able to believe the events on stage;” the second deals with psychological development and states that “the viewer must be able to escape from his/her particular reality into the fiction presented, in order to return full circle, back to reality;” the third is a “structured symbolic language” which reflects the pedagogical criterion. It reads, “the theatre offers a language of universal symbols that should be understood by young viewers” (Schonmann 137). Schonmann acknowledges that even when practitioners take all this criteria into consideration, it is not always sufficient, but it provides a language for TYA evaluation.

2.4 The Economics of Art: Bruno S. Frey, Werner W. Pommerehne, and Harold L. Vogel

Where Shifra Schonmann’s text synthesizes what is known about artistic and aesthetic valuation with knowledge of children’s culture and development, Harold L. Vogel and Bruno S. Frey merge research and scholarship on financial and economic analyses with the arts and entertainment. Vogel and Frey look at the arts and entertainment industries through the lens of economics in order to understand the relationship to the market. Just as it was necessary for me to establish a basis of understanding aesthetic evaluation with children’s theatre, I use an overview of Frey and Vogel to anchor the discussion of the arts and the market.

Bruno S. Frey and Werner W. Pommerehne first published their book, *Muses and Markets: Explorations in the Economics of the Arts*, in 1989, and it has served as a basis for a great deal of scholarship and discussion into the arts and economics. Frey and Pommerehne begin by defining what exactly an economic approach to the arts is. They acknowledge that artistic production and consumption have a greater number of variables and complex relationships than other goods, so Frey and Pommerehne seek, “whether it is possible to observe behavioural regularities among the people concerned” (6). They look for the “underlying
structure” of purchasing and producing art (6). Specifically, they look at artists and patrons and assume they are adults producing art for adults. With this information, I aim to problematize the economic perspective with the addition of patrons without social or financial capital (children).

When considering the market, Frey and Pommerehne explain the supply of and demand for cultural institutions. Frey and Pommerehne open their portion on the demand for cultural activities with the statement, “Obviously, the benefit from visiting the theatre is higher, the better an individual’s education is” (9). Furthermore, they continue that income and education are positively related. Thus, Frey and Pommerehne deduce that the demand for theatre tickets will lower as ticket prices rise. Based on Shifra Schonmann’s research regarding young people and theatre, pedagogical and psychological appropriateness of a performance contribute to a child’s theatre experience, but income and level of education do not. Additionally, teachers who take their students to the theatre have a clearly-defined education and income level not congruent with Frey and Pommerehne’s conclusions. Therefore, the question arises, what contributes to the supply and demand of theatre for young people? Government and private subsidies send thousands of income-deficient children to the theatre. Furthermore, children with parents of means may patron the theatre themselves, but does that make them more likely to bring their child to TYA-specific company?

Frey and Pommerehne’s analysis of the supply side of cultural activities takes into account that most cultural institutions are not-for-profit, so their production objectives differ than that of a standard supply and demand structure. The authors use a European museum as an example, but I believe the challenge translates to U.S. TYA companies as well. For instance, a theatre is funded by the city’s tourism bureau to produce a children’s theatre festival. Because the government dollars are intended for tourism, the theatre prioritizes funds for a hundred mile
driving range for regional diversity rather than a larger number of overall patrons. To apply the economic approach to TYA adds another complication to supply and demand because the supplier is conflicted by who makes the demands. As she observes, Shifra Schonmann notes the disparity between what children and adults view as good theatre. Additionally, in his previously mentioned article about parents and their children’s consumption, Ragnhild Brusdal discusses parental motivation for purchasing. According to Brusdal, parents are primarily influenced to buy for their children if the product is useful, aids in the child’s safety, promotes social belonging, or is educational (394). Brusdal furthers the argument that children are largely capital-less because, as he states simply, “…parents have their own preferences and these are not always in accordance with their children’s” (395). As one considers Frey and Pommerehne’s description of supply and demand in the performing arts, the addition of youth and their parents complicate the seemingly simple cycle.

Frey and Pommerehne go on to discuss the market and the government and how supply and demand for art is affected differently by the relationships between those entities. The authors explain that government subsidy of the arts is necessary to keep art from becoming commercialized, but when the government provides money, artistic freedom is lost to some degree (Frey and Pommerehne 17). Additionally, the relationship between performing arts and the market depends highly on prospective and actual attendance. Interestingly, they note that catering to the masses is not necessarily what keeps the doors of a theatre open; rather, “a cultural institution may well survive in the market if it provides services for a small minority of the population, if those people are willing and able to pay a sufficiently high price for such cultural services” (Frey and Pommerehne 18). What could this minority be in TYA? People under the age of 10? Parents in the highest income bracket? TYA companies in the U.S. were
born from social services and strive to be accessible to all children. Because they operate from a belief that theatre is an important experience valuable to all demographics of children, TYA ticket prices fall far lower than their adult theatre counterparts. At a standard adult-theatre ticket price, a family of four, even in a high-income bracket, would likely consider the event a luxury not to be afforded regularly. TYA companies emphasize marketing an entertaining and educational event which does not correspond with a luxury theatre experience.

One of the widely referenced principles in the arts market is the “positive external effects” or goods/services that cannot be reflected in the market. Frey and Pommerehne list five for the arts (19). Education value stands as the most contentious in the conversation about TYA. TYA relies in large part on the education value of their productions to increase their market profitability. This point stands true for the education value to the audience members but also to private and government funders who see TYA companies as an avenue to lifelong theatre patrons.

Frey continues in a later book, *Art & Economics: Analysis and Cultural Policy*, discussing methods of evaluating cultural property. One method is to look at the monetary revenue created from the entire experience (dining, transportation, ticket price, etc.), but this method, as explained before, does not reflect the positive external effects or non-market values (Frey 176). Additionally, looking at willingness-to-pay through empirical studies such as wages and rents in proximity to the cultural institution compared to those elsewhere and a “travel cost approach” pose interesting results but fail to integrate the education value (Frey 178). Finally, Frey discusses using Contingent Valuation Surveys distributed to the public but lists a host of challenges and limitations with this approach (179). The failure to represent the education value
in these methods of evaluation begs the question, then, how can we effectively analyze the economics of TYA?

In his text, *Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide to Financial Analysis*, Harold L. Vogel covers the entertainment industry comprehensively by examining each division of entertainment from toys and games to live and media-dependent entertainment. Specifically, the chapter “Performing arts and culture” proves most significant to the discussion of theatre. Vogel opens his chapter with the statement, “The performing arts traditionally generate more psychic than pecuniary income, and they operate under somewhat different economic assumptions than other entertainment industries” (257). Vogel’s analysis returns repeatedly to the conclusion that unlike other industries, it is impossible to raise productivity of a live performance. Vogel explains that an hour performance will always take an hour. This fact coupled with the premise that performing arts exist as public goods support Vogel’s assertion that performing arts need both private and government support (266). It should be noted that Vogel references Frey and Pommerehne’s work throughout his text.

From his analysis, Vogel implies that the only way to make money in the performing arts industry may be to look to advancing technology and new media to present live performances to larger audiences through television. To reach this conclusion, he moves through a typical chain of producers, angels, and artists using a Broadway budget and scenario from circa 1994. The flow of human, financial, and creative capital described by Vogel seems only vaguely to resemble the production process in a TYA producing house. From the break down of roles and responsibilities of producers and directors to why the money is provided and the expected outcome of the financial investment, Vogel’s scenario remains limited to Broadway’s performing arts industry, which fails to reflect the dozens of TYA companies throughout the country. Thus,
the question arises, are Vogel’s conclusions applicable to TYA? Does TYA impact the economy
enough to merit financial analysis specific to the field?

2.5 Creativity and Finance: Elizabeth Currid, Arjo Klamer, and Lyudmila Petrova

In my research, I discovered two publications that specifically synthesize and apply
economic and other theories to discuss art, culture, and creativity. In 2007, Elizabeth Currid of
the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California
published a comprehensive work titled, *The Economics of a Good Party: Social Mechanics and
the Legitimization of Art/Culture*, in which she examines the tensions surrounding how cultural
value is constructed and who does the construction. In their article, *Financing the Arts: The
Consequences of Interaction among Artists, Financial Support, and Creativity Motivation*, Arjo
Klamer and Lyudmila Petrova of Erasmus University, “analyze how different financial modes
matter to the creativity of artists -- whether they facilitate or interfere with the creativity that
leads to artistic achievements” (245).

Elizabeth Currid asserts, “cultural value is determined by form, not function,” which
positions its valuation as “seemingly arbitrary” (Currid 386). Within the construct of TYA,
practitioners and adult theatre professionals value performances based on aesthetic. Regardless
of aesthetic production values (form), TYA scholar Roger L. Bedard observes, “Schools are in
fact seeing field trips and assemblies more and more as distractions from that which they are held
accountable: tests” (16). Bedard points to what most TYA practitioners in the U.S. face
regularly: the valuation of art based on *function* rather than *form*. Funding based on the core
content educational value remains much of the TYA professional repertoire’s bread and butter.
Additionally, legitimization in the performing arts world requires a high value of form, dividing
the focus of TYA professionals. Currid also looks to the “Veblen effect,” arguing that
consumers attain their utility not only from the quality and composition of a good, but also the
price paid for it” (Currid 387). Greater value is placed on a good with a higher price. The
staggering ticket costs for a major Broadway musical or the price tag on a hotly sought painting
indicate to what degree American society values the work. Ticket prices for TYA companies
differ greatly from other professional performing arts experiences, but the production costs are
no less. It has been maintained throughout the field that lower ticket prices increase accessibility
enabling an entire family to experience a play. How do TYA theatres navigate Currid’s
observation of financial structure while retaining the middle to low income families as audience?

Elizabeth Currid also sheds light on the key concept of gatekeepers and intermediaries in
the art market. “That gatekeepers create economic systems by which to signal aesthetic value is
part and parcel of their role as purveyors of cultural value,” Currid states in response to D.
Crane’s influential analysis of empirical data collected regarding arts valuation (Currid 388).
Crane observed that an artist’s success was controlled by a few galleries who represented the
most successful artist and those few galleries were sought by museums and collectors.
Gatekeepers directly affect the reputation of aesthetic goods then hand that judgment to
intermediaries who in turn cue distributors. How do Currid and Crane’s findings apply to TYA?
In TYA, we often discuss the parents and teachers as gatekeepers to the ‘real’ desired audience,
children. Their purchase decisions valorize what is appropriate and quality entertainment for
children. Unlike the gatekeepers and intermediaries in Currid’s article, the gatekeepers of TYA
are likely to have only a casual or novice understanding of what they are buying, and, as
indicated by the studies of youth and their parents, will have objectives and desires that conflict
with their children’s. Currid goes on to discuss “cultural commodification” as a consequence of
these gatekeepers and intermediaries. She explains that artists will try to cater to them rather than
from their own creative instincts. I believe that this effect can be seen in TYA as well. As TYA
companies attempt to cater to the adult gatekeepers, theatre practitioners will favor the didactic rather than the balance of pedagogy, psychology, and aesthetic as described earlier by Shifra Schonmann.

Another interpretation of the gatekeeper/intermediary scenario occurs between sponsors and theatres. Because TYA is in large part funded by corporate and government philanthropy, those funders serve as gatekeepers and intermediaries as well. Grants and sponsorships identify specific agendas and deliverable outcomes they expect from their recipients. For instance, a small to mid-sized TYA company (about $1.2 million budget) received repeated season funding from a large corporation for their two-play series producing artistically or thematically edgy TYA shows in the black box theatre. These shows were commonly recognized by the theatre community as the best shows of the season despite their limited box office numbers. Recently, the theatre sought to produce an adaptation of the dystopian-society-themed young adult novel, *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry in the above-mentioned slot, but the corporation believed it to be too controversial a book to attach their name to. The small TYA company is left with a decision: to cater or not to cater? The TYA company did produce the play, and the corporation did not sponsor it. They did, however, continue their financial relationship with the theatre in other capacities; so when their artistic director is agonizing over season selection in the coming months, will he consider the personality of their partner corporation when selecting a play for that slot in the hopes of sponsorship? According to Currid’s findings, yes. Thus, it can be argued in this case, a corporate executive of a chain of restaurants decides what is an appropriate artistic experience for a child.

Arjo Klamer and Lyudmila Petrova of Erasmus University investigate creativity as a part of rarity. They assert that successful creativity can be distilled to the idea of novelty or newness.
The creative conception must be novel and rare to be successful. I observe a problematic point with TYA at this intersection. Roger L. Bedard’s postulation of the marginalization of TYA speaks to the direct power school agendas have over TYA. Because they are the primary source of income generated for a majority of TYA theatres, schools determine “subject matter, length, and style of the plays presented; production calendars and seasons; and the very organizational and economic structures of some theatres” (Bedard 12). Companies often reserve small slots in their season to produce the novel and rare stories acknowledging the assumed lack of profits gained. Creative value is determined by novelty and rarity, but TYA companies are rewarded for perpetuating school (adult) agenda of classic literature and didactically safe stories, how can their status raise aesthetically and in profitability? In her previously referenced book, Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People: Images and Observations, Shifra Schonmann suggests that theatre should not be a school event. Based on her findings regarding how children experience a theatre event she states, “Young people should be given the opportunity to choose the play they wish to attend, and be allowed to do so on their own free time as part of a general theatre audience” (Schonmann 164). Whether or not TYA practitioners agree or disagree with Schonmann and Bedard’s positions, theatre as a school event provides the majority of TYA’s revenue.

The financial transaction is provided by those who hold capital as gatekeepers and intermediaries: teachers, parents, school administrators, sponsors, etcetera. Klamer and Petrova ask, “how do different financial modes affect an artist’s creative process” (Klamer 246)? Bruno S. Frey originated a model used by Klamer and Petrova called Crowding Theory. To avoid a lengthy and dense explanation of Frey’s theory, Klamer and Petrova state it as, “[crowding in] occurs when cultural and other noneconomic values of a good or activity are enhanced in a
financial transaction; crowding out occurs when those values are diminished” (Klamer and Petrova 250). What financial transactions produce crowding in or out in TYA? To serve the needs of a school agenda creates a crowding in effect between schools and theatres, thus raising the value of TYA. However, that same service produces a crowding out effect in the eyes of the adult theatre world because there is an assumed compromise of artistic merit. Klamer and Petrova among other scholars assert that different financial modes do affect the creative process, but as to what degree or how precisely it is affected, they offer no regularities from which one could predict.

Therefore, TYA professionals are challenged to consider Klamer and Petrova’s rarity and novelty while increasing legitimacy despite Currid’s findings, and appeasing the adults who control child attendance. With those conclusions in mind, I close this chapter with little optimism for a pragmatic approach to implementation. I am left with more questions than answers. Even though productivity cannot be increased, is the overall value increased by direct learning that occurs when children experience a play? How can we quantify or qualify the learning that occurs? If the financial mode positively or negatively affects creativity, from whom should TYA companies seek their primary funds? To continue this research and discussion remains the imperative action that I feel confident asserting. TYA has long explored the role of children in our society as a means for better producing art for them. Likewise, we seek artistic advancement through study and practice of the theatre and teaching arts. In order to sustain and advance, TYA must add an economic approach to the discussion. In my initial research on this subject, I found countless practical guides to theatre arts management, but we have a responsibility to understand the theory behind the practice. Shifra Schonnman, as with many TYA practitioners, asserts that TYA requires both a theoretical and practical understanding of the theatre arts, the psychology
of a child, and pedagogy. The theory informs the practice. From this research, I assert that we must re-evaluate how we run our theatres. As history indicates in the previous chapter, TYA theatres either mimic theatres for adults or similar to community driven settlement houses.
CHAPTER 3: THEORY TO PRACTICE

In the previous chapter, I posit that we as TYA professionals bear a responsibility to re-evaluate how we run our theatres. The re-evaluation should be based on theoretical research in the psychology, pedagogy, and aesthetic of children combined with cultural economics. I analyze fundraising, marketing, and purchase intentions as though TYA is a new industry. Throughout this chapter, I consider practical application of these theories. I found the Development and Marketing offices of a theatre for young audiences the clearest matches for application. As with the previous sections of this document, I approach the discussion of marketing and development without pretense or definitive expertise. Based on my research, these approaches appear to be worthy of exploration.

3.1 Corporate Sponsorship and Philanthropy

Before a theatre event can occur, funds must be acquired to finance the rights of the play, the production and administrative staffs, building materials, performers, etcetera. This process can be likened to the start up costs of a manufacturing business; however, unlike the manufacturer, theatre companies require this ‘start up’ money every time they produce a show. The majority of not-for-profit TYA companies rely on a near fifty-fifty split between earned and contributed income, and it is the advance agreements of partners that provide the ‘start up’ capital for the above-mentioned costs. In the following section, I look at three articles regarding philanthropy in the arts: one is a brief look at why companies give to the arts, and the remaining two propose a new method of philanthropy that I argue proves promising in TYA.

In their article, *Why Do Companies Sponsor Arts Events?: Some Evidence and a Proposed Classification*, John O’Hagan and Denice Harvey examine the distinction between and motivations behind corporate sponsorship and corporate philanthropy. Using case studies and research originating from several parts of the world, O’Hagan and Harvey seek to better
understand the role of philanthropy and sponsorship in the arts specifically for the purpose of
greater application in Ireland. Their succinct review of current literature and their outsider
perspective offer a valuable reminder and clarity to what generally is taken for granted in the
United States.

O’Hagan and Harvey begin by distinguishing the differences between sponsorship and
philanthropy. The authors note that sponsorship is directly linked to the company’s promotion,
i.e., advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and personal selling (O’Hagan and Harvey
205). Philanthropy, on the other hand, is intended to have “no direct connection between the
contribution and any activity of the company” (O’Hagan and Harvey 206). The authors note that
there are a multitude of challenges in this distinction with overlaps in motivation and expected
outcomes. O’Hagan and Harvey cite the following motivations for corporate philanthropy:
contributing to the ability to profit; social responsibility; preserve corporate power; and driven by
stakeholders. Following this list, the authors cite the accepted motivations for sponsorship:
public awareness of the company; change public perception; public image; goodwill among
influential policy/decision makers; staff recruitment and relations; and specific product
promotion (O’Hagan and Harvey 206-209).

From these motivations, O’Hagan and Harvey posit and examine four motivations for
sponsoring arts events. The first reason for sponsorship is the promotion of image/name. In this
situation, the attendance of the “arts event should be broadly correlated with the demand for the
firm’s product” (O’Hagan and Harvey 210). This is perhaps the most commonly practiced mode
of sponsorship used in TYA from O’Hagan and Harvey’s four. The difficulty of the target
audience remains. Seemingly, TYA companies should seek sponsorship from companies that
serve families, but families of what income and demographic? Considering Crowding Theory
from the previous chapter, how does sponsorship from an educational materials firm versus a major retailer affect the arts event? An educational materials sponsorship would target patronage within the educator community of teachers, administrators, and their students. On the other hand, one such sponsorship would likely, according to previous research, pressure a theatre company to emphasize didacticism and abide by the philosophies of the corporation. Even a seemingly more general partner like a major retailer bears the risk of proselytizing ethically controversial products like over-sexualized clothing for young girls, processed foods that contribute to obesity, or a company with overt political, ethical, or religious, affiliations.

Supply-chain cohesion stands as the next reason for sponsorship. Arts events in this context serve as an internal event, such as a festival, to boost morale and goodwill among employees (O’Hagan and Harvey 211). I have no specific experiential example of this from TYA, which prompts me to consider if this is an untapped opportunity. For instance, to promote the image and name of the theatre within a sponsoring company, a TYA company can offer a family event, thus providing an exchange of resources between the theatre and the company. Is that scenario still considered sponsorship or more akin to bartering? A development director I worked under promised potential partners a ‘mutually beneficial relationship’, meaning an exchange of energies, whether tangible or intangible. What a theatre receives in financial capital, they provide a service of equal value to the funder. Creating and maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship between a corporate partner and a theatre promotes both entities positively; however, if every corporate partner of a single theatre expected services in return, the theatre would be taxed beyond capacity.

Next, the authors examine rent-seeking sponsorship. Rent-seeking is used to “directly lobby decision makers” with events such as corporate entertainment of political and influential
figures for the benefit of the sponsoring company (O’Hagan and Harvey 211). What happens then to the image of the arts organization involved in that persuasion? Arguably, the theatre involved would be accepting the political agenda of the corporate sponsor. Alternatively, theatres produce plays that argue points with which the theatre disagrees. For instance, the audience is compelled to support Hamlet’s decision to avenge his father’s murder by killing his uncle, but the theatre does not promote an eye-for-an-eye justice system. However, in TYA, because children are considered highly impressionable blank slates needing protection, an implication of a political agenda, even if ‘just for the money’ has a great potential to undermine the theatre’s value. An arts event lobbying politicians with their families on behalf of tobacco companies comes to mind.

Finally, O’Hagan and Harvey list the moderately vague category ‘non-monetary benefit to managers or owners’ as the last suggested classification. In this mode, companies do not profit, rather the arts event is used as a means of non-monetary compensation for a manager or owner (O’Hagan and Harvey 212). I have no understanding of how this could apply to a TYA company. Perhaps, with more research, this is an area of opportunity for TYA.

With the four suggested classifications, O’Hagan and Harvey conducted a survey to determine the most likely reason for sponsorship of arts events. Not surprisingly, promotion of corporate image remains the most important reason. Additionally, companies cited opportunity for media coverage and corporate hospitality as important when sponsoring an art event (O’Hagan and Harvey 217). The burden of the TYA company is to isolate and articulate what image their affiliation actually promotes. In the previous chapter, a sponsorship of The Giver proved very challenging for a regional TYA theatre because a corporate sponsor did not want their name associated with the ‘controversial’ material in a particular scene; however, the overall
mission of the theatre and the production was certainly not to advocate euthanizing fussy babies, rather to incite dialogue and literacy among young people. Interestingly, that same corporation sponsored a production of Hamlet in the same city; though, I imagine their focus was on the promotion of an invaluable cultural experience that comes with seeing Shakespeare, not the bloody vengeful murders and manipulation found in the text. I posit that the burden of proof rests with the TYA company to frame the corporate sponsor’s image promotion through Shrifra Schonmann’s previously stated trifecta of art, pedagogy, and psychology. We have to educate our potential sponsors beyond the importance of arts education - the default angle.

3.2 New Philanthropy

Traditionally, TYA companies find corporations, foundations, and government organizations to provide capital via grants that meet a specific need set by the funder (education outreach, tourism, content specific, etc.). TYA primarily relies on selling itself to funders through its service to education limiting itself to other available funds. Traditional modes of funding fall short when considering the available research in previous chapters regarding the economics of arts and culture as well as the treatment of TYA as a social service. Theatres for young audiences are forced to limit their focus to their social service ventures while neglecting Schonmann’s suggested three positions. In her article, The New Philanthropy: Its Impact on Funding Arts and Culture, Nina Kressner Cobb examines funding arts and culture through the lens of new philanthropy and, specifically, venture philanthropy. She cites that arts and culture have been mostly excluded by new philanthropy methods. Throughout this section, I examine Cobb’s position, the current understanding of venture philanthropy and how it may apply to TYA as an untapped funding method.

Nina Kressner Cobb explains that grant-making rhetoric has evolved to use investment/investee language and that with venture philanthropy, “foundations model themselves...
after venture capitalists by making grants that build organizational capacity as well as programs” (Cobb 129). From her observations she notes, “typically, they [venture philanthropist organizations] do not support new programs so much as strengthen a nonprofit’s capacity to create social change” (Cobb 130). She continues that venture philanthropy primarily serves education and youth and that it “has bypassed the arts” (Cobb 132). Cobb observes a number of instances where foundations use select ideas from venture philanthropy with artists to bring business into philanthropy. Specifically, she examines Program Related Investments (PRIs), which work like a loan but below market rate, program specific, and interest-free. Foundations also supply grants to create for-profit entities within a non-profit. Cobb also found funders providing pro bono business consultation to strategize and meet agreed benchmarks and outcomes. Concluding her research, Cobb addresses the arts community, arts policy researchers, and arts funders on how venture philanthropy can be utilized to support the arts. Mainly, she asserts that in order to attract venture philanthropists the arts community and policy researchers must assess, document, and make the case for what social change produced by the arts.

Nina Kressner Cobb’s observations focus on art for adults, but venture philanthropy speaks in large part to the problems I noted at the onset of my research. In order for TYA to operate independently from theatre for adults and social services, they require a new language that speaks to both the artistry and business of the field. Venture philanthropy, according to Mario Morino, Chairman of Venture Philanthropy Partners and Bill Shore, Chairman of Community Wealth Ventures …takes the form of strategic assistance which can include long-term planning, board and executive recruitment, coaching, help in raising capital, assuming board
roles, accessing networks, and leveraging relationships to identify additional resources and facilitate partnerships. (Morino and Shore 11)

In their essay, *High Engagement Philanthropy: A Bridge to a More Effective Social Sector*, Morino and Shore define why and how venture philanthropy works to provide necessary financial and service assistance to non-profits. A candid discussion between venture philanthropy giant, the Robin Foundation, and its non-profit recipient, The HOPE Program, also published jointly by Venture Philanthropy Partners and Community Wealth Ventures, sheds light on the challenges and rewards of venture philanthropy. The relationship between investor-grantor and investee-grantee is very close, honest, and long term. Rather than the traditional funding model where the funder looks only at the results directly related to their guidelines, venture philanthropy partnerships take into account the health, progress, and impact of the entire organization understanding foreseeable challenges. In this arrangement, TYA would be able to fully express how they serve young people and the community pedagogically, psychologically, and artistically, so with the funding partner, they can fully assess the organizational and financial needs thus promoting success in the market. TYA companies strive to balance art with social change/service, and with a high-engagement partner, they could employ their services for more profitability.

Venture philanthropy is not without its challenges and would certainly not solve all the problems in TYA. A fresh understanding of non-profit funding, however, is necessary for TYA to move forward as a field independent of theatre for adults and social services. Morino and Shore of Venture Philanthropy Partners and Community Wealth Ventures state pointedly an opinion particularly relevant to current methods of funding TYA:
At the core of increased effectiveness and growth of nonprofit organizations is funding. Yet the way we fund nonprofits often prevents them from achieving what they could do and certainly from being able to meet the latent demand for their services. (8)

As long as theatres for young audiences continue to mimic theatres for adults and settlement houses in their funding methods, the field will remain the orphan of the two parts. In order to move TYA forward as an independent, effective, and financially profitable industry, we must examine the movements in philanthropy with what is known about TYA and its effects on youth and community.

3.3 Audience Development

In the previous chapter, I explained that economists’ research in cultural economics consider the arts a public good. Public goods are difficult to value and cannot be entirely measured in the market. Theatres generally market individual shows or seasons based on artistic and entertainment value with production photos, catchy tag-lines, and star-appeal. Similar to funding mechanisms, theatres for a young audience are faced with different challenges with marketing. Theatres for young audiences not only have to identify the appropriate psychological and pedagogical level of a particular production, but they must determine how to market to that age and the parents. For instance, the marketing of a production like Blue’s Clues Live! requires access to children ages three to five - before school aged. Additionally, their parents, most likely, are young and still fully engaged in their careers. Marketing to those children and their parents differs vastly from marketing to the previously discussed production, The Giver, which is targeted for ages 10 and older. The aesthetic of the marketing materials differs with each play, but it also differs with each age bracket. Currently, theatres for young audiences promote each show and each education initiative as services in the entertainment or education industry. In the
following section, I examine differing avenues of marketing that may speak more readily to TYA’s needs.

Donna Walker-Kuhne of The Public in NYC defines audience development as,

…the cultivation and growth of long-term relationships, firmly rooted in philosophical foundation that recognizes and embraces the distinctions of race, age, sexual orientation, geography and class. Audience development also is the process of engaging, educating, and motivating diverse communities to participate in a creative entertaining experience. (2)

She goes on to explain that audience development merges what we know about marketing with relationship-building and is “proactive, not reactive” (Walker-Kuhne 2). Walker-Kuhne documents a research, analysis, and application process in developing community-based audiences she experienced at The Public. She lists ten tools for building audiences. Without summarizing all of her list, two stand out as particularly important to TYA. Number seven is “educating the audience and artists,” which Walker-Kuhne specifies to mean educating artists and audiences of your vision, “so they become aware of the larger picture” (6). However, this may be achieved, informing the adult and child audience and the art community as to the specific vision proactively would counter TYA stereotypes and pre-conceived notions. Donna Walker-Kuhne’s observations of audience development also include “creating value,” which she explains to mean making “the arts and culture accessible to everyone” (6).

Walker-Kuhne follows her observations with “prescriptions for engaging audiences” based on her findings. Overarching themes through the list include gaining a better understanding of and collaborating with your target audience. In the case of TYA, this means parents, teachers and, most importantly, children. While including children in a theatre’s process
seems obvious and, perhaps, a simple solution, we are still faced with the child-audience research from Shifra Schonmann and Winifred Ward. Their research proves a wide discrepancy between the adult and child perception of artistic integrity. Walker-Kuhne’s points on research and collaboration with target audiences carries a series of challenges, but it supports the idea that companies must have extensive and detailed understanding of children and their gatekeepers on a social and financial level in order to best market to them.

3.4 Social Marketing

As theatres for young audiences consider how to develop their patronage, Belinda Taylor offers insight into using social marketing in the performing arts. Social marketing combines traditional marketing tools with grassroots marketing techniques to produce a change in behavior to benefit the social and individual good. If we believe that cultural experiences, specifically theatre, produce a rehearsal for ‘real life’ and pedagogically and psychologically influence young viewers, then using social marketing techniques proves appropriate for TYA. Through Taylor’s company, Theatre Bay of San Francisco, key informants were assigned to investigate media, arts education, and public policy. In the article, media informants revealed a need to become more “media savvy and improve professionalism (‘hire a publicist’)” (Taylor 8). In arts education they learned that “the school system is a highly regulated sector with multiple decision-makers, so the goal would have to be articulated and pursued on many fronts,” a point which TYA professionals discuss at length (Taylor 9). Researchers also reported challenges with “ideological opposition” to the arts, “overcoming biases” to prove the worth of the arts, and “academic standards” (Taylor 9). The lessons gleaned from Theatre Bay’s interviews and analysis result in a clear need to apply social marketing techniques to develop long term relationships with the community. Unlike theatre for adults, TYA does not require more extensive research to prove social marketing’s worth.
These examples are merely suggestions for how TYA can apply what is known about cultural economics and the culture of children and families. The idea of developing community-based audiences as a unique process different from developing other audiences proves redundant. Most, if not all, audiences attending regional professional theatres are from the community whether immediate or within driving distance and are the primary source of sustaining income. Furthermore, in the above-mentioned research into social marketing, theatre for adults seems to require some convincing of social marketing’s merits; however, TYA has long battled its social service status. Thus, in order to move forward with new funding and marketing mechanisms, success is found in the discussion of the synthesis of the parts. From the previously cited studies, the following conclusions can be asserted with some certainty: in both development and marketing, more emphasis must be placed on understanding the audience financially and emotionally; community collaboration requires long term committed involvement; we have a responsibility to stay educated and share that education of the vision and purpose of TYA (pedagogy, psychology, and art); finally, TYA practitioners are responsible to understanding both the theory and practice of financial mechanisms in cultural economics. This chapter stands as a jumping off point and hopefully an inspiration to consider how the theoretical information and history can inform practice.
CONCLUSION

“Speak a new language, and the world will be a new world.” - Rumi

At the onset of this research, I set out to create a new language to be used among TYA teachers, artists, and administrators. I deciphered no mysterious code that would magically fix all of the psychic and pecuniary challenges faced by theatres for young audiences. I did, however, identify multiple theories, terms, and practices that seem promising as TYA moves forward. The historic precedents and contemporary cultural economic scholarship lead me to trust the value of experimentation with social marketing and new philanthropy methods. To conclude this research process, I look not to the specific practical applications but to how these discoveries might spiritually and theoretically influence my practice and advocacy in youth and community arts. I begin with what the research implies as a next step.

My research remains limited to existent published scholarship. Because of this, there is a potential for a gap in my experiential understanding of TYA operations and the actuality of funding. The next logical step in this research is to conduct extensive interviews, surveys, and financial documentation of theatres for young audiences and young audience programs within non-TYA specific theatres. To move closer to the new language I believe to be the key to TYA’s financial and artistic growth, I would cross-reference the acquired data with the published scholarship catalogued in the preceding chapters. Then, regularities in current practice could be determined and influenced. Theatre for young audience programs and companies could reference that material to more accurately predict the potential crowding in or out that occurs during a financial transaction whether during contributed or earned income. This process would be best conducted by a team that represents the parts of the whole picture: a cultural economist, TYA practitioners from artistic and education departments, as well as marketing and development professionals from the field.
From the historical research of the settlement houses, the Federal Theatre Project, the Junior League, and National Endowment for the Arts, I concluded that theatre with and for young people is generally measured by its utility as a social service. Roger L. Bedard, in his earlier referenced article, observes the same method of measurement in contemporary practices to the point that companies feel subservient to schools. At the beginning of my research, I asked how does TYA communicate its artistic and educative integrity to an outside party? I close this research process with a slight revision of the question: how, with the knowledge of cultural economics, parent/child spending habits, and the tools of social marketing and philanthropy, do we communicate the value of theatre events for young audiences to the adult gatekeepers? Based on the research gathered, TYA should focus on the utility of their product so that adult gatekeepers feel inclined to prioritize spending on theatre events for their children. The utility generally emphasized in TYA is the educative value. In order to equally sell the artistic experience, researchers and scholars in the field must seek to define the utility of arts experiences beyond core content such as literature adaptations and didactic issue plays. These theatre experiences bear the daunting burden of valuing the arts across demographics, and to do so more effectively, we must narrow our target marketing methods to be very specific with our agendas.

Through this process, I found that TYA is not only a hybrid field, as I discussed in the introduction. To advance TYA’s financial and social value, practitioners must re-envision their practice as wholly new and separate from the administrative, education, and artistic structures of theatre for adults and settlement houses. While Bedard and Shifra Schonmann both advocate a total split from the school system, school-children as a captive audience remain a reality of the field. With the information from Schonmann’s book combined with cultural economics, theatres for young audiences can reinvent their relationships with schools. Schonmann asserts that a TYA
play must produce according to a developed pedagogy and psychology equal to a defined aesthetic. The raw materials and understanding for the pedagogy and psychology can be found in the culture of the school system, so a healthy relationship with the school systems proves beneficial. However, considering Elizabeth Currid, Arjo Klamer, and Lyudmila Petrova’s conclusions that all financial transactions affect creativity, a school and theatre’s relationship must be forged with an open analysis of these potential effects. Additionally, considering Schonmann’s musings on children’s aesthetic perception, the school system is a single defined culture children live within. Young people cannot be defined by their school-selves alone; they, like all people, change their behaviors and language according to the environment or culture.

While TYA cannot and should not sever its ties with the schools, it must proceed with the awareness of the cause and effect of financial transactions between art and its funders.

Teachers often quip that the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else. I move forward from this research process with that idea in mind. The tools of philanthropy, social marketing, and audience development speak to a common action: educate. Educate our communities about our missions, our challenges, and our commonalities. Respect the adults in the audiences by understanding how to educate and be educated by them about their concerns for their children, their financial limitations, and their needs that need to be met. Listen to young people and what they have to say about their culture, education, and entertainment. From that perspective, we can advocate ourselves to businesses and foundations that we are experts in children and families, so we can forge long term mutual relationships. We, as TYA practitioners in all departments, must learn and teach the cause and effect relationships between financial relationships and the arts, so we can be open with our funders and patrons about what we need and what we try to avoid. It is not enough to limit our focus to the child audience; as we move
through the next hundred years of Theatre for Young Audiences, we carry the weight of cultural education of our communities.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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