



# The Young Audience: Exploring and Enhancing Children's Experiences of Theatre

*Matthew Reason*

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Children's theatre in the UK is thriving right now. Interest is growing in the educational, emotional and expressive benefits of theatre for young people; arguments about why children should watch theatre have become a central motif in debates about cultural policy and arts education. Yet, surprisingly, there has been almost no detailed and reflective research on these matters. While young children (aged 4-11) are increasingly provided for in terms of tailored theatre performances, the nature of children's theatrical perceptions and their experiences of being in an audience has scarcely been investigated.

This book uses innovative visual-arts based audience research, practitioner interviews and contextual analysis to fill this gap in research and explore the nature of young children's experiences of live theatre. It investigates three primary areas:

- \* the cultural policy, educational and creative contexts in which theatre for children is made
- \* children's aesthetic experiences of theatre
- \* the approaches through which children's engagement with theatre can be enhanced, extended and deepened

*The Young Audience* provides a valuable resource for teachers, artists, researchers, students, policy makers and other professionals working with theatre and with children in various other contexts and environments. It significantly enhances existing cultural policy and educational research by providing a detailed, analytical and methodologically grounded understanding of how young children perceive and respond to live theatre performances. It thus provides vital insights into how we can better support and enhance children's engagement with theatre.

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