

Community Theatre and Its Impact for Youth

An Honors Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I wanted to find evidence that suggests that community theater is an important and positive learning environment for young people. My goal is to see the comparisons between a school environment and a community theater environment and how it affects youth academically, socially, and mentally. To prove this, I worked at Muncie Civic Theater as a Stage Manager for their youth program and observed the young actors throughout the rehearsal process. I also gave a portion of the young actors a questionnaire that asked demographic questions as well as questions regarding what the young actors have learned while being a part of the program. My results of the observations and questionnaire showed that young actors who took part in the Muncie Civic Theater youth program were more confident and learned social skills because of their participation. I concluded at the end of this study that young people do much better socially and mentally if they participate in community arts programs than if their only learning environment was school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr. Andrew Waldron for helping me with this project and for always being a supportive professor during my time at Ball State University.

I would also like to thank my family by name: Robert, Amanda, Jack, and Emi Waddle for always supporting my endeavors and for giving me the courage to keep going throughout this process.

PROCESS ANALYSIS STATEMENT

For this project, I worked as a Stage Manager for the local Muncie Civic Theater for one of their youth programs. During this process, I observed and gave out a questionnaire to young actors in the program to see first-hand the benefits of a community theater organization for young people. What I found was an amazing community that took charge of educating its youth with social and emotional learning.

My original idea for this thesis had changed over time from being very broad to being more specific. I found that while working as a stage manager, I caught myself comparing what I was doing in the theater to the things I do in the classroom. I was simultaneously in the classroom during the weeks and on Saturdays, I was at Civic all day. This allowed me to see the data collected through not only the lens of a stage manager and researcher but also through the lens of a teacher. My thoughts began to focus more on the learning environment that Muncie Civic's youth program was advocating and comparing it to the learning environment of schools. I found many similarities and differences but what stuck out the most came from the questionnaire answers. Having firsthand data from the young actors helped me understand what they were getting out of the program and what I saw was an increase in confidence levels socially and an increase in social and behavioral skills. Through this discovery, I focused my thesis more on this and took a deeper look in my analytic memos for examples of social and emotional learning during rehearsals.

POSITIONALITY

From January to March of 2023, I worked with Muncie Civic Theater as a Stage Manager for their Act II Youth Program. I am familiar with Muncie Civic and its youth program because I have worked with them before during my Theater Education practicum assignment. Muncie Civic Theater is the only community theater in Muncie and the building has a very rich history. Once a vaudeville stage with traveling groups taking the stage, Muncie Civic Theater is now a place for both new and old actors to perform and practice the art of theatre. The theater has three youth programs, Encore, Act I, and Act II. Encore is meant for very young ages, from grades Kindergarten to 2nd. Act I is for middle-level learners from grades 3rd – 6th. Act II is for high-level learners from grades 7th – 12th. For this season, I worked as a Stage Manager for the Act II group during the show *Disney's Descendants*.

The show ran from January 7th to March 5th, with rehearsals meeting every Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. We had 8 weeks to pull this youth show together with only one rehearsal per week. The program is fast-paced and expects the youth actors to be on top of their lines and their blocking to make a successful show.

As a Stage Manager, I was able to observe from the inside as a participant observer because of my duties as a Stage Manager as well as the observations for this study. I was familiar with some of the youth actors from my previous work with Muncie Civic, but many faces were new to me. This allowed me to have a mix of new and old faces when observing and giving out the questionnaire.

Being the Stage Manager for Muncie Civic Theater included many different duties. My primary duties included keeping the cast on schedule during rehearsal, answering parent emails, creating a list of to-dos before the show opens, guiding youth actors to different parts of the building, and taking notes for the post-rehearsal discussion. During tech week, I was also in charge of calling the show; a term used in theater that means I told the lights, sound, and backstage crew when to “go” during a show. All these tasks took place at the same time I was observing the youth actors and my role helped me get better insight on how the actors were feeling throughout each rehearsal.

METHODS

For this study, I wrote analytic memos for each rehearsal detailing observations I had about actor behaviors and interactions. The analytic memos also included comparisons between teaching and stage managing at Muncie Civic Theater. I have coded the memos with different topics including the duties of a stage manager, the Muncie Civic production process, actor emotions, actor behavior, teacher–stage manager comparisons, actor–production team interactions, community building, and personal commentary. These topics will help support my thesis of community theater being an important and positive learning environment for a young person’s life.

Along with the analytic memos, I created a questionnaire to better understand what opinions the youth actors had on the effects of being a part of Muncie Civic Theater. In this questionnaire, I asked questions based on demographic, the effects of the program on social, personal, and family values, and other activities the actors were a part of during the rehearsal process. To better understand the data, I used quantitative analysis by using frequencies, ranges, and percent

analysis. On one of my questions, Question 11, the participants gave me many different types of answers. In order to understand this, I coded this question using in-vivo and descriptive coding. This helped the patterns appear more clearly as I analyzed the wide range of answers provided for this question. Since I could see the data more clearly through coding, I could further understand how the participants felt about the community theater and how it impacts them socially and emotionally.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were ages 12 – 18. Grade levels ranged from grades 6th – 12th grade. Each participant gave me a parent's permission slip that allowed me to observe them during rehearsals and allowed me to give them a questionnaire mid-way through the rehearsal process. Participants were also enrolled in the Muncie Civic Theater Act II program, which allowed the participants to be in the rehearsal process for the show. Real names have been kept confidential for both the observations in the analytic memos and the questionnaire.

In the questionnaire, I ask a few questions regarding the demographic of participants to get a better feel for where actors were based on age and grade.

Question 1: How old are you?

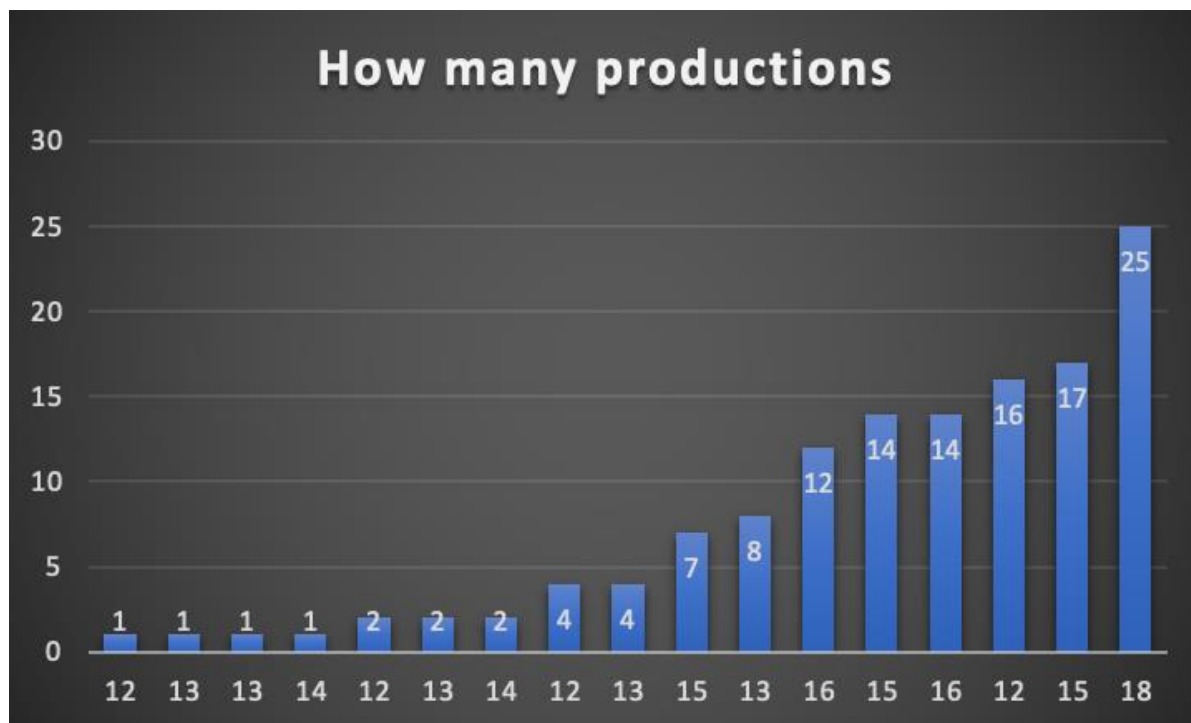
In this question, I wanted to find out how old each participant was when taking the questionnaire. The data showed that four individuals stated they were 12 years old, five individuals stated they were 13 years old, and seven stated they were ages 14 – 16. One individual stated they were 18 years old. Based on the data gathered, more than half of my participants were middle schoolers

and the other half were high schoolers. This is significant because it will show if there are any differences in further data regarding if they have finished middle school or not. The outlier, the 18-year-old, is also significant because it will show any changes in opinions if the participant is a legal adult. Younger actors also get the most benefit out of the social and emotional learning environment as they get to practice interacting with people outside of the school setting. Older actors speak on the impact of that environment and how it developed their growth as a human.

Question 2: What grade are you in?

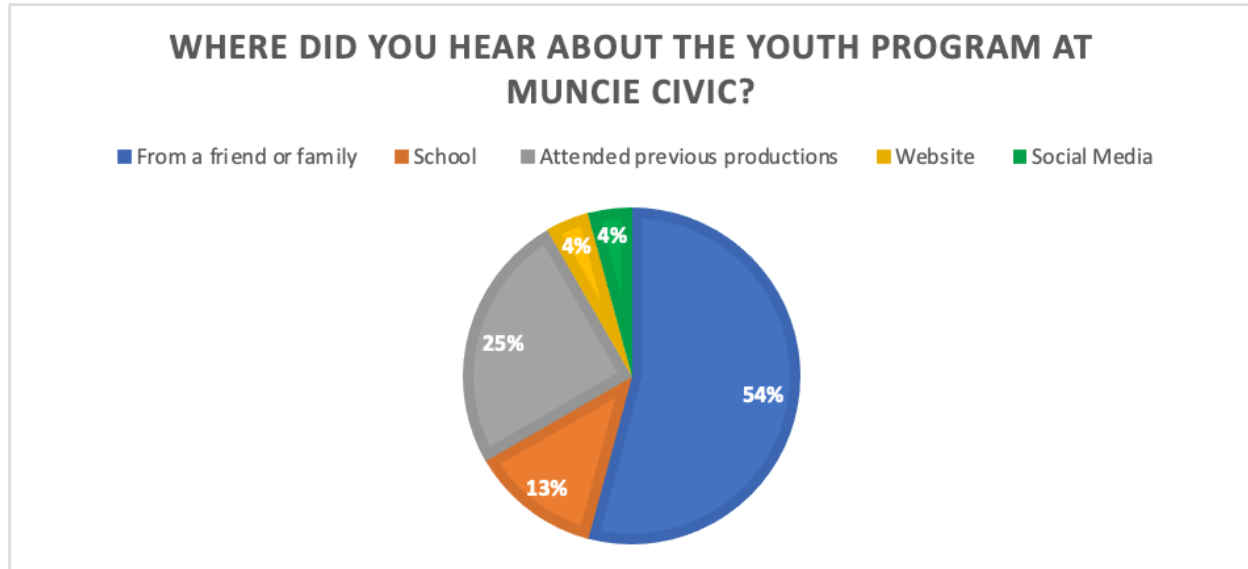
According to the data, 8 participants wrote they were in 7th grade. This is by far the grade where most of the participants were in. Five participants were in 9th grade or freshman in high school and one participant stated they were in 12th grade. The other three participants stated they were in grades 8th and 10th. One participant was in 8th grade while two were in 10th grade. Significantly, 8 individuals were in 7th grade and many of the following data entries reflect an overall positive range of opinions about the Muncie Civic Youth Program. One 12th grader will be important to see the changes in attitudes towards the Muncie Civic Theater program as an individual becomes more experienced in the theater community. We will see below that the 12th grader also had the most shows performed at Muncie Civic than any other participant. Grade levels indicate the social and emotional learning experience that actors have had previously, as younger actors are generally more inexperienced in social and emotional skills.

Question 3: How many productions have you been a part of at Muncie Civic?



Based on the graph, there is a wide range of productions the participants have previously been a part of. By far the largest number of productions was 25, answered by an 18-year-old participant. For the most part, we can see a trend of the older you are, the more productions you have been in at Muncie Civic Theater. There are some outliers like the 12-year-old with 16 productions under their belt, but the upward trend is still visible. Using the data, we conclude that older participants had stayed with the program longer, indicating repeated participation in the program. The program itself proves to be a positive learning environment for young actors as they return time and time again to be a part of the program. The data spread also represents the many kinds of people the participants will interact with; some youth actors come from lots of theater experience while others are first-time actors. These diverse backgrounds support the social and emotional learning environment as participants interact with peers of diverse ages and backgrounds.

Question 4: How did you hear about the youth program at Muncie Civic?



Over half of the participants had heard of the Muncie Civic Theater Youth Program through a friend or family member. This is significant because it shows the community behind the program and how word of mouth from trusted individuals is one of the most driving factors in if a young person will be a part of the program. 25% of participants said they attended past productions which influenced them to become a part of the program. When combining the participants who stated they heard about the program from a friend or family and participants who had attended previous productions, we get 79% of the participants from this study. We can conclude that the Muncie community is responsible for much of the broadcast of the Muncie Civic Theater Youth Program. A total of 13% of participants stated that school was an important factor in hearing about the youth program. Only 8% of the participants stated that social media and websites were responsible for them hearing about the program. This is significant because we would hypothesize that social media would have a higher percentage of young people who credit it as a reason for hearing about the program. This may be due to Muncie Civic having very little social media presence. The program has a Facebook page and there are fan accounts on Instagram for

the program however, many young people do not use Facebook anymore. This may also be because a total of nine participants were under the age of 13, the required age to use Facebook being 13. This data shows that the Muncie community takes charge of broadcasting its youth program to young people through word of mouth and trusted individuals. This builds on our idea that social and emotional learning is occurring as a part of the youth program as we see the Muncie community spreading by word of mouth about the program's benefits for young actors.

Table 1: Questions 5, 6, 7: Please indicate how important Muncie Civic Theater is in your Personal (Q5), Social (Q6), and Family lives (Q7)				
	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Personal Life	0	1	12	4
Social Life	0	2	8	7
Family Life	1	6	6	4

In the data spread, we can see that 12 participants indicated that Muncie Civic Theater is an “Important” aspect of their personal lives. 4 participants went higher than that and stated that the program is “Very Important” to their personal lives. This shows that almost all of the participants were impacted personally by the youth program. Only 1 participant stated that they felt “Neutral” about the importance of their personal lives. This is significant as it lays out how the program has created many personal impacts on young people, no matter what age or grade the individuals were in.

For the social importance of the program, we had more of a mixture of answers. 7 participants stated that Muncie Civic Theater's Youth Program was "Very Important" to their social lives, 8 stated that the program was "Important" to their social lives, and 2 stated that they felt "Neutral" on if it was important to their social lives. We see an increase in the number of participants who believed that the program was very important to their social lives. The significance of this can be seen through the increase of "Very Important" entries as we can conclude that socially, Muncie Civic Theater is a place to find new and old friends through theater.

Family life was seen as the least important regarding Muncie Civic's Youth Program. According to the table, 4 participants found the youth program's impact on family life to be "Very Important", 6 participants found it to be "Important", 6 were "Neutral" on the importance, and 1 participant found that the program was "Not Important" in their family life. We see a decrease in importance for family life overall with our first and only "Not Important" entry. When looking at the data, we can conclude that Muncie Civic Theater's Youth Program has the least impact and importance to young people's family lives, however, many still find it somewhat important. This could be because many parents and family members work in the youth program with their own kids as actors, meaning that family life is interwoven with the theater community. For those who felt neutral or felt it was not important, a potential hypothesis could be that their family is not involved in the theater community, or their family has other outside factors that make family less important during a youth program show.

Question 9: How much have you learned at Muncie Civic Theater?

This question was especially useful as 15 out of 17 of the participants stated that they learned “A Lot” at Muncie Civic Theater and only 2 participants stated they had learned “Some”. Based on the data, we can conclude that the Muncie Civic Theater Youth Program is not only a place to have fun, but it is also a learning environment for young students interested in theater. On question 11, I ask the participants to state what they have learned, with surprisingly varied results.

Question 11: If you feel that you learned something, please indicate one thing you have learned at Muncie Civic Theater.

Table 2: If you feel that you have learned something, please indicate one thing you have learned at Muncie Civic Theater.
I learned how to act
Something I learned at Muncie civic is how to not care what other people think about me
I've learned like how to act on stage and how to make a good production
Have confidence
how to be more confident
I have learned how to ask for help more than I would usually do
I've learned how to be proud and understand my emotions.
Difference between theatre and movie acting, Etc.
I have learned that theater is a form of art in which people share stories with the audience. It's important to tell these stories to reach people who need it the most and help others empathize with their favorite characters. The theater is a community as well as a family.

I've definitely grown as an actor
I have learned better social skills.
Overall, lots of dancing and choreography
How to be more confident
to go outside of your comfort zone
Flexibility as an actor (expanding range of skills, how to adjust to notes, etc.)
how to talk to other people
I have learned how to truly communicate my feeling and build a community.

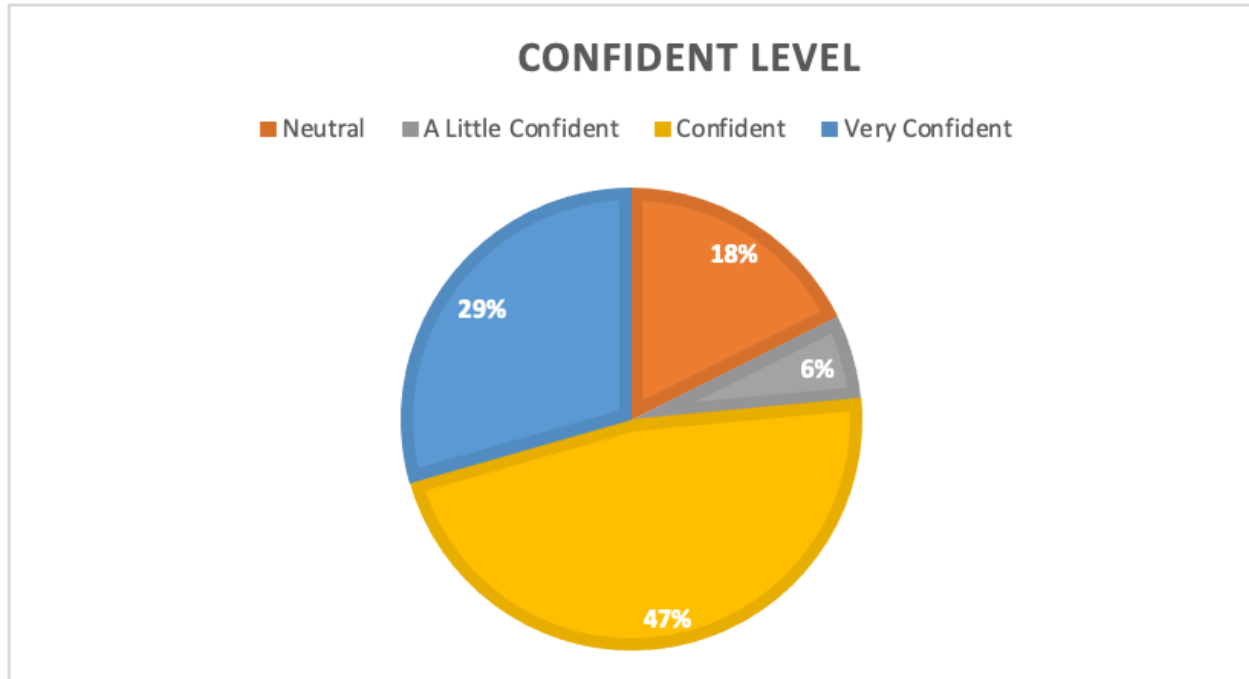
Table 3: Descriptive Coding Key	
Blue	Acting Skills
Green	Theatre as an Art Form
Orange	Community
Yellow	Social and Emotional Learning
Social and Emotional Learning Subcoding	
Red	Confidence = 4
Blue	“Understand my Emotions” = 1
Green	Communication Skills = 4
Purple	Empathy = 1
Orange	Self-Esteem = 2

For this follow-up question about what the participants learned while a part of the program, many different topics appeared in the participant data. To organize this data, it will follow a coding system to better understand each part of the answer. Four participants recorded that they

learned about acting skills (coded in blue) during the program. Acting skills included “flexibility as an actor” and “grown as an actor”. Four participants also recorded that they learned about theatre as an art form. Theatre as an art form consists of answers such as “dancing and choreography”, “make a good production” and “learned that theater is a form of art in which people share stories to the audience”. Two participants indicated that they learned topics about theatre as a community. Responses that indicated learning about theatre as a community were “community as well as family” and “building a community”.

Social Emotional Learning, coded in yellow, had the highest number of entries with a total of eleven. Social Emotional Learning, in this context, means that the entry provided was related to how the participant grew socially and emotional during the youth program process. Social Emotional Learning responses were sub-coded using in vivo and descriptive coding into five different topics: Confidence, “Understand my emotions”, Communication Skills, Empathy, and Self-Esteem. The highest number of responses out of the five categories were in both the Confidence and Communication Skills topics. Both topics were tied with four responses each, ranging from entries such as “outside your comfort zone” and “how to talk to other people”. Looking at the data, we can conclude that Muncie Civic Theater’s youth program teaches young people about how to communicate with others and how to be more confident. Other entries included learning to be empathetic and “understanding my emotions”. It is significant to see the pattern emerging from this set of data as social and emotional learning skills were taught the most at Muncie Civic Theater. Other skills were taught, however, the data shows that the participants support my thesis that community theaters are a positive environment for social and emotional learning.

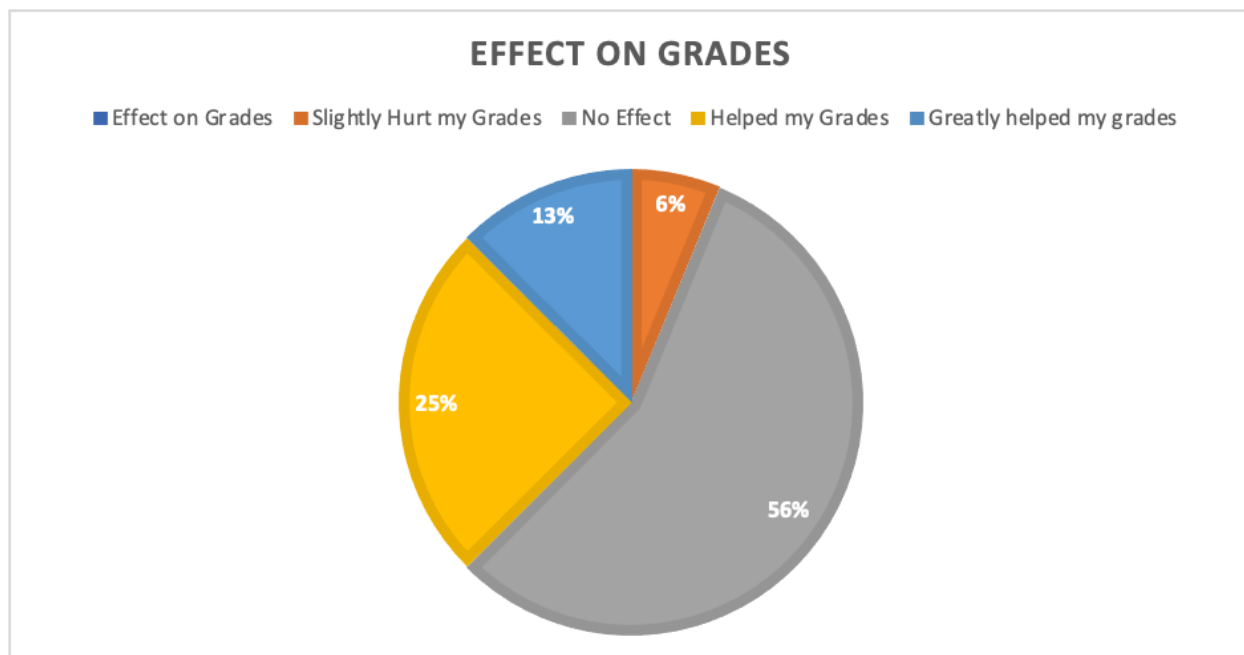
Question 12: Please rate your confidence level on stage.



Based on the pie chart above, we see 47% of participants felt “Confident” on stage when performing. 29% felt “Very Confident” and 18% were “Neutral”. Only 6% of participants felt “A Little Confident” on stage. In total, we can conclude that 76% of participants felt either confident or very confident on stage. Pulling from the specific ages and grade levels, the one 12th grader felt “Very Confident” on stage, but so did one 9th grader, one 10th grader, and two 7th graders. All but one of these participants who indicated they felt “Very Confident” on stage had been in at least 10 previous shows with Muncie Civics’ Youth Program. The participants who indicated they felt “Neutral” when it came to confidence level were all in 7th grade and had been in no more than 4 previous Muncie Civic youth shows. This is not an entirely surprising conclusion, but we can hypothesize that the more shows young people participate in at Muncie Civic Theater the higher their confidence level becomes. We can also hypothesize that Civics’ program creates a positive experience for those involved and grows young actors rather than tears them down. The positive learning environment present at Muncie Community Theater keeps and grows the

confidence of young actors. Confidence level is associated with one's own emotions on personal ability which directly supports my thesis that community theater is an important place for young people to grow socially and emotionally.

Question 13: How has Muncie Civic affected your grades in school?



According to the pie chart, 56% of participants indicated that Muncie Civic Theater had no impact on grades whatsoever. 25% stated that the program helped their grades, while 13% stated that the program greatly helped their grades. 6% of individuals indicated that the program slightly hurt their grades. In total, we can see that 38% of participants had better grades while participating in the youth program. The 56% is significant as it is over half of the subject pool taken during the questionnaire. If I was to do this questionnaire again, I would ask why the participants felt their grades improved or hindered during the process. But with the data that is presented here, we can hypothesize that the Muncie Civic Theater youth program's influence over academic achievement is varied and depend on the student's habits and behaviors towards

school. But for over half of the participants, academic achievement was not positively or negatively influenced by participation in the program.

Table 4: What other activities do you do besides Muncie Civic?					
Sports	Non-Drama Arts	Religious	School Clubs	Service	Drama
- Volleyball	- Art Club (3)	- Church	- Dungeons	- Student	- Drama Club
- Basketball	- Band (2)	Youth Group	and Dragons	Council (3)	(6)
- Track (5)	- Choir (4)	(4)	Club	- Key Club	- Improv
- Cheer		- Bible Study	- Cooking	(2)	- School
- Cross		- Church	Club	- Scouts of	Theatre
Country (3)		Band	- Travel Club	America	
- Swimming			- School	- National	
- Softball			Newscasting	Honors	
			- Spanish	Society (2)	
			Club		

According to the datasheet compiled and organized above, we can see the large range of activities the participants were a part of during the youth program rehearsal process. When looking at art-related activities under Non-Drama Arts and Drama, the data shows 17 entries were recorded including Art Club, Band, Choir, Drama Club, Improv Club, and School Theatre. When looking at non-art related activities under Sports, Religious, School Clubs, and Service, 32 entries were recorded. These activities included but were not limited to, Track, Church Youth Group, Key Club, and Cooking Club. Track was entered 5 times by participants while Drama

Club was entered 6 times. Under the Sports column, we can state that Track was the most participated sport when it comes to doing the youth program as well. Drama Club unsurprisingly had the most entries with 6. Some other interesting activities mentioned were Boy Scouts of America (now known as Scouts of America), Church Band, and School Newscasting. When looking under the Non-Drama Arts column, we can see that most entries were for Choir with 4.

When looking at the participant's data in this question, we can see that 4 participants were in Arts only activities. A total of 4 entries were indicated on Church Youth Group, one of the higher amounts in the data spread. Two participants also stated that they do no other activities besides the program, meaning that the youth program is the only activity this participant is a part of. Two participants indicated that the youth program is the only art-related activity they do but are a part of sports and clubs at school.

We can conclude based on the data collected that the youth program at Muncie Civic Theatre has a large population of youth who are in sports as well as theater. This breaks our preconceptions of theater being not for sports people, popularized by entertainment such as *High School Musical* and *Mean Girls*. These productions show an exaggerated view of the arts as a whole and separate young students into "sport-types" and "art-types" but, we can see that this is not the case. Young people are incredibly complex and participate in a variety of activities, no matter what group they are a part of.

Other notable clubs mentioned were Dungeons and Dragons and Key Club. Dungeons and Dragons is a role-playing game that involves dice rolling and improv work to create a story with

a group of people. It has been around since the 1970s but has only recently been more accepted as a legitimate club and hobby. It involves acting as you create a character and make decisions based on that character. In a sense, it is a small form of theater and a hobby that many theater professionals play because of its inherent low-stress environment and provides opportunities for everyone to act. Key Club is a service program led by students where they plan volunteering opportunities and do them for the community. I found this to be notable as it is a way for young people to help their local community, including Muncie Civic Theater. Service hours not only show dedication and kindness but also can be used as a way to spread the word about local events and opportunities.

RESULTS

Youth Acting

While observing the youth actors and writing the analytic memos, I discovered that many young actors developed and grew their acting skills. Many actors would come to the production team for notes, critiques, and asking for advice because they genuinely wanted to improve their skills. I had many actors who wrote me emails during the production process asking about their performance and wanting feedback based on the previous rehearsal. This showed me how passionate the youth actors were about improving and gaining more theatrical skills. One young actor had asked me to teach them how the rope system worked backstage. I obliged and showed this actor how to properly tie the ropes, which ones to not touch, and how to tell when the batten has gotten close to the floor. These are skills that are not taught in a classroom but rather are hands-on activities for young actors to learn about theatre, in this instance, technical theatre. I

also showed many actors how to operate the fog machine, a simple device that creates artificial fog on stage.

From the questionnaire, I gathered more data on what the participants had learned from being a part of Muncie Civic Theater. Four participants recorded that they learned about acting skills (coded in blue) during the program. Acting skills included “flexibility as an actor” and “grown as an actor”. Four participants also recorded that they learned about theatre as an art form. Theatre as an art form consists of answers such as “dancing and choreography”, “make a good production” and “learned that theater is a form of art in which people share stories with the audience”. Two participants indicated that they learned topics about theatre as a community. Responses that indicated learning about theatre as a community was “community as well as family” and “building a community”.

It is surprising to see how passionate these actors were to be learning new material, especially when we know in an academic setting that passion is not always there. Seeing the differences in engagement between school and a community theater is stunning, however, it could be due to those young students already having an interest in theatre, while public schools try to engage students with a range of interests. However, based on my analytic memos and the questionnaire, I can conclude that community theater holds a young person’s engagement for much longer than a public school. This, in turn, creates a learning environment that supports engagement on a social and emotional level through a safe community of fellow thespians and theatergoers.

Youth Social-Emotional Behaviors

Social Emotional Learning, coded in yellow, had the highest number of entries with a total of eleven. Social Emotional Learning, in this context, means that the entry provided was related to how the participant grew socially and emotionally during the youth program process. Social Emotional Learning responses were sub-coded using in vivo and descriptive coding into five different topics: Confidence, “Understand my emotions”, Communication Skills, Empathy, and Self-Esteem. The highest number of responses out of the five categories were in both the Confidence and Communication Skills topics. Both topics were tied with four responses each, ranging from entries such as “outside your comfort zone” and “how to talk to other people”.

Throughout the rehearsal process, young actors felt a range of emotions. The most common emotion that was heard during the process was “anxiety”. Being a part of a show is exhausting and takes a toll on people who have anxiety. In my analytic memos, I highlighted many times when actors would feel stressed and anxious, however, most of these emotions occurred during the audition process or our tech week. During our auditions, I wrote “Many actors were visibly nervous, but I observed that after I or another team member broke the tension, they looked more relaxed. Actors who were relaxed and calm during their singing performed better than those who were still anxious. Every actor is different and sometimes no matter how hard you try, the actor will be nervous” (Waddle, Analytic Memos 2023, pg.4). Young actors were, unsurprisingly, nervous about auditions as they wanted to do well during the audition. Young actors also felt anxiety during our tech rehearsals at the end of the rehearsal process. I write in my analytic memo about this tech week anxiety by saying “It is clear that our youth actors were stressed about the upcoming run so to ease some nerves, we practiced some breathing exercises” (Waddle, Analytic Memos 2023, pg. 34). I do not believe that the youth actors were always

stressed. In fact, these stressful behaviors were only recorded during the audition process and tech week. We can conclude that the rehearsal process was the reason behind the anxiety, rather than the community theater environment itself.

Youth actors portrayed other behaviors that suggested that the community theater environment grows social and emotional behavior. In my analytic memos, I go in-depth on two instances of young actors growing as individuals in both social and emotional settings. The first example is of two young actors bonding over art during rehearsal where I write “These actors, whom I will call A and L for anonymity, had seemingly formed a bond over art. L was showing A their sketchbook while A was showing their phone with hand-drawn art in one of their apps. The reason this stuck out to me was that L and A had shown introverted and wallflower behavior the last couple of rehearsals” (Waddle, Analytic Memos 2023, pg. 13). For A and L, it is apparent that the program is the latter for them. Still, I saw a connection between two wallflowers that does not happen everywhere. These two shared a common interest and through that connection, a bond was formed. The second example comes from a young actor who grew from being quiet and reserved, to joining a group of their peers during lunchtime. I write “However, Eric’s behavior has shifted over the past couple of rehearsals. While Eric is still quiet and reserved, I have started to notice an improvement in his ability to interact with others. During this rehearsal, Eric came in wearing a bright blue fedora, something that he was clearly proud of ... Back during the lunch period, I noticed that Eric was not eating alone, but rather, was playing the game Mafia with another group of actors “(Waddle, Analytic Memos 2023, pg. 30). I saw this growth take place over the course of 4 rehearsals where the actor grew more and more confident.

Both observations support the thesis that community theater is a positive learning environment for young people, in this case, for social and emotional growth.

Looking at the data and observations, we can conclude that Muncie Civic Theater's youth program teaches young people how to communicate with others and how to be more confident. Other entries included learning to be empathetic and "understanding my emotions". The importance of this conclusion comes from how young people learn these skills outside of community theater through public and private schooling. These skills are transferable and are learned naturally through school, however, many schools are not as inclusive and caring as other community programs. Community theater teaches young people these transferable skills in a safe and positive environment, with the creation of art being the end goal. The environment plays a large role in how young people learn and grow. Not all schools have a safe and positive environment, much of this we can see from the recent rise of school shootings and bomb threats. Community theater programs provide that safety and security, while also teaching young people how to interact with the world and their peers.

CONCLUSIONS

Teacher as Stage Manager

While writing the analytic memos, I started to see major comparisons to being a teacher and being a stage manager for a show. I discovered that many of the strategies I implemented as a stage manager could transfer to being a teacher. One skill that I found to be transferable as a teacher was managing time. During the rehearsal process, I made sure that each group during the day was moving on time and was getting everything, they needed to be done at the right time. As

a teacher, this is a skill that is used in every class. You only have so much time in the classroom so having great time management skills benefits you and the students. Another skill that is transferable from being a stage manager into being a teacher is greeting students when they enter the classroom. This may seem like an obvious action however, there is a lot of power that comes from a teacher greeting students when they enter. It promotes a safe and friendly learning environment. As a stage manager, this is something you do every morning with the actors, and it creates a relationship that will help young people feel seen in the acting space.

Stage Manager as Teacher

Looking at vice versa, many skills and ideas that teachers use are applicable while stage managing. One skill I used was talking with your students and forming bonds over commonalities. This is something that stage managers don't always do but it makes the rehearsal process much more worth it when you form commonalities with the actors. Finding commonalities is also a social skill that young people will learn through interacting with the world. Another skill that is transferable from teaching to stage managing is understanding that young people will talk with their peers and get off task. This is something that you realize as you teach that many students have school as their only form of being social. As stated previously, social learning is important for young people and one of the best ways to practice that type of skill is to interact with people around you. The same applies when working as a stage manager for young actors; many of them use the theater as a place of safety and for social learning. This is apparent not only in my analytic memos but also in the questionnaire answers. Based on the data, we can conclude that young actors use the community theater space as a place for social learning and for a safe place to learn about theatre.

Value of Community Arts

The value of community arts can be seen not through just the Muncie community, but through the youth of Muncie. Based on the data in the analytic memos and the questionnaire, we can see the impact that community arts have on young people. Young people need the community arts to grow socially and behaviorally outside of school. And while schools offer that structure to some, the community arts offer a learning environment that is safe and positive. The community arts are also a place for young people to grow their confidence and have lasting relationships with people that share the same love for art. The value of community arts does not only extend to community theaters but to other community programs such as Scouting, YMCA, and youth art programs. As a teacher, I believe we need to focus on the arts more, and advocating for community art programs will grow and support a large group of future adults who are empathetic and determined to make the world we live in a better place. Muncie Civic Theater is that place for young people and based on the data I collect, I stand by the idea that community theater is an important and positive environment for young people to learn and improve their social and emotional skills.

Works Cited

Waddle, Carter. "Analytic Memos" Muncie Civic Theater, 2023.