Cultural Value

Critical Mass: Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution

The British Theatre Consortium: Janelle Reinelt, (P.I.), David Edgar, Chris Megson, Dan Rebellato, Julie Wilkinson, Jane Woddis

Arts & Humanities Research Council

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British Theatre Consortium, a small think-tank of academics and artists, investigated how theatre spectators value the experience of attending performances. Our partners were the Royal Shakespeare Company, The Young Vic, and the Theatre Royal Plymouth (Drum). Pursuing the phenomenology of actual experience, we collected self-descriptions from individuals who attended the theatre, gathered through online surveys, personal interviews, and creative workshops. We also tapped memory by asking some subjects about a performance they saw at least one year ago. Over 300 surveys were completed, 31 interviews and 3 workshops. In addition, three public events were held in the host theatres to share the findings ('Unrestricted View: What do Audiences Value in What They See?') and a culminating conference, held in London at the end of the project, featured panels of artists and academics (The Roar of the Crowd: a Conference on Spectators and Cultural Value).

The results of the research confirm that value emerges in the relationship between the performance, the subjects, and their contexts. Subjects reported valuing the sociality involved in theatre; associated the experiences with their lives and the wider world. For most spectators, combinations of emotional, sensory, and intellectual stimuli register the impact of the theatre experience. Subjects valued liveness, the provoking of thought, and communal experiences as well as acting and other aspects of artistry. Memory is acute and sensory initially, tends to decrease and also become more conceptual as time passes. Subjects talk to a range of partners, family, and friends, often for a considerable time after the experience. Many spectators remember some performances from childhood. Interviews and workshops reveal how subjects process their experiences as an on-going part of individual lives, and those of their families and social circles, extending the experiences when prompted to creative imagining.

Researchers and Project Partners

Royal Shakespeare Company, Young Vic, Theatre Royal Plymouth Drum, Theatre Partners; University of Warwick, Royal Holloway Univeristy of London, and Manchester Metropolitan University, University Partners; Wendy Haines and Lisa Swirblies, Postgraduate Researchers

Key words

Value Attribution, Sociality, Memory, Associations, Networks, Processes, Acting, Company

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1. Project Description

Overview

1. 'Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution' looked at how theatre audiences value the experience of attending performances. We collected self-descriptions of experiences of individuals who attended the theatre, which were gathered through online surveys, personal interviews, and creative workshops. We also tapped memory by asking some subjects about a performance they saw at least one year ago. In providing a rationale for how TSVA fit the AHRC guidelines, we wrote in the original application:

> We advocate a multivalenced approach to cultural value which, while not dismissing economic and instrumental approaches, rests on a comprehensive understanding of the processes of value attribution based on individual appropriation of the phenomenal experience of 'being there'. We seek to understand how these experiences coalesce and intermingle with the experiences of others to produce additional values, thus going beyond the 'aggregate of individuals' to highlight how cultural activity might contribute to public value. By emphasizing the processual aspects of value attribution, we hope to bypass the problems associated with the agon of 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' values. Value emerges in the relationship between the performance, the spectator, and the network of associations which the experience triggers.

2. The project followed a period during which the British Theatre Consortium (BTC), of which the authors are members, had carried out a number of preliminary events and projects on themes related to cultural value. These included a seminar on cultural value at the Royal Society for Arts, Manufacturing, and Commerce, attended by practitioners and academics, held in February 2012, and a panel reporting its findings to a conference on arts subsidy held at the V&A in July of the same year. However, the most important preceding event was 'The Spirit of Theatre', a research project that partnered with The Library Theatre in Manchester on the occasion of opening a new theatre space after 58 years in their basement theatre in the Central City Library. Under the leadership of Julie Wilkinson, we had looked at memories of the theatre's patrons over time, and their attitudes toward the old theatre building and the new move. (A description of 'The Spirit of Theatre' concludes this section of the report.)
3. Our main objectives for TSVA were

- To understand how specific theatre experiences are valued (or not) by audience members
- To identify associational networks of experiences that together with theatre attendance give rise to value attribution
- To question the difference time and memory make to value attribution

4. We partnered with three important British theatres: the flagship Royal Shakespeare Company, the innovative Young Vic, and the studio theatre of the well-established regional Theatre Royal Plymouth (Drum). Considering the tight timeframe mandated by the AHRC (nine months), we examined the projected programming for the period and selected three productions at each theatre chosen for their variety across four categories: classical, new, experimental, and adaptations. We also selected five productions that had been mounted a year or more ago for the long-term part of the study, thus totaling fourteen productions in all. (Fig.1)

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE CO	YOUNG VIC	THEATRE ROYAL DRUM
Candide (Mark Ravenhill, after Voltaire)	*The Secret Agent* (Theatre O)	*Fight Night* (Ontroerend Goed)
Hamlet (Shakespeare)	*The Events* (David Greig)	*The Animals and Children Took to the Streets* (1927)
Wolf Hall (Mike Poulton's adaptation of the Hilary Mantel novel)	*Happy Days* (Samuel Beckett)	Solid Air (Doug Lucie)
**Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare)	**The Changeling* (Middleton and Rowley)	* Lovesong (Abi Morgan)
**The Heresy of Love* (Helen Edmundsun)		*Horse Piss For Blood (Carl Grose)
*Indicates long term study: shows produced 2012 or earlier		

Fig. 1 Table of the theatre partners for 'Theatre Spectatorship and Value Attribution' and the shows selected for the study—all but the long-term study shows ran between October 2013 and April 2014.

5. The theatres provided us with patron contacts after we negotiated appropriate data protection agreements, and 317 spectators took part in the study. We had set our target at 120 research subjects who would have completed all three of

our surveys (ten per show), 45 of whom would also do in-depth interviews and 15 who would complete creative workshops. A separate cohort of at least 30 would take the long term survey. We learned from the experience and advice of Becky Loftus, Head of Audience Insight at the RSC (which has a long history of conducting its own audience research) that we could expect an initial uptake of ten people for every seventy invitations we issued. Thus for each show, we invited between 70 and 100 people to participate. By and large, our estimates were right and we mostly met our targets and occasionally exceeded them. The exception was interviews and creative workshops, which were slightly below target, proving more difficult to recruit. (Fig. 2)

Fig 2. Total Survey Subjects: 317

First Survey	Second Survey	Third Survey	Long-Term Survey
220	114	87	87

Interview and Workshop Figures Theatre	Interviews	Workshop
RSC	12	5
Young Vic	13	4
Theatre Royal	10	2

6. A key feature of our research is its longitudinal nature. Longitudinal studies are still comparatively rare in research on audiences, impact and cultural value; and our approach stimulated particular interest from our partner theatres when we reported our findings to them. Moreover, we especially wanted to investigate whether changes occur in spectators' thinking about their theatre experience over time. We therefore collected data from respondents three times over a two-month period.
7. The research subjects were given three surveys to complete, the first before seeing the performance, the second the day after the performance, and the third two months later. In the first survey (S1), we asked for basic demographic information such as age, sex, educational level, occupation, and previous school or amateur theatre experiences. Concerning the upcoming performance, we asked why they had decided to attend that particular play and what their

expectations were. We asked, 'What experiences in the theatre (if any) have stuck in your mind from the last couple of years, and why?' and included the general question, repeated in S3, 'What do you value most about going to the theatre?'

8. The second survey (S2) was aimed at catching early impressions, thoughts and feelings about the experience, so we asked some sensory-based questions about a possible image, scene or moment remembered. We asked abstract questions, too, such as 'what do you think the play was mainly about?' Another group of questions looked for networks of associations, asking if the spectator had discussed the experience with anybody, in what medium, and whether or not the performance, its situations or characters had connected to the spectator's life or the times in which we live. We offered an open-ended question that invited them to comment on anything else of their choosing, and we asked in a somewhat awkward formulation, 'What things which you value about theatre did you find in this production (if you did)?'
9. The third survey (S3), completed after two months, looked for memory traces as time passed on, and also for what subjects continue to value (or in some cases had emerged as valuable over time). We repeated some questions about key aspects—how they would describe the play in a few sentences, the battery of associational questions from S1 and S2, and we asked them to rate the value of attending the show on a scale from low to high and to comment on the reasons for the chosen evaluation. A separate long-term survey (S4), covering five shows produced at least one year earlier, combined S3 with the demographic questions from S1, and was completed by a different set of research subjects.
10. The 30-minute interviews were conducted with subjects after they had completed the initial three surveys (although not all interviewees completed all three). The creative workshops were held on dates worked out with the theatres (on their premises) with participants who had seen the show but might not yet have filled out the third survey.
11. Upon the completion of the data gathering and preliminary analysis, we held three public events titled 'Unrestricted View: What do Audiences Value in What They See?', one in each of the theatres, for interested patrons, survey respondents, theatre staff, and other theatre professionals to hear and discuss our findings; and one conference titled 'The Roar of the Crowd: a Conference on Theatre Spectators and Cultural Value' that combined academic and artistic

speakers, and also presented our findings. Over 200 persons attended these events.The BTC website features a blog in addition to this report including reports on all the public events. (See www.britishtheatreconference.co.uk .)

12. In the remainder of this report, we will describe specifically our data and findings in the surveys, provide a chapter on the interviews and workshops, and in a series of Appendixes, short 'case studies' on findings particular to each of the nine shows we studied in depth, and individual reports on the workshops .

'The Spirit of Theatre'

[We include below a short summary of the research project BTC undertook which formed a pilot study for TVSA. A full report on this project can be found on the BTC website.]

13. 'The Spirit of Theatre' was a pilot project testing new methods of investigation derived from creative writing pedagogy in order to develop a collaborative relationship between subjects and research. The study focused on the Library Theatre Company (LTC) and its relationship to the City of Manchester since its founding in 1952, in light of its move out of the theatre in the Central Library. In 2013, the company merged with Cornerhouse Cinema to form a new joint organisation inhabiting a newly-built arts centre 'home'.

14. Supported by Manchester Metropolitan University, directed by Julie Wilkinson for the British Theatre Consortium (BTC), and managed by free-lance producer and director Chris Bridgman, the project involved staff and students from the Departments of English, History, Business and the School of Art. The BTC oversaw the design of the research project as a whole and published the final report on its website. Chris Honer, then Artistic Director of LTC, and the 12-member Library Theatre Community Consultation Panel, contributed to research planning and execution.

15. Focussing on Chris Honer's production of Brecht's *Mother Courage* (22 Feb-9 Mar 2013) which played at the Lowry's Quays Theatre, LTC's temporary home, the project comprised these elements:

    (1) Questionnaires: before, straight after, and one week after the show. 96 respondents from five performances over the run.

    (2) Interviews: eight face to face, five on the phone with spectators plus three contextual interviews with Artistic Director, Architect and Carl Barry, an actor from the precursor to the Library Company (Intimate Theatre).

Conducted by English students and MMU School of Theatre graduate Sophia Hatfield, with training in interview techniques provided by MMU historian Fiona Cosson.

(3) Workshops: four experiments using creative techniques, writing, drawing and performing, with undergraduate students, an A-level class, and LTC audiences.

(4) Interactive web-site: http://www.spiritoftheatre.org designed by Julie Wilkinson, artist Simon Woolham and the web designers 'groupof'. Using the model of the questionnaires, the site invited contributions from the public. Comments were added to an animated display in a ghostly procession of memories.

(5) Conference Presentation: by Dr Jane Tonge and Julie Wilkinson, summer 2013, at the Academy of Marketing Conference in Cardiff.

(6) Exhibition: a display of findings in the foyer of the Quays Theatre at the Lowry, the LTC's temporary base, in September 2013. Ten panels illustrating the themes of the research using quotations from audience members and images by Simon Woolham were designed and made by Julie Wilkinson, graphic artist Johnny Clifford and Chris Bridgman.

Key findings

16. Theatre-going provides an imaginative framework over time in which to locate and interpret personal and collective histories. Participation in a shared theatrical culture bonds one generation with another and provides structure for the articulation of personal and, to some extent, civic identity. This benefit flowed from the continuity of Manchester City Council's support of the Library Theatre since 1952.

17. The high level of audience engagement represents an untapped resource suggesting the need for subsidised theatres and other arts organisations to revisit their public role.

18. Most spectators in our survey, over decades, engage with theatre regionally, lending the Library Theatre a pivotal cultural role. Contemporary writing/performance by women figured in respondents' lists of strong memories only at the Library Theatre, as opposed to at other companies in the region. The performance dates of the shows cited correlates with a policy decision by the

Library Company to take action to support women as directors, performers and writers in the mid-eighties.

19. The most surprising finding in the research was that, even when respondents said that they enjoyed the use of live music in *Mother Courage*, they were not expecting it. The majority did not see music as appropriate to 'serious' thought-provoking theatre of the kind that they expected from the Library Company. Live music is something these audience members associate with commercial touring shows, becoming the clearest indicator of a difference between thought-provoking drama and popular entertainment. Most respondents had to adjust their idea of what a play by Bertolt Brecht might involve when they heard the live band on stage, especially because the band used amplification. This indicates a disruption in the continuity of Brechtian dramaturgy in which song provides a crucial challenge to divisions between popular and 'bourgeois' art. However, there were respondents who cited musicals they had enjoyed at the Library Theatre, particularly by Stephen Sondheim. These were productions which formed part of a strand of work directed by Roger Haines, before reductions in subsidy in the late eighties forced the company to cut back on the use of live music. Except for its use in family Christmas plays, in the minds of the majority of these respondents, song on stage is once again associated with aesthetic populism, as in the period of melodrama.

20. Evaluative judgments appear to come into play for spectators not immediately, but some time after seeing a play in a way that tends to displace early responses that do not fit into a familiar critical vocabulary.

21. The research techniques appeared to offer a new way of recognising the agency of the contributing subject in the research process consistent with the re-visioning of the spectator as an active participant in the construction of value.

2. Play/Production Information and Photos

The Animals and Children Took to the Streets

created by the 1927 company, was shown at the Plymouth Drum in October 2013. Written by Suzanne Andrade with animation by Paul Barritt and music by Lillian Henley, the show premièred in Australia in October 2010 and then toured internationally. Performing in sync with an animated backdrop as if in a silent film, three actresses and a musician tell the story of how a middle-class mother with her child, Little Evie, attempts to improve the lives of the poor with art lessons in 'The Bayou', a run-down area in a fictional city rife with crime. The authorities plot to drug the area's children to suppress brewing rebellion. The story is narrated through a soundtrack spoken by a male character, represented on stage by an actress, a janitor who intervenes to help rescue Evie, but is finally abandoned, all hope dashed.

Photo courtesy of 1927

Candide

by Mark Ravenhill. Produced by the RSC in the Swan Theatre, summer 2013. The new play 'responds to Voltaire's novel' and was directed by Lindsay Turner and designed by Soutra Gilmour, with Matthew Needham as Candide. The play follows the early situation of the novel in that Candide sets out on an epic search for his love Cunegonde, and visits many exotic places as he also time travels. A second narrative

Photo Credit: Manuel Harlan

involves a contemporary family drama with a violent confrontation at a birthday dinner about half way through the play. The philosophical optimism which the original satirises is likewise questioned and made fun of in this modern version.

The Changeling

by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley was revived by the Young Vic at its Maria Studio in February 2012, transferring in a largely recast version on the theatre's main stage in November of the same year. Directed by Joe Hill-Gibbon and designed by Ultz, the operatic production placed the Alicante-set Jacobean melodrama within a theatrical metaphor, with the audience wrapped round the action. Sinead Matthews played Beatrice-Joanna in the main house version.

Photo Credit: Keith Pattison

The Events

by David Grieg was produced at the Young Vic in 2013. Co-produced with the Actors Touring Company and Brageteatret & Schauspielhaus Wien, it was directed by Ramin Gray and designed by Chloe Lamford. Responding to the mass murder in Norway in 2011, the play imagines a young female priest in dialogue with the killer. Claire is obsessed with trying to understand the motivations of the young man; he has his own agenda. A local choir complements the actors in a representation of the community involved in the events (in the fiction, the young man

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attacked a choir rehearsal). Questions of the possibilities or impossibilities of understanding and forgiveness drive the production.

Fight Night

by Ontroerend Goed, a collective based in Ghent, Belgium. They toured the show to the Plymouth Drum in late September and early October 2013. The director of the show was Alexander Devriendt and performer/devisers were Charlotte De Bruyne, Sophie Cleary, Valentijn Dhaenens, David Heinrich, Angelo Tijssens and Roman Vaculik. Without identifying characters' allegiances to any political party or policy, the show staged election hustings in a boxing ring, compèred by a Master of Ceremonies/Referee. The audience used electronic clickers to vote, with votes recorded on display screens on stage, choosing between five candidates in a series of rounds. Each performance began with a statistical profile of the audience, whose votes determined which performer took on what role in the show.

Photo Credit: Reinout Hiel

Hamlet

by William Shakespeare. This new production opened in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in March 2013. Hamlet was played by Jonathan Slinger, whose previous work for the RSC includes the title roles in *Richard III*, *Richard II* and *Macbeth*. The production was directed by David Farr and designed by Jon Bauser, whose fencing-room set was much commented on in reviews. Greg Hicks doubled Claudius and the Ghost of Hamlet's father, the same casting structure as in the last RSC production of *Hamlet*, with David Tennant in the title role and Patrick Stewart as Claudius/Ghost, directed by Gregory Doran, in the Courtyard Theatre in 2008.

Photo Credit: Keith Pattison

Happy Days

Photo Credit: Johan Persson

by Samuel Beckett. Produced at the Young Vic in London from January to March 2014, directed by Natalie Abrahami and designed by Vicki Mortimer. The two characters Winnie and Willie were played by Juliet Stevenson and David Beames. Beckett's surreal masterpiece focuses on the tenacity and resilience of Winnie, who is buried waist-deep (and, in the second act, up to her neck) in a mound of earth. Stevenson's performance and the quarry-like set were much commented on in reviews.

The Heresy of Love

by Helen Edmundson. This new play opened at the Royal Shakespeare Company's Swan Theatre at Stratford in February 2012, directed by Nancy Meckler and designed by Katrina Lindsay. The play was part of a cross-cast season of plays around the loose theme of faith (the others being Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and David Edgar's *Written on the Heart*). The subject of the play was the life and times of the 17th century Mexican nun, Sister Juana Ines de la Cruz - played by Catherine McCormack - who was patronised by the Spanish colonial court but excited the jealousy of her fellow nuns and was charged and tried by the Catholic establishment for heresy.

Photo Credit: Robert Day

Horse Piss for Blood

by Carl Grose was a new play directed by Plymouth Theatre Royal artistic director Simon Stokes and designed by Frances O'Connor. It opened at the Plymouth Drum theatre in March 2012. A black comedy about a former mental patient returning to his Cornish

Photo Credit: Nobby Clark

home, the play melds conspiracy theories about nuclear weaponry with the dark secrets of an abandoned mine shaft and the fable of the Owlman of Mawnan.

Lovesong

is a collaboration between writer Abi Morgan (*The Iron Lady*, *The Hour* and *Sex Traffic*) and Frantic Assembly. Directed and choreographed by Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett (and designed by Merle Hensel) the show opened at the Plymouth Drum in October 2011, before a national tour. Played by an older and a younger pairing, it tells the story of a couple over the 40 years of a childless marriage. A digital version of the show was recorded at the Lyric Hammersmith and is available online.

Photo Credit: Johan Persson

The Secret Agent

devised by Theatre O in co-production with the Young Vic and the Warwick Arts Centre, opened at the Young Vic in September 2013. It was directed by Joseph Alford, designed by Simon Daw, with choreography by Eva Vilamitjana. Matthew Hurt and the company's adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel is filtered through its Victorian origin, but makes many connections to present day issues of terrorism and surveillance. Verloc, a secret agent, is a small

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shopkeeper who associates with low-level anarchist characters and is pressured into obtaining a bomb by his minders. While he is an inconsequential human, he is lionised by his desperately poor and mistreated wife, Winnie, who tries to keep their household together, caring for her elderly, impossible mother and younger simple-minded brother. The paranoia of those in power, the instrumentality of little people, and the wretchedness of alienation and poverty are the key themes, explored through Theatre O's physical style of gesture and song that creates a dislocating experience for spectators.

Solid Air

by Doug Lucie, directed by Mike Bradwell and produced by the Theatre Royal Plymouth (Drum). The play imagined an encounter in the early 1970s between the singer-songwriters John Martyn and Nick Drake and Tony Blair, the entertainments officer running an Oxford University ball where Martyn is due to play. The play explores the farcical and political possibilities of the clash between the anarchic Martyn, the melancholy Drake, and the uptight Blair. The encounter is further disrupted by a presence of a young wannabe actress, not wholly committed to the free love values of her era and then the arrival of a squaddie, whose brutal nationalism is a reminder of atavistic political forces both in the seventies and today. Indeed, the play invites its spectators to reflect on the values of the seventies compared to those of present day Britain.

Photo Credit: Manuel Harlan

During the performance, Sean Biggerstaff (playing John Martyn) performs three Martyn songs on a chair right in front of the spectators, which was particularly admired by the audience.

Twelfth Night

by William Shakespeare. This revival opened at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in April 2012 and transferred to the Camden Roundhouse later the same year. Directed by David Farr and designed by Jon Bauser, the production was part of a season titled *What Country Friends Is This? Shakespeare's Shipwreck Trilogy*, alongside *The Comedy of*

Photo Credit: Keith Pattison

Errors and *The Tempest*. Set in a run-down waterfront hotel on a rotting boarded stage (hanging over the real pool from which Viola emerges), the production featured Emily Taaffe as Viola and Jonathan Slinger as Malvolio.

Wolf Hall

a dramatisation of Hilary Mantel's novel by Mike Poulton. Along with Poulton's dramatisation of Mantel's sequel novel *Bring Up the Bodies*, this production opened at the RSC's Swan Theatre in December 2013, directed by Jeremy Herrin and designed by Christopher Oram. Poulton's previous work for the RSC includes adaptations of *The Canterbury Tales* and *Morte d'Arthur*. Covering the period of Cardinal Wolsey's fall, Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon and his marriage to Anne Boleyn, the play charts Thomas Cromwell's ascent to the role of chief fixer to the king.

Photo Credit: Keith Pattison

3. The Sample

Demographics

1. Who filled in our questionnaires? We had 220 separate respondents to our first survey, of whom 114 also completed the second survey and of whom 87 have completed the third survey (so far). 87 correspondents also filled in the long-term survey.
2. Thirty-one subjects were interviewed and eleven others participated in workshops. All of these were from the primary, not long-term, cohort.
3. The gender distribution of correspondents to S1 (the only survey that asked for this information) is given in fig. 3.1, which shows more than half (60%) of those who filled in the survey as female. This reflects national patterns of participation in the arts as captured in Arts Council surveys like 'Taking Part' (2005-).

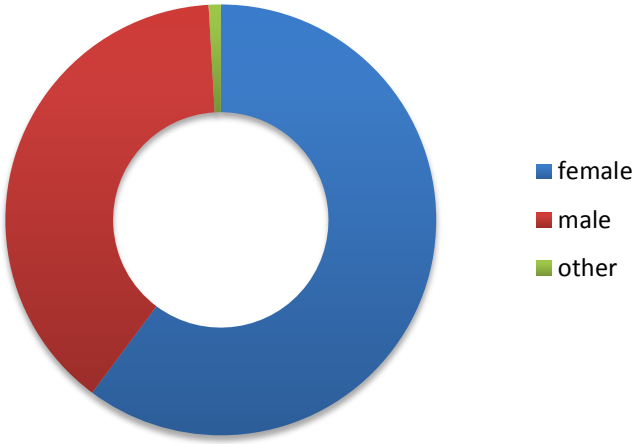


Fig 3.1

4. The gender of our respondents in the three theatres varied slightly. The Young Vic audience had the most even divide between male and female (48% to 51%); the Drum was the most imbalanced (32% to 67%), while the RSC was closest to the average across our sample (36% to 64%). The Young Vic and Drum, but not the RSC, included spectators identifying as 'Other' to this question.

5. The geographical distribution of our sample is shown in fig. 3.2. Three-quarters of our sample in S1 are from the south of England: 29% from London, 35% from the South-West and 11% from the South-East. This is, in part, due to the theatres that we surveyed (one in London, one in the South-West), but also reflects patterns of theatre provision nationally.

6. Our respondents were highly educated; the modal group in the sample were educated to postgraduate level and over 70% in S1 had been educated at least to degree level. While we were at first surprised by these figures, they were supported verbally by marketing staff at the Young Vic and Anne Torreggiani of the Audience Agency at two events we held in May 2014. It may also be, however, that the highly educated are more likely to fill in a questionnaire of this kind and that there is a bias inherent in the study. Further research would be needed to confirm or deny this.

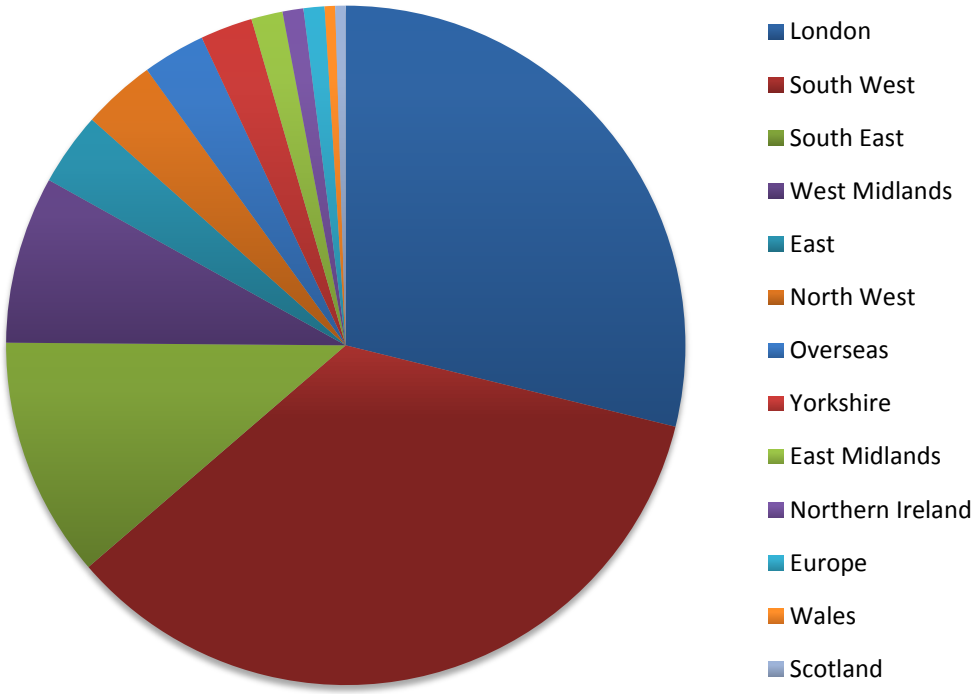


Fig 3.2

7. The education levels for the three theatres differ quite considerably. At the Young Vic 83% had been educated to degree level or higher, while at the Drum that figure is only 58%. However, this is partly explained by the Drum's very young audience (most of whom will not have yet had the opportunity to complete an undergraduate degree or postgraduate qualification [see 3.9]). The RSC audience, as with gender, is the closest to the average in our sample.

8. The age of our respondents is fairly evenly spread. Only the under-16 age group is – as one might expect – significantly under-represented in our respondents. (Indeed, the numbers are so small that we have ignored them in instances where they would have to stand for all under-16s.) The 56-65 and 65+ age groups are the two most strongly represented and the 26-35 and 36-45 groups the two least represented (under-16s aside).
9. These proportions vary with each theatre. The RSC has the oldest audience (57% being 56+ and 11% being 25 or under), while Plymouth has the youngest audience (34% being 56+ and 34% being 25 or under). The Young Vic, on the other hand, has a much higher proportion of its audience in the 26-55 age group: 58% compared to the RSC's and the Drum's 32%.
10. There is a popular conception that the spectators for theatre are just other theatre-makers. We did not find this to be the case. We asked about people's jobs in S1 and S4 and found that only 11% and 6%, respectively, declared their jobs to be in the theatre or other creative arts. Education was the largest single area reported, making up 29% of S1 and 23% of S4. Some of these were made of student groups and their tutors, but there were others involved in education without any professional reasons to attend.
11. It is perhaps worth remarking on the very broad spread of occupations listed, which included at least one psychotherapist, journalist, civil servant, tax

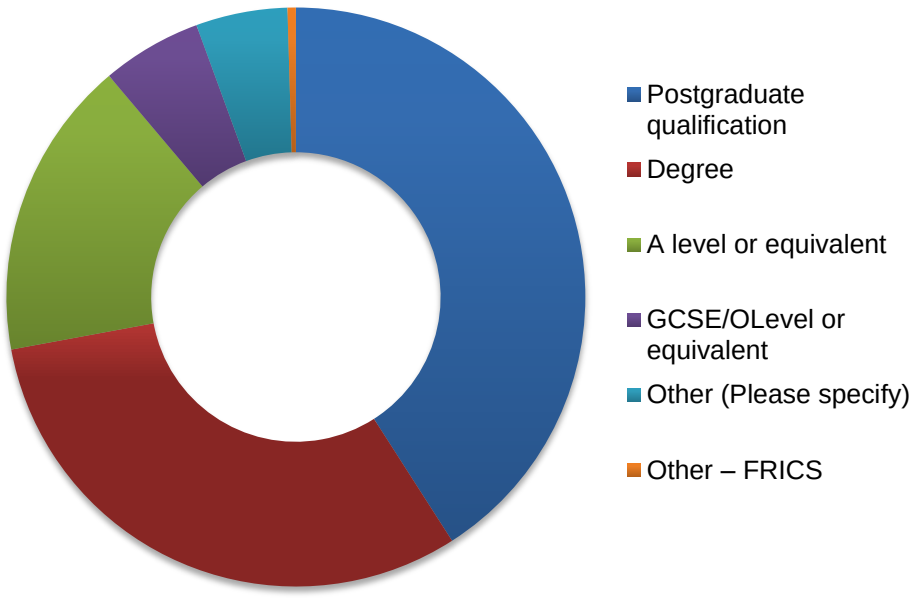


Fig 3.3

consultant, builder, nurse, solicitor, teacher, photographer, surveyor, engineer, janitor, farmer, and archaeologist. While a good many of respondents were among the 'professions', there were striking numbers of people in a range of jobs.

12. However, if our respondents did not work in theatre, a great many of them declared in S1 some prior practical experience of theatre (see fig. 3.4). Almost two-thirds of our spectators had been involved in school plays; just over two-fifths had been involved in amateur theatre and over one-fifth declared experience in youth theatre. Less than a quarter recorded no prior involvement in theatre.

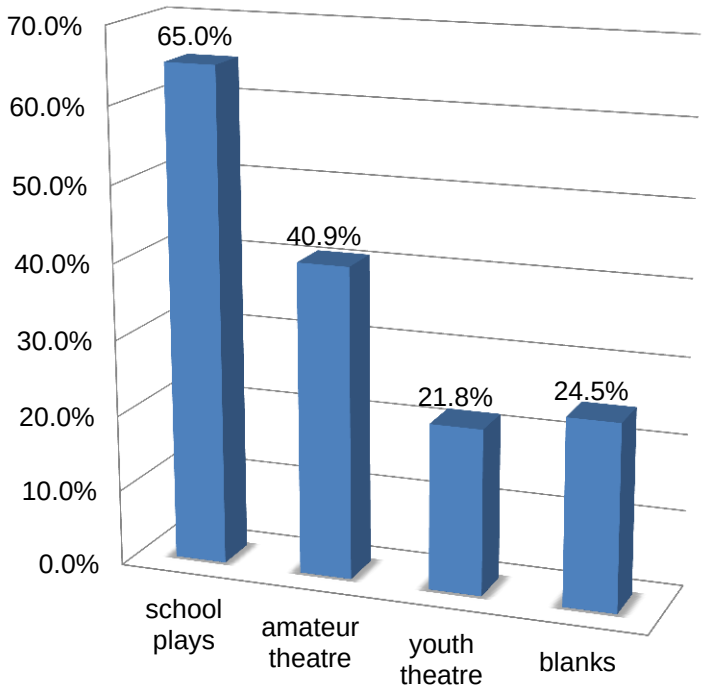


Fig 3.4

13. We asked our respondents in S1 how often they went to the theatre per year (see fig. 3.5). They were able to give any answer they liked and we interpreted their answers on occasion (the answer 'more than 20' was placed in the '21-30' band; 'every other month' was reckoned to be '6' and therefore placed in the '1-10' band). Without specifically going through one's diary and ticket receipts, this is inevitably going to be an approximation, but we hope that the overall picture is a reasonable indication of the theatregoing habits of our sample. Most respondents (59%) reported going to the theatre 1-10 times per year. Numbers drop steadily in the next two bands: 18.9% reporting 11-20 annual theatre visits and 10.8%

reporting 21-30 visits. Thereafter the numbers are very small. The highest

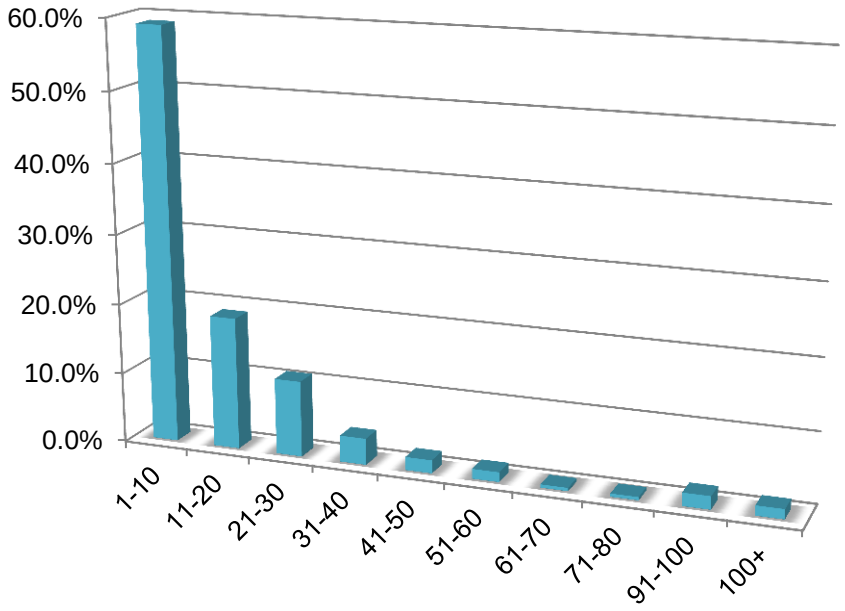


Fig 3.5

number of reported visits per year is 200. (We checked the occupation of the correspondent and this is *not* a theatre critic.)

14. We asked our respondents if they had visited this theatre before. 98% said they had, with only three saying no and two not answering the question.

15. We asked at what age our respondents had first been to the theatre. Most of our audience (60%) had already been to the theatre before their tenth birthday. A

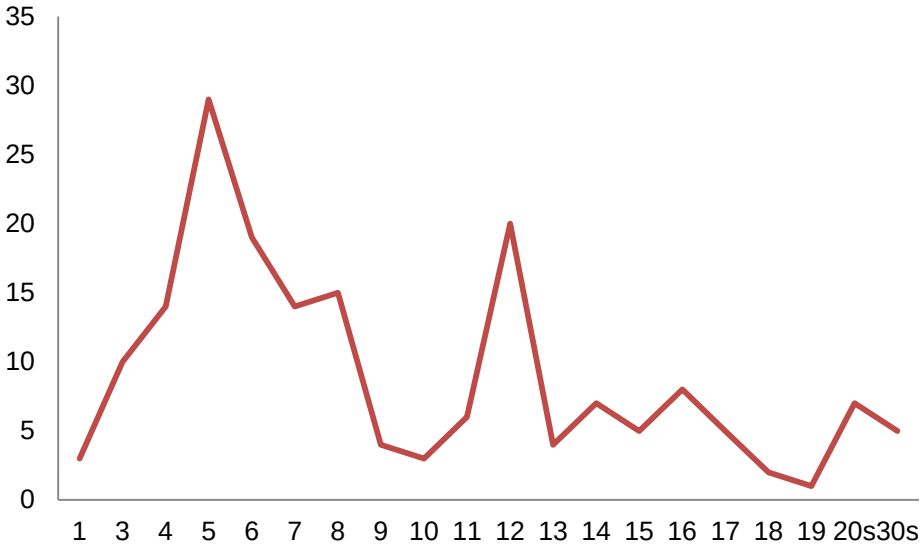


Fig 3.6

third first visited the theatre in their teens and only 7% had first visited the

theatre in their 20s or 30s. Fig 3.6 shows the numbers of respondents reporting first attendance by age, with peaks at 5 and 12 (the figures for the 20s and 30s appear to show a spike but are aggregated).

16. We asked our respondents if they had a disability 'relevant to your trip to the theatre'. 11 said yes, which is 0.5% of the sample.

4. Memory & Time

1. One of the key questions we wanted to ask was whether spectators' view of the theatre they see changes across time and, if so, in what ways. The Spirit of Theatre project had asked its audiences questions about their view of the play they were seeing just before, just after and a week later. We wanted to extend this time period and so our questionnaires are distributed just before, just after, two months after, and a year after the theatre visit. For reasons of the chronology of the project and the AHRC's timeframe, the final questionnaires related to different shows than those in the first three.
2. We asked a series of related questions across all of the questionnaires, hoping to trace the fortunes of different aspects of the play, how long they would live in people's memories and how the importance of each element rises and falls.

Value and Time

3. One consistent question asked throughout our questionnaires was about what respondents valued about theatre. Before they went, this was a general question about the things they valued in theatre as such; after they had seen the show, the question was about the show they had seen, inviting them to identify those things that they had valued about the performance. This has allowed us to model spectators' valuation of theatre across time.
4. We gave respondents a free text entry box in which to identify the values they ascribed to theatre. This led to a huge proliferation of different attitudes, ideas, approaches, lengths and specificity of response. To make sense of what they were telling us, we looked at the general responses and began to group replies under particular headings.
5. For instance, under the heading of 'thinking' we put a range of replies that singled out cognitive and ideational aspects of theatre experiences: 'food for thought', 'exploration of ideas', 'time to think', 'being ... made to ponder' were all answers placed in this category. 'Newness' covered all responses that referred to the originality or novelty of the theatre and the value of being told a new story. 'Emotion' comprised responses that either specifically used the word emotion and

its variants (e.g. 'emotional involvement', 'emotional impact', 'responding to emotions'), synonyms (e.g. 'being moved', 'feelings'), and specific emotional/affective states (e.g. 'being delighted, excited'). 'Communal' referred specifically to the shared collective experience of being in an audience, while 'atmosphere' might involve the whole experience of going to the theatre, including before and after.

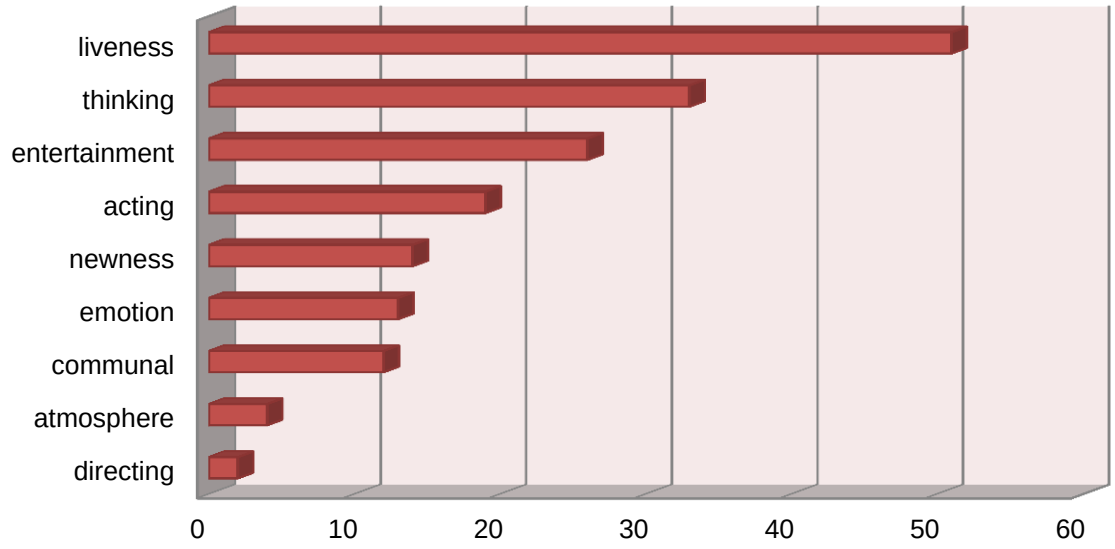
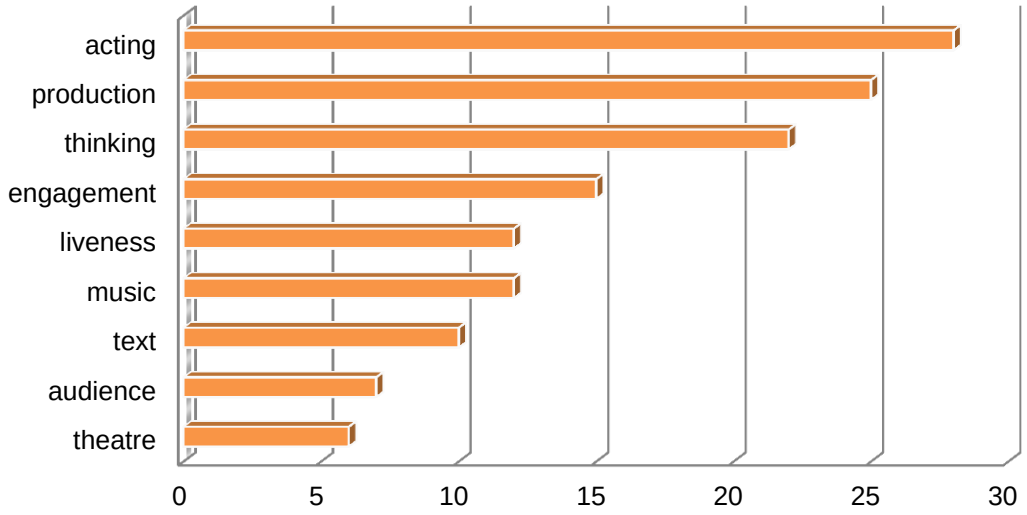


Fig 4.1

6. Fig 4.1 shows us the results of the general question asked in the first questionnaire. It shows the raw number of respondents who gave answers in that category. (Note that spectators often gave multiple answers and were not asked to choose one.) It confirms the findings of *The Spirit of Theatre* that 'liveness' is substantially the most common category of value of theatre reported by theatregoers. Following that is 'thinking', with various others after that.
7. The second questionnaire was completed around 24 hours after the first. In it, respondents are asked 'What things which you value about theatre did you find in this production (if you did)?' Fig 4.2 shows that that the values reported are ordered rather differently from the first questionnaire.
8. Now the highest rated value is the 'acting', which was only fourth on the list in S1, with the 'production' as a whole – a value that barely figured in the first questionnaire – second. Curiously, entertainment has disappeared from the top ten values (but more on that later).
9. 'Engagement' refers to answers talking about the spectator's emotional and intellectual involvement with the performance. 'Audience' refers to the collective

Fig 4.2

experience or direct audience participation. 'Music' was a particularly popular reference for audiences to *Solid Air*, a play which focused on two famous folk rock musicians from the early seventies and featured several live performances. 'Theatre' refers to the qualities of the building itself, the auditorium, stage, and front of house.



10. As a whole, it is clear that the sensual immediacy of theatre is the first value that is identified by the audience. Acting, production, engagement, liveness, music, audience, theatre all contribute to this sense of the event as a richly immersive experience. The answers are themselves immersed in values connected with sensuous engagement.

11. This is confirmed by answers to other questions. Spectators were asked what particular moments or lines from the play they remembered. As shown in fig 4.3, 77% of the audience answered with a description that either (a) explicitly referred to the emotional, affective, sensuous quality of a moment, e.g.:

- 'The use of sound to start and end acts made people jump' (*Happy Days*)
- 'There is a moment in the window where just after letting rip at Nick Drake that John Martyn realises the hurt he may have caused and hugs Nick Drake. There was a tear in both Nick Drake's and my eye' (*Solid Air*)
- 'the moment when the Host stood alongside the other candidates. It stands out because it made me feel cross.' (*Fight Night*)

or (b) incorporated subjective, affective states into their descriptions of these moments, e.g.:

- 'Repeated scene of Claire spilling/throwing cup [of] tea... […] First time quite surprising and sudden, second time predictable, but still a change of mood' (*The Events*)
- 'the opening scene with the three actresses peering from their windows while the animated backdrop set the scene with cockroaches crawling. Loved it because from that moment I knew we were in [f]or a treat.' (*Animals and Children Took to the Streets*)
- 'The image of 5 cloaked actors stood on the stage, each smiling at you

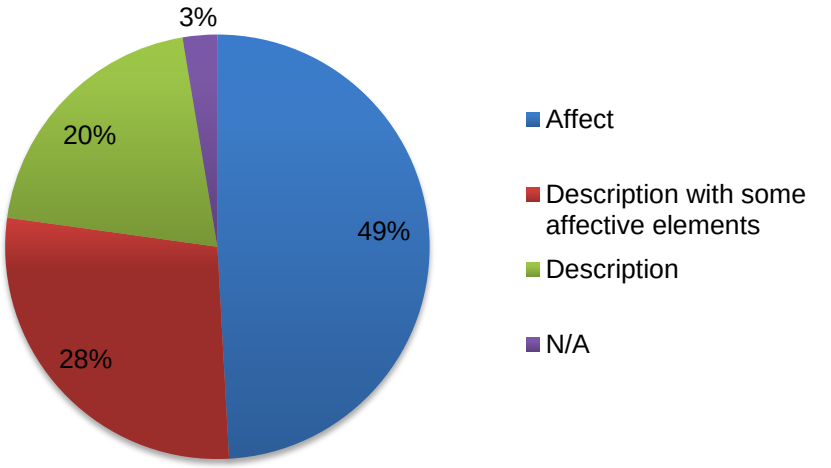


Fig 4.3

in an individual way. There was a feeling of "Who are they? What's going to happen next?"' (*Candide*)

12. By contrast only 20% gave (what seemed to us to be) purely neutral descriptions of performance moments, e.g.:
    - 'Ladies' white face make-up' (Animals and Children Took to the Streets)
    - 'the end. They all died' (*Hamlet*)
    - ' Jane Seymore [*sic*] declaring that it will be a boy next time having delivered the girl' (*Wolf Hall*)
13. The 3% of N/A answers were those where the spectator had either not supplied an answer or the answer was, for various reasons, incomprehensible.
14. This confirms the picture offered by the statements of value that immediately after a performance the values most commonly identified are those embodied in

the sensuous, emotional and affective experience of the theatre: its immersive aspects.

15. Two months later, S3 tells a slightly different story (see fig. 4.4). Now, the value most commonly identified is the theatre's opportunity to stimulate thinking and generate ideas and debate, which has leapfrogged 'acting' and 'production'. Other more sensory aspects, such as 'engagement', 'liveness', and (arguably) 'entertainment', have dropped out of the list, while 'politics' makes an entirely new appearance. 'Text' is more valued in the memory of the production while 'music' has become less so. There are new values of 'relationship' (meaning the value the performance has had to some personal relationship of the respondent) and 'social' (referring more broadly to the social experience of the theatre event); we will say more about this later.

16. The overall picture suggests that two months after a performance, the values most readily identified by its spectators are what we might call cognitive ones: the ideas and thought provoked by the performance and the political significance of the show. There is some correlation between these values and a stronger appreciation of the text (where there is one, of course). Meanwhile, the sensory qualities that were very strong in the immediate aftermath of the performance have receded in significance.

17. In the final survey, S4, completed one year after the original performances (and commenting on five different plays from those in S1-3), audiences were asked to rate the value of the performance and then to suggest what elements of the performance led them to rate it in the way that they did. Usually, those who

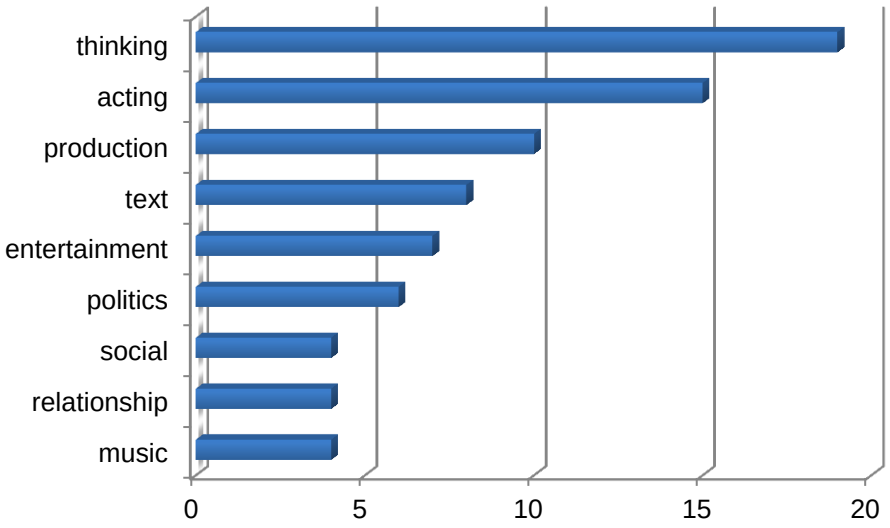


Fig 4.4

rated it low explained that the play had not stayed in their memories and said very little more about it. Thus the features of the text mentioned were in almost all cases positive values. (There is one exception, which will be dealt with under 4.27ff below.)

18. As can be seen in fig. 4.5, the order has changed again. Text now becomes the most regularly-cited reason for valuing the performance ('text' covers any specific reference to the play – as opposed to the performance – the writing and so on). Thinking has slipped down the list but one should place alongside this members of the audience who commented on the 'interpretation' of the play, the 'subject matter' of the performance, or indeed mentioned specific topics and themes ('age', 'love', 'politics' were cited by several respondents). 'Enjoyment' covers those responses that offered general statements about personal enjoyment. 'Personal' refers to those who enjoyed the performance because of personal meanings they derived from it. 'Relationship', as in 4.15 refers to the significance of the theatre visit for one or more of the respondent's personal relationships.

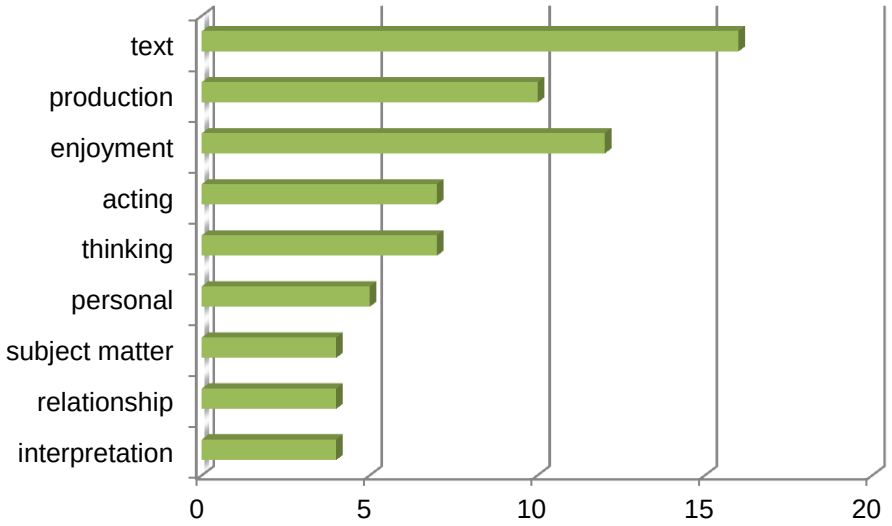


Fig 4.5

19. Broadly, with some caution, we might see the pattern established between S2 and S3 continued into S4: a rise to prominence of cognitive values and a relative receding of the immediately sensory aspects of the theatre. However, it is clear that these are anchored by memories of a strong production and strong performances.

The whole performance sequence

20. The North American performance maker and theorist Richard Schechner has influentially suggested that theatre scholars should stop focusing their attention exclusively on the moment of performance ('the show') and instead pay attention to what he calls 'the whole performance sequence', that is the substantially longer process that begins with the training of the actors and ends only when the performance event has ceased to be an active presence in the minds of all participants (1990: 43). What this research begins to do is allow us to model a portion of the 'aftermath' of the theatre event.

21. There is a diachronic shape to the reception of a performance:

    (1) **Just before a performance**, when an audience reasonably might be already anticipating the imminent event, spectators report the live experience as the most significant value of theatre.

    (2) **Just after a performance**, this sense of liveness is 'coloured in' by the intensity of the experience of the production, of being in an audience, seeing the actors, experiencing the design, the drama, the pleasures of attending a particular theatre with friends and so on.

    (3) **Two months after a performance,** the immediate impact of the performance has faded, relatively, and cognitive values have come to the fore, focusing on the meaning and significance of the performance, its relation to the wider world and to the spectator's own lives.

    (4) **One year after a performance,** the text (broadly conceived) has become a talisman of the show's value, anchoring its cognitive and aesthetic merits. The values of the production and the acting, in particular, are still very significant.

22. These changes can be observed in the responses of many individual spectators and are not merely an effect of aggregation.

22. In both S3 and S4 we asked our respondents if their view of the performance had changed between the end of the show and now. In both cases a large majority of our respondents believed their view had not changed. As shown in fig. 4.6, three-quarters of the audience reported that their view had not changed in the two months since the performance and 86% said the same after a year.

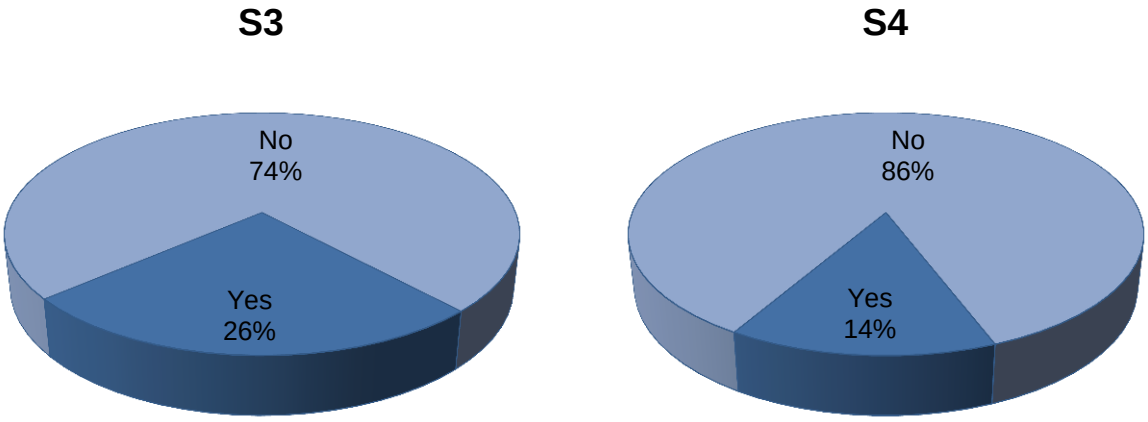


Fig 4.6

23. These results are, on the face of it, anomalous. For two reasons: first, they are inconsistent with each other. If 26% believe their view has changed between the end of the performance and two months later, *at least* 26% should say their view has changed between the end of the performance and a year later. In fact, we find a *smaller* number reporting their view has changed after a year. This is a signal that we should treat this kind of question with utmost caution. The notorious difficulties of apperception, of accurately reporting one's own mental contents, are no doubt at work here. This is also the point to remember that these spectators are answering questions about different productions and, while our sample is large and varied enough to expect the answers to be somewhat representative, there may be some outliers here that distort the figures.

24. Second, these answers appear not to tally with the results identified previously in this chapter. Reports of mental content are particularly difficult to use as evidence because they are hard to verify. In this instance, we can check, in broad terms, two different reports: what people say about theatre across time and whether they report their views changing. As we have seen, although spectators overwhelmingly report that their views have not changed, what they report valuing about the show changes very significantly. We should also note that among those who reported that their view *had* changed were a large number who

were merely reporting that their memories had somewhat *faded*, not that the *type* of value they assigned to the production had altered. How to square these apparently two different results?

25. We would like to offer an hypothesis, which makes the two positions compatible. This would need to be tested by further research. It may be the case that, as regular theatregoers, we *know* that theatre experiences have this unusually long tail, that they release different kinds of value over time. Indeed, perhaps we anticipate that our thoughts about the performance will mature over the coming weeks and months; it seems plausible that we even understand that this will follow a certain path from the intensity of immersion in the theatre experience towards a rich process of cognitive reflection on the event. The student who declares after a show 'I loved it but God knows what it was about' or 'Wow – I totally need to think about that' is, in a sense, anticipating this process. If we are right that we carry this sense of the shape of our long-term reception of a play, we might *both* report very different things at various points between the curtain call and a year later and yet maintain that our view hasn't changed, *because it was always going to change like this.*

26. If this is right, theatres might engage with their spectators in different ways:

    (1) They might look at ways in which they market their work; there is anecdotal evidence that the last thing mainstream theatres want to put on their publicity is that a production is 'intellectual', 'thought-provoking', 'will challenge your ideas' or 'will make you think'. There might be ways of indicating the longer term cognitive values of theatre.

    (2) They might look at ways in which they can contribute to that period of reflection. Theatres have, for a long time, offered resources like the post-show discussion, the platform interview, always offered during the run of a play. Some theatres – such as the Young Vic – already offer longer-term resources, such as online videos of people reflecting on the production. As long as this is not perceived as more marketing spam, this could enhance spectators' long-term appreciation of the theatre. As we suggest in the next chapter, there is evidence that the more an audience thinks about a show, the more highly they will value it.

Mere entertainment

27. A word that repeatedly crops up in our respondents' answers is 'entertainment'. Entertainment is a word that theatre academics have often been wary of. It is often thought to be in opposition to a more intellectually, aesthetically or socially engaged theatre. There can be a perception that 'entertainment' implies a certain shallowness (as in the common phrase 'mere entertainment') and an association with superficial 'display' and 'show', rather than what some might think are richer aesthetic and cognitive values. There is some evidence of these attitudes among our respondents, particularly in S4. One wrote: 'We enjoy theater as entertainment - it is enjoyable but not important'. At our report-back event at the Drum, some spectators defined their theatrical taste in specific opposition to that of the supposedly more populist main house programme; one baldly stated, 'I don't tend to go to musicals'. Entertainment is, however, an imprecise term: it is hard to imagine someone specifically wanting theatre to be unentertaining; it is a word that seems to have no opposing value, so its definition is hard to ascertain. Our questionnaires offer us an opportunity to dig a little deeper into what people mean by entertainment.

28. In S1, 28 respondents mentioned entertainment in response to the question about value. Of those 28 respondents, exactly half of them went on to complete S2. All of them answered positively to the question 'would you see another show by this company?' and they all reported enjoying the performances. It would seem reasonable to say that these 14 respondents, who report valuing 'entertainment', enjoyed the performance they saw. By exploring what they actually enjoyed about that performance, we can see what values constitute - or are at least compatible with – entertainment in the minds of our respondents.

29. Fig 4.7 gathers the answers these respondents gave to the question 'What things which you value about theatre did you find in this production (if you did)?' We have decided to show only those answers given more than once (as before, their responses were coded before being tabulated).

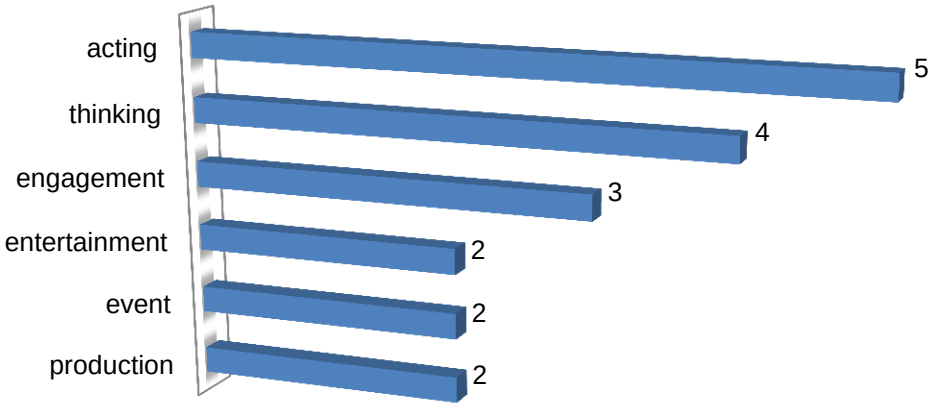


Fig 4.7

The comments and frequency are broadly similar to the entire sample for S2, including the high number of comments about 'thinking' which, to some, would seem contrary to the values of entertainment.

30. In addition, we looked for anyone else who mentioned 'entertainment' in S2 (in other words, respondents who mentioned entertainment in S2 but *not* S1). There were four. These are their comments on what they valued:

- 'thought provoking, entertaining'
- 'An evening out which was thought provoking and entertaining.'
- 'I like to be engaged as well as entertained and I find the performers [*sic*] manner very attractive also!'
- 'Faithfulness to the text; innovation; assuredness; clarity; engagement with the audience; entertainment.'

The third answer potentially supports the association between entertainment and show or display. But it is striking to see in the other three that entertainment sits alongside 'thought provoking' and 'innovation' which does not support the traditional association between entertainment and shallow escapism.

31. In S3, the number of respondents mentioning 'entertainment' rises to seven. We looked to see if they were reluctant to find connections between the performance and things happening in the world or in their own life. In fact, only one respondent who mentioned entertainment as a value in the performance saw no connection with these things. (One other respondent's gnomic answer to this question was the word 'Pudding'. We have found this somewhat difficult to

interpret and have discounted it.) Of course, it is perfectly possible that someone might value entertainment in the sense of escapism and also notice connections with the world and their own life. But in that instance one might expect them to have a lesser view of the performance and there is no sign of that in this sample. While we did not ask outright if the respondent 'liked' the performance, they often volunteer that information and indeed *all* of those who found connections with the world and their own lives *and* mentioned entertainment reported highly positive comments on the performance.

32. In S4, the picture slightly changes. Respondents were asked, a year after the performance, to state the value to them of the performance as 'high', 'medium' or 'low'; they were then asked to explain the value they had indicated. Entertainment is cited by ten people (out of a total of 97 questionnaires). In all other cases, specific attributes of the performance are offered to explain why a show was valued highly. In the case of entertainment, it is often used to explain why they rated the performance 'low'. Fig 4.8 compares how the audience as a whole rated the value of the theatre they had seen (A) and how those who described the performances as 'entertaining' rated the value of the theatre they had seen (B). Perhaps paradoxically, the spectators who found the theatre entertaining valued it significantly less than average. In other words, entertainment, to the S4 respondents, seemed to say very little about the value

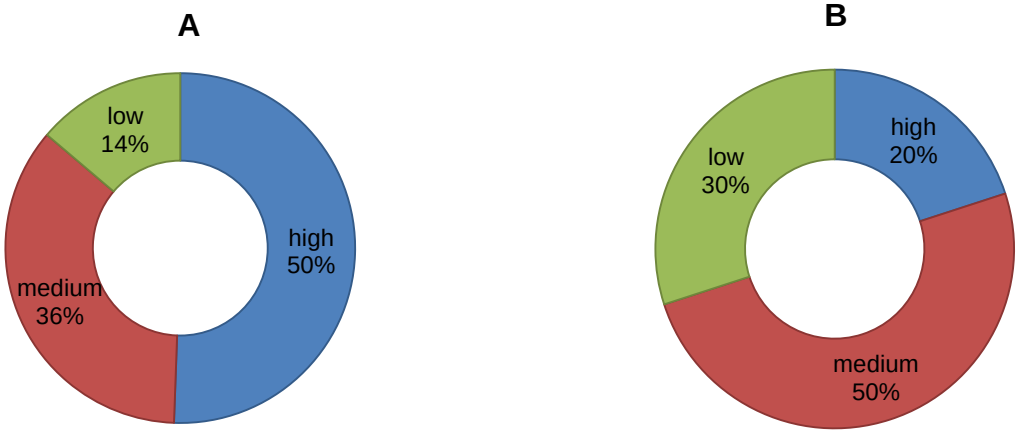


Fig 4.8

of the theatre they had seen. This may mean that they considered it 'mere entertainment', or, in the words of one of these respondents, 'Entertaining but not life changing'.

33. This tentatively leads us to conclude that, for most of the theatregoers in our sample, 'entertainment' is a term that does not initially imply superficiality or escapism and those who report looking for entertainment also consider it compatible with thinking and other cognitive values. However, there is also evidence that over time entertainment becomes slowly separated out from other values and may even be seen as antithetical to them. This may be a *post facto* rationalization or it may mean that entertainment is more compatible with the immediate values of a performance than with those released two months later (see 4.21).

5. Associations

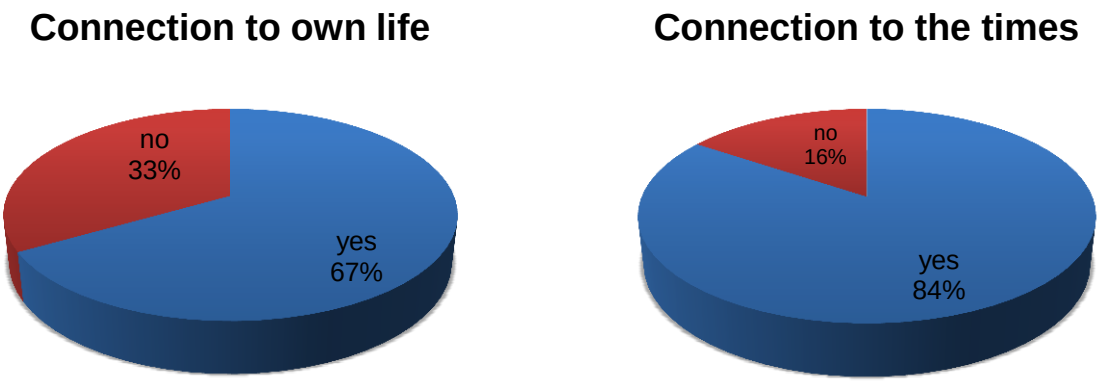
1. We were interested to investigate ways in which spectators come to value the theatre they see, not merely through their relatively personal judgments but through the activities of their daily lives. What sorts of meanings do audiences find in the shows they see? To what did they connect their experience of the shows they see? Their own lives or the wider world? Did going to the theatre affect the way they thought or behaved? Did it contribute to the attitudes they held or the decisions they made? And how far is value attribution a shared activity? Did our respondents simply change their minds or is the development of their appreciation of a performance something that happens through interaction with others and with the world? How and when and why are performances remembered? What are the triggers? What effect do these memories have? In other words, what associations are produced by these performances and how do these associations affect the view of these performances over time?

Meanings

2. We asked two very broad questions in S2, completed very soon after seeing the show, about the ways our respondents did or did not associate the performance to things beyond the performance. We asked:
    (1) Did you connect any aspects of the show to other aspects of your own life? If so, what were these?
    (2) Did you connect any aspects of the show to the times you live in? If so, what aspects were they?
3. We asked very similar questions in S3, completed two months after the performance. We asked:
    (1) Have you ever associated the show with other things in your life or your friends' lives? If so, please explain.
    (2) Have you ever associated the show with other things going on in the world or in the news? If so, please explain.

4. The results of these questions showed that spectators strongly make both of these kinds of associations. The answers to the questions in S2 are represented in fig 5.1.

5. Overwhelmingly – by a factor of 17 to 1 – spectators made connections between the show and contemporary events, from Korean purges and plebgate to Russell



Brand. There was a lower proportion of yeses to the personal question: 67% and ratio of yes to no of 2 to 1. However, it still represents a strong majority and the overall picture is that audiences are busy in and immediately after theatrical performances noticing, finding or making connections to their lives and the world around them.

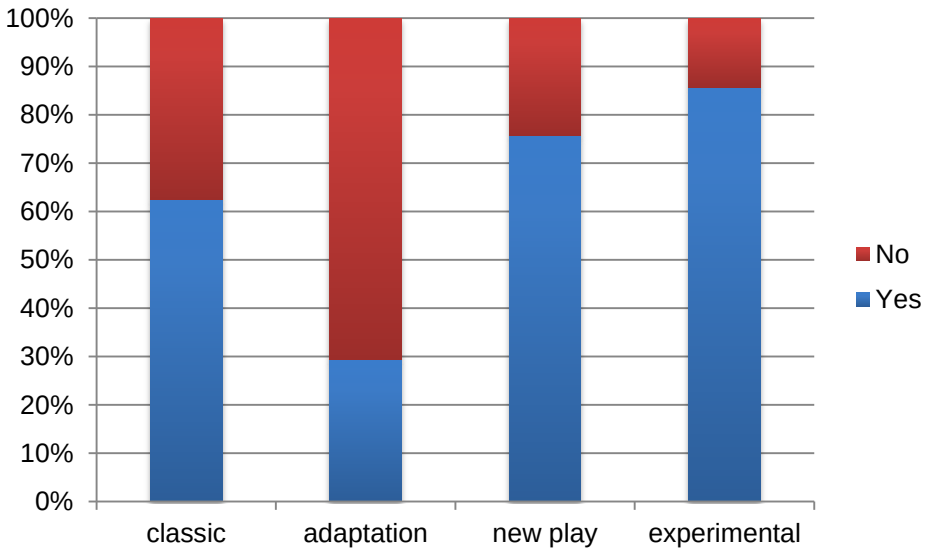


fig 5.2

6. These figures varied across the four categories of theatre we investigated. Fig 5.2 shows the proportions saying whether they made connections to their own life divided by the category of shows they were seeing. Spectators at the new plays

and the experimental shows were *very* likely to make connection to their own lives; spectators at classics slightly less so and spectators at adaptations were on balance unlikely to make such connections.

7. Fig 5.3 gives the same figures for answers to the questions about connections to the times. The picture shows slight differences. The new play and experimental spectators are even more likely to make connections to the times they are living in than to their own lives. Adaptation spectators are slightly more likely than those at classics to make those connections, but there is a consistent pattern that audiences at all kinds of theatre will make those connections.

8. The usual caution must be taken with drawing general conclusions from these results. It would be premature to conclude that adaptations generally do not get spectators thinking about their own lives, given that we were looking at an historical drama (*Wolf Hall*) and a classic political novel (*The Secret Agent*), which might indeed feel less 'personal' in tone and resonance. It seems unlikely that the same results would be found if we surveyed the spectator at *The Curious Case of the Dog in the Night Time* or *Wuthering Heights.* These results capture the responses of particular spectators to particular performances.

9. It does suggest, however, that there is somewhat greater reluctance – and greater variance in willingness – of spectators to connect the theatre they see with their own lives than with the times they live in.

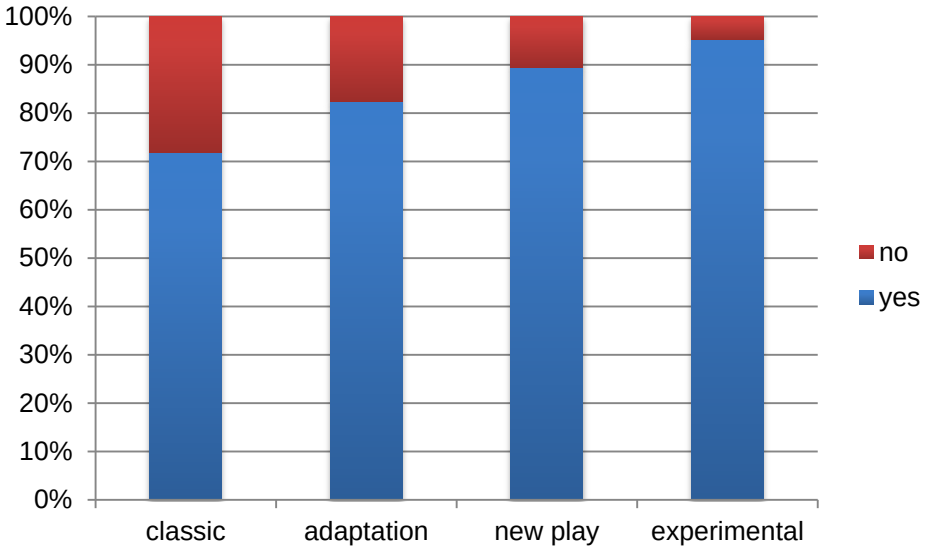


fig 5.3

10. We kept the terms fairly vague - 'aspects of your own life' 'the times you live in' - wanting to capture the broadest range of responses; this does mean that the data is somewhat mute. An answer of yes to the second question could mean

many things; our *Happy Days* spectators who answered yes to this question explained their answer it in a great variety of ways, anything from 'timeless' and 'the human condition' to 'cost of capitalism' and 'women's raw deal'. We cannot therefore directly conclude that spectators are attuned to, say, the political in this work. It is not clear whether, in the minds of those particular audience members, 'the human condition' was considered to be a political thing or in what way a 'timeless' production might be considered to illuminate our times.

11. If we look at the similar questions in S3, we find that the numbers finding those connections have receded somewhat. The results are represented in fig. 5.4.

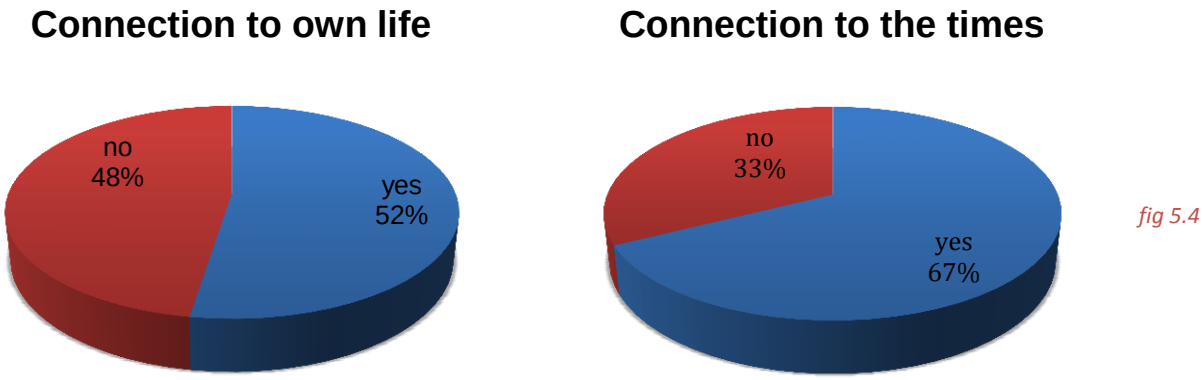


fig 5.4

12. There are still slightly more people making connections to their own life, but only just. The numbers making connections with their times has fallen from 84% to 67%. There are two apparent anomalies in these results, which are worth dwelling on.

13. First, the questions in S3 begin, 'Have you *ever* associated the show with…' In other words, the verbal construction literally asks the audience if they have *at any point* made this association. This should make the answers to this question in S3 *higher* than in S2, since they should include the associations captured by the analogous question in S2. We do not know for certain what the explanation for this apparent inconsistency but three possible reasons are:

    (1) the respondents have simply forgotten the associations they made straight after the show by the time they fill in the third questionnaire two months later;

    (2) they may remember those associations and, despite the verbal formation, assume they are being asked if they have made any *additional* associations, not wanting to repeat themselves in some way;

(3) there are slight variations in the way we represent the objects of the association:

(a) in S2 we talk of 'other aspects of your own life', while in S3 it is 'other things in your life or your friends' lives'. S3 might feel slightly more specific and concrete ('things' rather than 'aspects') and therefore the respondent may have discounted some associations as not meeting the criterion.

(b) in S2 we talk of 'the times you live in', while in S3 it is 'other things going on in the world or in the news'. Again, it is more concretely put and suggests definite political or cultural events, and the respondent might have felt the criterion was narrower.

14. If we were to repeat or extend this research project, we would look again at the wording of these questionnaires to ensure continuity and comparability between the questions. All of these factors may be at work and it seems to us important to remark that one would expect memories of a performance – like memories of almost anything – to become less distinct over time; if anything, it is the persistence of associations between the play and the audience's lives and times that is striking to us rather than any decline.

15. Second, while there is some limited evidence here of a slight decline in two measures of cognitive activity (if we consider making these associations a distinctively cognitive activity), the evidence we presented in 4.15-19 suggested the opposite: that audiences are more likely to value the distinctively cognitive activities associated with theatregoing over time. The contradiction may only be apparent, however, and we will not attempt to resolve it here, except to reiterate that the changing nature of responses to theatre in the weeks, months and years after seeing a performance seems to us a particularly fruitful topic for further research and liable to say a great deal that is sociologically and philosophically interesting about the nature of artistic value.

Discussions

16. We are interested to consider the ways in which a theatre visit and its aftermath are shared and become embedded in the lives of its spectators and their circles of family, friends and colleagues. In S2, S3 and S4, we asked the spectators if they had discussed the show with anyone; the wording was very similar in each case:

S2: 'Have you discussed the show with anyone else?'

S3: 'Have you discussed the show with anyone? (including those you may have spoken to right after the show, if you continued to speak to them)'

S4: 'Have you discussed the show with anyone? (including those you may have spoken to right after the show, if you continued to speak to them)'

17. The results show that our spectators overwhelmingly discuss their playgoing experiences with others, with over 93% answering yes to the question in S2. In the same question in S3, the yes figure has dropped to 84%, though it is at 89% in S4.[1] This suggests that conversations about a piece of theatre continue long after the performance.

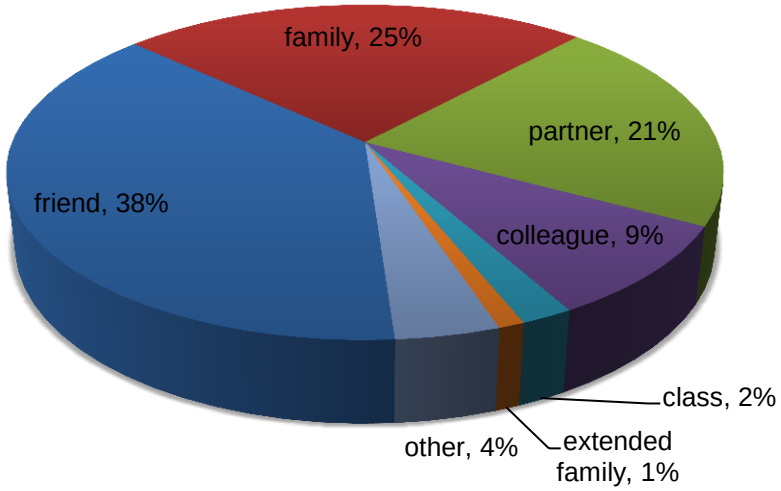


fig 5.5

18. In S2 we asked who they spoke to about their theatre visit and we coded their answers under seven headings: partner, family, extended family, friend, colleague, class and other. ('Class' refers to other members of a school or university group.) Friends, family and partner were the main interlocutors, making up 84% between them, as shown in fig 5.5.

19. These proportions remained about the same over the three surveys as shown in fig. 5.6.

[1] It would be inaccurate to describe this as a 'rise', since S4 is capturing the whole year-long period, while S3 captures discussions *since* S2. In other words, we cannot say with any certainty when those conversations mentioned in S4 took place, though we find it striking that the audience remembered having these conversations, which perhaps suggests something of their importance.

20. For clarity is it worth remembering that the gap between the show and S2 is a few hours, between S2 and S3 two months, and between the show and S4 one year. They represent different time spans and they do not represent the same set of performances. In some ways this gives us all the more reason to think that the picture is representative of a more general practice but that we should treat the numbers with caution.

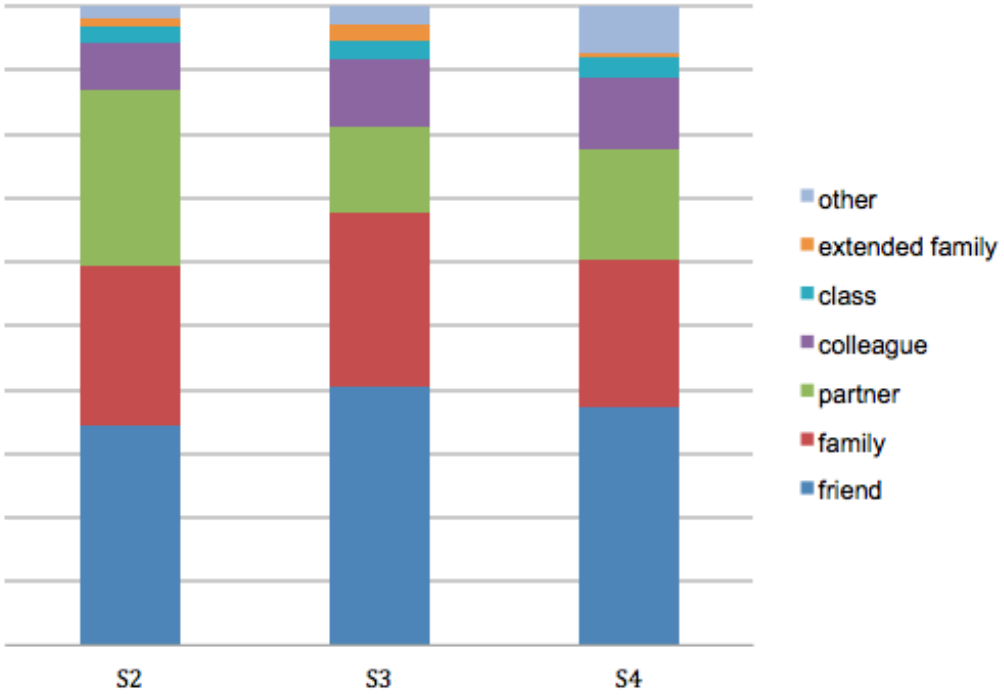


fig 5.6

21. We asked in S2 whether their discussions had affected or changed their view in any way. Respondents could give a free-form answer which we coded as 'yes', 'no', or 'some'. ('Some' was a way of capturing some complex or subtle answers which appear to imply some change in attitude without stating it up-front, such as 'Only that I should have been more fascinated by it than I was' or '[I] was surprised at my husband's surprise that

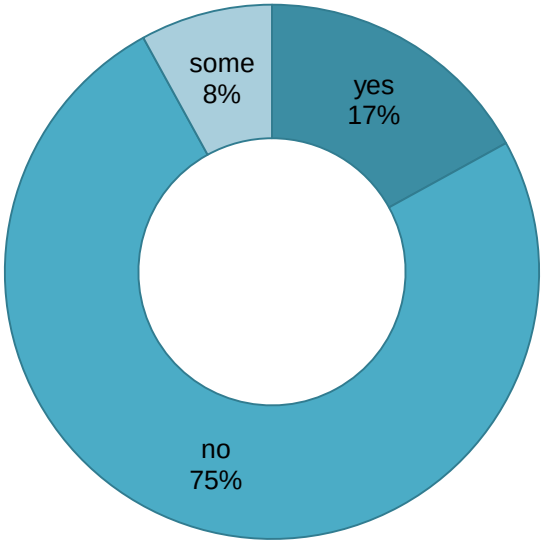


fig 5.7

[*Happy Days*] was so funny...it made me want to revisit [Beckett's] plays'). Three-quarters of the replies were negative (though this included quite a few people whose views were confirmed, possibly hardened, by the conversation; we found it hard to judge whether this counts as changing one's view). The rest thought their views had changed or had changed a little, as shown in fig 5.7.

22. Amongst our spectators, these communications are overwhelmingly face to face,

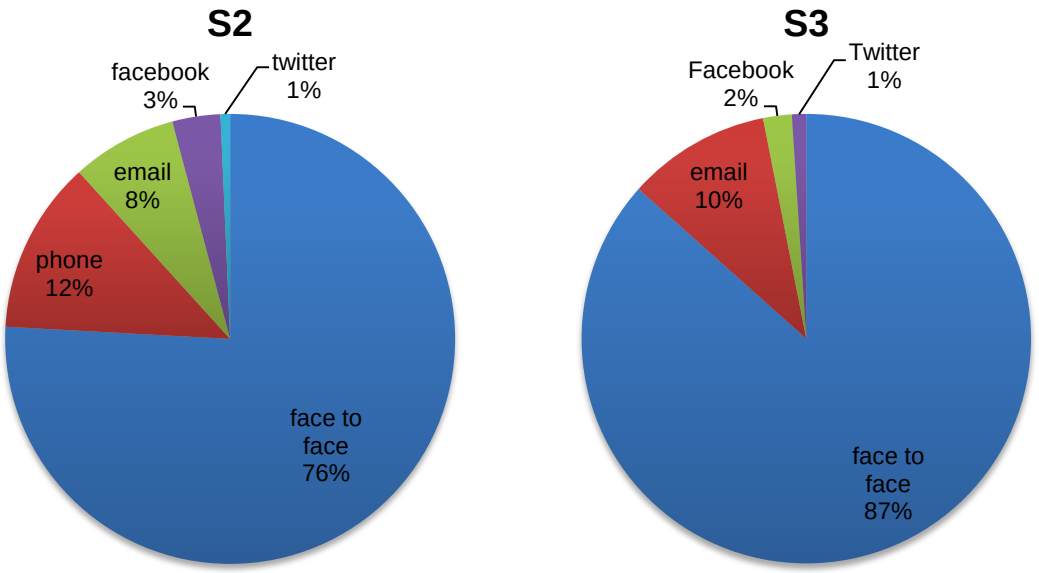


fig 5.8

as shown in fig 5.8. In S2, just over three-quarters of the communication is face to face with a flurry of phone calls, and digital and social media. In S3, 87% of the communication since has been face to face with no phone calls mentioned and very little use of social media.

23. This tallies with our experience tracking references to the shows on social media. While we kept up regular Twitter searches, joined Facebook groups and logged Google alerts for references to our sample shows, there seemed to be a flurry of activity around individual visits to the shows but these had a very short tail and, once the show closed, there was almost no activity.

Reviews

24. Our findings are mixed, if not negative, for theatre journalism. As shown in fig 5.9, only about a third of our respondents in S2 reported reading reviews or other media coverage and, even then, some wait until after they've seen a show to read them.

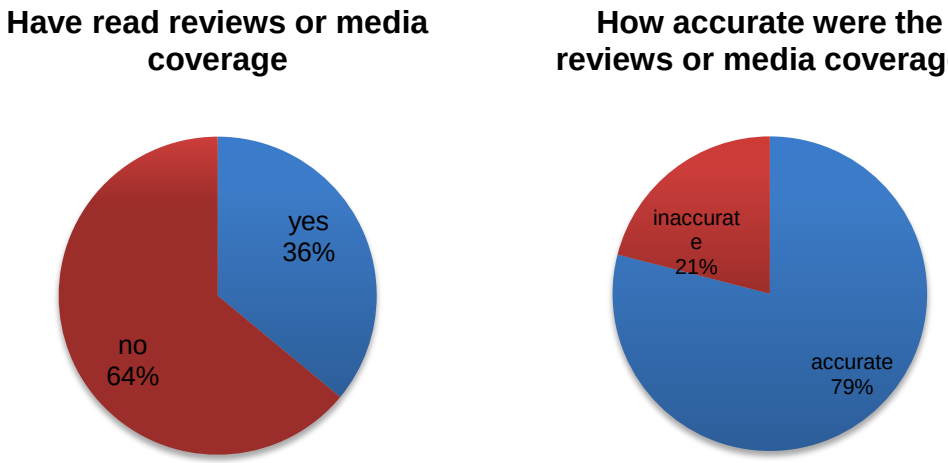


Fig 5.10

25. However, of those who *had* read reviews, as shown in fig. 5.10, a strong majority thought they had accurately represented the performance.

Remembering

26. We wanted to explore how often and why audience members would recall performances they had seen. This is a very difficult area for the reasons discussed in 4.23: the difficulty and unverifiability of reporting one's own thoughts. For that reason we have every reason to handle with great caution any of the findings offered here. However, as elsewhere, these provisional findings might better be considered hypotheses, worthy of further research and more detailed investigation.

27. We asked our respondents if they had thought about the performance since seeing it. Reassuringly for those of us who hope that the theatre lingers in the memory, respondents to S3, taken two months after the theatre visit, overwhelmingly report that they have thought about the performance since: over 93% report having thought about the show. We asked the same question in S4, taken a year after the shows, and had a slightly reduced, but still preponderant number of 82% reporting having thought about the show.

28. (We should note an apparent inconsistency here [very similar to that noted at 4.23 and 5.13]: the answers to S4 should cover the entire period since the performance and so should be *at least* the same as the answers from S3. There are at least three possibilities:
    (1) these may be errors produced by the impressionistic nature of the question;
    (2) these are different shows so it is possible the shows in S4 were less memorable;
    (3) our respondents may have forgotten remembering the show after a year.
    However, the inconsistencies are relatively small and may not significantly damage the robustness of the findings.)
29. We also asked our spectators to tell us how often they had thought about the performance in question. Since we did not ask people to keep diaries, these answers undoubtedly have an approximate and impressionistic quality. We coded these answers: where a respondent gave a number, we placed it within categories 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, and 21+ times. There were quite a few textual answers that seemed to us unquantifiable that said something like 'frequently', 'often', 'many times' and we gave that its own code of 'often'.
30. We asked this question twice, in S3 and S4. Although these results are no doubt fragile, it is interesting to note that the results in S3 and S4 are broadly similar. 1-5 times is the most common response followed by 6-10 times and 'often'. Curiously, there is a slight spike in the 16-20 category. There seems no very obvious reason to think someone would report thinking about theatre 16-20 times rather than 11-15 times, but the figure is repeated in both sets of results, as can be seen in figs. 5.11 and 5.12 .
31. It's perhaps a sign of the impressionistic nature of this exercise that the numbers are so similar. S3 covers two months and S4 covers one year. One might expect more memories of theatre in S4 with an extra ten months to fill. We did not ask how recent the memories were. It is possible of course that memories of performance cut off after two months, though that does not seem to us intuitively likely. More plausible, perhaps, is that we report very impressionistically the nature of our mental contents and '1-5' is a way of saying 'occasionally' or 'from time to time' and '16-20' stands in for 'I keep returning to my memories of that show'; in both cases the apparent numerical character of the response is a distraction from a qualitative comment about the memories.

32. We asked our spectators to tell us what had triggered the memories. Again, it is difficult, particularly at a distance of several months, to account exactly for why a thought might glide into one's head. However, once again it is reassuring that the results are similar between S3 and S4 as shown in figs. 5.13 and 5.14.

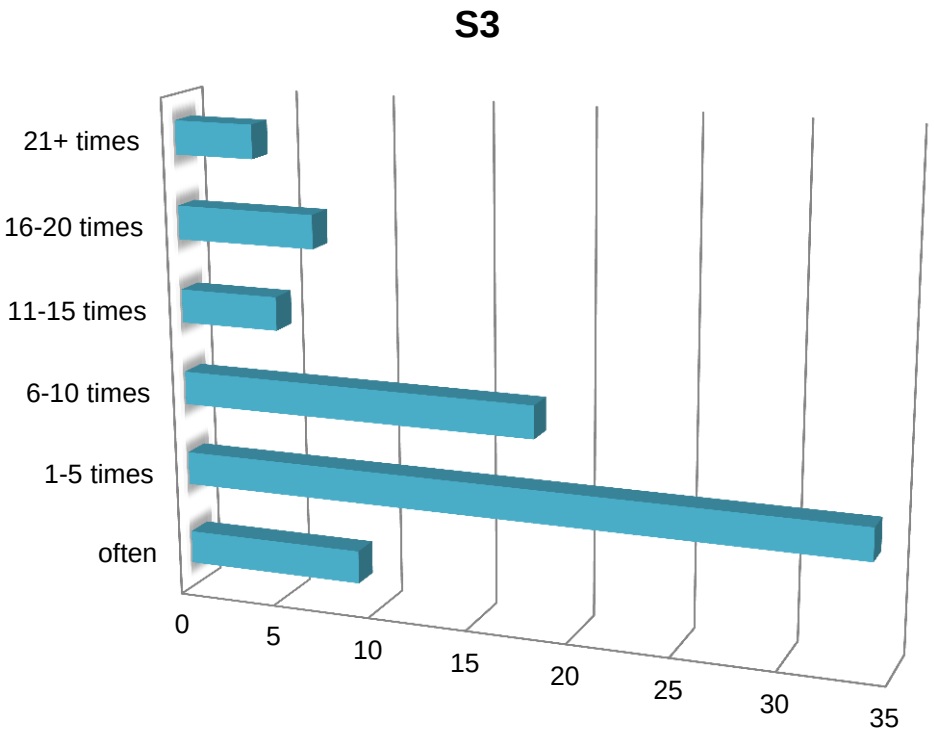


fig 5.11

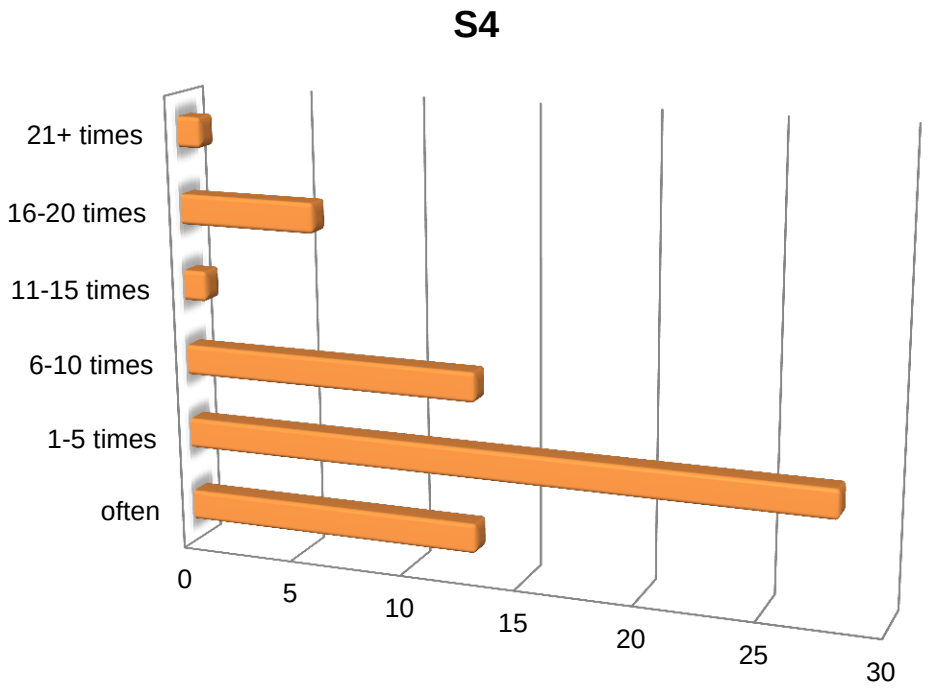


fig 5.12

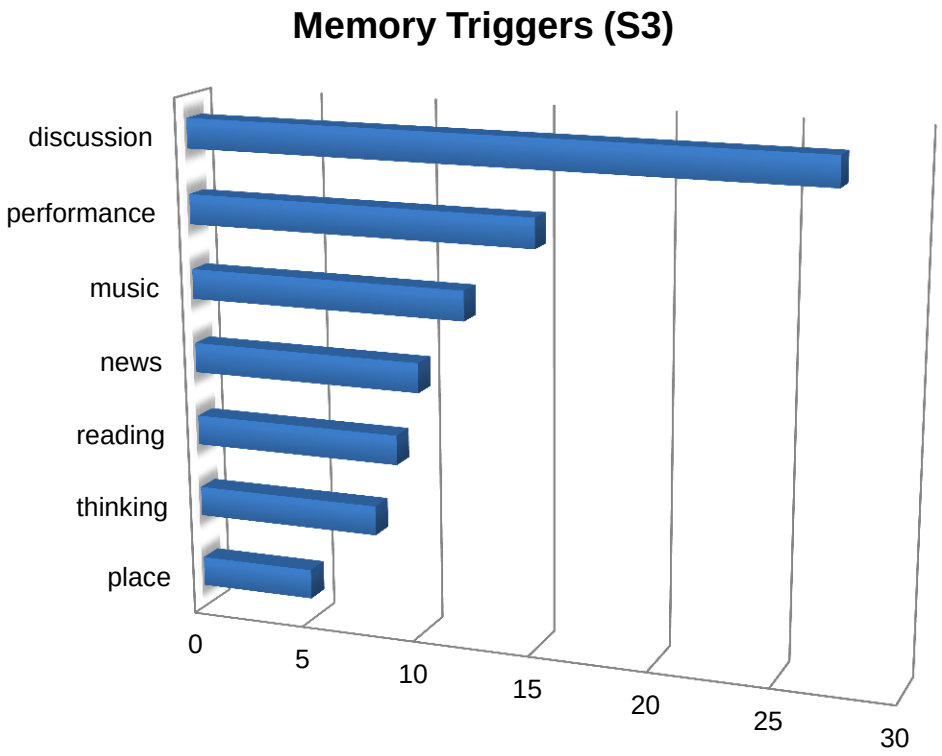


fig 5.13

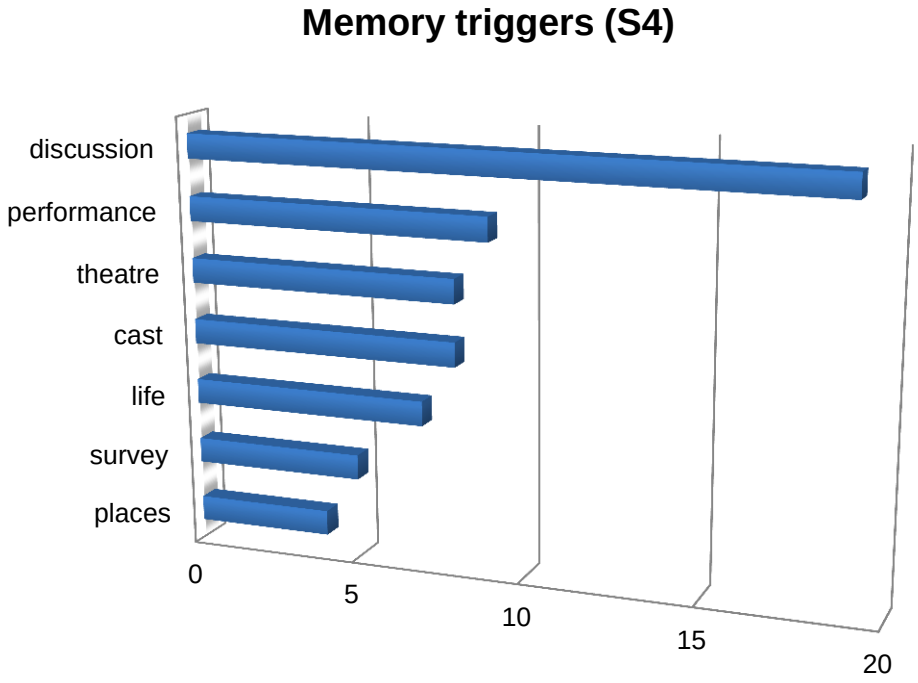


fig 5.14

33. Discussions with other people are the most common way to evoke memories of the show, followed by seeing other shows. The high numbers of people mentioning music is mainly due to *Solid Air* which was not one of the sampled shows in S4. It is worth noting that a number of people mentioned the questionnaire itself ('survey' on the chart) as a trigger for reflecting on the show!

34. As a final thought, we wanted to see whether there is any correlation between the kinds of values people ascribe to the theatre they see and the number of times they think about it.

35. Fig. 5.15 shows how often people thought about the show, divided into people who ascribed a 'high', 'medium' and 'low' value to the theatre they have seen. Because the numbers in these latter groups are different, we have multiplied up each group to make them proportionately comparable (hence no values on the Y Axis, because it's the comparison rather than the raw figures that are important here).

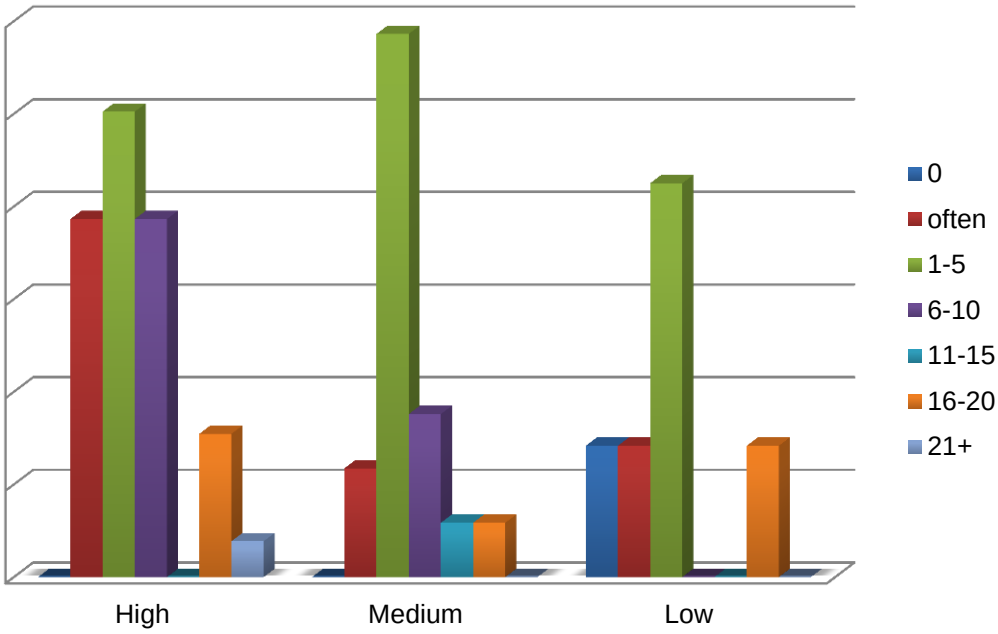


fig 5.15

36. What the chart shows is that there is a very high level of correlation between numbers of memories and the valuation of a performance. The people who remembered the show 1-5 times remains about constant, but the difference is clearly seen in the 'often' and '6-10' bars.

37. This can be seen even more simply if we combine these variable figures into a single chart (assigning each frequency a proportional value). Those who value the

shows highly remember the shows over twice as often as those who rate the value of the shows medium or low, as shown in fig. 5.16.

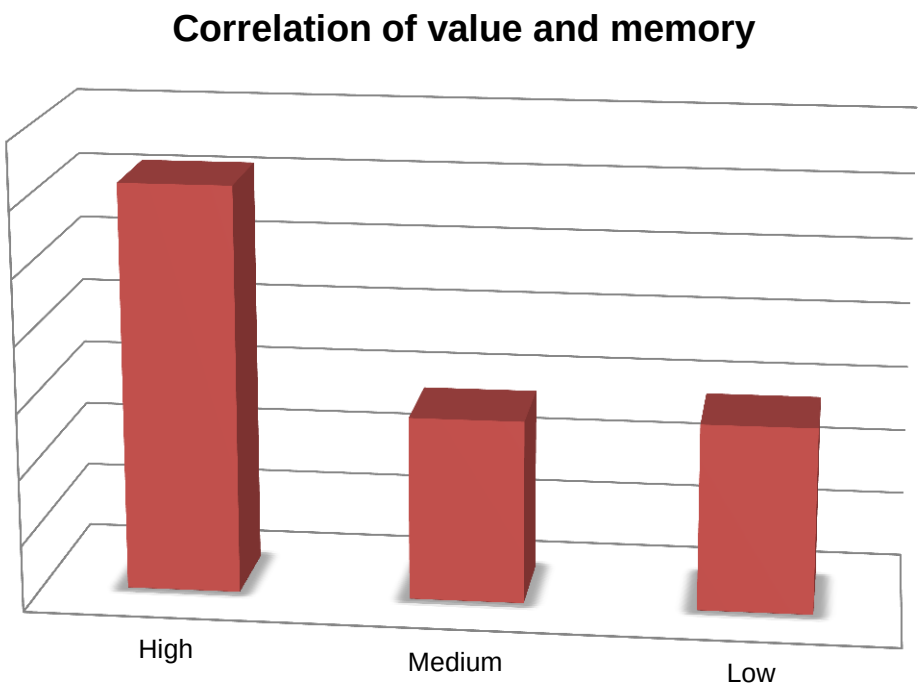


fig 5.16

38. In other words, there is a clear correlation between the number of times one thinks about a show and the high value assigned to it. It is not possible from our data to determine a direction of causality. Does remembering a performance enhance its value, or do we recall shows we value highly? The latter might seem more obvious, until we reflect how often we might bring to mind truly appalling nights at the theatre.

39. It is also worth noting that the role of discussion in spectators' experience of theatre reveals something profounder about the effect of theatregoing on social and familial relations and indeed solidarities. Whether or not audiences change their view as a result of these interactions, it is clear that discussion with partners, family and friends is a fundamental component of the theatre experience for many respondents. In interview, a *Wolf Hall* audience member went so far as to say that theatre going is 'one of those things that binds families together. A bit like sharing food … We have a shared experience, a common experience, it's something you can talk about, and reminisce over in years to

come … I think it's one of those things that's a very important part of family life'. This finding is supported by Ben Walmsley's 2013 qualitative study of the impact of theatre audiences at the West Yorkshire Playhouse and elsewhere, which supports the contention that 'the arts can improve relationships and family cohesion'. Walmsley quotes a respondent's feeling that 'theatre provided a shared memory bank and ideal opportunities to spend quality time with a partner', quoting another respondent who compare such a memory bank to 'a holiday or a house' (2013: 83).

40. In S3 we asked our audience if taking part in the research had affected their view

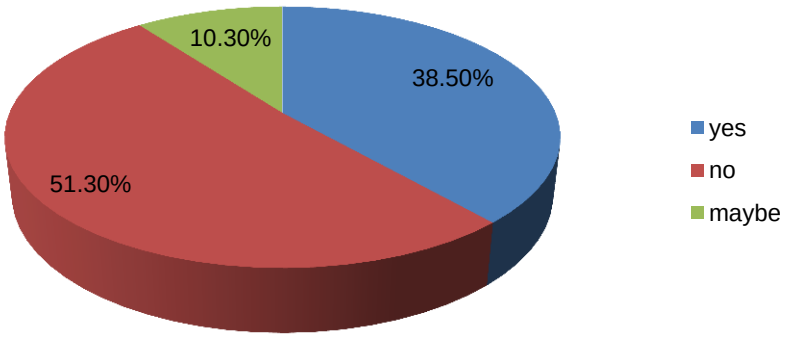


fig 5.17

of the performance. Just over half said it had not. But over a third said it had and the rest (of those who answered the questions) said it may have done. This should be borne in mind as if may be that our research does not always capture ordinary experiences of theatre spectatorship, but may model a certain new kind of theatre spectatorship. It is striking that of the respondents who suggested that the research had affected their view of the performance all of them wrote positively about the effect it had had. Typical responses were:

- 'Was nice to keep being reminded of the show.'
- 'Yes, in a way it prompted me to think more - or more clearly - about the show.'
- 'It has been good to reflect, it has made me think more deeply about the themes, I have enjoyed doing so.'

We were surprised by how positive these responses were and they lead us to a final recommendation.

41. Given the ways in which these memories are triggered by events outside the individual (discussions, communications from the theatre, our survey), it may be

that theatres could enhance the experience and value of the performances they put on by maintaining a conversation with their spectators. By reminding their spectators of the performances they have seen, it may actually profoundly augment and enhance the value of the performance the theatres provide.

6: Value & Correlation

1. Are certain people more likely to value and find meaning in theatre than others? For instance, are particular types of meaning more likely to be detected by men than by women? Does age affect the value we ascribe to the theatre we see? If we go to the theatre very often is that more or less likely to make us value an individual performance? How does educational attainment affect the kinds of meanings that can be derived from theatregoing?
2. These are complicated questions and the area is fraught with statistical fragility. In the time available in this phase of the research we decided to target our research in two areas, value and meaning, looking to see if either of these correlate with the identities of our respondents. We are aware that we have a wealth of data and there are no doubt further discoveries to be made, but we have necessarily had to limit the scope of our investigations. Sometimes our results seem to show that there is no significant correlation but this, too, is a research finding and we offer them here.
3. We have a robust dataset with several hundred questionnaire responses and a broad cross-section of the theatregoing public at these particular theatres. We should bear in mind, however, when looking for correlations, we are always segmenting our sample and sometimes this produced very small groups for particular questions, which must limit the confidence with which we can make general conclusions. Our provisional conclusions might be better thought of as working hypotheses to be tested by further research. Indeed, one of the aims of this chapter is to indicate the directions that future research might take.

Identity and Value

4. We wondered, on the most basic level, whether age and gender could be correlated with how highly our respondents value the theatre they see.
5. In S3 we asked our respondents to state whether they rated the value of the performance they had seen (two months previously) as high, medium, or low. This provided us with a basic statement of the respondent's valuation which we could use to check against various demographic factors. It is mostly impossible, of course, to tell exactly what our respondents meant by their valuations; one

person's low valuation might be someone else's high valuation, depending on the implicit criteria they have in mind. Questions of cultural valuation are often tied up with how we see ourselves; people can be eager to approve of cultural experiences to appear knowledgeable, while others can scorn particular cultural experiences for the same reason. We also found, fortunately only on a couple of occasions, some confusion about whether by value we meant cultural/aesthetic or financial. In short, when we talk here about 'those who valued theatre highly', it should be understood that this is a shorthand for 'those who report valuing theatre highly', which is not quite the same thing. Nonetheless, with all those hesitations registered, this question does provide us with a baseline from which to begin looking at questions of value and identity.

6. We looked to see whether women and men valued the theatre they saw differently. The results are shown in fig 6.1.

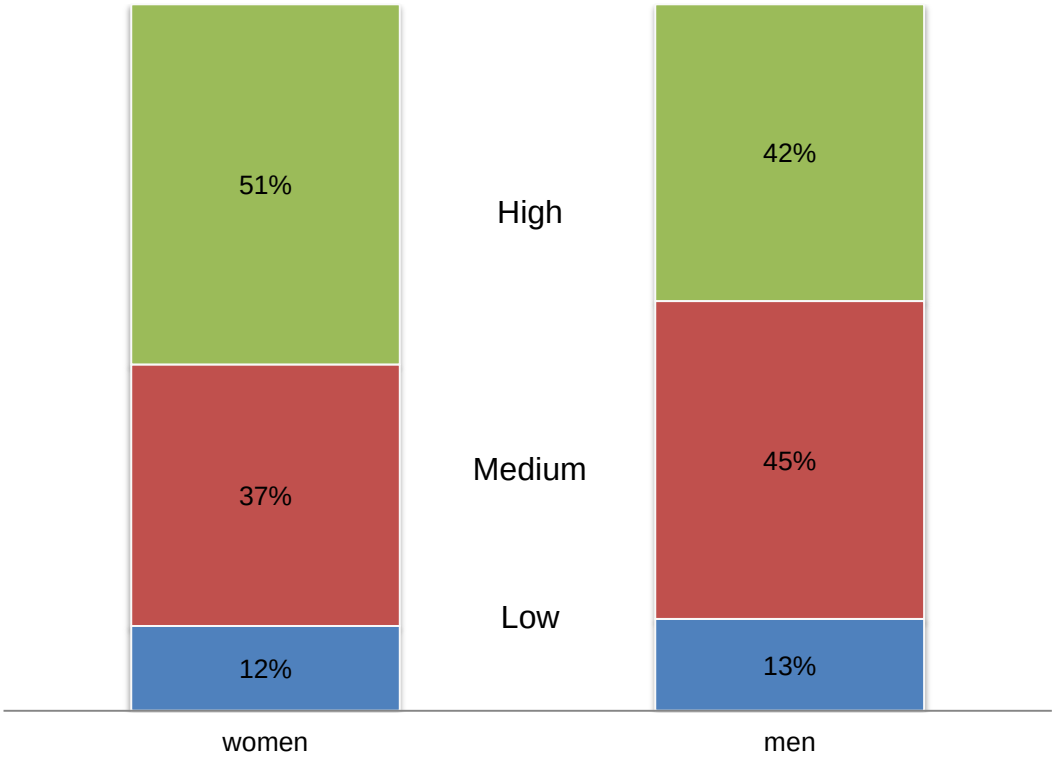


fig 6.1

7. Women are noticeably more likely to rate the theatre highly and men are noticeably more likely to rate the theatre at medium. The difference is around 10 percentage points in both cases. There is virtually no gender difference in assigning a low value to the theatre. In 3.3 we showed that our audience was more female than male, reflecting a broader cultural trend. It would be

interesting to explore whether both of these figures point in the same direction, to a greater enthusiasm for theatre among women than men.

8. We then looked to see if there were any correlations between attributing value to theatre and age. The results are shown in fig. 6.2. As with the gender sample, because there are varying numbers of people in these various categories, we have multiplied each up to be strictly comparable. However, this means that some age categories may be represented by a fairly small sample, making them less representative of the 'real-world' group.

9. There is a certain correlation between age and value in that the older our respondents are, the more likely they are to attribute medium or high value to the performances they saw. Almost 50% of the low valuations are given by respondents aged 35 or below, while they make up only 30% of the high valuations. However, the 65+ audience gives less than 5% of the low valuations and almost a quarter of the high valuations.

10. A couple of age groups drop out completely in one category or other. The 26-35 age group seem to be very polarised offering only high and low valuations with nothing in the middle. The 46-55 age group don't offer any low valuations. However, dividing our respondents like this produces some very small groupings and it would be unwise to draw too many conclusions from these figures.

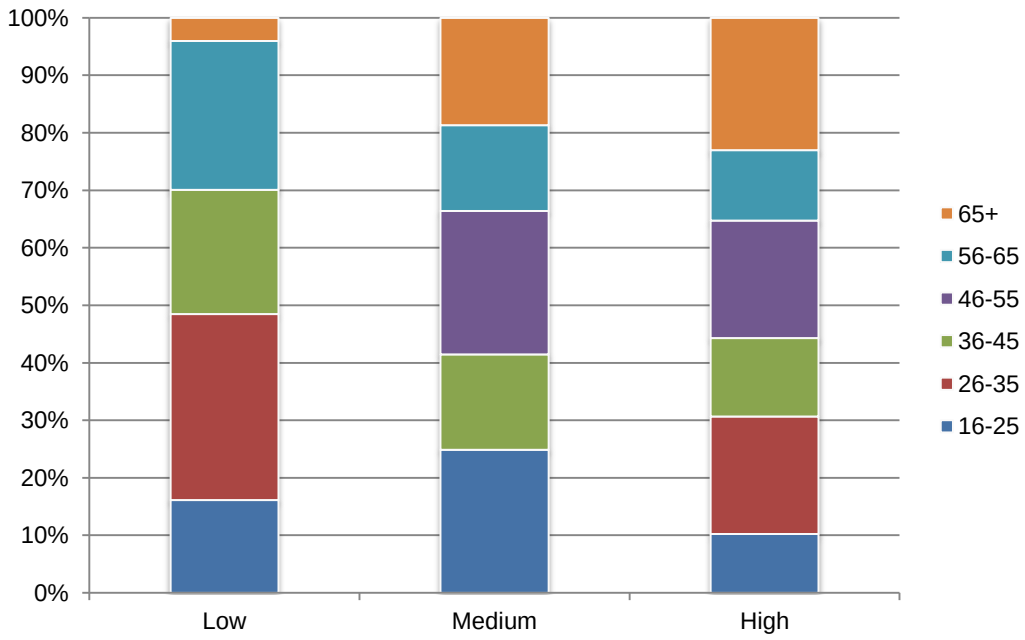


fig 6.2

11. A similar broad correlation is found between educational attainment and valuation, shown in fig. 6.3. Indeed the picture is similar enough to make one

wonder if we are perhaps looking at the same data. There is a rough correlation between age and level of education. The younger age group is very unlikely to have completed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The data is therefore telling us that the older and more educated you are, the more likely you are to rate theatre highly. Whether it is age or education that is doing the valuation here is impossible to judge from our figures.

12. We did not ask explicitly for our respondents to declare their class and we have been unwilling to infer this from the disparate declarations about work and career elicited from them. Education is a well-known indicator of class, though, and indeed it is notoriously easy to miss education as the 'confounding variable' in a sociological analysis. It has been argued that it is misleading to describe the audience for the subsidised arts as 'middle class' as such and that it would be more accurate to describe it as highly educated first, and middle class second.

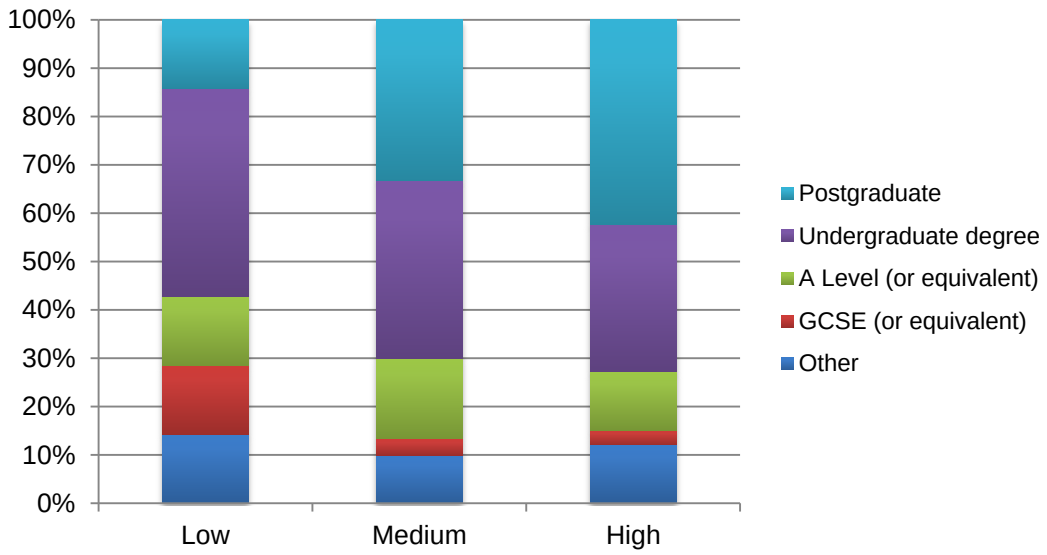


fig 6.3

There may be a similar comment to make about the age of the arts audience; it might be better to describe it as highly educated first, and aged second. This would repay further investigation.

13. We are intrigued by this apparent three-way correlation between theatre valuation, education and age and would also be interested to see further research on the status of theatre (and the arts more broadly) as an aspect of life-long learning.

14. We wanted to see if there might be a correlation between the number of times someone visits the theatre and their tendency to value individual performances

highly. We found it easy to imagine opposing scenarios: that going to the theatre a great deal primes you to appreciate its merits and also that frequent theatre visiting might make you more demanding and harder to please. The results are shown in fig. 6.4.

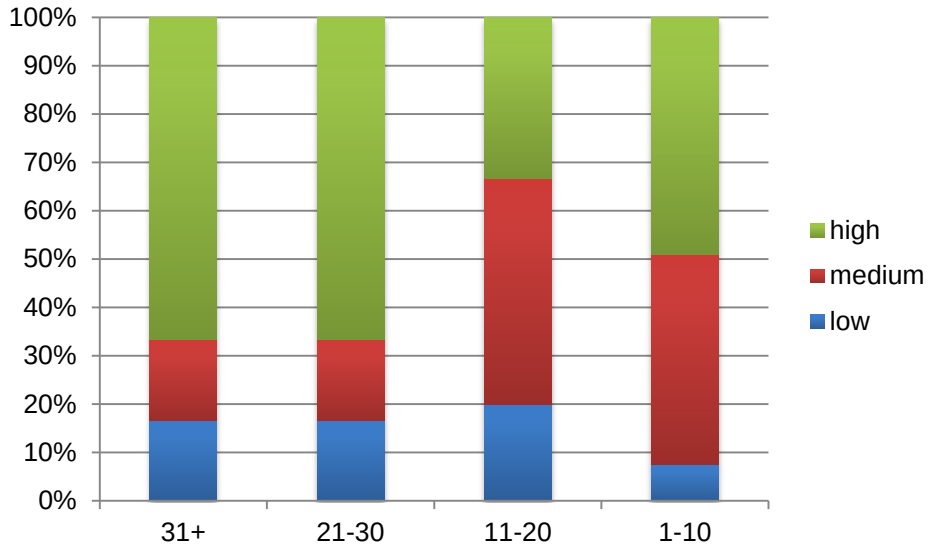


fig 6.4

15. Two things are suggested by this data, which pull gently in opposite directions. First, the more often you go to the theatre, the more likely overall you are to highly value the particular performances you go to see. As can be seen, 67% of respondents who reported visiting the theatre 21+ times per year valued their particular performance highly. One-third of those who visited the theatre 11-20 times per year, and one half of those who visited 1-10 times per year, valued it highly. Second, those who visit the theatre the least are also the least likely to give it a low valuation. Only 8% of the '1-10' spectators valued their show low, compared to 17% of the '21+' spectators. In other words, curiously, the more you go the more you rate the theatre highly; and the less you go the less you rate it low.

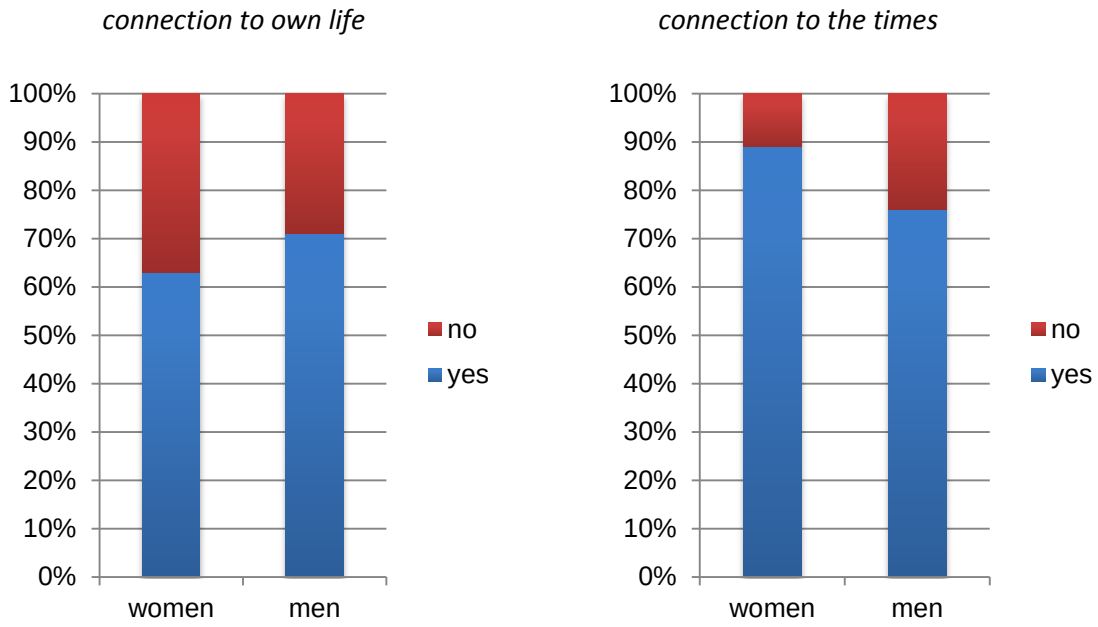
16. However, this picture is somewhat distorted because the 1-5 category is nine times as large as the 31+ spectators. We can look at the data from a different angle: rather than visualise how the frequency categories break down into valuations, we can look at how the valuations break down into frequency (see fig. 6.5). This shows that the 1-10 frequency group is far and away the largest group

at all valuations. The 21-30 and 31+ categories are probably too small to be statistically reliable. If we only pay attention to the 1-10 (purple) and the 11-20 (green) segments, it appears that the purple group, who go to the theatre less than once a month, tend to rate their theatre higher than the green group, who go to the theatre roughly once a month or more. Perhaps this might be interpreted as the relatively infrequent visit seeming more 'special' (or indeed, the infrequent theatre visitor not having quite as much to compare the experience to and possibly, therefore, not appreciating the full heights that the theatre can achieve); or conversely the more frequent theatregoer might be considered either less impressed by theatre's novelty or that their experience makes them more knowledgeable and demanding.

Identity and Meaning

17. As well as valuations, our respondents gave us information about the meanings they derived from the shows they saw. We were keen to see if there is any evidence that identity is a factor in the kinds of meaning our respondents found in their performances.

18. In S2, we asked our respondents if they made any connections between the performance and their own life and between the performance and the times they live in. We broke these answers down by gender and the results are presented in fig. 6.6.



19. You will see that slightly more men than women report making connections to their own lives, while somewhat more women than men report making connections to the times they are living in. This is perhaps notable for rebutting the gender stereotypes than associate women with the psychological and domestic and men with the public and political. Whether this is indeed a more general trend and, if so, why this should be the case is something we would suggest is worthy of further study. *fig 6.6*
20. We looked at whether age was a factor in making these kinds of connections. Figs. 6.7 and 6.8 show the tendency of the age groups to make connections with their own life and the times, respectively.
21. The size of the samples once again makes it difficult to establish a clear correlation though it is noticeable that the 26-35, 46-55, and 56-65 age brackets are the least likely to make connections in either questionnaire. The youngest and oldest are, conversely, the most likely to make these connections. Is it a coincidence that those generally not in paid employment have more 'headspace' to make these connections? This leaves the 36-45 age group unexplained – again approximating the responses of the youngest and oldest age groups in both charts. We move into the realms of sheer speculation here but further research might want to test whether this age group would tend to be more settled into their career, with a higher income, and more able to take time to explore the implications and significance of the culture they experience.
22. There is the beginning of a wider question here. In the 1940s, German political theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer wrote that the conditions of contemporary work left its members too exhausted in the evenings to enjoy 'authentic' culture and that, as a result, culture had changed to accommodate this depleted audience: 'No independent thinking must be expected from the audience [...] Any logical connection calling for mental effort is painstakingly avoided' (Horkheimer and Adorno 1973: 137). Without necessarily following these notorious pessimists to their full conclusions, we think there is fruitful research to do to explore whether and how an audience's conditions of work shape their responses to culture.

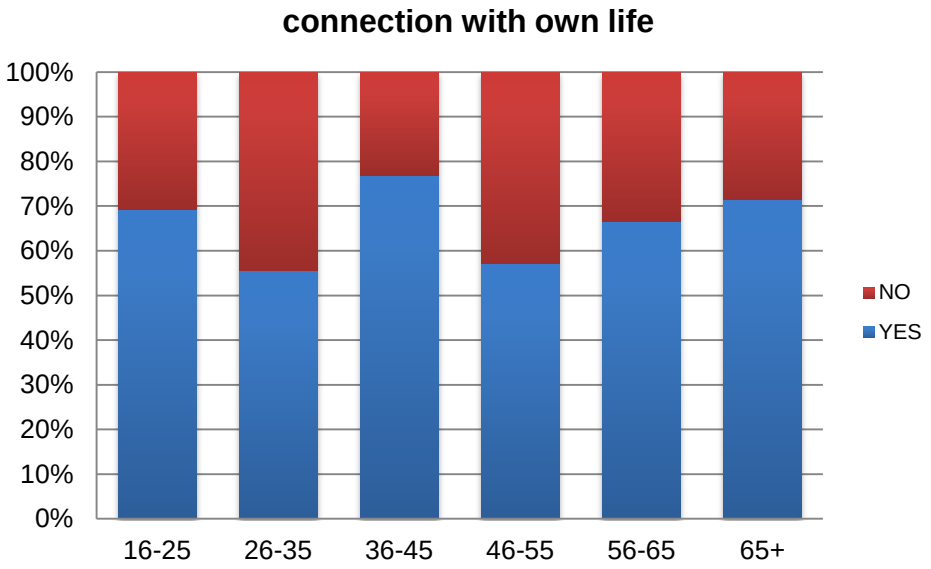


fig 6.7

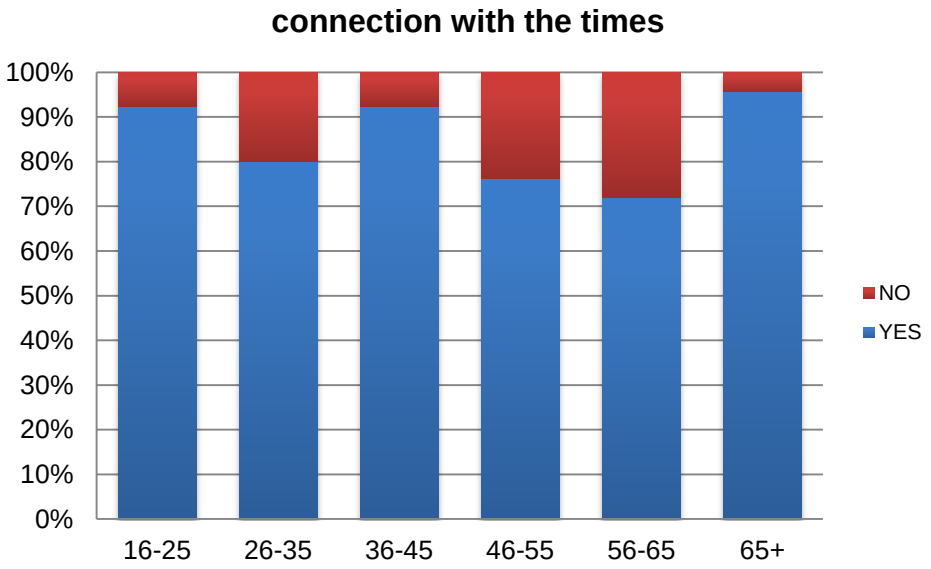


fig 6.8

23. We then turn to whether a tendency to make these associations correlates with level of educational attainment. It is clear that there is some degree of correlation, particular in the second question about making association with the times we live in. In both charts (figs. 6.9 and 6.10) the GCSE question relates to one or two respondents so should probably be ignored and the Other column should not be considered to be 'in sequence' as it covers a huge range of different (international) educational qualifications. Nonetheless there is a broad trend that

suggests the higher the level of educational attainment, the more likely an audience member is to make a connection with their lives and times.

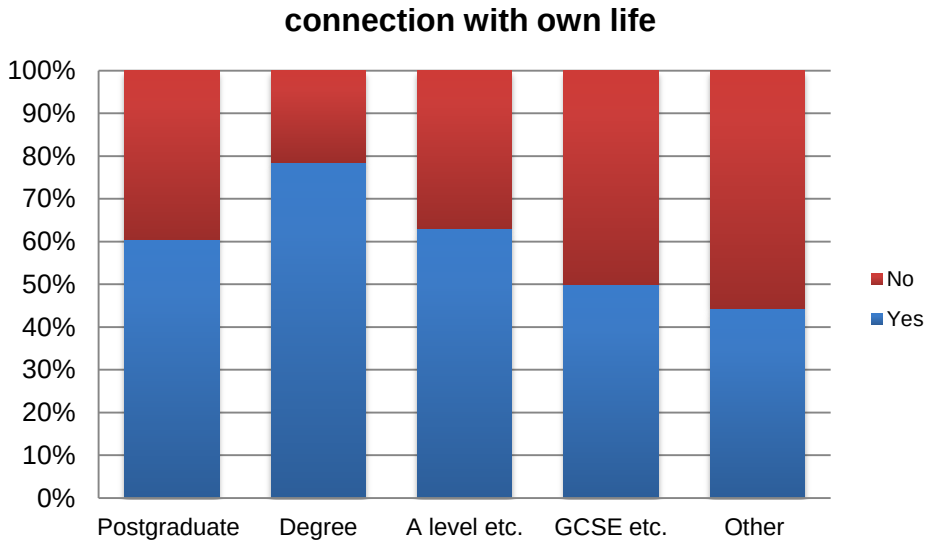


fig 6.9

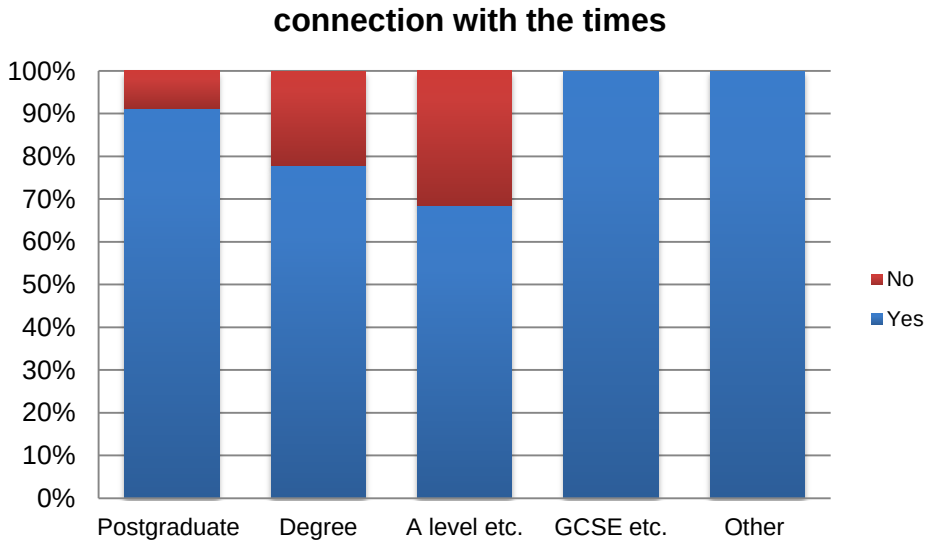


fig 6.10

24. Finally, we looked to see if the frequency of theatregoing might make us more or less receptive to associating the performance with our life and times. The evidence presented in figs. 6.11 and 6.12 pretty strongly suggests that there is no significant correlation at all. Indeed digging into the detailed figures behind the chart, those who go to the theatre 1-10 times have exactly the same propensity to make connections with their life and times as those who go 70-200 times a year. Although the sample is small, it does not suggest that more regular

experience with theatre makes you more or less likely to find connections with the wider world.

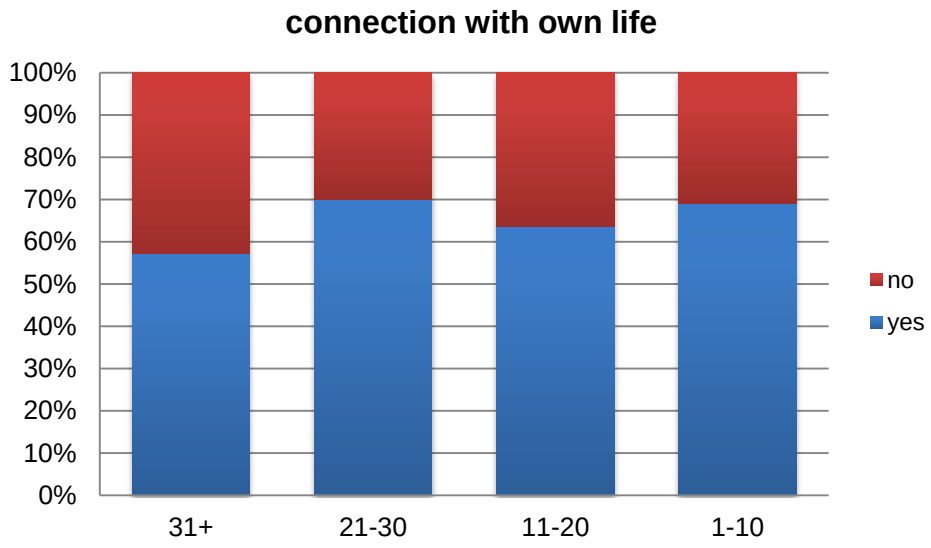


fig 6.11

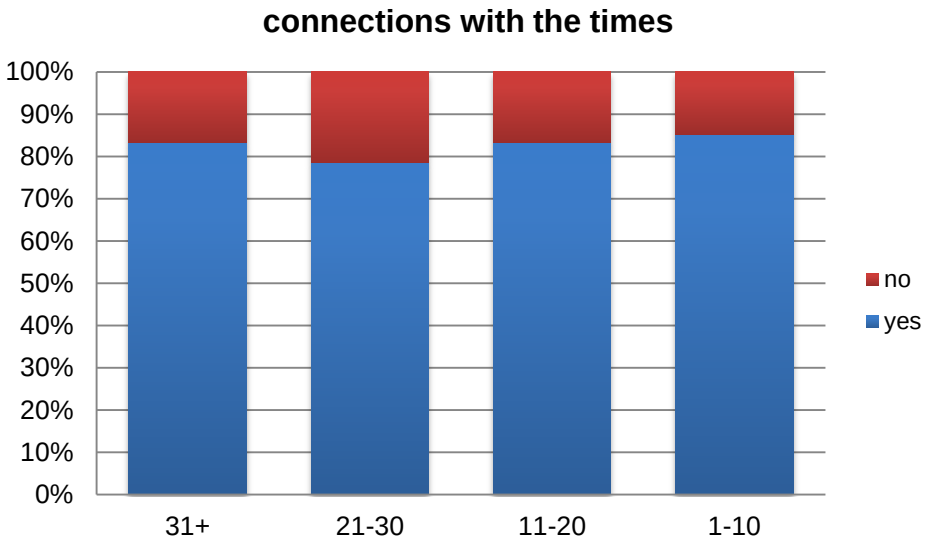


fig 6.12

25. Our findings, tentative though they are, seem to suggest that an older, well-educated woman who visits the theatre less than once a month is the most likely person to value highly the theatre she sees. Indeed, if we search for our respondents who fit all those categories (not many, it should be said), 71% of

them rated their performance highly and the rest all rated it at medium; none rated it low. Such characterizations of the audience, however, are crude. A better summation of our provisional findings here are that age, education, gender and frequency of attendance all seem to have some correlation with value, though it would be worth investigating whether there are causal connections between these factors. It may be that education, for example, is the key indicator and that other factors follow in various ways from that.

26. The propensity to find meanings in the theatre is harder to ascertain. There is an interesting pattern of men making connections with their own lives and women making broader connections to the times they live in. The old and the young seem most ready to make these connections and education does seem to be a general factor in an audience member's willingness to connect the theatre with life and the world. However, the lack of clear correlation in our findings might be seen as a sign of the theatre's openness; to 'understand' the theatre, it is not necessary to be highly educated or to be a frequent theatregoer. The theatre is an experience than can be accessed by a broad cross-section of the population.

7. The Interviews and Workshops

[Between November 2013 and April 2014, four interviewers conducted 31 interviews. At the Young Vic, respondents had seen The Secret Agent *(devised adaptation),* The Events *by David Greig and* Happy Days *by Samuel Beckett. At the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, respondents had seen* Hamlet, Candide *in a new version by Mark Ravenhill, and* Wolf Hall *adapted by Mike Poulton from the novel by Hilary Mantel. At the Plymouth Drum, the studio theatre of Plymouth Theatre Royal, respondents had seen* Fight Night *devised by Ontroerend Goed,* Solid Air *by Doug Lucie, and* The Animals and Children Took to the Streets *devised by 1927. Descriptions of the methodology in more detail can be found in Appendix A of this report. See Chapter 2 for short descriptions and photos of each play, and Appendix B for case studies of the nine shows covered in survey, interview and workshops.]*

Introduction:

An overview of the interview framework, creative workshop techniques and our interpretation of results

1. An early influence on the design of our interview script was oral historian Fiona Cosson of Manchester Metropolitan University who worked on the pilot project, 'The Spirit of Theatre', and offered us a model of semi-structured oral history interviews. Our interviews were more prescribed than an historical interview that is intended to gather memory for its own sake, in which the respondents entirely shape their own account based on relatively limited prompts. The structure of the TSVA interviews focused respondents on our areas of research interest in value attribution and tested the proposition that spectators do evaluate on the basis of networks of association, both social and mental.
2. Within the framework of the interview, we designed our questions to be open to interpretation, and one of the key methods we used in their analysis is to notice and describe how the respondent positions herself or himself as narrator as well as theatre spectator. We were able to use our professional knowledge of character construction to note structural and linguistic elements in the presentation of the interview, narrative repetition which helped to construct their responses as 'story', ways in which the respondents positioned the interviewer in relation to the process of answering, the register of address, and the use the respondents made of the interviewer's reactions to their answers.
3. We have included in this report reference to cases where the whole story which a respondent gives us in their interview illustrates a theme relating to our research

questions. In using this approach, we attempt to acknowledge a key aspect of our methodology, which strives not only to present the notion of value in the respondent's own language but to acknowledge the active contribution of our respondents to the re-creation in their stories of the experiential qualities of their theatre-going. In this way we hope to re-present some of the challenges which this material offers to critical conventions distinguishing the emotional from the cognitive in hierarchies of value, and the active from the passive spectator.

4. The participants tended to be frequent theatre-goers with a great deal of experience of a wide range of dramatic texts in performance. This is reflected in the range and sophistication of dramatic techniques deployed by the spectators-as-writers in their imaginative work in the creative workshops, which forms a further level of evidence of the learned conventions of dramatic structure, characterisation and dialogue which these participants have available to them as imaginative tools. In addition to explicit values explored in discussion and reactions to theatre implicit in the dramatic material participants invented, the deployment of dramatic writing techniques that operate at a somatic level speaks with some precision to the ways in which those participants find a use for dramatic storytelling. This evidence usefully complicates the accounts we have in the surveys of respondents' ideas of value. For example, the opportunity to experience the world through a displaced interiority - that is, the relative importance of character - is not only evidenced in surveys and interviews, but is demonstrated in the invention of coherent and evocative characters, by some workshop participants who otherwise describe their enjoyment of spectatorship in more cerebral or analytic, thus less 'embodied', terms. Likewise there is evidence in the creative writing of something which rarely appears in answers to other sorts of questioning: the significance of setting, not only as the first vivid impression of the world of the play or show at the beginning but also as an imaginary place, with its own ecology, architecture and atmosphere. Only in one or two interviews describing childhood memories of theatre do we see this aspect of the theatre experience replicated with an equivalent intensity. Through both interviews and creative workshops, when subjects make dramatic analogies to their experiences, we see respondents putting the knowledge gained from spectatorship to work, offering an additional expression of use-value which we might call 'imaginative utility'.

5. Sometimes, interview respondents gave fuller answers to some questions than others. Interviewers differed in the extent to which they developed respondents' first answers with follow-up questions and pursued digressions when relevant to our underlying research questions, sometimes altering the order when respondents pre-empted later questions. There are several examples where the respondent returns in the final section of the interview (concerned with enhancements such as programmes and reviews) to elaborate on an earlier question relating to aspects of value and personal experience.
6. In analysing the interviews, we bore in mind the position of the respondent as she or he presents herself. The creative workshop method allows us to take this process a step further, as participants themselves analyse what they learn about their particular and more general responses to being a spectator and seeing a show. There are also indications that the influence of both the group discussion and the group dynamic shapes the creative material which participants offer in relation to their response to the shows/and or theatre more widely. As creative workshop numbers were relatively small we present our findings from this exercise only in relation to evidence from the other methods used. Notes on the rationale underpinning the creative workshop technique we used and its relationship to the work of other researchers are offered in Appendix C to this report.
7. Below, we report more specific findings. The first nine sub-headings correspond to the main points of the interview protocol. Subjects are anonymised and referred to here by coding. At intervals, a text box indicates specific speculative interpretations we have made or trends we have observed.

Who are our respondents?

8. The first three tables below shows how many respondents we interviewed for each show by age group and gender. Totals in interview sample: 14 women, 16 men.

65+	1m	3m/m/f	2m/f	6
56-65		1f		1
46-55		1f		1
36-45		1f		1
26-35			1m	1
16-26				0

RSC	*Candide*	*Wolf Hall*	*Hamlet*	Totals: 10 5m5f

65+	2m/m	1f		3
56-65	1f		1f	2
46-55	2f/m	1f	1f	4
36-45				0
26-35		1f		1
16-26		1m		1
Plymouth Drum	*Solid Air*	*Fight Night*	*Animals & Children*	Totals: 11 5m/6f

65+			1m	1
56-65	1f	1m	2f/m	4
46-55			2m/m	2
36-45		1m		1
26-35		2f/f		2
16-26				0
Young Vic	*Secret Agent*	*The Events*	*Happy Days*	Totals: 10 6m/4f

9. Occupations: There were six lecturers or teachers; six people with writing or creative jobs, such as editor, journalist and photographer; five social or community workers; five administrative or financial staff; three people with technical jobs i.e. a flying instructor, a building surveyor and a software project manager; a full-time mother; a psychologist; a student; a farmer; a retired minister; and a judge. There are only three respondents who have only A- or O-levels. The rest have degrees or professional qualifications and 19 have postgraduate degrees.
10. There is no noticeable correlation between gender or educational level and interview responses in relation to the level of value attributed to the experience, although our sample is too similar in background and too small to be able to draw conclusions which are statistically representative of theatre-goers as a whole. Instead our analysis is inductive, investigating how these spectators evaluate their experience and placing most weight on the differences of explicit or implied value within the sample as indicative of different evaluative strategies.
11. The majority of our respondents have participated in either school plays, youth theatre or amateur theatre or a mixture of these activities. six out of 10 at the

Young Vic respondents, nine out of 10 at the RSC, nine out of 11 at Plymouth Drum: a total of 24 of 31. For some respondents, there are very close connections between the experience of watching, and of performing or staging plays themselves, with one respondent choosing to go to a play which she was interested in directing and others reporting enhanced pleasure arising from their understanding of the challenges to actors and acting skill, from direct knowledge of scripts, from understanding of directorial interpretation, and from applying practical hands-on knowledge of the mechanics of design and staging. One of our respondents, in the Young Vic group, had some experience in professional radio; one other in the RSC sample is a professional storyteller and actor.

The permeable boundary between spectatorship and participation indicates a cross-fertilization between making and watching theatre. This is something which we also found in our surveys, and in the pilot 'Spirit of Theatre' project, indicating that this is not an isolated geographical phenomenon.

12. Spectator expertise clearly contributes to the value attributed to the experience of seeing a performance. However, this expertise is developed in a variety of ways, which may or may not include direct participation in theatrical productions, or formal education. Several of our respondents relate their assessment of the show and its capacity to surprise and please them to extensive reading, and to the study of ideas and of dramatic texts in historical context. The habit of informal contextual study sometimes but not always begins at school. It is *not* related to whether respondents have an arts or a science background. Engineers, public relations staff, nurses and teachers are equally likely to 'read around' the play. Expertise can raise critical thresholds: C10 reports, 'One develops one's taste I think, perfects what one wants to see ... I still look to be surprised, shocked, challenged, I'm not beyond that. I guess it just gets more difficult to do when one has seen a lot and goes a lot.'

13. The age at which respondents first attend the theatre, direct participation in theatre-making and gender do correlate in noteworthy ways with the sorts of experience that respondents describe and value, as we will explore in the next section.

The first spark

14. For the majority of our interview respondents, theatre-going is a life-long habit. All but two respondents estimated their age when they first went to the theatre: 17 were aged 10 or under, and six were five years old or younger. One respondent points out that most people go to the theatre before they can read, and that it is often one of the very first experiences of a fictional story. Respondents report that this quality of inclusivity, allowing different generations to share their pleasure in a seeing a show, is something which they value highly.

15. We made a distinction in our question between the first visit and what sparked the respondent's independent interest. This gave us a complex and interesting picture, where some respondents recall vividly a memory from a very early age which then provides a basis for the story of their love of theatre, and others pick out later decisive memories which are also sometimes closely connected to key transitional moments in their lives. There is no apparent correlation between the age at which respondents go to the theatre and which category of play or which plays in our survey they have seen.

Women's role as guardians and promoters of theatrical engagement is an important aspect of the findings of our research which has implications not only for marketing and programming, but also for consideration of equity of cultural access in relation to public funding of the arts, since this research suggests that cuts which limit that access will impinge disproportionately on women, children, and family life.

16. Parents, particularly mothers and women more generally (as partners/wives/aunts and in one case, prospective mothers-in-law) are significant in introducing our respondents to the theatre, something which is also indicated in our surveys and in 'The Spirit of Theatre' research. In this group, four respondents remember going with mum, and one, an adult starter, with his wife. Again, as in 'The Spirit of Theatre' research and in our surveys, there is often a special quality of bonding implicit in the description of this experience. WH3 has an intense memory of *Peter Pan*, and reveals her child's eye view of the scale of the beings on stage; 'I remember a boy on the back of a horse no, no a dog, the dog...'. This respondent works out from her siblings' birth dates that there were probably 2 younger children left at home 'with Dad or Nan' when she went to see

this show on the tube across London with her mother, but, 'I don't recall anybody else being there except my mum and myself'.

17. Theatre-going is an important part of continuing family life: twelve of our respondents report going first to the theatre with both parents or the whole family. For some respondents, these early family trips were not what sparked their interest. One respondent, who locates his real interest at the point when he began studying literature in his late teens, reports 'tagging along' to the theatre with his parents. Another, though, takes us right into her first experience forty years earlier:

> We went to see *Billy*, Michael Crawford was in *Billy* ... it was one of those holidays where it rained continuously, and my parents had said, oh,we're going to just go into this theatre and see the show, so it wasn't planned or anything like that ... and we went in and we had really rubbish seats, not that I knew that at the time [*laughs*] ... but it was just amazing absolutely amazing ... the show, the feelings, the atmosphere ....

18. The majority of the respondents saw pantomime first and emphasized the importance of affordability of family access to theatre indicating that this is both an activity associated with class aspiration, *and* something that is regarded as offering open access to cultural participation irrespective of means.

19. School trips were the first contact with theatre for five of our respondents and three of these represent their family's lack of interest in theatre, in retrospect, as a disappointment. WH23, whose hook into theatre is an O-level in English Literature that she studied as an adult, reports that her parents would 'rather have jumped off the Eiffel Tower than send her to the theatre'. A different angle is offered by WH10 who comes from an Irish background and distinguishes the family culture as being rooted in other art forms, music and poetry sung and recited at home rather than theatre.

20. For those whose spark of interest happens later this can be 'caught' from a partner; there are examples of both genders sharing the theatrical interest which establishes a family theatre-going habit and two respondents specifically mention marriage as the point at which they began to go to the theatre.

21. There is also a noticeable 'Liverpool effect'. One Young Vic audience member and another from the Plymouth Drum, specifically locate their interest in theatre in the dramatic culture of Liverpool and particularly new writing and new writers produced at the Everyman theatre. One is a Liverpudlian man (HD20), who first started going to the theatre at the age of 16 or 17 as part of a group of friends

who gathered at the Everyman. The other is a native of Devon (AC21), who went to Liverpool as a student of literature and came away a confirmed theatre-goer.

22. In several cases, respondents describe the moment when they discovered the audience. WH3 tells us:

> ... the very first thing I remember doing was a comedy thing called *The King of Hearts' Tarts* ... I must have been about seven or eightand I played the King ... I remember doing something in this play that hadn't been rehearsed and that made people laugh, and I did it again and they laughed again ... so I've been quite a 'thesp' in my own way over the years.

23. Particular texts or stories can provide the key moment of interest in theatre and, where respondents describe this happening in childhood, the interviews tend to return to themes implicit in that experience. Memories are often fearful, comic, or both: WH17, for example, describes seeing Arthur Askey as Old Mother Riley, and remembers devils in skull-tight red or black caps with horns, leaping up out of a trap.

24. Childhood memories can also shape what respondents value in later theatre going experience. SA4 offers an account of a theatrical form as her first memory. She was brought up in Singapore - 'my first memory is seeing shadow puppets on the street' - and remembers the Chinese cultural influence:

> it was very multicultural at the time ... very much orientated towards costume, music - not so much voice because of course I wasn't ... [able to speak] the language ... but the colour and the music ... there was another world going on ... a world was being created in front of me and ... in a way for my pleasure ... as a child that had a tremendous impact on me ... that you could escape almost ... the life that you're in and go into whichever ... aspect of life you wanted.

25. She goes on to describe the first view of the stage in a way which echoes this first experience: 'when the curtains are separated or lifted or whatever the process is ... seeing the world that you're entering into ... always impresses me actually'. And her early enthusiastic account of the music accompanying the Chinese puppet shows is something she elaborates and connects with the later experience of Shakespearean language:

> I'm not really one for musical theatre as such, to be quite honest, but I'm quite ... into rhythm and sound ... I always think of ... the idea of ... sound as something aesthetic ... so the way words ... are used ... impress me I mean I love Shakespeare obviously, Molière ... I quite like verse.

26. We can see here an example of how key early experiences set an aesthetic agenda for our respondents' later evaluative idiolects.

27. Whatever the cultural frame of this first dramatic experience, even when it is closely associated with the idea of home and of personal cultural identity, it is represented in terms of otherness and the uncanny, qualities which several of our interviewees later explicitly link with the imaginative and social benefits of dramatic art.

In many other answers to this and other questions we find repeated what appears as a **drive to recreate the intensity, immediacy and novelty of the initial encounter** with a displaced, uncontrollable alterity - a source of delight and fear in various proportions but marked too by what is often represented as a first moment of awareness of one's own individuality in the crowd.

Social networks and connections

28. We have commented above on the importance of theatre attendance in cementing relationships and family solidarity. The interviews support the picture which emerges from the surveys of the vibrancy of social networks within which theatre-going is situated. Respondents use discussions about shows as a way of building connections with family, friends and colleagues across generations. C10, a lecturer, goes to see *Candide* with his son who is studying to be an English teacher; AC10 goes to 3 experimental shows at the Drum with her daughter; another respondent goes with her son's girlfriend. WH11's youngest son is taking drama at school; at home plays are discussed and when any member of the family misses out on a trip to the theatre the others are expected to ring and fill that person in, on what has been missed. WH11 discussed *Wolf Hall* with her mother who is particularly interested in Tudor history. AC21, a writer of children's non-fiction, takes a professional interest in what absorbs her nephews and nieces when they watch a play. After seeing *War Horse* with his grand-daughter, SA14 begins reading more children's stories by Michael Morpurgo so that they can talk about them together. Several respondents go to and talk about theatre as a couple but others go despite a partner's lack of interest: FN7 went to see *Fight Night* because it appealed to a husband who doesn't generally like theatre, and they started talking about the show as soon as it ended and carried on talking all the way home. The response of a companion or companions, the rest of the

audience or both figures strongly in the interviews despite the fact that few of the respondents say that they are influenced by other people's opinions of the show. For HD3, bereaved of his wife with whom he was used to go to theatre, there is great pleasure in those moments in a performance which would have pleased his companion. TE2 finds discussion after the play much more interesting if one person likes it more than another. But going with a companion or friends also brings responsibility to recognise different tastes and some people prefer to go alone, enhancing the ability to concentrate..

29. There is some evidence of the operation of taste as an indication of allegiance to a set of shared values. For example, as mentioned above, some of the respondents make sure to mention that they do not go to see many musicals or West End shows. This is consistent with the findings of the Spirit of Theatre research, where audience members for a production of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* distinguished thought-provoking theatre from 'entertainment' on the basis of whether there was live music in the show, or not. Although some TSVA respondents distinguish between different major touring shows, for example SA2 who did not rate either *One Man Two Guv'nors* or *War Horse* but did enjoy *Birdsong* and *The Lion King,* not one of our respondents draws a distinction between shows on the basis of how they are funded, indicating the blurring between publicly subsidised and purely commercial touring product. The Plymouth spectator in particular seem to have a diet of major touring productions and musicals on try-out before London runs which does not satisfy the appetite of these respondents for more thought-provoking and intimate shows.

30. Only one of our respondents, the youngest, says that he would trust friends' recommendations ahead of his own judgement in choosing what he wants to see. HD20, the Liverpudlian now in London, identifies a social pressure with an implication of class identity:

> For people who live in London there's a certain kind of expectation that you will have been to see some theatre, and so if you're sitting in a pub with friends or if you're out to dinner, you'll tend to say, 'oh, what have you seen?'

31. Three of the male respondents discuss clothing in relation to theatre. One RSC s member regrets fellow audience members who, having spent a lot on an expensive show, do not dress formally. Two of the younger men mention (positively) the chance to dress up to go to the theatre, although this is a matter

of self-expression rather than formality. One female Young Vic attender says that her sense of connectedness with theatre is indicated by the fact that she now goes straight from work without changing clothes.

Identity and Place

32. For respondents based in the South West, access to theatre is a major issue and the sheer distances that audience members travel indicates the high value attributed to seeing a show.

33. SA10 came to the South West from Newcastle and recalls seeing Alan Plater's *Close the Coalhouse Door* with her parents. Later, as a student nurse in London, she recalls, 'If the theatres had tickets they would pin them up on the noticeboards ... for free ...', thus enabling her to see many different sorts of shows. While she and her husband were in Plymouth they saw shows at the Theatre Royal main house and the Drum but this became harder when they moved further into the countryside, even though the 'Villages in action' scheme allows them to see shows by touring companies which this organisation books into the village hall, such as Kneehigh. As part of a rare return visit to re-connect with her roots, they recently went back to Newcastle to see Lee Hall's *The Pitmen Painters,* and visited the now closed pit where some of the original paintings which feature in the show are displayed.

34. FN12 is based in Plymouth but originally from Belgium and is a fan of Ontroerend Goed who presented *Fight Night* at the Drum. This respondent is interested in the challenge her home country has to offer the British public, both in terms of the show's comment on voter apathy, but also in terms of the relative paucity of theatrical culture. She is hungry for the vibrant artistic scene in Ostend where her social life revolved around theatre: 'If we don't go to theatre, where will we get food for thought from?'

35. An Italian respondent living in London attributes to theatre the power to promote tolerance and in *The Events* he identifies questions about how we respond culturally to immigration as key both to his own experience as a migrant, and the Italian response to the arrival of strangers in his home town.

36. Theatre-going is seen as a way to mediate cultural as well as geographical displacement. WH23, a female engineer, describes how her hunger for artistic experience makes her feel like an exile in her own community. When she tries to

talk about seeing plays with friends and colleagues, 'it's a little bit like being in a different part of the country.' Yet the metaphor of being taken elsewhere by the play is a strongly positive theme throughout these contributions. C10 comments that the value of theatre is 'something to do with moving into a more profound place, and disregarding superficiality'. Another interviewee reported that theatre 'opens up different avenues of thought . . .that I wouldn't have dreamt of'. The intensity produced by this sense of transportation may account for the passion of respondents faced with the prospect of a world without theatre: I would be berefit if I was unable to go'. In his 2013 study, Walmsley quotes a 60-year-old Londoner who would be 'devastated and heartbroken' without theatre in her life' (84).

37. In the creative workshops, settings are some of the most evocative aspects of the writing. Even though he had not seen *The Events,* HD14 picks up aspects of another person's retelling of the story of that play in his depiction of a boatyard in an isolated rural setting, on a river, where a stranger arrives, looking for work. In her writing, composed in a new workshop built for the Theatre Royal company on the site of a now disused dockyard, AC9 depicts a woodland which has grown up over an industrial site which seems to speak more directly to the economy of the city where the theatre is based than to any of the shows remembered and discussed in that workshop. This reminds us that although creative responses to the plays can throw new light on those responses, this sort of extrapolation has an independently creative as well as a research dimension.

Personal associations

38. For all respondents, being suitable for discussion afterwards is a shared marker of value, independent of the show's intrinsic merits. One question, however, did divide our sample. We asked for an example of a show other than the one surveyed, which might have elicited personal associations for our respondents. One respondent was not asked this question but of the 30 who were, nine said that not only could they not think of an example but that they disagreed with the assumption of the question. Three people were initially unsure how to answer, but did give examples of personal connections with particular shows. 18 readily connected shows to events in their own lives. No-one who made personal connections with the story of a show were unwilling to share them. For example,

TE19 had seen *The Events.* Early in his interview he described a memory of a play about Afghanistan which had stayed in his mind because of the 'insight it gave into the way the insurgents were thinking'. He was at first stumped by the question about personal associations, explaining that he was keen to try to answer but he didn't mostly think about plays in relation to himself. Later, when asked about what most affected him in the theatre-going experience, he remembered a play he had seen,

> about a young man in a tower block um and that ... reminded me very much of what happened to a friend of somebody that I knew ... who'd ended up killing themselves ... and so I ... I guess that affected me directly because I could identify um somebody I knew very much with ... one of the key characters in the play

39. The response of some who were unsure indicates that the question of personal connection does not fall into their usual frame of evaluative reference - it seemed unfamiliar and demanding.

40. For those respondents who readily made connections with their own lives, the examples which they gave were of significant and emotional moments in their lives, of important relationships, or key professional matters. TE10, for example, connects *A Taste of Honey* with her experience as a primary school teacher ('bad parenting creating a cycle of need which is passed on') while TE2, a Charity Manager, connects a production at The Shed *(*National Theatre) with her work with young homeless people.

41. WH10 was one of five respondents including 1 person in the creative workshop, who mentioned associations with the death of a loved one. In WH10's case, any play, like *Wolf Hall,* which depicted the death of a mother tends to put her in mind of the death of a beloved grandmother. As a mother and a teacher, her interest was mostly in the reactions of the people left behind. In the interview, describing her interest in *Wolf Hall,* she positions herself as someone who takes a guiding role in young people's access to the history of her Roman Catholic heritage, having organised trips for her pupils to visit hidden priest-holes in big houses, as evidence of persecution following Henry VIII's split with the Roman church. Her personal connections with dramatic events in various texts are intimately bound up with her identity and social role, which she represents as being mediated through the theatrical culture she interprets and shares with her own children and her pupils. Her formative theatre experiences are of Manchester

theatre, before she moved away from the city. She mentions a key memory of a production of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* at the Library Theatre, as well as shows at the Royal Exchange, and the Lowry.

42. Three respondents associate plays directly with memories of living relatives. 2 respondents make comparisons with troublesome work colleagues using the idea of character 'types'. WH14 uses the fictional Cromwell from *Wolf Hall* to compare with 'a greasy-pole climbing colleague at work', and WH11 says of a colleague, 'he's not *exactly* Iago'.

43. Two contributors, both performers, give extended and lively accounts of their theatrical experiences, with contrasting implications for their construction of value. For one, there is no question about the depth of personal associations; for the other, there is a distance from self-analysis although still deep involvement.

44. WH17 used his interview to map his own route into theatre and story-telling; the devils who pursued Old Mother Riley are echoed later in a Sergeant with a bayonet in *Oh What a Lovely War!* illustrating the way in which he uses theatrical analogies to rationalise fear and threat. His parents moved him to New Zealand as a boy, and his experience of displacement is embodied in the story of painting an island set for Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton,* and then in playing the part of the kidnapped cabin boy, Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island*. At the same time, his ability to entertain has offered him licence and recognition: 'I can remember that I could make people laugh in the theatre at school, which got me out of a lot of trouble.' He travelled back to England to become a geographer, a maker of maps, but instead turned to acting. He became aware of the power of theatrical analogy when studying with the inspirational drama teacher Dorothy Heathcote, 'in her big sandals', and going on to work within the school system as a drama advisor.

> And then when the National Curriculum came in [*laughs*] they said there's no room for storytelling and drama ... so I went freelance and did drama and storytelling, but as I got older of course carrying boxes of drama equipment around, got too much. So I carry my bag of stories around now.

45. WH17 posits a transformative function for dramatic storytelling.

> not actually being taking part in theatre, but even watching theatre lets you see what it's like in other people's shoes ... So you can deal with ... experiences yourself. And you say ah well I saw that happen so I know this could happen.

46. He characterises empathic identification as culturally formative, particularly in relation to our interpretation of a notionally shared past, positioning Mantel's *Wolf Hall* in the context of an exploration of an historically imbued English landscape. In contrast with the 'untrodden' territory of Australia, 'when you walk up on the Ridgeway, you think men have been, and women have been walking ... these paths for thousands and thousands of years.'

47. The way in which we approach our history is indicative of political value:

> one of the great disasters I think of the whole ... um ... system that we live in is people don't understand their history ... I don't think that people at the top think about the past at all ... they block out areas of the past.

48. On the other hand, WH3 offers a different account of herself in relation to her theatrical aspirations: She was 15 and hoping to go to drama school when her parents moved the family to Singapore where instead she went to commercial college and later married. Now, when she goes to the theatre:

> I can't just go and see a play just sit back, and I don't mean to criticize, but just enjoy it. I think other people do enjoy thinking about it, but I'm looking at the lighting, the sound, the staging as well as all the acting ...

49. She distinguishes between musicals 'based on pop songs' and the power to move of *Les Misérables*, and explains her fascination with Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen,* in which she acted in an amateur production, but now wants to direct, as a desire to bring more clarity to the complex ideas in that play: 'you learn so much'. However, the idea that there might be personal associations with the content of a show is not what she expects from theatre:

> I thought the question for me personally was just a wee bit ... it didn't apply ... I went to see the *Wolf Hall* because I read the book ... my interest was more practical than an emotional experience initially ... there wasn't anything in the production necessarily that made me relate to anything else in my life necessarily.

50. She too enjoys the historical aspect of *Wolf Hall,* seeing its depiction of Cromwell's political machinations as confirmation of her sense that 'nothing changes'.

51. For FN16, *Fight Night* is atypical in provoking a more thoughtful response, which she relates to the effective reduction of character to type in that show as opposed to her normal experience where she would not come away thinking about how the show related to her real life: 'Mostly it just sort of gets me there at that

moment ... I feel with the characters or I don't feel with them, or I feel angry with them or I don't feel angry with them'.

52. However, the debate about whether or not the question of personal associations are relevant to what some respondents get from watching performance is not simply an argument about entertainment versus intellectual engagement. For some respondents, the power of drama resides in its objectivity, the presentation of what is strange, in the moment of its reception.

53. SA17, a photographer doesn't see theatre as trite entertainment, but 'a bit like a painting. I expect it to move me, but I don't expect it to ... politically motivate me or anything like that ... I don't see it as propaganda, I see it as a sort of emotive art.'

54. SA4, who travels long distances to see shows at the Plymouth Drum, says 'I do like the escapism', but uses the term to relate to her ability as an adult to live her life as she pleases: 'It supports my inner sense of freedom'.

55. HD20 finds theatre inspiring for his work as a publisher, but 'I treat a play as a play'. He reads the question about personal association as reference to realism and distinguishes between the way film can involve him more fully in a way that the comparative artifice of theatre prevents.

56. For HD19, who has seen *Happy Days,* and is interested in how texts gather status - or canonicity - 'the personal effect is stronger when the play's own stage world is more coherent.'

57. Contrasting scenes written in the creative workshop at the RSC situate this debate in the context of different sorts of theatrical aesthetics. H6 writes a realistic scene, set on a balcony overlooking the sea, which connects the dynamic between Gertrude and a Hamlet, who refuses to grow up and accommodate himself to the adult world, with her own family experience of a recent divorce as a way of using the material of the play to work through a personal circumstance:

> The occasion is the celebration of my sixtieth birthday. Toast completed, my husband asks his daughter-in-law, 'and how are things', at which she breaks down in tears and tells us her marriage is 'over', and this sets in train a summer of events which 'bodes some strange eruption to our state'.

58. C6, on the other hand, offers a meta-theatrical exercise in dialogue which draws much more on the dramatic representation of theatre of the absurd:

Woman:	I expected someone, but I didn't know it would be you.
Man:	You hadn't noticed, then?
Woman:	Shall we open the champagne, or is it too soon?
Man:	I'd love some champagne, but we haven't explored the other dialogue yet.
Woman:	What other dialogue?
Man:	The pages in the script you missed out. You're only supposed to appear later. I've got so much to say first. I've learnt it all but now I won't get to say it because you've arrived too soon and we have to move on.

59. Although there are some clear differences of philosophy underlying this debate about personal associations, we can see that not only are terms such as 'escape', 'entertainment', and 'emotion' used in ways which resist a shared definition, but that there are also apparent contradictions indicated by the use of these and other terms within the same interviews. For example, H4 offers a dynamic, modern formulation. 'intellect is influenced by emotion and ... emotion of course is influenced by one's cognitive processes'. However, he then goes on to say that theatre is valuable because it offers 'catharsis', while acknowledging that the Ancient Greeks in their exclusion of women were 'not perfect'. The social and ceremonial aspects of the classical concept of catharsis do not figure elsewhere in an interview largely concerned with the psychological. HD19 tells us that his views are not changed by watching a play, but paradoxically that its value is to allow an audience member 'to reassess to re-experience...aspects of how you see the world'. Our respondents appear to be engaging with critical conventions which fail to capture what they experience as a complex interplay between alterity and identification.

Time, memory and memorialisation

60. A strong theme, running through both interviews and workshops highlights the function of theatre in relation to stages of life as seen through the prism of mortality. Theatrical experiences sometimes directly memorialise personal bereavements or serious illness. Beyond this, there is a vivid awareness of the simultaneous singularity and commonality of the theatre experience, a paradox which several respondents point out. For some respondents, a darkened auditorium is key to the distinctiveness of this aspect of theatre, and distinguishes it from television drama in particular. Enjoying the opening moment, like the pleasure which audience members get from seeing new

stagings of familiar texts, is analogous to coming back to life after dying. The world of the play is brought to life when the play begins; and new interpretations of the same play by different companies similarly revive and reinvigorate historic texts. The play ends, but the actors live to perform again. Our respondents make use of the ironic tension between the 'liveness' of theatre, the 'now' of performance, and the self-contained nature of the story of a play, limited by the concentrated period of time during which the spectators are willingly compelled to attend to the action on stage.

The creative workshop exercise allowed participants to express in a safe way deep connections with their own lives

61. SA14 associates John Mortimer's *A Voyage Round my Father* with his own father's disabling stroke. HD3 mourns his wife when he goes to see the opera *La Traviata,* while 'wandering round London reliving some of the things we used to do.'

62. Psychologist WH14 offers us a study of productions of *Hamlet* he has seen beginning with his first memory of Hamet's father's ghost, aged nine or ten, which charts the development of his own thinking:

> it is all about what are we doing here, what is existence about, do we know anything beyond life itself, and how do you deal with living now with uncertainties and so on, and then, you know, the more you see Shakespeare as an individual, the more you realize it is to do with his relationship with his own son, and a kind of mourning, but it's also his own father. So, at certain points at the play, Shakespeare is appearing to be father to his son, but also son to his father.

63. When WH14 studied as a psychologist he was able to apply a Freudian Oedipal interpretation; later, becoming a parent complicated his understanding of Claudius's character. This interview shows the respondent continuing to mull over Jonathan Slinger's interpretation of the part, beginning with a mostly negative comparison with the National Theatre's recent production with Rory Kinnear, which offered a comment on the present day with its depiction of an oppressive surveillance state. By the end of the interview, WH14 gives more weight to the idea that the Slinger production stressed the play as Hamlet's inner drama, indicated by the use of presence - of Hamlet and even of the dead Ophelia who remains on view in a shallow scrape of a grave from her death to the end of the play. This interview reveals the response over time of the spectator to the text as a way of connecting with, reviewing and re-incorporating one's own memories into an ever-evolving self-awareness. Plays influence the way we see life, but life

influences our reception of the play, 'in a mutual sort of influence.' Here theatrical repetition is in dynamic negotiation with the idea of mortality itself.

64. Another respondent SG11 is troubled by her loss of memory, something which the interview itself brings home to her. Attending the theatre 200 times a year, she is distressed to discover that she cannot recall any details of performances. She is sharply aware of the span of a life: 'Oh I don't want to get to that stage ... I don't want to not go and be able to see something live'.

65. Many respondents to the questionnaires remarked on the moment in *Wolf Hall* in which the company staged the death of Lizzie Cromwell, Cromwell's wife, marked by the actress moving quietly across the stage, unnoticed by other characters including Cromwell himself. In the creative workshop, WH24 was inspired by this moment and invented a scene which he felt expressed his response to his own recent bereavement. The participant felt exposed by this – a feeling of being laid bare which is often felt by students of creative writing in early workshops – but we were able to reassure him that, until he himself had made those connections explicit, the rest of the group didn't know that it revealed his own story.

66. One interviewee in his 70s made a point about theatre attendance which provides an interesting gloss on the perceived age profile of theatre spectators, proposing that 'as you get older and as you experience events in your own life, you are then able to see more in a work of art than you did before'. Rereading *War and Peace,* the interviewee reported thinking that he hadn't remembered certain passages because he hadn't registered them on his first reading, 'because I hadn't got the equipment to understand the idea. So, it is almost like saying, you can't learn anything from somewhere else, unless you have already learned it yourself'. For this interviewee at least, theatre is thus a form of life-long learning.

Value

67. As in the surveys, interview subjects identity 'liveness' as the most important attribute of performance. There are differences among respondents about what is valuable about this, with some stressing the sense of immediacy and others what C10 calls 'that strange moment of genius' which distinguishes risky theatre performance from film which has been 'edited to perfection'. For one or two others the presence of the rest of the spectators is crucial. WH23 compares going to the theatre to 'eating an orange and getting the vitamin C'. For FN7 it is

'a part of who I am', and for H24, 'some of the most powerful experiences of my life have been in theatre'. SG11 is one of two respondents who receive performances as if a gift. 'These people are acting on the stage just for me!' SA2 sees theatre as an inherently active pursuit:

> Oh it's hugely valuable to me I would be bereft if I was unable to go to ... see theatre ... I don't watch TV, I've not watched TV for the last, I don't know, six or seven years because ... I find it's very banal crap ... I read a lot of books, I go to art galleries and things like that... and I sing in a Gospel choir ... I just like to be ... much more ... active rather than passive in my entertainment and ... I regard theatre as an active entertainment rather than a passive entertainment ... and that's what's particularly enjoyable from my perspective.

68. Many of our respondents pick out the opening moment of the play as having the most effect on them. TE3 captures the sense of anticipation vividly.

> probably it's that mix of expectation and ... seeing the moment the play will start that ... sort of ... thrill[s] me ... that's the best moment because of course at that point I cannot be disappointed because I'm excited about the play and then I'm concentrating and I'm already looking maybe at the set and ... taking the details in and ... I'm sort of even responding to the [*laughs*] energy in the room, and maybe talking with someone sitting next to me ... so sort of building up of excitement is the is the best moment.

69. SA10, a nurse/midwife remembers the final moment of *The History Boys* viscerally, 'as if someone had squashed my chest in some way, it was so emotional'. FN20, from our youngest age group makes an instructive comparison with other sorts of cultural experience. He enjoys the unexpected in theatre, which coincides with his taste in the sort of 'high-octane' performance he associates more with gigs, and with pantomime. He experiences the silence of a theatre auditorium as a pressure or restriction, as conversation 'bursts out' afterwards.

70. While not all respondents see the need for theatre to speak to social and political issues, as we have seen in the section above on personal connections, for many of our subjects the quality of the debate provoked is a crucial aspect of the value they attribute to the experience of seeing the show, a criterion which operates at least to some extent independently of a critical or aesthetic valuation. One respondent describes *Happy Days* as 'the sort of play you could kind of project your own thoughts onto', while another sees plays 'as a vehicle for discussing issues'. HD3 has come to eco-thinking and feminism, and he sees the theatre as

a shared place for social and political criticism. Two respondents stress the importance of being able explore the mind-set of the villain. TE10 believes watching theatre encourages action in real life. All the respondents who had been to see *Fight Night* spoke at length and with energy about the political and personal connections that show made for them.

71. In the RSC workshop, C12 criticised Mark Ravenhill's re-working of *Candide,* but nevertheless took full advantage of the chance to dispute the argument of the play by recycling settings and characters from the play to put a pilot in a space craft where he had to make a choice of life and death on behalf of his cargo of humanity.

Enhancements

Reviews

72. Respondents generally are equivocal about reviews. Those who read them tend to go to the *Guardian*, *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, BBC Radio 4, or to other listings, magazines, and online review sites, most commonly after rather than before seeing a show to compare their view of the show with that of the reviewers. The most positive response to reviews is in relation to new plays where a couple of respondents say that a review is helpful in introducing them to new writers and writing. Some respondents are energetic in their annoyance at reviewers who write negatively about a show they have enjoyed and almost all mention that they are not influenced in their response to reviews but prefer to make up their own minds. Only one respondent said that she enjoyed the chance to test her views against those of the critics. One other is a fan of Lyn Gardner whose catholic taste and interest in a wide range of work matches her own interests. Two write their own reviews informally but systematically after each show; in one case to help her to form her own opinion and as a teaching tool, and for friends; in the other in an email she sends out to a group of friends who have expressed interest in what she has to say. In effect this respondent is an unpaid reviewer herself.

Programmes

73. HD25 has in her living room 'an entire wall of theatre programmes', which she and her husband refer to, in order to discuss and compare different productions and follow actors' careers. HD20 sees the actors' summary biographies in the programme as an affirmation of the credibility of the production. For several respondents, the programme notes enhance their enjoyment and add to their knowledge, but there are as many comments from respondents who resent the adverts, the quality of the content and the marketing generally in the theatre. Some respondents point out that there is no need for a programme, as they get all their information about the show on line.

Workshops and talks

74. The response to our question about participation in pre- and post-show discussions, talks, workshops and lectures is very positive where people have participated in these, but they are seen an ancillary rather than key activity, especially for those who have long trips home after going to the theatre. Live streaming of theatre onto cinema screens, on the other hand is very popular, even though it is widely regarded as second best to being present at the live event.

Effect of questions

75. For most respondents taking part in the surveys and interviews has had no effect on their responses to the play they saw, which was the subject of the interview. However, C10 found himself irritated at being asked to spend longer thinking about the play he had seen than he felt it merited, and HD20 noted how filling out the survey 'fixed' the show in his mind. WH10 discovered just how much she valued theatre through doing the interview, re-evaluating its importance in her life.

76. In the creative workshop, FN10 felt that *Fight Night* was not a show he would have remembered were it not for our questionnaire, but nevertheless invented a scene set in a modern hustings, and plotted behind-the-scenes tensions between 2 would-be lovers, using this material to work through his response to the politics of the current Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition, with *Fight Night* as a model.

77. At the end of his interview, SA14 decided to invite neighbours as well as more friends to share theatre trips with him.

78. For this group of respondents, the theatrical experience does more than reinforce community - it creates community through debate and shared feeling.

Summary

79. Our respondents use their experience of theatre:

- as a way of building social networks and neighbourly connections and bonding families
- as an opportunity to relieve the pressures of self-awareness and mediate subjectivity by offering access to another world - attractive because it is strange and explicitly not as a lesson in how to live
- by contrast, as a medium for exploring the meaning of behaviour and underlying personal, social and political dynamics
- to enhance empathic understanding of the lives of others and broaden the mind
- as a prompt to action in their own lives
- as a living mental map of their lives, through geographic, social, familial and chronological topographies
- to exercise an active and self-determining role as critical spectator.

One last comment: We have noticed in the interviews and workshops that subjects who live at a distance from theatre are particularly aware of value constructed on the basis of the relationships between one performance experience and another, and express a hunger for the sort of material which provides food for thought. This has important implications for theatre provision and public funding.

10. Conclusion: Future Plans and Research Priorities

The Research Project, Our Objectives and Results

1. Returning to the original objectives of TSVA, we set out to investigate the benefits of empirical research to questions of cultural value in the realm of theatre by focusing on the 'processes of value attribution based on individual appropriation of the phenomenological experience of "being there"'. We wanted to use a portfolio of methodologies (surveys, interviews, workshops) to understand if and how spectators' experiences 'coalesce and intermingle with the experiences of others to produce additional values'. We also wanted to experiment with longitudinal research that might tell us how time and memory effect value attribution. Our rich data bank provided many opportunities for us to analyse these questions, and along with all the detailed insights and findings we have recorded in this report, we would like to underscore the most important ones from our point of view:

- The project's conclusion that sociality is interwoven with value in relation to theatre experiences is the hallmark conclusion. It shows that spectators value the 1) liveness of the actual theatre experience, 2) associate the ideas and feelings generated by the performance to other aspects of their lives and times, 3) process their thoughts and feelings about the experience over time—and change the inflection, if not the elements, of their judgments over time. 4) They discuss their experiences with family and friends; for many this is very important to the overall value they place upon attending the theatre.

- Therefore, our hypothesis that value is created in the relationship between the performance, the spectators, and the networks of associations which the experience triggers, is validated by our research.

- Spectators value theatre for a complex variety of reasons, but the top indicators are liveness, thoughtfulness, and artistic production elements such as company, actors, and design. The most important finding, however, is that

these are often combined in making judgments about value, and that many spectators find considering a performance entertaining quite compatible with it being intellectually challenging, causing us to call for more research in the concept of 'entertainment' (see below).

- We found a very high level of associations between the play and the world in which we live and a slightly less high level to the personal lives of our subjects. This was at its peak in S2 and S3, and seemed to decline over time, or to transform into more abstract formulations of theme or concept. We also noted a difference in the kind of impression made or recalled over time, and have come up with the new hypothesis that the 'Aftermath' of the theatre event can be modeled in stages: from sensuous particularity related to the proximity of the performance, to a rise in cognitive values and emphasis on meaning and significance in the middle term, to more abstract and condensed impressions in the longer stretch of time. This could/should be further tested (see below).

- Another key finding about memory and time is that for those spectators who begin their theatre experiences early in life, theatre becomes a form of 'life-long learning' where meaning accumulates over time. Spectators who attend a lot of theatre appear to become better at selecting high-value shows to attend, and report a good deal of associational and substantive nourishment from their experiences. Our interviews and workshops especially allowed us to see how this takes place over time in the lives of our subjects, and also the way it is frequently woven into familial networks, inter-generational sharing, and friendships.

- The final finding about memory is that it is chimerical with respect to self-reporting. Spectators may report they have not changed their minds while our survey data indicates otherwise. Subjects seem to have trouble remembering exactly how many times they recalled the performance two months later, judging from the wide range of numbers they reported. The intense imagery of early recall often turns into generalization or abstraction as time recedes.

- Our demographic data indicates that identity features such as age, gender, education, and previous theatre experiences all have some correlation to value attribution, with education being the strongest variable. These correlations are as yet 'weak' however in view of our small sample.

- From our interview and workshop sessions, it is clear that the kind of information that can be gathered by surveys alone is limited. To maximize its value, survey information needs the kind of elaboration, argument, interpretation and diligence that draws on the resources not only of expert interpreters but also the detail and specificity found in the interview and workshop situations. We conclude a portfolio of mixed methodologies is best suited to this type of research which attempts to examine the inner lives of subjects as well as their external behaviours and judgments.

- Further reflections and arguments about our conclusions can be found in two forthcoming articles accepted for publication in refereed journals (See References). In the blog section of our website, reports appear on our public events in each of our partner theatres and the final conference.

Future Research Priorities and Plans

2. There are many opportunities for drawing other insights from the existing data which we will continue to mine and parse in coming months. However, there are also some 'hot topic' areas of our current findings that we think merit further research. These often will call for 'big data' and longitudinal scope. They should also be built with research teams that include theatre partners and social science as well as theatre scholars.
3. As to future plans, we would like first to comment on some of the limitations of our just-completed study:
4. We were ambitious with what we tried to do in TSVA, and there really was not enough time or resources to achieve our goals within the limitations of the call for applications. This meant a lot of voluntary time, difficulty staying within our budget, and a smaller sample than would have been needed to be conclusive about a number of items we considered. We would strongly recommend to funding bodies requisitioning such research that ample provision be made for 'big

data' to be gathered and that sufficient time and resources be allocated for longitudinal research.

5. For the future, we would envision designing research to follow up on one or more of the above ideas, but not by ourselves. During our study, we saw how scholarship, public outreach, and affiliations with artists, companies, and public policy figures can create a productive synergy. At our public events, we benefitted from hearing feedback from theatre managers and found that the RSC is responding to our findings by considering longitudinal studies (discussed at the RSC 'Unrestricted View'), and that Anne Torreggiani of the Audience Agency said at our conference that the Agency woud now look more specifically at audience members with postgraduate qualifications as a result of our research. This indicates the importance of working with these groups from the beginning. We think they need to be full stake-holders in the next phase of our research, and that indeed the research objectives and key questions should be agreed in advance by these constituencies. We also would require social science partners and adequate postgraduate research assistance to ensure methodological soundness and efficiency. The research would need to be carried out over a long time—perhaps five years would be an ideal span. Based on what we know about academic funding, the following opportunities would offer enough time and support to sustain this work: AHRC Research Grants go up to £1M over up to five years. ESRC Research Grants go up to £2M over five years but there would obviously have to be a real social science focus to the work. Then there's the ERC Advanced Investigator Grants but these require one PI to lead a team and might not be as well suited to the larger coalitional project we've outlined. In the future, we will investigate these possibilities in more detail.

6. Here, then, in conclusion, are some of the topics we feel merit further research:

- The question of whether and how people change their minds over time with regard to valuation is interesting and should be worthwhile to all stakeholders (public policy, theatres, academics). Related longitudinal questions include confirming the findings of associational changes to self and world over time (or challenging them), and the long-term value of theatre experiences to spectators who attend theatre over a period of years.

- Investigating the arc of judgments of value and whether or not there is a change in the qualities invoked (as we have posited) from sensuous toward conceptual as time passes.
- The variables of education, age, gender, and past experiences of theatre will need further research with a big sample in order to be conclusive about whether and how these effect experience and value attribution.
- Gender, especially, is a rich category for further exploration. It seems from our data that women might associate in differing patterns to men. It also seems that women are often the ones who introduce theatre into their families, maintain social bonds with friends and family, and develop long-term experiences with theatre networks. On the other hand, it is intriguing that in our study men associated more often to their own lives than women while women associated more frequently to the larger world.
- How much interaction and stimulation after the performance enhances spectator valuation is particularly important for theatres as many are beginning to try to develop long-term relationships with spectators around the shows those patrons attend. While our research showed that post-show discussions were of high value only to some, it also indicates clearly that people value discussion and sociality and engage in it for some time after the stimulus of the performance has passed. It would be good to measure more definitively whether or not being worthy of discussion is a criterion of high value for spectators.
- Our intriguing findings concerning the meaning of 'entertainment' and its compatibility with 'food for thought' indicate a topic that needs more research and could be very valuable to policy makers as it focuses on some stereotypical and widely current ideas and questions them. Our findings show that these terms are not incompatible at all, and that in actuality people often refer to them together as valuable attributes. One additional aspect to this maybe the limitations of vocabulary and the habits of discourse that privilege certain words such as 'entertainment' when a more elaborate and nuanced complex of meanings are being trumped by the typical associations with triviality it frequently conjures up.
- Finally, a speculative project that follows up on the evidence of our interviews and workshops that people use theatre to make analogies to other aspects of life in such a way that knowledge accumulates and deepens, becoming an

experiential 'data-bank' for life-long learning, is extremely appealing, although how to measure this would need to be carefully considered. Such a project would be responsive to one of our key findings: that, for many people, theatre is a lifelong commitment, from childhood experience as theatre-goers, via adolescent theatre practice in school plays, youth and amateur theatre and university study, through to adult theatre going which contributes to and is deepened by networks of personal and social relationships.

Appendix A: Research Methodology and Methodological Advances

Introduction

1. Our application for AHRC funding responded to the CfP's desire for 'evaluative approaches and methodologies suitable to assessing the different ways in which cultural value is manifested'. In theatre studies, there has not been a great deal of spectator research. The best of it has been theoretical (Blau,1990; Bennett,1990), and even in 2009, Helen Freshwater noted 'almost no one in theatre studies seems to be interested in exploring what actual spectators make of a performance'(2009:29). Northern Europeans such as Willmar Sauter engaged in a flourish of empirical research in the 1980s, but later turned to more theoretical work on the theatrical event (2000). New and different empirical research specific to value attribution offers a fresh approach.
2. Our study was designed to face the challenge of designing methods of capturing 'being there': existential, phenomenological aspects of personal/individual experience—aspects of 'inner life' not necessarily easy to reach. At the same time, we needed to study enough subjects to be able to make some claims for our results. We decided on a portfolio of research methodologies that would include surveys, in-depth interviews, and creative workshops as well as theoretical and conceptual analysis. Research on 'kinesthetic empathy' underlies our inclusion of creative workshops in our portfolio. It combines empirical and theoretical work to capture elusive dimensions of audience experience missing from the equation: 'An experience, therefore, is not just what is going on in an spectators's mind (and body) during a performance, but also involves audience members' self-reflection on the experience of a performance as a central facet of the thing itself' (Reason 2010). We also looked at social media and originally planned to capture and analyze data from Facebook and Twitter. However, we discarded this aspect of our study when the surveys showed that our subjects were not engaging either of these significantly with respect to their communications about their experiences of the shows. That, in itself, however,

seems like an interesting finding—face-to-face discussions and some email proved the most common mode of communicating about the theatre experiences.

Subject Protocols and Data Protection

3. The initial issue of identifying subjects to invite to participate in TSVA involved working out agreements with the three theatres. Two of them gave us names and email contacts for patrons who had bought tickets to the shows and had not prohibited being contacted by third parties. The third theatre preferred to send out our invitations through their own email system, so we only received names and contacts when subjects agreed to participate. We also sent our postgraduate students to one performance of each play to solicit additional participants. We developed methods to respond to data protection issues that insured Warwick secured the data and that the subjects agreed to its collection and storage. We worked closely with the University's Humanities and Social Science Research and Ethics Committee protocols, and received approval for our research project. We designed the surveys to be accessible by links to a Warwick-based secure website. Subjects were asked in the first survey to consent to the various parts of the study, and informed that their survey data would be anonymised and kept by Warwick for ten years. Only those who consented to be approached for interviews and workshops were contacted about those events. We sent one reminder email to those who did not return S2 and S3, but no more. We also invited everyone who had participated in even one survey to the public events, and will be sending them a link to the final report on our BTC website. The only other contacts with subjects occurred when they emailed the project email account with questions or comments. Thus we tried to preserve each subject's privacy and minimize intrusion.

Survey Methods of Design and Analysis

4. Once we had received all of our questionnaire answers, the data was put onto an Excel spreadsheet. It was then cleaned up – on two occasions individual audience members had completed the questionnaire twice, for instance – and the data anonymised. Some of the questions were answered by a limited choice (for

example 'age group') and these answers could immediately be used as search topics within formulas.

5. Others could only be answered by typing in a text box; in these cases, we coded the answers. This involved looking at the spread of answers and grouping the answers. In some cases, this was straightforward: the question about how often they go to the theatre we simply coded in 5-point groups (1-5, 6-10, etc.). Others were more subtle and complex: the memories people had of the performances they saw, the values they looked for in the theatre, for example, required the researcher to code the data to make it manageable, but to use, as far as possible, codes drawn from the wording the respondents had used (see 4.5 for an example of this). Codes were circulated between the researchers for comment and amendment.
6. The group met several times to discuss the kind of questions they wanted to ask of the data. A list of questions was drawn up and over the course of the research period, formulas were applied to the spreadsheet to generate the findings which are mostly set out chapters 3-6 of the present report.

Interview Methods

7. Between November 2013 and April 2014, 31 telephone interviews were conducted by BTC member and TSVA CI Julie Wilkinson and two Warwick and three Royal Holloway postgraduate students. Wilkinson ran a training session for the interviewers at Warwick University and each interviewer asked ten prepared questions and follow-up questions to explore nine key areas: initial interest in theatre; key memories of shows; expectations of the show and reasons for choosing it; patterns of sharing the experience of seeing the show, and implied or explicit social networks centred on the play or theatre; personal associations with content/style; the effect of theatre on life or ideas; value of theatre; enhancements, including discussions, theatre programmes and reviews; and whether the research process itself changed the respondent's sense of value. Interviews were conducted on the telephone or via Skype, recorded and then transcribed by the interviewers with additional help from Janelle Reinelt and Chris Bridgman.
8. Invitations were sent out by email to audience members who had agreed to be contacted for interview, in order of their appearance in our records (determined

by when they filed their first survey). We had hoped to balance the numbers and genders of interview subjects over the course of the project, but found it difficult to secure interviewees and we had little choice in who was ultimately interviewed (we achieved gender distribution of 14 women, 16 men). The number of interviews per show reflects the take-up of invitations to participate in interviews rather than sample control, although we ensured that we did at least 1 interview for all the shows surveyed in surveys 1 - 3. One interview was written up from notes immediately after the interview as opposed to being transcribed from a recording, due to a failure of recording equipment.

Creative Workshop Methods

9. The term 'creative workshop' is meant to designate a carefully structured approach offering the participants a method of accessing their own responses to the experience of seeing the play. Participants for the creative workshops had filled in the surveys and agreed to participate in the workshop, but had not been interviewed. Again, participants were invited by email in order of their appearance in our records until the numbers of places per workshop were filled with no preference other than the need to ensure that there were people present who had seen all the shows surveyed and that we were able to offer a workshop at each venue. We offered up to ten places per workshop as a maximum with a notional lower limit of six. At the RSC we had five participants, three men, two women. At the Plymouth Drum we had a good sign-up of interested participants but on the day most of them did not attend and there were only two participants, one male and one female. To some extent this changed the dynamic of that event, requiring the workshop leader to participate in the brainstorm of memories of shows to facilitate discussion, although her responses were not included in the evaluation of the results. At the Young Vic we had four participants, all male.
10. The workshops lasted two hours and began with group discussion of memories and associations pertaining to the show they had seen. Participants were then asked to create an individual piece of original imaginative writing, which was shared among the group; they then discussed the relationship between their invented settings and scenes, their response to the shows they had seen, and anything the process revealed about the use and/or value of theatrical spectatorship to their thinking. Workshop leader Julie Wilkinson and other group

members' interpretations were cross-checked, with each participant able to agree or disagree.

Conclusion

11. Throughout the research project, multiple members of the BTC team reviewed the work of the others. Project manager Jane Woddis kept master record files, and PI Reinelt also kept sets of these records. The objective was to check and counter-check each other's work at every point. The data analysis meetings involved all six of us, and the conclusions and findings in this report represent a full consensus of this research group.
12. We have found that the interviews and workshops were extremely valuable for understanding fully the ways our subjects processed their experiences and valued them. These were, however, time-consuming for both researchers and subjects, and more difficult to recruit. Future projects should allow more resources (time, money, and personnel) to allow a bigger sample for these features of the project. However, looking back, we have concluded that we were able to employ the appropriate variety of methodologies to achieve our research goals. All three of our tools worked to obtain discretely different aspects of the information we sought. Together with our analytic and theoretical expertise, they were appropriate and effective.

Appendix B:
Case Studies by Show

The Animals and Children Took to the Streets, experimental production by 1927, performed at the Theatre Royal Plymouth Drum, October 2013.

Statistics: 22 respondents (19 women and three men) completed Survey 1 (before the show), eight Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and five Survey 3 (two months later). 11 of the 19 women were between 16 and 25 years old; all three of the men were under 35. Seven respondents were from Plymouth or nearby Plympton. Five had travelled significant distances including three from Bodmin, an hour away.

We categorised both *Fight Night* and *Animals and Children* as 'experimental'. However, location may be a more important factor here than category. What is significant in this group of responses is the broader 'diet' of theatre on offer in the region, as represented in the significant proportion of reported memories of major touring plays and musicals, both commercial and subsidised.

Women answered our survey in particularly high proportions from the Plymouth Drum. Despite the fact that the youngest female age group were not represented at all in our survey of the new play Solid Air, these respondents did report seeing new plays by Abi Morgan, Nick Payne and others performed by the Youth Theatre Company.

Two contributors had seen a previous show by this company and for one 'student/paint assistant', that production 'made me realise what theatre can be'. However, in contrast to the response to *Fight Night*, the responses in the second and third surveys fell away, markedly so in the younger age group.

There was consensus about the themes of the show, including social injustice, poverty, class and revolution. However, respondents were uncertain about the tone of the show and the target of its criticism. One person thought that the show was mostly about the

'need for people to rise up against injustice and our apathy', whilst another thought 'It was a story about getting rid of things that ruin the sensibility of the middle class'.
All who answered identified with characters: there were six comments about the Janitor, two respondents mentioned the animated child 'Little Evie', and one the Shopkeeper, but none mentioned the mother.

Respondents tended to agree about what is valuable, praising stylistic originality, music and the visual inventiveness of the production. Four people who responded immediately after the show made connections ranging from loneliness to self-criticism. Six of the respondents saw strong connections with present-day social injustice.

One respondent attributed high value, two medium and three low. Those who attributed low value felt that this was to do with the nature of entertainment: 'It's just theatre - not life changing!' For one respondent, whose other memories are of commercial musicals and who went with her daughter, the question about a connection with her own life was dumbfounding: 'None - strange question? We live in the 2010s not 1920s - why did you ask this?' This serves to remind us that to survey at all implies the presumption that theatre has the potential to deliver personal and cognitive value - something which is not self-evident to all audience members. Nevertheless, in our final survey, three of the five respondents were still thinking about what the show had to say.

Candide, a new play by Mark Ravenhill after Voltaire, performed at the RSC's Swan Theatre, summer 2013.

Statistics: 23 respondents (12 women and 11 men) completed Survey 1 (before the show), 15 Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and 16 Survey 3 (two months later). 11 were aged 56 or older. Seven had postgraduate degrees, eight had first degrees, one had A levels. Ten had done school plays or amateur theatre, six had done both.

Candide is categorised as a 'new play' within the project, following Ravenhill's designation, but many people knew it as an adaptation of Voltaire, or even as a version of the Bernstein opera/musical. Further, Ravenhill does follow the original, at least in the scenes set in the 18th century and a play within the play showing Candide his life. That said, there were a number of people who didn't know the source materials. The survey

responses divided sharply between these groups with the people who did know something about the sources tending to answer in a comparative fashion, often judging Ravenhill to be less profound or clever than Voltaire; those who had no reference were more apt to avoid the judgmental language of the first group.

A second unique feature is that the play is clearly philosophical, even if one doesn't know the source. The testing out of the maxim, 'Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds' is explicit within the performance, and almost every spectator in our study comments on this as the theme, quotes a version of this maxim, and expresses opinions about the suitability or not of this 'way of life'. This also leads to some rather polarised answers to questions such as, what was the show like? (e.g., either comments on the production values (theatrical, clever, funny), or abstractions about the theme such as '*Candide* is a play about a main question of mankind').

Perhaps not surprisingly given this description, there is less connection for many spectators to their own lives than we have found in other shows, and when there is, it is usually expressed around sharing or rejecting optimism as a way of life. On the other hand, many associations to the world are provoked by the performance for our spectators - they range from global warming to the futility of bringing children into the world, to reality shows, the power of media, schoolyard killings, and the condition of Europe today. When asked what they value about theatre that they found in this production, inventiveness and theatricality, clever design elements, props, and costumes predominated. By the third survey, only eight people commenting on this question, the strongest consensus was in remembering the birthday party scene and its shooting of the mother as the main image (not all liked this scene, but five of eight remembered it first).

Other feedback is more diffuse. Fewer people connected the performance to their lives or to the world, but those who did offered long comments to explain their views, which seems important here - the play requires explanation if one engages with the philosophic material, and all who answered at length did. Eight respondents assigned the experience a high value and seven a medium value. As might be expected, pleasure came with the creativeness of the show and the thought-provoking nature of the material.

The Events, a new play by David Greig, performed at the Young Vic, October-November, 2013.

Statistics: 19 respondents (12 women, six men, one 'other') completed Survey 1 (before the show), eight Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and seven Survey 3 (two months later). Age distribution was almost equal among the categories (except for 65+, which had only one). 12 had postgraduate qualifications – just more than half. Four had Degrees and two A-levels. All but three had formative experiences of youth, school and/or amateur theatre or a combination.

The spectators for *The Events* were frequent theatre-goers (most 20-30 times a year), and were attracted to the play because they thought it would be challenging, exciting, thought-provoking, and well-written ('challenging' was mentioned most). This audience wanted to experience a high-octane performance that would move them emotionally and intellectually. While less than 50% of the original cohort filled in the other two surveys, they expressed themselves in considerable detail. In the section of the survey where respondents could write as much or as little as they liked, we noticed that the comments were lengthy.

The subject matter of the play alludes to but does not specify the events in Norway in 2011 when a right-wing ideologue murdered 69 young adults on the island of Utøya. The play deals with the aftermath of an attack on a church choir by a young man, and in particular its impact on a female priest who organises the choir and survives the attack. Spectators connected the play not only to the Norwegian situation, but also to school shootings and other similar events, so connections to 'the wider world' were evident throughout the responses. As the role of the young man was played by a person of colour, multiculturalism and immigration issues were also noted. When spectators reported in S3 on thinking about the show, common triggers were current events and also the news that the play would be touring internationally. However, spectators also thought introspectively. One wrote, 'In my daily life I am drawn towards the "at risk" individuals that Claire [the priest] helps with the chorus so the issues of tolerance, living in a multicultural environment, being responsible for one's actions and empathising for others are something I can relate to quite easily'.

The production itself was highly valued by all but one who selected medium value. Among its assets, the use of local choirs was singled out in most responses as

contributing strongly to the effect of the production. Again, the qualities of being challenging and thought-provoking were mentioned, and what one spectator described as 'being part of a cultural conversation'. All but one of the respondents spoke to others, mostly friends, about the play, recommending it but also discussing content and ideas. The quality of the writing and effectiveness of the staging came in for praise, summed up by one respondent as 'Brilliant acting, powerful writing with the choir adding an extra quality'.

Fight Night, experimental production by Ontroerend Goed, performed at the Theatre Royal Plymouth Drum, autumn, 2013.

Statistics: 22 respondents completed Survey 1 (before the show), 14 Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and 14 Survey 3 (two months later). Our respondents were the youngest for any of the shows we surveyed with 11 in the 16-25 age range; 13 were female. Responses to the second and third survey are sustained, indicating the strength of feeling about this show. Uniquely in our research, 13 of 14 respondents remembered specific lines. 12 of the 22 respondents participated in amateur theatre, seven in Youth Theatre, and 15 in school plays. Seven respondents were from Plymouth but six others had travelled between seven and 54 miles to see the show, and two were from Belgium. Six of our 22 respondents identified as fans, and three took up free tickets under a scheme run by Plymouth Theatre Royal for young theatre-goers. As with *Animals and Children*, these respondents reported many more memories of musicals, circus, and popular comedy than do audiences from the other theatres studied, as well more new plays and devised/performance pieces, which they had mostly seen at the Plymouth Drum.

There was consensus on the subject matter, with all respondents mentioning voting, power, choice, democracy, government; they also all recognised that the audience was part of the subject matter, making this a particularly interesting case study for our investigation. Comedy is important to the 'stickiness' of memories of the show.

Most respondents writing immediately after the show were shocked that, at the climax of the performance, a portion of the spectators participated in a rebellion against the rules and were excluded from the auditorium. But later, in Survey 3, respondents tended to think first about the more general issues raised.

Despite one person's doubts about whether the show is theatre at all, and two people who enjoyed the show but felt that it did not deliver on its early intellectual promise ('it

bottled out of any worthwhile conclusions'), respondents made a wide range of connections both with their own lives and with the world, including the ethics of game shows, conflict in the Middle East, and forthcoming local and national elections. Two respondents made direct associations between the comedian and commentator Russell Brand's much-publicised opposition to voting, broadcast on the BBC in October 2013, and the issues raised in *Fight Night*. The show appeared to confound the division we made in the survey questions between public and private associations. For almost all of the respondents, the piece allowed the expression of a deep sense of political unease, which was in conflict with desire for 'a newer, fairer world'.

There was a strongly positive response to our question about characters, despite the fact that personae were interchangeable in the plot. The company presented a limited range of character types in terms of female roles, age, and apparent racial and physical uniformity. This is not mentioned by respondents in the survey although two workshop participants expressed some disappointment that there was not as much choice offered as promised in the show. The extent to which the spectators became aware of their own roles in defining character was limited.

There is no correlation between value attributed and the number of times respondents reported having thought about the show. The majority reported discussing the content of the show. Of the 14 who attributed value in Survey 3, two attribute low, six medium and six high value. Clearly, other sorts of value than a critical approval can operate for the spectator, which derives from the use to which he or she puts the content of the performance. The associative value of this show arose from the extent of self-reflection provoked, and from the immediacy and perceived significance of the subject matter.

***Hamlet*, classic play by William Shakespeare, performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, from March 2013.**

Statistics: 26 respondents (15 women and 11 men) completed Survey 1 (before the show), 15 Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and 13 Survey 3 (two months later). 18 respondents had A-levels, 13 first degrees and five postgraduate degrees. eight were aged between 16 and 35 years old. All had been to the theatre before; over half started play-going before their tenth birthday. Nine had participated in amateur drama (not including school plays).

The play was the chief motivating factor for attending the production (seven people); three had been influenced by a partner or friend. Their expectations were high (nine); one was apprehensive of too experimental a production, and one hoped for a new approach to the play. One looked forward to the social side of the evening.

For those who filled in the second survey, the most memorable production decision was that to keep the dead Ophelia on stage, in a shallow grave, throughout the last act of the play. There were reservations about the goth actress in the play scene ('out of line with the rest of the play'). Being *Hamlet*, there were many recalled lines (including five people who cited 'To be or not to be' and three 'Alas poor Yorick'). Asked what the play was about, eight named a subject (including revenge and grief); two summarised the story. One respondent said the play's subject was 'epistemology'. Asked whether they'd focussed on a character, ten mentioned Hamlet, two Gertrude, two Claudius and one Ophelia (this respondent said that, for the first time, the Hamlet/Ophelia relationship made sense).

Only one person found nothing surprising in the show (and 'not pleasantly'); people praised the acting (including Polonius), the humour and the bleak, Scandinavian TV-style setting.

Asked if they'd discussed the show, one said they'd talked to the student who gave them the questionnaire. All had discussed the show with others, six with more than one person, and overwhelmingly face to face. However, ten denied that their discussions had changed their views. Only one person hadn't discussed it with others; most had talked about it with more than one person. People found these communications refreshing; it sustained their memories of the production.

Asked about personal memories inspired by the play, one respondent to the second survey cited seeing her mother's grave being filled in by gravediggers; another, who'd lost both parents, felt an affinity with Hamlet's grief and isolation; a respondent to the

third survey cited a friend who had committed suicide. However, nearly half said they didn't relate the play to their personal experience. Asked about connections to public issues or events, respondents cited the treatment of women, American school massacres, the Arab Spring and Russian oligarchs. Two mentioned the play's timeless themes. Three said they saw no connection with our times.

Those who filled in the third survey were less likely to associate the play with things going on in the news. The things that stuck with people were much more about sensation, the use of the space, and emotion. Eight said their view of the play hadn't changed; some people whose view had changed took a less positive view of the show now.

Eight people thought the questionnaires difficult or odd; six didn't. One respondent found many questions irrelevant to the experience of seeing the play; another felt awkward about filling them in. A third thought the questionnaires were thought-provoking. Four thought filling them in had affected their view of the performance (enhancing its impact), eight thought it hadn't.

Overall, the *Hamlet* spectators fitted what you'd expect of an RSC audience: higher-educated, literary, thoughtful, and loyal to the company. Only three people had read the reviews, two of whom disagreed with the critics. They had clearly thought about the productions, and discussed them with a wide range of people. Refreshingly, perhaps, these discussions rarely changed their minds.

Happy Days, classic play by Samuel Beckett, performed at the Young Vic, January to March, 2014.

Statistics: 36 respondents (15 women and 21 men) completed Survey 1 (before the show), 19 Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and 14 Survey 3 (two months later). 27 of the respondents were 46 years old or above (11 of these were 65 or older). 16 had postgraduate qualifications – just short of half. 21 had formative experiences of youth, school and/or amateur theatre.

Many of the respondents were seasoned theatregoers with recent experience of seeing Shakespeare, new plays and revivals. They chose to see the show because of the

opportunity it presented to see a classic and challenging play with a renowned actress in the lead role; the perceived reputation of the Young Vic for high quality work was also a factor. The majority expected to be absorbed, stimulated and intellectually challenged by the play; these expectations were shaped by the cultural capital of Beckett, the prestige casting of Juliet Stevenson, and the perception of high quality experimentalism at the Young Vic. Respondents ascribed multiple values to theatre in general but there was a significant cluster of comment on liveness, immersion and immediacy.

Expectations of a bravura performance as described in the first survey set terms for many of the approving comments in the second. There was a very strong identification with Winnie who, for many respondents, was the centrifugal force of the play and the entrancing visual focus of the production. Memorable moments included the physical incapacitation of Stevenson at the start of Act Two, the use and volume of sound, the impressive set, and Stevenson's gestural repertoire and, in particular, her smiling in the face of adversity. The sense of shock was palpable in many of the comments although this took a negative inflection for some: one respondent was attracted to the show because of its lead actress (and acknowledged the quality of her performance) yet described the whole experience as 'horrendous' and without value. Others appreciated (and remembered afterwards) the strong opening and closing moments, the comedy, the relative silence/inaction of Willie, the play's capacity to sustain interest, the homely/'English' performance of Stevenson, the visceral impact of the set, the sound of gravel and sirens, and the parched colour of the stage environment.

Respondents offered a range of interpretations of the dramatic situation, both optimistic and pessimistic. Many felt that the play offers broad statements on the human condition (the inevitability of decline and death); others articulated a very pronounced personal identification with Winnie as the beleaguered wife of a seemingly unresponsive man (as one respondent put it, 'it cast a light on my most important inter-personal relationship'). One or two respondents commented that the production exposed the inadequacy of capitalism to improve life and, in particular, to better the position of women; others felt it offered a moving depiction of the infirmities and isolation of old age, especially in a time of austerity. The central stage image triggered a range of associations and conflicting binaries: brightness and horror, political and absurd, specific and universal. Most responses tended to concur with the summary of one audience member: 'sparse, shocking and thought provoking'.

In its aftermath, the majority of spectators discussed the production face-to-face (and occasionally on the phone), mostly with friends and partners. For some, these discussions helped clarify the play and illuminate its meaning. There was some evidence of a gender divide in the reception of the play, with women identifying with its sexual politics and clarifying this aspect of the play to men. There were a broad range of associations, from Pinter and other Beckett pieces to Ibsen (women's entrapment) and Kim Cattrall's performance of a paralysed woman in *Whose Life is it Anyway?*

The quality of the production was almost uniformly related to the acting and text. In the third survey, ten out of 14 respondents ascribed the show 'high' value. Many wanted to return to the Young Vic because of the quality of its productions: there were also approving references to the theatre's amenities and its commitment to experimentalism.

The Secret Agent, adaptation of Joseph Conrad novel by Theatre O, performed at the Young Vic, September 2013.

Statistics: 22 respondents (11 women and 11 men) completed Survey 1 (before the show), eight Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and seven Survey 3 (two months later). Respondents were fairly evenly distributed by age group, five had postgraduate qualifications, six had first degrees, and two had O levels. All but four had been involved in amateur theatre or school plays, over half in both.

While we had a good or at least average response to the first survey, there was more than half attrition for the other two parts. This may have been partly a result of the show not being terribly successful. Some negative remarks bear that out, and also responses indicate that the impression the show made on its spectators was not uniformly strong.

The majority of *Secret Agent* patrons didn't know the Conrad source. Eight did, and of those, three indicated they were anticipating seeing how the production handled the source material (another three said it didn't matter or was a long time ago and not relevant). The company is known for its experimental work; one person mentioned wanting to see the company. Many of the respondents were interested in other experimental work such as Punchdrunk, Shunt, and shows from the Edinburgh Festival.

A number mentioned they went to theatre a lot; many are fans of the Young Vic and see a lot of their shows.

Pulling together generalisations about the spectator's reception of this play is almost impossible, as they are quite various. Here are some specific things from the surveys: in the second survey, in answer to the question of what the show was about, people answered, 'secrecy, insanity of terrorism, nihilism, believing in a better life, and demagogy', making it difficult to find common ground. Probably the terrorism theme, given that terrorism is so much in the news of our world, made the strongest recurring associative connection for people.

When asked what the show was like, the respondents mostly gave affective characterisations of the production - 'unusual, intense, funny, but unclear' was one, and 'bad, pretentious' was another. Two others said it was 'a farce', 'surreal', and in other questions it also was called a 'musical'. In the second survey, for the question about connections to their lives, which gets a high 'yes' vote across the project, six of the seven respondents said 'no' (one saying 'no thank goodness'). However, one of the seven spectators was a visitor from Japan, and he wrote longer thoughtful answers. For example, on the aspect of audience participation, he wrote: 'In the middle of the part when the six spectators joined the stage, I felt all of the audience was part of the play. Or to put more precisely, when the man interpellated to the audience. Those 6 audience to me was "our" representations without election … Furthermore, during the speech of the man, while the 6 audience "played" their parts, according to what the man said, I felt that directly or indirectly that I am taking part of the terrorist project. What the audience was doing to me was that I/we do when we watch TV programs at home on the sofa'.

It is interesting how he related the audience participation part to his own life by seeing it as a strategy to make him feel the connection to his life (and the world). Another spectator, however, said he felt the audience participation was 'not necessary' in his closing comments in the last question of the survey.

Perhaps what can be said is that this performance had differing reactions among those who responded to us - there is no strong consensus, but a bigger sample might have disclosed stronger trends. However, one generalisation that seems to emerge concerns impact: the performance did not make a big impression on them. Based on evidence from Survey 3, four out of six respondents didn't discuss the show with anybody, five

said there was no connection to their lives while two mentioned mental illness as a personal experience they linked to the drama. No one read reviews (they weren't published at the time), so there was no larger conversation for any of them. Three respondents attributed low value to the show and three medium (no highs) and the reasons offered expressed that either it wasn't that memorable or excellent, or they had forgotten it easily. One person throughout was very hostile to the show, calling it 'self-indulgent nonsense'. One person praised the acting and physicality of the performances; two persons thought the show was 'fun', inventive or clever but, as one person said, 'perhaps too clever', so even that judgment was qualified in the end.

Solid Air, a new play by Doug Lucie, performed at the Plymouth Drum, November 2013.

Statistics: 29 respondents (17 women and 12 men) completed Survey 1 (before the show), 14 survey 2 (immediately after the show) and ten Survey 3 (2 months later). Five of the respondents were over 65 and two between 26 and 35. The majority were between 36 and 64. There was no respondent until 26. 19 respondents reported having been in school plays, 12 to have taken part in amateur theatre, and six in youth theatre. Only eight had no previous theatrical involvement at all.

Solid Air was striking and exceptional because of the number of people who attended it because of its subject matter (an Oxford May Ball performance by the 70s cult musician John Martyn). 16 of the respondents to the first survey mentioned Martyn and Nick Drake's music as a reason for going. Indeed, one female respondent said the subject was the bait to get her non-theatre-going husband to go to the show, and two husbands suggested the trip for that reason. Other listed reasons for booking to see the show – subject matter and interest in the era - clearly overlapped with the music.

Nonetheless, and despite the fact that no respondent knew of or had seen Doug Lucie's work before, seven respondents to the first survey saw value in the play being new.

In the second survey (completed after seeing the show) respondents largely reported an experience which exceeded their expectations. In addition to the rendering of Martyn's music (which surprised respondents with its authenticity), respondents admired the detailed naturalism of the Oxford college set. One was 'shocked at my distress at the

frequent swearing'. Asked about the content of the show, many identified politics in general and class in particular. A number acknowledged that the evening had a nostalgic element for them personally; 'reminiscing on the times when I would drink too much, eat dodgy cakes and discuss subjects which I thought at the time were the most important in the world'.

Almost everyone reported discussing the show, immediately after seeing it and in the two months following. Most of these conversations went beyond partners and families. Often the topic was the distance between the ideals of the early 70s and now, and a comparison between the two worlds, the gap between 'what our hopes and dreams were and what happened to them along life's road'. One respondent observed that 'people still take drugs, drink, make music and have sex'; more than one argued that the class divisions shown in the play were coming back.

Many were struck with the portrayal of a dysfunctional squaddie who'd seen service in Northern Ireland; a comparison was drawn with contemporary soldiers back from Afghanistan. One respondent was reminded of a brother who'd suffered a bad accident, leading to years of self-destructive behaviour. Perhaps surprisingly, only one respondent referred to the student organising the concert, clearly based on Tony Blair.

In the third survey (two months after seeing the show) respondents talked more about the memories which the show provoked, connecting that with continuing discussions with friends and family. 'It was important and enjoyable', one respondent wrote, 'to go back and remember the senses and feelings of that time in my life. It provided my partner and I with lots of shared ground to discuss and enjoy'.

Wolf Hall, adaptation of Hilary Mantel novel by Mike Poulton, performed at the RSC's Swan Theatre, December 2013.

Statistics: 25 respondents (15 women and ten men) completed Survey 1 (before the show), ten Survey 2 (immediately after the show) and eight Survey 3 (2 months later). Seven of our respondents were over 65 years old; three had postgraduate degrees as their highest qualification, ten had first degrees, and 13 had A-levels. All had been to the theatre before; 15 had been to the theatre before the age of ten. 13 had participated in amateur theatre (not including school plays).

The predominant motive for attending *Wolf Hall* was having read the book (16 had done so). Respondents' expectations were high; three were keen to see how the book had been adapted, and three how faithful it was to the book.

In the second survey (immediately after seeing the show), respondents were asked about memorable moments. These included the court masque (two), the death of Cromwell's wife (two) and the final scene, with its assemblage of ghosts (two). These memories were clearly more vivid than that of individual lines; the only one remembered even in outline was 'the line about Jane Seymour'. All focussed on a character or characters; in addition to Cromwell, people cited Wolsey and the king. One respondent said that 'Anne Boleyn did not come as being so beautiful as to warrant Henry's obsession'; another was surprised by how much they had been engaged by three of Henry's wives who appear in *Wolf Hall*.

Everyone had discussed the show with others, overwhelmingly in face to face conversations. Only one person discussed the play with only one person. However, more people denied that discussing the play had changed their view (seven) than not. Three thought it had clarified their view. For third survey respondents (two months on), memories had been triggered by anything to do with the Tudors, reading C. J. Sansom, and reading *Wolf Hall* again. Again, all but one had discussed the play with others. Generally, people seemed to have talked about the play in groups, with friends as well as family (in one case, this was self-dismissed as 'usual sort of dinner party chat').

Answering the second (immediate) survey, half of the respondents denied that the play connected with aspects of their own life; despite the next question, most answers were about public events (including North Korea, as well as general issues of injustice and abuses of authority). North Korea came up again in answers to the question about the play's connection with public events, as did Plebgate: all but two thought the play had resonance to the times we live in.

Three respondents to the third survey denied associating the play with anything else in their personal lives; one respondent had cited the workshop as having brought out a sense of loss. Only two said they hadn't associated the play with public matters: political fixers were frequently cited. However, asked if anything else had stuck with them,

respondents were much more impressionistic: they remembered visuals and sensations (including the simple set and Wolsey's red robe).

Half of the third survey respondents denied that their view of the play had changed. One remained dissatisfied with the casting of Cromwell. Five rated the experience of seeing the show highly, citing the acting and the adaptation. One had got a seat for £5, and cited that. Another mentioned the intimacy of the space.

Five people found the questionnaire difficult or odd; two respondents said that it was too analytical; one that it contained leading questions. One said it helped them to think. Four people thought that taking part had affected their view of the performance; two thought it hadn't.

Everyone said they'd go to another show by the RSC; two specified their desire to see the companion show *Bring Up the Bodies*. Asked if what of what they value in theatre was in the show, four mentioned the proximity of the action in the Swan, two that the play provoked thought, and one that it was live. All but one of the third survey respondents denied reading any reviews.

Appendix C:
Reports on Creative Workshops

[For those who would like more details about the Creative Workshops, we have included here reports that were written immediately after the events.]

Creative Workshop: RSC, Stratford

The first of our creative workshops was held at Stratford on 2 November 2013, and brought together five spectators who had seen either *Hamlet* or Mark Ravenhill's version of *Candide*.

Led by BTC's Julie Wilkinson, the workshops encouraged spectators to share their expectations and experience of seeing the plays and to discuss their themes. The participants were then invited to invent a new scene or story inspired by them. The idea was not to rewrite the plays, but to explore the associations inspired by the production. Then participants were asked to devise and draw a setting for their scene, and finally to imagine two characters inhabiting or entering that setting, with a memory, a secret, a lack or a want.

To prompt this exercise, participants were invited to consider, props from one or both of the productions: a champagne glass, a bouquet or a knife, a printed book, red party streamers and a handkerchief. They were also asked to write down two or three lines from the plays, of which the *Hamlet* line 'this bodes some strange eruption to our state' proved the most evocative.

The writing that resulted drew on significant and sometimes painful real-life experiences (in 1 case, a difficult family divorce) which participants associated with the plays, and which influenced readings of the productions. For one participant, the visit to the RST to see *Hamlet* inspired a vivid memory of a childhood trip to Stratford to see the same play.

In the subsequent discussion, participants agreed that their expectations of the productions played a big part in the value that they attributed to the experience of seeing them, though one participant said that she'd stopped reading texts in advance to

enhance the anticipation of what the company was going to offer. All agreed that, as regular theatregoers, they strongly valued the opportunity to see directors' and companies' interpretations/readings of texts. They enjoyed the mental detective work needed to reveal the intellectual content of an interpretation; an important part of the value of the experience was the opportunity to tussle with the ideas, images and readings offered.

In discussing the production decisions in *Hamlet*, it was clear the ones which had stayed with the participants were those that were surprising or even discomforting: these included an unusually sane Hamlet conducting a real love affair with a blue-stocking Ophelia. Echoing the surveys and interviews, participants were struck by the decision to put the mad Ophelia in a wedding dress, and for her to lie in her open grave from the graveyard scene to the end of the play. Generally, it was agreed that it was discomforting elements, or those incongruous with expectation, that made the greatest impact and thus produced the greatest value.

In the case of *Candide*, the discussion focussed on the expectations of Ravenhill's interpretation of the Voltaire text. One participant felt that Voltaire had written a satire but Ravenhill had produced a polemic (the content of one speech was like 'something he might read in a *Guardian* editorial'). However, participants agreed that a value they shared was the opportunity not just for intellectual stimulus, but to have the experience of arguing with the writer or the company; mentally disputing what was on offer led them to think of their own alternative ideas.

In summary, the participants agreed that a high value came from allowing a production or play to discomfort or surprise.

Creative Workshop: Theatre Royal, Plymouth

The second creative workshop took place at the Theatre Royal Plymouth on 9 November 2013. Only two of the seven expected participants attended: one had seen *Fight Night*, *Animals and Children* and *The Secret Agent* (the latter at the Young Vic), the other had seen *Fight Night*.

Led by BTC's Julie Wilkinson, the workshop encouraged spectators to share their memories and experiences of seeing the plays and to discuss their themes. Keeping these in mind, the participants were then invited to invent a new scene or story in order to explore the associations inspired by the production. To begin, participants were asked to devise and a draw a setting for their scene, and then to imagine a character in that setting, with a memory, a secret, a lack or a want. Wilkinson then asked participants to write the following words on their picture: a sweeping brush, a pill, a microphone, a computer screen (these were props in *Fight Night* and *Animals and Children* (it only became apparent later on in the workshop that one spectator had also seen *Secret Agent*, so no props had been selected from that show). Then, she prompted another person to enter each scene, and asked the participants to decide 1) something this person wants right now, and 2) something this person is thinking or saying right now. Wilkinson also gave out the following words to be written on the scene as a stimulus to this last direction: 'overall we thought it a great improvement', 'just a little bit racist', 'it's hard to keep the wolf from the door' (these were approximate lines from *Fight Night* and *Animals and Children* - there is no published text). Finally, the participants were directed to write a passage to share with everyone; it could be either a paragraph telling the story, or a scene in dialogue. These were then read out and discussed.

In sharing memories of the shows, the following values of theatre experiences emerged as important: personal engagement with a show, uniqueness of the performance, a satisfactory resolution provided by an ending, but also the thought provoking aspect of breaking of conventions. The quality of argument in a show, prior knowledge of the company or other related shows, and the responsiveness of the rest of the audience (group engagement in the show) were also valued; while these values were agreed, not all of these values were seen by the spectators in each show.

As both participating members (and Wilkinson) had seen *Fight Night*, direct comparison of memories and impressions produced discussion on democratic participation and the value of voting as an agreed theme. They also highlighted the audience participation aspects of the show and whether or not it was manipulative, and how individual spectators reacted (choosing to participate or not). This brought mixed reactions from the workshop members - one had chosen to stay and vote, the other to refuse and leave. One had been to see the play twice and was disappointed there wasn't more

difference between the two performances, since the structure of the play seemed to invite variation depending on how the spectators reacted.

While *Fight Night's* discussion was dominated by thematic concerns, *Animals and Children Take to the Streets* stimulated a discussion of aesthetics, the animation and mix of cinema and live techniques used by the company (1927 takes its name from the moment when silent film crossed over to 'talkies'). One participant with a background in design (both art and theatre) identified German expressionism as the style of the piece and explained why she saw it in that way. The details of the setting, costumes, acting and atmosphere were of most interest.

The stories written by the two participants were connected to the shows, but only marginally: one was a scene set in the back halls of Parliament with both a romantic interest and a conflict between fictional coalition partners; the other story emphasised atmosphere, a woodland setting and an encounter between two young girls, one who believes in magic. The first was seen to depart from the *Fight Night* scenario, but not owe it much more; the second was seen to take period and atmosphere from *Animals and Children* - one girl was dressed in Victorian attire. As in our other workshops, participants enjoyed hearing about the plays they hadn't seen, and especially the creative extensions of the workshop.

Creative Workshop: Young Vic, London

The third and final creative workshop took place on 25 January 2014 at the Young Vic. There were four participants, all of them male; one had seen *The Events*, two had seen *Happy Days* and one *Wolf Hall*.

Led by BTC's Julie Wilkinson, the workshops encouraged spectators to share their expectations and experience of seeing the plays and to discuss their themes. The participants were then invited to invent a new scene or story inspired by them. The idea was not to rewrite the plays, but to explore the associations inspired by the production. Then participants were asked to devise and draw a setting for their scene, and finally to imagine two characters inhabiting or entering that setting, with a memory, a secret, a lack or a want.

To prompt this exercise, participants were invited to consider props from the productions: a ledger, a candle, a mirror, a writing desk, a bell. They were also asked to write down fragments of text from the plays ('when words fail', 'forgiveness', 'man is wolf to man') to add to their pictures.

The ensuing conversation amongst the group explored the shows in detail and considered the extent to which each participant's invented scene connected with the plays and, possibly, their own lives. The group also discussed if the exercise revealed anything new about the value of watching plays and going to the theatre.

All four participants were very positive about the shows they had seen and agreed that the quality of the script was the thing they valued most, followed by the quality of the production. Three of the four talked about enjoying seeing fresh interpretations of plays they already knew. There was general agreement that the quality of a piece depended on how much the text as presented called on the audience to think about its meaning. There was a consensus that the level of intellectual challenge of the piece is crucial.

The creative exercises reflected the influence of the plays seen, the points which had arisen during the discussion and, in some cases, personal experiences to which the plays or the discussion of the plays directly related. One participant made a connection between *Happy Days* (which he had seen in the Fiona Shaw/National Theatre production but not at the Young Vic) and his father's reluctance to move beyond repetitive and familiar phrases to deal with emotional realities; he also associated the role of the vicar in *The Events* to his own job as a teacher. At certain times of personal tension or change, the play appears to be the primary material that serves the very immediate imaginative needs of the audience member. The participants particularly enjoyed hearing about the plays or productions of the plays they had not seen and this was reflected in how they constructed their own scenes.

It is striking that the themes which were identified in the plays tended to emerge not only in the writing of the person whose work had triggered the discussion, but in that of others in the group. In fact, the writers were often surprised by what they had produced and by the connections between their scenes and the plays they had seen. 1 participant spoke directly about the process of assessing the value and nature of the experience of seeing a play: 'It takes about a week to bed in'. There are, perhaps, significant discrepancies between immediate responses and the more settled judgement of the

quality of the play and the value of the experience, which includes selecting some memories over others.

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The BTC Team:

David Edgar's work as a playwright includes *Entertaining Strangers, The Shape of the Table, Albert Speer* and *Playing with Fire* for the National Theatre and *Destiny, Nicholas Nickleby, Maydays, Pentecost, The Prisoner's Dilemma* and *Written on the Heart* for the RSC. His latest play *If Only* was performed at the Chichester Festival Theatre in 2013 and broadcast on BBC Radio Four in 2014. David Edgar founded Britain's first postgraduate course in playwriting studies (at Birmingham), was Britain's first Professor of Playwriting Studies, and is a former President of the Writers' Guild.

Chris Megson is Senior Lecturer in Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. His current research focuses on the political and philosophical aspects of contemporary British drama, and publications include *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and *Decades of Modern British Playwriting: the 1970s* (Methuen Drama, 2012).

Dan Rebellato is Professor of Contemporary Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. His books include *1956 and All That, Theatre & Globalization, Contemporary*

European Theatre Directors, The Suspect Culture Book, and *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009*. He is co-editor, with Jen Harvie, of the 'Theatre &' series for Palgrave Macmillan. He is also a playwright and his plays for stage and radio include *Here's What I Did With My Body One Day, Static, Chekhov in Hell, Cavalry*, and *My Life Is A Series of People Saying Goodbye.*

Janelle Reinelt is Professor of Theatre and Performance at University of Warwick and was President of the International Federation for Theatre Research (2004-2007). She was awarded the 'Distinguished Scholar Award' for lifetime achievement from the American Society for Theatre Research (2010). Her most recent book is *The Political Theatre of David Edgar: Negotiation and Retrieval* with Gerald Hewitt (2011). In 2012, she was awarded the Excellence in Editing prize together with Brian Singleton for their Palgrave book series, 'Studies in International Performance'. Her current book project is *The Grammar of Politics and Performance*, with Shirin Rai, forthcoming from Routledge in 2014.

Julie Wilkinson is a playwright, actor and senior lecturer of creative writing at Manchester Metropolitan University. She has written many plays for theatre, for radio and television, and recently performed her own one-woman eco-show, *Springtide at Mablethorpe*, in venues including a festival tent and the Edinburgh Storytelling Centre. Her first memory of theatre is of looking down from the gods on Beryl Reid shimmering downstage right on the gilt-framed stage of Manchester's Opera House, but it was the old Library Theatre Company's family Christmas shows which involved her in the story. She carried out a research project, 'The Spirit of Theatre', with director Chris Honer and Library Theatre audiences, which prepared the ground for the current British Theatre Consortium/AHRC study.

Jane Woddis is an independent cultural researcher based in Birmingham. She has previously worked professionally in community arts and theatre in education. Her work as an independent researcher has included an EU-funded project on the impact of drama on young people's learning http://dramanetwork.eu/ and the British Theatre Consortium's report 'Writ Large' for Arts Council England. She is an Associate Fellow at the Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick, and Research Fellow on the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value.

References, external links, and outputs

Research Outputs

We have had two articles accepted for publication in referreed academic journals which discuss TSVA and our findings. They are:

Reinelt, Janelle. 'What UK Spectators Know: Understanding How We Come to Value Theatre'. Forthcoming in *Theatre Journal,* special issue on Spectatorship, to be published in autumn, 2014.

Wilkinson, Julie. 'Dissatisfied Ghosts: Theatre Spectatorship and the Production of Cultural Value'. Forthcoming in *Participations,* special issue on Theatre Audiences, to be published in winter 2015.

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The Cultural Value Project seeks to make a major contribution to how we think about the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society. The project will establish a framework that will advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate it. The framework will, on the one hand, be an examination of the cultural experience itself, its impact on individuals and its benefit to society; and on the other, articulate a set of evaluative approaches and methodologies appropriate to the different ways in which cultural value is manifested. This means that qualitative methodologies and case studies will sit alongside qualitative approaches.