

# Book Review

## Youth Theatre: Drama for Life by Michael Richardson

–Rashmi Jha

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Michael Richardson started working in youth theatre by accident and continued working there for over 20 years. In large part of his working career, he was associated with training practitioners and was also involved in the area of strategic development of youth theatre in the UK. The book is an outcome of the thorough practice of the author in youth theatre and researching additional materials from social science to neuroscience throughout his life.

The book focuses on the use of theatre techniques as a tool for non-formal learning to enhance the personal, social and learning development of young people along with promoting their creativity. In the book, the author advocates to offer a non-formal learning environment to young people that will be participant-focused, task-centred, and above all empowering for all.

*Youth Theatre: Drama for Life* defines the youth theatre's process by focusing on essential parts and describes how youth theatre supports young people's development. This book also explores whys and hows of youth theatre to ensure the best possible outcomes. It describes how youth theatre can be used as a tool for non-formal learning.

The book is divided in four parts along with foreword, acknowledgements, introduction, conclusion, appendix, and index. Each part is again divided into sub-parts.

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In the introduction part, the author shares his experiences as a practitioner and the stressful life experience of youths along with stressful environment of education system.

The first part with three sub-parts focuses mainly on what is youth theatre, why it should be practiced, and what process should be followed to get the maximum possible benefits. This portion focuses on the effectiveness of youth theatre and explains how the uniqueness in the presentation style of the youth theatre practitioner can help in overall development of a person including social, personal, educational, and creative development.

The second part with seven sub-parts explains in details the youth theatre process and its different components. The components include physical exercises, voice modulations, enhancing and working on different skills and presentation of the work.

The third part with eight sub-parts discusses the process of forming a suitable environment where the youth theatre process can be practiced and applied efficiently. The first sub-part focuses on how proper structuring of the workshop can help participants get more benefits in terms of personal, social learning, and creative development. The second sub-part discusses the physical structure of the workshop, how to prepare for the workshop, and most importantly, how to overcome the challenges while delivering a workshop. Other sub-parts include evaluation of workshop, challenging behaviour of the participants, health and safety, fund raising, and youth leadership.

The fourth part with two sub-parts covers the most common ways of applying this process. It was used in different educational settings, in youth theatre productions and performances at various places to bring change and enhance the personal, social, educational, and creative development.

In the conclusion part, the author has not added any of his anecdotes, he has rather included writings of two of his colleagues where they have stated the incredible benefits that youth theatre can bring to its participants.

There are two appendices at the end. One appendix talks of theatre games and the other one gives recommendation for more reading.

Although the book is mainly targeted at youth theatre practitioners, it will also be of use to teachers, youth workers, student of theatre practice, and others who use drama as a tool for non-formal learning. This book will help practitioners increase their understanding of structure and philosophy of youth theatre practice. This will help them in improving their own skills.