

Book: *Dancing for Young Audiences: A Practical Guide to Creating, Managing and Marketing a Performance Company.* McFarland, 2013.

Author: Ella H. Magruder

Reviewed by: Susanne Frederiksen

Author Ella Magruder and her husband Mark Magruder have, with their company “Menagerie Dance Company,” for many years created dance performances for young audiences in school settings in America. With great enthusiasm, professionalism and practical insight, dancer and choreographer Ella Magruder shares her experiences in her book *Dancing for Young Audiences*. After nearly twenty year of being on the road with dance performances in schools, Ella Magruder writes:

...we're as optimistic and enthusiastic about performing dance for children as when we began. From our “up-front and personal” experience touring dance in schools and community centers we having seen firsthand the profoundly positive effects that dance has on young audiences and students who participate in dance experiences. Our schools and community centers need more dance! (2013, 3–4)

This is her credo and this book addresses the need for more dance for children and young people particularly in an educational perspective. The book appears as an easily accessible handbook and has systematic directions on how to handle bookings and applications for grants, how to

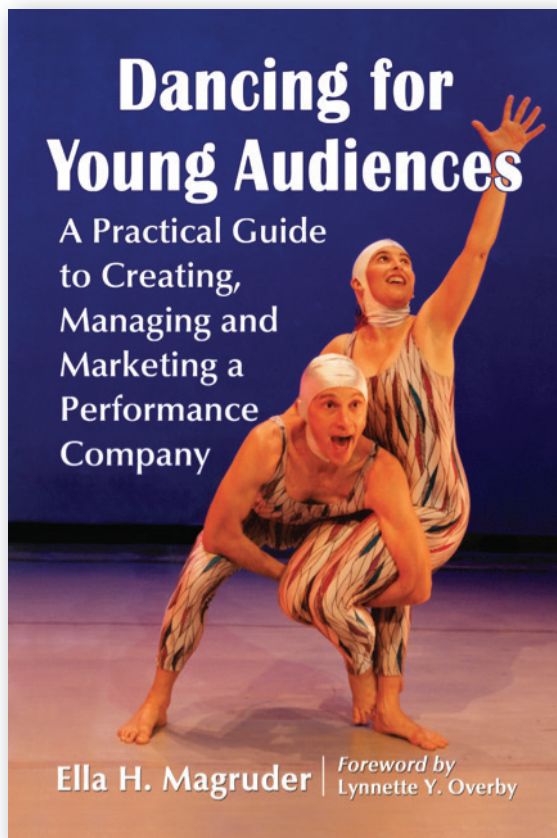
approach the young audiences in the theatre, and how to make it worthwhile for teachers and principals to keep giving the students opportunities to be part of a theatre experience in a high strung school curriculum.

Dancing for Young Audiences is divided into five manageable sections. It does not have to be read from cover to cover, but the reader and potential company director can delve and dig into different sections to find new knowledge, ideas and inspiration to one's own entrepreneurial ideas and ambitions. The profiles of ten successful dance companies from all over the world in the end of the book give a good perspective on the variations for performance approaches for children's work, and the touring and production information (chapter III), which gives valuable insight into some pedagogical considerations on presenting performances in school settings, can be applied to almost any performing group from professional dance companies and organizations to high schools and studio dance performers.

Dancing for Young Audiences is written primarily for an American audience, but can be read and used by non-Americans too, for the many concrete experiences on creating performances, performing for children. Tips on publicity and marketing can easily be transferred to other countries with very few adjustments.

The author reflects on creating performances for children and young people and stresses a format that does not 'talk' down to the young audience, but involves and creates space for the young audience's own reflections and participation. Here I find the difference between American and European audiences a bit stronger than in the rest of the book. In the Nordic countries we have a very strong theatre tradition for young audiences, meeting them with respect and acknowledging them as individuals in their own right, and not belittling them on stage.

The discourse in performance art is changing. The attention to audience involvement is coming forward at many levels, also in children's performances, where the young ones often are invited to engage more actively also on stage. As a person who has not seen Ella and Mark Magruder live on stage firsthand, I can sense and acknowledge the drive and passion the author and her fellow performer must have had for the young audiences, and this must shine through in the live performances too.



BIOGRAPHY

Susanne Frederiksen established Ung Dansescene (1997- 2012), a platform and professional theatre of dance with and for children and young people in public schools. She is teaching and organising dance activities in Denmark and abroad. At present coordinator at Dansehallerne and project manager for the daCi 2015 conference to be held in Copenhagen. Author of the book "Dans Dur" (Dance works) (2004).