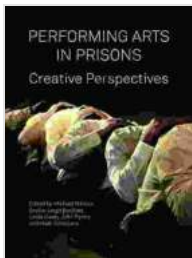


# Performing Arts in Prisons: Captive Audiences and Transformative Power

The American prison system holds one of the largest captive audiences in the world. With over 2.2 million individuals incarcerated in federal and state prisons, the United States has the highest incarceration rate globally. This vast population presents a unique opportunity for the performing arts to foster rehabilitation, promote healing, and empower those behind bars.



## Performing Arts in Prisons: Captive Audiences by Fik Meijer

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 3964 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 366 pages



Performing arts programs in prisons have a long and storied history. The first recorded instance of a theater performance in a prison setting occurred in England in 1774. In the United States, the first prison theater program was established at the Auburn Correctional Facility in New York in 1819. Since then, performing arts programs have spread to hundreds of prisons across the country.

## The Benefits of Performing Arts in Prisons

The benefits of performing arts programs in prisons are numerous and well-documented. Research has shown that participation in the performing arts can reduce recidivism rates, improve mental health, promote cognitive function, and foster social skills.

**Reduced recidivism rates:** A study by the RAND Corporation found that inmates who participated in a prison theater program were 43% less likely to be rearrested within three years of release than those who did not participate in a program. The study attributed this reduction in recidivism to the program's ability to improve inmates' social skills, self-esteem, and empathy.

**Improved mental health:** Participation in the performing arts has been shown to improve mental health outcomes for incarcerated individuals. A study by the National Endowment for the Arts found that inmates who participated in a music therapy program experienced significant reductions in anxiety and depression.

**Promoted cognitive function:** The performing arts require participants to use a variety of cognitive skills, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving. Studies have shown that participation in the performing arts can improve cognitive function in incarcerated individuals, which can help them succeed in educational and vocational programs.

**Fostered social skills:** The performing arts require participants to work together as a team, which can help them develop social skills such as communication, cooperation, and empathy. These skills can help inmates build positive relationships with others, both inside and outside of prison.

## **The Challenges of Performing Arts in Prisons**

Despite the many benefits, performing arts programs in prisons also face a number of challenges. These challenges include lack of funding, limited resources, and security concerns.

**Lack of funding:** Funding for performing arts programs in prisons is often limited. This can make it difficult to provide quality programs and to hire qualified staff.

**Limited resources:** Prisons are often overcrowded and understaffed, which can make it difficult to provide adequate space and resources for performing arts programs.

**Security concerns:** The security of prisons must always be a top priority. This can make it difficult to provide access to performing arts programs for inmates who are considered high-risk.

## **The Impact of Performing Arts in Prisons**

Despite the challenges, performing arts programs in prisons have a profound impact on the lives of incarcerated individuals. These programs offer inmates a chance to express themselves creatively, develop new skills, and build positive relationships.

The transformative power of the performing arts can be seen in the stories of inmates who have participated in these programs. One such inmate is Tyrone Stokes, who served a 10-year sentence for murder. While in prison, Stokes participated in a theater program. The program helped him to confront his past, develop empathy for others, and find a new sense of purpose.

After his release, Stokes founded a theater company called the Creative Corrections Group. The company provides theater programs to incarcerated individuals and helps them to transition back into the community. Stokes' story is a powerful example of the transformative power of the performing arts in prisons.

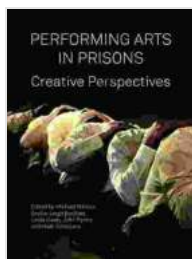
Performing arts programs in prisons offer a unique opportunity to rehabilitate, heal, and empower incarcerated individuals. These programs provide inmates with a chance to express themselves creatively, develop new skills, and build positive relationships. Despite the challenges, these programs have a profound impact on the lives of inmates and can help them to succeed once they are released.

## Citations

\* [RAND Corporation]

([https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1756.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1756.html)) \* [National Endowment for the Arts](<https://www.arts.gov/about/what-we-do/research-analysis>) \* [Creative Corrections Group]

(<https://www.creativecorrectionsgroup.org/>)

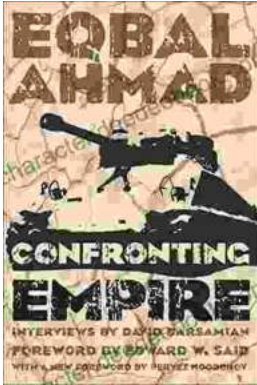


## Performing Arts in Prisons: Captive Audiences by Fik Meijer

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

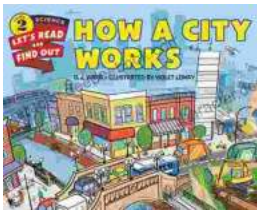
Language : English  
File size : 3964 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 366 pages





## Confronting Empire: Eqbal Ahmad's Vision for Liberation, Decolonization, and Global Justice

Eqbal Ahmad (1933-1999) was a renowned Pakistani intellectual, activist, and scholar whose writings and activism continue to...



## How Do Cities Work? Let's Read and Find Out!

Cities are complex and fascinating places. They're home to millions of people and are constantly changing and evolving. But how do cities actually...