



## **TO DELIGHT AND TO PROFIT**

*Are schools in the early childhood area being offered  
a markedly different theatre experience since  
December 1991, when the Australia Council Drama  
Committee changed its funding guidelines?*

**Thesis for Honours BA In Educational  
Theatre**

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## PREFACE

The Roman critic Horace declared in Ars poetica that the aim of the dramatist should be 'to delight' and 'to profit'. This double emphasis on entertainment and instruction was central to neoclassic dramatic theory.

Ever since, there has been constant debate amongst theatre artists, critics and theoreticians about whether the greater emphasis should be on entertainment or instruction. In the twentieth century, playwrights such as Eugene Ionesco have argued for art for art's sake, while Bertolt Brecht strived for theatre that would stir the critical faculties of his audience in such a way that they would be forced to think about their lives.

This study examines this debate in the context of theatre performances for early childhood audiences in present day Australia. In December 1991 the Drama Committee of the Australia Council, the Federal Government's principal arts funding body, conducted a Policy/Program Review. Its resolutions were perceived by the youth performing arts industry as a victory for those who championed art for art's sake. By studying the quantity, types and standards of theatrical performances before and after the 1991 review, this study looks at whether this is indeed the case.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to assess whether schools in the early childhood area are being offered a markedly different theatre experience since the 1991 review, as well as evaluating the response of teachers of this group of children.

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