Children's entertainment.

Irma Schnierer

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CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

By

IRMA SCHNIERER, PH.D.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I AM greatly indebted to a number of experts in the fields of education, radio, film and other agencies, for their assistance in compiling this booklet. This help was all the more essential since, apart from newspaper and magazine articles, there is no literature dealing with radio, film and theatre for children in Australia. I have therefore had to depend completely on information given by these experts, and on the reports, memoranda and other documents put at my disposal.

May I, therefore, thank first of all Dr. K. S. Cunningham for his guidance and ever-ready cooperation, also Professor G. S. Browne of Melbourne University, Mr. W. D. Nicol of the Teachers' College, Melbourne, Miss E. Swires, Assistant Organizer of the National Fitness Council of Victoria, Miss Ida Osbourne, Organizer of the National Children's Session of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, Miss H. Gilbert, Vice-President of the Children's Cinema Council of Victoria, and Miss Rosemarie Benjamin, Director of the Children's Theatre in Sydney, who all helped me in my investigation.

IRMA SCHNIEER.
CHILDREN NEED ENTERTAINMENT

CHILDREN need entertainment as much as they need food, clothing and education. In fact, entertainment is part of education, and education and entertainment can be interlocked to their mutual advantage. The ideal would be to have entertaining education and educational entertainment.

There are still many parents, teachers and other educationists who are not in favour of entertainment for children, irrespective of whether it is good or bad, because they think it distracts the children from their home and school duties. They are right in so far as entertainment by the cinema, radio and other agencies should not be allowed to become too frequent, and too exciting. Furthermore, of course, their primary duty is to watch the kind of entertainment their children and pupils have, and to protect them as much as possible from bad influences. However, parents are often more concerned about their children’s progress in school, about their marks and homework, than about their equally important recreation. To ask for the right kind of entertainment (as is the purpose of this booklet) is a different thing altogether from denying the child a satisfaction without which his life would be drab and joyless.

In the early stages of the child’s existence we don’t speak of ‘entertainment,’ but of play. It is not always easy to differentiate between play and entertainment, because they often merge, and both have educational functions which must be encouraged. But if an
attempt at definition should be made, play could be described as an urge from within, whilst entertainment is offered from outside.

The child begins to play during the first few weeks of his life. But as soon as he establishes contact with the adults in whose care he grows, he also wants to be entertained. He craves for little games with his parents, listens attentively to mother's voice when she sings simple songs to him, and expresses pleasure at the sounds of a piano. Parents who fail to heed their children's needs in this respect bring up sulky, bad-tempered children and deprive them of great happiness. It is also a well-established fact that children who have little opportunity to play, and no playthings which they can manipulate, become clumsy and awkward, and cut a bad figure in later life.

For some time the infant is quite satisfied to play with his toes and fingers, but after a while he must be provided with playthings which stimulate him to activity. Playthings have the same function in the child's early life as entertainment has when he grows bigger. Child-psychologists and educationists have recognized the great importance of appropriate toys for the child's development, and try to assist inexperienced mothers in their choice. I would refer particularly to an excellent leaflet, prepared by the late Dr. Vera Scantlebury-Brown, issued by the Public Health Department, Victoria, and to the Parents' News Sheets, compiled by the Kindergarten Teachers of Australia, which contain lists of toys, selected according to age groups.
In the leaflet *Suitable Toys For Different Ages* Dr. Scantlebury-Brown said: 'One of the best ways of keeping a child healthily and happily employed is to give the right kind of playthings. Play is a very important part of the child's life because it is through play that children learn, by experimenting and investigating. When we think of the amount of time during the day that children spend in play it will easily be seen how necessary it is that children have suitable toys. A child needs toys with which he can do things, so that he will be able to play quite happily without constant attention from adults. If a child is given suitable toys with which he can make or do things, he learns to make his own decisions, to concentrate, and very often learns lessons of independence.'

The young child provides most of his own entertainment. He does not need much company, and even when he has reached pre-school age, and finds himself a member of a group of children, he prefers at first to play alone before he takes part in organized games. Particularly during the period of imagination he likes to be left alone, and to create an unreal world that is realistic for him—a world where he makes inanimate things live. He talks to dolls, stuffed animals, pictures in picture-books, and invents non-existent playmates. He breathes life into any ordinary packing case which, thanks to his fantasy, becomes a sea-faring boat, a house or a castle.

The toys which are given to the child should always be chosen with a view to being constructive. For this reason war-toys should be completely elimi-
nated, because they foster the sense of destructiveness and lay a foundation for accepting the idea of killing, not to speak of the many minor and major tragedies caused by the handling of toy-guns. Having miniature weapons may even prompt the youngster to get hold of a real gun, sometimes with fatal results for himself or his playmates. Of course, as long as we adults make wars and use deadly weapons to destroy each other, we cannot hope to implant into the child’s soul any real aversion from war. Those who are concerned with the upbringing of children surely have the right, however, to deplore any deliberate encouragement of war-mindedness through games and toys.

Play and entertainment vary according to the child’s age. The child up to five or six does not care for ‘reality.’ This fact must be taken into account in choosing playthings, and forms of entertainment. It would be as wrong to give him at that stage an electrically driven railway as to take him to certain realistic picture shows. Not before he enters the ordinary day school does he become interested in ‘real things’ and consequently critical of make-believe games, of fairy tales and freely invented stories. The child’s urge to play never subsides, although it is often restrained by the increased pressure of school work. It is just then that parents should see to it that he gets a fair amount of relaxation and amusement. Children at school age need and accept guidance more readily than at any other stage of their development. From pre-adolescence
onwards the influence of the family unit is on the wane, and the impact of the outside world is felt more strongly.

How does our existing educational system deal with the problems arising from the child's natural need to become not only enriched in knowledge, but to have his thirst for entertainment satisfied?

Education and Entertainment

Pre-school child education as practised in Australian kindergartens has taken into account all the factors which promote the child’s healthy and happy development. It is directed towards the ideal aim of education through entertainment and entertainment through education. Whilst playing, the child becomes acquainted with the satisfaction of work and creation; he paints and builds, models and sings. When listening to a fine story or good music, he is being subconsciously taught the appreciation of beauty and art. The pretty kindergarten surroundings, the gaiety of colours—pictures on the walls, flowers on the luncheon tables—all help to awake in him a sense of beauty which permeates him so much that he often requests similar adjustments at home; for beauty has become part of his life. The excellent effect of humour on child management is not overlooked either. For the statement of that great Swiss educational reformer, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, who taught more than one-and-a-half centuries ago, still holds good: 'We must lift up the children's minds by God's gift of laughter. Children need merriment, and we must make them laugh.'
It is a great pity that the splendid training of the growing child’s physical, mental, emotional and social forces in Australian nursery schools and kindergartens embraces only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of our pre-school child population. There are far too few kindergartens in the Commonwealth! Nevertheless the nation-wide ‘Free Kindergartens’ and the six model Lady Gowrie Child Centres in the capitals of each State have given a lead, and it is to be regretted that the spirit pervading them is lost when the child enters school.

Education is the real battlefront of democracy, and no modern educational programme can be confined to the classroom. It must reckon with many outside influences such as film, radio, newspapers. It must let them play a part in school life itself. However, in our primary and secondary schools we still see a strict line drawn between education and entertainment. The children and older youngsters find an outlet for their urge to play in outdoor exercises and organized sport which form part of the syllabus, but apart from the school-broadcasts and occasional exhibitions of documentary films in those schools where radio sets and cinema outfits are available, instruction is—with some noteworthy exceptions—generally dry and uninspiring, and does not appeal to the child’s desire for increasing his knowledge in a palatable way. One of the reasons why children at school age are so hungry for indiscriminate entertainment outside school may be that their imagination, their curiosity and creative powers are starved at school. They also miss much stimulation and
happiness because they are not adequately guided to appreciate beauty and art.

In her brochure *The School Leaving Age* Elwyn A. Morey\(^1\) says very aptly: 'We should have learnt from the Greeks that the search for and appreciation of the beautiful is at least as important as the amassing of a store of knowledge. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to these things, yet so often we push them out into an ugly, competitive and industrial world without having done anything to arouse their appreciation of the beautiful in art, music, dress, architecture, or even the beauties of nature. Appreciation is not something which can be taught—it must grow through experience suited to the age and the needs of the child.'

That is exactly the principle which guides preschool child management in our Free Kindergartens and Model Centres, but is badly neglected in primary and secondary schools.

*Various Forms of Entertainment*

The many forms of recreation and entertainment may be subdivided into physical and spiritual entertainment, although bodily and mental activities can never be completely separated from one another. Physical exercises, games and sports have a very salutary influence on the mind, whilst the stimulating effects of the enjoyment of music, books, and art in general on the healthy development of the child and juvenile are equally recognized.

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However, games, sports, hiking, camping, holiday activities, etc., belong to a category of entertainment which is not within the scope of this booklet. In passing it should be mentioned that all these activities, coupled with many artistic ones, are sponsored generously and with excellent results by the National Fitness Council and its affiliated Playground Associations and youth organizations, the latter having developed a very desirable and active club-life for young people in recent years. These organizations and the Council itself state that their main objective is to provide 'health in all its aspects—physical, mental and spiritual fitness, practical training in citizenship through healthy leisure-time activities—especially for the boy and girl who have left school.'

The variety of mental and cultural entertainment suitable for the child according to his age is almost unlimited. It starts with simple songs and nursery rhymes and culminates in the youngster's creative activities on an amateur or school stage, in a band or orchestra, or in a workshop for crafts. Some forms of entertainment are as old or nearly as old as mankind itself, like music, dancing or the theatre; others have a lifetime of about half, or even less than a quarter of a century, such as film and radio respectively. Only very few of the many existing forms of entertainment can be discussed in this booklet.

Reading, for instance, by far the best form of entertainment for children on account of its special value as active entertainment, is too wide a field to be treated within the framework of this small brochure. The same applies to music, the most
pleasure-giving of the arts. However, as far as reading is concerned, a special publication in the *Future of Education* series on children’s books and libraries is in preparation, and there the unequalled importance of reading matter for the child’s mental development will be thoroughly examined. But this much should be said here: although ours is the epoch of the movies and the radio, it has by no means eliminated the influence of the book which, as the growing popularity of children’s libraries proves, still captures the child’s imagination, and remains his reliable friend.

Radio, film and theatre have been chosen for a more detailed account for special reasons: entertainment by radio and film is highly commercialized, and that involves a great danger from which our children should be protected. On the other hand their influence is so tremendous that the modern child cannot but fall under their spell. The question therefore arises as to what can be done and what is being done, to direct this influence into useful channels, so that it will become not a curse but a blessing in the cultural development of the child. This matter will engage our attention in the following chapters.

In sharp contrast to the mass-entertainment provided by wireless and movies stand the ancient art of puppetry, now being revived in Australia, and the live-theatre for children which is also taking shape at present. The cultural and educational value of these agencies is so promising that it seems worth while to follow their beginnings with interest and sympathy.
Soon after radio came into everyday use during the early 'twenties, its enormous influence on our daily life was recognized, and great interest was taken in using it for the benefit of the young. Special children's sessions were introduced in most civilized countries, starting with the oldest form of child entertainment — story-telling, and presenting the youthful listeners with an unseen 'Uncle' and 'Aunt,' who established rapport between station and audience. Since then big strides have been made in the selection of programmes for children, and whilst on the one side commercial enterprises were keen in providing mere entertainment, not always of the best kind, educationists became more and more aware of the great possibilities of educational and cultural entertainment and instruction over the air. The political propaganda value of the radio was also discovered at an early stage, and the dictatorships made the most of it. 'Give radio to the child,' screamed Hitler. 'Science has forged a new weapon to bring me the flesh of youth.' He ordered all schools to acquire wireless sets, and from 1933 till the defeat of Nazi Germany, all broadcasting for children was centralized and under the control of Nazi Propaganda Minister, Josef Goebbels. Italy and the other Fascist satellites of Germany aped the Nazi system with greater or less ingenuity, whilst Japan really 'excelled' in conquering the child's mind.

In the Japanese Government-controlled session for youth the 'News for Children' played a pre-
dominant part, and this news service was, of course, nothing else but subtle propaganda. For instance, the children received exact geographical information about the Indies so that almost every one of them could carry out secret missions. The children’s session had, in spite of some interspersed entertainment items, only one purpose: to prepare Japan’s youth for leadership in Greater Asia.

Russia stands midway between the Fascist and democratic conception of using sound waves for captivating the young listener. As early as in 1924 the Soviet Government ordered radio reception for the whole child population. It provided schools of all grades, from nurseries upwards, with radio and film equipment. However, the programmes are under the supervision of the educational authorities, and are of wide range. Propaganda with the object of moulding every child into a good Soviet citizen, plays a big, but not an exclusive part, in the children’s sessions, which foreign observers claim to be of a very high cultural and artistic standard. Pursuing the principle that ‘children should always be shown great art,’ the best writers, actors and directors are assigned to the children’s division of the radio.

The Western Democracies have never resorted to broadcast propaganda in order to bring the young generation under their control. However, whether broadcasting is completely commercialized as it is in America, placed under a government monopoly as in Britain, or consists of a mixed system of national

and commercial stations as, for instance, in Australia, it was felt everywhere that sessions for young listeners could not arbitrarily be left to station managers, but that educationists, psychologists, parents and the children themselves should voice their opinion and criticism, and help in working out suitable programmes for the entertainment and the enlightenment of the different age groups of children and juveniles.

An American Code

America took up youth-broadcasts in a big way. The first radio programme for young people was broadcast on April 7, 1924, and six years later, in 1930, the American ‘School of the Air’ was established. Before long criticism was directed against the parading of juveniles in the youth sessions, against the awakening of wrong ambitions in immature children who were brought to the microphone, and against over-exciting programmes, which favoured mystery, gangster and kidnapping features. American women formed a National Radio Committee in 1934, and exercised their influence on the huge Columbia Broadcasting System, which later adopted many of their pronounced views. In a statement, published in 1935, Columbia declared that ‘it felt a certain responsibility to the community,’ and in accordance with that responsibility it listed some specific themes and dramatic treatments ‘which are not to be permitted in broadcasts for children.’ Among the indicted themes and forms of treatment were:

‘The exalting, as modern heroes, of gangsters,
criminals, and racketeers will not be allowed. Disrespect for either parental or other proper authority must not be glorified or encouraged. Cruelty, greed and selfishness must not be presented as worthy motivations.

Programmes that arouse harmful nervous reactions in the child must not be presented.

Conceit, smugness, or unwarranted sense of superiority over others less fortunate may not be presented as laudable. Recklessness and abandon must not be falsely identified with a healthy spirit of adventure. Unfair exploitation of others for personal gain must not be made praiseworthy. Dishonesty and deceit are not to be made appealing or attractive to the child.

A programme for children of elementary school age should offer entertainment of a moral character in the widest social sense. It should not obtain its entertainment value at the cost of distorting ethical and social relationships in a manner prejudicial to sound character development and emotional welfare.”

Columbia’s action was followed by another big commercial concern, the National Broadcasting Company, which set similar standards, and demanded the purging of the children’s programmes from stories of ‘torture or suggestion of torture,’ from ‘horror present or impending,’ and from ‘profanity and vulgarity.’ It also warned against ‘the use of the supernatural or superstition, likely to arouse fear,’ and

2. Quoted from Dorothy Gordon, All Children Listen.
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concluded its code with the following points: ‘In order that children will not be emotionally upset, no programme or episode shall end with an incident which will create in their minds morbid suspense and hysteria. Dramatic action should not be over-accentuated through gunplay or through other methods of violence. To prevent over-stimulation of the child’s imagination, sound effects intended to anticipate or simulate either death or physical torture are not permitted.’

This merely negative approach to the problem by the ‘code’ was supplemented by recommendations regarding good entertainment sessions, and Columbia Broadcasting engaged eminent child psychologists who, together with its own Advisory Board, worked out programmes to meet the approval of parents, children and educators alike. Heading these recommendations were: dramatizations of fairy tales, folk tales, classics and modern books, the presentation of folk songs, classic, romantic and modern composers, familiar songs which stimulate the children to participate in the singing, quizzes, etc.

According to American sources, no great improvement in children’s programmes is visible, despite the existing code, and despite the close scrutiny by women’s organizations, all of which have special radio committees. For the American broadcasting system is exclusively commercial, and depends on sponsors. These are far less interested in children’s proper entertainment and education than in the success of their advertisements, and the expanding of good children’s programmes is hampered by the
general conception in those circles that children’s sessions ‘don’t pay.’

In Great Britain the position is much healthier because it is free from commercial interests. Radio was established there in 1920, and soon afterwards the B.B.C. introduced its ‘Children’s Hour,’ featuring stories, serial adaptations of the classics, good music, songs, information, and items of history. Commander Stephen King Hall, who talked about problems children encounter in their daily life, such as housing, strikes, unemployment of their fathers during the depression, etc., became a ‘real star,’ for he brought to the microphone what convinces the child most—sincerity, integrity and humanity.

Youth-Broadcasts in Australia

The Australian Broadcasting Commission had thus an excellent example in the mother country for both its entertainment sessions for children, and its school-broadcasts which were introduced in 1930. Broadcasting for children started in 1924, when listeners were still equipped with earphones; however, the ‘National Children’s Session’ was completely reorganized in 1939. It is broadcast now on relay to all States except Western Australia, which does not take part in the scheme on account of the two hours’ time difference. When Sydney comes on the air at 5.30 p.m., Western Australia’s young listeners are at 3.30 p.m. still at school, and cannot participate in the session. Until 1939 each State had its own programme, but then it was decided ‘to pool the talent and resources available and broadcast the session from Sydney.’
Miss Ida Osbourne, the organizer of the National Children's Session, was good enough to put at my disposal a very detailed report on her work. In it she points out: 'The idea behind the new session was to provide two things. A bright and entertaining programme of 50 minutes each day which would stimulate children to do creative work, and to provide programmes of the highest possible standard which would serve to build up a discriminating audience for the future by reflecting the evening programmes.'

Ten minutes of the session each day is devoted to younger children—six to eight years—whilst the balance is 'general interest' for youngsters up to sixteen years. A very interesting point in the above-mentioned report, of which only some extracts can be given here, is, that the adventure serial—the backbone of the Commercial Stations—is not such a favourite among the children as many people think. In a plebiscite in which the young listeners were asked to vote for their favourite session, the serial came second on the list, whilst a series of travel talks by Captain Frank Hurley, on his adventures at the South Pole, proved an 'easy winner.' The A.B.C.'s Children's Session drew the conclusion from this plebiscite, and has reduced the previous daily broadcast of the serial to three times a week. In the adventure serial, for which historical backgrounds, authentic Australian outback settings, New Guinea and island-locations are frequently used, a boy, or a boy and a girl, are introduced as 'heroes' with whom the listening children like to identify themselves.
Stories are told to the youngest age group only, whilst they are brought to life by dramatization for the older audience.

Information of all kinds, musical items, folk-songs, folk-dancing and puppetry, etc., bring great variety to the programmes, which are carried out by a team of child-loving and child-understanding broadcasters who create a kind of family atmosphere between the station and the children. One of the most outstanding and most popular features of the National Children's Session is the 'Argonauts' Club,' which was initiated in 1941, and has at present a membership of 40,000.

Miss Osbourne describes the club-activities of 'The Argonauts' which play such a big part in the lives of ten thousands of our children, in the following way: 'The Argonauts' Club was organized on the background of the search for the "Golden Fleece" with Jason as the leader of the Club and members divided into boats of 50 rowers, each boat with a classical name. On joining, each member is sent a badge consisting of a reproduction of "The Argo" and a pledge, which is signed and retained. Members of the Club are encouraged to share experiences of all kinds with their fellow-members by writing letters of description of any happenings or experience, submitting poems, stories, plays, musical compositions, models—in fact, examples of any sort of activity.

'These receive marks and the marks are added to each child's card in a register of the Club. On reaching a total of 150 marks, the Order of the Dragon's
Tooth is awarded, for which a certificate is sent, and a new badge consisting of a dragon. After a further 250 marks have been gained, making 400 in all, the Order of the Golden Fleece brings still another certificate and the Golden Fleece Badge. Three twenty-minute sessions weekly are at present devoted to the Club, one of which is *The Argosy*, the Club magazine, which is entirely made up of the children's contributions. The other two sessions include cultural talks, a call for sick Argonauts, who find themselves in the boat of the "Limping Men," and the giving out of milestones, i.e., the boat and the number of any member achieving any multiple of 25 marks is read out. The actual names of the children are never used. Every member is known by the boat and his number in the boat—"Orion 15," "Zeus 29," etc. This enables criticism to be given without other children having knowledge of the person criticized. Every encouragement is given to original work by the specialists conducting the session, and an average of 900 letters weekly is received from members enclosing this work.

'It has been found that many members of the Club who joined at 13 or 14, and who have now reached the award of the Golden Fleece, are keen to keep up their work with the Club, and, in a recent competition, entries were received from forward areas in New Guinea where young soldiers still wished to retain their membership.'

The Argonauts have a special Brains Trust Session, in which a question is asked by one child, and opinions are sent in by other boys and girls. Some
of the questions discussed have been: 'Do you prefer day or boarding school?'; 'Should boys make their own beds?'; 'What do we need to make a better world?'; 'Do you think town children are better off than country children?'; 'Which do you think is more important to Australia, her trade or her culture?'

In contrast to the splendid record of the National Children’s Session the 'Children's Hour' of the commercial station is causing much concern. The programmes are sometimes crude, the adventure serials have more often than not a gruesome tinge, and the parading of juvenile 'stars' and money-prize-winning competitions are apt to create conceited youngsters, and to arouse in them false hopes of a glamorous future which may end in bitter disappointment. The 'birthday calls,' long abolished by the A.B.C., but to which the commercial stations still cling as a means of tightening their contact with the young listeners, are also a rather unhappy feature, because they delight only a small number of children, and put them into the limelight on a special day of the year whilst boring the majority of the child audience.

Some time ago broadcasting and educational representatives met in Melbourne, and an agreement was reached that the radio programmes for children would be examined more closely. Among the complaints received by the Postmaster-General (Senator Cameron) were those about 'grossly exaggerated blood-and-thunder productions,' which were apt to be injurious to sensitive children who were inclined to take them too literally, and about 'the use of slang and bad English during these sessions.' Never-
theless, the American idea of a 'code' to regulate the children's sessions was dismissed. Instead, hope was expressed that improvement considered desirable would be achieved by close co-operation of all parties concerned without the need or use of arbitrary power. Parents and educationists who are troubled by the present state of affairs can help considerably to bring about the necessary improvements if they voice their objections and insist on programmes which don't upset and harm the children.

Menace of the Adults' Programmes

But there is still another problem! Perhaps even more dangerous is the influence of adult programmes on children, for it is a fact that the young not only gather around the radio during the 'Children's Hour,' but listen in at other times as well, thus being exposed to all the trash poured out for the grown-ups. When challenged that the adult programmes contain a good deal of stuff disastrous for children, broadcast people advise the parents to forbid their children to listen in. But how can the radio be 'policed' by the parents? One need not be a fully-fledged educator or a child psychologist to know that prohibition has usually the opposite effect to that desired, and will only arouse the child's curiosity. On the other hand, the commercial stations cannot be entirely blamed, for they simply fulfil the requests of their listeners, the great majority of whom demands swing music, crooning, light amusement and the notorious mystery and murder serial.

The solution of the problem of how to protect
children from these damaging influences can therefore neither be found in prohibition, nor in shifting the serials to late hours, when the children are safely in bed. This latter recommendation is frequently made, but the stations object for commercial reasons. Moreover, such a step would not meet the case of the 'teen-agers, who don't go to sleep much earlier than their parents. A solution can be found only in improvement of the children's own taste, by imbuing them with the real values of art, of good books, of drama and music, and by widening their knowledge, so that when they grow older, they will reject the poorer kinds of entertainment which we are getting at present.

School Broadcasts

The National Children's Session is aiming at the goal just stated. But of still greater importance are the school-broadcasts which cater for all children from toddler-stage up to school-leaving age. It is impossible to give here more than a very sketchy account of the wonderful work carried out by the Advisory Committees for educational broadcasts in conjunction with the A.B.C. Only this much should be said: that in recognition of the fact, mentioned before, that no modern education can be confined to the classroom, the organizers of the school-broadcasts have forged a link between the world outside and the school itself, and have broadened and humanized the syllabus of our primary and secondary schools. In the 'Kindergarten of the Air' session, a feature unique in the world, and eagerly studied by British and American educators and broadcasters, the
youngest listeners are taught good manners in a most pleasant and amusing way; the half-grown ones receive a glimpse of our social system in the 'Social Studies' talks in a most appropriate form; in the weekly 'Discovery of Music' feature they are made familiar with the best that art can give. In these and in similar features education and entertainment are intimately interwoven in the school-broadcasts, thus breaking down the prohibiting walls of strict distinction between learning and leisure.

The little pamphlets on school broadcasts, published by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, which help teachers and pupils in their common studies, are distributed free of charge among the scholars in Tasmania and South Australia, and in the other States can be obtained for the small charge of 6d. a copy. These pamphlets give additional support to the excellent Australian school broadcasting system.

Considering the extraordinary value of this service, one must deplore the fact that not every school throughout the Commonwealth has its wireless outfit. The provision of sets depends on the initiative of headmasters, teachers and voluntary bodies such as Parents' Associations, Mothers' Clubs, and Youth Organizations. We see here an almost painful discrepancy. In every house, in every hut, up and down the country there is a radio, usually tuned in indiscriminately to entertainment-providing programmes, whilst at very many schools children still miss the opportunity of profiting from the most accomplished combination of education and entertainment.
THE POWER OF THE CINEMA

The cinema is the biggest entertainment agency the world has ever seen. It is quite obvious that children cannot be excluded from this modern form of recreation and information. According to a pre-war investigation—the figures may have considerably risen by now—77,000,000 persons in the United States go to the movies each week, more than one-third being children and adolescents. About eleven millions of those who attend are under the age of 14. Children of the 5-8 age group visit a cinema on an average twenty-two times a year, those between 8 and 19 fifty-two times—that is, once a week. But there are many American children who attend the pictures four times each week. In one special investigation it was found by clocking the audience as it entered the doors of a theatre in a congested area in New York City, that 53 per cent. of the entire attendance were under 21; 17 per cent. under 7 years of age. The figures are taken from the American publication *Our Movie-Made Children*, by Henry James Forman.

In England about 67 per cent. of all children between 5 and 15 years, i.e., 4,610,000 children, attend Saturday morning and afternoon performances. Not included in this pre-war survey are those who also go to the evening pictures, either by themselves or in the company of their parents.

In Australia there is a child population of 1,200,000 between the ages of 5-15, and we can well assume that more than 75 per cent. attend the
pictures regularly. No figures for the whole of the Commonwealth are available, but an investigation carried out by the Children’s Cinema Council of Victoria a few years ago showed that 96 per cent. of all children in the areas where the survey was made attend moving pictures, 60 per cent. at least once a week. Even this may be a conservative estimate, for 67 per cent. of our children and juveniles attend evening shows, and without doubt a higher percentage of metropolitan children attend the customary Saturday matinee.

A research undertaken in Queensland in 1941 yielded similar results. In the report entitled 'The Effect of Films on Our School Children' it was stated that the number of pupils of the 5th, 6th and 7th grade who go to the pictures once weekly ranges from 23 per cent. to 70 per cent. The survey showed an average attendance of 50 per cent. of pupils of the 3rd grade. For 4th grade the percentage varied from 25 to 60 per cent. with an average of 43 per cent. Ten per cent. of the groups surveyed attend the cinema more than once weekly.

These figures are revealing. They prove that most children from pre-school age to adolescence are under the influence of the movies. Their taste, their values in the fields of morals, art and music, and indeed their whole outlook is moulded to a great extent by the cinema. They accept everything they see and hear without discrimination, because at this age their characters are still unformed. Even mature persons with well-established characters and fixed habits are influenced by the film, but by no means
to the same degree as children, who are much more susceptible to momentary impressions. An American study has shown that children retain about 70 per cent. of what adults keep in mind after a show. They remember the contents of a film even better after several months than under its immediate impact. Facts like these help us to realize what a powerful factor the film is in the lives of the young!

We must draw the right conclusions. The influence of the film can obviously be for good or for ill. Summing up an investigation in this field Dr. W. B. Inglis of Glasgow University Education Department made this statement: ‘For the vast majority of children the cinema is beneficial rather than harmful, provided care is taken in the selection of films. The portrayal of unaccustomed scenes and modes of living, the development of the appreciation of beauty in the medium of the film, the provision of wholesome amusement, the quickening of the spirit of adventure are surely not unworthy services to childhood and youth.’ Nor must we forget the wealth of information which serves to widen the child’s horizon, assuming the information is truthful and is presented in a way that will start the child thinking.

Unfortunately, unsuitable films still outnumber good ones, and it is to the detrimental programme that we must object. Mere prohibition does not lead anywhere. It would only induce the child to do furtively what he considers his legitimate right: to share the amusement of film-going with his elders. Children have often been found attending a pro-
hibited picture show without their parents' knowledge, the parents thinking them safe at a friend's place, on the sports ground or elsewhere. The duty of parents, educators, and everyone who is interested in the child's welfare and healthy development lies in the encouragement of the production and distribution of better films than those available at present. There is still much apathy among parents. They neither clamour loudly enough for the good film nor are they aware of the dangers of the bad film. If we grown-ups accept films, untrue to life, which give a distorted picture of what is going on in the world—that is our affair. But children who cannot choose for themselves must be protected from the unsuitable film.

Payne Fund Research

The most thorough investigation in regard to the influence of the movies on the child's mind was one made in America in the early 'thirties. This enquiry was inaugurated by the Motion Picture Research Council, and was financed by the Payne Fund. The series of resulting publications comprises about a dozen books and covers more than 3,000 pages. The enquiries were under the supervision of Dr. W. W. Charters, Professor of Educational Research in Ohio State University. In an introduction to H. J. Forman's book Our Movie-Made Children (which summarizes the findings of this extensive research), Dr. Charters vindicates as follows the enormous amount of work and money invested in this investigation: 'I agree with the author in the fundamental position that
the motion picture is powerful to an unexpected degree in affecting the information, attitudes, emotional experiences and conduct patterns of children; that the content of current commercial motion pictures constitutes a valid basis for apprehension about their influence upon children, and that the commercial movies present a critical and complicated situation in which the whole-hearted and sincere co-operation of the producers with parents and public is essential to discover how to use motion pictures to the best advantage of children.'

Some of the conclusions of the Payne Fund Study have been rejected by other investigators, who accuse them of generalizations and prejudice. But many of the conclusions are undoubtedly valid. Particularly interesting is the study on delinquency. There was perhaps a tendency in the Payne studies to overemphasize the part played by gangster and murder films in causing juvenile crimes. The movie picture as the immediate cause of delinquency could be found in isolated cases only. It is clear that so many other factors—bad living conditions, unhappy family atmosphere, physical impediments, frustration, etc. —contribute to the making of the juvenile criminal that the whole blame cannot be thrust on the cinema. But the murder and crime film undoubtedly strengthens latent tendencies. Sleep disturbances, fear complexes and a general deterioration of morals are also direct results of the horror film. This should

1. Most violently by Raymond Moley in his book Are We Movie-Made? which includes excerpts from a very philosophical publication by Dr. Mortimer Adler of Chicago University, Art and Prudence. Moley’s book appeared in 1938 (Macy Masius, New York).
suffice to start parents thinking. How rarely do parents consider what kind of picture their children are going to see when on a Saturday afternoon they want peace in the house, and wish to get rid of the little trouble-makers!

**Development in England**

An important step towards the protection of children from the influence of unsuitable films was made in England by the action of the British Film Institute in establishing four categories of films: A—for adults only, B—for adults and adolescents, C—for family audiences, and D—for children. In 1928 the Children's Film Society was founded, and local organizations did splendid work in England and Scotland by hiring cinemas for special film performances, with the object of educating the children to appreciate the right type of pictures. These organizations work together with the Children's Cinema Councils, which are responsible for arranging the programmes. They are also closely connected with the educational authorities.

A great drawback in Britain as well as in many other countries is that the supply of good films is insufficient to make it unnecessary for the child to be shown the poor film. Up to the present the film industry, outside the Soviet Union, has not taken much interest in the special needs of children. Russia is the only country where the production of films for children and juveniles, according to their different age groups, is a special and highly developed branch of film production. It is the only country where
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children have their own cinemas. Before the war there were about 150 children’s picture houses in the U.S.S.R.

Recently the huge Rank Organization in Great Britain has embarked on the making of special films for children. As it can rely on the widespread Children’s Cinema Clubs, which were formed shortly before the war and revived immediately after, it is assured of a tremendous following. In fact, two of the big British circuits—Odeon and Gaumont (of both of which Mr. J. Arthur Rank is Chairman)—created these clubs mainly for psychological reasons, namely, to remove the children from the adult audiences. But this move may have important financial results as well.

Up to now producers and distributors have been of the opinion that special child performances ‘don’t pay.’ They have consequently retained the evening adult programmes for Saturday matinees. The great success of the Children’s Cinema Clubs may convince them that their calculation is wrong, and that it is worth while to cater for children.

Membership in the British Children’s Cinema Clubs is open to all children between the ages of 7 and 14. It is eagerly sought, as children under 14 have very few opportunities to enjoy club life. In the Cinema Clubs they also form football, cricket, swimming and boating teams; they have orchestras, concert parties, dramatic societies, bands, etc. At present about 400,000 children attend the Saturday morning meetings regularly, and are shown the best films available.
To increase the number of good films the Rank Organization has set up a Children’s Film Department. This has already started with the production of entertainment films—short-story films, cartoons, and nature films. In addition a topical film is released each month for the members of the Cinema Clubs, called ‘Our Club Magazine.’

The Film the Children Like

In a broadcast in the B.B.C. Overseas Service (published in Talk, April, 1946) Mary Field, who as Director of the Children’s Film Department, is in charge of the productions, has revealed some aspects which guide the Department’s activities: ‘One pleasure the children have been starved of in the cinema,’ she said, ‘is the pleasure of being able to identify themselves with the actors on the screen. That is what adults enjoy doing so much at the pictures, but children had seen no children in the films, except an occasional child star whose environment was foreign, and who was not in the least like themselves and their companions. We have found that they take the greatest pleasure in watching stories of very ordinary children in very ordinary British scenes. Between the ages of 7 and 14 we find children are realists in their film-going. They do not want to see heroes and heroines in very beautiful homes or very modern schools, but in the kind of kitchens and classrooms that they are used to themselves. Nor do they like the kind of child actor that is attractive to the adults.

‘In all their pictures they do like action and sus-
pense. Ultimately we feel that children's entertainment films should provide adventure, fantasy, well-camouflaged information, and an opportunity to take an active part in the screen entertainment. But, above all, the films provided for children should be first-class pieces of film craftsmanship. Thus, we shall be training intelligent adult film audiences, before whom the film industry might put its best and most intelligent products.

The Children's Cinema Club movement has already spread to Canada, and just before this booklet went to print it was learned that Hoyts' Suburban Theatres are experimenting with the same idea. In ten Sydney suburban picture theatres Saturday morning performances, lasting from 9.45 till 12.30, are being arranged to which adults are admitted only if accompanied by a child. If the venture proves successful in Sydney, a similar start will be made in Melbourne. Provincial towns are not included in the scheme for the time being. The programmes provide for one full-length film, shorts, cartoons, travel talks, serials of the 'Western Adventures' type, community singing, etc. Gangster and other detrimental films are banned. The management points out that it wants to offer pure entertainment. But if the programmes are well chosen the educational value of these special children's performances will emerge by itself. It is certainly for this reason that Sydney school teachers are highly interested in the new movement, and encourage their pupils to attend the morning performances. Admission charge is 6d. and 9d.
It is too early to assess the importance of this recent development, but it may help to bring about an improvement of the children's cinema position. The close connection with the British Rank Organization is very promising in any case. There is also another link between this organization and the Australian Commonwealth, for at the moment producers of the Rank Organization are busy here with the production of a thrilling serial dealing with the capture of horse-thieves by a group of children. The film will be released under the title 'Bush Christmas.'

In their ardour to see the present position of the film improved people sometimes go so far as to declare: 'There are no good films for children.' However, such a statement is a gross exaggeration. There are the beautiful Walt Disney films such as 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,' and 'Pinocchio,' pictures like 'Bambi' or 'Lassie Comes Home.' These should never completely vanish from the programmes till every child has had an opportunity of seeing them. Then there are the cartoons, which children love, although these are tending to become more and more sophisticated and thus more suitable for adults than for children. There are many excellent 'Travel Talks'; shorts on discoveries in science, on interesting inventions, on exploring expeditions, etc. There are nature studies which unfold the secrets of animal life and the beauties of growing flowers. These can captivate the child's imagination, even if not especially designed for children. Pictures such as the foregoing make good programmes for children, provided they are carefully selected according
to age. But it is unfortunately true that there are still far too few of them.

Growing Concern in Australia

In order to replace the unsuitable film at present shown by the amusement industry at Saturday matinees for children, the Children's Cinema Council of Victoria made an attempt to arrange special programmes in co-operation with commercial picture managements. These Saturday afternoon performances proved a great success. However, at the end of several weeks the scheme had to be abandoned because the stock of available good films was exhausted.

Aware of the predominance of the bad film and of its influence on the great majority of our child population, educational authorities, teachers, churches, youth welfare organizations, and, to a lesser degree, parents themselves, have become increasingly alarmed. Children's Cinema Councils have been formed in most States of Australia with the double purpose of protecting the child from the dangers of the bad film, and of providing him with adequate picture entertainment. The main objective of the Councils in regard to the first point is stricter censorship and reclassification of the film, since the present classification 'Suitable—or not suitable—for general exhibition' has proved completely inadequate.

At the time of writing the question is under consideration. Recently recommendations were made by the Children's Cinema Council of Victoria, which demands classification of films as: A—Suitable for
adults only, H—Horror films, and F—Family films, to which parents could safely take their children. The recommendations include also the appointment of a child psychologist, who should advise the censor in classifying the films, and the request that only 'C' (children’s) films should be shown at matinees in country and suburban theatres on holidays and Saturdays or whenever children were expected to form a considerable part of the audience. It was demanded, and in the author’s opinion rightly so, that a representative be appointed to the State Advisory Committee to the National Film Board. This should apply to all Children’s Cinema Councils in the Commonwealth. The situation is equally bad in all States, and the National Film Board, already in existence, should deal with the whole problem on an Australia-wide basis.

However, it will not be enough to tighten the censorship, since this is a purely negative measure and loopholes can always be found. In some States, e.g., in New South Wales, there is no censorship at all. Even more important is the provision of good films, either produced in Australia, where the documentary film has made some progress in recent years, or imported from other countries with the special aim of providing entertainment and education. South Africa, for instance, has developed a scheme which could be adopted here.

In a memorandum to the Child Welfare Advisory Board in New South Wales the Australian Council for Educational Research has described that scheme in the following terms: ‘In that country (South
Africa) it is understood that the authorities have ruled that any films approved by a special committee as “educational” may be imported at half the usual rate of duty. The term “educational” is widely interpreted and the companies are thus encouraged to submit their films for inclusion under this category. It no longer pays them to fill up their programmes with poor films since they are actually more expensive to show than good ones. A very marked improvement in programmes has been reported.

The memorandum just quoted affirmed the desirability of Australia-wide investigation of the proportion of children of various age groups within a given area who attend the films with greater or less frequency. As we have already seen such studies have been carried out on a very limited scale only, e.g., in Victoria and Queensland. Research of such magnitude cannot be left to voluntary organizations with restricted means, such as Children’s Cinema Councils. It is the responsibility of the educational authorities, who should tackle the question in collaboration with the Film Board.

Another interesting question is: what kind of film do the children enjoy most? About three years ago the New South Wales Education Department took a census of the opinion of 6,000 pupils of primary, high, technical and domestic science schools, and the results were quite satisfying. First preference, as was natural in the midst of war, was given to factual war pictures, comedies were placed second and homely films of family life third. Next followed nature pictures and travelogues. Slumped at the bottom of
the list were horror, gangster, murder films and 'heavy romance.' These were condemned by the youthful critics not on moral grounds but for their 'stupidity.' A questionnaire distributed by the Victorian Children's Cinema Council showed only 2 per cent. of the questioned children to be in favour of crime films. In conducting similar enquiries throughout the Commonwealth it would also be essential to ascertain the opinions of teachers and parents concerning the films seen by the children, and to secure facts regarding their policy towards film-going by the children in their care.

Equipped with the widest knowledge possible we would be able to solve the problem of films for children more efficiently. For one thing is certain: an improvement in the present position is absolutely necessary. Anybody who has ever attended a children's matinee will never forget the sight of children from three or even two years upwards crowding the local cinemas, with staring eyes, wide open in fear and horror, the little ones sometimes crying, or boys of pre-adolescence age whistling with delight, whilst they follow the events on the screen, where shooting and killing is going on, where people carry guns and revolvers just as an ordinary person carries a handkerchief in his pocket. Any thinking person who has seen this cannot fail to feel his responsibility towards the young generation of Australia, since this is the responsibility of everyone who cares for the sound and healthy development of our children into citizens of a democracy.
of the National Fitness Council, a 'Youth Theatre' was established in June, 1945. The object of this theatre is 'to encourage the art of the theatre through wholesome and well-presented entertainment, both for its own sake and as a means of intelligent recreation amongst the youth of the community.'

The Youth Theatre is directed by Mr. W. D. Nicol, of the Melbourne Teachers' College. It is staffed by an enthusiastic voluntary youth committee, whose members have given service previously at National Fitness Vacation Play Centres, youth organizations, or school puppetry groups. The Committee is supported by trained puppeteers, who not only run the performances, but are also in charge of the making and painting of puppets, scenery, properties, etc. A start was made when the first puppet shows—marionettes and glove puppets—were presented to groups of youth organizations, schools and bodies interested in youth work, in the premises of the Victorian National Fitness Council in Melbourne.

The theatre was filled to capacity at each performance, and its great success proved two things: the popularity of puppetry, one of the oldest artistic crafts, among children of all ages, and the real need for entertainment. It was a very wise step to choose puppetry as the first activity of the Youth Theatre, because in its director's own words, puppetry 'is an ideal form for introduction to youth clubs; it can absorb all kinds of talents, including modelling, painting, dressmaking, carpentry, electrical work, etc., and teaches by practical experience theatrical production and design, musical appreciation, as well
as acting, on a scale that makes the children feel that the theatre really belongs to them. Through this medium fairy tales and folk tales of other lands are introduced, and just as the story-teller forms a link between the listener and the reader, so puppetry can bridge the gap between folk-lore and drama. Puppetry unites actors and spectators in a common bond.' The child's own creative activities are stimulated, and his desire to take a hand in making puppets is encouraged by instructions he readily receives from trained personnel after the performances.

After the Youth Theatre had passed through the first experimental stages a little hall, again in the premises of the National Fitness Council but more suitable than the original room, was opened and furnished with a tiny stage, which is nevertheless well equipped with lighting and sound apparatus. Prices are kept very low, in order to enable every child to attend, and group attendances by schools and institutions under the supervision of teachers and youth leaders are favoured. Grown-ups are admitted only if accompanied by children, so that most of the 150 seats of the hall are available for the little theatre-goers. The Youth Theatre's price policy is possible only because its sponsor, the National Fitness Council, is subsidized by the Government; in this way it can successfully compete with the cheap matinees at the cinemas. Usually a whole season is immediately booked out after the first announcement to the public.

Now every Saturday in Melbourne sees an excited audience of pre-school and school children with
bright eyes and burning cheeks, watching the performance, joining in songs and answering questions put to them from the stage, e.g., what should become of the villain or what award should the hero be given. Their active interest is thus aroused, and they are not mere onlookers, but become part of the show. When they finally go home, their minds have received plenty of ideas for working out their own creative energies.

The Melbourne Youth Theatre’s puppets and marionettes performances are the first of their kind in Australia, but they have already been taken on tour to Victorian holiday camps and play centres, and have gone as far as Tasmania, where the scheme has been adopted with great enthusiasm.

The National Fitness Training Courses in crafts, drama and puppetry are also allied to the Theatre’s service, so that potential youth leaders of the Council’s thirty-nine affiliated Youth Organizations have the opportunity of experience in the Theatre, which they can pass on to their own groups. The idea of training puppeteers, of making glove puppets and marionettes, and of presenting performances in their own surroundings has spread to youth clubs, play groups, schools, etc., within and beyond Victoria, and while this development is shaping, the Youth Theatre has advanced a step further towards its next goal: live-theatre for youth by youth.

There is always a certain danger that children appearing as actors and actresses in the limelight may assume ‘star’ attitudes. But wisely guided by experienced educationists and psychologists, and working
in the happy atmosphere of a 'team,' this danger can easily be eliminated. On the other hand child audiences just love performances by children.

The Youth Theatre has already launched experimental shows with a cast of children between 7 and 14, the programme including a short dramatized scene from 'Alice in Wonderland,' a transcription of a Swedish fairy tale, and dramatized versions of poems, called 'Poems into Plays.' The possibilities of such simple shows, which do not require much scenery and a complicated apparatus, are very great, indeed. For they, too, can travel like the marionettes and puppet shows, and bring good entertainment to child institutions, to play centres, hospitals, etc. The presence of a paralysed child on his stretcher at one of the Youth Theatre's performances, and his exuberant joy there may well indicate what a blessing it could be if the theatre were to entertain those unfortunate hospital inmates who are unable to move.

Children's Theatre in Sydney

A different approach to divert children from indiscriminate film entertainment and to give them the best that theatrical art can provide, was made in Sydney by an individual effort which would well merit practical and financial support by the New South Wales Education authorities. Almost ten years ago, in 1937, Rosemarie Benjamin started a 'Theatre for Children,' but lack of money compelled her to put on only irregular seasons of performances. It was not until 1944 that she found in John Kay a
financial supporter and manager for her scheme. The idea had possessed her for a long time, and she brought to Australia a wealth of experience, based on her studies in Russia, and on her own practical work in England, where she founded 'The Young People's Theatre' in London, with the support of such famous actors and actresses as Noel Coward, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Peggy Ashcroft, John Gielgud and others. Her knowledge gathered in Russia proved a great advantage for her venture in England and later in Australia, for Russia is undoubtedly foremost in the field of highly artistic and educational entertainment for children.

It is significant that the first Children's Theatre was established in Moscow in 1918 when the revolution was at its height, and that a mere child, then 15-year-old Natalie Satz, who later became a world-famous figure in the field of theatre and art for children, was entrusted with its organization. At present there are more than a hundred theatres for children in existence throughout the Soviet Union, three in Moscow alone, with at least one, but very often two performances daily. A special department of the 'Central House of Children's Art Education' under the control of the People's Commissariat of Education deals with all questions concerning the children's theatre. The principle of Russia's greatest producer of all time, Stanislavsky: 'One must play just as well for children as for adults, only better still,' has been taken as the keynote in building up the work. The most outstanding producers, actors and actresses—many famous film stars started their
career on the juvenile stage—playwrights, composers and stage technicians are engaged in this work.

A new trend in literature began in connection with the children's theatre. At the beginning there were very few suitable plays available, and stage adaptations of Russian fairy tales and other popular reading matter for children had to be made. But at the same time translations and dramatizations of masterpieces of world literature were speeded up, such as Kipling's *Jungle Books*, Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer, Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the fairy tales by the brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, and they quickly became favourites on the children's stage.

Whilst the theatre in the U.S.S.R., like any other form of education and entertainment, is used there as a means of propaganda, implanting in the child's mind admiration for the deeds of the revolution and the achievements of Russia's social system, it is also used for the cultural education of the young. Thus, side by side with modern plays which mirror present-day problems, the programmes—particularly those for the older age groups—cultivate the great Russian classics of the past, and the works by the greatest English, French, German and Italian dramatists Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe and Goldoni are perhaps more often represented on the Russian juvenile stage than in the countries in which they wrote.

The children's theatres have their staff pedagogues who arrange talks with the audiences, and familiarize themselves with their wishes. The children's reactions are then brought to the notice of the theatre
department of the Central House of Children’s Art Education, where they are carefully studied, and taken as a guide for the selection of further programmes. Eighty per cent. of the audiences are organized groups from schools, whose syllabus profits from the excellent artistic entertainment the children enjoy in their leisure time. Lively discussions of the theatre performances take place in the schools. The writing of plays by the children themselves, or of essays on their impressions, are encouraged. The interest in drawing, costume and stage design, in music, folk-lore and dancing is nourished, bringing to life many a slumbering artistic talent.

The Sydney Theatre for Children is built on principles similar to those which guide the highly developed theatre in Russia, and can be regarded as a vanguard enterprise of great importance for the whole of Australia. It adheres to the fundamental axiom that children should be given the best art possible, and discards average amusement. Many plays are specially written for children or adjusted to their understanding. Fairy stories are often presented in a new form, which according to Miss Benjamin’s conception ‘may help to ease the child of some of the unconscious guilt fantasies emphasized and stirred up by many traditional stories.’ Other types of plays deal with problems the children are confronted with in their every-day life at home and at school. But even in the fairy tales an attempt is being made to retain their atmosphere of fantasy and romance, whilst at the same time bringing it within
the child's experience of reality. The actors and actresses are carefully chosen, and are never condescending, never 'play down to the children.'

In order to establish the right contact between the stage and the child-audience, two symbolic figures, Jester and Columbine, have been introduced, to whom the children can talk during the intervals or after the performance, or write letters. The two figures wear masks to avoid any self-consciousness a child may feel when addressing a definite personality. The figures act as a kind of parent or teacher substitute, and the children are quite at ease in expressing their ideas and criticism to them.

Attached to the theatre is an 'Audience Club,' which had to be disbanded owing to war difficulties, but has been revived recently. In this club the children act as critics not only of the plays they have seen at their theatre, but of art shows, pictures, etc., they are taken to. They are asked for their opinions on books, stories, comics or anything of interest. They are also encouraged to write the words for songs, and to write and produce their own plays, for which purpose a little stage is at their disposal in the Children's Theatre Studio. All these activities are furthered by the publication of plays for children to act on their own, with indication of simple scenery and costumes.

Drama and School

The development of puppetry and live-theatre, be it Theatre for Youth with a predominantly adult cast as in Sydney, or Theatre of Youth as fostered by
the Melbourne movement, may have very healthy repercussions on the Australian schools, where the value of drama and arts has long been acknowledged as essential for education, and by some accepted as part of the curriculum. The generally growing interest in the theatrical art and its cultivation in schools was indicated by a recent conference, held by the New South Wales Education Department at the Sydney Conservatorium, to discuss the topic 'Drama and the School.' Selected groups of children of ages ranging from 4-18 showed to about 1,200 teachers of infants', primary and secondary schools what can be achieved in the practice of dramatic arts, and the teachers afterwards discussed possibilities of dramatizing history lessons, building up verse-speaking choirs and arranging play-readings in primary and secondary schools, whilst much attention was paid to the construction of toy theatres and puppetry in infant classes. It is obvious that children who have been imbued from early years with a love for the arts, and the theatre in particular, will be better judges of good entertainment and reject the often worthless amusement offered by commercial enterprise.

*A National Children’s Theatre*

The awakening of a widespread interest in theatre and drama for children may also contribute to the renaissance of the theatre for adults in Australia, and it is encouraging that C.E.M.A. fosters both the theatre for the grown-up and the young theatre-goer. But if one day an Australia-wide National Theatre
for children comes into existence it must not be restricted to the capitals and big provincial towns. It must travel throughout the country, for the children in remote and rural areas need good entertainment as much, or even more, than our city children. Consideration must also be given to a sound price policy which makes it possible for every child to attend a good show. This is a very important point, because otherwise only privileged children could enjoy the benefit of highly artistic entertainment, whilst the under-privileged would still be exposed to the damaging influence of the unsuitable but cheap picture show.

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