

1998

## The effectiveness of using drama in presenting spiritual material to school students

Geoff Pollard  
*Edith Cowan University*

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING  
DRAMA IN PRESENTING  
SPIRITUAL MATERIAL TO  
SCHOOL STUDENTS

BY

Geoff Pollard

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Honours in  
Bachelor of Arts - Religious Studies

Edith Cowan University

November 1998

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with determining the effectiveness of using drama in presenting spiritual material to school students. As a performer in schools I often wondered if the “magic” of the stage was what the students identified with or whether in addition they were also understanding and learning spiritual truths. As an undergraduate religious student I was exposed to the research of Goldman who concluded that Scripture teaching in Primary Schools should be minimised because he believed the students were incapable of understanding parables and miracles. I looked back on my school performance years and the warm reception given to the plays I was involved in and wondered at the limitations of Goldman’s study. His cognitive approach was well founded and affective, but was he missing a part of the picture? My hunch was that children may well understand spiritual concepts by intuitively grasping symbols, character stereotyping and story dynamics even when not equipped necessarily to understand words or complex religious thoughts in a cognitive sense. I was intrigued to find out if the growth patterns described by developmental psychologists could be demonstrated to be in effect when children were exposed to live religious theatre.

In order to determine these questions I organised three different research episodes in schools. In the first I interviewed Primary School children following a forty-minute religious play to ascertain how and what was learned.

what (if anything) that they had understood spiritually, my third research experiment was done with a school of deaf children where few words were spoken/signed during an enactment of Jesus healing.

Analysis of this data suggest that children can understand spiritual truths intuitively when exposed to religious theatre. It also showed that students' developmental stages affect their cognitive understanding and therefore some knowledge and recognition of children's limitations would be helpful in maximising the positive effects religious drama can produce.



*To know what a child is able to grasp intellectually is a surer foundation for education than to know only what adults feel the child ought to grasp ~ Ronald Goldman.*

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Date..... November 1998

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The Author as Zacchaeus sitting in a “tree”

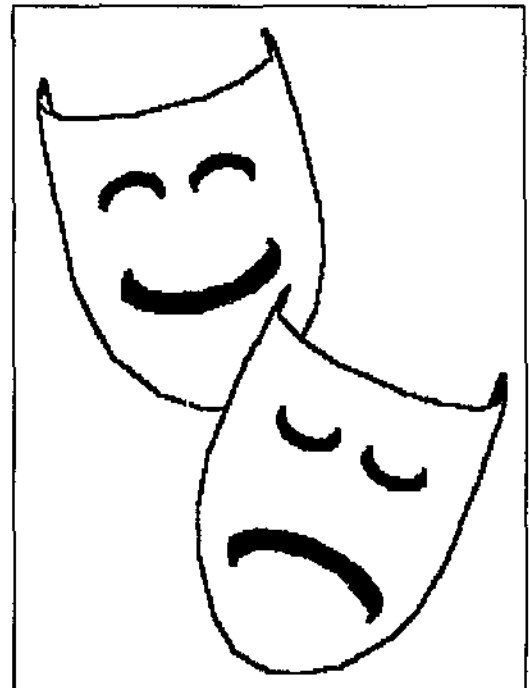
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to sincerely thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Cynthia Dixon, for her shared knowledge and expertise, willing helpfulness and support, and ongoing understanding and encouragement. Without her wisdom and faith this thesis would not have been completed. I would like to thank Tim and Nicky Bowles for being brave enough for me to investigate the effectiveness of their work in presenting Christian drama in schools. They have both graciously assisted and opened all doors to evaluation and permitted me to incorporate the plays they created as part of this thesis. They are true friends. Over many years I have gained from an army of teachers and writers who have deposited in me knowledge in the areas of religious studies, education, drama and psychology. I acknowledge my indebtedness to them all. I wish also to thank John and Charlotte Lawler for their ongoing fellowship in my work. A special thanks to Jessie Dog who took me for walks among the trees and birds which helped preserve both my emotional equilibrium and spiritual awareness.

## GLOSSARY

**Religion.** Whatever we as individuals do to come to grips personally with the questions that confront us because we are aware that we and others like us are alive and that we will die (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993, p.8). In this thesis I call such questions “existential questions”.

**Cognitive Learning.** Intellectual development, the ability to think, express ideas, figure out the *why*, and discuss (Cully, 1979, p.16).



## *Chapter 1*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Setting the Context

In 1991 I had been a Christian for some twenty years when I responded in a prayer group to the suggestion that a Clown Troupe be formed to aid in evangelism. During the following months I attended training classes and learned from Floyd Shaffer's *Clown Ministry* (Shaffer & Sewall, 1984). The following six months led to many "in the market place" attempts at Christian clowning. My clown character of Pierre Le Chef grew in confidence and skill. I was asked if I was willing to become part of a nativity play using Pierre's character as an angel/clown. This was my introduction to full time drama ministry to schools and youth groups performing with The Edge, a talented group of Christian dramatists formed as a semi professional company in 1987<sup>1</sup>. During the writing and setting of the play I followed instructions and began to learn about acting and drama. The end product was a forty-minute, one-act play, which was performed in many Schools, youth groups and outreach situations for churches. I enjoyed the whole process of group creativity, travel and setting up, sharing the gospel message with thousands of children and adults. One year

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<sup>1</sup> The company began as *Moving Images* (formed under the guidance of the Anglican Church) evolved into *The Edge* (independent and multi-denominational) and presently performs as *The Fine Edge* (a part of Scripture Union). Appendix 1, part of a document I helped create during a year of feasibility planning in 1997, gives an overview of its goals, structure and work.

we totalled an audience of 24,000 people. Over the next three years my clown character ceased and I transformed into Zacchaeus, Peter, and many other Biblical characters. I slowly learned different drama and staging skills.



The Edge - 1991

The Author (Zacchaeus)

Nicky Bowles (Mary)

Tim Bowles (Jesus)

Coralie Bemrose (Musician)

Rochelle Penheiro (Enforcer)

### Statement of the Problem

During the three years I performed regularly with 'The Edge' I often wondered if our using the same play for a wide range of year groups was accomplishing our goals. When we acted out one of the parables, did the different age groups take what they were capable of understanding or did the characters and images speak in a universal language that is understood by all? My worst fear was that perhaps it was just the strength and power of theatre that was being responded to and

not the spiritual content. These might seem strange questions for a beginning performer to be asking. However, since 1972 when I completed a two year Bible College course I had been teaching Scripture in many different settings and situations both as a paid preacher and lay volunteer. My wife and I often headed up the Sunday School Program of our local church and had taught all grades and ages. So when I experienced the power of theatre and its ability to hold the attention of church and unchurched audiences I felt highly motivated to discover what was causing these positive results.

### **Finding Answers and More Questions in Academia**

I began in 1995 a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies with a supporting major in Drama. I was keen to gain the skills of writing scripts that not only worked well as theatre but would also present the message of Scripture effectively.

One of the units I studied, *Psychology and Religion*, looked at faith in children and how it develops. I was introduced to academic readings that discussed if and how children understand spiritual concepts and literature (Goldman, 1964; Murphy, 1977; Rowe, 1981; Wakefield, 1975 and many others). The lectures centred on the themes of Piaget, Bull, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Bowlby, Erikson, Fowler, and Westerhoff. The textbook was Robert Coles' *The Spiritual Life of Children* (1990). This literature raised for me the following question. Does this growing body of knowledge relating to child development suggest that Christian theatre needs to be written at different levels for different age groups? Having lived through the demands of creating plays of forty minutes duration which

were basically played to all (with minor adaptations between Primary and Secondary), the thought of multiple productions with different dialogue and situations seemed out of the question and logistically impossible. Each of the plays I performed with 'The Edge took six weeks of planning, group creativity, writing, staging, and rehearsals to end in a form that could be advertised and booked. As we were paid for performing and not paid for the steps leading to performing, the opportunity to write plays for age groups spanning only a few years using our process seemed remote. Since ending my full time association with 'The Edge the company has developed to the point of writing different plays for Primary Schools and Secondary Schools.

Other units of study introduced me to the world of Jung and Campbell. In a script writing course I was introduced to Campbell's (1949) outline of story telling in his classic *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. This work lead me to ask, "Does religious theatre tap into symbols and myths that are inherent in us all and therefore will the same play speak appropriately to each age group?"

### **Purpose of the Study**

An invitation from the University to enter the Honours program provided the opportunity to investigate in a formal way my hunches and growing convictions about Christian drama and resolve the questions raised from the theories noted. My purpose is to explore how the developmental stages affect children's understanding of spiritual theatre.

## Research Question

Are children hindered in their understanding of spiritual concepts presented in theatrical form by the level of development they have attained or do they understand in ways that tests to check cognitive understanding are incapable of verifying?

This will be explored through the following specific questions arising from the plays used for data gathering:

1. In the light of Piaget's cognitive development theory, to what extent can Primary school children understand the paradoxical statements of Jesus when portrayed in drama?
2. In the light of Piaget's moral development theory, can Primary school children accommodate Jesus' decision to overturn the money tables when this is dramatised and to what extent can they understand statements involving moral judgements?
3. Does dramatising the parables help overcome the problems isolated by Goldman concerning Primary school children's comprehension?
4. Do students bring to religious theatre an already inherent spiritual viewpoint as Coles or Fowler would suggest that help them find meaning in the performance?
5. Does the community nature of theatre help it to model spiritual truths as Erikson's model of development might suggest?

6. Does dramatising Scriptural stories impact children because the stories contain within them well established and culturally understood symbols and images inherent to our natures as theorised by Jung and Campbell?

The scope and diversity of the above questions might leave the impression that I am attempting too much or a fear that what follows is at surface level only. However, I feel that each of the specific questions has grown logically and coherently from the performances and plays used for the research and that together they build a composite answer to my research question and help to fulfil the purpose of this thesis.

### **Subsidiary Research Queries**

Along with material to answer the above questions I have also incorporated other queries into my data gathering which I shall explore in less depth. I included in the research opportunity for: general feedback on what the children enjoyed about the performances; a question to determine the effectiveness of using songs to progress the story line and reinforce the themes and; an attempt to determine if the performer's stated goals were accomplished.

### **Overview of the Design of the Study**

The objective was to do fieldwork with live theatre. I began with an actual performance which provided the rationale for a series of questions which

formed the basis for a questionnaire<sup>2</sup> designed to elicit different developmental issues. Chapter four details the rationale behind each question. Two plays, *Nic's Easter Tricks* and *Trials and Triumphs*, written and performed by The Fine Edge dictated the specific questions to be asked and investigated. (See Appendix 2 and 3 for copies of these plays).

Initially the method was to analyse Primary school students' response to a religious play within the framework of Erikson's psychosocial developmental model, and then investigate Secondary school students' understanding of a religious play in the light of Campbell's myth and symbolic theory of story. As the year progressed and I adjusted to the schedule, content and performances of The Fine Edge and my research question became clearer I realised I would not achieve my goals unless I added to this framework. I decided to also do some fieldwork with a school for deaf children that enabled me to create an environment for theatre that was not heavily influenced by the spoken (or signed) word. This would provide evidence to determine whether learning by these students was achieved through influences other than cognitive processing of language, evidence that could then support the view that religious theatre can also be processed in ways independent of cognitive developmental levels. I took this step following my first data gathering at a Primary School when I realised how difficult it would be to differentiate clearly the processes used by hearing children in understanding drama. I realised that the questionnaire had enabled

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2 for copies of the two questionnaires used.

me to discuss successfully cognitive issues but not the other part of my research question. I hoped that by working with deaf children I could address successfully the question of children learning by symbols, story dynamics and involvement with dramatised characters.

### **Significance of the Study**

The literature review failed to identify any previous attempt to apply the findings of developmental psychologists to children's understanding of theatre productions which focused on the realm of spirituality. While many works describing the benefits of using drama in the classroom to aid children to learn as they play-act were identified (Allen, 1979; McCaslin, 1981), no work was found describing how and what children learn from a spiritual play being performed for them. Perhaps this is the first attempt to do so. My past background in religion, drama and education gave me a providential starting point.

### **Limitations of the Study**

When I began this thesis I imagined I was going to add a few drops to an existing pool of information. As I searched in vain to locate the river I could travel down I became more aware of my limitations that might effect the voyage. In what follows I feel like a novice using splendid tools left by masters. In the three streams I find myself, I feel most relaxed in the Waters of Religion, just able to stay afloat in the Drama Pool and almost lost in the Sea of Psychology.

While I have located my conceptual framework in developmental terms I have not entered into the ongoing debates concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the different developmental theorists. I have assumed agreement on the basic tenet that children grow in different stages in their abilities physically, mentally, spiritually and socially (Luke 2:52). I therefore use uncritically with a broad brush the major points established by the developmental psychologists.

Much of what follows is tentative because I have endeavoured to unfold an idea that I discovered led to uncharted waters. So I have chosen to describe the journey I have taken and the discoveries that at times led me on and altered my direction. What began as many questions and hunches has slowly developed into more certainty and on some points to conviction.



## *Chapter 2*

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis belongs at the meeting place of developmental psychology, religion and theatre, in relation to the process of education. However, as the following chapter dealing with my conceptual framework will show, it is developmental psychology that is at the centre of the research questions and from which the other subjects are approached. I will therefore orientate this review in that direction and less toward the other three disciplines.

#### **Literature Relevant to Developmental Psychology.**

Developmental psychology is a large and growing area of study (a search of this subject at Edith Cowan University located more than 300 published references). Major theorists like Piaget and their ideas I discuss in the next chapter. Many of the books focusing on developmental psychology have been published with the goal of providing an overview of the discipline and follow the same organisational pattern of moving from birth to mature age and describing the issues or in Erikson's terms "crisis" of each stage. Liebert, Wicks-Nelson and Kail's text, *Developmental Psychology*, (1986) is an example of this and outlines simply the kind of issues of development that I raise about children's ability to learn. A more specific overview and introduction to the subject of cognitive development is provided by George Rebok (1987) in his work *Life-span Cognitive Development*.

Others before me have applied the findings of developmental psychologists to their particular field of interest. The Physician, Psychopathology, Social Work and Education all receive chapters in Dale Harris' *The Concept of Development* (1967). Using the standard text book outline of the life span from birth to death, Dixon and Bouma (1981) supply a life cycle approach to home economics based squarely on the stages described by developmental psychology. *Educating Young Handicapped Children* by S. Gray Garwood (1979) is also based on a developmental approach. Medicine and developmental psychology are combined in Simons' (1985) book, *Understanding Human Behavior in Health and Illness*. The nursing profession is viewed through the lens of developmental psychology in *Nursing Assessment and Health Promotion through the Life Span*, by Murray and Zentner (1985) with Barry and Morgan (1985) narrowing this topic to psychiatric nursing in their *Mental Health and Mental Illness*. Izard, Kagan and Zajone's (1984) *Emotions, Cognition and Behaviour* is a work based, in part, on workshops sponsored by the Committee on Social and Affective Development During Childhood, of the Social Science Research Council in England.

Appleyard, (1991), on reading and Hargreaves, (1986) on music, come much closer to my own subject. From a developmental point of view, Appleyard argues that in the preschool years the child is a listener to stories and a player in a fantasy world; the school-age reader escapes into a hero and heroine world; the adolescent reader "looks to stories to discover insights into the meaning of life, values and beliefs worthy of commitment, ideal images, and authentic role models for imitation" (Appleyard, 1991, p.14). The first two chapters in

Hargreaves' *The Developmental Psychology of Music* (1986) lay the basis for the remainder of the book's description of music by grounding the discussion in cognitive psychology and Piaget's theory.

I would therefore place this thesis among the growing number of publications that apply the findings of developmental psychology to a specific subject. As previously mentioned I could not locate a particular study or publication that has attempted to analyse the educational results of religious theatre being performed in schools in the light of developmental stages. However, the step of applying developmental theory to specific subjects is a well trodden path with examples like Appleyard's and Hargreaves' actually touching skills used in theatre.

### **Literature Relevant to Religious Theatre.**

In the realm of religious writing and performing arts I have already mentioned my own introduction to this field of endeavour through Shaffer and Sewall's *Clown Ministry* (1984). This work is described as a 'how-to' manual with dozens of skits for service and worship. Included in this is a defence and explanation for clowning based on exegesis of certain Scriptural passages.

Two works which grew from community activity by Christians skilled in performing arts like The Edge are *The Folk Arts in God's Family* by Patricia Beall (1984)<sup>3</sup> and *Rejoice - A Biblical Study of the Dance* by Debbie Roberts (1987). Beall's work is a practical 'how-to' manual growing out of the experience of the

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<sup>3</sup> This book became the standard text for the training of volunteers for Religious Education in Western Australia.

Christian group called Fisherfolk. It contains material for story, poetry, song, dance, mime and drama. The first section of the book sets out a rationale for the use of these arts based on their historical use, scriptural support, use in worship, value in education and use in the family to create a sense of festival. Concerning education, it is argued that performing arts makes us think, relates to our experience, disturbs our prejudices and gives enjoyment. With very similar section topics, Debbie Roberts discusses dance. Her book grew out of five years of learning and experience with a Christian based dance company and so parallels in some ways The Edge's growth in the field of drama.

Concerning plot and story structure for Christian theatre there is much to be gained from Clifford Warne. Moving from the account of Nathan causing King David to repent by telling him a story, Warne discusses the basic ingredients of telling stories in his *The Magic of Story-Telling* (1971). He emphasises the importance of creating a problem for the hero to overcome (conflict), keeping the suspense going, creating characters and motivating them in an understandable way.

A potentially rich source of information touching on many of the aspects of this thesis is literature concerning the Miracle Plays or Mystery Plays of medieval Europe. These plays involved whole towns and their guilds in production and were spoken in the vernacular rather than the Latin used in church liturgy. *The Second Shepherds' Play* (ca 1420), from the Wakefield Cycle (Klaus, Gilbert &

Bradfield, 1995, p.117-138), demonstrated both the sophistication and strength of religious symbolism used in this type of theatre. As these cycles of plays, taking many days to perform, were one of the common people's ways of understanding and being taught the Biblical stories, much can be learned from this period concerning theatre's ability to communicate spiritual truths. In this case the performance was often to benefit people who were unskilled in reading and writing. This period, being more familiar with symbolic communication in comparison with our own period's emphasis on realism, can provide insights into both the techniques and the power of theatre to communicate successfully spiritual material. Pollard's (1923) anthology of miracle plays provides an introduction and notes on the York, Chester and Coventry cycles including plays on Mary Magdalene, Noah's Flood, and The Sacrifice of Isaac. Woolf (1972) investigates the dramatic value of four cycle plays. Kolve (1966) examines the history of the Corpus Christi Festival plays and provides a critical analysis of them.

### **Literature Relevant to Theatre.**

My attempt to understand what children learn from spiritual theatre continues a debate concerning the merits of theatre that has been in progress since at least the writings of Plato (427 -347 B.C.E.) In *The Republic* (Book X), Plato argued that the poet (dramatist) should be excluded from the perfect Republic because he appeals to men's passions rather than to their reason. Also, because the poets art is based on imitation and not reality, he is a threat to virtue. Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.E.) in his *Poetics* touched on an understanding of the emotional response

to theatre still current today in believing that there can be a cathartic release. In *Epistle to Oxford and Cambridge* Ben Jonson in 1607 said of his play *Volpone*, that having drawn on the ancients and as a *comic-Poet* he was “to imitate justice, and instruct to life, as well as purity of language, or stir up gentle affections” (Brockbank, 1968, p.9). In 1668 Jeremy Collier wrote a stinging rejection of the plays of his period because he viewed them as indecent. He starts his rebuttal however with a description of what he felt plays ought to accomplish:

‘The business of plays is to recommend virtue and discountenance vice; to show the uncertainty of human greatness, the sudden turns of fate, and the unhappy conclusions of violence and injustice; ‘tis to expose the singularities of pride and fancy, to make folly and falsehood contemptible, and to bring everything that is ill under infamy and neglect (McMillan, 1973, p.391).

Continuing to the twentieth century the points raised by the above writers have been reviewed and discussed anew. Northrop Frye in *The Argument of Comedy* (1948) says of *Volpone* that “the final assertion of the moral norm takes the form of a social revenge on Volpone” (Sidnell, 1994, p.453). He discusses the fact that comic plays from Greek days to our own start in the normal world but move into a green world (forest or country side away from the city) where, by metamorphosis, the resolution is achieved before the return to the real world. This green world is symbolic of a lost golden age that was peopled by fairies, dreams, and pastoral lovers. He states that we “spend our lives partly in a waking world we call normal and partly in a dream world which we create out of our own desires” (ibid, p.459). My research with the children who watched The

Edge builds on this long tradition of analysis and theorising upon how, what and why drama is or is not effective in society.



'The Author as a clown riding through stilts worn  
by Tim Bowles

It is interesting to note that over the centuries of the Western theatre tradition the nature of the audience and players has changed. The religious plays of Greece were watched by a male audience. The plays of Shakespeare's era were acted by males only, this not changing until the Restoration theatre of the seventeenth century. Theatre analysis and criticism with an emphasis on

childhood has awaited the twentieth century to be explored. The new understanding we have of childhood that developmental psychologists have established has led to a growing body of knowledge concerning children and theatre. Although not directly applicable to my research, television programs like Sesame Street and the literature growing from its philosophy and goals adds to the overall understanding of this subject. Gerald Lesser's book, *Children & Television: Lessons from Sesame Street* (1974), is an early example of this type of literature.

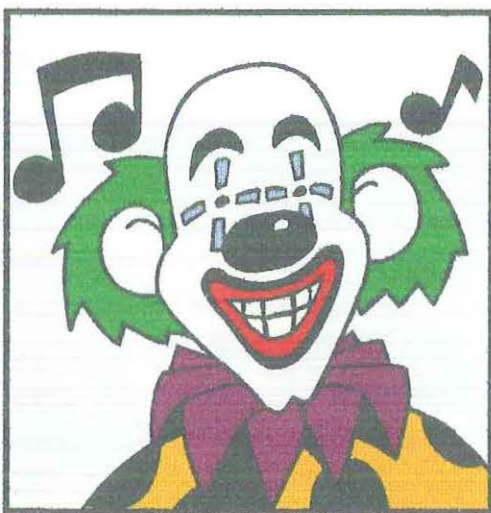
### **Literature Relevant to Education.**

As previously mentioned, the literature dealing with drama in education has focused on students learning by performing drama or writing about drama. As such, it does not relate directly to what is learned by students from a play being performed for them, however, much can be learned from this literature about developmental learning stages and educationalists' goals for using drama. Two publications are representative. The first is a very practical work entitled *Drama in Primary* (1989) by Davies & Harwood & Ross & Taylor. Along with many themes and ideas such as circus, dragons and witches for classroom drama it describes the level of development for each Year group and the types of drama warm ups and styles best suited to each class. This is a clear, hands on publication that discusses many teaching issues and goals relevant to drama in the classroom, such as language development, movement, role-play and evaluation.

The second publication that covers drama in schools is the *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia* (1998) produced by the Curriculum Council. There is useful material in "The Arts" section (p.49 - 80) that discusses learning outcomes, students generating ideas and learning skills and processes. It covers the areas of student's aesthetic understanding and appreciation of the arts in society. Specific to drama, the following elements of the curriculum are listed:

role and character, situation and human interaction, voice, movement, space and time, language and texts, symbol and metaphor, audience, dramatic tension, and dramatic forms, genres, styles and conventions (p.60).

The closing three sections give an overview of developmental issues relevant to each age group; learning, teaching and assessment and; links across the curriculum. This publication is 'up to date' with the issues of drama in the classroom and developmental stages.



*These commandments which I give you this day are to be remembered and taken to heart; repeat them to your children, and speak of them both indoors and out of doors, when you lie down and when you get up - Moses (Deuteronomy 6:6,7).*

## Chapter 3

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the sources of my conceptual framework used in expanding the hunches that began my quest. I can reflect on two discoveries during my undergraduate years that helped crystallise my thoughts for this thesis. The first was learning that George Lucas used Campbell's work in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949) in creating his *Star Wars* trilogy (Moyers, 1988, Video 1). Since *Star Wars* became a best seller around the world in over twenty nations it seemed reasonable to conclude that Campbell's understanding of myth and story must have some value and be worth pursuing. I hoped that I had found an academic answer to my hunch that spiritual drama speaks in a universal type of language and that is why all age groups seemed to both enjoy it as well as learn from it. I enlarge on Campbell's thoughts in a following section.



The second discovery that helped to direct my thinking was reading about some of the experimental work that Piaget had undertaken (Dixon, 1994, p.21-70). I was particularly struck by his story of the child who accidentally broke a tray of cups in contrast to a child who broke one cup while behaving badly. He used this story to demonstrate that children grow in their moral understanding of events. He demonstrated this with the children's answers to questions concerning which of the boys had been the naughtier. The younger child would view the bigger damage to the cups and conclude that that must be the bigger crime. Older children can allow for intention and conclude that the bad behaviour causing the one-cup to be broken was the worse crime. This alerted me to the danger of assuming that we all interpret drama in the same way. The reality that each age group brings potentially different cognitive skills to watching drama is a concept that underlies much of this thesis.

The remainder of this chapter details the writers and their theories that I have based my conceptual framework upon. To help gain an overall picture before looking at individual parts I have included the following Table by Rossiter (1981, p.223) which sets out the stages of development the major theorists have proposed, giving the ages and the words used to describe each stage.

Table 1

**Comparisons Between Developmental Theories**

AGE	PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (Erikson)			COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT (Piaget)	MORAL DEVELOPMENT (Kohlberg)	FAITH DEVELOPMENT (Fowler)
Infancy	1 Oral Sensory	Trust vs Mistrust	(Hope)	Sensory motor	0 Instinctive self- centred orientation;  Good is simply what is liked and wanted	1 Imitative faith
Childhood 3-6	2 Anal muscular	Autonomy vs Shame/doubt	(Will)	Initiative or pre-logical (pre-operational)		Pre-conventional Morality
	3 Genital loc	Initiative vs Guilt	(Purpose)			
Pre Adolescence 7-11	4 Latency	Industry vs Inferiority	(Competence)	Concrete operations	2 Affiliative faith	
Adolescence 12-15	5 Puberty and Adolescence	Identity vs Role Confusion	(Fidelity)	Formal operations	2 Personal usefulness orientation; conforms to obtain rewards	3 Conventional faith
Young Adulthood 15-18					3 Approval seeking orien- tation; interpersonal concordance or good boy-nice girl orien- tation; avoids dis- approval	(Searching faith)
					4 Law and Order orien- tation; respect for authority and social order	4 Personal faith
Adulthood 19-30	6 Early Adulthood	Intimacy vs Isolation	(Love)	5 Social Contract, utilitarian orientation	5 Community faith	
Middle Age 30-	7 Adulthood	Generativity vs Stagnation	(Care)	6 Universal ethical principle orientation		6 Universal faith
Aged 60-	8 Maturity	Ego-integrity vs Despair	(Wisdom)		Autonomous Morality	Inter-Dependent faith
						Faith with no bounds

**Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory**

Piaget identified four stages of cognitive development. Dixon (1994) outlines these stages in the following way:

i. Sensorimotor period: birth - 2 years:

children, through physical interaction with the environment move from reflex activity at birth to symbolic activities; to the ability to separate self from object in the environment.

ii. Preoperational period: 2 - 7 years:

children's ability to think becomes refined, beginning to use symbols, but still bound in the here and now.

iii. Concrete operational period: 7 - 11 years:

children develop the ability to perform mental operations, logically thinking, but require concrete, tangible materials to do this.

iv. Formal operational period: 11 - 16 years:

true, logical abstract thinking develops with the capacity to cope with hypothesis (p.31).

It is this development in cognitive ability that I have endeavoured to apply to spiritual drama in schools. Without the ability to think abstractly, how do Primary aged students understand the Scriptural content of plays? What meaning do they construct when they bring their concrete thinking to the material that spiritual theatre presents?

### **Piaget's Moral Development Theory**

As already mentioned concerning children's different response to the breaking of the cups in Piaget's story, children give a different response to moral issues as they mature in age. When Piaget researched children's understanding of what constitutes a lie, he found that they progressed through believing a naughty word to be a lie, to confusing mistakes with lies, to a definition of a lie as something that is not true to finally, by age ten - twelve, understanding a lie to be any statement intentionally false (Dixon, 1994, p.95). In similar fashion Piaget showed that younger Primary aged children believe rules to be unchanging with this developing by age ten to understanding that rules are arbitrary and can be questioned and changed. In the realm of judgements, according to Piaget, the young child judges actions in terms of consequences (more broken cups means a worse act) while the older child takes into account intentions (the one broken

cup was worse because it was broken during wrong behaviour). These developmental differences concerning moral issues has determined a part of the research I have undertaken as I have attempted to demonstrate to what degree an audience of children interpret moral issues arising from drama.



*To understand is to discover, or reconstruct by rediscovery, and such conditions must be complied with if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and creativity and not simply repetition - Jean Piaget.*

### **Goldman's Concerns about the use of Parables**

Building on the work of Piaget, Goldman questioned children concerning their understanding of parables. He found that the stages of cognitive development influenced the ability of children to deduce the meaning that adults would generally impute to the parables. In a section detailing general implications of his work to religious education Goldman (1964) says,

We have previously mentioned the false assumptions apparent behind the design of some Agreed Syllabuses in relation to many biblical stories suggested for younger children. Parables are an example of this, and the more we know of children's thinking, the more we can see that not only concepts but the level of formal operations (or propositional thinking) demanded by the Parables of Jesus make them, on the whole, unsuitable for children... there

would appear to be a pressing need for further research of a systematic nature into recommended biblical material to test out the suitability of the material recommended. The recommendation may have to be faced that very little biblical material is suitable before Secondary schooling (p.225).

With these thoughts in mind I have endeavoured to discover what children learn from parables if they are experienced in the context of drama. Although Murphy (1977) criticises Goldman for equating mature religious thinking with an abstract, symbolic understanding of parables when he says, "This is clearly a point of conflict for those who hold the view that a literal or historical interpretation of biblical stories need not necessarily be inconsistent with mature religious thinking"(p.168) his conclusions are not dissimilar. Murphy believed that Goldman's conclusions could be modified if the methodology of testing children's understanding of parables included an explanation of the nature of parables, a modern text and context for the parables was used and there was a change in the style and type of questions asked. Then he expected the children to respond with three different levels of understanding: literal, simple application and, allegorical. Following is Murphy's (1977) conclusion:

This study... does suggest a developmental trend towards understanding the allegorical meaning of parables, as children grow older. However, this study also suggests that this is not a simple development, by showing that it can be influenced by a variety of factors. These factors would seem to include the parable itself, the form in which the parable is told, as well as the way that the child's understanding of the parable is tested.

It would seem from the results that a parable such as 'The Good Samaritan' may often be understood by children aged seven, whereas other parables may not be understood until eleven years of age or later. Also a parable such as 'The Pharisee and the Tax Collector' may be more likely to be understood at

seven or eight years of age if the story is told in a modernized form, than it would be when told in the standard version.

On the whole these results do suggest that intellectual development affects children's understanding of biblical parables, but they also suggest that the cognitive limitations of the younger children are not straightforward, and may be varied as a function of both the structure of the material and the way it is presented. 'Thus this study would appear to give little support to a simple stage-development theory of the development of understanding of biblical parables. The gradual developmental trend that is demonstrated to vary between different parables in different forms might, however, suggest a dependence on a variety of cognitive restructurings, appearing at different times (p.172).

It was fortuitous that the play *Nic's Easter Tricks* included both the parable of 'The Good Samaritan' and 'The Pharisee and the Tax Collector' which allowed me to add to this ongoing discussion on children's understanding of parables.

### **Coles' and Fowler's Belief that Spirituality is Intuitive and Inherent**

Coles' (1990) says of his thirty years of talking to children about spirituality in preparation for his book,

It is a project that, finally, helped me see children as seekers, as young pilgrims well aware that life is a finite journey and as anxious to make sense of it as those of us who are farther along in the time allotted us (p.xvi).

His book is a collage of stories, pictures and paintings, interviews and conversations that demonstrates that children are conscious of their spirituality and the questions and issues that religion tries to engage. He says, "The better I knew the children, the more closely I listened to them, the more drawings and paintings of theirs I collected and tried to comprehend, the more evident it

became that in many of them religion and nationalism, combined in various and idiosyncratic ways, gave constant shape to their sense of how one might (or ought not) live a life” (ibid. p.xiii). Coles’ demonstration that children have a direct perception of spiritual truths is a concept that I use to postulate that children will learn from spiritual theatre independently from any reasoning process.

Fowler’s (1981) research led him to the same appreciation of children’s spirituality. He says,

I believe faith is a human universal. We are endowed at birth with nascent capacities for faith. How these capacities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kinds of environments we grow in. Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture. Faith is also shaped by initiatives from beyond us and other people, initiatives of spirit or grace. How these latter initiatives are recognized and imaged, or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives (p.xiii).

With this understanding I have sought to show that children gain from spiritual theatre in ways that cognitive testing will not uncover. Does spiritual theatre provide that environment for faith development through social interaction, community, language and ritual as the performance comes as a gift with spirit?

### **Erikson’s Stages and the Importance of Community to the Development of Faith**

Erik Erikson’s model (first expressed in *Childhood and Society*, 1950) of eight developmental stages from birth to death and his belief that at each stage

spiritual or religious values are learned from influential persons are concepts that I have built on in order to develop my thesis. The first two stages, where trust and autonomy are developing (or conversely, mistrust and shame) occurs prior to Primary School age. Stages three and four, the development of initiative and industry, (versus guilt and inferiority) takes place prior to puberty and thus relate to Primary School children. The fifth stage, search for identity or role confusion, fits well into the period of Secondary School.



*One may scan work after work on history, society, and morality and find little reference to the fact that all people start as children and that all peoples begin in their nurseries - Erik Erikson.*

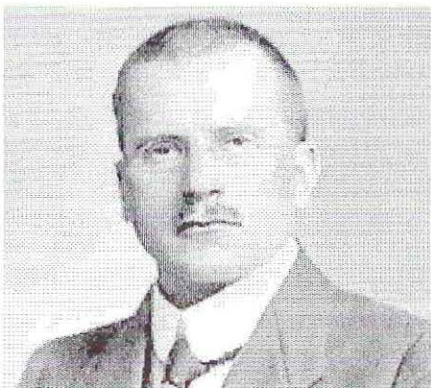
The importance Erikson (1963) places on institutional imparting of religion can be appreciated from the following passage which is taken from a discussion of his infancy stage where the crises of trust or mistrust is negotiated (potentially leading to adult faith):

The parental faith which supports the trust emerging in the newborn, has throughout history sought its institutional safeguard (and, on occasion, found its greatest enemy) in organized religion. Trust born of care is, in fact, the touchstone of the "actuality" of a given religion...The clinician can only observe that many are proud to be without religion whose children cannot afford their being without it. (p.250 & 251)

As Johnson (1990) notes, "Erikson's psychosocial theory clearly accords religion an important role in human development" (p.191). It is this concept of developmental growth occurring within the framework of society and its institutions imparting values and faith that I use to help evaluate what occurs when a spiritual play is performed in the setting of the school society.

### **Jung's and Campbell's Theories Concerning Symbols and Stories**

For the purpose of this thesis I am drawing from Jung the idea of the *collective unconscious* of which he said, "The collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual" and it "is the source of the instinctual forces of the psyche and of the forms or categories that regulate them, namely the archetypes" (Clift, 1982, p.18 &19).



*The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child* - Carl Jung.

Concerning archetypes Clift explains Jung's meaning in the following words:

He regarded the archetypes as analogous to the instincts, except operating in the psyche instead of the body. The archetype is a pattern or a drama that is

found in human experience. 'The particular way an archetype is experienced in an individual psyche will be peculiar to that person and will be drawn from his or her total experience (ibid, p.19).

My connection of these thoughts with religious drama is whether children understand some of the material through these unconscious archetype phenomena.

Joseph Campbell, building in part upon Jung's work, believed that the myths and religions of mankind down through the ages spoke in a symbolic way and that today these symbols (archetypes) were being understood by psychoanalysts. By interpreting the symbols and bringing together the stories from around the world, Campbell believed that the ancients would speak clearly to today's generation (Campbell, 1993, p.vii-viii). Having collected myths and stories from diverse peoples and from many ages Campbell proposed that they could be reconstructed into the same basic plot line, thus the title of his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. He gives the following summary of the heroes journey (which I include in full to be able to analyse part of my research data in a meaningful way later):

The mythological hero, setting forth from his commonday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle; offering, charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate

forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), his own divinization (apotheosis), or again - if the powers have remained unfriendly to him - his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft); being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir) ( p.245-246).

All societies, our own included, tell our children stories that reinforce cultural beliefs and values. When religious drama is performed in schools we are tapping into this cultural deposit of story telling and the intuitive ability of children to both enjoy and understand the story elements.



*The modern hero-deed must be that of questing to bring to light again the lost Atlantis of the co-ordinated soul* - Joseph Campbell.

## **Hadfield's Theory on Dreams**

The person I found who came closest to setting out with the same questions as myself was J. A. Hadfield. He combined scholarship in three areas of expertise: Psychoanalysis, English literature (drama) and theology. When I first encountered his work Hadfield (1954) was researching how we understand dreams and not drama. Hadfield said of dreamers that they sense the significance of dreams intuitively even though they may not be able to understand them cognitively (Hodgson, 1972, p.123). This is exactly what I feel happens when children are exposed to spiritual drama. The following quotes from Hadfield (1954) concerning dreams could also be applied to theatre.

It is indeed because we do not understand our deeper emotional problems that we have to work them out by analogy, by myth, and by parable, and that is precisely the function of dreams. It is interesting to note that Christ made this distinction between the automatic effect of the parable and its conscious interpretation, for when he spoke to the people in parables, and afterwards his disciples wanted an explanation, he said, 'Unto you (disciples) it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without (the people)... in parables' (Mark iv:11). To the people he told the parable and left it to produce its own effect, for obviously he was not merely story-telling to the people. He realized that the stories would have a greater effect in the untutored mind without interpretation, for the untutored mind is the subconscious mind. ...Dreams are parables, symbolic stories, carrying a deeper meaning, and they have an effect on the mind even when they are not consciously understood or interpreted. The story carries its own moral (p.124 & 125).

## **Berryman's Appraisal of the Developmental Psychologists**

I found in Jerome Berryman's book *Godly Play* many of the conclusions that I had reached concerning the work of Piaget and others when it is applied to children's understanding of religious issues. He believes it is a mistake to conclude that children do not experience existential questions and that "there is a kind of knowledge that children have that goes undetected by cognitive developmental studies, such as those of Piaget" (1991, p.137 & 138). He takes issue with Goldman's conclusions for the same reason. Berryman believes that religious language invites us to "enter into its actions, symbols, narratives, and parables to play at the edge of our existence" (ibid, p.148), and that it is then that we experience the presence of God. His following anecdotal evidence can be paralleled with the effects of spiritual drama:

my experience with sick and dying children for more than a decade in the Texas Medical Center convinced me that young children know a lot about death and have religious experiences. I watched as children helped one another prepare for death when parents and other significant adults were not able to help them. I presented religious materials to them, especially the Parable of the Good Shepherd, and noticed a kind of peace visible in their faces and bodies even if they could not tell me why they felt peaceful (p.142).

## **Courtney and his Theory on Drama and Intelligence**

In some parts Richard Courtney's book *Drama and Intelligence* reminded me of Aristotle's concept that the effect of Greek tragedy was cathartic. As already mentioned, in his *Poetics* Aristotle argued that the audience gains an emotional relief when they watch drama and that this purifies from selfish passions.

Courtney's argument is similar when he maintains that actors effect certain changes in the members of an audience. He says, "In a great performance we feel that we have been changed, that we have learned in some way - although, as this change or learning is largely tacit, it is difficult to put into words" (1990, p.25). Courtney says, "the change is as likely to be one of thought structure as of content - as much part of *how* we think as of *what* we think (p.26). This perception of how theatre influences in ways that are hard to put into words verifies my own experience of needing to change my original research methodology to include deaf children in order to try and demonstrate the change in thinking that spiritual theatre can promote.

This chapter has described Campbell's belief, used by Lucas in *Star Wars*, that their are basic ingredients to all cultural myths and stories that are readily understandable. Piaget demonstrated that children grow in their moral understanding of events and in their cognitive development. Goldman pointed out that parables may be beyond the propositional thinking of Primary School children. Coles' research showed that children have a direct perception of spiritual truths in an intuitive way. Erikson described eight stages of developmental growth, the first four helpful in highlighting the spiritual issues important for society to instil in their children. Jung has taught us the importance of our unconscious psychic heritage that can be seen in understanding archetypes. So the data described in the following chapter is the product of questions based upon the conceptual framework created by the amalgamation of Lucas' plot development of *Star Wars* with Goldman's

thoughts concerning children's inability to fathom the depths of parables, mixed with the developmental theories of Piaget and Erikson, overlayed with Coles' description of children's direct perception of spiritual truths, and combined with symbols, stories and dreams supplied by Jung, Campbell and Hadfield.



*Let the children come to me: do not try to stop them: for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these - Jesus (Matthew 19:14).*

## *Chapter 4*

### DATA COLLECTION

#### **Overview**

During the year I have gained data from ninety students representing five schools in the Perth area. Two Primary schools answered a questionnaire and one Primary school class wrote “Thank You” letters after watching *Nic’s Easter Tricks*, a forty minute play designed to tell the story of Easter through the events surrounding Nicodemus. A Primary School for deaf children allowed me to use a Scripture class to gain data on how the children understood spiritual truths presented in the form of drama. Lastly, a Secondary school Year eleven class answered a questionnaire having watched *Trials and Triumphs*, a play based on the life of Joseph as told in the book of Genesis. The remainder of this chapter describes the plays, methods and rationale for my research and details each of the five schools’ data.

#### **Background to the Data gained from *Nic’s Easter Tricks***

As a past performer I was asked to a Dress Rehearsal of *Nic’s Easter Tricks* in order to point out any unforeseen problems of staging or acting. After the show we went through my list of observations. I then asked each of the performers what they were trying to accomplish through the play, and what they hoped the children would gain from seeing it. I asked each one to give me a key word or

words that they thought were central to the play they had produced. The following is a verbatim account:

Understanding the reason of the cross.  
 Historical understanding of Easter.  
 Jesus is cool.  
 Possibility of having a relationship with Jesus and God.  
 Come as a child to the Father and Jesus.  
 God's love is available to everyone, but it is a different love.

In *Nic's Easter Tricks* Jesus is portrayed as a stilt walking, conjuring, circus skilled leader. The Gospel material used includes the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Nicodemus' visit at night, questions asked to trap Jesus, Palm Sunday, the cleansing of the Temple, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. Volunteers from the audience are used at different parts and often the audience is encouraged to participate with singing and verbal responses. Some of the chocolate golden coins are distributed to the poor (children).

Following the dress rehearsal my thoughts about the play were as follows. From a scriptwriter's view I was concerned that the plot took a long time to get going. The early scenes were used to establish the characters of Nicodemus, Jesus and Caiaphas. I wondered if Primary school children need a strong plot line all the way through to help them stay focused. Moreover, the early scenes contained paradoxical teaching material from Jesus' ministry that might have been beyond the comprehension of many. Material about law and law keeping was also part of the early dialogue that Primary School children may have found challenging. The last two thirds of the play was easier to follow as the plot to destroy Jesus gave urgency to what was happening and most of the Gospel material was acted

out and not just included in the dialogue. Overall I felt that the play would be loved and enjoyed by the children. The vehicle of Jesus as a trick performer seemed appropriate as a way of keeping attention and allowing for many enjoyable moments in the play. The use of song and dance, circus skills, colourful clothes and imaginative stage settings adds up to make this play an enjoyable experience.

### **Construction and Rationale for *Nic's Easter Tricks* Questionnaire**

Questions based on the major emphasis of the play and not obscure points were drawn up. I tried to use the same words and sentences that the play used in phrasing the questions.

Following is my rationale (recorded at the time) for asking each of the questions:

1. *What did you like best about the play?* I thought this would provide good feedback for The Fine Edge as well as provide evidence whether their performance had been well received or not.
2. *What do you think the actors wanted to tell you?* Having asked and recorded each of the actor's statements concerning their desires for the play before it was performed, this question was designed to evaluate their goals.
3. *What do you think Jesus meant when he said, 'In God's way of doing things the first is often last and the last often becomes first'?* When I watched this play for the first time I was aware that a lot of Jesus' sayings that are paradoxical had been used to establish Jesus' character. I wondered to what extent Primary school children

would be able to understand them, even if they were given clues by clever acting and suggestive stage settings for each statement.

4. *How would you describe the following characters: Nic, Caiaphas, and Jesus?* Although I expect to get simple answers like *good* and *bad* I am trying to establish the level of understanding of the major characters even if the children were not understanding all they said. From Jung and Campbell's perspective the play would communicate on a level of symbols and story line and not necessarily need all the dialogue to be understood.

5. *Put a tick next to the prayer you think God is happy with:*

- a. *"God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers and evildoers - I do good deeds twice a week, and give money to the poor."*
- b. *"God, please have mercy on me, I need your help... I do things wrong sometimes."*

Thinking of Piaget's work I wondered if smaller children would have to say that God listened to the proud man's prayer because he said he had done good and the humble man's prayer would not be listened to because he admitted to doing wrong. In the play Jesus actually says that God is pleased with the humble approach.

6. *Why did Jesus tell the story about Roger Razorblade?*

- i) *So that we know to go and do good to people in need?*
- ii) *To make sure we do not have bad manners like Roger?*
- iii) *To tell us that hospitals are the best place to take sick people?*

Based on Goldman's work on parables I expected this part of the play to be misapplied. I suspected that the younger the child the more unlikely they were to make personal application and identify with an uncouth bikie (Roger) but think concretely that the good that was done was because the injured person was taken to a hospital.

7. *When Jesus told Nic he must be born again, how could Nic do that?* Thinking of Piaget, I wondered if Primary school children had reached a level of cognitive ability to understand this concept. Although the play did a tremendous job with John 3 and it was very entertaining I felt this part of the play was undecipherable for young children.

8. *Why may Jesus have been in trouble with Caiaphas' money?*

i) *Because he tricked the money away from Caiaphas?*

ii) *Because he gave money to the poor?*

iii) *Because the Romans would be angry with what Jesus said about taxes?*

The way Jesus palmed the money to trick Caiaphas may have led to confusion concerning right and wrong. In the absence of any Romans on stage and the difficult intellectual concept of taxes I doubted if this piece could be followed. I felt the threatening music at this point would have alerted the children to the fact that the plot was developing to its resolution but the actual reasons for it would be misunderstood.

9. *Did Jesus do the right thing when he threw the table and money onto the floor? Yes or No.*

As the table was thrown from a height of six foot onto the bare floor with a

great crash I wondered if the anger and the anti-social behaviour shown would be unacceptable to young ones. Again, this was a question aimed at determining if theatre watched by students was subject to the moral growth patterns described by Piaget.

10. *Was God pleased that Jesus was killed on the cross? Yes or No.* The sound of nails being struck and the visible scene of Jesus on the cross with the dialogue that this was God's purpose was, I suspect, a little hard to juggle for young ones.

### **Primary School 1 Data**

I was allowed to use the questionnaire with a combined class of Year 1 & 2 students (six and seven year olds). This followed immediately after the show. With the help of Steven Daly (A *Fine Edge* performer) and Timothy Pollard (my thirteen-year-old son) we interviewed all 18 students. We each worked with one child at a time, reading out the questions and scribing the answers. This took about 45 minutes in total. I am not certain how reliable this method was for collecting data as each of us had a slightly different way of asking the questions and holding the pen against the paper which subconsciously may have suggested some of the answers. Following are the students' response to each question. Rarely do the numbers tally correctly for each question because some students left questions unanswered.

#### *1. What did you like best about the play?*

When he tricked Caiaphas as he worked in the garden.  
That he spilled his blood for us.  
When Jesus rose from the dead.

When Jesus was on the cross and asked others to be forgiven.  
 When Jesus was on the cross.  
 Jesus' tricks with the money.  
 Stilts.  
 'The tricks - Jesus.  
 Jesus' tricks.  
 'The part where the guards were guarding the tomb.  
 Jesus' crucifixion.  
 'The money tricks.  
 'The mean lady.  
 'The robbers.  
 Liked all of it.  
 'The music.  
 When he was up on the stilts and he was having a happy time.  
 When Jesus died on the cross.

2. *What do you think the actors wanted to tell you?*

God.  
 To believe in Jesus.  
 About God.  
 About how Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 Don't know.  
 How Jesus died.  
 To believe in God.  
 So you know how to, so you learn about Jesus and God.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 About Easter.  
 About Jesus.  
 About Jesus.  
 To be kind to others.  
 How he actually lived and how he was raised from dead.  
 I don't know.

3. *What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "In God's way of doing things the first is often last and the last often becomes first"?*

Because they turn around.  
 He made the tree's first and thought of that last.  
 No Comment.  
 People being good they become first and bad people become last.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 Don't know.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 Don't know.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 First.

Rising from the dead.  
 I don't know.  
 'They swap places.  
 "Because you go through this life first, then you have another one."  
 Good.

4. *How would you describe the following characters:*

*Nic* - Good. Kind. Trying to help others. Said good things about Jesus.  
 Good. Good. Good man. Nice. Nice and good. Good. Good.  
 Good. Nice Religious, he cared about Jesus. A kind person.  
 Kind. Happy, enjoys telling about Jesus. Nice.

*Caiaphas* - Bad. Mean. Bad. Very bad man. Didn't like her. Bad.  
 Bad man, very bad. Mean. Mean because she said that  
 God's tricks were bad. Bad. Mean. Bad.  
 Mean at the start, at the end she was nice. Mean.  
 Very mean. Very mean. Quite strict, doesn't like people  
 having fun. Bad.

*Jesus* - Good. Strong. Clever. Very good man like Nic. Really kind.  
 Good. Really good man. Really nice. Good. Good. Good.  
 Good. Nice. A good person. Very kind.  
 Teaching people about God.  
 Kind to share his last meal. Nice.

5. *Put a tick next to the prayer you think God is happy with:*

- a. "God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers and evildoers - I do good deeds twice a week, and give money to the poor." ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓  
 b. "God, please have mercy on me, I need your help... I do things wrong sometimes." ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

6. *Why did Jesus tell the story about Roger Razorblade?*

- So that we know to go and do good to people in need?* ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓  
*To make sure we do not have bad manners like Roger?* ✓  
*To tell us that hospitals are the best place to take sick people?* ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

7. *When Jesus told Nic he must be born again, how could Nic do that?*

Imagine that.  
 He could follow Jesus.  
 No Comment.  
 To remember things about being a baby.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 Don't know.  
 No comment.  
 No Comment.  
 Don't know.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 I can't remember.  
 Don't remember anything.  
 He was very sad, he felt that he would lose his friend.

Change his mind to when he was a baby.  
He needs to imagine it in his head.  
Shrink.

8. *Why may Jesus have been in trouble with Caiaphas' money?*  
i) *Because he tricked the money away from Caiaphas?* ✓ ✓  
ii) *Because he gave money to the poor?* ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓  
iii) *Because the Romans would be angry with what Jesus said about taxes?* ✓ ✓ ✓

9. *Did Jesus do the right thing when he threw the table and money onto the floor?*  
*Yes or No.*  
Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes.  
No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No.

10. *Was God pleased that Jesus was killed on the cross?* *Yes or No.*  
Yes, Yes.  
No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No.

**Primary School 2 Data**

I worked with a Year six class that had 24 students. The twenty minutes used to fill out the questions followed immediately after the close of the show and the children had walked back with their chairs to their classroom. I handed out the question sheet to each student and asked them to answer honestly having performed the Chinese compass routine to get them settled and cooperative. Some of the students filled out the questions quickly while others went at my pace as I read out the questions and elaborated. The following are the students' responses to each question. As the students wrote their own answers I have left the spelling and grammar mistakes as found.

1. *What did you like best about the play?*  
Me.  
A tick.  
My acting.  
Ererythink.  
The bit with Ross in it.  
I liked all because it had lots of good moments.  
I liked everything.  
Nothing.  
Rogor the biker guy.

'The bit with R. Razor blade.  
 All of it.  
 'The triks.  
 'The nurse.  
 'Thing.  
 'The tricks.  
 'The tricks.  
 'The fury the roken star.  
 Nothing.  
 I liked it all.  
 I like the whole thing.  
 Everything.  
 Jugeling.  
 George and he had was spiking hair.  
 Jourg when he was funny.

2. *What do you think the actors wanted to tell you?*

Jesus is coming.  
 Love God.  
 How to love Jesus and God the right way.  
 'That you listend very well and the actors where excellent.  
 About Jesus and God.  
 To be kind and respect others.  
 'That Jeses is a good person.  
 I truly just dont know.  
 About jesus and about god.  
 They wanted to tell you about how lived.  
 To obay Jesus.  
 To shew you what Jesus did.  
 That Jeuse is importent.  
 About Jesus.  
 To show you that god forgives.  
 They said that god loves you.  
 The jesuse alive.  
 To show us that Jesus is the son of god.  
 'That Jesus is a good man.  
 Jueso is cool and nice.  
 To be kind.  
 About Jeuses life.  
 About Jesus and god.  
 About Jesus.

3. *What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "In God's way of doing things the first is often last and the last often becomes first"?*

No comment.  
 Don't know.  
 No comment.  
 Don't know.  
 Question mark.  
 That other people who aren't as capable as us get a fair chance.  
 I dont no



He couldnt  
 Know it dont \_\_\_\_ wait he rencarnated.  
 No comment  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 Dont know.  
 Close his eyes.  
 No comment.  
 Dontnow  
 No comment.  
 I don't know.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 No comment.  
 Dash.  
 Dash.

8. *Why may Jesus have been in trouble with Caiaphas' money?*

- i) *Because he tricked the money away from Caiaphas?* ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- ii) *Because he gave money to the poor?* ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- iii) *Because the Romans would be angry with what Jesus said about taxes?* ✓ ✓  
 ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

9. *Did Jesus do the right thing when he threw the table and money onto the floor?*  
*Yes or No.*

Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes,  
 Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes.  
 No, No, No, No, No, No.

10. *Was God pleased that Jesus was killed on the cross? Yes or No.*

Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes,  
 Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes.  
 No, No, No, No, No, No, No, No.

### Primary School 3 Letters of Thanks

- Thank you for coming to our school and acting for us. The best part was when Jesus fell off the cupboard at the end. I learnt lots of things. The most Important thing was that I liked the play. Matthew.
- Thank you for coming to our school for that play. I learnt a lot about Jesus. My best bit was when Nick had the mohawk on because it looked funny. I learnt that Jesus loved children. Matt Crockett.
- Thank you for your performance at our school. The best part was when Jesus fell off the cupboard at the end. The whole thing was cool because I learnt lots of things. The most important part was how Jesus taught us about love. Sam Colvin.
- Thank you for coming to our school. My best bit was when Nick put his thumb up and burped. I learnt love keeps you warm and happy. Ivan.

- 'Thank you so much for doing the play for us. It was brilliant. I learnt a lot because I never knew there was a story about Nick's Easter 'Treats. My favourite part was when he was acting like a baby. Laura.
- 'Thank you for coming to our school. Your performance was good. I have never seen a show like it. Nick was very good at it. It was very funny when Nick acted like a baby. My favourite bit was when cool guy said, I don't know. Melissa Kitson.
- 'Thank you for coming to our school. My favourite part was when the guards ran away. I learnt that Easter isn't just about Easter eggs and Easter bunnies. It is also about Jesus. Catherine Dare.
- 'Thank you for coming to our school to perform for us. I was scared when I did the dance. My favourite part was when Nick was being tilted side to side. I learnt that they talked about love. Claire Farrow.
- I would like to thank you for performing Nick's Easter ricks. My favourite part was when Jesus was juggling. I learnt lots of things to do with Jesus. Hayley Martin.
- 'Thank you for your performance it was really something. The best thing was when Jesus nailed to a cross and rose from the dead but I liked the whole show because it was cool. I liked it when Nick put his thumb up and burped at the same time. I liked it when the guards ran away. David Goyder.
- I loved your Show about Jesus and about Easter and what happened long ago when Jesus was told a lot. I loved it when you were on the stilts and doing tricks and making people laugh and giggle. It was sad when Jesus died but I knew it was a play. I never saw a play like it. Katherine.
- 'Thank you for your act, It was really awesome. I liked the bit when Jesus was nailed to the cross and the other bit when he rose from the dead and the guards ran away. I learnt that Jesus came from God. David Leslie.
- We loved your performance. It was excellent. My sister Tessa was part of the dance with Claire and Kate. I liked the part when Nick was a baby and was about to suck from Jesus. I hope you can come again! Bianca, E.
- 'Thank you for entertaining us with some very good songs. I learnt a lot about Jesus and his friends. My favourite part was the first bit and the dancing. Erica.

## **Primary School 4 Data**

I had the opportunity of working with a deaf group of primary school children for a forty minute Scripture class. Previously I had helped this same class to construct a play based on the story of Noah. I wanted this class to demonstrate that children even in the absence of words could learn and develop spiritual ideas and thoughts from drama. I wanted to test my hypothesis that younger children learn from stories in non-cognitive ways as suggested by the work of Jung, Campbell, Coles and others.

My plan for the forty minutes was as follows. Although I had chosen the story found in Luke 18:11-19 (the healing of the ten lepers) I did not tell the children the story or refer to the text. I arranged for them to help me act out the story with no words being used from the story. My helpers told them what to do, but not the story. When the children arrived I shared with them the consequences of being a leper in the time of Jesus. Ten of the children were then quickly bandaged around head, arms and legs by adult helpers. As Jesus (dressing for the part while the bandages were put on) I touched and "healed" each leper and one at a time sent the lepers to the two adults dressed as priests who then allowed them to re-enter the fellowship of their class mates who were playing the part of relatives and friends. The last of the lepers to be healed I then sent to the priests, however he returned to thank me and I gave him a special hug. I then asked the children to play act for me what they had learned from the story. They broke into four groups of about six with each group having an adult helper. I watched and set a time for this creative effort of seven minutes. Each group then performed the following sketches:

1. A girl discovered that her shoelace was undone and could not do it up. A boy came and did it up for her. A girl could not get her hair clip in place so a friend did it for her.
2. The second group decided to retell the story we had just acted out. (After the class the group leader told me that she had watched the children decide what to

do and they had talked about Jesus helping people and remembered an earlier story of the feeding of the five thousand).

3. The third group showed us Jesus healing a person with a twisted leg.

4. The fourth group also showed Jesus healing but had remembered past classes and each person was asked by Jesus to pray first and then say thank you. The last person healed was asked "what do you want?".

In the closing minutes I thanked them for their help and efforts and we gave them a handout with the story told in cartoon form and a word find exercise with the key words being used from the story.

Before leaving the deaf school we debriefed as a group. The leader felt that the session had been very important because the children had not only remembered some of the past lessons but they were also connecting them together and arriving at thoughts like *Jesus helped others and so should we*.

### **Background to the Data gained from *Trials and Triumphs***

This play uses the life of Joseph from the book of Genesis as its main source of material, tying in with the parallels found with Jesus' suffering. It is a forty-minute production with a constant flow of songs and movement. Along with much humour there is a delightful piece where Pharaoh and Joseph put on a show of dignity and majesty by walking with tables as head coverings!

I was invited to travel to Camp Logue Brook and help The Fine Edge with an all day performing arts presentation involving the Year elevens (sixteen year olds) from a private Church school. The campsite is south east of Perth about 140 kilometres. It is set on a hill escarpment and backs onto a dam. Kangaroos and bush walks surround the campsite. It is a picturesque location.

I thought that doing a questionnaire following a performance of *Trials and Triumphs* at a camp that students had been at for four days could have the following advantage. Being part of a whole days activities that were led in part by The Fine Edge ensured a good relationship with the students who watched the play at 9.30am, then discussed the play in groups for about twenty minutes.

I had forgotten that at an Edge performance for schools there is an introduction that covers the main themes of the play. So Steve Daly spoke clearly before the play about Reconciliation, Forgiveness, Integrity and Faith. Also, after the play was concluded the students formed groups and discussed questions about the play that again underlined the main themes. So I would expect that the questionnaire would not show the effect of the play only but also the effect of these before and after the play activities.

Being a religious school (the teachers prayed with us before the group activities) also makes evaluating the questionnaire difficult. In the group of seven that I joined after the play, four of the group had actually played in a Year eight production of Joseph and therefore were very familiar with the story. One was a theatre arts student. They had no difficulty understanding the Joseph/Jesus

parallel and gave me three parallel points (their suffering, their providing a safe home, and their being led by God). They also found that the songs provided atmosphere and said they had no problem with understanding the words and themes from the songs. They were also not put off by the different players playing a lot of different roles or characters. I wonder if others not as well educated in theatre and the Genesis story would do as well.

### ***Trials & Triumph's* Questionnaire Construction and Rationale**

1. *In a sentence, give the performers some critical feedback.* This is always helpful for the performers and organisers to get some feedback. Hopefully I will gain more realistic responses than a class *Thank You* exercise.

2. *Provide three or four words that describe the themes of the play.* These questions were my attempt to tease from the audience the key words like *Reconciliation*, *Integrity*, *Forgiveness* and *Faith* that are used in the advertising flier. I purposefully did not use any of those words in the questionnaire in order to find out how much of the playwright's ideas had crossed to the audience.

3. *Name one of the characters that sung a song and describe briefly what the song was about.*

The three years I spent performing with The Edge had left me with a concern that the songs we used often had important messages and at times marked important shifts of plot or theme and that our audiences would not pick this up because they were hearing the songs for the first time and thus would fail to be clearly directed by the lyrics. So this question was asked to throw some light on

this area of theatre. How well do young audiences pick up on modern songs and lyrics?

4. *Where do you think Joseph's dreams came from?* This question and the next question attempt to check for understanding of the play and also see what faith might be in the audience.

5. *What interpretation was put on Joseph's dreams?*

6. *Why was Jesus compared or paralleled with Joseph?* The paralleling of Jesus and Joseph in the play asks for a spiritual sophistication of ideas and themes from the audience. Again I am looking for understanding and spiritual awareness from the audience.

7. *Was God interacting in Joseph's life of suffering? Briefly justify your answer.* I think the question of suffering and God's role in that is a difficult one. I wondered what Year Eleven's response would be to the plays suggestion that somehow God was involved in Joseph's slavery and imprisonment. Or is this question too briefly touched upon in the play for it to have been picked up on?

8. *What message for Australia today did the players suggest from the story of Joseph?* This question again allowed me to see if the themes of *reconciliation* and *forgiveness* had been communicated successfully.

9. *If you enjoyed the show, what gave you a buzz?* Again I was looking to provide feedback for the performers as well as finding out what left the strongest impression on the audience.

10. *Can you state something that you learned about God and His ways?* Again I was

looking for the key theme words and what spiritually had happened among the audience.

## Secondary School Data

1. *In a sentence, give the performers some critical feedback.*

Speak up. More stage positions.  
Positioning on stage was very effective.  
Entertaining performance. Riveting.  
I think there should be more funny stuff.  
A bit too abstract sometimes.  
The joke are not funny.  
Entertaining.  
Take it off!  
I really enjoyed it.  
They were very good and realistic.  
Riveting and enjoyable.  
(One left the question blank).

2. *Provide three or four words that describe the themes of the play.*

Reconciliation forgiveness integrity.  
Reconciliation forgiveness integrity.  
Reconciliation, forgiveness, integrity.  
Reconciliation, forgiveness.  
Forgiveness integrity reconciliation.  
Forgiveness reconciliation. Faith. Suffering.  
Forgiveness, reconciliation. good! faith.  
Reconciliation forgiveness suffering.  
Forgiveness, reconciliation, faith.  
Dreams, -relevant/forgiveness-Reconciliation.  
(One left the question blank).

3. *Name one of the characters who sang a song and describe briefly what the song was about.*

Tanya - Dreams also healing.  
Tanya - Dreams.  
Tanya - Background themes.  
Tanya and Michelle - Dreams.  
Tanya - healing wounds.  
'That lady at the front sang many songs. (very nice songs).  
Tanya - dreams, themes.  
Tanya - healing wounds and learning to forgive.  
Tanya - Dreams and healing.  
(two left the question blank).

4. *Where do you think Joseph's dreams came from?*

God.  
God his premonition.

God.  
 God or maybe just his mind.  
 God, of course.  
 God.  
 God.  
 (his head!) God.  
 God.  
 God.  
 God.

5. *What interpretation was put on Joseph's dreams?*

That he thought he was good - trying to show of to brothers - really that he was the chosen one.  
 Cows and corn = 7 good years of harvest, 7 years of famine.  
 His own + society.  
 He would rule over his brothers.  
 That his brothers would bow down to him.  
 They were key to future.  
 ? (sorry, I'm dumb).  
 That his brothers would bow down to him.  
 Guidance from God.  
 That he was infatuated with himself.  
 That he was inflatuated[sic] with himself.

6. *Why was Jesus compared or paralleled with Joseph?*

Because they both suffered for other people.  
 They both had to suffer so others could be set free.  
 Both suffered for the wrong reason.  
 They both went through suffering.  
 Because they are both important people in the Bible and their stories are similar.  
 Joseph went through the same Trials and Tribulation as Jesus did.  
 To show the pain they were both put in.  
 Because they suffered the same way.  
 Their trials and tribulations.  
 They both showed forgiveness.  
 They both suffered for the sake of others  
 Jesus for everyone - Joseph for bro's.

7. *Was God interacting in Joseph's life of suffering? Briefly justify your answer.*

Yes - Joseph was their for a purpose in the long run to help his family through the hard times learn to forgive oppressors.  
 Yes, because his suffering was for the best - it save the country from the famine.  
 Yes, because of that he came a 2nd ruler of Egypt.  
 Yes he felt Joseph's pain.  
 Yes. he was improving it even though Joseph had to suffer.  
 Yes. Suffering saved life.  
 Yes because he helped Joseph to overcome it and learn from it.  
 Yes! He had planned everything and he was pulling the strings (Joseph was a puppet of Gods).  
 (Three left the question blank).

8. *What message for Australia today did the players suggest from the story of Joseph?*

Learn to forgive and reconcile.

Learn to forgive.

Forgiveness is important.

?

People can forgive others no matter what and that Jesus did the same and so did too.

To forgive people.

Reconciliation - aboriginal and international.

Joseph was very forgiving although society today does not expect people to be like that.

Reconciliation - but before you can reconcile you must be able to forgive.

(Two left the question blank).

9. *If you enjoyed the show, what gave you a buzz?*

'The atmosphere/singing. The fact that it was the truth.

Jeff.

The cows.

The whole thing. Jeff.

The harmony on the end song, and the body language.

The guy with the long hair.

Jeff (mmmmmm).

Jefferson.

The music was really great.

I enjoyed the music and the cows and corn.

(One left the question blank).

10. *Can you state something that you learned about God and His ways?*

If you trust him then he will help you out.

If you trust him he won't let you down.

He forgives. This is important and we should do the same.

He forgives.

He works in different ways, doing different things.

No!

He is very forgiving. He knows what the future holds.

He works in mysterious ways but wherever he leads you it's for a purpose in the long run.

(Three left the question blank).

## **Answers to the Questionnaires given in Percentage Terms**

Before starting the analysis of the data found in the following chapter I have listed the answers to the questionnaires in percentage terms. I hope this helps to expedite an understanding of my analysis of the data that was amenable to this type of treatment.

### Questionnaire for Nic's *Easter Tricks*

3. *What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "In God's way of doing things the first is often last and the last often becomes first"?*

Years 1&2 - 66% gave no meaningful answer

Year 6 - 87% gave no meaningful answer

5. *Put a tick next to the prayer you think God is happy with:*

- a. *"God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers and evildoers - I do good deeds twice a week, and give money to the poor."*

Years 1&2 - 41%

Year 6 - 13%

- b. *"God, please have mercy on me, I need your help... I do things wrong sometimes."*

Years 1&2 - 59%

Year 6 - 87%

6. *Why did Jesus tell the story about Roger Razorblade?*

- i) *So that we know to go and do good to people in need?*

Years 1&2 - 31%

Year 6 - 71%

- ii) *To make sure we do not have bad manners like Roger?*

Years 1&2 - 6%

Year 6 - 12%

- iii) *To tell us that hospitals are the best place to take sick people?*

Years 1&2 - 63%

Year 6 - 17%

7. *When Jesus told Nic he must be born again, how could Nic do that?*

Years 1&2 - 61% gave no meaningful answer

Year 6 - 78% gave no meaningful answer

8. *Why may Jesus have been in trouble with Caiaphas' money?*

i) *Because he tricked the money away from Caiaphas?*

Years 1&2 - 12%

Year 6 - 26%

ii) *Because he gave money to the poor?*

Years 1&2 - 69%

Year 6 - 39%

iii) *Because the Romans would be angry with what Jesus said about taxes?*

Years 1&2 - 19%

Year 6 - 35%

9. *Did Jesus do the right thing when he threw the table and money onto the floor?*

Year 1&2 - 22% ticked "Yes"

Year 6 - 73% ticked "Yes"

10. *Was God pleased that Jesus was killed on the cross?*

Yes or No.

Years 1&2 - 12% ticked "Yes"

Year 6 - 70% ticked "Yes"

### Questionnaire For *Trials And Triumphs*

2. *Provide three or four words that describe the themes of the play*

91% correct response

3. *Where do you think Joseph's dreams came from?*

100% mentioned God

5. *What interpretation was put on Joseph's dreams?*

82% correct response

6. *Why was Jesus compared or paralleled with Joseph?*

100% correct response

7. *Was God interacting in Joseph's life of suffering? Briefly justify your answer.*

73% correct response

8. *What message for Australia today did the players suggest from the story of Joseph?*

73% correct response

10. *Can you state something that you learned about God and His ways?*

64% meaningful response

## *Chapter 5*

### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

In order to answer the questions listed on page five as the purpose for this study, this chapter analyses the above data by grouping the relevant responses to match each question.

#### **Material Relevant to Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory**

When asked what Jesus meant when he said "In God's way of doing things the first is often last and the last often becomes first" 66% of the Year one and two's could give no answer or no coherent answer. Two gave an answer that recalled the physical action of the play in that the children on stage where physically moved in sequence from last to first, thus the answer "They swap places". Two felt obligated to arrive at some solution to the query and made up answers with no relevance to the play, such as "He made the tree's first and thought of that last". One answer came close to the meaning but actually reversed Jesus intention by saying, "People being good they become first and bad people become last." So I detected no real understanding of this part of the play by Year one and two's. The Year sixes also failed to answer this question with only three venturing an answer. By saying, "Following the rules" one student was picking up on the dialogue concerning law at that part of the play. "Things can easily turn around" shows a philosophical response. One lone voice

out of forty-two students could say “That other people who aren’t as capable as us get a fair chance”.

Question seven from *Nic’s Easter Tricks* questionnaire concerning being born again results in the same analysis. The majority of the children could make no comment. The Year ones showed their concrete thinking by repeating the content of the scene, such as “I’ll remember things about being a baby”. Solving the problem literally one child suggested “Shrink”. The Year six responses paralleled these answers with the majority making no comment. These forty-two answers supplied me with no evidence that any of the children had understood this part of the drama in the abstract way that the material calls for.

The answers to question eight concerning the use of Caiaphas’ money for the poor or for taxes shows that this sequence was beyond the cognitive level of the majority. Only 28% of the students appear to have followed the dialogue at this point, which pointedly explained the issue of taxes, “If he says it’s not right to pay taxes to Caesar, they’ll get the Roman authorities to charge him with rebellion... If he says it is right to pay taxes to Caesar, the religious authorities will say he’s betraying God because the Roman authorities hate our worship of God”. The abstract concepts of taxes, Caesar and authorities made this section beyond the cognitive level of most of the Primary school children.

In contrast to the above cognitive levels proving problematic to the understanding of abstract material in *Nic’s Easter Tricks*, the Year eleven response to *Trials and Triumphs* demonstrates a far greater level of cognitive development

as would be expected. Question six concerning the parallel between Jesus and Joseph shows the level of understanding achieved by this age in contrast to the junior students. All the answers demonstrate abstract thought in the context of the play with some showing mature thought, such as “They both had to suffer so others could be set free”.

These two sets of answers supplied by Primary and Secondary school students shows clearly the difference in cognitive skills. Even though the complex thoughts were incorporated into drama it did not help the younger students to understand. Their cognitive level of growth hindered their comprehension.

### **Material Relevant to Piaget’s Moral Development Theory**

Three questions from *Nic’s Easter Tricks* were designed to find out if dramatising situations helped children work at a level beyond their moral growth development. The answers to question five concerning which prayer God would listen to, the self righteous or the repentant sinner, shows that the younger children had more difficulty with this than the Year sixes. Although the action of the play and the dialogue attempted to show clearly that God listened to the repentant sinner, 41% of the younger children were influenced by their knowing that one is rewarded for right doing and punished for wrong doing and they therefore concluded that God must listen to the self righteous man.

Question nine of the *Nic’s Easter Tricks* questionnaire showed a clear indication of the developmental change between Year twos and Year sixes. When asked if Jesus did the right thing when he threw the table and money onto the floor 78%

of the younger children said “No” while 72% of the older children said “Yes”.

The younger children show they are moral realists governed by rules and consequences, while the older children have grown to moral reciprocity as they take into account the intentions of Jesus, thus demonstrating Piaget’s stages. I think this illustrates that the different age groups evaluate drama from within their level of development. Again I observe that dramatising the material does not in itself alter the ease or availability of complex thoughts to minds not yet mature enough to comprehend the material.

The Year eleven responses to Joseph’s suffering and God’s part in it (Question seven) shows the development of moral values that occurs through time. Their answers show sophistication in the area of understanding why there is suffering. While younger minds might have equated suffering with punishment and therefore missed the providential nature of Joseph’s suffering, the older minds were able to see that suffering had led to good outcomes like salvation, forgiveness, learning, improvement and purpose. When the Year ones were asked if God was pleased that Jesus was killed on the cross 88% said “No” even though the dialogue had said “Jesus reminded us that it was God’s purpose that he be killed” and the playing of the scene showed Jesus death as a positive. The Year six students gave a 70% “Yes” answer to this question showing the developmental growth that had occurred.

### **Material Relevant to Goldman's Parable Theory**

Question six of the *Nic's Easter Tricks* questionnaire deals with the Parable of the Good Samaritan retold in the play to include Roger Razorblade as the helpful stranger. The Year one response shows that 62% thought Jesus told the story so that we would know to take sick people to hospital, while 71% of the Year six students thought that Jesus told the story so that we would now to do good to people in need. This difference can be understood in developmental terms.

Roger being portrayed as a mohawked, leather and chain wearing bikie of vulgar disposition and course vocabulary acted as a barrier to the younger watchers in equating anything he did with goodness (thus faithfully portraying the emotional response in Jesus day to Samaritans). Hospitals the students know are good, but a badly mannered person they suspect as bad. They therefore could not draw the lesson that Jesus intended from the story. This is exactly the point that Goldman made. To understand parables and miracles requires a level of thought young minds are incapable of.

Interestingly, 27% of the letters from Primary School 3 mentioned Roger as the best part of the show, and I can verify that observing an audience of children watching the show demonstrates how much the performance of Roger Razorblade is enjoyed. He gains the loudest response. Yet, watching from behind I could observe that the younger children would look first at their teachers (for permission) before they laughed at Roger. He was behaving in a "wrong" yet funny way. They were in a dilemma. Their moral sensibility was being stretched yet the fun and atmosphere of the show was in full swing. I

think the questionnaire shows that the resolution of the dilemma was to not equate goodness with Roger. So this section of the play worked well as theatre for the audience, yet the younger children missed the message. This demonstrates to me the crux of my research. Developmental levels of understanding and other variables such as interaction with stage characters are at play together when children watch spiritual theatre. A play written for all ages will be understood at the cognitive level each child has grown to while at the same time the affects of live theatre will be communicating through symbols, character appreciation and story or plot development. In trying to ascertain the effectiveness of spiritual theatre in schools it must be determined to what extent these variables of drama offset or interact with the cognitive level of the audience.

### **Material Relevant to Cole's Theory of Children's Inherent Spirituality**

I was surprised at the consistency of the Year eleven answers to question four. When asked where they thought Joseph's dreams came from they all answered "God" (with two also suggesting Joseph's mind). This either reflects them giving the correct answer based on what the play said or it reflects a spiritual faith. The student that answered "God, of course" was clearly identifying himself or herself as a person with faith. Certainly in answering question ten 64% gave a strong affirmation of knowing something about God and his ways when they answered

with thoughts like, “He works in mysterious ways but wherever he leads you it’s for a purpose in the long run”.

The same point can be made from the Primary school students’ response to the question “What do you think the actors wanted to tell you?” Answers mentioning Jesus or God were made by 76% of the combined classes. This apparent ease to use this type of language may point to the inner spirituality of children that adults would find difficult to emulate.

### **Material Relevant to Erikson’s Theory of Faith Development**

Almost by accident I gained some data demonstrating Erikson’s belief that it is within community that faith is established. Without the following explanation the answers given by the Year eleven’s to question nine would remain puzzling. When asked, “If you enjoyed the show, what gave you a buzz?” 40% said Jeff (a reference to myself). As one of the players quipped, I must have done really well, as I was not even in the play! I did however, as part of the Camp activities, lead a group of students in creating a tableau based on Jesus healing the man lowered down to him through the roof. I noticed as I worked with the students and explained the text and a little of my own spiritual journey that they were deeply involved and appreciative. So I felt a little embarrassed yet thankful that some had said they got a “buzz” from that session. So although their responses had nothing to do with the play itself, they do illustrate well that spirituality and matters of faith are gained by interaction within a group and others mirroring

faith to us. Presenting Christian drama in schools is an excellent vehicle to use in this process.

### **Material Relevant to Campbell's Theory of Symbols and Story**

All the students answered question four, which asked for a description of Nic, Caiaphas and Jesus. Except for the questions that asked for what they liked best from the show or those requiring a tick from a multiple choice, all the other questions had blanks, "I don't know" or inappropriate answers. Why did all the students feel confident to answer this question? From the answers it is obvious they knew who the good and bad guys were and became emotionally involved with them. So Nic is "good" "kind" and "happy", Caiaphas is interpreted as "mean", "evil" and "ugly", while Jesus is "good", "kind" and "nice". Clearly the play communicated at this level of character appreciation equally to all students. I suspect that Campbell would have described the main characters as fulfilling the following roles according to his basic story outline (previously noted at p.29). Nicodemus is the hero being called to a journey of change and spiritual growth. Caiaphas stands in the way and puts him to the test. Jesus gives him magical aid and instruction. If this is the case the students related to the characters in *Nic's Easter Tricks* in the same way children did to *Star Wars*.

### **The Effectiveness of Using Songs**

The answers to question three show that the songs used in *Trials and Triumphs* communicated the themes of dreams, healing and forgiveness. As only one of the performers (who sung the most) was mentioned I received no feedback on

the other songs. This question did not accomplish what I hoped it would and I think a supplementary question was required. However, from this data and the anecdotal response reported earlier the evidence points to the fact that the audience enjoyed and understood the songs and thought they were a good part of the play. More than half of those that communicated what had given them a buzz (question nine) mentioned the music. Only two of the 56 students questioned concerning *Nic's Easter Tricks* said they liked the music best. Of course this does not reflect on the effectiveness or value of the music as the students were asked what they liked best and the best part for the Primary school children was the tricks. However, it does make an interesting contrast with the Secondary students' response of mentioning the music as the best part. Certainly to use music as a vehicle for the message is popular with teenagers.

### **The Performer's Stated Goals Matched to the Student's Response**

As mentioned before I listed the performers statements when I asked them to give me a key word or words that they thought were central to *Nic's Easter Tricks* and what they hoped the children would gain through seeing the play. In what follows I have listed the performers hopes of what they would accomplish with an evaluation of the data gained from 56 students who saw the play.

#### *Understanding the reason of the cross.*

When asked specifically if God was pleased that Jesus was killed on the cross the younger Year students said "No" and the older Year students said "Yes". So this goal was not uniformly met. Eight students said the scene with Jesus on the

cross was what they liked best about the play. Of those eight, two specifically gave an interpretation - "That he spilled his blood for us" and "When Jesus was on the cross and asked others to be forgiven". The data shows that 43% of the students said something meaningful about the cross.

### *Historical understanding of Easter*

Clearly what has just been said above concerning the cross would also fit well for this performer's goal. As well as mentions of the cross and resurrection of Jesus four students did mention Easter specifically. The following two quotes match the performer's hope well: "I learnt that Easter isn't just about Easter eggs and Easter bunnies. It is also about Jesus" and "I loved your Show about Jesus and about Easter and what happened long ago when Jesus was told a lot"

### *Jesus is cool*

As already mentioned, the description of Jesus as kind, good, loving, nice etc as answers to question 4 by all of the students shows that they liked the presentation of Jesus as a juggling, happy wonder worker. Jesus and his antics were mentioned by 25% of the student's as the best part of the play with two students saying, "I loved it when you were on the stilts and doing tricks and making people laugh and giggle" and "Jueso [sic] is cool and nice".

### *Possibility of having a relationship with Jesus and God*

As this performer's statement expresses the fairly abstract concept of relationship the questionnaire was not particularly helpful in ascertaining if the

play impacted in this way. However, 12% of the students did respond with thoughts about belief in Jesus and God as the following quotes show: “I believe in Jesus” and “So you know how to, so you learn about Jesus and God”.

*Come as a child to the Father and Jesus*

Again I found this goal statement was sufficiently complex to not be addressed specifically by any of the students comments. I received no data that matched this particular goal.

*God's love is available to everyone, but it is a different love*

Love was mentioned by 14% of the students although to what degree that they recognised any difference couldn't be ascertained. The following two quotes come close to this performer's hope for the plays effect: “How to love Jesus and God the right way” and “They said that God loves you”.

I think the above analysis of the data reveals that the performers' desires for their work were mainly accomplished. Fifty-seven answers or comments were given by the fifty-six students surveyed that signified their interaction with the play was what the performers were hoping for. As their stated goals were mainly spiritual in nature this demonstrates that religious drama can communicate effectively and impart spiritual truths even to children of young age. Somehow the problems associated with developmental stages and cognitive ability were overcome to some degree by *Nic's Easter Tricks*. Again this points to the conclusion that a spiritual play written for children of different developmental

stages of growth can successfully communicate material of value because they understand the performance in more ways than a language based cognitive test may reveal.



*When I was a child I spoke like a child, thought like a child, reasoned like a child* - Paul the Apostle (1 Corinthians 13:11).

## *Chapter 6*

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

My purpose for doing the above research was to explore how the developmental stages effect children's understanding of spiritual theatre. I have endeavoured to answer the following question, "Are children hindered in their understanding of spiritual concepts presented in theatrical form by the level of development they have attained or do they understand in ways that tests to check cognitive understanding are incapable of verifying?" In answering this question I will discuss the findings of my research in the light of the six questions arising from The Fine Edge's plays that I asked in order to limit and focus this original question. This chapter will then in outline form parallel the material found in chapter 3 concerning my conceptual framework. However, before I do so, I wish to express the following caveat.

#### **Limitations of Findings**

With regards to the data gathered from schools I was both pleased and disappointed. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to have spent time with different classes yet would have loved to have much more time and opportunity to do more data gathering. I was disappointed to have not gained a larger response from the private school's camp that left the data gathered for *Trials and Triumphs* a little thin. I realise that my opinions based on my research data can only be at best a humble pointing in what I hope are helpful directions.

I also harbour reservations concerning the particular questions asked and the use of questionnaires as a method of data gathering. When shown the results of the *Nic's Easter Tricks* questionnaire one of the Directors of The Pine Edge queried my question three: "What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "In God's way of doing things the first is often last and the last often becomes first."?" I was asked: "As this was not by any means the centre or theme of the play and it came and went quickly was it fair that I was checking the students comprehension of it?" My inner response was to be defensive and respond with a "I didn't write the play, I can only ask questions from the material you put in there." What I have done in undertaking this research is to risk finding out that our performances were not doing what we thought and the children were not understanding the material. What I have found out is that the children do understand a lot of the material in their own way. As I have asked questions based on my interest in developmental psychology as well as religion and drama, I have skewed the research and therefore unavoidably the results toward a certain direction. Controlling the variables I have found difficult. All I can state is that I have tried to do it all fairly and honestly with a view to providing data helpful for future writers.

Along the same lines is the difficulty of gaining information from the youngest Year one students. When I showed the headmaster at one of the Primary Schools the questionnaire he said that the children were not that advanced to be able to fill it out. I assured him that we were going to do the reading and scribing so it would not be a problem. Again, this underlined the fact that the play

contained some very difficult thoughts and use of language. The questionnaire simply reflected that and was not responsible for it. However, I am sensitive to the criticism that children this young would have a hard time answering questions to strangers in any situation and that perhaps a questionnaire was too big an undertaking for them. Yet with limited time and resources it was both possible to do and productive of data.

As this year of Honours work closes I perceive that it has been easier to check for cognitive understanding than Jungian insights. When the year began I had the model of checking for Jungian or Cole's type intrinsic spirituality within students that explained the popularity and apparent success of The Edge's spiritual performances. This I have found very difficult to isolate or demonstrate. To some degree this difficulty led me to do the work with the deaf children. However, from long association with deaf people and communities, and having a daughter that has written a thesis on the history of communication among the deaf, I know that the results with the deaf children might well have relevance to only them. This is a complex area to think through. Are deaf children stronger in non-verbal communication and therefore more likely to be constructing meaning without the use of language? If so, then my reasoning based on the results with the deaf school would have to be queried. Certainly my daughter "raised her eyebrows" when I explained why I had done the drama at the deaf school and expressed her reservations as to my concluding anything about hearing children.

## General Findings

The data confirmed the work done by developmental psychologists in regard to the varying stages of growth intellectually and morally in different aged school children. Care therefore needs to be taken in creating theatre from Bible stories that a scene conveys material understandable for the age group. In the past many have tried to make adult material understandable to younger children by only simplifying the language. Developmental psychologists have shown this is not adequate. Results of the questionnaire confirm my belief concerning Primary School children that theatre is just as accountable to this truth as any other discipline of education. Not only must we simplify our language but also the underlining logic and thoughts. The use of John 3 and Nicodemus being told to be born again was not understood by the children in *Nic's Easter Tricks*.

Although the scene was very funny and entertaining and some children reported their amusement few could formulate a statement of its meaning and those that did showed little comprehension.

Using deaf children to dramatise a story without using words in the telling of the story resulted in them play acting scenes where they helped others, either in real life situations or as Jesus. Although the word *help* had not been used the children had watched the story unfolding and organised it into their beings by demonstrating ways of helping. The story acted out had resulted in a social or moral value being expressed. I believe this demonstrates that Christian drama can communicate truths to children even when they may not understand the

words used or appreciate the types of literature from whence the story came (Parable or apocalyptic etc). It also illustrates Courtney's point that theatre changes *how* we think and not just *what* we think (1990, p.26). Having watched Jesus heal they thought of helping when they saw someone in need.

### **Results in the Light of Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory**

I asked, "In the light of Piaget's cognitive development theory to what extent can Primary school children understand the paradoxical statements of Jesus when portrayed in drama?" The results show that the children did not understand the concept behind the statement, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first..". Nor did they understand the issue of being "born again." Three-quarters of the students did not follow the issues raised about taxes being paid and giving to the poor, which underlines the fact that Primary school students have not developed the level of cognitive skills to be able to process paradoxical statements even when they are incorporated dynamically into drama.

### **Results in the Light of Piaget's Moral Development Theory**

I asked, "In the light of Piaget's moral development theory can Primary school children accommodate Jesus' decision to overturn the money tables when this is dramatised and to what extent can they understand statements involving moral judgements?" The results show that the younger Years viewed Jesus' actions of turning over the money changer's tables as wrong, but the older Primary School students saw his actions as permissible. This difference between the younger and older Years at Primary school was repeated concerning God hearing the sinner's

prayer or the self-righteous prayer and whether God was pleased with Jesus' death on the cross. These results have answered one of my original questions originating from Piaget's story of the boys that broke cups. The understanding of moral issues by children is tied to their stage of growth even when the issues are presented as theatre.

### **Results in the Light of Goldman's Parable Theory**

I asked, "Does dramatising the parables help overcome the problems isolated by Goldman concerning Primary school children's comprehension?" The results showed that two thirds of the younger Years did not grasp the meaning of "The Good Samaritan", with the result being reversed for the older students. As mentioned above concerning "The Prayer of the Sinner and Pharisee", the older students grasped the meaning but the younger ones did not. Goldman's concerns are well grounded. Murphy's conclusion regarding parables (1977, p.172) was also confirmed with these results. Dramatising parables does not in itself alter the availability of complex thoughts to minds not yet mature enough to comprehend the material.

### **Results in the Light of Cole's Theory of Children's Inherent Spirituality**

I asked, "Do students bring to religious theatre an already inherent spiritual viewpoint as Coles or Fowler would suggest that help them find meaning in the performance?" Many of the children's responses recorded in the questionnaires and in the "Thank You" letters showed a freedom to express religious beliefs. The plays were not performed to students who came with no previous thought

about spiritual issues. This observation connects with Berryman's work when he showed that children experience existential questions (1991, p.37). They will bring these experiences or questions to a performance. For example, a child fearing death or working through the issues of losing a loved one will be impacted by a play depicting the Easter story and the resurrection event.

### **Results in the Light of Erikson's Theory of Faith Development**

I asked, "Does the community nature of theatre help it to model spiritual truths as Erikson's model of development might suggest?" The response students give to The Fine Edge's performances as shown by the "Thank You" letters and the general positive comments concerning the plays shown in the questionnaires demonstrate that issues of faith can be communicated in the context of community and relationship as Erikson suggested.

Erikson's eight stages of life can be divided into two groups (1963). The first group of four (birth through Primary School) deal with internal values or feelings such as trust and autonomy. The last four (teenage through old age) deal with issues arising from cognitive thought and reflection such as identity crises and isolation. I think this gives a clue to the types of theatre that should be developed for different ages. Thus the Primary ages would focus on the "crises" issues which Erikson listed in the positive as *trust, autonomy, intuition, and industry* and in the negative as *mistrust, shame and doubt, guilt and inferiority*. The Secondary ages would focus on the issues of identity and role confusion and all the sub sections of that period.

Erikson believed that children learn the tradition of the religion in their culture from the institutions in their society. He explains why this is the case by linking his eight stage development model with institutions:

Each successive stage and crises has a special relation to one of the basic elements of society, and this for the simple reason that the human life cycle and man's institutions have evolved together. (1963, p.250)

The Edge has always tried to work hand in hand with the Chaplains and others to ensure that there is a flow on from their performances where possible.

Spiritual theatre should be evaluated in the context of this bigger picture of faith development. A chance meeting while I was at one Primary School with a man who introduced himself as Keith illustrates this point. As coordinator of Scripture teaching in the school he shared with me that the children who had watched the play in other schools he teaches at, had thoroughly enjoyed it and were really pleased to see in the flesh what they had been studying as lessons over the past weeks in Scripture Class.

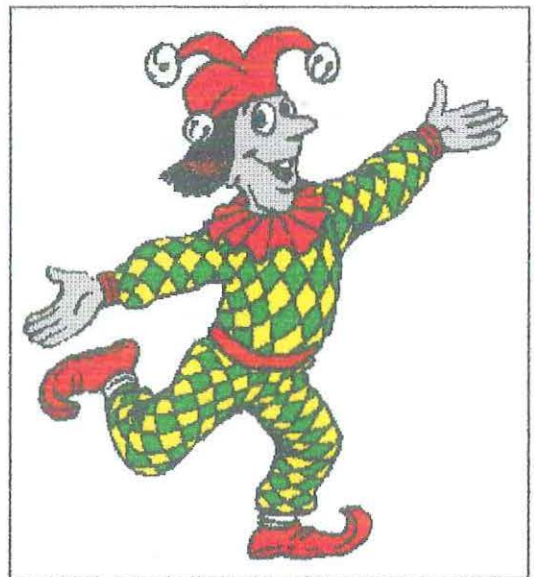
Christian performers demonstrating energy and skills may well be allowing children to observe role models that are a part of a child learning religious faith. Fowler, while writing about teenagers, talks about “significant others” who “mirror” a set of images of self with accompanying meanings that are drawn upon in forming identity and faith (1981, p.154).

### **Results in the Light of Campbell's Theory of Symbols and Story**

I asked, “Does dramatising Scriptural stories impact children because the stories contain within them well established and culturally understood symbols and

images inherent to our natures as theorised by Jung and Campbell?" My research failed to do justice to this question. Only the responses describing Nic, Caiaphas and Jesus touched on this. My analysis of that data suggested that indeed the students had understood the characters through association with known character types. The work done with the deaf children could well point to the effectiveness of narrative and symbols to be agents for spiritual understanding in children regardless of the developmental level attained.

Fowler says in his stage two of children's development of faith that the rise of narrative and the emergence of story, drama and myth in the child's life are ways of finding and giving coherence to experiences (1981, p.149). Children's appreciation of narrative and story line indicates to me that spiritual drama in schools should have a strong plot that is developed early in the play.



*I began to remember certain long-ago moments with children: a remark, a picture drawn, a daytime reverie shared, a dream or nightmare reported - all of them in some fashion having a religious or spiritual theme - Robert Coles.*

## *Chapter 7*

### CONCLUSION

#### **What has been Accomplished?**

Using 'The Fine Edge's performances to research the effects of developmental stages on children's understanding of spiritual theatre has confirmed that the stages do affect what is understood. Although drama can bring situations and conversations to life, if the material is beyond the cognitive understanding of a particular age group's ability, then performing it as theatre will not by-pass their developmental limitations.

The conceptual framework used proved to be helpful and allowed for the data to remain structured. The developmental psychologist's theories helped suggest useful questions to ask the students concerning the performances. The data gathered from the realm of theatre adds to the previous research that has attempted to delineate the stages of growth children progress through.

#### **Future Use**

I hope that what I have learned will find expression in the future production of spiritual theatre as I continue to work with those already involved in this work or help establish new performing arts groups to multiply the present involvement in schools. Feedback of this material to those already working in this field should result in encouragement based on the confirmation of the good already being done and a challenge to improve the suitability of material being presented.

Those involved in church pastoral work with concerns on how youth develop faith should find this thesis a help to discovering the effectiveness of spiritual theatre in communicating issues of faith in a way acceptable and accessible to youth. Perhaps the present lack of support for this ministry will be altered once its potential is understood.

### **Further Research**

Although I searched the Internet and the CD-Rom data base at The University of Western Australia, I failed to locate a similar research project. Eventually I realised that a mass of material can be located by searching for *education and drama*. However, this uncovers papers and essays written concerning the use of drama in the classroom as a teaching strategy or method. Scanning titles of papers being written but not being able to locate actual texts convinced me that further time spent on the Internet could yield a number of research projects similar in interest to this thesis.

### **Implications of the Study**

I hope this study does not imply that I believe Christian performers need to be trained in child psychology or developmental psychology in order to be effective. The plays performed that I have researched did communicate to the children. It is my hope however, to point out that spiritual plays can be made more effective if the truths unearthed by child psychologists are kept in mind. My desire is to see a good product be improved.

Schools and church people can be assured that using Christian performing artists as teachers of spiritual values and truths is fruitful. It is an effective way of teaching all ages and a concrete expression or mirror to faith that presents worthy role models.



*There is a kind of double faith - faith that we can in some measure grasp, clarify and work effectively with the most vital processes of our lives, but also faith that the reality of any such complex process will not be exhaustively contained in our theoretical frameworks - James Fowler.*

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## APPENDIX 1

### S. U. DOCUMENT DESCRIBING “THE FINE EDGE”

#### Proposed Performing Arts Department

Submitted to: Scripture Union Council, June 1997.

Submitted by: Performing Arts Development Committee

#### *Overview of the activities of the Department*

The breakdown of the work undertaken by the department will be according to the following approximate proportions:

50% = work in schools - performance-based and training

25% = work in churches training local people to minister in and through the performing arts as well as performing in church services, youth groups, etc.

25% = other areas (including other SU Departments) working in performance and training with other organisations and agencies like Prison Fellowship, TEAR, denominational youth departments etc.

#### *The 50% work of the performing arts department in schools will include:*

1. The production and performance of drama / music / dance presentations on Biblical themes suitable for: Primary school students, Secondary-school students in a variety of contexts, RE seminars, retreats, camps, Personal and Vocational Education Classes, lunchtime concerts, curriculum-based class work, eg. Health Ed, Drama, etc.
2. Training: The leading of classes/workshops in the creative arts and investigation of the Bible suitable for: Primary school students, Secondary school students in a variety of contexts as above, Teachers/chaplains in-service and training

*The 25% work of the performing arts department in churches will include:*

1. Performance: drama / music / dance presentations on Biblical themes in church services, creative presentation of Bible readings/excerpts within church services, contribution to church youth/ camping programs.
2. Training: The leading of classes/workshops in the creative arts and investigation of the Bible suitable for: youth groups, family groups/camps, specific-interest groups (eg. Drama, circus skills, music, workshopping the Bible)

*The 25% work of the performing arts department in other areas will include:*

1. Contribution to the programs of other departments within SU (eg Warriuka, SUIS, SUPA, Camps, SUFM, HYS).
2. Co-ordination of (groups of) volunteers working on performing arts projects for specific groups, like: Family Missions (eg. "Struth Youth" Touring Group), Prison Fellowship, TEAR, church groups

### **"Fine Edge" Performing Arts Group**

"Fine Edge" Performing Arts Group will be made up of 4 'Associate Performers' working with the Coordinators of the department. These staff will work a 3-day working week with the department (spread over a possible 5 days, one of which will be Sunday to accommodate some of the 25% work in churches they will do). 'Associate Performers' will receive an honorarium on the same scale as the current Short-Term Staff, with an incremental increase in the second and third year of their term in the department should they continue for that time. Two days of the working week will be set aside for them to undertake paid work elsewhere. It is possible that one or more STS applicants could fill the role of 'Associate Performer' and devote the extra 2 days of work-time to other areas of work within the department and/or work with another SU department. It is also possible that a STS person could work within the department but undertake more of a technical support ('roadie') role than a performance involvement.

*How the Group will undertake its work*

It is planned that of the annual 40 weeks of effective fieldwork time possible - equating to 120 working days - 24 days will be spent in rehearsal and preparation of the group's programs and

96 days will be spent in fieldwork along the lines of the breakdown listed earlier (50% in schools; 25% in churches; 25% other). That makes for 48 days in schools' work, of which it is planned 36 days will be spent in High Schools and 12 days in Primary Schools. In Primary Schools this will avail 24-30 performance presentations on Biblical themes (2-3 per day).

In High Schools this will avail up to 72 performance presentations with seminar/discussion follow-up, although this number will likely be smaller due to the number of whole-day and multi-day retreats the group is likely to be involved in. Such retreats do however increase the ministry opportunities of the group because of the increased student contact and variety of program involvement these longer programs make possible. Of the remaining 48 days of fieldwork, it is planned that 24 days will be devoted to work in churches and 24 days devoted to work in other areas.

In churches, it is planned that 12 days will involve performance presentations on Sunday mornings/ evenings/ Friday nights/ etc. Allowing for travel and set-up time and the informal follow-up that often accompanies such visits, this equates to 24 performance presentations on Biblical themes (or 2 per month over a 12-month period). The other 12 days in churches would comprise training programs for church groups, again availing 24 morning/ afternoon/ evening sessions (an average 2 per month over a 12-month period or a number of multi-session workshop series).

The 24 days of fieldwork in other areas will involve a mix of performance presentations and training programs according to the requests/ needs of the groups involved. For instance, from an interdepartmental perspective, if "Fine Edge" was booked by SUPA Arts Camp or a Warriuka Program it may involve both performance and training workshops, or just one of these. Time-wise it may involve a number of days or only a part of one.

The introduction of a Scripture Union Performing Arts Department would assist children, young people and their families to develop a loving relationship with God by presenting Biblical truth in ways that are accessible and culturally appropriate to children, young people and families. It would also foster and promote Bible exploration in creative ways that assist non-literary-based people.

## Appendix 2

## QUESTIONNAIRES

### Questionnaire for *Nic's Easter Tricks*

1. *What did you like best about the play?*
2. *What do you think the actors wanted to tell you?*
3. *What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "In God's way of doing things the first is often last and the last often becomes first"?*
4. *How would you describe the following characters:*  
  
*Nic*  
  
*Caiaphas*  
  
*Jesus*
5. *Put a tick next to the prayer you think God is happy with:*
  - a. *"God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers and evildoers - I do good deeds twice a week, and give money to the poor."*
  - b. *"God, please have mercy on me, I need your help... I do things wrong sometimes."*

6. *Why did Jesus tell the story about Roger Razorblade?*

- i) So that we know to go and do good to people in need?*
- ii) To make sure we do not have bad manners like Roger?*
- iii) To tell us that hospitals are the best place to take sick people?*

7. *When Jesus told Nic he must be born again, how could Nic do that?*

8. *Why may Jesus have been in trouble with Caiaphas' money?*

- i) Because he tricked the money away from Caiaphas?*
- ii) Because he gave money to the poor?*
- iii) Because the Romans would be angry with what Jesus said about taxes?*

9. *Did Jesus do the right thing when he threw the table and money onto the floor?*

*Yes or No.*

10. *Was God pleased that Jesus was killed on the cross?*

*Yes or No.*

## Questionnaire For *Trials And Triumphs*

1. *In a sentence, give the performers some critical feedback.*
2. *Provide three or four words that describe the themes of the play.*
3. *Name one of the characters that sung a song and describe briefly what the song was about.*
4. *Where do you think Joseph's dreams came from?*
5. *What interpretation was put on Joseph's dreams?*
6. *Why was Jesus compared or paralleled with Joseph?*
7. *Was God interacting in Joseph's life of suffering? Briefly justify your answer.*
8. *What message for Australia today did the players suggest from the story of Joseph?*
9. *If you enjoyed the show, what gave you a buzz?*
10. *Can you state something that you learned about God and His ways?*

## *Appendix 3*

### TEXT OF THE PLAY *NIC'S EASTER TRICKS*

## Nic's Easter Tricks

**Narrator:** (v.o. offstage) This is the story of a man who followed a man who said he was the son of Son of God...

(Nicodemus enters followed by children and the towns people)

**Song:** Nic's Easter Tricks

**Jo:** (townsperson) That was Nicodemus. He lets us call him "Nic" for short now. Did you like the tricks he did?

(AUD: Yes!!!!)

**Jo:** Yes, we like them too, Nic uses his tricks to teach people about God.... That's what he is... a teacher about God... But Nic has changed a lot recently... He used to be a hard man - like the other teachers about God... always talking about laws and rules we're not allowed to break. Of course, rules are important to learn and obey but some ways of learning them are a lot more fun than others - like we just saw, aren't they?

**Child:** (running on, tugging at Jo's clothes) Hey Jo! Look out! Caiaphas is coming!

**Jo:** (to audience) Oh-oh - Here comes the High Priest! He's the ultimate teacher about God - and for some reason he's the hardest one of them all... Somehow, people are always getting into trouble with Caiaphas... excuse me (quickly exits)

(Caiaphas enters)

**Caiaphas:** (to audience) Did you see where Nicodemus went?

(AUD: Yes/No!!!)

**Caiaphas:** Well? Answer me! Did you see which way he went?

(AUD: Yes/No!!!)

**Caiaphas:** Well, which way was it?

(AUD: 'That way!!!)

**Caiaphas:** 'That way?

(AUD: Yes/No!!!)

**Caiaphas:** Good (about to leave, stops to ask one more question) One more thing... Did you enjoy his tricks?

(AUD: Yes!!!)

**Caiaphas:** (very angry) I was afraid you'd say that!!! Well you mustn't! They're not good tricks - he does them all wrong - and he uses them to teach people about God. Do you understand me? Do not enjoy seeing his tricks!! Or else... Nicodemus! (exiting and calling out) Nicodemus!!!

(Jo enters and walks past Caiaphas doing a little "Phew!" signal to audience before Caiaphas grabs her and spins her around)

**Caiaphas:** You! Did you see which way Nicodemus went? Did you enjoy his tricks? Do you know where he is?

(Jo shakes head, nods and shrugs shoulders in turn in a somewhat crazy fashion)

**Caiaphas:** Oh you're no help - get out of my way... and don't enjoy his tricks!! (pushes Jo who cowers...)

**Caiaphas:** (as he exits, parting salvo) And don't enjoy his tricks! Tell everyone you see the same... Don't enjoy Nicodemus' tricks...

**Jo:** (picking herself up) (to AUD:) See what I mean!? And this is probably one of his good days... But do you know what started all of this ----- and made Nic change the way he teaches people about God and everything? I should say do you know who it was? Do you?

(AUD: No!!!)

**Child:** Hey Jo! Guess what? Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming!!

**Jo:** Well it looks like you'll be able to see for yourself...

[Jesus' head bobs up over the backstage flats and he waves.]

**Jesus:** Hello!

(AUD: Hello!)

[While this is happening, Disciples run on with kids / get kids from audience]

**Jesus:** God's way of doing things... is a surprising way... (he appears from behind flats and reveals he is on stilts.) In God's way of doing things, the first is

often last and the last often becomes first...

[children in line routine ... ]

**Jesus:** In God's way of doing things, the smallest seed can grow into the biggest of trees where lots of birds and animals can find shelter in its branches...

**Child:** Jesus, why are you so big?

**Jesus:** I'm not that big, I just like having fun (becoming midget routine ...) You see, God's Kingdom - where people know and remember that God is King - is an upside-down Kingdom (he does a headstand/ handstand) where you look at things completely differently... (he waves again to audience) Hello!

(AUD: Hello)

**Jesus:** It's like... what you need is some God-colored spectacles...

[Disciple puts crazy specs on Jesus... Jesus then stands up on stilts again]

**Jesus:** ... to see the world and each other through... (realising the ones he has on)  
Um... I don't think these are the ones...

[Disciple passes Jesus other specs]

**Jesus:** Well, these are closer anyway... For instance, the way God sees things, it's not those who think they're holy and great and wonderfully good in themselves who God is pleased with...

**Disciple 2:** God, I thank you that I am not like other people robbers and evildoers- or even like that tax collector!.. I do good deeds twice a week, and give money to the poor... Thank you God that I am so good...

**Jesus:** ... but those who know they're no good without God's help...

**Disciple 1:** God, please have mercy on me, I need your help... I do things wrong sometimes...

**Jesus:** God's pleased with that kind of attitude, 'cos with that kind of approach God can help people grow - like the tree we saw a minute ago... Now, you've heard people say, "Love your neighbours - or friends (Disciples demonstrate) - and hate your enemies (Disciples demonstrate again)... But the way God sees things, you should love your enemies and forgive those who do wrong to you...

**Nic:** Teacher!

**Jesus:** Yes.

**Nic:** You say we must love our enemies and be kind to those who are not kind to us... but what is love? Is it the gooey feeling you have for someone when you think they're really hubba-hubba-hubba...

**Jesus:** (laughs slightly) Good question.. I'll tell you a story which shows what love is really about - but I'll need your help to tell it. (to Disciples:) Can you get some helpers ready please Simon and Andy

**Disciples:** Sure (they start getting kids and themselves organised)

**Jesus:** 'This story will show again how God's way of seeing things is so often surprising to us... (once everyone is in opening positions)  
A person was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho

(student does mime-walk; others huddle and put on masks)

**Jesus :** When suddenly he was set upon by a band of robbers and thugs...

(masked ones throw black sheet over victim's head; mime beating him up and robbing him)

**Jesus :** ...who beat him... robbed him... and left him for dead by the side of the road.

(masked ones run off with booty; take off masks)

**Jesus :** Just then one of the priestly followers of Caiaphas - one of the chief priests - came walking by... (seeing Nicodemus, addresses him) You can be the chief priest, Nicodemus...

**Nic :** What does the chief priest do, Teacher?

**Jesus :** You tell *us*, Nicodemus, what *would* a chief priest do?

**Nic :** (starts walking past) Well, if I was going to celebrate a holy festival, I would not want to be made unclean by someone who was bleeding and dirty... so I'd have to walk past on the other side of the road...

(Jesus nods in agreement; "Charlene" goes into position behind Jesus)

**Jesus :** Soon after came someone who was clean and neat, and whose breath was always sweet...

(Charlene leans out from behind Jesus and sprays breath freshener into her mouth)

**Jesus :** ...none other than Charlene Churchgoer...

(Charlene dances on, headphones in her ears)

**Jesus :** Now Charlene loved going to church. In fact, she was going to church right at that moment... In fact, she was running late!

**Charlene:** (seeing him lying on the ground) Woh! Hey there, Daddiol What happened to you? (lifting sheet slightly to have a look, still dancing) Oooh! (looks at watch) I'd love to stop and help but I'm running late for a prayer meeting... Hey, but I'll say a prayer for you while I'm there, OK? God bless! (she dances off)

**Jesus :** Not long after this, a registered nurse came walking by...

(Nurse starts walking by; hears groan from victim [v/o])

**Nurse:** (gasp) Are you all right?!?! (lifts black sheet and looks at victim) Yuk! What happened to *you*?

(Victim is heard to groan again [v/o])

**Nurse:** (barking orders) No! Try not to move or say anything... Any sudden movement could lead to an increase in systolic blood pressure to the brain, which in turn could lead to coning of the brain stem and hypothalamus thus causing coma and eventual death... Just relax for a moment...

(Victim groans again [v/o])

**Nurse:** (taking out clipboard and pen) Now, I'll need to see your medicare card before I can take your pulse, have you got it there?

(Victim groans again [v/o])

**Nurse:** Oh don't tell me it's been stolen - that's what they all say... (ticking off on her clipboard) And I can't staunch your bleeding unless you've been AIDS-tested in the last three months, have you?

(Victim groans again [v/o])

**Nurse:** (ticking clipboard again) Oh well, I'm afraid there's not much I can do for you, then, except give you a little something to ease the pain (she gets out the huge needle and primes it) which is probably just as well as the risk for health care professionals of getting sued is greatly increased in unclinical conditions... (lifts sheet and addresses victim) Now, just roll to one side... this won't hurt a bit... Here we go...(she stabs him with the needle)

(Victim's body tenses with the pain and he is heard to scream: "Ouch!" [v/o])

**Nurse:** Well, I'm off on a home visit now, but I'll call an ambulance for you on my way back... Ta-tal (she exits)

**Jesus:** And finally along this dusty road, came a wanderer whom some of you might know. His manner and his clothing notwithstanding, this traveller showed a bit more understanding... Along the way came Roger Razorblade...

**Roger:** (enters, skateboarding and singing) Ease on down, ease on down the road, yeah, yeah, yeah... Ease on down, ease on down (noticing victim) down, down, down, down among the dead men, doo, doo, doo... Oi! What happened to you?! (he looks under sheet) Ergh! Sucked in, chucked out, ripped off, spewin'! Here, let me wash the dirt out of some of your wounds (he spits inside the sheet and rubs victim's arm) Here, can you move? I think you can... (calling to other volunteer) Here, give us a hand... (Roger and volunteer lift victim onto skateboard, singing) He ain't heavy, he's like blubber...

- Jesus:** So Roger took the victim to the nearest hospital...
- Nurse:** Can I help you?
- Roger:** Yeah, I'd like to remit this patience...
- Nurse:** What's his name, please?
- Roger:** Dunno!
- Nurse:** What seems to be the trouble?
- Roger:** Dunno!
- Nurse:** Well, by the looks of him, he's been in a fight or an accident, is that correct?
- Roger:** Dunno!!
- Nurse:** Do you know anything at all about this person you've carried in here?
- Roger:** He's gettin' heavy...
- Nurse:** I see...
- Roger:** I just found him by the side of the road, blood spurtin' out of his mouth, maggots starting to crawl into his wounds...
- Nurse:** (cutting him off) 'Thankyou!' That's all the details I need right now - just put him on the stretcher over there, please?
- Roger:** Sure... (Roger and helper carry victim offstage)
- Nurse:** That's fine, thankyou... well, be assured you friend will be well looked-after. Is that all I can help you with now?
- Roger:** Nup!
- Nurse:** What else do you need to know?
- Roger:** Visitin' hours! (he spits on the floor)
- Nurse:** Oh please! Well if you must come back, come over here and have a look at this visitors' chart...
- Jesus:** (to audience:) So now I ask you... Which one of these showed love to his neighbour?
- All:** (appearing from backstage, singing) Neighbours... everybody needs good neighbours...
- Jesus:** (cutting them off) Wait, wait, wait! I'm just asking them the question...

- All:** Oh, sorry! (they disappear)
- Jesus:** (to aud:) Which one showed love to his neighbour?
- All:** (appearing again, singing) Neighbours...everybody needs...
- Jesus:** Not yet!!
- All:** Sorry! (they disappear again)
- Jesus:** (to audience again) Which one showed love to the victim?
- Audience:** Roger!!!
- Jesus:** So you should all go and do likewise... (turns towards backstage area) *Now* it's time to sing...
- All:** (appearing again, Jesus dances off as they sing) Neighbours... everybody needs good neighbours... with a little understanding... they can make a better *day*...
- Narrator:** (V/O:) Meanwhile, inside the halls of the great temple of Jerusalem...
- Caiaphas:** (to Chief Priest) I'm telling you, he must be stopped!
- Priest:** But how?
- Caiaphas:** I don't know, but between this Jesus fellow and John the Baptist before him, they'll turn all of God's people away from proper temple worship...
- Priest:** Oh Caiaphas, I think you may be overreacting... 'The people know Jesus is just a flash in the pan
- Caiaphas:** Oh do they?
- Priest:** They realise that he's not a real good or holy man
- Caiaphas:** Do you think so?
- Priest:** Yes...
- Caiaphas:** Well, lets just see what these people think... (refers to audience)
- Priest:** OK...
- Caiaphas:** (to audience) Do you think Jesus is a good man??
- (AUD: Yes!!! Caiaphas raises his eyebrows to Chief Priest)
- Caiaphas:** Do you think Jesus is a holy man?
- (AUD: Yes!!!)

- Nic:** (entering and answering him:) Oh yes I do think he is...
- Caiaphas:** (wheeling round to him) Nicodemus!
- Nic:** You called for me Caiaphas?
- Caiaphas:** Yes, Nicodemus, we have reports telling us that you have been supporting this Jesus of Nazareth
- Nic:** Supporting him? In what way?
- Caiaphas:** Well, like a support act, really. It seems that everything he's been doing, you've been copying...
- Nic:** It's funny that's what Jesus says His disciples - His followers - should do - copy the master, and that's what He says He's doing - copying His Father in heaven.
- Caiaphas:** Well he can't do that! How dare he call God - almighty - the maker of heaven and earth, the holy God - his Father. It's blasphemy! Like this healing on God's holy rest day - he's ignoring God's holy rules, and dragging the people down with him - he must be stopped!
- Nic:** But how do you know he's not helping people know and understand God better?
- Caiaphas:** Mmmm?
- Nic:** A...as their Father
- Caiaphas:** You're sounding like one of his followers again Nicodemus - you'd better watch it yourself - or you'll get in the same trouble as he's heading for
- Nic:** And what trouble is that?
- Caiaphas:** Like I said, he'll be stopped sooner or later - just like John the Baptist was...
- Priest:** That's it! Caiaphas - you're a genius!
- Caiaphas:** Why? What did I say?
- Priest:** Just like John the Baptist... He was taken by Herod , the Roman Governor, and killed for us - so to speak - why don't we enlist the help of the Romans in getting rid of Jesus too
- Caiaphas:** Yes, but how?
- Priest:** (thinking) Mmmm...
- Caiaphas:** Got any ideas, Nicodemus?
- Nic:** Why would you want to get rid off a man sent from God?

- Caiaphas:** (indignant/sarcastic) A man sent from God???
- Priest:** (excited) Caiaphas, that's it!
- Caiaphas:** What?!
- Priest:** A man sent from God - the Son of God - that's what he claims to be - God's King on earth - right?
- Caiaphas:** He has been rumoured to say as much
- Priest:** Well, surely he's a threat to Rome then - as a King - even as King of God's people, he is an affront to the Romans' no King but Caesar rule
- Caiaphas:** Good thinking, Zedekiah - I knew you could be relied upon to come up with a plan. What do you think Nicodemus?
- Nic:** I think that if this man is from God then there is no point trying to stop him
- Caiaphas:** (grabbing him by the scruff of the neck) And if he is not from God then we'll be doing him a favour - which you seem to have forgotten how to do
- Nic:** God is the Judge of peoples hearts Caiaphas
- Caiaphas:** Well, make sure you don't bring judgement on yourself, Nicodemus, from your fellow teachers of the law
- Priest:** Caiaphas, lets go and talk to Pontius Pilot, our Roman Governor, and warn him of the possible unrest among the people if this rebel, Jesus, is not brought under control...
- Caiaphas:** (to Nic:) Remember Nicodemus, you've been warned - you're on our side... or you're in trouble (they exit...)
- Nic:** (to aud) So what was I to do? I had to go and ask Jesus about this myself. I went to him after dark so as not to arouse any further suspicion among my fellow teachers of the law... (he exits)

-----JESUS AND NICODEMUS SCENE-----

[Jesus, Disciple 1 and Disciple 2 enter. They carry swags and a lamp. Disciple 2 practises juggling as they walk...]

- Disciple 2:** (yawning) Teacher, it's starting to get dark, and I'm really tired... Can we stop here for the night?
- Jesus :** Sure... (takes juggling balls mid-flight and continues juggling them) Let's set up camp...
- Disciple 1:** It's a good thing you told all the people from that village to go home when you did, Jesus, or they'd probably *still* be wanting you to teach them and heal all their sick people...

- Jesus :** 'These people are like sheep without a shepherd... (Jesus dons a blindfold and tries to keep juggling - but drops the balls...) ...they don't know where they are going... (takes off blindfold and starts picking up the balls)  
We have to help them carry their burdens...
- Disciple 1:** (unrolling swag) Right now my biggest burden is my *feet*, and if I don't rest them soon they'll go on strike... which means I'll have to walk on my hands the whole time! (gives a mock demonstration of that)
- Nic:** (entering cautiously) Excuse me, can I please see the teacher?
- Disciple 1:** Ohh no..... (collapses onto swag)
- Disciple 2:** (to Jesus) Do you want me to get rid of him, Master?
- Jesus:** (looking at Nic) No no... (to Disciples) You rest - I'll talk to him...
- Disciple 1:** Are you sure, Jesus?
- Jesus :** (smiles again) Yes, you rest... (to Nic, beckoning) Welcome, friend... (putting 2 juggling balls over eyes) What are you looking for?
- Nic :** You, Master...
- [Disciples eye Nic suspiciously. He looks back at them momentarily]
- Jesus :** (taking juggling balls from eyes) Yes...
- Nic :** (entering further) Well, Teacher, we know you are a man sent from God, for no ordinary person could perform the miracles you've been doing - like healing all the sick people; feeding thousands of people from just a few loaves of bread and even forgiving people the things they do wrong - all these things you couldn't do if God was not with you... working through you... in a special way...
- Jesus :** So...?
- Nic :** So... some of us still need to be reassured that this new teaching of yours - this new way of relating to God - is from God...
- Jesus :** (starts juggling) You were there the other day - weren't you - when I said it's necessary to rediscover the wonder of a little child?
- Nic :** Yes I was, Teacher... (captivated by juggling) Wow!! How do you do that?
- Jesus :** (keeps juggling) That's a good start, Nicodemus... but for religious teachers like you, you may as well go all the way back to the start and be born all over again...
- Nic :** But, but, but... Jesus - how can a man or woman be born again when they're grown-up? Especially when they're as... grown-up... as I am?

- Jesus :** (drawing alongside him, arm around shoulder) You mean when they're as *old* as you are...
- Nic :** Well, I wasn't actually going to say that...
- Jesus :** Nic - may I call you Nic?
- Nic :** Yes, certainly...
- Jesus :** Nic, think back for a minute to when you were a baby...
- Nic :** Mmm... a little baby...(Nic thinks back... and then starts sucking his thumb)
- Jesus :** Good! You're very good at this... Now, how much did you *know* when you were a baby?
- Nic :** (starts to speak with his thumb in his mouth and then corrects himself)  
No- mu-... excuse me - Not a great deal...
- Jesus :** That's just it, Nic! You need to *forget* you know anything about God from books or teachers or anything... just keep imagining you're that little bitty baby...(refers to disciples who are now snoring quietly in the background) sleeping like a baby... (Jesus grabs a towel from the gear the disciples have brought in and throws it to Nic) Here - this can be your blanky...
- Nic :** I had one just like this, y'know...
- Jesus :** I thought you did... (grabbing a teddy bear from one of the sleeping disciples and throwing it to Nic) Here's a teddy bear too...
- Nic :** Thanks!
- Jesus :** You're welcome. Now keep remembering...
- Nic :** This is what following God is about?
- Jesus :** Not yet - close your eyes again - what happened next?
- Nic :** (remembering) I was sleeping... then I started crying... (he cries like a baby)
- Jesus :** Then what happened?
- Nic :** When I cried, my mother would come and pick me up - she'd cradle me in her arms and sing me a beautiful song...
- Jesus :** Good! What else?
- Nic :** She'd sway from side-to-side, sometimes she'd dance around the room with me gently rocking in her arms... I could hear her heartbeat, I could feel the warmth of being in her arms...
- Jesus :** And what next?

**Nic :** She'd say, "I love you, Nicodemus" (he starts to cry) and I felt a peace and joy so deep in my heart...

**Jesus :** And how else did you feel?

**Nic :** I felt so happy! (starts bawling with the emotion of it all)

**Jesus :** That's it, Nic... (slaps him on the back) Now you're getting to know what it's like to follow God...

**Nic :** (still emotional) Huh?

**Jesus :** Here, I think you need this...(produces a handkerchief for Nic, which turns out to be a magic trick long one...) Mmm - this is a long one... Any way, it's not what we can do for God that counts. It's what God can do - *has done* - and will do for us that we should keep our eyes on...

**Nic :** (shakes his head) Tell me more, Jesus... (he does an enormous blow of his nose with the hanky)

**Jesus :** God wants to cradle you in his arms, sing you a beautiful song, say "Nicodemus, I love you" and dance you through the life he's giving you.

**Nic :** (laughing slightly) I guess I never thought much about the fact that God might *like* me...

**Jesus :** Nicodemus, he's crazy about you.. Why at the very thought of you - the child he created - God wants to let off fireworks (he lets off a popper over Nic's head) God feels that way about all his children...

**Nic :** Oh Jesus, this is so wonderful... I just can't wait to go back and tell the people I have to teach about all these things...

**Jesus :** Good...

**Nic :** Oh, but I also want to go and talk to God for myself about these things... when I pray... it's just not going to be the same now I know God and I can be *friends*...

**Jesus :** Oh more than friends, Nicodemus... when you pray, start with "Our Father..." or better yet, "Daddy! Daddy-God!"

**Nic :** Oh yes, that's wonderful (waving hands) Daddy! Daddy-God! (he dances about and trips over one of the disciples) Oh excuse me - sorry!

[Disciples stir and moan]

**Nic :** Oh but Jesus, I mustn't forget - I also came to warn you...Please be careful! The teachers about God like Caiaphas and the other chief priests are very angry about your teaching and they're plotting to stop you - one way or another...

**Jesus:** As long as it is day we must do the work of Him who sent me. Night is coming when no-one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world

**Nic:** What do you mean "night is coming" - it's still night-time now

**Jesus:** (laughs) I'm speaking in parables Nicodemus... I tell you the truth, unless a seed of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds...

**Nic:** So... are you expecting to die at the hands of the High Priest?

**Jesus:** My heart is troubled but what shall I say? "Father - get me out of this?" No, this is why I came in the first place to this hour... What I will say is, "Father, put your glory on display!"

**God v/o:** I have, through you, and I will again...

**Nic:** (amazed) Whoh! Who said that?

**Jesus:** (smiling knowingly) Sometimes my Father speaks to me in audible ways...

**Disciple 1:** (waking up) Was that thunder? is there going to be a storm?

(Disciple 2 yawns and stretches)

**Jesus:** (winks at Nic) It wasn't thunder, but there is going to be a storm

**Disciple 2:** Eh? How can there be? There's not a cloud in the sky...

**Jesus:** The storm will be in all of our hearts, come let's get ready to travel... We're going to Jerusalem...

**Disciple 1:** (incredulous but trying to reason) Jerusalem?... Teacher, everyone knows the religious authorities there are out to kill you... and yet, your going back there?

**Jesus:** (smiling patiently) I was just telling Nicodemus here...

**Disciple 1:** (to Nicodemus, welcoming) Gooday!

**Nic:** Hello

(Nic shakes hands with Disciple 2, also, as he does so, Disciple 1 realises they're wearing their boxer shorts and becomes mildly embarrassed)

**Disciple 1:** Oops! Sorry

**Disciple 2:** We'll just get our duds on... (they put their robes on)

**Nic:** That's fine...

**Jesus:** Anyway, are there not 12 hours of daylight?

**Disciple 1:** Yep - sun's rising now...

**Jesus:** A person who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees the worlds light...  
It is when he walks by night that he stumbles (Disciple 1 stumbles getting pants on, hat fallen over eyes, Jesus helps balance Disciple 1) because he has no light...

( Caiaphas (in disguise) enters with some townspeople)

**Jo:** 'There he is! (points to Jesus)

**Nic:** (gasps in recognition of him) Caiaphas! (pulls his own hood over his head)

**Caiaphas:** Ah Jesus! We know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth...

**Nic:** (Flabbergasted) But-bu-bu-bu-bu-bu!

(Disciple 1 places a hand on his shoulder to calm him)

**Nic:** (about Caiaphas:) What a hypocrite!!

**Disciple 1:** Don't worry, Jesus won't be fooled...

**Caiaphas:** You aren't swayed by peoples opinions, because you pay no attention to their status or office

**Jesus:** Well of course, people are not always what they seem to be on the outside... are they?

**Caiaphas:** (laughs nervously) Tell us, teacher, is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

**Nic:** (realising what's going on, to Disciple 1) He's trying to get Jesus in trouble with the Roman authorities...

**Disciple 1:** Relax! Jesus knows what he's doing...

**Jesus:** Show me the coin used for paying the tax...

**Caiaphas:** (reaching into his pouch for a coin) There you are

**Nic:** That's some of the money he's got, ripping off people with temple taxes...

**Jesus:** (having a bit of a joke, using some sleight of hand) Mmmm, this one's a bit tricky... I might need to check another (he passes the coin surreptitiously to Disciple 2)

( Caiaphas passes Jesus another coin )

**Jesus:** (still using sleight of hand) Mmmm... slippery little fellows aren't they?

(looking carefully at the coin) I'd better check that this one's the same as all the other ones you've got there...

(Caiaphas starts handing over all the coins to Jesus)

**Jesus:** (to Disciple 2) Check they're all the same...

**Nic:** (to Disciple 1) But you don't understand, they've got him trapped... If he says it's not right to pay taxes to Caesar, they'll get the Roman authorities to charge him with rebellion... If he says it is right to pay taxes to Caesar, the religious authorities will say he's betraying God because the Roman authorities hate our worship of God...

**Disciple 1:** (realising the gravity of the situation) Ah! Oh-oh...

**Disciple 2:** (having finished checking the coins) They're all the same, Master...

**Jesus:** You're sure - they're all the same?

**Disciple 2:** Yes master...

**Jesus:** (bringing Disciple 2 forward with all the coins in his hands) Good.  
(to Caiaphas, hooding up the coins before him) This engraving - who does it look like? And whose name is on it?

**Caiaphas:** Caesar's...

**Jesus:** (tossing the coin to Caiaphas in a tricky way) then give to Caesar what is Caesar's... and give to God (he holds up Disciple 2's hands) what is God's.  
(to Disciple 2) Distribute this money among the poor villages here so that they can pay their temple tax

(Disciple 2 goes and discreetly hands out coins to audience members)

**Caiaphas:** (amazed, confused and slightly outraged) But - !

**Jesus:** (holding up the pouch Caiaphas is carrying) Does this not say temple taxes? That's exactly where the money will be going...

**Caiaphas:** (speechless) But... But... (he looks at his empty pouch, the solitary coin and the money being distributed)

**Jesus:** (to disciples) Come let us go to Jerusalem

**Disciple 1:** (to Nic) See, I told you he'd manage it no problem...

**Nic:** (pumping the air with his fist) Yes!! Oops (checks to see if his hood is still on sufficiently)

(Jesus and his disciples exit)

**Caiaphas:** (to Jesus who has left) Don't think you'll get away with this Jesus... You're

still a wanted man... And when you turn up at the Passover Festival in Jerusalem, they'll be a crowd of Roman soldiers there to greet you... (he exits)

(Jo and Disciple 2 enter)

**Disciple 2:** (to audience) When we got to Jerusalem, there wasn't a crowd of soldiers waiting for us - at least not at first - there was a crowd of people waving palm branches, coats, anything they could wave - to welcome us... Everyone was laughing and dancing and singing, thanking God that he'd sent Jesus to be their King... that Jesus would be a King who'd rule in love, not in fear, hardness or tyranny... everyone just wanted to sing and celebrate... even old Nicodemus came out to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem...

(Song: JESUS THE PRINCE OF PEACE)

**Disciple 2:** Boy that was an exciting day! But the rest of that week - during the Passover Festival - was the most confusing of our lives... You see, many people thought that Jesus was going to gather an army, claim kingship of But Jesus just went to the temple and taught people about God... One time he cleared out all the money - changes and temple tax-gatherers from the outer court of the temple... He got really angry and said;

**Jesus v/o:** It is written in Gods teaching "My house will be a house of prayer" but you - you have made it a den of robbers...

**Disciple 2:** We know right then that Jesus had sealed his fate - at least as far as Caiaphas and the other teachers about God were concerned... and though we tried to warn Jesus, he just kept saying it was all part of God's plan.

(Jesus and Disciples enter)

**Jesus:** I know this is difficult for you to understand right now, but God had decided to show how much he hates people hurting each other, but how willing he is to forgive people when they do wrong against each other and against him...

**Disciple 1:** How Lord?

**Jesus:** God had decided that I - his son - must be killed and after three days rise again...

**Disciple 1:** Lord, this can't be right - you must have made a mistake, surely you don't have to die...

**Jesus:** (turning away) Away from me tempter! (turning back to disciple) Not you, my friend, but your words - were the words of God's enemy - the Devil, the tempter, the one who deals in darkness (he turns to them all) 'The light must overcome the darkness. Come let's eat the Passover meal (they prepare for meal)

**Disciple 2:** (to aud) We didn't know it at the time, but that would be the last meal Jesus would eat before his death... even as we shared it, he was still teaching

us how he would keep God's love alive inside us and how he wanted to keep sharing God's love with the world through us...

**Jesus:** (taking bread) 'This is like my body (He breaks it and shares it out) It's broken and it's shared out for everyone... Eat up - God wants us to be filled... (taking the cup) 'This is like my blood... (he pours it into cups for them) It's being poured out to be shared around... (passing cups around when all are poured) so that that which gives me life - following God - will give you life - following me... (he raises his cup) (Cheers! (they all drink) Come now, let's get ready to leave - the one who betrays me has done his work...

( Music over )

**Disciple 2:** That night Jesus took us to his favourite place to pray. It was a beautiful garden, cool and quiet in the late evening. But it was just like Jesus said: Night came - and the darkness with it - a group of soldiers sent by Caiaphas to arrest Jesus turned - led to us by one of Jesus' own followers. Some of us started to fight back but Jesus reminded us that it was God's purpose that he be killed. We still couldn't believe it but it was happening... There was a mockery of a trial - in the middle of the night.. and what was crazy was that the Roman Governors didn't really want to have Jesus killed, they knew he'd done nothing wrong... that the other teachers about God were nervous and jealous and couldn't deal with Jesus' honesty... But Caiaphas and his fellow religious leaders said the Roman rulers would be betraying their King Caesar if they let the people call Jesus king - so then the Roman rulers started getting nervous... They eventually buckled and signed the warrant to have Jesus executed by crucifixion -

( Sound effects - hammer and nails )

**Disciple 2:** The amazing thing about Jesus being nailed to a cross to die in a state of public humiliation was not the barbaric and cruel method of torture and execution that it was - but the fact that Jesus went against the popular practise of using all his final energy to call his executioners rotten names, to tell everyone what he thought was wrong with the world and to curse those who were having him killed... No, not Jesus - instead he prayed for them...

**Jesus:** Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing!

**Disciple 2:** In a way, he was praying for all of us - 'cos we all do things wrong sometimes... and we all need forgiveness... and to learn how to forgive others... After they'd finished nailing Jesus to the cross, the soldiers lifted him up and dropped the base of the cross into a large hole dug especially for that purpose. The impact sent shock waves throughout his body, dislocating many of his bones. Many people teased and taunted him - including the religious leaders

**Caiaphas:** Surely if he is the son of God he can save himself

**Disciple 2:** He hung there in agony for six hours

**Jesus:** Father, into your hands I commit my spirit

**Disciple 2:** After the six hours, Jesus said a final prayer, breathed in his last, taking upon himself the punishment for all the wrong done in the world... although we didn't realise it at the time, we just thought how meaningless it was - but then, all wrongdoing towards each other seems meaningless when it's looked at closely... When it came time to take Jesus from the cross, Nicodemus was there - with a friend of his - another teacher who had become one of Jesus' followers... Joseph of Arimathea... They took the body down from the cross, covered it with expensive perfumes and oils, wrapped it and laid it in a tomb that Joseph had bought for members of his family... He was happy to give it as a gift so Jesus could have a decent burial...but because Caiaphas still didn't trust Jesus - even when he was dead - or any of us his followers - even though we were in hiding - he had some guards posted at the tomb to make sure nothing unexpected happened...

(Caiaphas sets volunteer guards in position)

But that's when the greatest Easter trick of all happened... Some time during the night, the stone miraculously rolled back from the tomb... and there was a bright light... Was it an angel?? The body of Jesus was gone! He had risen from the dead, just like he'd said he would. The guards were so afraid they ran away, petrified...

(guards run off)

At dawn that morning, one of Jesus' most faithful followers, Mary Magdalene, came to the tomb to pay her last respects to Jesus... but when she saw the stone rolled away and that the tomb was empty, she became distressed...

**Mary:** What have they done with the body of Jesus?

**Disciple 2:** As she looked around, Mary saw someone she thought was the gardener...

**Mary:** (to "gardener") Sir, if you have taken my Lord away from here, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him...

**Disciple 2:** It wasn't the gardener, though, it was you-know-who playing another Easter trick... (Jesus removes hood)

**Jesus:** Mary!

**Mary:** Jesus?!? (she turns to tell the others who aren't there, looks back at the tomb, looks back at Jesus and runs into his arms, dropping her basket of rose petals)

**Jesus:** (laughing) Mary it's good to see you too, Mary, Mary, let go of me... Mary I can't breathe... (finally extricates himself from Mary) Mary - I can't stay with you forever - 'cos I'm going back to God - our Father - your Father, the Father of everyone who'll come to him as a child - and I want you and all the other followers to tell people the Good News - that God's love is available to everyone who's willing to receive it and share it... so go - go and tell them to go to Galilee - where I'll meet with them in a few days' time... Go... (she exits)

(Caiaphas runs on; puffed and exhausted)

**Caiaphas:** What's going on here? Where's Jesus' body? What happened to the guards?

**Jesus:** (winks at audience, puts his hood back on and starts juggling) Who are you looking for?

**Caiaphas:** Jesus! I mean his body - he's dead!

**Jesus:** Oh? Really?

**Caiaphas:** Where are the guards who were guarding this tomb?

**Jesus:** Guards? Oh yes - there were guards... um - they ran away... when the tomb blew open...

**Caiaphas:** The tomb blew open??

**Jesus:** Oh - just the rock in the doorway. There's a lot of energy given off when someone rises from the dead you know...

**Caiaphas:** Yes I'm sure - what?! Rises from the dead? That - that - that's impossible. Don't make jokes like that..

**Jesus:** (winks at audience again) Well, you might think it was a joke - but if you ask me it was deadly serious...

**Caiaphas:** Wait a minute, you look familiar...

**Jesus:** Only for those who have eyes to see... (he takes off his hat again)

**Caiaphas:** Impossible - ah - ah! ahh! Guards - Guards, you've gotta help me...

(Jesus laughs, does some more juggling, winks and waves to audience and exits)

**Disciple 2:** Jesus did a few other tricks on us all before going back to His Father in heaven. One time he made a surprise breakfast for us all on the beach - after we'd been fishing all night and caught nothing... But even when he went back to his Father in heaven, he promised he'd return in a pretty specky way one day, and in the meantime he'd send his Holy Spirit to be with us - inside us in fact - like the bread he gave us at his last supper - and doing tricky things to draw us closer to Jesus, make us more like Him and teach us how to receive and share God's love and forgiveness...  
Why - he may even be doing some tricky things in your life today...

(Reprise "Nic's Easter Tricks" song with new lyrics: "Jesus is alive". See following:)

Jesus is alive  
Come along and check it out  
On his love we will thrive  
It's what it's all about  
Jesus is the King  
And He rules here in our hearts  
His love makes us sing and dance

( All bow and exit )

THE END

## *Appendix 4*

### TEXT OF THE PLAY *TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS*

## "TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS"

### STRENGTH TO LOVE

### RECONCILIATION

#### "The story of Joseph"

*"Until Your Love Broke Through"* - By Keith Green

(sung by Coralie)

*Like a foolish dreamer  
'Tryin' to build a highway  
To the sky  
All my hopes would come tumblin' down  
And I never knew just why  
Until today when You pulled away  
The clouds that hung  
Like curtains on my eyes  
Well I've been blind  
All these wasted years  
When I thought I was so wise  
But then you took me by surprise*

#### CHORUS

*Like wakin' up from the longest dream  
How real it seemed  
Until your love broke through  
I've been lost in a fantasy  
That blinded me  
Until your love broke through*

*All my life I've been searchin'  
For that crazy missin' part  
And with one touch  
You just rolled away the stone  
That held my heart  
And now I see that the answer  
Was as easy as just askin' You in  
And I am so sure  
I could never doubt  
Your gentle touch again  
It's like the power of the wind  
(Chorus)*

(music continues)

(The stage is set with a table and a cup on it. A long piece of material is also draped over the table)

**Narrator:** My first memory of the word "reconciliation" is that it was a really big word...

(A man and a woman begin approaching each other from opposite sides of the stage in slow motion, a child plays with the long piece of cloth between them also in slow motion. As she sees their expressions, she moves back fearfully)

**N:** ...and it was something that married people needed to have in order get back together - if they had split up for some reason...

(The man tips the table over, spilling the cup and it's liquid all over the place, including all over the child's face. This signifies the break from slow motion into real time and the cacophony of noise that accompanies the argument)

**Husband:** You don't know anything I'm trying to say to you do you? Do you?? I can't take this I'm outa here.

**Wife:** Why can't you understand what this is doing to us? (she's crying)

(Child screaming, covers her face with cloth to block out what she sees. Man exits. Woman cries and cuddles child. Freeze.)

(music changes)

**N:** My first memory of the story of Joseph was of the beautiful coat his father gave him...

(Upstage, Jacob gives Joseph his coat and helps him try it on. Downstage, Mother and child break freeze and child starts walking around with long piece of material as if it were a coat.)

**N:** I often imagined that I wore that coat and that my father loved me that much... But that wasn't the only reason I felt I could identify with Joseph... he was also a dreamer... he had dreams of glory and of fulfilment, of wholeness, of oneness, just like me... and he would emerge from the deep pit of his suffering to know the power of reconciliation in his life

**Song:**

*Dreaming ... of days to come  
when we'll be one  
I'm screaming... as nightmares fall  
Is that you who calls my name  
I cannot see...  
Is the dream just me?  
Am I just making it up?  
Or am I dreaming... of days to come  
when we'll be one  
we'll be free then... no need to fight  
Throughout the night... we'll see his light...*

(Music continues, becomes dream theme, N wafts sheet over Joseph)

**Joseph:** (waking up) I've had a dream!

**Levi:** Oh-oh- here comes Joseph...

**J:** (getting up) I've had a dream - listen to this dream I had...(running to them;) Brothers! Gather round, here's my dream: We were out in the field, tying up bundles of wheat. Suddenly my bundle stood up and your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it...

(Pause...silence you could cut with a knife...)

**J:** (still excited) Well...what do you think?

**Levi:** Do you really think you are going to rule over us?? (walks off)

**Simeon:** (with a fake forced laugh) Get a life, Joseph...

(Joseph stands there, dumbfounded that they weren't impressed)

**N:** I could really relate to Joseph... he knew what it was like not to get on too well with his immediate family... but he loved to dream... and he kept wondering if it might be God talking to him through those dreams...

(Dream theme again, Brothers 1&2 mutter to themselves about dumb sheep and dumb Joseph; Joseph remains frozen)

**J:** (breaking freeze) Brothers! Brothers wait up. I've had another dream I want to tell you about it..

**L:** (sarcasm oozing) Oh great! A dream from Joseph!

**S:** Oh goody...Do tell...

**J:** Well look, I'm not making these up - these are real dreams I've had...

**S:** Go on, Joseph

**L:** (dryly) We're dying to hear it...

**J:** Well in this dream, there was the sun and the moon and eleven stars around them...

**L:** Wait! Wait! Wait! Simeon, how many brothers does Joseph have - altogether?

**S:** (feigning counting) Um...eleven!

**L:** Oooh! Symbolic, isn't it?

**J:** Are you listening?

**S:** Joseph, we're all ears!

**J:** So there's the sun and the moon and the eleven stars...

**L:** And where are you Joseph?

**J:** I'm in the middle of them

**L:** Oh (nodding) why am I not surprised?!

**S:** And don't tell us - the sun, the moon and the stars all bowed down to you?

**J:** (genuinely surprised) How did you know?

**L:** That's it!

**S:** Let's get him!

**L:** You've had it this time Joseph! (they grab Joseph and drag him away)

**S:** We are sick to death of your stupid dreams!

**L:** We don't want you to rule over us!

**S:** In fact, we don't even want you for our own stinkin' brother-

**L:** - any more!

**S & L:** Goodbye! (with that they throw Jesus into the pit)

**J:** Aaaah!

**S & L & J:** (landing SFX) Thud! (or similar)

**N:** There in the bottom of that dry well - no water even to splash his face - Joseph faced the loneliness, the despair that comes with betrayal. I bet Joseph asked God some of the questions I've put to God at times - maybe you've asked them as well... I know Jesus did, years later in the garden of Gethsemene...

(Angel offers Jesus the cup of suffering, musical intro begins)

**Jesus:** Lord and Father, I don't want to drink this... If it is possible take this cup of suffering from me...

**Joseph Jesus and N (singing):**

*Jesus: Oh God... Where are the dreams you sent?*  
*N: Oh God... I can't believe this was meant to happen...*  
*Joseph: Oh God... is this some kind of punishment?*  
*All: Oh God... why are you so silent?*

N: *Oh God...*  
 Jesus: *why are you...*  
 Joseph: *so silent?*  
 Alk: *You're so silent when...*  
 Jesus: *you're surrounded by suffering...*  
 N: *You have the power to change it...*  
 Joseph: *so often you don't*  
 Alk: *You're so silent when...*  
 N: *your truth is ridiculed*  
 Jesus: *Corruption reigns among those who rule*  
 Joseph: *Why don't you act?*  
 Alk: *Oh God why are you so silent.....*  
 N: *Oh God.*  
 Joseph: *please save me....*  
 Jesus: *from this silence*

**Jesus:** (calling out) Father, not my will but yours be done!

**J:** (spoken) Brothers!! Are you still there? We can call all this a joke! I promise I won't repeat it to Father... Father...

(music continues)

**N:** I love that part in the story of Jesus where we're told what happens next..  
 (reads) "An angel from heaven appeared to Jesus (in the garden) and strengthened him..." helped him prepare for that cup of suffering he'd drink at his crucifixion - following the betrayal by his friend, being sold into death...

(Angel leads Jesus offstage)

**N:** Following Joseph's betrayal by his brothers - being thrown down a dry well - he was sold into slavery by them, handed over to some Midianite traders and taken by them to the slave-pits of Egypt... an already inhuman place - where Hebrews just happened to be a hated race...

(Joseph is bound in chains and led forward by the Midianite)

**Midianite:** What am I bid for this healthy young workhorse? (slaps Joseph on the face)

(Potiphar comes forward and buys Joseph from the Midianite)

**N:** As Joseph was bought and sold he must surely still have been wondering where God was in the whole saga of his betrayal and now sale into a foreign land

(Potiphar starts removing Joseph's chains)

**N:** However, God did begin to show His hand by blessing the work Joseph did under Potiphar, his Egyptian owner who was also the king's official in charge of the palace guard...

**Potiphar:** (singing)

*I hey Joseph! I like your work...  
You always do what you're asked and you never shirk  
You're not afraid to get down in amongst the dirt  
I think what I paid for you isn't what you're worth  
I think God is blessing me somehow through your work*

*Hey Joseph, I trust you now  
I want to make you the boss over my whole house  
Just stick pretty close to me and I'll show you how  
I think God is blessing you by the sweat of your brow  
I think that because of you God is blessing this house  
I want to put you in charge of my whole house  
I think God is blessing you but I don't know how*

(spoken) So Joseph, you're in charge... I must go away for a few days now... Remember I trust you...

(music continues)

**N:** The only thing better than getting a real job - even getting a promotion - is having a job where you feel like God really wants you to be there, that he has a plan and a purpose for you being there, that he has somehow called you into that situation... to improve it... Maybe Joseph got a bit carried away with that at times... but that experience goes a long way to reconciling the competing voices in your soul, to enabling you to forgive those who let you down - even betray you - along the way... I certainly felt that sense of Gods call once or twice... but more about that later... Suffice it to say that Joseph no doubt enjoyed that sense of integrity and interaction too... until...

**Pot's Wife:** (entering) Joseph! Oh Joseph!

(Joseph gulps... and starts to leave)

**Wife:** (catching Joseph by the arm) Don't run away Joseph... why are you so shy, such a big manly brute as you are...

**J:** I have work to do Mrs Potiphar...(he makes to leave again)

**P's Wife:** (flashing angrily) My husband is your boss and in his absence I'll tell you what you should do... (turning sweet again) And right now that work is to be with me (she bats her eyelids at him)... Kiss me Joseph you fool! (she puckers up and puts her face next to his and his arm around her)

**J:** (drawing back) With respect Mrs Potiphar, your husband has entrusted everything in his household to my care. He trusts me and has held nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I then do such a wicked thing and sin against God?

**P's wife:** (turning dark again) Joseph... I want you... and I always get what I want... (she clasps his collar)

**J:** (turning and running out) I'm sorry but I must leave (he runs out, leaving his collar in her hands)

**P's wife:** (shrugging) 'Then Joseph, I'll just have to get you another way... (she muses her hair) Help! Help! Come quickly! Someone! Anyone! Joseph tried to rape me! Help!

**N:** How would we have responded? Is that the kind of faithfulness to God we display? And yet what was Joseph's rewarded for his faithfulness? In the short term at least it seemed as though he was punished for it. In chains again... Betrayed again... In jail for a crime he didn't commit... Just like Jesus many years later...

("Oh God Why Are You So Silent" music is reprised behind this next section. Jesus is on the other side of the stage, the soldier covers him with the black sheet and the crown of thorns, then picks up a stick to hit him)

**Soldier:** Come on Jesus - Holy Prophet and King - (soldier does a mock bow) Prophecy who hit you!

(soldier beats Jesus with a stick then moves back and hits him some more in slow motion. On the other side of the stage, Potiphar has finished putting the chains on Joseph...)

**Potiphar:** (seemingly friendly) Joseph, I'm sorry it had to end like this...

(Potiphar punches Joseph hard in the stomach, he doubles up in pain, grimacing. Soldier 2 comes and whispers to soldier, breaking it into real time)

**Soldier:** Ah Jesus! You've had a reprieve... the governor has ordered it's time to take you out... to be crucified... (the soldiers drag him up and lead him out) Come on dead man!

**N:** How often do we think it's the end of the story when it's not... God loves surprise endings... Actually he loves surprise middles and surprise beginnings as well... but here, it could have been the end of the story for both Jesus and Joseph, yet for both of them it was oh-so-far from it...

**Warden:** (to Joseph, untying his chains) I'm giving you a reprieve Joseph... (Joseph looks shocked) ...Oh I can't release you... only the King can do that... but I see you're a trustworthy man - I've been keeping my eye on you... so, as a trial thing - so to speak - get it? Trial? anyway, I'm putting you in charge of this section of the prison - see how you do... and if you still prove trustworthy you might just get a promotion... being in charge of that section of the prison as well!!! Anyway we'll see, you get the prisoners up for their morning inspection and I'll be round directly...

(Warden hands Joseph a scroll, directs him towards the audience and exits. Joseph starts hassling out members of the audience, as only he can do!)

**N:** (by some way of explanation) Joseph brought his trademark enthusiasm to this new role as well... and God was with him, showing him kindness and granting

him favour in the eyes of the Prison Warden... Joseph was put in charge of the whole prison and some time later, two of the King's own attendants were brought to the prison... One was the King's cupbearer - or personal servant - the other was the King's baker...

(Joseph returns from audience as cupbearer and baker lie down to sleep under prison blankets...)

(Dream theme music)

**Cupbearer:** (sitting up suddenly) I've had a dream!

**Baker:** Really?... Me too!

**C:** Mine was so weird

**B:** (really spacey) Yeah... mine too...

**C:** Well, what was your dream about?

**B:** (describing it) On my head were three baskets of bread. In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharoah, but the birds came down and were eating them out of the basket on the top of my head...

**C:** (looking at her dubiously) You're right... that's weird...

**B:** Well what was your dream about, smarty cupbearer-pants?

**C:** Well in my dream I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it was bundled, it blossomed, into clusters of ripe grapes. This cup of Pharoah's was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into the cup and put the cup into Pharoah's hand...

**B:** (still spaced) Wow! Symbolic man!

**C:** What do you think they mean?

**B:** Probably that we had indigestion overnight - caused by the disgusting food they feed us in this joint...

**Joseph:** (who has been listening to the conversation) Are you talking about dreams?

**B:** (only slightly facetiously) No -we're talking about ice-creams... got any?

**C:** (politely) Please excuse my friends facetiousness and pre-occupation with food... In answer to your question, yes - we've both had dreams which have left us befuddled...

**J:** Does not the interpretation of dreams belong to God?

**B:** Dunno - never thought about it.

**C:** (nudging B) Well... can you tell us God's interpretation?

**J:** 'Tell me your dreams...

(music accompanies the mimed actions of B and C retelling their dreams simultaneously.  
They finish, and Joseph ponders thoughtfully for a moment..)

**Joseph:** Cupbearer, this is what your dream means... The three branches you saw are three days. Within three days Pharoah will lift up your head and restore you to your position as chief cupbearer.

**C:** (excitement mounting) Really??

**J:** Yes... but listen, when all goes well with you, would you remember me and show me kindness; mention me to the Pharoah and see if you can get me out of this prison... for I serve time for a crime I did not commit...

**B:** (half under his breath) That's what they all say!

**C:** (nudging baker again) Certainly I will, Joseph wasn't it?

**J:** That's right... Joseph

**B:** (somewhat overfamiliarly slaps him on the back) Well Joey boy, what's my message?

**J:** This is what your dream means baker... The three baskets you saw are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift you off your head like the birds lifted bread out of that basket. And the birds of the air will eat away at your flesh...

**B:** (thoughtfully) Ohhh... (the penny drops, she goes straight for his throat) What?!? I want my money back! What a rip-off! You're a con artist!

**J:** (clarifying) Um, I didn't ask you for any money.

**B:** (stopped in tracks) Oh... (shakes him again)... well it's still a lousy interpretation

(C sidles over to B and hugs her)

**B:** (to C) What are you doing?

**C:** It's been nice knowing you

**B:** (Indignant) Don't you start! Just because you got a good interpretation. How do you know he didn't mix them up and you're not going to be in for it in three days?....

(executioner comes and taps her on the shoulder)

**B:** What do you want? (recognises him, he beckons her) You see, this'll be the King calling me to him to tell me he's changed his mind (to executioner hopefully) Isn't it? (executioner shakes his head) Well don't worry! I'll be

back! I'll head off this whole misunderstanding! Oops! Did I say "head off" - I mean, I'll find a short cut to clarity on this issue... Oops! I mean, not so much "short cut" as making sure hostilities don't come to a head... Oops! I mean I don't want everything to come to a head - mine or anybody else's for that matter...

(they have gone)

- Warden:** It is hereby decreed by King's ordinance that the chief cupbearer will be reinstated to the office of personal servant to the king. The former baker, or parts thereof, will be on display at the King's execution block as a timely reminder to those who complain about the dough they're getting.
- N2:** The baker was executed at the Kings command and the cupbearer was reinstated to the office of personal servant to the King - just as Joseph had interpreted from the dreams... However, the Cupbearer did not remember Joseph... He forgot him...
- N:** The Cupbearer is surely the ultimate representative of every one of us who's ever promised to do something and then promptly forgotten all about it... For Joseph languished in that prison for a further two whole years following the Cupbearer's omission. Yet God's call was visited with divine communication in the form of some more dreams.
- C:** (stands at side, waiting patiently)
- K:** (walking very slowly, his head covered by his sheet, he moans and groans repeatedly...) Oh I hate Mondayth (the Pharoah speaks with a broad lisp and wet "r")
- C:** (entering, holding a glass of orange juice) It's Tuesday morning your Majesty, Good morning!
- K:** Well I hate Tuethdyth ath well... (finally uncovering his head to reveal a lot of Pharoah make-up) And don't "Good morning me", you obthequiouth fop...
- C:** (puts orange juice down and starts draping sheet over Pharoah's shoulder) I see you didn't have a good nights sleep again your Majesty...
- K:** Didn't have a good nighth thleep?! Thath an underthatement!
- C:** What was it Fairy? (quickly correcting himself) I mean Pharaoh?
- K:** (shoots him a suspicious look, then carries on) It wath tho the dweamth I've been having lately...
- C:** Dweams, your Majesty?
- K:** Yeth, dweamth... fat cowth and thinny cowth -
- C:** Oh no, not dreams about her again Your Majesty...

- K:** No, no thethe were weal cowth!
- C:** 'Tell me about it!
- K:** (impatient) Will you thtop intewupting me?
- C:** 'Thorry your Majesty...
- K:** (shooting him another suspicious glance but not quick enough to pick up his faux pas) And come and help me get dwessed! I told thethe dweams to magicianth and withe men yetherday and they could not interpwet them for me...
- C:** What did the wise men and magicians say your Majesty?
- K:** Oh they jutht kept thaying the dweamth were confirmation of how wonderful and powerful I am, how glawiouth ith my thpledour, my might and my inthight...
- C:** Mmmm... clearly an erroneous interpretation your Majesty... (he passes K the orange juice)
- K:** (thanking the cupbearer for agreeing with him, with just the slightest tinge of uneasiness) Thankyou Cupbearer... (he sips)

(C claps hands... attendant rushes in with mirror)

- K:** Oh Cupbearer... you know I'm weaving my wobe athymetwically thethe dayth - I told you it'th the lateth fashion...
- C:** Sorry your Majesty, I forgot you like it bent.. now
- K:** Tsk... Mutht I do everything mythelf? (he starts to fix it) Oh and that juithe of owange hath far too little honey in it for my tathte...
- C:** I'll correct it immediately your Majesty... (runs off to get honey)
- K:** Yeth... I would... I've hanged men for leth than that!
- C:** (coming back on with honey) Well, speaking of that, your Majesty, I must confess, I've been remiss...
- K:** Wemith?? In what way?
- C:** (putting honey in the juice but getting distracted and putting a lot in) Yes your Majesty, well... Pharoah was once angry with his servant - we don't need to go into the details, but I was in prison with the chief baker... or was I just visiting him in prison? - anyway, each of us had a dream the same night and each dream had a meaning of it's own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams and he interpreted each of them for us. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position in your service my Lord, and the other man was (clears throat) hanged... (stops pouring in honey)

**K:** (considering) Mmmm, a Hebwew you thay?

**C:** Yes your Majesty... (gives him orange juice again)

**K:** Well then, thee if you can locate thith young hebweew and we'll athk him if he can interpwet my dweam...

**C:** (excited now) Certainly your Majesty....

(K sips orange juice and nearly spits it out... pulls face and shakes head)

**K:** (smiling) That'th how I lie my juithe of owange... (he skulls it) Ah!.... 'Thervant!!

(Servant has put down mirror and runs to Pharaoh)

**Servant:** Yes my Lord?

**K:** (passing him empty glass) Bwing me my woyal Kinethphewic cwown!  
I will attend the court today...

**Servant:** Yes, my Lord... (servant runs off, puts down glass, picks up table and puts it on K's head)

**K:** Thankyou...

(Royal music as Pharaoh exits)

**K:** (as they are processing through the audience) Do you think I look wegal?

**Servant:** I'm afraid I don't know much about those animals my Lord!

**N:** The Pharaoh did locate Joseph and after he was washed and shaved, he came before Pharaoh. Joseph sought God - as always - for the interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh... It turned out that Pharaoh's dreams foretold seven years of bountiful harvests in Egypt to be followed by seven years of famine...

**J:** God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners in each of the plentiful years, so that grain be stored under the authority of Pharaoh, and kept in reserve to be used - and sold - during the seven years of famine...

**P:** (entering) I'm impwethd by you Jotheeph, and by your plan of action. I believe you and your interpwetation of dweams - I think we all agwee your interpwetation hath a wing of twuth about it and I thay to my officialth, can we find anyone like thith man, one in whom ith the thpirit of God?

**Officials:** No... certainly not, (etc)

**Pharaoh:** Thinth God hath made all thith known to you Jotheeth, there ith no-one tho ditherning and withe ath you... You shall be in charge of my palathe, and all my people are to thubmit to your orderth... (he claps)... I hereby put you in

charge of the whole land of Egypt, you are the second-in charge to no-one but myself

(table is put on Joseph's head and royal music is played as Pharaoh leads Joseph in a procession around the stage)

**N:** Joseph administered the project so well and stored the plentiful harvests of grain so efficiently that when the famine hit seven years later, people from all the surrounding countries came to Egypt to buy some of the grain that had been stored...

(Simeon and Levi start entering from behind the audience)

**N:** And sure enough, when the famine hit Canaan, the sons of Jacob - Joseph's own brothers - came knocking on Egypt's door to buy grain...

**S:** (As they approach, to Levi) Can you think of any reason why that guy has a table on his head?

**L:** I bet it'd keep you really dry when it rains...

**Asst:** What do you want?

**L:** We're from the land of Canaan. (When Joseph hears this he immediately hides behind his table and peeks through it) We've come to buy grain

**Asst:** (turns to Joseph and speaks - a whisper through the eye hole - then back to Simeon and Levi) The governor says he thinks your spies...

**S:** Spies!?

**L:** That isn't so, we're honest men, we are brothers wanting to buy grain for our families - we are not spies!

**S:** (nudging Levi) we are your servants

(They bow down to the ground)

(music begins, discordant, tumultuous, Joseph lifts table in anger for a moment, as if to break it over his brothers' heads, then stops himself; music quietsens as he begins to sing)

**J:** *Oh my brothers, you made me cover  
You made me eat the dust...  
So many lonely, helpless hours  
Not knowing who I could trust  
And now you're here  
You want my help  
What can I do for you...  
(reprise 1)*

**N:** What would you have done? What would our society today expect Joseph to do? Joseph did not immediately reveal his identity to his brothers. Instead he initiated a series of tests designed to stir their consciences and seek out what changes of heart had occurred within them over the years... (brothers follow Joseph's beckoning to other table)... One of them involved a feast where Joseph sat them around a table in order of their age and gave a five-fold helping of food to his youngest brother Benjamin... (brothers are astonished)...

**J & N:** *It's time to heal broken hearts  
To seal open wounds  
Come to me  
Share my food  
Be my friend  
For the first time...*

**N:** One of them involved hiding his precious silver cup in his brothers belongings, having it found, convicting his youngest brother Benjamin of stealing it so that he would remain in his custody. One of them involved detailing one of his brothers until his youngest brother Benjamin was brought to him (brothers plead as one of them is impounded)... When he was eventually satisfied that they had changed and that his youngest brother Benjamin was safe from the abuse he himself had suffered, he was ready to play his last card...

**J & N:** *It's time to heal open wounds  
It's time to seal broken hearts  
Made anew  
No longer two  
I always knew we could be one...  
(reprise 2)*

**J:** I am Joseph.

(Joseph speaks to them from behind the table, Simeon and Levi look at each other but cannot speak)

**J:** How is my father Jacob?

(they look back to Joseph and slowly start to move the table away from him. When they see him they just reel back. Levi starts to speak but can't, Simeon's head just shakes in disbelief. Joseph moves towards his brothers and lifts them up)

**J:** Yes, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into slavery in Egypt. God allowed it all to happen because of his purposes... God is the one who sent me ahead of you to save lives - including yours...

(The brothers try to bring themselves to hug Joseph and almost do, he draws them close to embrace them)

**J:** Don't try to speak or say anything, you don't have to... You're in my place now - You're home. I can make a home for you here if you want - and there will be enough for all - without fighting or tears or bloodshed... Come, let us visit Pharoah and see about bringing my Father and your families out here to stay.

(they exit upstage)

**N:** So as you can see, things really turn around. The ones who murdered become the ones who are welcomed home. The ones who sold their brother into slavery become the ones set free. The ones who hated become the ones beloved. The ones who envied became the ones who are blessed. The Father who lost his dearest son regains his whole family. The ones who faced starvation are welcomed into the land of plenty. Reconciliation today is till a big word for me... But the clues that help me find my way around it are firstly the realisation that I am all of these things - the one who murdered, sold into slavery, hated, envied, lost and faced starvation of a spiritual kind if not physical starvation... But who, thanks to Jesus, becomes welcomed, set free, beloved, blessed, part of the whole family of creation and welcomed into the land of plenty - plenty for everyone if we all share it. The other realisation is that it's God's initiative that causes reconciliation - nothing I do... only faithful response to His leading and communication - like Joseph showed... And reconciliation also means something else to me now. I hear it used often in reference to the process of healing as indigenous and non-indigenous Australians learn what it is to be different parts of a whole creation. It strikes me that Joseph's family could not go forward until they went back - and dealt with what they had done to him in the past - and God had a new and better future for all which he was able to reveal to them through Joseph's faithfulness and his families new-found humility... I wonder if it might not be the same for us today...

**All:** "Until Your Love Broke Through" ...Reprise

(Instrumental Jesus "Communion" Reprise)

**Jesus:** Don't try to speak or say anything, you don't have to... You're in my place now - You're home. I can make a home for you here if you want - and there will be enough for all - without fighting or tears or bloodshed...

("It's time to heal" Reprise)

**THE END.**



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