

Platform Papers



PROVOCATIVE ESSAYS ON POLITICS AND THE PERFORMING ARTS

Platform Papers is a series of feisty quarterly essays by arts experts and practitioners on topical artistic, ethical and political issues. To further stimulate the exchange of ideas, each issue includes a Readers' Forum, in which responses to previous essays are published.

The debates sparked by the series have already penetrated well beyond the foyers of performing arts institutions, to the groves of academe, the boardrooms of the business world and into the corridors of political power. Now in its third year of publication, the **Platform Papers** series is fast becoming a significant feature in the landscape of our national conversation.

An alternative voice, seeking the health of Australia's performing arts ...

John Golder, editor

If the essay by Martin Harrison is any indication, this series of essays should prove lively and provocative. Let the debate begin!

Fiona Capp, reviewer in *The Age*

As though its intellectual energy and passionate engagement with contemporary Australia were not enough to recommend Robyn Archer's essay, some of it is drop-dead funny as well. Kerry Goldsworthy, former

*editor of *Australian Book Review**

*I commend **Platform Papers**' commitment to stirring the pot—a great Aussie tradition—and stimulating critical inquiry about the arts, and addressing those issues facing the arts sector. Peter Garrett, Shadow*

Parliamentary Secretary for Reconciliation and the Arts

No government that is concerned with our mental health, our growth and our future can afford to ignore David Throsby's essay.

Cate Blanchett, actor

*Publishers can intervene decisively in public debate; think of Currency House's **Platform Papers** on the performing arts ... With [a] series such as [this], we can hope to contribute to intellectual renewal.*

Sylvia Lawson, author and cultural commentator

*In a country where debate about the importance and place of the arts in a civilized society finds almost no outlet, it is salutary that Currency House's **Platform Papers** are proving such an important voice in the discussion of the future of the performing arts.*

David Williamson, playwright



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ABOUT EACH ISSUE



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PP1: 'Our ABC'—A Dying Culture?

Former radio producer **Martin Harrison** accuses the ABC of not fulfilling its charter obligations. Having lost its once-valued sense of creative leadership, it now pursues a policy of 'arts by stealth'. He asks why there are so few arts programmes on the ABC, speculates on the viability of an arts TV channel and argues for a new cross-boundary mode of broadcasting that embraces the interactive viewing and listening practices of the twenty-first century.
ISBN 0 95812 124 9 \$12.95

PP2: Survival of the Fittest: The Artist versus the Corporate World

Former ACO violinist and music festival director **Christopher Latham** exhorts independent artists to become more engaged, versatile and resourceful and to make work about the immediate world in which they live, if they want to survive the challenges posed by under-funding and an electronic society's exponential rate of change.
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PP3: Trapped by the Past: Why our Theatre is Facing Paralysis

Associate director and literary manager of the Melbourne Theatre Company **Julian Meyrick** launches a well-reasoned attack on the current state of Australian theatre, accusing it of a refusal to move forward from the 1970s. He argues the need for a more democratic and collaborative structure, a rejection of the funding wars and the development of a more national strategy.
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PP4: The Myth of the Mainstream: Politics and the Performing Arts in Australia Today

Singer-songwriter and festival director **Robyn Archer**'s personal and political essay accuses Australia and its political leaders of having sold out the arts to marketing and to what she believes

are mythical mainstream values and a preference for entertainment over intellectual challenge. She calls for performance that is not driven solely by populist notions, but by a genuine effort to reflect the rich diversity of Australian life.
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PP5: Shooting Through: Australian Film and the Brain Drain

Filmmaker and producer **Storry Walton** discusses a key aspect of the crisis currently facing the Australian film industry: the talent drain of our best and brightest artists for rosier prospects overseas. However, rather than bemoan the loss, he argues, we should find ways to attract these 'deserters' back home in order to make films that are quintessentially Australian.
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PP6: Art in a Cold Climate: Rethinking the Australia Council

Keith Gallasch, Managing Editor of the arts magazine *RealTime*, is severely critical of the Australia Council's declined support for the innovative work of artists living at the bottom end of the 'small-to-medium sector' of the arts hierarchy, and argues that it is time to seriously rethink the organisation in order to make it less of a grant-processing machine and more a spur to creative innovation and relevance.
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PP7: Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy?

Our leading cultural economist, **David Throsby** traces the history of public policy and government patronage of the arts from 1818, via the Keating Government's Creative Nation, to the present. He believes that, although the Howard Government appears to regard cultural heritage as a 'dead subject' for discussion, a cultural policy is a formidable way of showing what we really value about being Australian.
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PP8: Body for Hire? The State of Dance in Australia

Executive producer of the Onextra dance company, **Amanda Card** argues the need to reinvigorate dance in Australia. She urges the need for radical change in the current structure of our dance companies, which should become entrepreneurs employing pools of dancers to work with invited choreographers.
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PP9: What Price a Creative Economy?

Stuart Cunningham, Director of the Brisbane Centre for Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, proposes a new way of looking, not only at culture and creative expression, but also at what is needed to strengthen our creative economy. In so doing he provides fresh evidence for renewing the case for public investment.
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PP10: Satire—or Sedition?: The Threat to National Insecurity

Satirist and broadcaster **Jonathan Biggins** shows how the history of the Wharf Revue has charted the erosion of the democratic tradition of parliamentary debate in Australia and continues to answer the call for an oppositional viewpoint. The most insidious threat to free speech implied by the recently reinvigorated sedition laws, he asserts, lies in self-censorship.
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