

Victorian College of the Arts  
Media Release 2008  
10 October

## *play:ground*

Enter the imaginary world of a child soldier  
“You have to learn not to cry”

### A VCA Masters of Theatre Practice performance

*Play:ground* at the **Carlton Gardens Playground** from **5 – 8 November** is written and directed by Claudia Escobar, a Colombian artist and Masters’ student at the VCA, who has long worked with child victims of violence in her country.

Nine children aged between 6-11 years old (from Fitzroy Community School) and four adult performers compose the cast of this arresting and frighteningly real play that transforms the benign and magical Carlton Gardens playground into a landscape of war in the imaginary world of a child.

By attending school ‘as a 6-year-old child’ – joining in their games, their imaginary play and learning processes – and through intense research into the close relationship of war with human nature, Claudia Escobar found the point where childhood and war collide.

“It is frighteningly common for child soldiers to not actually want to be rescued or freed,” says Claudia.

“War, violence and killing become an exciting game for these children: they learn to exist in a quasi-imaginary world where real body counts are as meaningless and bragged about as an Australian child would a Nintendo victory.”

All of this remarkable experience is incorporated into her new theatre work, *Play:ground*.

Worldwide, more than 300,000 children fight in government armed forces and armed opposition groups in more than 30 countries. These children are mostly between fifteen and eighteen years old, though the youngest reported was seven years old. Despite progress, efforts to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers are too little and too late for many children. In Colombia the numbers of child combatants currently exceeds 11,000, a situation which is not openly discussed.

(Sourced from *Child Soldiers: An Overview*, The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, [www.child-soldiers.org](http://www.child-soldiers.org))

*Play:ground* gives voice to the devastating effects of this ghastly reality on the lives and psychology of these children by taking the audience into the imaginary world of a Colombian eight year-old who is forced to become a child soldier and fight for Colombia’s long term drug war.

**Don’t miss this remarkable work from a new and dynamic talent in the international theatre landscape.**

<b>Dates:</b>	Wednesday 5 – Saturday 8 November <b>CAUTION: This work contains adult themes and is not recommended as children’s entertainment</b>
<b>Time:</b>	8.30pm each evening. <b>ENTRY IS FREE. No booking necessary.</b>
<b>Place:</b>	Carlton Gardens Playground <b>Melway</b> Ref - 2B H11, behind the Melbourne Museum/IMAX. <b>Parking</b> available on Rathdowne and Nicholson Streets. <b>Tram</b> 85, 9 or 96 from Bourke Street down Nicholson Street



**Victorian College of the Arts  
Media Release 2008  
10 October**

**Media Enquiries:** Kate Mazoudier 03 9685 9397 or Lisa Montague 03 9685 9371