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HUMA 5105

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April 16, 2008

### Abstract

#### To Work, To Play: Protestant Ethics and the Playhouse

A large percentage of people today adhere to what sociologist Max Weber famously named “The Protestant Work Ethic.” We see employment as something tedious and arduous that must be endured in order to accumulate as much wealth as possible. We look forward to vacations and retirement as the payoff, leisure time being our only opportunity to relax and enjoy our lives.

The Protestant Worth Ethic draws a firm line between *work* and *play*. Work is seen as something difficult and unpleasant, while enjoyment can be found in the form of hobbies, entertainment and art. Also, The Protestant Work Ethic dictates that art is more valuable than entertainment, with serious, dramatic works viewed as high-culture (as they more closely resembles *work*), and light-hearted, comedic works seen as a more lowly form of leisure (as they seem to many like unimportant *play*).

This paper examines the way the Protestant Work Ethic has affected Western society’s view of labour, and specifically, how it is represented in a Canadian playhouse (the Sudbury Theatre Centre). The STC staff defies the protestant work ethic in two ways. First, they put on whatever kind of plays they want, and what the city wants, without much worry about what is “high art” and what will enrich their audiences. They

aim to entertain. Second, they love their jobs, and do them regardless of meager pay and a constant lack of funding for new projects. For the STC employees, *work* and *play* exist together.