



Journée Mondiale du Théâtre World Theatre Day Día Mundial del Teatro

World Theatre Day Message 2022

In March 2020 we busily prepared a new dedicated website to celebrate World Theatre Day on 27th March. Amateur theatre companies from all over the world registered their events on the website to mark the day.

Enter, Stage Left: COVID-19 in a mind-blowing, headline-creating, spectacular and career-defining, debut role...

The COVID World Tour 2020 - 2022, was a compelling production but, despite the huge exposure, the reviews were extremely unfavourable, and we hope and pray that the production will never be repeated.

COVID cancelled amateur theatre productions and events globally and forced many of us to re-examine our daily habits, our rituals and our practice, and to consider how we live our lives within the existential context of our planet.

And now, in March 2022, the prosperity, confidence and relative safety of Europe are once again being shattered by war. As I type this message, I am thinking constantly of our amateur theatre friends who are inexorably entangled in the daily realities of war and survival.

Our connection, our unifying factor in AITA/IATA, is amateur theatre. We are all theatre people, who share a love of theatre and an understanding of how participating in theatre enriches lives, encourages debate, provides a platform for dialogue, question and discussion, underpins understanding and meets with and includes all communities on this planet. AITA/IATA is where people of all opinions, cultures and backgrounds find a common reference and come together to share.

Many years ago, I was supporting an international amateur theatre festival in North Africa which mainly attracted companies from other Islamic countries. I recall witnessing a very heated argument centred around one particular guy in the coffee bar during the interval between performances. I was in the company of the festival director, and I asked what the disturbance was about.

He replied: 'You'.

Shocked, I said: 'Go on'.

'He wants to know why the 'Nazarene' is here at the Festival and being given such authority and status'.

I laughed but felt inwardly awkward and nervous. I asked if he could organise a small group chat to include the guy who was so culturally enraged. We sat, drank tea and discussed the piece of theatre we had just seen and shared our views through interpreters. The debate was impassioned and whatever our beliefs or backgrounds, we were able to find agreement through our common reference in theatre. Nothing changed overnight, no pivotal moment was experienced, but my detractor was able to offer me a cigarette and to shake my hand when we parted company.

As we discuss reasons and search for answers and understanding, we need to ensure that opportunities for sharing, and conversation still take place. In times like these, our festivals take on a greater importance and the AITA/IATA Council continue to plan with partners in several countries towards organising future events.

We will also be undertaking some research, through our members, into the effects of COVID-19 and how amateur theatre plans to move forwards with an international dimension, post-COVID. Our context for this research will consider the environmental impact of international amateur theatre festivals and examine our responsibilities to the future of the planet. The results will provide for future discussion and the first planned platform for this will be a Forum on Children's and Youth Theatre later this year.

We take the opportunity of World Theatre Day to launch our new website, and to celebrate a new project devised by the North European Amateur Theatre Alliance focusing on sharing the joy of theatre through the eyes and voices of children.

We encourage you to continue making interesting, intriguing, challenging, provocative theatre, and to share your work internationally.

And specifically, on World Theatre Day - 27th March 2022, we celebrate the power of theatre to influence change and to bring about understanding.

Aled Rhys-Jones

AITA/IATA President