



Journée Mondiale du Théâtre World Theatre Day Día Mundial del Teatro

World Theatre Day Message 2023

In my life experience, I can remember specific years where unrest threatened the equilibrium of society, and perhaps 1968, 1982 and 2005 resonate loudest for me personally. Today, as the world marks the anniversary of the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing war in the region, I am once more reminded of the collective anxiety experienced with friends and family on those former occasions.

Life Post-COVID has its differences, they are sometimes hard to quantify or pin down, but they are there, nonetheless. I would suggest that our society is making a shift and, as we are living through this period, it won't be us who will fully understand the impact of this shift but those who follow. Yet it falls to us to consider the paths forwards and to make choices.

As we search for understanding around us, scratch our heads in disbelief and remember our adversaries who once were our friends with total bewilderment, we turn to our habitual activities and customs for consolation: the comfort of the familiar and the reassurance of ritual. For many, involvement in cultural activity, be it through sport or the arts, provides the safety of familiarity and the safest place for testing and challenging ideas, discussing choices and expressing opinion.

In marking World Theatre Day in 2023, and a message of international exchange and cooperation through theatre, we seek to reassure ourselves of a future for civilisation where harmony replaces aggression and mutual understanding replaces conflict. Early theatre practice and much indigenous theatre celebrated the seasons and the elements and helped us to understand the role these played in our lives. Since ancient times when plays were first recorded in script, theatre has provided a platform for conflict of ideas: a place for testing argument and the examination of viewpoints in open discourse, and a place for debate through illustrated scenes and role play.

At the time of writing, AITA/IATA has just held its first Digital Conference on Children's and Youth Theatre where contributors and participants discussed the lessons learnt from the pandemic and considered the way ahead. Much attention was placed on hearing the voices of the children within the plays they present and on ensuring a democracy in young people's theatre. We will continue this work and will support it through an ongoing research project conducted in collaboration with the University of Antwerp. We encourage you to help us in this area by completing the questionnaire you will find on the AITA/IATA website [HERE](#). The results of the research will be shared and discussed at our FORUM to be held as part of the activities of the International Festival of Amateur Theatre to be held 19th – 25th June 2023 in Debrecen, Hungary. Further information may be found [HERE](#).

In the spirit of World Theatre Day, we invite amateur theatre companies from all over the world to visit our dedicated website [HERE](#) and share with each other the productions that you are preparing and performing on or around the 27th March, to give a picture of the international language and practice of theatre.

Our mission of: 'Understanding and Education through theatre', is no less relevant today than it was when we began in 1952. We encourage you to continue making theatre and to continue to search for answers through cultural exchange and international participation: sharing our viewpoints and discussing both our similarities and our differences through theatre.

My message remains the same as it did 12 months ago, that on World Theatre Day - 27th March 2023, we continue to celebrate the power of theatre to influence change and to bring about greater understanding.

Aled Rhys-Jones

AITA/IATA President
