




WORLD DAY OF THEATRE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - MESSAGES 2015



I'm one of the lucky ones. And if you're reading this message you're probably one of the lucky ones too...

From my earliest years I remember my parents taking me to the theatre; I saw everything, from children's theatre to musicals, ballets, pantomimes and serious plays. One particular experience stands out. I was taken on an interactive theatrical experience, where the audience and the actors went on a literal and figurative journey together. The production took place on a farm in a beautiful valley, and still to this day I can recall the barely-contained excitement I felt. I was fully part of the action – and as we experienced various dangers along the way, were swept along by the narrative in which we were all playing a vital part. I was taken in by the stories and felt deeply empathetic.

What I understood so clearly then, at the age of six, was that theatre was something which was profoundly transformative, deeply communal, and in which we all made meaning together.

Since then I have been lucky enough to enjoy many theatre experiences in different parts of the globe. Some were forgettable, but others were deeply impactful. And always I find myself searching for that moment of alchemy, where reality is transformed, where as a community – the audience – we are simultaneously opened up to the experience, and feel empowered to make meaning of what we are seeing, with those around us.


Not every child is as lucky.

This year ASSITEJ celebrates our 50th anniversary. In this half-century of our existence we have come a long way, reaching new continents and countries, bridging linguistic, social, economic, religious, political and personal borders, to ensure that more children in more places may be as lucky...

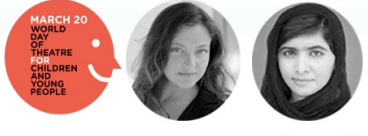
We still have a long way to go. In the last 50 years, many things have improved for children the world over, but there are still so many, many challenges. As artists who appreciate the transformative power of the arts, through the work of ASSITEJ, we are able to make a difference and to ensure that more children may have these moments of powerful empathy and connection, which will never leave them.

So join us in celebrating this very special 50th anniversary through our "Take a child to the theatre today" campaign – ensuring that more and more children have the opportunity to experience the profound awakening caused by a powerful encounter with theatre.

For in the end, it should not be a question of luck...



Message from ASSITEJ President
Yvette Hardie



Message 2015

Me, You, They

Theatre is vitally important for every child from their tenderest years. Dramatic art gives us our first access to a community outside of our own family and we do it through those "let's pretend" moments so typical of childhood.

"Let's Pretend" is fundamental to the child's developing imagination, enabling the child to create an imaginary future which is rich and complex, with other people ...

Because in theatre there is a "me", the one who "plays" or acts as if the events are happening for real so that others, "they", the audience, think that it is real. And then we get "you".
Me, You, They

This unity of "me and you" on stage is so strong that it creates an "us" in terms of a secret language. Participating in the theatrical act as a spectator – or spectator as the great Brazilian theatre maker Augusto Boal would say, it is in any case about joining in and accepting make-believe as we did in our childhood.

A child comes to realize that his world exists through a game played with reality. And a child can only learn from tiny moments of experience because he is not yet aware of patterns, rules and dogma ...

Me/You/They...

Then someone else, that adults call 'the other', comes on stage to play with 'me'.

"They" have to believe in Beauty, they must dream, and be transported away from the reality of what the rest of humanity does. This "they" doesn't wage war, it tries to understand the world. "They" have to sit in silence, transfixed by the same dazzling light created by this me and you, which is itself so perfectly balanced in its relationship, one to the other, that even violence is "not for real." And all of this "fakery" and this "make-believe" is the best educational process a child can enjoy.

"Me/You/They..."


A bit like a magic spell - "Abra-ca-dabra" or "One, Two, Three – Go!"

So that the child can have better dreams and so that the adult can better understand...

Unless it is actually the other way around ...

It is because ASSITEJ does understand this that we are both honoured to be messengers for hope, youth, art, and education and be able officially to launch this celebration with pride. We hope that by joining forces we will be able to pass on to future generations the importance of learning through the art of theatre to promote a better world based on peace, respect and social justice.

Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize 2014
Guila Clara Kessous, UNESCO Artist for Peace



Message from Nobel Peace Prize Winner
Malala Yousafzai and
UNESCO Artist for Peace
Guila Clara Kessous

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