

# World DAY of Theatre for Children and Young People: 20th March 2012



## Spread the Word!

Dear friends,

I love the theatre.  
I love the magic of this art where we are all together  
in the same room, and yet unique...  
Everyone has his story,  
barefoot or luxury sandals  
in the cold of the poles or the heat of the tropics.  
Each according to his mood,  
his family, his tastes, the colour of his skin, his problems, his dreams.

I loved the theatre even more  
when the actress that I was came to meet young audiences.  
I realised just how fine the line is between fiction and reality.  
Who is telling the truth, if truth exists?  
Who is lying?  
Who speaks better and more tenderly from man to man ...  
Reality or fiction?

The temptation is great to believe that reality is truth  
and that fiction lies.  
Why then would a slap in the face,  
a simple slap on stage, have upset me so  
the other day  
while  
yesterday I watched, unmoved, live images of war on television  
telling me that tomorrow there would be a bigger catastrophe  
more serious  
more fraught.

Why?  
The question is fantastic - and inexhaustible.  
It is this mystery which makes the theatre so precious and so rare.  
All of you sitting there - waiting for the lights to come on ...  
Tell me, where is the truth, if truth exists?  
Tell me, where are the lies, if lies exist?

With all my warmest wishes,

Suzanne Lebeau (playwright Quebec, Canada)

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Theatre is for everyone, and yet theatre does not reach everyone. Often it does not reach the adult, because there has been no opportunity for the child to fall in love with it. And often it does not reach the child, because the adults who create the framework in which children live and learn and grow, were never reached, and so feel no compulsion towards it. It does not reach the child, because adults have other priorities, or because there are major obstacles of geography, of accessibility, of affordability and of awareness.

Due to its very special and particular nature - the live moment of interaction, that precious window in which artists are able to touch the hearts and minds, ears and eyes, of those breathing the same air as them, in a unique and intensely personal way - theatre is naturally limited in its capacity to reach every child and young person. But once the audience is there, it is entirely unlimited in its capacity to communicate the essential, the mysterious, the actual and the possible. This is why we as artists must be so vigilant about the work we create, to ensure that every encounter with theatre will be an opportunity for the audience to become more curious, more intrigued, more captivated - and perhaps to fall in love with the encounter theatre offers them.

For the next three years, we ask all ASSITEJ members to speak with a united voice, and to join the call to "Take A Child to the Theatre Today." This call goes to the heart of our mission at ASSITEJ: to ensure that every child and young person has access to theatre. But we cannot do it alone. We make this call, because we recognise that we need to reach out to those with the power to ensure that children and young people are able to experience a theatrical encounter. We ask governments, education, large corporates, small businesses, parents, extended family members and individuals everywhere to respond to the call. We ask ASSITEJ members and centres to work actively to engage them and to enlist their support in practical and innovative ways.

For while we say "Take a Child to the Theatre Today" most particularly on this special day of March 20th, we hope that this appeal will resonate powerfully through every day of the year with everyone who hears it, so that every child and young person, everywhere, has the opportunity to fall in love with theatre.

***Yvette Hardie***

***President of ASSITEJ***

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