



The International Theatre Institute is celebrating
World Theatre Day

In the Presence of Jessica Kaahwa, Author of the International Message 2011

Wednesday, 23 March 2011, Hall I, UNESCO, 125, avenue Suffren, Paris 7^e (with invitation)
Contact for invitations: iti5@iti-worldwide.org

World Theatre Day was created by the International Theatre Institute in 1961 in order to celebrate theatre around the world. It is celebrated annually on the 27th of March by ITI Centres and the international theatre community. Various national and international theatre events are organized to mark this occasion and World Theatre Day is celebrated by ITI National Centres of which there are now almost 100 throughout the world.

This year, the celebration will take place at UNESCO on the 23rd of March, in the presence of the author of the message, Jessica Kaahwa from Uganda. This renowned playwright, actress, director, and theatre academic, representative of African theatre has been chosen by the members of the Executive Council of ITI to write the 2011 address and be the guest of honor of this special evening, where she will also present one of her plays, conceived for the event.

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Celebration of World Theatre Day 2011: Draft Programme

Jessica Kaahwa, Uganda

"Putting Words Between The Eyes", a one act play by Jessica A. Kaahwa
Solo performance, created for the occasion (20 minutes)

Reading of the International Message

The play "Putting Words Between the Eyes" is about a clash of reality and memory. The events in this one act play take place in Sarkina Republic that has just gone through a protracted violent conflict, leaving behind shattered lives. The goodwill ambassadors are equally disillusioned because of abortive peace resolutions. Caught in the dilemma of hope and distrust, are the vulnerable civilians and peacekeepers. The author has chosen the character of Sarah as the window through which we glimpse into the complexities of rebuilding traumatized communities.

Modeste Nzapassara, Central African Republic / France

Extract from "Black Bazaar" by Alain Mabanckou (15 minutes)

A down-to-earth, caustic and comical look at immigrants in France, and at the madness of the world surrounding them – communitarianism, segregation, exile etc.

A. Mabanckou portrays the lives of French speakers from Africa and the Caribbean and raises the question of French colonialism's legacy. Are its consequences still omnipresent today?

Modeste Nzapassara is a French actor, director and playwright. He was born in 1967 in Bangui, Central African Republic, where he was trained at the National Theatre of the Central African Republic and with companies such as "Conteurs de Tout". He received the 1st prize of the "Comédien Espoir", at Bangui festival in 1989. He is the artistic director of the POLYCHROME Theatre, a company he founded in 2008. As an actor he worked, among others, with Joël Jouanneau (*Dernier caprice*), Michael Batz (*Fragments d'Humanités*), Gérard Gelas (*Le mâât de cocagne*), Lucien Marchal (*Andromaque*), Richard Demarcy (*Songo-la rencontre et Oyé Luna*), Gabriel Garran (*Romain-Gary-Louis-Jouvet*) ...

After the adaptation of *Black Bazaar* in June 2009, he wrote two new plays *Rouge Vif* and *Au nom du Père*.

Thembi Mtshali-Jones, South Africa

Extract from her autobiographical one woman play "A Woman in Waiting", directed by Yael Farber (15mn)

With support of the South African Embassy to France and the International Relations Arts and Culture Department of the South African Government.

Thembi Mtshali-Jones is one of the leading ladies of South African theatre – a singer, actress, and playwright.

“Woman in Waiting” is testimonial theatre that represents the birth and growth of Thembi Mtshali from childhood to adulthood, from poverty and oppression to empowerment and international recognition. It is unabashedly autobiographical, and charts a trajectory that connects the individual story and the national drama from the perspective of the black South African, Thembi, and her matrilineal line: her mother, grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter.

Percussions from Sudan

Two drummers from Sudan’s Al Bugaa theatre company will perform at the opening and at the end of the ceremony.



World Theatre Day 2011 Message

A Case for Theatre in Service of Humanity

Jessica A. Kaahwa, Uganda

Today's gathering is a true reflection of the immense potential of theatre to mobilize communities and bridge the divides.

Have you ever imagined that theatre could be a powerful tool for peace and reconciliation? While nations spend colossal sums of money on peace-keeping missions in violent conflict areas of the world, little attention is given to theatre as a one-on-one alternative for conflict transformation and management. How can the citizens of mother-earth achieve universal peace when the instruments employed come from outside and seemingly repressive powers?

Theatre subtly permeates the human soul gripped by fear and suspicion, by altering the image of self - and opening a world of alternatives for the individual and hence the community. It can give meaning to daily realities while forestalling an uncertain future. It can engage in the politics of peoples' situations in simple straightforward ways. Because it is inclusive, theatre can present an experience capable of transcending previously held misconceptions.

Additionally, theatre is a proven means of advocating and advancing ideas that we collectively hold and are willing to fight for when violated.

To anticipate a peaceful future, we must begin by using peaceful means that seek to understand, respect and recognize the contributions of every human being in the enterprise of harnessing peace. Theatre is that universal language by which we can advance messages of peace and reconciliation.

By actively engaging participants, theatre can bring many-a-soul to deconstruct previously held perceptions, and, in this way, gives an individual the chance of rebirth in order to make choices based on rediscovered knowledge and reality. For theatre to thrive, among other art forms, we must take the bold step forward by incorporating it into daily life, dealing with critical issues of conflict and peace.

In pursuance of social transformation and reformation of communities, theatre already exists in war-torn areas and among populations suffering from chronic poverty or disease. There are a growing number of success stories where theatre has been able to mobilize publics to build awareness and to assist post-war trauma victims. Cultural platforms such as the "International Theatre Institute" which aims at "consolidating peace and friendship between peoples" are

already in place.

It is therefore a travesty to keep quiet in times like ours, in the knowledge of the power of theatre, and let gun wielders and bomb launchers be the peacekeepers of our world. How can tools of alienation possibly double as instruments of peace and reconciliation?

I urge you on this World Theatre Day to ponder this prospect and to put theatre forth as a universal tool for dialogue, social transformation and reform. While the United Nations spends colossal amount of monies on peacekeeping missions around the world, through the use of arms, theatre is a spontaneous, human, less costly and by far a more powerful alternative.

While it may not be the only answer for bringing peace, theatre should surely be incorporated as an effective tool in peacekeeping missions.



Biography

Jessica Kaahwa, PhD is not only an accomplished playwright, actress, director, and theatre academic; she is also highly respected internationally for her humanitarian work. A Fulbright scholar, she is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards to continue her research and fieldwork using theatre and media as a constructive force in conflict zones and for health improvement.

Jessica Kaahwa is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Departments of Music, Dance and Drama at Makerere University in Uganda, where she also received her Master's degree. Widely traveled, Jessica Kaahwa's undergraduate degree is from the University of Benin of Nigeria where she also worked as a broadcaster with the External Service – Radio of Nigeria. In 2001 she received her PhD in Theatre History, Theory and Criticism from the University of Maryland, USA.

Jessica Kaahwa has written over 15 plays for theatre, television and radio, including "Cornerstone", "Dog-Bite Justice", "Paradise for Ever", "Echoes of Peace", and "Drums of Freedom". She has directed and starred in several of her plays. Her directing credits include "King Lear" by William Shakespeare, "Mother Courage and Her Children" by Bertolt Brecht (translated in Luganda and toured in South Africa and Washington D.C.) and she co-directed the "Soldier's Tale" by Igor Stravinsky. Acting credits include "Cornerstone", "Things Men Do" (by Rose Mbowa), "Our Husband Has Gone Mad" (by Ola Rotimi), "Death and King's Horseman" (by Wole Soyinka) and "No More Oil Book" (by Tunde Fatunde).

A strong advocate for human rights, good governance and development, Jessica Kaahwa relentlessly raises her voice for gender equality and peace and conflict communication. She has also orchestrated several national and international initiatives using theatre for development and continues her research on the multiple applications of theatre in all facets of society.

Writing publications and manuals and lecturing on these issues internationally, she has conducted many training workshops for international and national organizations, as well as many higher education institutions.

Kaahwa is a strong believer in "teaching by doing." Her humanitarian actions also include the establishment of a centre for orphaned children on her farm in Uganda, where she spends much of her free time enabling them to regain a sense of belonging and security.

Jessica Kaahwa speaks English, French, Swahili, and most Bantu languages in and around Uganda (fluent in Runyakitara).



The International Theatre Institute ITI: Goals

The purpose of the International Theatre Institute is to promote international exchange of knowledge and practice in theatre arts in order to consolidate peace and friendship between peoples, to deepen mutual understanding and increase creative co-operation between all people in the performing arts.

To achieve this purpose, ITI:

- encourages activities and creation in the field of the live performing arts (drama, dance, music theatre)
- aims at an enlargement of the existing collaboration between performing arts disciplines and organizations, both national and international
- establishes international offices and fosters the establishment of ITI Centres in all countries
- collects documents, disseminates all types of information and issues publications in the realm of the performing arts
- co-operates actively in the development of the "Theatre of Nations" and encourages and co-ordinates the organization of theatrical congresses, workshops and meetings of experts, as well as festivals, exhibitions and competitions, both on regional and interregional levels, in co-operation with its members
- defends the free development of the performing arts and contributes to the protection of the rights of performing arts professionals.

To achieve this within ITI, the member Centres of the organization are guided by the principles of mutual respect of the national traditions of each country.

The International Theatre Institute ITI: History and Background

The International Theatre Institute was officially inaugurated during the meeting of its first World Congress in Prague, 1948, organized on the initiative of UNESCO and a group of international theatre experts.

It was just after World War II that the growing feeling that peace needed to be constructed above all in the minds of men through exchange, international cooperation and dialogue gave the impetus that led to the birth and influence of the various United Nations' organizations.



UNESCO came into being in 1946, and a sub-committee on Arts and Letters which included distinguished writers and dramatists met at its First General Conference. It soon became clear that there was a need for an international clearing-house for theatre arts, a non-political, non-commercial association in which theatre artists and administrators of all countries could work out a practical program to facilitate exchange and circulation of play scripts, current theatre information, performing companies, and young artists.

The International Theatre Institute ITI and UNESCO

Being one of a limited number of umbrella NGOs admitted to formal associate relations with UNESCO, ITI is contracted to advise UNESCO on matters of theatre, and cooperate with UNESCO in the areas of exchange of information and expertise in the field of theatre, sensitizing of young people to theatre arts, improvement of the status and the training of actors and writers.

The International Theatre Institute: the international days

The celebrations of the International Days are important events which increase public awareness towards theatre, dance, languages and cultural diversity. The key event is the World Theatre Day, celebrated through the world and by all the ITI members. The popularity of the International Dance Day is increasing each year. The two days have been created by the International Theatre Institute.

World Theatre Day- 27th of March(celebrated this year on the 23rd of March)

The World Theatre Day is celebrated annually on the 27th March by ITI Centres and the international theatre community. Various national and international theatre events are organized to mark this occasion and World Theatre Day is celebrated by ITI National Centres of which there are now almost 100 throughout the world.

The key event of the World Theatre Day is the circulation of the "International message of the World Theatre Day" written by a distinguished personality of the performing arts, invited to share her thoughts on theatre and peace between people. Jean Cocteau has been the first author of the international message in 1962. This message is translated in 50 languages in order to be spread internationally and put online on our website and on the websites of our Centres and partners organizations.



Authors of the international message for the World Theatre Day 1962-2010

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The event is organised in partnership with the South African Embassy to France, the International Relations Arts and Culture Department of the South African Government, the delegation of Uganda to UNESCO, Africultures and Résonances Africaines.

