

International Theatre Institute ITI

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We keep asking the question: Is the theatre still relevant to the times? For two thousand years the theatre has held a mirror up to the world and explained our place in it. Tragedy has portrayed life as being subject to Fate – Comedy has done this often enough as well. Human beings are flawed, we make fatal mistakes, rail against our circumstances, clutch at power, are weak. Deceitful and naïve, we are happy in our ignorance and sickened by God. I hear people say that life today is beyond the grasp of the traditional instruments of the theatre and that it is consequently no longer possible to tell stories. Instead, different sorts of texts, no dialogues, but rather statements. No drama. A new kind of human being is beginning to appear on our horizon: Beings that can be cloned and genetically manipulated according to whim and plan. These new, flawless beings, insofar as they are possible, would have no need for the theatre as we understand it. They would be unable to comprehend the conflicts that drive it. But we don't know the future. I think it is up to us to devote all of the energies and the talents that have been given to us – by whom we do not know – to protect from this uncertain future our wicked, beautiful and imperfect present, our irrational dreams and fruitless exertions. The means at our disposal are rich. Theatre is an impure art and therein lies its vital power. Unscrupulously, it uses everything that stands in its way. It is forever betraying its own principles. It is, of course, not immune to the fashions of the times, it avails itself of images from other media, sometimes speaking slowly, sometimes quickly. It stammers and falls silent. It is extravagant and banal, evasive, destroys stories while creating new ones all the same. I am confident that the theatre will always be able to fill itself with life – as long as we feel the need to show each other what we are and what we are not and what we should be. Long live the theatre! The theatre is one of humanity's great inventions, equal to the discovery of the wheel and the taming of fire.