

International Theatre Institute ITI

World Organization for the Performing Arts

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René Maheu 1966

On this stage, a place like many other, where nothing being real everything is being unbued with meaning, all things, credible or absurd, because none is true, are marvelously possible. Here which is everywhere, this evening, which is timeless, the whole world and the whole story of yesterday and tomorrow, of now and of never, are set before us for our fancy's exploration.

Let me hail the theatre as the stuff of all men's dreams.

Miraculous deed, insubstantial image, now for the delight of our eyes and ears, some action is about to emerge from imagination, which will gain our uplifted hearts. What power lied in the act! The force of comedy, the horror of tragedy, the anguish of drama impose an immediate spell, illusion enacted begets belief. The theatre is not a performance to be witnessed: it is experience shared, or is nothing.

The theatre reminds ms that Man is action, and that action is faith. What power lies, too, in the communion thus established among men, which transcends the divisions and boundaries of nature and society, and even of culture? Unlike other assemblies, the theatre audience is not a collection of individuals in isolation; it is a community seeking its soul and, from time to time, finding it-never thereafter to forget it.

While the play is on the stage human brotherhood makes the audience single.

Power, too, of speech-which is essential to the theatre.

Speech, that is thought. These words, which use expressive voices and features so as to enable us to gaze into our own deep secrets; words incarnate in living forms, frail and lovely, guiding them through the conflicts, the lures, the disputes and the snares to the culmination or extinction-splendid, pathetic or ludicrous as may be-of love or death, of the grotesque or the superb; their meaning takes me beyond what I see. Through them my beliefs become clear to me and I appraise them. It is thus that I shall leave this hall of illusions with an understanding of reality, which I can apply to my own life.

Bounds by the theatres spell, I shall have undergone a test. The theatre's falsehood shed a light on my own errors; and the theatre itself frees me from its own witchery. It is purification. Its name is catharsis.

On the occasion of the Fifth World Theatre Day, UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is proud to pay tribute to the greatness, the universality and the eternal youth of the theatre. On behalf of the Organization, I wish to convey the public's gratitude to you, authors, actors, producers, all you who by your crafts, create the poetry of the stage. May you, for your part, always merit the punlic's affection and esteem, may you never forget the dignity of your art, you who have the fearful power to make men laugh and weep as one.