

# International Theatre Institute ITI

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## Arturo Uslar Pietri 1992

The theatre is man's way of living, his other way of being and fulfillment, of looking at himself and of continuously stating his conflicts. This is its immense value and its irreplaceable role. A mere glance at the world of the ancient Greeks suffices to make us realize what the theatre-what they called theatre and which has nothing to do with what we today call by the same name-signified in their lives. That theatre did not simply offer the possibility and conflicts. It also constituted another way of continued fulfillment, with only a hazy differentiation between what was part of the theatre and what was part of life.

The theatre's great moments have been precisely those when it has seemed to become reality and life itself. We must not forget that the theatre which disappeared in the West as the ancient world faded, is magically reborn as part of religious worship. Even the Mass is nothing less than a form of liturgical drama. This is what makes it possible for us today, in particular circumstances, to relive the "*Prometheus*" of Aeschylus, or Shakespeare's "*Hamlet*", or Calderon's "*Life is a Dream*".

Many years ago I had the extraordinary experience of seeing a performance of Aristophane's "*Peace*" transformed into part of life and of the present time in the hands of the Comédie Française. Those were the days when storm clouds heralding World War gathered on the horizon, when fascism wielded its gloved iron fist, when humanity was living through literally unending eve of horror. Through one of those miracles, which only the theatre can bring forth, the old words and the ancient scene metamorphosed into life itself. The words of the actors were those being spoken by the conscience of all of us who were present at that unforgettable hour.

This is the unique grandeur of the theatre, its peerless gift, which has managed to survive in all its essence, despite the deformations and baseness, which a too frivolous world has imposed upon it.

In every corner of the world, at every moment when a true being faces life, one can sense the curtain rising.