



Message for World Theatre Day 2019

27 March 2019

English translation

Carlos CELDRÁN, Cuba

Before my awakening to the theatre, my teachers were already there. They had built their houses and their poetic approach on the remains of their own lives. Many of them are unknown, or are scarcely remembered: they worked from silence, in the humility of their rehearsal rooms and in their spectator-packed theatres and, slowly, after years of work and extraordinary achievement, they gradually slid away from these places and disappeared. When I understood that my personal destiny would be to follow their steps, I also understood that I had inherited that gripping, unique tradition of living in the present without any expectation other than achieving the transparency of an unrepeatably moment; a moment of encounter with another in the darkness of a theatre, with no further protection than the truth of a gesture, a revealing word.

My theatrical homeland lies in those moments of meeting the spectators who arrive at our theatre night after night, from the most varied corners of my city, to accompany us and share some hours, a few minutes. My life is built up from those unique moments when I cease to be myself, to suffer for myself, and I am reborn and understand the meaning of the theatrical profession: to live instants of pure ephemeral truth, where we know that what we say and do, there under the stage lights, is true and reflects the most profound, most personal, part of ourselves. My theatrical country, mine and that of my actors, is a country woven from such moments, where we leave behind the masks, the rhetoric, the fear of being who we are, and we join hands in the dark.

Theatrical tradition is horizontal. There is nobody who may affirm that theatre exists at any centre in the world, in any city or privileged building. Theatre, as I have received it, spreads through an invisible geography that blends the lives of those who perform it and the theatrical craft in a single unifying gesture. All masters of theatre die with their moments of unrepeatable lucidity and beauty; they all fade in the same way, without any other transcendence to protect them and make them illustrious. Theatrical teachers know this, no recognition is valid when faced with that certainty which is the root of our work: creating moments of truth, of ambiguity, of strength, of freedom in the midst of great precariousness. Nothing survives except data or records of their work in videos and photos that will only capture a pale idea of what they did. However, what will always be missing from those records is the silent response by the public who understands in an instant that what takes place cannot be translated or found outside, that the truth shared there is an experience of life, for a few seconds, even more diaphanous than life itself.

When I understood that the theatre was a country in itself, a major territory that covers the whole world, a determination arose within me, which was also the realisation of a freedom: you do not have to go far away, or move from where you are, you do not have to run or move yourself. The public is wherever you exist. You have the colleagues you need at your side. There, outside your house, you have all the opaque, impenetrable daily reality. You then work from that apparent immobility to design the greatest journey of all, to repeat the Odyssey, the Argonauts's journey: you are an immobile traveller who does not cease to accelerate the density and rigidity of your real world. Your journey is toward the instant, to the moment, toward the unrepeatable encounter before your peers. Your journey is toward them, toward their heart, toward their subjectiveness. You travel within them, in their emotions, their memories that you awake and mobilise. Your journey is vertiginous, and nobody may measure or silence it. Nor may anybody recognise it to the right extent, it is a journey through the imagination of your people, a seed that is sown in the most remote of lands: the civic, ethical and human conscience of your spectators. Due to this, I do not move, I remain at home, among my closest, in apparent stillness, working day and night, because I have the secret of speed.

Translation from Spanish by Luis Llerena Diaz