



World Theatre Day Message 2016 by Anatoli Vassiliev

Do we need theatre?

That is the question thousands of professionals disappointed in theatre and millions of people who are tired of it are asking themselves.

What do we need it for?

In those years when the scene is so insignificant in comparison with the city squares and state lands, where the authentic tragedies of real life are being played.

What is it to us?

Gold-plated galleries and balconies in the theatre halls, velvet armchairs, dirty stage wings, well-polished actors' voices, - or vice versa, something that might look apparently different: black boxes, stained with mud and blood, with a bunch of rabid naked bodies inside.

What is it able to tell us?

Everything!

Theatre can tell us everything.

How the gods dwell in heaven, and how prisoners languish in forgotten caves underground, and how passion can elevate us, and how love can ruin, and how no-one needs a good person in this world, and how deception reigns, and how people live in apartments, while children wither in refugee camps, and how they all have to return back to the desert, and how day after day we are forced to part with our beloveds, - theatre can tell everything.

The theatre has always been and it will remain forever.

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And now, in those last fifty or seventy years, it is particularly necessary. Because if you take a look at all the public arts, you can immediately see that only theatre is giving us - a word from

mouth to mouth, a glance from eye to eye, a gesture from hand to hand, and from body to body. It does not need any intermediary to work among human beings - it constitutes the most transparent side of light, it does not belong to either south, or north, or east, or west - oh no, it is the essence of light itself, shining from all four corners of the world, immediately recognizable by any person, whether hostile or friendly towards it.

And we need theatre that always remains different, we need theatre of many different kinds.

Still, I think that among all possible forms and shapes of theatre its archaic forms will now prove to be mostly in demand. Theatre of ritual forms should not be artificially opposed to that of "civilized" nations. Secular culture is now being more and more emasculated, so-called "cultural information" gradually replaces and pushes out simple entities, as well as our hope of eventually meeting them one day.

But I can see it clearly now: theatre is opening its doors widely. Free admission for all and everybody.

To hell with gadgets and computers - just go to the theatre, occupy whole rows in the stalls and in the galleries, listen to the word and look at living images! - it is theatre in front of you, do not neglect it and do not miss a chance to participate in it - perhaps the most precious chance we share in our vain and hurried lives.

We need every kind of theatre.

There is only one theatre which is surely not needed by anyone - I mean a theatre of political games, a theatre of a political "mousetraps", a theatre of politicians, a futile theatre of politics. What we certainly do not need is a theatre of daily terror - whether individual or collective, what we do not need is the theatre of corpses and blood on the streets and squares, in the capitals or in the provinces, a phony theatre of clashes between religions or ethnic groups...

Translation from Russian original: Natalia Isaeva