

International Theatre Institute ITI

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Radu Beligan 1977

It is WELL KNOWN: The theatre gave human dignity its first testimony ; a testimony which in its struggle against violence and oppression, in its endeavour to comprehend and warn, can be prescribed by no one.

It is WELL KNOWN: The theatre, first among all other arts, recognized and voiced matters of conscience, understood where they came from, what drove them; and through protest and suffering affirmed reason, brought equilibrium to the world.

It is WELL KNOWN: The theatre taught man to face himself honestly, with infinite scrutiny; to confront his guilt and assume responsibility for himself; it taught him to consider and rise to what he could be rather than bow to limitations he has been led to accept. It taught him equality through protest and how one man alone is an entire universe.

I think of the report, the resonance, the awful tense expectation before the curtain rises, an expectation, which literally wills the spectacle to take off. I think of those everyday incidents a whisper, a shadow, a glance, which seem minor to us but which, on stage, take on an overwhelming dimension and become charged with dramatic significance.

In a single question are gathered intelligence, sensibility and the spirit. When it is asked its truth is recognized, and the barriers dividing spectator from spectator, audience from stage, fall. A sense of solidarity takes its place; a fragile web is spun to unite men and their nations. In that question we know that we are bound by our common dangers and aspirations than divided by our differences: the answer to one nation's problems can be the answer to the world's. In that single question we recognize we belong in a world to whom is given the responsibility to co-operate. In that single question we recognize we must no longer allow ourselves to be manipulated, possessed, trampled upon. We understand, we participate, we act. We are ourselves, fully ourselves. Today, as it was a thousand years ago.

And it is a privilege. A privilege the theatre shares with other languages of art, languages of intuition able to articulate and quicken those insights, which are the bearers of progress, the builders of bridges. A privilege enabling people to open themselves one to another and share dreams of a just and better world.

The responsibility is awesome: as theatre-workers and as men we are part of the vanguard. That is why they wait, actor and public, tense and expectant, for that curtain to rise, that question to be asked.