

International Theatre Institute ITI

World Organization for the Performing Arts

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Miguel Angel Asturias 1968

Wherever there has been drama, words remain: the words of Man's discourse with the Gods, of Man with the world, and of Man with Man. They are the words of an immortal dialogue, the language of centuries, which in the theatre, after multiple vicissitudes becomes once more the most human, direct, effective, and fertile means of communication with the masses.

The theatre was and remains, a liturgy, a religious performance, the very origin of creation and literary form-in other words, it is just verbiage and illusion to some, magic, reality and the means of moral betterment to others, and for everyone it represents the world of dreams. Speaking on behalf of civilizations which rise anew, and civilizations which have age-old theatrical traditions such as the Maya culture of Guatemala, I am not referring here the image of obsidian knives offering up hearts to the sun, but to the great moments of heroic drama: the feather, bell and smoke dances which eternity has graven in stone and the "mitotes", those hallucinating celebrations in which entire nations danced for days and weeks on end until they sank exhausted and overpowered by sleep.

It is from this world that I venture, as a man from another solar system, to address those who create, patronize and watch the miracle of drama, inviting them to link hands, not just to form chains but to build bridges of mutual understanding.

In the four corners of the globe, theatre personalities from every dramatic tradition will at this moment be obliterating frontiers, forgetting race, nationality and creed, they will be united in striving for peace as the one and only need in this hour of unprecedented conflict.

On this Seventh World Theatre Day, in this jubilee of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, every conscience must be brought to bear upon those who proclaim so many misfortunes inherent in the human race-the destruction of Man by Man, fratricidal wars, genocides and that other way of decimating humanity which is achieved by economic asphyxiation.

Nowhere are the footlights dimmed. On the contrary, theatre lights throughout the world shine out like stars in whose glow the problems of humanity are raised and discussed in every language, every problem of the survival of our civilization under the shadow of the dread of nuclear arsenals.

As long as this threat remains, our planet cannot be considered a safe place, and my cry of alarm is intended not to interrupt this event which the International Theatre Institute is today celebrating all over the world, but in some way to help us to work together to prevent the world being converted into a grave, with these few words as the epitaph of our universe: 'La Commedia é finita.'