

# International Theatre Institute ITI

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## Fathia El Assal 2004

Theatre is the father of all arts. This is a truth none can contend, and for this reason it is my one and only passion.

I have always believed that playwrights distinguish themselves by their noble human feelings. Their message can thus help people to rise above themselves, to free themselves from their frustrations, from exploitation, and thus be able to gain a sense of dignity. For playwrights to succeed in accomplishing their mission and in influencing people, they should master their profession thoroughly, and have full control over the style of artistic expression. Otherwise their message will be blown away by whiffs of wind and leave no trace behind, thus missing the required aim. For in every work of art, the message of the artist has always been geared towards human justice, maturity of expression, and authenticity. It would therefore be wrong to think that one of these factors can hold sway over any of the others.

They say that theatre is an art based on solid structures devoid of all superfluous trimmings, and that its dialogues should be firm, concise and far from any babbling. They also say that for this reason it is incompatible with the nature of woman, who is unable to dissociate herself from her ego, and consequently cannot express herself with objectivity. They say! To this I reply: woman who can carry in her womb a new life during nine months is just as capable of creating a play that is solid and coherent. On one condition: that she be a real playwright.

Fortunately, modern theatre has liberated itself from traditional forms as a result of several waves of renewal which began with Pirandello, Bernard Shaw, Brecht and many others, with the theatre of the absurd, of refusal and of experimental avant-gardism. Today it is very rare for an author to write in a traditional style.

In my first play (“Women without Masks”) I chose “theatre within the theatre”, a formula which has become familiar in modern plays. “Woment without Masks” began with a cry and a question, for I felt myself pregnant with words dating back tens, maybe even hundreds of years.

Could it be that the time had come for the pains of labour strangling my innermost self to be releasing and projecting my word towards existence ? My word ! ..... my passion ..... my childhood ..... my child ! I listen to its voice so remote from complaints, from sighs. A voice that was crushed and humiliated. A voice whose echos reverberated generation after generation. Conscience, in human history, bears the heavy weight of persecution and bondage.

I have refused to set down on paper a single phrase that did not emerge from my deepest soul. Not one line that did not express the truth about woman, and about her power of giving. This is why I have asked my pen to take the oath of refusing to write a single line if it were to express weakness or frustration, as well as to refuse to obey me if it felt me cowardly before truth. I then asked it to help me

bring to the fore the greatest number of women whose lives I share, by drawing nearer to them and becoming their mouthpiece.

We would thus bare ourselves completely before each other, by ridding ourselves of the rust accumulated with the passage of time. We would cry out against all the circumstances and events that have deprived us of the bursting forth of our human powers.

Lastly, I believe that theatre is the light that illuminates the path of mankind. A light that ensures an organic link with the spectator by creating warmth between us -- be that communication through the written text or through the performance on stage.