

THE CROATIAN MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD DAY OF THEATER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2017

My first encounter with the theater took place long, long ago in the Puppet Theatre in Split. I remember very well how from a sunny day I entered into the darkened hall and how my fascination with the theater began then.

Before the performance a fairy-tale creature entered on stage, a gentle lady in a dark blue velvet dress, who could have been my grandmother in terms of age.

She greeted us and led us into the secret art of the theater. The performance followed, applause. The exit from this miraculous box into a sunny day seemed quite shocking to me and threatened a "disenchantment" from the experienced elation. I wanted to stay in the theater for hours. I fell in love then with the theater at first sight and forever.

Many years later I worked as an actress, and for the last sixteen I have directed the Firebird City Theater in Zagreb.

And everything I experienced at an early age I wanted to convey to young viewers, to charm them with the theater, offering them the most beautiful and unforgettable performances. I knew that only in this way when they grow up they would become an excellent audience, with heightened criteria, true arbiters of taste and refinement. I wanted each performance to totally envelop them, enabling them to dive into the wondrous dimension of imagination, to remove themselves from often harsh reality, to realize true values and be committed to them, and to take them as a landmark in their lives, because only children see all and understand all.

Let us create with joy and inspiration, give them our talent and enthusiasm, and they will never forget. Let us enrich and enlighten their childhood and youth because theater, uniting acting and set design, costumes and lights, choreography and music, and particularly texts, offers an insight into the full spectrum of artistic expression that contributes to a unique pleasure.

Therefore, we all have enormous responsibility and obligation to create performances for children, because if a child does not fall in love with the theater at once, we have lost him or her forever as part of a high-quality theater audience.

The smallest deserve the best without the rest.

Let us give it to them.

Let them remember (no matter what kind of sorrows and trials of growing up they are exposed to) that in their childhood they were truly happy and filled with beauty and goodness in the theater, which is to say Dostoyevsky can indeed save the world.

And so, dear children, welcome and enjoy the theater!

Marija Sekelez,
Dramatic artist