



IDEA

**International Drama/Theatre and Education Association
Association Internationale d'Art Dramatique/Théâtre et Éducation
Asociación Internacional de Drama/Teatro y Educación**

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International Drama/Theatre and Education Day: 27th November 2008

As the President of IDEA, I'm delighted to declare November 27th International Drama/Theatre and Education Day. We now have a specific day to celebrate the knowledges and skills that make up our broad, rich and distinctive contribution to the global project of cultivating a human education, human rights and peace for all, in particular for young people, children, and excluded communities that are threatened by violence. Let's raise a toast to this global drama of transformation!

Of course, this is not an easy time to celebrate and dance with joy. All generations and continents today are painfully aware of how global warming, widening social inequality, violence, poverty and AIDS intimately touch our lives and threaten our futures. In different ways, every drama teacher and pupil, theatre artist and community places unsustainable competition centre-stage when it dramatizes the cause of our loss of humanity, increasing youth despair and inhuman pressure in his and her local performances. Like 9/11, today's financial crisis has turned our homes, schools and work-places into a global workshop and theatre of hopelessness and denial.

But there are also real grounds for celebration. In every corner of the world, communities, schools, colleges and cultural centres are generating new performances of solidarity and cooperation, drawing on decades of experiment, research and vision. Industrial waste is being recycled into musical instruments and epic sculptures of vision. Rows of desks are being placed against walls to transform theatres of fear and alienation into performances of participatory experimentation. And theatre artists and universities drama departments are working with teachers, police, prisoners and communities of special needs to nurture confidence, human rights and networks of hope. In all of the ninety countries that make up the present IDEA community, an emerging new world is already lucid and on-stage.

However, though there may be a consensus among *us* that education now needs to prepare people for a permanently-changing, technologically-driven, 'knowledge-based' world, and that our artistic languages and creative industries have never been so relevant to creating new societies, we cannot be naive. In many parts of the 'developed world', the arts in education are being replaced by laptops and 'basic skills'; and in every region of the world, parents and teachers still think of our artistic languages as, at best, irrelevant luxuries and, at worst, inaccessible, elitist privileges. Though we see how artistic languages nurture our multiple intelligences and our capacity to care and create, most parents, teachers and politicians are not yet convinced.

So when we celebrate this 27th November – remembering the 27th Article of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (*'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefit'*), and November as the month when the 'Declaration of the Rights of the Child' was passed by the United Nations – let us call on a few neighbours, teachers, journalists, industrialists, politicians and/or friends working outside our community of drama/theatre and education, to celebrate with us!

Let's tell, or better still, let's *perform* how our stories of drama and theatre educate and transform, and listen to the questions of those who are not yet partners in this global project, so that November 27th is a day of learning to share our knowledges and enlarge the performance of transformation.

Dan Baron Cohen, President of IDEA