

WORLD THEATRE DAY > March 27th 2016
Quebec message



Kwe aweti'. Yiheh Onyawatenro'. Askenoni'ia'ies !
(Kou-e Aweti. Yi-heh On-ya-wa-tin-ro. Aske-non-nee-ee-a-yes.)

Yo-ho, my friend. Come in, make yourself at home and warm yourself up to the fire that was kindled many weeks before you arrived. We knew that you would not forget us. Your visit was hoped for, long-awaited.

I am addressing you, inspired by the renowned verve of the first inhabitants of these territories. The same verve that sealed alliances on the breasts of Tadoussac and on the banks of the St. Lawrence in Pointe-à-Callière. The verve that invited you to paddle, side by side, on this great river that walks its way into the heart of the Great Turtle. I'm addressing you, inspired by the ones who — with us — would like to inhabit the stages of our province, where our collective imagination stems from.

I'm just a foolish animal. I speak, but my words are just sounds that make sense because you allow them to. I humbly ask you to hear my plea, and to let it open your eyes, find a chime in your ear, illuminate and warm up your soul. Allow yourself to be seduced, and feel your heart beat in synch with the actors and visitors who came to take place with you.

Our nation is filled with sensible speakers, who will reveal your fears and desires, and who wish to offer you the chance — if only for this moment — to see their words carry all the joy or all the sadness that you may have been yearning to express.

The space in front of you, the proscenium, is a window that we occupy with humility in order to reveal yourself to you. We would never dare to tell you what to do. We simply want to return the missing part of your soul that you may have lost one breath at a time while trying to survive in our undermining and dehumanizing world.

We would like to offer you laughter. Laughter that will vibrate in your head and in your belly. Laughter that will warm you up and that will illuminate the face of the stranger next to you.

We would like to offer you the chance to shed some real tears. Tears that will give you relief and that will bring you closer to those who grieve as you do.

Do you realize how lucky you are to be here with us tonight? Do you realize to what extent your action is significant? You are here, right now. Backstage, the actors are panting, sweating, ready to reveal a part of themselves, a part of yourself. You are the privileged witness of a moment that will never occur again, except in your memory, and in the memory of the people around you. Look to your left, to your right or behind you, and greet someone you don't know. Tonight, this person will come to you and tell you one word, one single word about what you just lived. We invited you to this encounter, to this menuentakuan (me-nuene-ta-kouanne).

This gift that we are offering you was not carved into stone, no fingers were blistered while weaving it. We did not have to dig up the ground or take anything away from Mother Earth.

We have carved this place. We have woven these words. We have poured out our souls to offer you something precious, like a shell-bead belt, a wampum, reminding you about what unites us.

Art is an eternal, renewable resource. As long as there will be sensitive beings who will know how to use their imagination, the hope of being able to live together will survive. Let's hope that this will prevail as long as grass will grow in the plain, as long as snow will fall, and as long as the wind will blow.

Theatre is our home, the place where we rehearse for what we aspire our community to be. The place where we will finally make peace with one another, beyond artifices.

Charles Bender

Charles Bender is an actor/presenter from the Huron-Wendat in the Quebec City area. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Concordia University and has worked on several productions in both French and English. He collaborates regularly with **Théâtre Ondinnok**, a First Nations theatre company in Quebec. He recently founded a new First Nations theatre company, **Menuentakuan**, which presented his first creation **MULIATS** at Théâtre Denise-Pelletier in February 2016 .

The theater is a living rooted in the society in which it operates art.
The Conseil québécois du théâtre welcomes the contribution of
Quebec theater international artistic influence of Quebec and Canada.

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