

# World Theatre Day 2016

## Canadian Message by Sky Gilbert



You're sitting at home, in your favourite chair - with your favourite animal in your lap (cat? dog? lizard?). You're surfing the web. You like it because your favourite movies and games and TV shows are at your fingertips. But you also like it because it tells you *who you are*. You discover all sorts of things about yourself when you're online. If you buy something online you get a cheery message saying "I know what you like...why don't you try this too?"

But wait. What if you were to leave the house?

After all, you *could* go to a Starbucks. But wouldn't that be an awful lot like sitting in a room full of people who are acting as if they were home alone?

What about a movie?

Yeah sure, a movie.

There *will* be strangers. But it *will be dark*.

You feel at home at the movies, because movies also tell you who you are. If you're old – they'll show you trailers for movies starring Maggie Smith. If you're young– they'll show you trailers for movies featuring pretty, blonde, blue-eyed girls singing about frozen worlds.

But what if you went to see a live play?

Well....

Why not?

When you get there, you realize it's not very big. Only about 30 seats. How can it be a good play if there are only 30 people watching? And the chair you're sitting in isn't comfortable like your chair at home.

The show is about to start and you realize there are only about 10 people in the audience. And the program says there are only five people in the cast! Oh no! If you

laugh too much, you may disturb your neighbour. But if you don't laugh enough, it might hurt the actors' feelings.

And what if it isn't even a comedy?

Suddenly, the play starts.

Oh no. They're saying bad words. Words you would never say at home. You didn't come to the theatre to hear such words! And the ideas! The writer has some strange radical ideas – and not ones you agree with. Some people are laughing. A couple of them are crying. And some aren't reacting at all.

Should you stomp out, now – angrily – and make a scene? Or should you endure it quietly, and when it's done – slink out?

Finally it's over. You are stung, humiliated and embarrassed. They turn the lights on. Someone is sweeping the floor. You look around sheepishly. Suddenly you realize that there is a person sitting beside you. How could you not notice? You turn slightly and look.

It's...it's an old woman! Very old. And she's...she's a *different colour* than you.

She speaks. She has a dry, cracked voice. And you can barely understand her accent.

"I liked it," she says. "What do you think?"

You don't know what to do or what to say. You might have to disagree with this very kindly, very, very, very old woman.

Then, out of panic, you find yourself thinking about the play. You realize that it not only made you think – it made you feel, too. And then you realize it made you... gosh...you don't know what's going on! There's a tingle running up your spine. And it's very odd... as if...as if...as if you are thinking and feeling *at the same time*! And you think and feel confused, loving, angry, passionate, scared, sexy– and kind of unhinged! What in heaven's name is going on?

Then you turn to the woman.

You open your mouth.

And then you – *you talk*.