

## Courage to play

Media broadcasts bring us sad and distressing news of unnecessary deaths, disruption and dark intentions. The 24 hour news cycle reaches into our lives and disturbs our safety.

As IDEA members it is important to remember that in the flow of human lives there are stories to tell and that drama, theatre and education are powerful ways of healing and comforting people in distress. I cannot forget seeing performances by the Mostar Youth Theatre who continued to gather and work together while bombs fell. I think of a young theatre director whose New York production of *Mercury Fur* opened on the night of the shootings at sandy Hook who said to the audience:

Mercury Fur is a tragedy in the theatrical sense of the word, a construction of events to provide catharsis in those who see it. But today we experience tragedy, as we so often do in life, without structure, without meaning. This is a dark play but it is dark so we can see light shine through more clearly. As theatre artists our job is to search for something more ephemeral: light. It is our job to draw paths through the darkness.

In IDEA we share similar memories to soothe the anxious world.

There has never been a time when the world has needed drama, theatre and education more.

Drama, theatre and education hold a mirror to the world that lets us see ourselves.

Drama, theatre and education enable the world to rehearse questions of importance and enact them through the safety of fiction.

Drama, theatre and education are lights in darkness.

Play is important in the lives of children. Through play young people learn to explore: themselves, their lives and their worlds. But we should not forget that play is also important for people of all ages and places. However serious and focused life can be - and it is for so many people in poverty or making migratory journeys - there needs also to be laughing and joking and meeting together so we can find our humanity, understand ourselves and our world. Drama, theatre and education are meeting points for human connection.

At this time as drama and theatre educators we need to speak up for **the courage to play**. We need to remind the world of the value of opportunities for improvising and exploring ideas in response to what we see in the world. We need to write and perform plays that address challenges and suggest human responses to troubling lives and circumstances. We need to teach with purposeful playfulness. Above all we need to allow our children to play.

Drama, Theatre and Education is our best possible response to the daily news.

**Robin Pascoe**

IDEA President 2013-2016