



Theatre
Communications
Group

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TCG/ITI-US Celebrates the 49th Annual World Theatre Day In Honor of Ellen Stewart

***Tony Award-winning Actor Jeffrey Wright Gives US Message
Artist and Humanitarian Jessica A. Kaahwa Gives International Message***

“Theater reshapes reality.

Emboldened by the playwright’s imagination, actor and audience conspire to re-think the world.”

– *Jeffrey Wright, excerpt from World Theatre Day US Message*

New York, NY – Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, which also houses the US Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI-US), invites all theatres, individual artists, institutions and audiences to celebrate the 49th annual World Theatre Day on March 27, 2011. TCG/ITI-US, invited Tony Award-winning actor and global citizen **Jeffrey Wright** to issue a US message, which was recorded on video: www.tcg.org/international. Pulitzer Prize-winning Playwright, Lynn Nottage gave the first US message for World Theatre Day last year.

Created in 1961, World Theatre Day is celebrated annually on March 27 by International Theatre Institute Centers around the world and the international theatre community. Each year, a renowned theatre artist of world stature is invited to craft an international message to mark the global occasion. This year, ITI Worldwide, headquartered in Paris, asked artist, academic and humanitarian **Jessica A. Kaahwa**, from Uganda, to write the international message. As with last year’s international message by Judi Dench, Kaahwa’s statement will be translated into more than 20 languages and distributed to tens of thousands of audiences.

Kaahwa makes a case for theatre as a tool for peace building internationally. She writes, “To anticipate a peaceful future, we must begin by using peaceful means that seek to understand, respect and recognize the contributions of every human being in the business of harnessing peace. Theatre is that universal language by which we can advance messages of peace and reconciliation.”

Wright, who won the 1994 Tony Award for *Angels in America* and most recently performed in John Guare’s new play, *A Free Man of Color*, at Lincoln Center Theatre, is Chairman of the Taia Peace Foundation, which is active in development work in Sierra Leone. Wright articulates that the art of listening is critical for the transformation of theatre to occur, “If we listen well and observe, the theater’s gift to us is the sly suggestion that what occurs within its walls can occur without them, too – that the world is changeable.”

TCG/ITI-US dedicates its World Theatre Day celebrations to the full life and inspiring legacy of **Ellen Stewart**, founding artistic director of the La MaMa Experimental Theatre, who passed away on January 13, 2011. Stewart, considered as a mother, goddess and true arts advocate, was a vital part of the international theatre community and composed the World Theatre Day International Message in 1975.

This year, as in the past, one way to celebrate World Theatre Day is to spread the US and international messages. TCG/ITI-US is encouraging its members, colleagues and audiences to:

- Visit www.tcg.org/international for ways to celebrate, including downloadable versions of the messages from Wright and Kaahwa;
- On Sunday, March 27, share the World Theatre Day messages with your audience and community;
- Register with the Performing Arts Alliance (PAA) and participate on Arts Advocacy Day (April 4-5, 2011);
- Use the PAA web resources to contact your elected officials regarding the need for:
 - improved visa processing for international guest artists;
 - increased funding for the Cultural Programs Division of the State Department's Office of Citizen Exchanges;
- Register for the Human Rights Watch.

To download the messages and bios of Wright or Kaahwa – and for more information about World Theatre Day celebrations, please visit: www.tcg.org.

International Theatre Institute (ITI) was formed in 1948, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) joined with world-renowned theatre experts to form an international non-governmental organization in the field of the performing arts. The mission of ITI is to “promote international exchange of knowledge and practice in theatre arts in order to consolidate peace and friendship between peoples, to deepen mutual understanding and to increase creative cooperation between all people in the theatre arts.” Today, ITI consists of approximately 90 Centers worldwide. An ITI Center is made up of professionals active in the theatre life of a country and representative of all branches of the performing arts.

The first World Theatre Day International Message was written by Jean Cocteau in 1962. Succeeding honorees include Arthur Miller (1963), Ellen Stewart (1975), Vaclav Havel (1994), Ariane Mnouchkine (2005), Sultan bin Mohammad Al Qasimi (2007), Augusto Boal (2009), Dame Judi Dench (2010).

Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, exists to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. Founded in 1961, TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. TCG became home to the US Center of ITI in 1999 and is represented on the US National Commission for UNESCO. TCG offers its members networking and knowledge-building opportunities through conferences, events, research and communications; grants approximately \$2 million per year to theatre companies and individual artists; and advocates at the federal level. TCG is the nation's largest independent publisher of dramatic literature, with 11 Pulitzer Prizes for Best Play on its booklist; it also publishes the award-winning AMERICAN THEATRE magazine and ARTSEARCH®, the essential source for a career in the arts. www.tcg.org

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