

For Immediate release
March 26, 2009

Contact: Linda Jacobs
212.609.5900, ext.255
ljacobs@tcg.org

International Theatre Institute's 47th Annual World Theatre Day Takes Center Stage Across the Globe

International Message read at UNESCO in Paris

Increased participation from American Theatres

Mayoral Proclamations issued in NYC and Chicago

International Theatre Institute (ITI) archives have permanent home
at New York Public Library (NYPL)

Conference in D.C. to advance cultural exchange

New York – As America ushers in a new age of political and cultural diplomacy, Theatre Communications Group (TCG), which serves as the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), is bridging divides and creating dialogue between the American not-for-profit theatre and its international counterparts.

“TCG became the official home for ITI-U.S. in 1999,” said Teresa Eyring, TCG Executive Director. “Our trustees understood the critical importance of international relationships among theatre artists to not only advance the art form, but also act as a kind of under-the-radar diplomacy.”

Created in 1949 by UNESCO, the mission of the International Theatre Institute 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 increase creative co-operation between all people in the theatre arts.”

“It is so encouraging to know that the new President of the United States understands the value of theatre to American life,” said Emily Cachapero, Director of ITI –U.S. and Director of Artistic Programs for TCG. “I hope, in this new era, that theatre will be recognized as a powerful tool that has and will continue to help us move forward as a global community.”

Since 1962, ITI has celebrated World Theatre Day by engaging notable international artists to craft and deliver the annual **International Message**. Previous honorees include Arthur Miller (1963), Ellen Stewart (1975), Václav Havel (1994), Ariane Mnouchkine (2005) and Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi (2007).

This year, ITI chose Augusto Boal, renowned Brazilian theatre director, writer, and politician, to create the message that will guide participating ITI Centers around the world for the next year. Boal is the founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, a theatrical form originally used in radical popular education movements. In 2008, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and his seminal book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, is published by TCG Books.

Boal delivered his **International Message** yesterday (March 25, 2009) to 400 artists as well as cultural and political leaders at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Headquarters in Paris, France. ITI Centers, theatres and communities around the world will continue their celebrations on March 27, 2009.

As with previous International Messages, Boal's statement has been translated into more than 20 languages, distributed to tens of thousands of audiences prior to performances, printed in hundreds of daily newspapers, and heard on countless radio and television stations.

In his message for the 47th Annual World Theatre Day, Augusto Boal writes, "We are all actors: being a citizen is not living in society, it is changing it."

Increased Participation from American Theatres

This year, thanks to social networks and online resources, World Theatre Day is receiving greater attention and involvement in North America. Since theatres are experiencing an expanding awareness of belonging to the global community, TCG, in collaboration with the League of Chicago Theatres is encouraging its members, colleagues and audiences to:

- Share Boal's timely message with audiences and colleagues on March 27;
- Register with the Performing Arts Alliance (PAA) and Arts Advocacy Day;
- Contact their elected officials regarding the need for –
Improved visa processing for international guest artists
Increased support for the State Department's Office of Cultural Exchange

Mayoral Proclamations Issued in NYC and Chicago

Last week, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg issued an official proclamation declaring March 27, 2009 World Theatre Day and states in part

Whereas: Long considered the theatre capitol of the world, New York City respects and admires the cultural diplomacy that is evolving through cultural exchanges and collaborations as TCG and ITI work with national and international colleagues to celebrate **World Theatre Day on March 27, 2009**; and

Whereas: TCG and member theatres are major contributors to the American theatre sector, which employs more than 113,000 artists, administrators and production staff, and produces over 172,000 performances each year, reaching 30 million people and contributing over \$1.6 billion annually to the U.S. economy.

Similarly, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley issued a proclamation sighting Chicago's thriving theatre community as one that continues to engage with the national and international communities.

Major International Theatre Collection Announced

Recently, the New York Public Library and TCG announced the completion of a five-year project that archived a collection of theatrical activity from 116 countries and regions from 1946 to 2006. The International Theatre Institute/Martha C. Coigney Collection includes one-of-a-kind documentation that, in many cases, is the sole record of the evolution of performing arts in certain areas. The Theatre of Latin America (TOLA) Collection—which includes over a thousand scripts, and manuscript documentation of the modern theatre in fifteen Latin American and Caribbean countries—is just one example of this rare collection now available to the public.

Advancing Cultural Exchange in Washington, D.C.

In advance of its National Conference (June 4-6 in Baltimore), Theatre Communications Group will host a pre-conference titled **ACTivate Change: Bridging Creativity and Cultural Exchange** in Washington, D.C. on June 3, 2009. The goal for the pre-conference is to unite theatre practitioners, policy makers, and cultural leaders with the diplomatic community and government agencies to share knowledge and seek ways to increase support and demystify the process for cultural exchange.

It has just been announced that celebrated author Jeanette Winterson will speak at the 2009 TCG Pre-Conference. The author of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*,

Winterson is the recipient of numerous literary awards as well as the BAFTA Award for Best Drama. She frequently writes and speaks about the importance and power of the arts in society, most notably in her book of essays, *Art Objects*.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected in every sphere, artists play active roles in shaping a clear understanding of what this new world culture can and will be. U.S. theatre professionals now, more than ever, must renew its efforts to connect and collaborate with colleagues outside of our borders.

TCG is a national organization with global reach that is taking proactive steps to unite the field of professional non-profit theatre with this new world culture. To learn more about these efforts, including grant programs, publications and World Theatre Day, please visit www.tcg.org.

Background Information

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.

ITI consists of approximately 90 ITI Centers worldwide; an ITI Center is made up of professionals active in the theatre life of the country and representative of all branches of the performing arts. Theatre Communications Group (TCG) became home to the U.S. Center of ITI in 1999.

TCG's mission is to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional, not-for-profit American theatre. TCG initiatives include a variety of artistic, management, international and advocacy programs. Its many publications offer a national resource for reference, opinion and debate on theatre and the performing arts today.

Martha Coigney served as Director of the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) from 1966 to 2003. From 1987 to 1995 she was President of Worldwide ITI. In 1995, she was awarded UNESCO's Picasso Medal and was made Honorary President of the ITI for life.

Currently she serves on several Boards, consults and participates in international theatre projects. As of this October Martha Coigney has studied and worked in theatre for 56 years.

#