



Children's Rights Take the Stage Worldwide Through Performing Arts

ASSITEJ International and its global network mark the World Day of Theatre and Performing Arts for Young Audiences by calling attention to children and young people's cultural rights through live performance and artistic action. As Sue Giles, President of ASSITEJ International, affirms, "Children's cultural rights must be visible, present and practised — today and every day."

20th March 2026, Children and young people's right to access culture is increasingly under pressure. Across the world, opportunities to encounter theatre and live performance are shaped by inequality, political priorities, economic constraints, and the marginal place of the arts within public life. In this context, theatre and performing arts for young audiences play a crucial role in safeguarding children's cultural rights, not as a symbolic gesture, but as a daily practice.

Under the slogan *"Staging the Rights of Children. Today. Everyday."*, ASSITEJ International calls attention to the essential role of live performance in upholding children and young people's rights as active participants in cultural life. Theatre is not simply entertainment for young audiences; it is a space where rights are exercised, identities are explored, and voices are heard.

As Sue Giles, President of ASSITEJ International, states: *"Children and young people make up almost one third of humanity, and yet their right to participate in arts and culture is often overlooked or not taken seriously."*

International frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognise children's right to freedom of expression and participation in cultural life, particularly through Articles 13 and 31. Theatre and performing arts translate these rights into lived experiences. They create shared spaces for imagination, dialogue, and critical thinking, where children and young people can encounter diverse perspectives, reflect on their realities, and build a sense of belonging.



Today's geopolitical and social context, marked by conflict, polarisation, displacement, and growing social divides, makes this work more urgent than ever. In many countries, theatre and performing arts for young audiences face systemic challenges, including unstable funding, limited institutional recognition, and reduced access within education systems. These conditions risk excluding children and young people from cultural life at a time when inclusive spaces for reflection and expression are most needed.

"Adults are the enablers — or the gatekeepers — to children's access to theatre and performance," Giles emphasises. *"That is why we must make these rights visible, present and immediate in every community."*

ASSITEJ International and ArteVOX Teatro reaffirm that access to theatre and performing arts is not an added value or a future aspiration, but a present-day necessity. Supporting this sector means recognising children and young people as cultural citizens, and ensuring that their rights are embedded in cultural policy, education, and public discourse.

Giles also underlines the deeper impact of live performance: *"Theatre ignites imagination — and without imagination there can be no hope. When children encounter powerful shared experiences, we are fostering empathy, interpretation, and the agency of the next generation."*

On this occasion, ASSITEJ's global network is activating performances, public programmes, discussions, and media initiatives across regions. Together, these actions underline a shared commitment: children's cultural rights must be protected and practiced — today and every day.

About ASSITEJ International

Founded in 1965, ASSITEJ International is the global association for Theatre & Performing Arts for Children & Young People, uniting theatres, organisations, and professionals in over 75 countries. ASSITEJ advocates for the artistic, cultural, and educational rights of children and young people, promoting their access to live performance from the earliest age. It supports the creation, development, and sustainability of theatre and performing arts made especially for young audiences.

Through its programmes, events, research, and the annual World Day of Theatre & Performing Arts for Young Audiences, ASSITEJ fosters international collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and professional development, helping



ensure that children and young people everywhere can experience the transformative power of the arts.

<https://assitej-international.org/>