

Dear Ljubo Beslic

I am writing this letter on behalf of members of the National Association for the Teaching of Drama, in support of a group of internationally acclaimed theatre practitioners that we understand to be undergoing significant difficulties at this time.

Mostarski Teatar Mladih (MTM) is a company with whom we have fostered excellent relationships. Sead Djulic and Armin (Joha) Hadzimuzic are at the heart of this. Due to complicated circumstances beyond their control, they have felt the need to redefine themselves and, in honour of the intentions of the original company and the year of its founding, have renamed themselves MTM 1974.

We are saddened that a company with such an excellent reputation overseas is in this present situation. I would like to take the time to illustrate some of the many examples of work that have rightfully earned the company the prestigious reputation it currently has.

They have performed *Pax Bosnensis* over 140 times around the world. This has done much to educate audiences as far apart as Singapore and Cardiff to the reality of the war and for the need to work for peace.

They performed at the IDEA (International Drama and Education Association) executive meeting in 1997 that triggered a re-evaluation of the role of Drama in Education throughout the world. They re-introduced the International Youth Theatre Festival in 1996, encouraging the outside world back in to Bosnia, building bridges with the wider world as well as within the country. They stand for multi-culturalism and moderation. They have normalised the lives of hundreds of young people from Mostar and the surrounding regions following the war, giving them a sense of belonging as well as sense of purpose. In doing this, they were giving these young people an approach to make sense of their lives.

In 1997, they created the Centre for Drama in Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (CDO BiH) and have spent the years since working with communities across Bosnia and other Former Yugoslav Republics to create a world in which people learn to understand one another.

From 1998, the CDO BiH has run international conferences that have brought together practitioners from across the globe to Mostar. For a decade, Mostar has become a byword in progressive education across the world. It has also been an opportunity for the different ethnic communities of the former Yugoslavia to re-discover their shared values. This has subsequently led to further projects: in 2001, NATD sent a delegation to Kosovo as a direct result of work undertaken in Mostar. The group spent 3 months living and working in a Muslim community in Gjilan developing the first Kosovan production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Similar projects have also taken place in Serbia.

These are events that have educated all involved about what happened, what is happening now and how we can prevent it from happening again in the future.

Our relationship with MTM has provided us, and the young people with whom we work, with highly valuable life experiences. Young people in the UK, through NATD, have had regular contact with young people in Mostar. They have devised performances that have been shared with international audiences in various locations in Mostar and the surrounding area, including the Centar Pavarotti. Examples of these experiences include:

1997: *Titus Andronicus*

2001: *Minotaur*

2004: An independent delegation of young people without adults attended a youth conference hosted by MTM

2010: *Tongue*

2011: *Empire of the Son and Beautiful Weapon*

In 1998 NATD sponsored a tour of the UK by MTM. They performed in London, Cardiff, Birmingham and Leeds to great acclaim.

Between 1997 and 2003, Sead Djulic submitted a series of articles about MTM to NATD's professional Journal. We were honoured to finally welcome Sead to our Association's annual Conference in 1999, where he gave a keynote lecture.

This is a deep relationship built on mutual respect and with mutual benefits for all involved. I hope that from reading this, you can see that it means a lot for all of us to support MTM in its essential work. We are discussing other ways in which we can support MTM. We would like to discuss with you the possibility of sending a delegation of members to Mostar to find ways of securing the future of this vital organisation.

I look forward to continuing dialogue with you and I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Saxton
Chair
National Association for the Teaching of Drama.