



CLOSING REMARKS

By JEREMIAH BARTRAM

Animateur for “Celebration” Puppet Power 2022

It’s been my privilege over the past days to see all the shows and participate in all the Intermissions—and I feel changed by the experience, which has been immersive. This always surprising blend of conversations, performances, and some wonderful how-to sessions has been nourishing in ways that I would never have imagined—kudos to Wendy and Erin for creating such a dynamic mixture of experiences, and for so imaginatively exploiting the opportunities of the virtual, which bring us all together, wherever we are.

I can’t in these five minutes do a summary of all the riches of the week, especially the amazing performances, which were often so hauntingly beautiful. But certain phrases stay with me, and always will:

- What are your intangible treasures?
- I sit. I wait. I continue my way.
- Radical listening.
- Your protagonist IS the audience.

- We didn't know there was a way you SHOULD do it. We Just did it.
- Create our own rituals.
- Celebratory love.
- Who is celebratory art for? Everyone. It's owned by the people.
- And maybe simplest, yet most potent of all: *the community of puppeteers*.

So when I reflect on the accumulated call to action which emerges from our time together, which has itself been a celebration—that's the theme to which I return:

- We celebrate life, love and our art.
- We celebrate our identity—as artists, above all; and as people who may be trans, or male, or female; who may also be Indigenous, Black, White, People of Color.
- We celebrate an art that is rooted in our various human cultures—and also reaches beyond them, to a shared humanity.
- We celebrate our identity as people with 'intangible treasures'—and that's each one of us; but also, as artists, we engage in 'radical listening' and are able to hear, and tell, both the intimate and the public stories of our time.
- We celebrate as prophets of a renewed societal order, based on justice and peace and environmental stewardship—'we the people,' as Sandy Spieler says and shows us in her vast outdoor rituals.
- And we celebrate with hope, love and courage, wherever we are, knowing that art is a gift that always returns a hundredfold to the giver, and increases with the giving.
- THEREFORE, we celebrate in the face of the fears and dark forces of our time, knowing that we belong to a community of artists, of puppeteers, of seekers, of peace makers—
- Confident that our work, however intimate or grand in scale, has the power to change the world.