

## **KIDS COMING UP THESE DAYS**

The first impressions we make of emerging talent can be harsh and cruelly dismissive. This has always been the case and may be the only necessary obstacle in the path of that emerging talent. The only necessary teacher. I don't bemoan it.

But with the kind of permanence the internet maintains (and the monopolies of certain private entities that filter what passes through), along with the precariousness of an artistic culture that lives in a society which beams a lack of respect on any work that is not in obvious relationship to the elected homogeneity of what is going on in "current affairs," that cruel dismissiveness becomes that much more destructive.

Storytelling communities aren't going to thrive just because they've re-written the woke script. And yes I am referring specifically (though not exclusively) to the current trend of theatre companies opening their virtual readings with tediously long introductions that include all of the politically correct jargon (I am not against this jargon, I am against introductions all together. Just start the thing). That, coupled with the featured artists' predictable (though, of course, deft) weight on the scale of the current national "conversation" is a signal that we are all doing things that are well and good but ultimately avoiding what is truly necessary to maintain a vital artistic culture.

The only thing that really matters is how resilient the "kids coming up these days" are in making utter crap, getting trashed and ridiculed, and getting back up again to dig a little deeper to find the truth of their hearts so that they may offer their unique gift to the world. And how resilient and candid audiences are in continuing to show up, and, when the work is good, acknowledging that generously, and spreading the word about it relentlessly, even if, and most likely especially if, that work is not associated with an already established institution however large or small.

Those kids need to be seen. And fed.

Those kids coming up can be eighteen or eighty, they can be on the fringes or right at the center of the establishment. By "kid" I don't mean age or relevance and I don't mean a baby goat.

By "kid" I mean anyone who is interested in something completely new and thrilling. Anyone who plays in the sandbox without looking up to see if the adults are beaming their approval.

For actors and writers, whom I am always surprised and grateful to count myself among, the kids are the ones who know they are enough as they are. And all that matters is the honest play they put in, not the flimsy standards of seemingly powerful though clearly desperate gatekeepers and institutions.

Keep your head down long enough and you'll know every time you look up things will change. By "things" I mean institutional standards. Why depend on something so unreliable, when your work has been there for you since day one and will continue to be there until you yourself

abandon it?

P.S.

I have a new short story coming out this week, titled *Sketch Girl* (that is unless I change the title last minute). Excited to share.

If you haven't already had the chance to read my other stories, including *Joseph's dream*, they are all available here:

Mohammad Shehata - Short Stories

And of course, listen to instalment 13 and 14 of *Speaking Into The Fog*. You don't need to be "caught up."

Mohammad Shehata - SPEAKING INTO THE FOG

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*Mohammad Shehata's blog.* [mohammadshehata.com](http://mohammadshehata.com)