

Next Generation at Schäxpir Festival



Nina Hajjiyanni was one of 20 participants in the ASSITEJ Next Generation programme at [Schäxpir Festival](#) in Linz, Austria in June 2009. Nina is Associate Director at Action Transport Theatre

What did you enjoy most? Why?

The most important and enjoyable element was the reconvening of the NG network, with a view to furthering and developing the aims and ambitions of the NG 'idea'. Namely to develop new ideas and thinking in the development of children and young people's theatre and creating new opportunities for cross cultural artistic and organisational collaboration.

In addition to this, the programme at Schäxpir Festival offered seminars and dialogues with artists and presenting companies about their practice; this was very valuable in unpicking the artistic process for some of the work seen. The meeting with the performance director for **Capital of Culture Linz '09** was particularly inspiring, he spoke of the needs and rights of children which was at the heart of the **Linz '09** programme.

Seeing a wide range of work from Germany, Holland, France, Korea, Austria was also very rewarding and highlighted differences in artistic values and approaches. The diversity of that work – site specific, dance, puppet, text based...was great to see

Connecting with ITYARN (International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network – part of ASSITEJ International) at the festival was a key success for the NG project and holds opportunities for the future in terms of documenting and articulating the NG project from a research point of view.

The physical practical work led by Stephan Rabl, which explored individual impulse, and group dynamics was a significant aspect in the programme. This offered the NG group a different way of working together, which cut across language.

What did you enjoy least? Why?

The lack of structured time (and head space) to work on the NG project strategically amid a grueling schedule has meant in my opinion that there was less opportunity to further the broader aims of the project.

I felt at times over the festival unsure as to what the focus was for the NG group. As individuals it was a fantastic, stimulating and demanding experience but as a group, time to talk and plan was rushed and clarity was difficult. There was little reflection time.

It is clear to me that working in an international context, that is, with people of different languages needs MORE time than ordinary in order to communicate carefully and effectively. We would have benefited from space and time away from the excitement and energy of the festival.

Did you have any personal or professional aims that you wanted to achieve or explore during the Festival? What were they? (eg projects, collaborations, meetings etc)

I hoped to

- Work with others to develop the NG project both conceptually and practically working out plans for the future, consolidating and expanding opportunities for a sustainable network
- Develop new project ideas as well as developing an existing opera project borne from the NG project, which is already in the process of being made. Touring the UK in 2010, internationally in 2011
- Profile the opera project (*My Mother Told Me Not To Stare* for Theatre Hullabaloo and Action Transport) both within the NG context and at an international theatre festival as one of the outcomes of Adelaide 2008 ASSITEJ World Congress
- Network with other theatre professionals at the festival
- See new work and be inspired

Do you feel you achieved them? if not, what would have assisted you achieve them?

Broadly the experience was successful in terms of networking opportunities and by offering a diverse programme of performances. On a professional level

- I connected to others
- I found out more about the practice of Stephan Rabl as a festival director and theatre director
- I found out more about the next ASSITEJ World Congress event
- I had opportunity to talk about my practice and the work of Action Transport Theatre
- I connected with the other members of the NG project and found out more about individual practices.

In terms of what would have assisted in achieving more - I feel that planning time for the group prior to the festival and/or having a facilitator to help structure our time would have been of great benefit.

Lack of 'separate' time meant that there was less scope to further the NG network and focus on making new opportunities. Our time was largely 'reactive' in response to the huge amount of stimulus offered by way of performances, seminars and practical sessions.

What have been the developments for the NG at the Festival?

- Discussion around linking with ITYARN in the future.
- Work on a NG book/ documentation for dissemination at the next ASSITEJ World Congress in 2011
- Furthering relationships between NG members
- Connecting with ASSITEJ EC members
- Discussion around new collaborations and projects

What do you identify as being the next step in the NG Program?

I believe it is crucial for the next step to be about creating space for the NG members to work and plan together. I think ideally to maximise the outcomes and benefits of this project it would help to not only have time at a festival but have time separately with a clear agenda and focus.

This would create a crucial opportunity to pull forward learning, to explore our collective process as participants in the NG project and disseminate that information

Final comments and/or reflections.

The Schächpir Festival offered a generous and rewarding experience for NG participants. In order to build on this and the meeting in Adelaide 2008, face to face time is needed in order to capitalize on what has been an extraordinary experience. The danger is that this project 'fades away' whereas, it is crucial to make this experience work for ourselves, for ASSITEJ and for others. The idea of creating a book, of connecting to ITYARN, of offering case studies... are the things we must now focus on. In the process of making these things happen there is much learning to be gained; for the current group, for others and for ASSITEJ as a world organisation.

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