



Report for TYA UK 1st International Meeting of ASSITEJ, Kijimuna Festival, Okinawa, Japan July 30th – August 5th , 2012

Background

At the ASSITEJ World Congress in Copenhagen and Malmö in May 2011, the General Assembly of ASSITEJ adopted a new constitution and established the possibility for an annual gathering of artists on a global level.

In 2012 the very first ASSITEJ 'International Meeting' and artistic gathering of ASSITEJ took place in Okinawa City, JAPAN, from the 28th July to the 5th August 2012, in conjunction with Kijimuna Festa – the International Theatre Festival for Young Audiences.

With the working topic "Theater: Nuchigusui" (Nuchigusui is 'healer of life' in Okinawan dialect), the festival provided an opportunity for people from all over the world to focus on the role of art and artist at times of 'crisis', to witness a country responding to recent tragic events, to experience Asian theatre and culture, to meet, interact, and develop new creative opportunities with people from all over the world.

The Festival and International Meeting offered opportunities to discuss a number of subjects through it's seminar and symposium programme, the role of art and theatre as a means by which 'healing' can take place was in direct response to the impact of the devastating earthquake and tsunami and the nuclear tragedy at Fukushima in 2011.



Path to Warsaw 2014

'Facing the Society, Facing the Artist, Facing the Audience' are the focus areas for the 2 International Meetings and the next World Congress in 2014 representing the 3 year cycle between the World Congress where the National Assembly meet to formally steer the direction of the association.

For Kijimuna 2012, the focus was on 'facing society', exploring how artists respond to communities at times of crisis and in response to disasters and how professional artists respond to children. This subject formed the basis of the 2012 edition of the ASSITEJ magazine which highlights work in this area from a number of different countries. The subject was also reflected in seminar discussions and was the stimulus for the Next Generation performance 'Nuchigusui'.

The theme for the 2nd International Meeting as part of the SCHÄXPIR Festival in Linz, 2013 will be 'the artist', looking at notions of 'quality' and artistic process and product.

The topic for the World Congress in Warsaw 2014 is 'the audience', exploring how specialists in TYA can best understand their audience, the changing relationship between professional artist and child or young person; looking at what the new developments are in this area.

Kijimuna Festival

Performances -

The festival included over 50 productions from Japan, Asia and all over the world, there were a number of companies from Europe including Theatre Batida (Denmark), NIE (Europe), Compagnia RODISIO (Italy) and Catherine Wheels (Scotland) who presented 'White'.

Links to festival programme and Kijimuna Facebook page can be found here-

<http://www.kijimuna-festa.org>

<http://www.facebook.com/kijimunafesta>

Seminars included -

- Current TYA situation in China, outlining possibilities for the future
- Pacific Shorts: short play readings by young playwrights from pan-pacific (Write Local, Play Global)
- ITYARN (International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network)
- Arts Management
- Life and peace (Okinawan history)
- Directing (Organised by Jienkyo - Japanese Union of Theatre Companies for Children and young people)



Symposiums included -

- The role of theatre for children and young people in peace building
- The establishment of an artists network in Asia
- Theatre in education in Asia
- Disability arts (global perspectives)
- Art at times of crisis
- Next Generation Network
- New Methods in TYA practice

ASSITEJ Membership/ National Centres

During the Executive Committee meeting which took place during the festival it was decided that National Centre's of Egypt, Pakistan, Cyprus, Greece, Nicaragua and Uganda would be expelled from ASSITEJ.

National centers are expelled for three basic reasons. The first is for non-payment of dues over a period of three years. The second reason is if a centre is not open to all practitioners in the country, which is a violation of a major provision of the constitution and a founding principle of the organisation. The third reason is where there is inappropriate, or fraudulent behaviour.

ASSITEJ is actively working with other practitioners in the above countries to help create new National Centers that are in keeping with the goals of the association.

New members of ASSITEJ were also welcomed during the meeting, these include Montenegro (National Centre), Bright Stars in Afghanistan (individual member), LIPA in Bulgaria (individual member).

An incomplete application was received from Mongolia which has since been approved. Nanzikambe Arts Development (Malawi) and Dewis Duran (Venezuela) have also recently been welcomed as individual members.

TYA UK Contribution to Disability Arts at Kijimuna

A contribution to a Disability Arts Symposium was made by Arts Practitioner Danny Braverman at the Kijimuna Festival in the form of a video statement which provided an overview of the landscape within the UK related to inclusivity and disability arts. This was done through communication with Diana Kržanić Tepavac (Serbia) who co-ordinated the event and who has worked in the field of Disability Arts in Serbia.

Speakers at the Symposium were;

Yuko IchiJi (Japan) :

www.MUSEKK.co.jp

Muse Company/ Creative Arts Executive Committee (NGO).

Advocate for an improvement in cultural policies.

Katsuhito Morimoto (Japan):

<http://puppet.or.jp/>

Director of deaf puppet theatre made by deaf and hearing people.

Kim Yong-Woo: (Korea)

<http://www.lsf.kr>

Wheelchair dancer.



The video contribution included statements from Diana Kržanić Tepavac (Serbia) Danny Braverman (UK) and Boris Caksiran (Serbia). It is available to watch here - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvTu49_OW1o

TYA UK Disability/Inclusivity Team comprise of a group of UK practitioners, chaired by Daryl Beeton, co-ordinated by Vicky Ireland who meet regularly

Activity to date;

- The team presented a day of workshops and seminars at the 2011 ASSITEJ World Congress in Malmö/Copenhagen, at the request of the Congress organisers who felt the UK had expertise to share. A video documentary of the event can be found here - <http://vimeo.com/user10971930>
- An Inclusive Theatre for Young Audiences" report by Danny Braverman was written, it can be found on the TYA UK website - www.tya-uk.org
- 10 UK practitioners attended the Disability Arts convening 'Towards Setting a New Agenda' at the Kennedy Centre, Washington DC in Sept 2011
- TYA UK Inclusivity team will contribute to activities in Linz 2013 as part of the SCHÄXPIR Festival (2nd International meeting of ASSITEJ) including discussion around a global Inclusive Theatre/Disability Arts Network.
- Contribution to the next World Congress in Warsaw, Poland 2014. It is hoped that this will include an Inclusive production from the UK

TYA UK remains a lead partner in the work of ASSITEJ supporting its commitment to furthering the Disability Arts agenda, being more representative and promoting inclusive work more actively

ASSITEJ International Meeting

The 1st ASSITEJ International Meeting took place on 29th July and 30th July. 25 countries were represented in the International Meeting as well as 2 International Networks as follows;

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, Croatia, China, France, Germany, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nepal, Poland, Romania, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Taiwan, UK, USA, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. International artistic networks were: ITYARN (Research Network) and Write Local Play Global (WLPG)

Writer and EC member Asashi Fujita (ASSITEJ Japan) welcomed the 1st International Meeting of ASSITEJ on behalf of Mr Shimoyama, Kijimuna Festival Director. Yvette Hardie explained how ASSITEJ has been transforming itself in the past year through a set of 'vital choices'. She explained:

"The vision of the association is to be more vital, more engaged, more pro-active; not waiting for every 3 years to meet at our international world congress and performing arts festival, but meeting every year somewhere in the world, ensuring that our members are able to participate in the artistic conversation and development more often and more conveniently. We are heading towards our 50th anniversary in 2015, and there is a definite sense of the organization becoming more flexible, more responsive, more in tune with a rapidly changing world, more dynamic as we do that"



The main purpose of the International Meeting was to engage members with the artistic work that ASSITEJ does. To help develop innovative initiatives that ASSITEJ could steer which would better support the changes members wish to see in their respective theatre scenes.

The activities of the EC four working groups (all of which have to consider fundraising as a common theme) was summarised;

- **Policies and Protocols:** working plan has been refined, developed policy and protocols document has been created to explain roles and responsibilities for the EC, refined the membership system and created policies around the new system of membership; developed criteria for international meetings and for the Congress; developed criteria for ASSITEJ International projects.
- **Publications:** producing annual magazine (both hard-copy and digital versions) – 2012 edition now available with the theme, "Theatre as Medicine for Life"; ITYARN book of papers from the 2011 World Congress has been published; Congress documentation will be created.
- **Promotion:** developed social media communications; revamped and ongoing editing of the website to make it more accessible; launch of the 3 year World Day Campaign "Take a child to the theatre today" and the creation of a promotional video for World Theatre Day 2012; a more inviting newsletter format; interviews to get behind the scenes (with Yvette as President and also with previous winners of ASSITEJ Honorary President's Awards).
- **Projects:** Annual meeting – with seminars, symposiums, workshops and other activities which relate to the core vision of the association; Congress; Next Generation programme – which has a placements programme component. The general aim of the Next Generation programme is to introduce and integrate young people (under 35) and emerging artists into ASSITEJ. It is facilitated through festival programs, placement programs and other means. The website will serve as a hub for placements to be offered and applied for.

ASSITEJ Projects

ASSITEJ Magazine 2012 - 'Theatre as Medicine for Life' has been distributed. An online version can be found here- http://issuu.com/assitej/docs/assitej_magazine_2012

The next issue of the ASSITEJ magazine will be written in English and in French and will be promoted through the SCHÄXPIR Festival and 2nd International Meeting in Linz, June 2013.

ITYARN Book (Research Network)

The book comprises of essays which deal with a broad range of issues including representation, cultural contexts, questions of identity, race, class and gender theory, notions of child and childhood, aesthetics, and the influence of media and dominant ideologies in relation to the field of theatre for young audiences globally. It is available here -

http://www.amazon.co.uk/TYA-Culture-Society-International-Jugendtheater/dp/3631636881/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1358006798&sr=8-1

Write Local Play Global (Writers Network)

WLPG now has 450 members from 54 countries. The purpose of WLPG is mutual communication around play generation and play development projects. The project was launched in Copenhagen and Malmö in 2011.

<http://writelocalplayglobal.org>

Next Generation Programme

The Next Generation Programme at Kijimuna was centred around a collaborative performance project 'Nuchigusui' which young and emerging artists from all corners of the globe created in response to the festival theme 'Theatre - Medicine for Life'. For more information about the next residency to be held in Linz, Austria as part of the SCHÄXPIR Festival (deadline Jan 30th 2013) contact nextgeneration@assitej.at or see <http://www.assitej-international.org/next-generation/>

Taboos in TYA

The Taboo project started in 2007, the aim being to explore what taboos mean in theatre for young audiences across different cultural contexts. The first meeting was held in Venezuela, in Caracas where Latin America's and Nordic countries participated. The second meeting was held in Finland with participation from Ireland, Zambia, Brazil and Argentina. The next meeting will be held in 2013 in Latin America. The project is open to all. For more info contact [María Inés Falconi mifalconi@argentes.org.ar](mailto:mifalconi@argentes.org.ar)

Patchwork Family - Case Study

A co production and international project with Austrian, Russian, Croatian, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Korean and Japanese artists involved.

For more info contact Ivica Simic ivica@assitej-international.org



Regional Networks

Members present at the International Meeting were invited to network and discuss key issues with colleagues over the course of the 2 days. Members were grouped loosely according to regions and asked to consider three questions:

- What is the burning social question of your region?
- How is theatre addressing this question?
- What does 'Theatre as 'Medicine for Life' mean to you?

Feedback included-

In Europe:

- there is growing pressure on children in school that pushes them to be prepared for an economic system. There are many challenges to schools engagement and there is a need to focus on work with teachers to address this.
- There is a focus on work dealing with social exclusion.
- There are various approaches to playwriting for young audiences, which includes debate around the role of the writer and 'didacticism'.
- In relation to 'theatre as medicine for life', theatre could be described as a 'drug'

In Asia:

- there are huge pressures around achievement for children and 'being the best'
- there are significant intercultural issues within communities
- theatre needs to give time for children to feel relaxed and to think about what they want/need.
- theatre is a time where children can imagine.
- In relation to 'theatre as medicine for life', theatre needs to 'cure'

In Australia:

- there is a significant focus on technology and on-line streaming which is taking the place of traditional touring.
- broadcasting is having a big influence.
- In relation to 'theatre as medicine for life', theatre is a 'massage'.

In Canada:

- there is a lot of conservatism (particularly in the anglophone part) and a lack of challenging or subversive work.

In Latin America:

- Mexico has state support for the arts but conditions remain challenging, Argentina is also facing challenging conditions and there is a lack of financial and state support.

In South Africa:

- there is a lot of work happening but everything very much dependent on funding.



Future Networks

There are 3 new potential ASSITEJ networks, conversation about each network's aim and structure will continue at the next ASSITEJ International meeting in Linz 2013. These networks are;

- **Next Generation Network** - a framework for past and present participants to continue an artistic exchange but also as a gateway for other Next Generation artists who may not have previously engaged with the programme.
- **Festivals Network** - bringing together festival directors and programmers from all over the world to share approaches, discuss sustainability and develop new ideas
- **Disability Arts Network** - bringing together disabled and non-disabled artists from all over the world who work in the area of inclusivity/disability arts. To continue to deliver activities within ASSITEJ

Other possibilities were discussed at the international meeting including;

European Artists

A network for members of the European Union (artists within the EU) was also discussed as a potential fundraising opportunity which could support collaborations between ASSITEJ National Centres. There would also be an opportunity to state the case for the arts in relation to cultural policy within the EU.

Dance

The dance network in Europe, 'Freshtracks Europe' will make a presentation at the SCHÄXPIR Festival in Linz and discussion will follow about the possibility of this moving beyond the 2 year European network into more of an international collaboration.

Music Theatre

A Music theatre network was discussed, a working group exists with ASSITEJ members from Austria and Germany who will lead a symposium on the subject in Linz.

Early Years

The European early years network Small Size was discussed with a focus on how it might become a project with possible membership status of ASSITEJ.

Last Generation

This was proposed as a humorous point but was seen as having some merit in relation to older artists sharing their experience with younger artists through project work.

Education/New Pedagogy

Linked to the education work of theatre companies – focussing on how companies reach out through education. A symposium/ seminar on this subject is planned for Linz 2013.

International Collaborations

A possible network which shares examples of best practice in relation to International Collaboration.

Creative Industry

Focusing on expertise in arts management, producing, technical theatre and administration



ASSITEJ Encyclopedia

ASSITEJ is approaching its 50th anniversary in 2015. The idea of an online encyclopaedia of global TYA history is being discussed as a way to mark this occasion and support the work of the association. An online 'wikipedia' type model is being explored which would need to set out the organisation's legacy outlining the history of the association, key practitioners and movements, developments in the field and terminologies.

The online body of information would include a database of 'Who is Who', as well as outlining trends and approaches in different countries.

ITYARN are expected to play a key role in this project and are looking to connect with Wikipedia to develop the project and manage the information.

ASSITEJ Academy

ASSITEJ has been exploring links with the International Theatre Institute (ITI) in order to establish a potential joint proposal which focuses on education and training and opportunities to exchange and enhance skills within the membership. Different models are being explored with recent discussion focusing on university links.

SCHÄXPIR Festival, Linz 2013

The 2nd ASSITEJ International Meeting will take place as part of the SCHÄXPIR Festival, Linz, Austria, 20-30 June 2013

The festival will consist of: 40-45 productions; 20 from Austria and 25 international productions; 3 productions made by and with children and young people.

The Festival and ASSITEJ International Meeting will explore the theme "Facing the Artists - Facing the Art" with seminars and symposiums every day exploring different topics to do with artistic development.

The festival will host around 200 events with 4-6 performances per day.

In addition a Next Generation Programme will take place bringing together young and emerging artists from all over the world for the first time.

Disability Arts will be one of the subjects discussed through the seminar programme. The TYA UK Inclusivity team will contribute to the planning of this work/



Unique to SCHÄXPIR is an opportunity to spend 'a day with' renowned artists, allowing individuals to have in depth conversations, respond to work and develop links.

<http://schaexpir.at/assitej-international-meeting.html?L=0>

'KORCZAK 2014' - Warsaw, Poland

The organisers of the 18th World Congress lead by ASSITEJ Poland have recently made a call out for shows and workshops/seminars for selection.

The Polish Centre of ASSITEJ and the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute through the KORCZAK Festival will present an international programme and a *'review of the most interesting theatre phenomena for children and young people in the whole world during recent years'*.

The Festival comprises two sections: international and regional (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary), there will be a focus on; Interactive theatre which explores the role of the audience, work made by children and young people, Inclusive Theatre, early years work and more

For more info and in order to submit a performance for the festival or to propose seminar or workshop activity see here - <http://www.assitej-international.org/news/congress-news/>

Deadline for workshops and seminars is 28th February 2012
Deadline for performance works is 30th April 2012

Nina Haiyianni
Chair TYA/UK
Friday 11th January 2013