

REPORT ON YOUNG CRITICS' SEMINARS Sofia IATC congress 2008

Between the extraordinary congress in Seoul in October 2006 and the current congress in Sofia 2008, three seminars took place: a first one in Novi Sad in May-June 2007, a second one in Cordoba, Argentina, and the third in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, both in October 2007.

For 2008 two seminars are confirmed: one in Wiesbaden, Germany, in June within the "Neue Stücke aus Europa" biennial, the other in Jonquière, Canada, in September in connection with the puppet theatre festival "Manigances".

Two more seminars are confirmed and being planned for spring 2009: one in Tamasi Aron Theatre in Sfântu Gheroghe, Romania, in March, one in Amsterdam in connection with the Holland festival in June.

1.

In this report we would like to draw attention to some aspects that have characterised seminars in these last five years, regarding the number of participants, the number of monitors and working languages.

Mainly for budgetary reasons, festivals and other organisations hosting IATC seminars usually don't have the capacity to invite more than 10 to 14 participants, sometimes even fewer. That somewhat changes the system we have had for a long time that included the presence of two monitors and the director of the seminars in the role of co-ordinator. Today, usually we work with only two monitors, one most of the times "local", and the other one assuming both the role of monitor and co-ordinator. As the number of seminars every year is rarely less than three, it has become common for the director of seminars to delegate the functions of co-ordination to one of the monitors, as it happened with Jean-Pierre Han in Novi Sad and Paulo Eduardo Carvalho in Santiago.

Traditionally, when groups of 20 participants were still possible, the working languages of the seminars were French and English allowing for the division of the group in two subgroups. Nowadays, due to the reduction of the number of participants and to the decrease of French-speaking young people, the creation of two equal subgroups has become almost impossible, frequently demanding bilingual monitors. The organisation of a first seminar in South America, the one in Cordoba, Argentina – initiative of our colleague Halima Tahan –, demanded a new adaptation of IATC's practises, having for the first time Spanish as the dominant working language.

Adaptability, together with the maintenance of our association's standards, have somehow guided our efforts towards a more flexible and modern structure of the seminars in close collaboration with the hosting entities.

2.

During the last five years we have more and more often worked with thematic seminars, due to their inclusion in festival with specific profiles. In this period 2007-08 the Novi Sad seminar within the Sterijino Pozorje Festival had a theme, "In/out of context", concerning the special aspects of international theatre festivals and their relations to a regional theatrical landscape. The planned seminar in Jonquière, Canada, 2008 will deal with particular aspects of a varied range of performing languages, such as puppetry, masks etc. Experience has proved that a thematic young critic's seminar is often more fruitful than general ones.

Some of these seminars included writing for a local theatre magazine or journal, together with, in other occasions the participation in round tables and similar public events. Likewise, the possibilities opened by the electronic media are creating new opportunities for a more direct exposure through blogs, portals, net-editions of papers, etc.

3.

A new type of collaboration is now being experienced, namely the organisation of a seminar together with an independent critic outside of IATC, for the festival of new plays in Wiesbaden. We are trying to balance this co-operation, and will get back later with an evaluation.

4.

The organisation of young critics' seminars remains as one of IATC's most significant activities, particularly in the renewal of its membership and the revitalisation of its perspectives on criticism as has proved in this congress' papers. Specifically the "alumni" seminar in Seoul produced a circle of younger critics of great importance for the international association and the seminars. That is the reason why we consider of the utmost importance the inclusion of a special section in the new web site of the association, dedicated to young critics. This section could also have links to other young critics' activities.

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