

Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Association of Theatre Critics held in Seoul, 21 October 2006, 9am

1. Present and Absent

Those Present : Ian Herbert (President), Michel Vaïs (General Secretary), Irène Sadowska-Guillon (Treasurer), Yun-Cheol Kim (Vice-President – Korea), Margareta Sörenson (Vice-President, Director of Young Critics' Seminars – Sweden), Don Rubin (Canada), Kerri Allen (USA), Jean-Pierre Han (France), Tomasz Milkowski (Poland), Paulo Eduardo Carvalho (Portugal), Lumila Patlanjoglu (Romania), Kristina Matvienko (substitute for Nikolai Pesochinsky – Russia, who arrived after the meeting), and Kalina Stefanova (Director of Colloquia).

Andrzej Zurowski (Honorary Vice-President) was also present .

Apologies for absence: Juan Antonio Hormigón (Spain).

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted unanimously, and is as appears in these minutes.

3. Minutes of the meetings in Turin, 8 and 11 March

These were adopted unanimously, with no corrections.

4. Matters arising from the minutes: None.

5. Programme of the Seoul Congress

Yun-Cheol Kim summarised various aspects of the congress. Around 95 participants were expected. Only one (Matti Linnavuori, from Finland) had signed for the code of ethics group, and no one had chosen the group on Regional Sections and the next Congress. It was decided to hold only one workshop session, that on the journals exchange. It was also decided that all Congress papers should be put on the website, and that all participants should be told of this.

6. Reports :

6.1. President

Ian showed the certificate he had received in the name of the Association in Novi Sad, at this year's Sterijino Pozorje colloquium, celebrating the 50th anniversaries of both Sterijino Pozorje and IATC. Ian had chaired this meeting. He also showed the protocol signed by him on 6 July 2006 with the Bulgarian Minister of Culture, for the Association's 23rd Congress, to be held in Sofia in the Spring of 2008. Ian had also represented IATC at the conference of the American Theatre Critics' Association, in Niagara on the Lake and Stratford (Canada) in June 2006, and delivered a paper. As a result, the American section of IATC is considering an invitation to hold our 24th Congress in Chicago in 2010. In September, Ian represented IATC at the congress of FIRT in Helsinki, at which 500 papers were delivered.

6.2. General Secretary

1. Michel had tried without success to set up a colloquium on the training of critics in conjunction with the Festival de théâtre des Amériques, in Montréal, in Spring 2007.

2. Thanks to the support of the Festival ManiganSes of Jonquièrre (Québec, Canada), its partner organisation, Michel had been invited as General Secretary to the Titerías (marionettes) Festival in Guanajuato, Mexico, from 22-28 May 2006.

3. Following this, the ManiganSes Festival in Jonquière, Québec (12-17 September 2006), had also invited Michel, and asked him to select four other critics from the Mediterranean region to come. After consultation with several national sections and individual members, Hasan Anamur from Turkey, Diane Scott from France, Orenca Moreno from Spain and Louise Ghirlando from Malta were invited. Their travel and hospitality were covered by the ManiganSes Festival. Michel organised a round table of summary and discussion on the festival, which aroused much interest.

As a result of this, it is now very possible that IATC will be invited to organise seminars for new and/or established critics in Guanajuato and Jonquière. The journal *Jeu* number 123 (June 2007) will also include a dossier on theatrical relations between Québec and Mexico.

4. Michel announced that the proceedings of the Turin Congress colloquium would be published in *Jeu* 121 (December 2006). The dossier, entitled 'The End of Criticism?', will comprise Ian's introduction, the four papers (with illustrations) and a number of articles on criticism in Québec. It will note in addition the twentieth anniversary of the Association Québécoise des Critiques de Théâtre.

5. Michel reported new members of IATC: the Caribbean Regional Section, and new individual members from Singapore (Felix Tan), Nepal (Abhi Subedi) and India (Durgadas Mukhopadhyay), all of whom would be attending the Seoul congress.

All these new memberships were unanimously approved by ExCom. The candidature of the Caribbean Section is also to be put to the next Congress.

6.3. Treasurer

Irène's written report noted that on 30 September 2006, our balance of funds was €15,835.05, after expenditure of €7,924.32 and income of € 3,703.88.

Irène had had no response from the Lithuanian Section since 2002, and had neither a contact address nor a subscription from Iceland or Denmark. These two sections had been officially accepted in principle, but had never paid subscriptions and could not therefore be considered as members. Further, the Slovene section had not paid its subscription since 2003. Should they be considered as in hibernation? Margareta and Tomasz undertook to speak to Lithuanian and Danish colleagues. Michel would talk to Alja Predan, a colleague from Slovenia who was coming to Seoul.

6.4. Other members of ExCom

Margareta will soon be sending her full reports on the seminars in Vilnius and Charleville-Mézières. In Vilnius, after three last minute cancellations from overseas participants, the number taking part was equally divided between 5 Lithuanians and 5 visitors. We shall have to remind participants in future that last minute cancellations are expensive, if rooms have been reserved and paid for. Kerri Allen pointed out that the American participant, who had had to cancel his trip because of family illness, had also had to pay for the air ticket that he had reserved.

Paulo Eduardo announced that like *Jeu*, the Portuguese journal *Sinais de cena* will be publishing the Turin papers, with accompanying articles on local criticism.

7. Future Activities

7.1. 2008 and 2010 Congresses

The 24th Congress is due to take place at the end of April 2008 in Sofia. At a recent festival in Plovdiv, the Bulgarian Minister of Culture had asked Bulgarian theatre companies to prepare to take part in a theatre showcase, which would be held during the event. Since we have two

sections in Bulgaria at present it is perhaps fortunate that the Minister is taking direct and personal charge of the Congress.

2010 Congress : Kerri Allen told us of the possibility that it would be held in Chicago. ExCom met there in June 2002, and in 1997 there was a Young Critics' Seminar there. Jonathan Abarbanel, of ATCA, is working enthusiastically to realise the project. Chicago has 200 theatres, presenting 1000 productions a year to 5 million spectators.

7.2. ExCom Meetings

The organisers of the Europe Prize will invite ExCom to meet in April 2007 (probably 26-29) in Thessaloniki, Greece, and would like us to organise a colloquium there. Originally, the Prize ceremony was to have been held again in Turin, but the budget was taken by the Festival of the Union of European Theatres, who are partners with us in the Prize. Negotiations with Salonika have been helped by UTE's Iphigenia Taxopoulou, a good friend and former assistant secretary of IATC.

The contract had not yet been signed, but since the money has been allocated by the Greek culture ministry, it is 98% certain that the event will take place. ExCom therefore accepted this invitation for its Spring 2007 meeting.

Tomasz said that the Polish section would like to invite ExCom, in Spring 2007, 2008 or 2009. This could be at the beginning of March in Katowice (with a theme of 'Looking for the new generation of artists') at the end of April in Opole ('Contemporary Polish plays and the art of interpretation') or at the beginning of May in Kalisz ('The state of the art of the actor'). In each case ExCom would be invited to take part in a colloquium – titles suggested above. With Salonika and Sofia programmed for Spring 2007 and 2008 respectively, it was decided that this proposal be considered for 2009, and would be followed up later.

NOTE : Arriving after the meeting, Nikolai Pesochinski repeated the invitation from the Baltic House festival to hold an ExCom in St Petersburg some time between 30 September and 10 October 2007. Alternatively, there could be a meeting in Moscow during the Golden Mask festival, in the first five days of April 2008.

7.3. Seminars for New Critics

An invitation had been presented, to organise a seminar in Novi Sad (Serbia) in May 2007, in conjunction with the Sterijino Pozorje festival of Serbian theatre. There would be places for 15 participants, 5 Serb and 10 from overseas.

Other possibilities not yet confirmed:

Yun Cheol had conducted a seminar for Krysztyna Meisner, of the Dialog festival in Wroclaw, Poland. She would be interested in an IATC seminar for young critics in October 2007, especially those from outside Europe.

There had been a proposal for a seminar in Vigo, Spain. Paulo Eduardo had not been able to contact Manuel; we may have to drop this project.

Hungary: there were a number of proposals from the Hungarian Section to be followed up, including one for the national drama festival in Pecs. Ian had also recently met Maria Szilagy of the Contemporary Drama Festival in Budapest; she said she would be very interested in hosting a seminar, if funds could be found (a previous Budapest seminar had been aborted for lack of funds).

Ian also mentioned the Istrapolitana Festival of student theatres in Bratislava (Slovakia), where the mix of young critics and young theatre students might be a positive factor if handled sympathetically. Andrzej recalled that Carlos Tindemans had previously organised a seminar at this festival

7.4. Cultural Bridges/Meetings of Established Critics

Kalina summarised the meeting just held in St Petersburg under the hospitality of the Baltic House Festival, in October, with the theme ‘Do You Follow Me?’ Critics from nine countries attended, including Korea, both Canadian sections and South Africa.

Don added that he had met a number of critics on his recent stay in South Africa, and found much interest among them in IATC, although none had yet joined. He would be revisiting in 2007 for the FIRT conference, from 10-14 July, in Stellenbosch. This would be a good opportunity to set up a section, and he hoped that other ExCom members might be able to attend. [more details of the FIRT meeting on their website www.firt-iftr.org]

Kalina announced that she was working with Ludmila on a colloquium at the 2007 Sibiu Festival, Romania, (which is directed by Constantin Chiriac) : 30 critics will be invited, from 21-29 May approximately. The colloquium will take place over five days of two-hour sessions. Directors and other theatre personalities would also be invited. The festival programme will include a *Seagull* from Andrei Serban and a *Faust* from Silviu Purcarete (Sibiu is joint European Capital of Culture in 2007). Kalina will send more details to ExCom, who will help in choosing the 30 critics to be invited.

The invitation to hold an ExCom in Almada, Portugal, during their festival in July 2007, was made on the basis that we had no other possibility. With the ExCom due to be held in Thessaloniki, it was agreed to organise an Almada colloquium instead. Kalina will work with Paulo Eduardo to develop this proposal.

Santiago (Chile): late August – early September 2007. Carola Oyarzún is able to invite five critics on the occasion of the festival of new European theatre, from the countries participating. They will take part in a colloquium from 29-31 August, on the theme of the ‘unholy trinity’: Theatre – Audience – Critic.

Ludmila put forward a firm invitation from Craïova (Romania), to hold another Shakespeare colloquium in conjunction with the International Shakespeare Festival in May 2008. To be followed up.

Andrzej proposed another colloquium for Shakespeare specialists at the Gdansk Shakespeare Festival, on Shakespeare and the contemporary theatre. In view of Ludmila’s invitation he suggested that the Gdansk meeting be in 2009. While on the subject, he expressed his regrets that no IATC national section had recommended a Shakespeare production for Gdansk. Only Ian had put forward proposals, with some regularity. The call for productions is still on the website. Michel will send a new appeal for sections to send proposals of productions for Gdansk. If there is no response, the festival will have to consider withdrawing the mention of IATC collaboration which appears in its programme. ExCom noted that the proposed colloquium was the first time that IATC had actually been offered reciprocity in terms of attendance, and hoped that this would stimulate more co-operation from national sections. Andrzej mentioned that the major prize at the last festival, in August 2006, had been given to a Korean production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Don Rubin announced that the Canadian Theatre Critics' Association and York University intend to organise a colloquium in 2008 (end-June or beginning July) on criticism and the universities. Given the gulf between pure theory and practice not based on theory, what is the responsibility of the universities? One delegate would be invited from each national section, as well as ExCom, giving a total of around 50-60 participants. Don envisaged three sessions of twelve papers each, and two keynote speakers, such as Robert Cushman (Canada) and John Lahr (USA). He was already looking for financial support for the event. The proposal was adopted.

Finally, it was mentioned that Andrzej would be one of the principal speakers at a colloquium in Wroclaw, Poland, in the one-man show festival. This event was intended for Polish critics.

8. Projects

8.1. Thalia Prize

Don and Yun-Cheol told us that Eric Bentley was well, and would arrive in Seoul on Sunday. He was most enthusiastic about coming to receive his prize. Don was to meet him at the airport. There was already good press coverage of his visit in Seoul. He would be speaking to students of the KNUA, where Yun-Cheol teaches, and he was particularly interested in talking to gay students on the topic of 'Theatre and the Revolution – Sexual'.

Ludmila showed the cane, topped with the figures of Thalia, which would be presented to Eric Bentley. She gave a CD of 26 artistic shots of the cane to Yun-Cheol for Press use. We should invite the sponsor of the prize, Emil Boroghina of the Craiova Shakespeare Foundation to each of the next four congresses, to deliver the canes, which had already been produced. This was agreed.

Everyone admired the statuette. The designer, artist Dragos Buhagiar, and Mr. Boroghina would be featured at the Bentley prize giving. ExCom warmly thanked Ludmila and the Romanian Section for their part in this aspect of the prize.

For the 2008 Prize, ExCom members are invited to think about possible nominations. We can discuss them further in Thessaloniki. Ian will collect ideas on the voting procedure, by e-mail.

8.2. Journal Exchange and Book Projects

The journal exchange project will be developed as part of the Congress.

The book project could not be presented in Seoul by Sanja Nikcevic, who was absent owing to illness. Ian suggested we form a working party of which Sanja would be a member. Don, Jean-Pierre and Maria Helena (according to Paulo Eduardo) expressed interest in joining this committee, alongside Sanja and Kalina. Ian would like to be copied in on any correspondence and would comment as necessary. The aim would be to link this book, on the training of critics, to the Toronto colloquium in 2008.

8.3. Code of Ethics

It was agreed to set up a committee comprising Matti Linnavuori, Manuel Vieites and Michel to further this project. Don also offered to share his views, without wishing to be a member of the committee. Michel will send out a general call for ideas. The basis of discussion could be the existing codes in both Canadian sections and the US. Agreed.

9. Relations with other organisations

Ian had written to all our sister organisations, inviting them to this 50th anniversary congress. Several had sent messages for the Congress programme: ITI, AITA, SIBMAS, FIRT. Others (OISTAT, ASSITEJ) had replied late but would be represented at the congress. No response from UNIMA.

We noted the continuing good relations with all these groups, especially ITI.

10. Communications

10.1. Website. There were those who found it difficult to navigate. It was suggested, for instance that Michel place the Congress information nearer the beginning. Michel asked for individual comments to be sent him by e-mail.

10.2. *Proceedings of the Turin Congress.* As well as appearing in individual sections' journals (see 6.2.4 and 6.4 above) they would be published in due course as part of the Premio Europa proceedings.

11. Membership and recruitment

11.1. New members: 60 countries now have IATC members, but the treasurer pointed out that some of these are 'phantoms', in that they have not paid their subscriptions.

12. Other Business : Michel explained that he was having increasing difficulty in obtaining subsidy for travel from the Canadian Government, which had been making serious cuts in the area of culture, above all in the field of international relations. The Canada Council for the Arts had now accepted the idea of grants for theatre critics, but not for officers of international organisations, who 'should be supported by their organisation'. Other ExCom members said they were experiencing similar difficulties. ExCom accepted that the Association's officers (President, General Secretary, Treasurer) be helped with their travel expenses where absolutely necessary – though in view of past history Ian felt that the President should try not to take advantage of this possibility. The proposal was carried unanimously.

13. Date and place of the next meeting

Thessaloniki, end-April 2007 (26-29?)

Meeting closed at noon.

Michel Vaïs

General Secretary