

## **Theatre criticism, new criticism and young critics**

During the extraordinary congress in Seoul in October, a special edition of the IATC seminars for young critics ran in parallel. 17 young critics were finally selected, almost all of them having experienced one or two previous international seminars for young critics in the world.

We were working for short afternoon sessions, trying to focus - for once - not on the performances we were the opportunity to attend, but on questions related to our profession and its conditions in different parts of the world.

In a final presentation (Oct. 25) to all congress members, the seminar participants tried to launch some of the ideas, problems and topics that seem to be crucial in our time. Mostly, they were related to the quick development of new media, especially in the Internet, like blogs and web site publications.

The young critiques were very clear on one point: IATC must update itself to the needs of today, and improve in letting younger generations into the active work as critics and as members of the organisation.

A multitude of questions were finally grouped under four headlines:

### **1. Pluralism**

It is time to say “Bonjour pluralisme”! Stop ignoring the rich variety in the media! Newspapers are still more prestigious, but Internet is reaching theatre goers and readers (and sometimes interactive readers), younger generations, etc., with a more global and international capacity. It is time to have a more inclusive approach to the critics being active in The Internet - try to find them, reach them, make them join the IATC and update our work.

Democratic, accessible and open minded, all this is true, but with the idea of pluralism come also other aspects: are all opinions acceptable and with the same value? Are there no limits, no rules for theatre criticism in these new media? We need a consistent discussion on such questions.

The definition of “theatre criticism” must in IATC embrace academic criticism and newspaper criticism and any variety of the two; structures of this differ a lot from one country to another, but theatre critics of different traditions should all feel welcome in IATC.

### **2. Quality**

Can anyone be a theatre critic? Who has the right to claim to be one? The Internet lets anyone express him or herself. It is democratic, but also a challenge to our profession, skill and capacity. We can only compete with our knowledge and our ability to describe, our perfection in language and expression, capable to inspire audiences and theatres. It is not enough to have a cultivated background in literature to reflect on the theatrical life - we should also have a wider view on social contexts, the span between history and future, we should aspire to something new.

A suggestion in practice is that young critics start to circulate a newsletter (monthly to start with...) informing on what is new, interesting, important in theatre today where they live and work.

### **3. Ethics**

New media are challenging the authors' rights to some extent, but generally speaking the ethics of a theatre critic are about the same on the Internet as in any other publication. International laws and the national jurisdiction should be respected in the same way as for paper publications.

IATC should defend its members and their possibilities to work; we should also argue among our members for the virtues of the profession: seriousness, quality, continuity.

#### **4. Gender, age, 'globality' and other balances**

IATC should better mirror the fact that today's critics are increasingly women, but also should other balances be respected such as a between the western world and the rest of the globe, and between different ages and years of experience. Aspects of equality and discussions on norms should help the work of the IATC in the national centres as well as in the ex-com.

#### **Some proposals:**

A young critic's newsletter (as mentioned above)

Young critics could run one or several seminars for young critics

A special seminar on gender issues/equality

Seminar with external monitors (Kristeva was mentioned!)

Web site / blog critics should be represented in the ex-com

Representatives of young critics should be represented in ex-com meetings

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