

WORKSHOPS FOR YOUNG CRITICS 2018-2021

Report

By **Jean-Pierre Han**, director of workshops

The workshops for young critics, which is one of the flagship activities of the IATC events, prove to be, year after year, more difficult to organize, mainly because of the financial difficulties of most festival organizers that would be willing to accommodate them.

However, after our Congress in St Petersburg in November 2018, we have been able to keep our cruising speed and organize a quick succession of workshops, one – the first one – in Iasi, Romania, during the festival for all ages directed by Oltita Cintec. It was the second time this festival opened its doors to young critics. As usual, two groups were accepted, one working in English under the supervision of the Bulgarian critic Aglika Stefanova, the other one in French, monitored by our Japanese colleague, Mariko Anazawa, who is also the IATC Adjunct Director of workshops for young critics. As the French-language group had only three participants, it was combined with the English group. This experience of combining both groups had previously been experimented successfully in the Limoges workshop, in June 2018, and co-monitored by Mariko Anazawa, Michel Vaïs and myself. This is an arrangement that should be discussed among us, and may be repeated. The Iasi workshop was held from October 2-10, 2019.

Immediately following, a new workshop was held at the Wuzhen Festival, in China. It was organized by Peng Tao, from our Chinese section, whom I would like to thank here. This workshop was different, as one of the two working groups brought together exclusively young Chinese critics. Of course, Peng Tao monitored it. The second group, with participants coming from seven different countries, was conducted by Octavian Saiu. This was a wonderful experience, which I could attend thanks to the generosity of the organizers. The program of this edition of the Festival was particularly prestigious, with shows from Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Philippe Genty and Michael Thalheimer...

During this workshop, the participants attended a public round table on criticism, chaired by the monitors, Peng Tao and Octavian Saiu (I always try, for all workshops, to organize a similar event whenever possible).

These two workshops were initiating a strong trend for a nice season of work for the young critics, but this momentum was to be brutally put to an end for the reasons we all know.

After this sad misfortune, and as suggested by our president, Margareta Sörenson, with whom I have always been in perfect agreement, we decided to find ways not to demobilize our young critics, but try to minimally respond to their expectations. Taking into account the impossibility of watching live performances, and to be together, we chose to work on-line, with a new procedure.

Here, allow me to reproduce the proposal I circulated to the Excom members before our meeting of March 27. Two experiences already took place, one monitored by Deepa Punjani with an English-speaking group, the other one by Mariko Anazawa for the French-speaking one. The results were quite different, but both interesting.

We propose to continue this experience and have French- and English-speaking groups. Each time, we suggest limiting the number of participants to 4 or 5, with one monitor. This way, we will have **small groups, easier to manage**. This solution also takes into account the fact that it is often quite uncomfortable and tedious to work on-line (one gets tired, technical difficulties may arise, translation issues occur, etc.). As far as the work itself is concerned (including, of course, writing articles), we suggest adding another element, which will be to invite an accomplished critic whose role will be to finally evaluate the workshop and the critical work of all participants. This way, several such workshops may be organized, over a short period. Each time, one show will be seen by all (video recordings of shows are easy to find these times), which everyone will be able to discuss and work on. Since the young critics will be able to watch the recording before the meeting, they will have all the time needed to write a critique according to the guideline they will be given, and from which a discussion can arise. As much as possible, this will also allow us to recruit young critics from a large variety of countries.

The duration of these working meetings should not exceed 1.5 hours.

This being said, I hope we can resume as quickly as possible our young critics workshops as we have always organized them.

(Translated by Michel Vaïis)