

13th GENERAL ASSEMBLY of ASSITEJ - TROMSØ, NORWAY

Centres present:

Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Brasil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India (corresponding member), Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia (observer), the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palestine (observer), Peru, Poland, Portugal (observer), Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

By proxy:

Belgium, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Russia, Ukraine.

Helge Andersen, President of ASSITEJ Norway, welcomed all the delegates to Tromsø for the General Assembly and Congress and on behalf of the Norwegian Centre he gave his sincere wishes for a successful event.

Helge Anderson read out a message of greetings from Honorary President Ilse Rodenberg wishing success and good outcomes.

The President, Michael FitzGerald, welcomed the Assembly and expressed his thanks to all the delegates for coming to this 13th ASSITEJ General Assembly.

He gave a short presentation of the Executive Committee members present.

The President thanked the Executive Committee and the Commissions for their work during the last three years and addressed a special thanks to Niclas Malmcrona, who had managed to take over the duties of the Secretary General at a time of real trouble and who had worked hard and efficiently to secure that the work was done.

The President gave his report to the assembly (see attached).

Finally the President asked for all items for a o b on the agenda to be handed in in writing.

Apologies from members of the outgoing Executive Committee had been received from: Judit Benedek (Sweden) and Jacqueline Russo (Venezuela).

It was noted that the official opening ceremony prior to the Assembly included the Honorary Presidents' Award. At the Award, the President congratulated all the finalists and in thanking Nat Eek, Honorary Past President for his donation of the Award, remarked that ASSITEJ was most fortunate in having such a valuable and remarkable Award which was unique among international arts associations.

Nat Eek stated the Award was for sustained excellence 1996-99 and thanked the Award Jury for its outstanding work in reaching a decision. The Jury was Michael Ramløse, Denmark, Galya Kolosova, Russia, Kim Woo Ok, Korea and Vicky Ireland, Great Britain.

He announced Arena Theatre, Australia, as the winner and presented Rose Myers, Artistic Director, with the prize of a cheque for \$5 000, an engraved goblet, a bottle of champagne and a citation. She made a speech of thanks and spoke of the work of Arena Theatre.

Special commendation was made to Eva Bergman, director, Sweden who was runner-up and and who received a citation.

Honourable mention was made of the other 6 finalists who were also presented with citations. They were: Guti Fraga, director, Brazil, Rolf Lydahl, director, Sweden, Mikri Porta Theatre, Greece, Halina Machulska, director, Poland, Theater Spilkischte, Switzerland and Childsplay Inc, USA.

1. Nomination of Voting Commission

On the recommendation of the Executive Committee the General Assembly agreed to the Voting Commission as follows:

Eckhard Mittelstädt (Germany)

Vicky Ireland (Great Britain)

Anette Riis Poulsen (Denmark)

Kim Woo-Ok (Korea)

Verification of the centres' right to vote

The total number of votes came to 124

Simple majority: 62 votes

Total numbers of centres: 42

2. Approval of the minutes from the General Assembly 1996 in Rostov-on-Don

No comments or questions were made.

The minutes were unanimously adopted.

3. Report from the Executive Committee

No comments or questions were made to the report.

The report was unanimously adopted.

4. Accounts 1996 - 1997 - 1998

The accounts were presented by Treasurer Harold Oaks (USA). He commented on the accounts which had been distributed to all the centres in advance.

There had been exceptional expenditure in connection with the trouble of the Secretary General. With a subtraction of this expenditure, income and expenses would come close to a balance.

On a question from Pete Belcher (Austria) the Treasurer explained that ASSITEJ International was not in debt. The accounts showed a current balance of \$47 608. In comparison the balance at the 1996 Congress had been \$45 500.

Ann Shaw (USA) commented on the expenses for the President's Award and the Treasurer explained that the amount \$550 covered bringing the jury to the meeting in London and shipping the material to the Archives in Frankfurt.

With no further comments or questions the accounts were unanimously adopted.

5. ASSITEJ International Survey

The Survey was presented by Chair of Artistic Commission Marjorie Maclean (Canada). She

was pleased that it had been possible for the first time in the history of ASSITEJ to ask the members for their opinion. Many of the questions in the survey were compiled by matters raised at previous congresses.

The Committee had received more answers back than had been anticipated. In all 29 centres had participated.

In addition it had been particularly satisfactory to receive so many answers from ordinary members. There were even cases of individual members answering even though the centres did not.

The Committee had extracted from the answers 15 primary recommendations pointing out the core values of the organisation and what the members want from the organisation.

It was the hope of the Committee that this commitment to ask and answer would continue during the next three-year period.

Marjorie Maclean concluded by stressing the importance of taking up the challenges ahead. In doing so it would be possible for ASSITEJ to take a place in the world as a prominent and efficient organisation. She reminded the delegates that in adopting the survey the centres should feel committed to it.

Ivica Simic (Croatia) praised the good work done by the Committee and was pleased to note that at the turn of the Millennium the survey could give a clear picture of what ASSITEJ has achieved over the past 9 years. He encouraged, however, the next Executive Committee to work seriously on the problems raised by the survey in order to secure better results, more members and a much more aggressive approach over the next three years.

Judy Potter (Australia) praised the survey and gave her recommendation to endorse it. She reminded all the delegates of their responsibility within their own country.

Somalatha Subasinge (Sri Lanka) stressed the need to listen to different voices within ASSITEJ - voices telling of differences in some countries so vast that some of the delegates would not be able to imagine it.

Myriam Reategui (Peru) found the document important but too technical and specific in relation to reality in regions like the South American ones. She encouraged the Executive Committee in dealing with the recommendations of the survey to include representatives from other cultures.

Wolfgang Schneider (Germany) agreed that the statistics of the survey might not be representative of the world as some countries had sent one or no reply and others had sent many. He suggested to set up working groups to consider three possibilities:

- 1) to discuss the artistic circumstances
- 2) to promote the idea of theatre for children all over the world
- 3) to develop the organisation

He encouraged also to look specifically into the differences between the member countries.

Marjorie Maclean (Canada) added that the main purpose of the survey had been, in fact, to point out the differences in order to push the organisation forward more progressively. She suggested that delegates should sign up during the Congress for specific areas of interest and in doing so commit themselves and/or their centres to assist the Executive Committee over the next three years.

Luca Radaelli (Italy) found the survey good and useful - allowing for the limitations of any statistics. He stressed the importance of realising that quality should still be the main core value for the organisation and to keep in mind that through theatre it is possible to deal with social problems of a very complex reality.

Hagit Rehavi Nikolayevsky (Israel) stated that the survey was clear and sharp and would save the organisation from a vague image. It would also be a good starting point for her own centre in their endeavours to encourage more members to join the national centre.

Vicky Ireland (Great Britain) found the survey extremely useful in the promotion of theatre for children towards governments. She also pointed out that a lot of work would have to be done from now on by the members themselves in order to bring results to the next Congress. She conveyed the offer of help from Jeremy Turner, Arad Goch Theatre in Wales, in relation to questions of minority audiences.

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe) expressed her gratitude for the work done by the Commission. She was particularly happy to see the links to education in the survey and she felt that the document held the capacity for every country to make of it what they wished and concluded by giving her re- commendations to the survey.

Jan Skotnicki (Poland) warned against the danger connected with all information and communication of leaving out imagination and the impact on the child.

Anette Riis Poulsen (Denmark) deduced from the discussion that the document had already proved itself a success. She was convinced that it would become a usefool tool for all the centres. She encouraged all the centres to start working on the recommendations.

Lou Westbury (Australia) gave her warm support to the survey and brought up the suggestion that the Executive Committee should find a way to distribute computers to centres which could not afford it.

Kim van der Boon (the Netherlands) was impressed with the huge work done by the Commission and added that much pressure would be on the next Executive Committee to follow up on it. She pointed out that everyone at the Congress shared the wish to reach children with artistic work and now was the opportunity to be practical and start work.

Harold Oaks (USA) summed up that all the recommendations of the survey should be discussed, addressed and commissioned. With the survey it would be possible to reach out to countries with conditions very different from our own.

The President stated that it was now the responsibility for the Executive Committee to make a strategy for work based on the survey and what had been said during the present discussion. He asked for the Assembly to vote on the paper.

The report was put to the vote:

Centres for: 41

Centres against: 0

Abst: 1

The report was adopted.

6. Review of the Language System

The President referred to the recommendation made by the Executive Committee.

There were no comments or questions from the Assembly.

The recommendation was unanimously adopted.

7. ASSITEJ World Day

The President asked the assembly to discuss the proposal. He explained that the 3rd Monday of October was already International Children's day as set by UNESCO and it had seemed sensible to choose the same day.

There were some comments to the proposed day and when it should commence.

It was suggested that the Executive Committee should do some research and in dicussion with the membership establish an ASSITEJ World Day in the month of October starting in the year 2000.

The President asked the assembly to endorse the proposal with the suggested amendment.

The proposal was put to the vote:

Centres for: 41

Centres against: 0

Abst: 1

The proposal was carried.

8. ASSITEJ International Charter "Magna Charta"

Wolfgang Schneider (Germany) explained that the statement was intended for every member to use in his or her work in the promotion of theatre for children.

There was a short discussion about the specific wording of "theatrical arts" (1st line) and of "politico cultural" (22nd line).

It was agreed to change the 22nd line of the Charter into: "ASSITEJ International is a political advocate for the promotion of theatre for children and young people in principle and practice".

There were no further questions or comments.

With the agreed change the Charter was put to the vote:

The proposal was carried unanimously

On a proposal from Vicky Ireland (Great Britain) it was decided to list on the document the names of the centres in support of the Charter.

9. ASSITEJ Archives in Frankfurt

Wolfgang Schneider (Germany) explained that the Archives represented the international cultural memory of ASSITEJ.

The Archives contain 2000 books about children's theatre, more than 3000 plays for children from all around the world, 1000 copies of video tapes from theatre productions and over 30 000 articles and photos.

He asked the centres to help the continued existence of the Archives by sending in material and by using the Archives.

The President stressed that ASSITEJ was indebted to Germany for its admirable work with the Archives.

10. Working Programme 1999-2002

The Assembly was asked to bring up further questions or proposals to the draft for a Working Programme 1999-2002 as outlined by the Executive Committee.

It was generally agreed that the implementation of the survey and the proposed Working Programme would be a huge amount of work and priorities should be decided by the Executive Committee.

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe) requested the Executive Committee to consider special support for the African countries over the next period.

Maria Luiza Monteiro da Silva (Brazil) asked to include in the Working Programme extra emphasis on theatre dealing with underprivileged children in all cultures.

Jürgen Flügge (Germany) encouraged the membership to use the tools already within ASSITEJ e.g. the World Theatre Festival and the ASSITEJ World Project.

Somalatha Subasinge (Sri Lanka) suggested to place Executive Committee meetings in countries whose representatives would otherwise have difficulty in attending the meetings.

This would also allow the EC members to see and to encourage the work from these countries.

The President asked the Assembly to endorse the Working Programme as set up in the draft proposal with the additional questions raised by the Assembly.

The proposed Working Programme 1999-2002 was unanimously accepted.

11. Subscription 2000-2001-2002

On behalf of the Executive Committee Treasurer Harold Oaks (USA) recommended a continuation of the current system for the next three-year period up to 2002 with a minimum subscription of \$100 and with encouragement to pay more - up to \$500.

It is the intention in 2002 to recommend a raise of the minimum subscription fee to \$150 or \$250.

Arun Agnihotri (India) asked if the fee for corresponding membership would be the same.

India is currently trying to persuade Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh to become corresponding members.

The President clarified that up to 2002 the fee for corresponding members would be the same.

The conditions after 2002 would be considered before next Congress.

The proposal to continue the present subscription system was unanimously accepted.

12. Budget 1999-2002

The proposed budget was unanimously accepted.

13. Place of Congress 2002

The President was pleased to welcome two proposals to host the next Congress: from Canada and from Korea.

a. Canada (Vancouver + Montreal)

Marjorie Maclean and Remi Boucher presented the invitation from Canada.

Canada has proposed several times over the years but Canada was never chosen.

The year 2002 will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Festival in Vancouver and there are plans for an elaborate programme.

In unison with "La coups de theatre" Festival in Montreal the two festivals offer a wide variety of shows and different styles of work in a Canadian context. The two festivals have a strong focus on work both nationally and internationally and can also offer strong aboriginal theatre and other forms of theatre showing recent immigration and integration of different ways of thinking.

A joint Vancouver/Montreal Congress would combine the English and the Francophone aspect. The two festivals have the staff, the office facilities etc to cope with the Congress arrangements.

There is a good chance of getting the money from the Canadian government right now and it would be possible to start the planning of the Congress immediately.

The Congress would take place during the month of May 2002.

b. Korea

Kim Woo-Ok put forward the invitation from Korea.

The plan to make a joint Japanese/Korean Congress had been given up prior to this Congress. The Japanese Centre was, however, willing to support and help if Korea would take on financial responsibility.

Kim Woo-Ok suggested it was time to venture into new areas in the world and trying to organize a Congress in a different way. It would also be a good opportunity to have a look at the Asian Child moving toward a new identity in a new century.

A new government has just taken over in Korea and seems to be willing to spend money on children and on good cultural programmes, so chances for support to the Congress seem fair. The Congress would take place during the month of July 2002.

The President thanked the two centres for their fine invitations and asked the Assembly to vote on the matter.

The result of the voting was:

71 votes to Korea

47 votes to Canada

(3 centres not present)

Korea was elected to host the 2002 ASSITEJ Congress.

Kim Woo-Ok pointed out that the invitation would only be possible if the money could be secured.

14. Presentation of the candidates for the Executive Committee and for the offices of the Secretary General and the Treasurer.

The candidates for the offices of Secretary General, Treasurer and for the Executive Committee presented themselves:

Candidate for the office of Secretary General:

Niclas Malmcrona (Sweden)

Candidate for the office of Treasurer:

Vicky Ireland (Great Britain)

Candidates for the Executive Committee:

Lou Westbury (Australia)

Remi Boucher (Canada)

Ivica Simic (Croatia)

Wolfgang Schneider (Germany)

Hagit Rehavi Nikolayevsky (Israel)

Yoshige Kagawa (Japan)

Kim Woo-ok (Korea)

Kim van der Boon (the Netherlands)

Helge Andersen (Norway)

Jan Skotnicki (Poland)

Peter Rinderknecht (Switzerland)

Harold Oaks (USA)

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe)

15. Elections

The Executive Officer Niclas Malmcrona explained the procedure of elections: Candidates receiving 61 votes or more are elected. Candidates receiving less than 61 votes are not elected.

a) Election of Secretary General

The outgoing Executive Committee had nominated Niclas Malmcrona (Sweden) for the office of Secretary General 1999-2002.

The result of the vote:

Yes: 121

No: 0

Abst: 0

Absent: 3 (Iran)

Niclas Malmcrona was unanimously elected as Secretary General 1999-2002.

b) Election of Treasurer

The outgoing Executive Committee had nominated Vicky Ireland (Great Britain) for the office of Treasurer 1999-2002.

The result of the vote:

Yes: 109

No: 6

Abst: 9

Vicky Ireland was elected as Treasurer 1999-2002.

c) Election of the Executive Committee

The centres were asked to vote for the remaining members of the Executive Committee.

The result of the vote:

Lou Westbury (Australia) 85 votes elected

Remi Boucher (Canada) 80 votes elected

Ivica Simic (Croatia) 92 votes elected

Wolfgang Schneider (Germany) 95 votes elected

Hagit Rehavi Nikolayevsky (Israel) 72 votes elected

Yoshige Kagawa (Japan) 91 votes elected

Kim Woo-ok (Korea) 94 votes elected

Kim van der Boon (the Netherlands) 99 votes elected

Helge Andersen (Norway) 73 votes elected

Jan Skotnicki (Poland) 76 votes elected

Peter Rinderknecht (Switzerland) 76 votes elected

Harold Oaks (USA) 87 votes elected

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe) 94 votes elected

All the candidates were elected.

d) Election of President

The Executive Committee retired and brought back the nomination for Presidency.

Wolfgang Schneider announced he had not proceeded with a nomination for the Presidency so that at least one of the key officers of President, Secretary General and Treasurer could come from outside Europe. On behalf of the Executive Committee Wolfgang Schneider (Germany) nominated Harold Oaks (USA) as candidate for the office of President of ASSITEJ.

Result of the vote:

Yes: 92

No: 18

Abst: 14

Harold Oaks (USA) was elected the President of ASSITEJ 1999-2002.

e) Election of Vice-Presidents

Four candidates for the three offices of Vice-Presidents were nominated for the three posts as Vice-Presidents:

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe)

Wolfgang Schneider (Germany)

Lou Westbury (Australia)

Kim Woo-ok (Korea)

The Secretary General pointed out that in order to be elected the candidate must get more than half the votes present. If more candidates get more than half the votes the ones with the most votes are elected - up to number of offices vacant.

Result of the vote:

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe) 40 votes not elected

Wolfgang Schneider (Germany) 113 votes elected

Lou Westbury (Australia) 42 votes not elected

Kim Woo-Ok (Korea) 60 votes not elected

The Executive Committee retired and brought back a proposal for a second round of election with three candidates (for two offices):

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe)

Kim van der Boon (the Netherlands)

Kim Woo-Ok (Korea)

Result of the vote: (three centres not present)

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe) 72 votes not elected

Kim van der Boon (the Netherlands) 80 votes elected

Kim Woo-Ok (Korea) 74 votes elected

Vice-Presidents of ASSITEJ 1999-2002 are Wolfgang Schneider (Germany), Kim van der Boon (the Netherlands) and Kim Woo-Ok (Korea)

16. The Tromsø Declaration

Marjorie MacLean (Canada) read out a letter in support of the Declaration from Minister of Foreign Affairs in Canada Lloyd Axworthy. She asked the assembly to endorse The Tromsø Declaration.

She explained that the intention of the paper was to have a paper in the name of ASSITEJ at a national and international level which asserted the right of all children to live without war and labour.

Maria Luiza Monteiro da Silva (Brazil) and Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe) spoke in favour of the paper and encouraged the Executive Committee to expand it further.

It was decided to add to the paper the following sentences:

”The Tromsø Declaration is against any sort of exploitation, abuse and violence that can lead to physical, psychological and social harm that may impair the integral growth of the child”.

and at the end of the last paragraph:

”The members of ASSITEJ International will also actively work towards the implementation of the rights of children and young people in the world through theatre arts”.

The President asked the assembly to endorse the paper with above amendments.

The Tromsø Declaration was unanimously carried.

17. A o b

a. Honorary Membership of Michael Ramløse, Denmark

On the recommendation of the Executive Committee it was proposed that Michael Ramløse should be given the title of Honorary Member of ASSITEJ.

Michael FitzGerald (Australia) spoke on behalf of the Executive Committee of Michael Ramløse’s extraordinary work in the service of theatre for children. His talents as creative administrator for ASSITEJ International and his eye for fairness and quality combined with his ability to inform, include and involve the world had earned him the right to Honorary Membership of ASSITEJ.

Tisa Chifunyise (Zimbabwe), Somalathe Subasinge (Sri Lanka) and Arun Agnihotri (India) spoke warmly for the proposal.

Michael Ramløse was made Honorary Member of ASSITEJ by a unanimous vote.

b. Report on regional ASSITEJ meeting in Africa

Tisa Chifunyise and Elisabeth Kabasa (Zimbabwe) gave a report on a conference held in Harare May 1999. Eleven countries took part in a very successful meeting. The participants agreed to work together in the future and find ways of co-operation with similar organisations in Africa. It was the hope that a number of the countries participating in the meeting would join ASSITEJ International.

c. ”Action for Children’s Art in Great Britain”

Vicky Ireland (Great Britain) gave a report on a newly formed organisation in Great Britain with the purpose of promoting arts for children. Sixty people across all the art forms in Great Britain have come together in order to act on a situation increasingly desperate with lack of money, interest and support. A conference had been held in March and a newsletter had been distributed. Already people have started to work together across the art forms and there is reason to believe that collectively the children’s arts will make up a stronger voice.

Vicky Ireland encouraged the delegates to consider this idea on an international level.

d. The Bravo Project

Katariina Metsälampi (Finland) reported on ”The Bravo Project” which will take place in Helsinki in 2000. Nine cultural capitals are working together and forming new networks. In 2000 there will be performances from all of the nine cultural capitals.

e. ASSINET

Bjarne Thanning (Denmark) gave a report on the work done on ASSINET. There is now an ASSITEJ homepage with general information about ASSITEJ, the current newsletter,

information about the Executive Committee, a member address list, the festival guide etc.

Also available for the members is a surf-site and the ASSITEJ chat - a discussion forum securing instant communication.

Bjarne Thanning encouraged all the members to use the ASSINET and to contribute with suggestions for improvement and expansion.

f. Children as Victims to Media

Rosie Belton (New Zealand) asked the Executive Committee to protest against the fact that children all over the world are becoming victims of the media. She encouraged ASSITEJ to consider working out a declaration similar to the Tromsø Declaration demanding that children and children's imagination should be protected.

g. Greetings from Georgia

The President had received a fax from the centre in Georgia wishing success for the Congress. There are now problems of reorganisation in Georgia as three national theatres have been asked by the government to become one theatre. There is now an urgent lack of money and the Georgian centre asks ASSITEJ for support.

The President asked the assembly to bring back the request to the centres.

h. Report from Peru

Myriam Reategui (Peru) spoke about the difficult situation for the Peruvian centre. She explained that because of lack of money there had been no candidate for the Executive Committee.

18. Closing Session

On closing the General Assembly the President Harold Oaks thanked ASSITEJ Norway for their good work in organizing a fine Congress and a wonderful Festival. A special thanks was addressed to Helge Andersen for making this visit to the delightful town by the Arctic Circle come true.

The President gave his warm thanks to the outgoing members and councillors of the Executive Committee for their hard and dedicated work in the Committee.

He thanked also the Voting Commission for their work during the Assembly and a very special thanks were addressed to Niclas Malmcrona for his efficient and good work as Executive Officer.

Vicky Ireland (Great Britain) spoke on behalf of the assembly and of the Executive Committee when she expressed her deep and heartfelt thanks to Michael FitzGerald for his outstanding contribution to ASSITEJ International during his period as President.