

Closing speech by President Wolfgang Schneider at the 14th Congress in Seoul
Colleagues and friends of ASSITEJ!

As the new president of ASSITEJ International it is my great honour to close the 14th ASSITEJ Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2002 in Seoul.

I do this in respect of the Honorary Presidents and Honorary Members of our organisations. It was nice to have you with us, thank you Michael Ramlose, Ann Shaw and Orna Porat, thank you Nat Eek and Michael FritzGerald.

It was the first Congress in this millennium, and it was the first Congress in Asia. And this made this event very special. The West met the East, the North the South, and the other way around. Storytelling met dance theatre, actors met puppet players. Big shows on huge stages met small performances in little boxes; the brave little tin soldier from Argentina met the brave little tin soldier from Germany; contemporary pop music met traditional folk music; realistic stories met fairytales; the disabled girl met a hat seller; Prince Hamlet met the Dragon King; Kim from Korea met Kim van der Niederlande met Kim from the United States.

This means the Congress was a success, the festival was an outstanding programme! Both events showed us the variety and the diversity of our business, the theatre for children and young people.

Yes, you are right, I said business, because of the many artists working all over the world for children, because of the big support of thousands of companies producing permanently theatre art for young audience. And because of the huge amount of money which was spent for the festival by Korea and different sponsors. And from all over the world to make it possible to be here, to perform and to communicate from face to face. In the time of internet and other technologies it is of great importance to come together in reality because it is this that makes theatre so unique. There are real people who have to talk to real people in the same moment lifely and authentically. So our business is a social one, our interest is not the profit of money, our profit is the art of imagination. To promote creativity, to give phantasy a chance, to reflect our daily being. That is why it is so important to have ASSITEJ. And every three years such a meeting.

This meeting was useful, this meeting was fruitful, this meeting gave us the power to go home and to work on with satisfaction, proudly and initiatively. We found good conditions in Seoul, we found a friendly audience full of interested young and old Korean people. We found a city which shows the world that football is not the whole life. Seoul shows us that the arts must be part of cultural policy, must be the mirror of the society, must be in the centre of our life.

ASSITEJ Korea gave us an introduction of a well-organised centre. And we know ASSITEJ Japan is doing this job also very well. Thank you for hosting the Congress, thank you for a wonderful festival, thank you for a great hospitality.

Dear colleagues and friends, have a nice evening, a good journey back and take care.

I close the 14th ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival Seoul 2002 and hope to welcome you again to the 15th ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2005 in Montreal. Farewell!

Professor Dr. Wolfgang Schneider
President of ASSITEJ International