

# 10th Women Playwrights International Conference Cape Town - South Africa 2015 | *Newsletter #3*

## Greetings from Cape Town!

Firstly, thank you to those who responded to the call to be part of the 2015 reading committee. We were grateful to get so many responses from all over the world from women who are interested in helping to read and select the plays. For those who responded, we will be in touch in due course to let you know the details and timeline for the submission procedure and how shortlisting and selection will work.

We've now begun to focus on another phase of the planning, and probably the most difficult: writing proposals and sourcing funding for the logistics and organization of the conference!

As you know, WPI is a non-profit and non-governmental organization. As such, the task of getting the conference financed is huge! We are excited to have been granted some funding from the Writers' Guild of Norway, which

will already enable the participation of females from parts of the world where support is not available.

However, of course, we need as much funding as we can get and cannot do it alone. If you have experience in grant writing, know of any funding avenues we should be pursuing, would like to receive a general proposal in order to secure funding in your own country, or work for or with organizations that administer funds to bodies like the WPI or for events like the WPI conference, we would love to hear from you!

Please email us at [wpic2015@gmail.com](mailto:wpic2015@gmail.com) with your suggestions.

**Kind regards,**

**Amy Jephta, Karen Jeyens, Zara Trafford**

*WPI Host Committee*



**WPIC** is an opportunity to meet, to build networks, to create genuine, lasting contacts between women playwrights and theatre professionals. Our aim is to have a supporting impact on cooperations and to build bridges between people from different parts of the world.

**WPI** was founded in 1988 and held its first conference in Buffalo, New York, USA. Two hundred women from over 30 countries were in attendance. Since then, women playwrights have gathered in Canada, Ireland, Greece, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia, India and Sweden. The 10th conference will be held 2015 on Cape Town, South Africa.



**You can follow us on twitter @womenplaywright  
Feel free to spread this news letter among your colleagues!**

Homepage for WPI, [www.wpinternational.net](http://www.wpinternational.net)

# ***Hello all WPI-members!***

Hope this finds you all well and working! Life is a rollercoaster, suddenly things happen in your life that you don't expect – and the ups and the downs get to us. I experienced getting breast cancer right after our conference in India. My years between the Mumbai Conference and the Stockholm Conference were very much about fighting the cancer – and realizing that I have to take care of myself in order to be able to do my projects and work with what I find important in life. It was also a lesson in being content. From my fear of death I got the opportunity to look back – and I saw that what I already had done was good enough. We are good enough! The wish to get well was not so much about being able to do more projects, as to try to be better at appreciating the good things in life.

I just had the great experience of visiting Australia. I met so many nice people and experienced so much. I had some very good meetings with some of you Australian WPI-people! At the Adelaide Fringe Festival I saw "Breaker" by Salka Gudmundsdottir – WPI-member from Iceland, and a participant in Stockholm last August. "Breaker" was performed at Holden Street Theatre. Very nice!

In Melbourne I got the fantastic opportunity to be part of the La Mama Theatre. Rosemary Johns, WPI-member/playwright/actor/director directed a staged production of my play "The Archaeologists" to a completely overbooked crowd at a Saturday matiné in the middle of March. Sandra Shotlander, WPI senior advisor, interviewed me on stage after the reading.

Back in Norway I am now working towards my own production STEM! We have a workshop next week and start the rehearsals in the end of May. So now I am doing the last research and preparing music, texts and visuals for my 3 actors. I have been commissioned to make a performance about gender and democracy – and must say I got very inspired by Guerilla Girls and their performance at WPIC2012 Stockholm.

Just think about what can be inspiring in South Africa! I look so much forward and I can assure you that Karen Jeynes and Amy Jephta with their group in Cape Town really is planning a fantastic conference.

**Work well, live well, fight and breathe.**

**Lene Therese Teigen**

*WPI President*

*therteig@online.no*



*Liz Jones - artistic director at La Mama Theatre in Melbourne and Lene Therese Teigen.*

## 3rd WPI CONFERENCE 1-10 of July, 1994: ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

The third international Women Playwrights Conference was held in Adelaide from 1st to 10th July 1994 as a ConFest, combining the activities of a conventional theatre conference with an international performance festival. The Conference theme, the relationship between traditional women's ritual or storytelling and contemporary women's performance, grew out of the Australian experience. By acknowledging all the international and indigenous strands of performance that exist in Australia, it was possible for the Conference program to welcome women from all over the world who were working in a wide range of traditional and contemporary forms.

Representatives from 37 countries attended the conference as delegates. Speakers took the platform from 26 countries, 31 performances were staged from countries outside Australia, and plays or extracts were read from 14 countries.

The 457 delegates came from 40 cultures, spoke 30 languages, belonged to different classes or castes, were racially diverse and had entirely different understandings of the practice and purpose of theatre and performance. Considering the varied performance practice of the delegates, it is not surprising that the privileged place of the "playwright" as a writer of plays had to be contained within a wider definition of a creator of performance which includes traditional storyteller, performance artist and ritual leader.

As host to the International Women Playwrights Conference, Australia brought the event to the Southern Hemisphere for the first time and, also, as a Westernised country within the Asian Pacific Region, had a unique geographical and cultural opportunity to embrace playwrighting from all corners of the world.

The Conference aim was developed out of discussions between the Artistic Director, participants at the First Asian Women in Theatre Conference held in Japan in 1992, and members of the Conference research committee. There was a strong commitment to create a theme that would provide a meeting point for artists from diverse cultures and political perspectives. In order to make the Confe-



rence truly international, it was essential that the structure was pluralistic and avoided a "Western" ideological bias.

The 3rd International Women Playwrights Conference significantly increased participation by playwrights from countries in the Asia-Pacific Rim at this event. 14 countries from this region made up 39% of the countries at the Conference including first time participation from writers in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam as well as a dramatically increased participation from women from the previously represented

nations. Including Australian, Asian Pacific delegates made up 71% of the total delegate population. Representation was significant from the United States (62 delegates) and Canada (21 delegates), the two previous host countries. Caribbean representation was strong with delegates from Jamaica, the Bahamas and the West Indies. South American representation was, in the end, disappointingly non-existent with the late cancellation of Argentina's Griselda Gambaro and Susana Torres Molina and the failure of delegates from Bolivia and Chile to raise funds to cover their airfares. However, plays by Gambaro and Molina were read as part of the Artspace Programme.

The periphery of the European world was well-represented with several delegates from Scandinavia, Greece and Britain. Central Europe itself was noticeably poorly-represented despite dogged efforts from Conference organisers.

The African continent was represented by speakers from Morocco and South Africa as well as African-Australians from Ghana and Tanzania.

Guest speakers included Robyn Archer (Australia), Vijaya Mehta (India), Justine Saunders (Australia), Joan Littlewood (England), Li Ying Ning (China), Renee (New Zealand), Fe Remotigue (The Philippines), Kim Kum Hwa (Korea), Hannie Rayson (Australia) and Fatima Dike (South Africa).

"The significance of this conference must not be underestimated ... [it] was perhaps the most important theatre event in Australia this year."

Theatre Australasia, august 1994

**Julie Holledge**

*Conference Artistic Director*

## Aat Festival 2013 in Amman, Jordan

In March 2013 I participated in the Aat festival Celebrating International Women's Day in Amman, Jordan. Aat is a network of Arab women artists with WPI member Lana Nasser, one of the founding members. The festival took place between 8-12th March, 2013 at Al Balad theatre among other locations around Amman.

In its fourth year, Aat objective is promoting women artists from the Arab region. This time round they welcomed International Women Playwrights from the UK, US, and I, from Uganda.

With a multi-genre lineup, a film was screened, an opera and plays staged and read. All these tackled themes ranging from poverty, sexuality, war, culture and the age old question of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit, in relation to the position and struggles of women in societies from around the world.

The festival was kick started on International Women's Day with the screening of *Solar Mamas* at the Rainbow Theatre. *Solar Mamas* is a documentary that follows a Jordanian woman's journey to Barefoot College in India where she is to receive training in Solar Energy Engineering. Her enduring strength is tested so much so that she opts out of the government funded program for the sake of her children, only for her to willingly choose to return to India with a stronger resolve to learn, work and be able to do something with her life while steering change in her community.

My play *He Is Here He Says I Say* which was part of the Democratic Stage WPI Conference in Sweden 2012 was workshopped and read.



Margaret Namulyanga and Razan Mbaideen from Aat Festival

Dima Bawab, a Jordanian opera singer, staged an adaptation of *My Voice*. A delicate but bold attempt that poses what if the roles were reversed in the Garden of Eden, or Adam and Eve willingly ate the forbidden fruit and or, what would it have been like if Eve was offered the forbidden fruit and turned the offer down? *My Voice* in this time asks us to reconsider the trappings and bindings of norms and moral

codes when it comes to the vices that victimize women. The opera suggests women need to find ways of firmly expressing their viewpoint without being necessarily incensed within establishments like religion that spell out roles in addition to calling for total subservience.

Other plays staged include *Return*, written, directed and performed by British artists, *3 Fates of Iraq origins* that explores the contrast in a young woman's journey as she returns to Iraq, ten years since the US invasion; and *Bareed Mista3jil...egad* by Happy Hyder from the United States. *Bareed Mista3jil...egad* is a comprehensive

collection of coming of age real life stories and monologues on homosexuality among Lebanese women.

The festival was met with a great and vibrant turn up of theatre patrons.

**Margaret Namulyanga**  
WPI member, Uganda

## Ana Mendes: DANCE PLAY

After the wonderful sunny days in the WIPC, Stockholm, I went straight away to the rehearsal room again... to work on Dance Play, a performance about immigration, life and movement.

Dance Play tells the story of Mahanz Banaie, an asylum-seeker who came from Afghanistan to Europe at the age of 14 years old. Dance Play it's a play about life, movement and immigration. A work about the moment we live now in Europe with hope and revolution. I use a pair of Nike shoes to tell the girls story, the relationship with her husband. The performance is composed by several lyric moments, interlaced with movement scenes, in which I explore dance in abstract terms.

Dance Play is written in English with some parts in German, because I am also exploring gender/identity in parallel with language. So, the same way that male and female are two identities interlaced, also English and German are two languages that derivate from each other.

I developed this work because I met Manhaz Banaie in Weimar, during an artistic residency that I attended there. Although her story is not original, in the sense that all immigrants have to face all sort of problems to arrive to Europe, her personality and the life scale of her story fascinated me. So, I decided to develop this performance with the hope that, if I could make something out of it, perhaps she could also see a possibility for life change.

The development of this performance was very difficult for me, given the complexity and rigorous of the work, and my lack of performing skills, as a playwright... Nevertheless, I persisted on doing it, and made a couple of scratch shows in London until I arrived to the final version of the play. On the last show, at Sophiensaele, in Berlin, last February, I decided to drop it, because I felt that it was too much effort for me... but finally I won the Prize of the Jury Sophiensaele, Festival 100% Berlin... but, what made me tremendously happy was that the girl and her family were all invited to go to Poland for one week to attend a festival were I am performing. So, after this event, I decided to keep performing this play... which is now going to Spain and the UK. So, perhaps, Mahnaz live can also be changed... One day.... ■

## Berlin Summer University of the Arts - July 15th - October 13th 2013

The Summer University of the Arts in Berlin offers a wide range of outstanding seminars and courses: performing arts, fine arts, design and music. It also includes a creative entrepreneurship programme sponsored by the European Regional Development Fund of the Berlin Senate Chancellery - Cultural Affairs.

The International Summer School of Creative Entrepreneurship (ISSCE) offers artists and creatives of all disciplines as well as designers and creative entrepreneurs varied courses in areas as: Networking and Communication, Career Planning and Self-Marketing, Creative Entrepreneurship and Organisation and Arts Management. More info: [www.udk-berlin.de/sites/sommerkurse/content/index\\_eng.html](http://www.udk-berlin.de/sites/sommerkurse/content/index_eng.html)

### Calls for Participation

Applications are now open for the UNESCO International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (IFPC). Priority will be given to young artists/creators (18-30 years) or to projects benefitting youth, especially in developing countries.

**Deadline: 2nd May 2013.**

More info: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/creativity/international-fund-for-the-promotion-of-culture/>

**Have you something to share with other WPI members?**

**Mail your info to me, [mireille@miripedia.se](mailto:mireille@miripedia.se)**

**Next news letter will be published in August/September.**

**Dead line 25 August.**

## Good news from Norway!

Last year in Stockholm, a very generous support from the Writers' Guild of Norway made it possible for 26 women playwrights from 19 different countries to attend the WPI Conference. That had a great impact on the conference and created a true meeting place for discussions, net working and social fun.

The good news are that the Guild in Norway once more has decided to give a substantial support. This time for the Conference 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa.

At the same time, they elected the WPI president, Lene Therese Teigen, as member of the Guild's board.

*Thank you, Norway!*

## WPIC 2012 - report from FUL

The conference in Stockholm has been covered in two large reports. The formal one is already published on the web.

Very soon the second one will reach the web too. It's done by FUL (Ugly), an art magazine, an artist collective, a performing arts company. They write in the foreword:

"We have been exploring, analyzing, exhibiting, and performing works around neo nationalism, skin, the staging of oneself, performativity and censorship. All of this with inspiration from queer feminist and post-colonial theory and activism.

This publication is dedicated to Women Playwrights International Conference 2012. In Stockholm, Sweden. We were asked by the host of the WPIC 2012, Riksteatern, to make a documentation of the event in the critical but tender Ful manner. The result is not only a review/retrospect of the events that took place, but an ambition to fill the gaps of those that didn't. Not a document for the archives, but one that can keep on asking questions to form future conferences. And here is our reflection. Our memories. Our tribute. Our resistance. Ful is a feminist. Ful is a post-colonial. Ful is a queer."

*In the beginning of May, you'll find the report on the website*

<http://wpic.riksteatern.se>

## **WPI-Philippines' Board convenes in the Summer Capital of the Philippines**

Beating the scorching heat of the dry season in the country, the WPI-Philippines' (WPIP) Board convened in Baguio City, the Summer Capital of the Philippines. Spearheaded by its Founding President Malou Jacob, the Board Meeting was held at the Conference Room of Azalea Residence in Baguio City last April 14, 2013.

The meeting was well-attended by its Board composed of Fe Remotigue and Bebot Rodil from Mindanao, Vice-President Dessa Quesada-Palm and August Andong from Visayas, WPI Management Committee Member Marili Fernandez-Illagan, Secretary-General Ma. Theresa Belleza and Board Treasurer Jasmin Tresvalles from the National Capital Region, and Mary Carling, together with Ms. Jacob, from Luzon.



The major topics discussed were a review of the WPIP organizational status, general objectives and future plans; the WPIP accomplishments since its inception in the Second Conference for Asian Women and Theater in November 2000, and the reports on various WPIP initiatives and projects.

Each Board Member were requested to present a brief report on the implementation of the WPIP's flagship project "Save the Babailan" which discovers and helps the emerging Lumad and Moro women playwrights in the country through the conduct of Basic Playwriting Workshop for Indigenous Women in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao; the hosting of the 6th WPIC in Manila (2003); and the major participation of the WPIP Board Members in various WPIC such as the conferences in Adelaide (1994), Athens (2000), Jakarta (2006), Mumbai (2009) and Stockholm (2012).

A report on the 2012 Dramaturgy Workshop and Discussion Series and the 2013 Dramaturgy Colloquium-Workshop Caravan, an initiative in collaboration with the International Playwrights Forum (IPF), one of the standing committees of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), was also presented by its project director, August Andong.

Held in Metro Manila, Iloilo City in Panay Island and Bacolod City in Negros Occidental, the said projects were able to provide a venue for

sharing of ideas and exchange between international dramaturges and Filipino playwrights and theater artists and for developing skills of dramaturgy among the young and aspiring Filipino playwrights.

Secretary-General Ma. Theresa Belleza reported on the participation of the WPIP in the 33rd ITI World Congress in Xiamen City, Fujian, China in September 2011 thereby expanding the international network and linkages of the WPIP.

To cap the meeting, Ms. Marili Fernandez-Illagan, WPIP Board Member who was also elected as member of the current WPI Management Committee, presented an overview on the preparations of the WPI conference in South Africa in 2015 and the possible participation of the WPIP to the said conference.

And as agreed during the meeting, the WPIP looks forward in pursuing its flagship project "Save the Babailan" and in achieving its future plans to (1) come up a compendium of works by Filipino women playwrights, (2) organize and facilitate dialogues and exchange with international playwrights and organizations, (3) establish a database of Filipino women playwrights and their works (4) mentor young and emerging playwrights through residency program on playwriting, and (5) organize a Festival of Women Plays.

**August Andong, WPI-Philippines**

# WPI elected for 2012-2015



Sondos, Lene, Andrea, Marcia, Valantina, Vanessa, Patricia, Helena & Sally.  
Missing: Catherine & Marili

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## HOST COMMITTEE/SOUTH AFRICA

Karen Jeynes  
Amy Jephta  
Zara Trafford, conference coordinator  
e mail: [wpic2015@gmail.com](mailto:wpic2015@gmail.com)  
twitter: [@womenplaywright](https://twitter.com/womenplaywright)