

Press release from Riksteatern
(Sweden's national theatre tour company), 29 Mars 2012

WPIC – A Unique Theatre Event in Sweden

In August this year, women playwrights from all over the world are to meet in Sweden. The organisation Women Playwrights International, WPI, is holding its ninth annual conference at Södra Theatre in Stockholm; it is being hosted by Riksteatern. The six days will span a rich programme including, among much else, South African drama, a Baltic theatre project and Afghanic Voices. WPIC is a unique theatre event in Sweden, 2012.

Under the heading The Democratic Stage women playwrights will be meeting from 15 to 20 August at Södra Theatre in central Stockholm. Added to their numbers there will be stage directors, actors, theatre directors, researchers, teachers, journalists and others interested in societal issues taking part in the conference, too. Both new young writers and older more experienced ones will be participating. There are to be workshops, seminars and performances. Effort has been made to include participants from outside the English-speaking areas of the world. Men too are welcome to the conference; but on this occasion they're to be ushered more often into the auditorium than onto the stage.

WPI is a network for women playwrights of all generations and from all quarters of the globe. The conference, which is arranged every third year, is a very important meeting place; it provides opportunities for collaboration and establishing durable, qualitative artistic relationships. The WPI president is Lene Therese Teigen, a playwright living in Oslo; she has taken part in several earlier WPI conferences.

“There is great strength to be found in gathering and meeting eye to eye,” says Lene Therese Teigen. “If we are to live in a democratic world, women must be given the means to make their voices heard. The WPIC is a step in that direction.”

Three particularly important items in the programme are the so-called ‘keynote speeches’: one on the position of women within Arab theatre, one on performing arts for children and young people, and one on the situation of women within African theatre south of the Sahara.

Playwrights have been encouraged to submit scripts; nearly 600 plays have been sent in from over 60 different countries. Out of these, 150 have been selected for presentation during the conference. The plays are based on six proposed subjects: The Individual and Society, Sexuality, War, Social Equality and Poverty, Work and Career and God/Divinity.

“We have received works from Bangladesh, Canada, Finland, Uganda, Lebanon, Cuba, Chile and Australia, among other countries. It is really exciting that there is so much interest. I’m proud that Riksteatern is hosting the WPI conference, now that it’s coming to Sweden. The conference theme with its international perspective is definitely in line with Riksteatern’s work,” says Rani Kasapi, head of Riksteatern’s international operations.

Among the selected scripts are South African Nadia Davids’*This Woman Is Not for Burning*, Singapore-born Rosaline Ting’s *Journeys*, and the Swedish writer and journalist Ulrika Kärnborg’s new play – about

Natascha Kampusch – I Used to Be His Orange Blossom. Kärnborg's play is due to be world-premiered at the Stockholm City Theatre in September this year. Moreover the Young Women Playwrights Around the Baltic Sea project and Suzanne Osten, who is giving one of the keynote speeches, will be visiting the WPIC; Osten will be talking on performing arts for children and adolescents.

More than 300 are expected to take part in the conference which will be the first WPIC in northern Europe. Earlier conferences – they are held every third year – have been in, for example, Toronto, Manilla, Athens and, the previous one, in Mumbai. WPI is a network that aims at encouraging developments, and at gaining international recognition for the work of women playwrights. The WPI guidelines state, among other things, that all women in theatre are welcome regardless of race, class, age, ethnic or religious background, sexual preferences or disabilities.