

10th Women Playwrights International Conference Cape Town - South Africa 2015 | Newsletter #4



TIME TO SUBMIT YOUR PLAY FOR CAPE TOWN!
Read more at page 3.
Last day of submission 1 dec 2013

Get inspired by the 4th conference in Ireland,
as remembered by Sandra Shotlander and Margareta Skantze,
at page 4-6.

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**

You can mail us on **wpic2015@gmail.com**

Feel free to spread this news letter among your colleagues!



Homepage for WPI, www.wpinternational.net

Words from our president:

Hello all WPI-members!

I hope this finds you all well. One year has passed since our conference in Stockholm. So much has happened since then – and so little. I feel like it was yesterday. I have so many nice memories from meeting all you beautiful talented people - so many fantastic texts, stories and contexts are still working inside me.

Finally the group of documentarists have the result of all their work in Stockholm, here you have the link to the FUL report. Thanks to the swedish FUL group for all their hard work, we are so happy you managed to complete this even with hard working conditions.

I am so happy a lot of you WPI members still are in contact, and I am hoping to see you all in two years in Cape Town. It is with great pleasure we now can bring forward the call for submissions for our next conference – look

elsewhere in this newsletter for the information. You are doing great work in South Africa – Amy, Karen, Zara and Fatima!

And finally – our history section. In this newsletter we are proud to present two accounts of the WPI conference in Ireland. Thank you to senior advisors Sandra Shotlander and Margareta Skantze for your stories from Ireland.

For now – all the best from the norwegian mountains, we have a good summer here in Norway and I am working on my next play in-between taking walks in our beautiful nature.

Work well, live well, fight and breathe.

Lene Therese Teigen

WPI President

therteig@online.no

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR the 2015 WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Women Playwrights International is now accepting submissions from playwrights who want their original work to be part of the next WPI conference. The conference will be held in July 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Women playwrights are requested to submit plays on the following themes:

- *Beyond Words*: Plays that script the physical, the visual, the digital or the aural - new texts for new mediums
- *In Other Words*: Plays that are multilingual, for multilingual audiences, or have been translated into English from their original language
- *Choice of Words*: Scripts that have been developed with actors, directors, co-writers or dramaturgs as part of a workshop or devised process
- *Our Own Words*: Plays written for the writer themselves to perform, plays exploring autobiography or memoir

Eligibility

- **Submission** is open to professional, semi-professional or beginning women playwrights from any part of the world, of any age.
- **The script** can be unproduced or previously produced (please do not submit plays for which you do not own copyright).

- **One acts** as well as full length plays will be accepted. Musicals will be accepted within reason and selection will be resource dependent.

Guidelines

For the first round of submission, please submit the following via the online form:

- *An 80 word synopsis of your play*
- *A 50 word motivation detailing how and why it fits one of the WPI 2015 themes*
- *A 50 word biography of the playwright*
- *Your country of residence*
- *A brief production/development history of the submitted play (if applicable).*

Please note

- Your synopsis must be in English, and your full script should be 75% English, or translated into English
- Your play must have a maximum of 8 characters

- **Deadline for submissions: 1 December 2013**

- Please only submit scripts which are already written, or will be completed by March 2014

The shortlist will be announced in April 2014. Selected applicants will be invited via email to submit the full script within 2 weeks.

The final line-up will be announced in July 2014.

Translation & selection

While we are seeking ways to offer translation services, we are currently unable to do so for the first submission round.

The mandate for the conference will be to select 20% South African playwrights, 20% playwrights from the rest of Africa, and 60% playwrights from the rest of the world.

To submit, please click on this link.

For queries or further info, please contact us at wpic2015@gmail.com.

Kind regards,

Amy Jephta

Karen Jeyens

Zara Trafford

Fatima Dike

WPIC Host Committee

For more information about WPI, please visit our website

www.wpinternational.net

Read about the previous conference

<http://wpic.riksteatern.se>

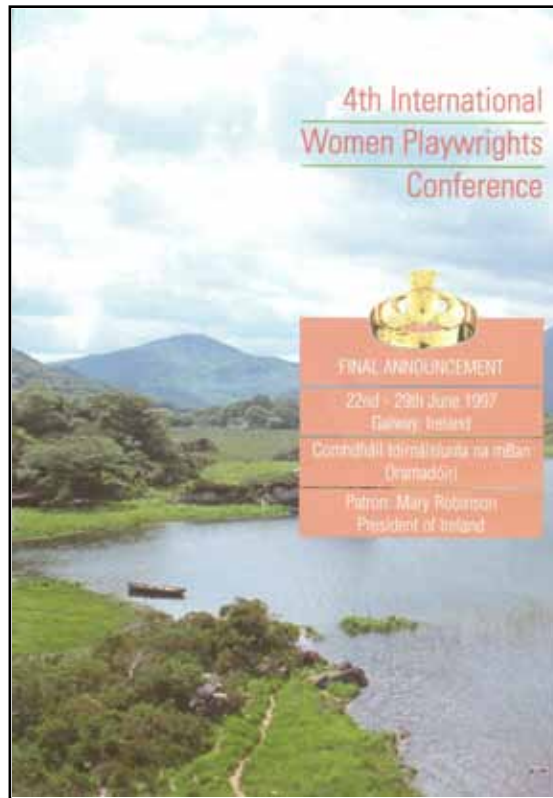
4th IWPC CONFERENCE June, Galway, Ireland , 1997

“National Identity Within a Worldwide Context”

Sandra Shotlander and Margareta Skantze remember:

Having attended the 1st conference in Buffalo, USA in 1988 and the 3rd conference in Adelaide, Australia, 1994, I was very excited to travel to Ireland with its great beauty, rich cultural heritage, including some favourite playwrights and not the least to reunite with friends from past conferences. I was also looking forward to making new friends and it was in Galway, that Margareta Skantze and I met for the first time. We did not know that Ireland would be something of a turning point for our organisation. *The International Center For Women Playwrights*, formed after the first conference, closed its office in Buffalo and continued its activities on line. While retaining the International Advisory Committee with national representatives, it was after Ireland that the organisation created an International Management Committee and became incorporated as *Women Playwrights International*. With early funding problems the conference would not have taken place without the dedication, commitment and generosity of its Co-ordinator *Maire Holmes*, also with the support of her late husband *Tom Breathnach*. Maire is a celebrated Irish playwright, poet, award-winning writer of literary fiction, theatre director, radio and TV broadcaster and newspaper editor. *Ann Henning Jocelyn*, playwright, actor, director, broadcaster, translator and celebrated writer of fiction was equally important for the success of the conference as Artistic Director. Finally the conference would not have taken place at all without the work of the committee members or “team” behind Maire and Ann.

The conference took place at University College, Galway and most participants including myself were in University accommodation within walking distance of the conference venue, thus we got to know each other well. In five days with keynote



speakers, workshops, panels and 91 plays by women from 22 countries, we certainly felt a global web of connections and that women’s work co-

ming from national roots had an international resonance.

Australian keynote speaker, Kate McNamara pointed out that in past times women would have been put to the stake, for none of us has learned the art of silence. Far from silence the 270 women created, “a kind of Celtic Revival” for participants as Belinda Taylor from Bay Area, California, wrote in *Callboard/Sept. 97*, (now called *Theatre Bay Area Magazine*.)

This was the first and only time I have had the chance to hear a play in the lyrical Irish language. *Eilis Ni Dhuibhe: Dun ma mBan Tri Thine* explored the life of a contemporary woman, through the use of Irish legends and fairytale. Another hugely poignant Irish play was *An Island’s Lament*, by Mary Hoey, about a family leaving the dying community of the Blasket Islands in the 1930’s. The daughter of the family had different views however on island life.

A heart wrenching performance imprinted on my mind was the monodrama *Coming and Going at Sundown* by Korean writer, performer, Gil-Cha Hur. The play is about the Korean women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military in World War II. It is based on the story of Gil-Cha Hur’s grandmother, abducted at the age of 14 and treated with unspeakable brutality. The tragedies were compounded, when those who survived the war returned to their villages and were shunned by their own people. The piece ended with a sha-





manistic ritual for the grandmother's spirit, for all the aggrieved spirits of the women. To conclude the ritual, an iron bell was struck three times. The audience left the theatre without applause, without a word, a profound silence.

Other full productions included Greek playwright, Christiana Lambrinidis's eyewitness accounts of women in a Bosnian prison camp; Canadian, Ann Lambert's dark comedy set in the kitchen of a seedy New York restaurant and Le Thi Diem's one-woman performance *Red Fiery Summer* telling the story of her family, who moved from war torn Vietnam in the early 70's to San Diego, where the Vietnamese mother learnt the awful truth about her son's death. Tanzanian born Australian writer performer, Sheela Langeberg had showcased her one woman show based on her mother's life story, *Maija of Chaggaland*, in Adelaide. It was wonderful to see Sheela's performance and its reception in Galway.

Readings of plays were equally varied such as *Nga Pou Wahine* by Maori writer, Briar Grace Smith about a Maori worker in a canning factory; an Alaskan story about a Cree child taken from her parents and put into foster care; a mystical story about a crypto-Jewish enclave in New Mexico; Katherine Griffith's broad comedy *The Ballad of Billy K* in which the hero is a woman.

I had met Indonesian playwright, Ratna Sarampaet in Adelaide, 1994. In Galway before her play reading, Ratna spoke about the difficulties encountered performing her play, *Marsinah Accuses*, on abuse and repression of workers. At one performance the Indonesian officials turned off the lighting in the venue, but the performers continued in the dark. In 1998 under the New Order Regime, Ratna was put in prison for three months. The continuing story of

Sheela Langeberg in *Maija of Chaggaland*



Ratna's association with WPI including directing the 6th WPI conference in Indonesia is to come, but before that Greece and the Philippines.

Sandra Shotlander

(Melbourne, Australia) WPI Senior Advisor

Sandra has been an actor, playwright, director and teacher of writing. Her plays have been performed throughout Australia and in the USA. She has written commissioned works for Melbourne schools, Victorian Arts Centre and for Radio National, Australia. She founded and directed two theatre groups, The Plantagenets performing school syllabus work and Melbourne Mime and Mumbles, a theatre of the deaf.

She has performed a number of roles for WPI on the International Advisory Committee, the Steering Committee formed after Galway, which became the Interim Management Committee leading up to the Athens conference, 2000. She was a co-ordinator of Australian delegates to India in 2009.

The Conference in Galway, Ireland was a watershed in my life as a playwright – and a woman.

I just loved Galway from the very start. This wild, vibrant and cheeky little town on the utmost border of Europe filled with pubs and street musicians, laughter, stories and songs was a perfect setting for the meeting of women playwrights from all over the world. The conference took place at the University building in Galway, which stood empty during summer vacation. For one week women from all corners of the world filled the auditorium, the corridors and the classrooms with their voices, dreams, stories, visions and experiences. I was simply thrilled to see all these women from all over the globe, bound together by the same ardent wish to express themselves in the most public of all art forms: the theatre!

I will never forget the first key note speaker, Kate Mc Namara from Australia. She wore funny glasses, formed as bright red hearts. She talked of the search of women playwrights for a home, of us being mapmakers and explorers and archeologists in a landscape not yet described. She talked about the way women in the theatre have been explored and abused, ripped and plundered of their thoughts and emotions by male directors and producers in the theatre. There are many ways of skinning women of their creativity, she said. (Oh, did I recognize that!) But yet, she said, we must continue to take off our armour, recapture our visions and dreams, regain faith in language and prevent the "mass-suicide of words", in order to change the world for the children who come af-





ter us. Silence is considered a female virtue, she reminded us. But we have chosen to speak! Not long ago we would have been burnt at the stake. But here we are!

It was a beautiful speech. Her words entered my heart and have remained there ever since.

I just loved the mixture of the plays presented at the Galway conference. There were plays about women's bodies and their struggle with disease and pain, plays about women as victims of violence. Other plays were about women transgressing borders, both physical and imaginative. There were plays about heroic women in the past and also of women as men's accomplices in acts of war and suppression.

Two plays have specially lingered in my mind. One was about an angel woman isolated in a cave praying for the future of our planet mourning the loss of grandmothers. The play was written in Welsh, exploring this dreamy, slow, poetic, soft language as opposed to the male aggressiveness of the English language, the language of the conquerors. Pictures of the beautiful Welsh landscape accompanied the play but in the end the screen was covered by the huge lips of the aggressor silencing the voice of the Welsh Angel. Interesting thought, the language of the conference being English!

The other one was "Maija of Chaggaland" by Sheila Langeberg from Tanzania. In her play – which was a full length performance - she paid homage to her mother who had saved her and her twin sister from circumcision. This love song for a mother made a deep impression on all of us and Sheila was given standing ovations. Her play stood out as such a contrast to the many other plays highlighting the troubled mother-daughter relationship

in the Western world, one of them with an echoing question: "What was the face of my mother before I was born?" (Katherine Griffith, USA).

Apart from the presentation of the plays there were some very interesting discussions on form and content by women challenging the Aristotelean dogma of conflict and violence as the basis of drama. Would it be possible to make love and forgiveness the driving force instead?



Sandra and Margareta, photo taken in Athens 2000.

At the closing ceremony Maire Holmes, who organized the conference in cooperation with Ann Henning Jocelyn, hailed the bravery of all the women who had made this conference happen. Small miracle it was. But what was next? Who was ready to undertake the huge responsibility of organizing the next conference?

The day after – on Sunday June 29 1997 - there were about twenty of us left in Galway. We met in the entrance hall the University building in order to discuss how to create a new conference in the year 2000. We were sitting in a circle, on hard little chairs, facing each other. It was cold, dark

and dreary, since the electricity had been switched off. One by one the women dropped off to catch a plane back to some far part of the world. But we succeeded to form a steering committee of nine women: Sandra Shotlander (Australia), Lynn Hayes (US), Ma Lourdes Jacob (Philippines), Lia Karavia (Greece), Margareta Skantze (Sweden), Roberta Uno (USA), Brenda Cotto Escalera (Puerto Rico), Tess Onwueme (Nigeria), Jyoti Mhapsekar (India).

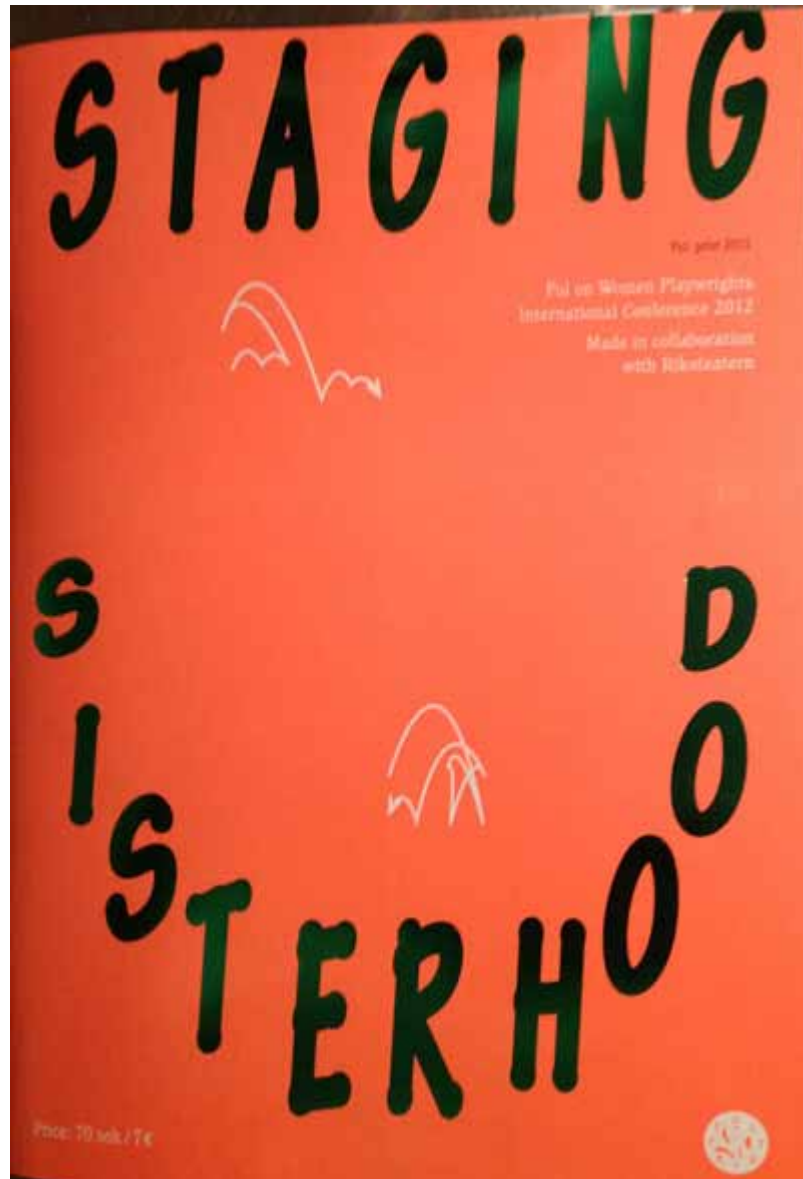
We gave each other a solemn vow to meet again after three years time. And we managed to keep that vow thanks to the dedicated work both of the steering committee and of the energetic Greek conference director Aiki Bacopoulou-Halls. The venue of the next conference in the year 2000 could not have been more symbolic: the philosophical faculty at the University of Athens. I kept saying to myself: **"Move over, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato! Here we come! The women! On the threshold of the new millennium."**

Margareta Skantze

(Karlskrona, Sweden) WPI Senior Advisor

Margareta has worked for fortyfive years in the theatre as actor, playwright, producer and director. She has written and directed twelve plays, all of them based on historical research featuring women in key roles. She is founder and artistic leader of Teater Kontur. Her plays *Mary Magdalene* (1997), *The Silent Song of the Heart* (2000) and *Black Madonna* (2009) have been presented at WPI conferences.





WPIC 2012 - two final reports

The conference in Stockholm has been covered in two large reports. The formal one, *WPIC 2012 in Stockholm - the report*, gives you a lot of useful facts and figures.

The second one, *Staging Sisterhood*, was 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."

You'll find both these reports on the website, as PDFs possible to print by yourself. Please, feel free to use them to inform others about WPI.

<http://wpic.riksteatern.se>

WPI elected for 2012-2015



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

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Karen Jeynes
Amy Jephta
Zara Trafford, conference coordinator
e mail: wpic2015@gmail.com
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