

10th Women Playwrights International Conference Cape Town - South Africa 2015 | *Newsletter #6*



18 month to go!

Time passes so quickly.

The dead line for suggestions of work shops etc is coming up soon - 7 February.

The final selection of plays is being done as these words are written.

In this news letter you find more info.

Also, we take another walk down memory lane, looking at the 6th conference in the Philippines in 2003.

Enjoy!

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!

January is coming to an end. This means for us who live on the top of the world ... (on the upper side of the globus as made by the colonialists, I suppose) - that we are heading towards spring and summer. You guys on the opposite side is in the middle of summer – waiting for fall. This is just a small reminder of all the things that make us different. And strongly bearing in mind how important equality is,

I still want to point out that differences make the world a fantastic place to be. "All different, all equal" as the human rights campaign in Europe was called, some years ago. We also need to be reminded on how different women are from each other. In order to make the world a better place to be, we need to make room for the good men to be doing the good stuff – then it will be even easier to have time and give room to all our individual differences.

WPIC 2015 is approaching and we are about to realize that it will take place! Pay attention to what the host committee is writing in this newsletter – you need to sit down fast and make a proposition if you have an idea for a workshop – the deadline is just around the corner!

In the history-section of this edition you can read about the WPI Conference in the Philippines which took place in 2003. It

was my first conference, and I can assure you it was a life changing experience. We proudly present texts by the conference director Malou Jacob and by the former WPI president Meena Natarajan. Thank you so much for contributing to the very special history of WPI.

We need new and younger people to join us – we need to share the WPI experience with more people. So don't hesitate – spread the word, make them come to South Africa in July 2015. It will give power to a whole new generation of international playwrights and theatremakers. We need people to write the next chapters of our history-project.

**For now -
work well, live well, fight and breathe.**

Lene Therese Teigen

WPI President

therteig@online.no

Hello from Cape Town!

WPI is thrilled by the response to our first round of calls: we've received 271 entries from 28 countries so far! Our reading committee is busy going through each of these submissions. By the end of February, we will have our shortlist. We will also be releasing further calls in categories and areas where we feel we should still be looking for more playwrights, so please keep an eye out for that.

A reminder that we're still accepting proposals for workshops. Do you have an idea for **an inspiring, practical workshop** that would tie in with our themes?

Beyond Words: scripting plays that explore the physical, the visual, the digital or the aural - new texts for new mediums

In Other Words: working with texts that are multilingual, for multilingual audiences, or are in translation

Choice of Words: the editing process, including working with directors, dramaturgs or workshopped productions

Our Own Words: writing for yourself, autobiographical works, biography, memoir, or writing for your own performance

If you believe you have something exciting for us, mail us at wpic2015@gmail.com, subject "workshop" with:

- 50 word description of your workshop
- one paragraph biography
- one sentence motivation for how it fits one of our themes

Owing to some technical issues, we are extending **the deadline for workshop proposals to 7 February.**

Also, we are dealing with a huge volume of email, and apologies if there are delays in responding to you - we value all of you, and will respond as soon as we can. Thanks for your patience!

Looking forward to sharing more details with you shortly,

**Amy, Karen, Zara, Fatima,
Patricia, Sondos**

wpic2015@gmail.com



THE 6th WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE

14 -20 November 2003 in Manila, The Philippines

Inspired by WPI, the late Japanese playwright/director/actor Koharu Kisaragi organized The Asian Women and Theater Conference Series. When the Philippines hosted The 2nd Asian Women and Theater Conference in 2000, we launched the Women Playwrights International Philippines (WPIPhil) with Roberta Uno, Jyoti Mhapsekar, Ratna Sarumpaet and Ding Pajaron in attendance at the National Arts Center in Mt. Makiling.

When Mexico had to withdraw as host of 6WPIC after 9/11, the Philippines was asked by Anna Kay France to step in since we just organized the first WPI country chapter. We were in a dilemma - after all our intention was only to conduct workshops for emerging women playwrights but we had to prove ourselves, so we said yes.

This was the first time the WPI Conference was held in Asia. Our theme was "*Women making theater in a changing world*".

The following were the goals of The 6th Women Playwrights International Conference: To seek answers and solutions to the artistic, professional, social and political concerns, issues, and queries that confront women playwrights and theater artists from around the world. To create and provide multiple forums where women theater artists can share work methodologies, texts, perspectives and ideologies. To promote the creation of strong, sustainable, national and international information and touring networks for women theater artists. To disseminate in the Philippines, the work of Filipino and international women artists and promote Filipino women artists' work outside the Philippines.

The subthemes for drama sessions were: "Writing

or making theatre in a period of war and political turmoil", "Shifting borders and boundaries", "Gender and sexuality", "Loss and legacy", "Racism and justice", and finally "Spirituality and tradition".

There were five simultaneous venues for Drama Sessions. 15 plays (excerpts) were presented and discussed each day with the playwrights / theater artists; a total of 60 plays in four days. Senior WPI members were country curators (who located, shortlisted / chose country delegates with WPI Mancom / WPI Philippines); gave overview and facilitated the open forum with the playwrights/theater artists. Special features: A panel on Feminism, a Forum with the Grandmothers (sex slaves during the WW2 Japanese occupation of the Philippines) coordinated by Nelia Sancho, tour of protests sites, Coffee with then Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (second woman president after Cory Aquino), Dialogue with Filipino woman playwright Virginia Moreno.

It was a baptism of fire for WPI Philippines. Dessa Quesada worked on the theme/ sessions. Marili Fernandez prepared the participation of the indigenous and Moro emerging playwrights we gave workshops to in Mindanao. August Andong worked on the website. Bing Tresvalles and I worked on the project proposal for Japan Foundation.

I decided to move back to Manila from Baguio and became a lecturer at the De La Salle University. I remember that everyday for months I went to the library's Faculty Computer Room and worked on 3 computers simultaneously for hours after my class. And that's how we invited all the speakers and participants. Ding Pajaron our NY based member was responsible for bringing in Jessica Hage-

dorn, Alice Tuan and the legendary Ellen Stewart of La Mama. Meena Natarajan brought in Dijana Milosevic of Serbia Montenegro. Both Ding and Meena were in consultations with Anna Kay and Lynn Hayes. Meena also visited Manila just before the conference.

After all the data and pictures came in, the program brochure was prepared with technical support from the Cultural Center of the Philippines..

Tessa Belleza coordinated the airport /hotel arrangements And with Nikki Torres and Clottie Lucero managed the readings by the local actors and the nightly performances at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP).

Japan Foundation brought in the ASEAN, Indian, and Japanese delegates. The Asian Cultural Council gave support for Alice Tuan, Jessica Hagedorn, Ellen Stewart and a chinese delegate. The CCP provided the performance and dinner venues. Memorable performance of Kaniku by Japanese Hanaarashi, excerpts of Dogeaters by Tami Monsod, Vagina Monologues by Monique Wilson and Cecile Guidote; Maija of Chaggaland by Sheila Langeberg; and EastTimor's Dancing on Blood by Ivete de Oliveira and Maris Nunes.

The late Chanter Mendung who opened the conference with her prayers, was adored by the delegates especially Dijana Milosevic who wanted to come back and visit the Tbolis of Lake Sebu in Mindanao. I can still hear the tiny bells round the waist and ankles of the Tbolis as they walked in for breakfast every morning during the conference.

MaLou Jacob conference director,
today WPI senior adviser

Leading up to 6th conference in the Philippines - our first conference in Asia

My first conference organized by Women Playwrights International was the 5th conference in Greece in 2009. Roberta Uno, who was Conference Convenor for the conference, told me about WPI and encouraged me to get there. What I felt that first morning in Greece was a deep sense of gratitude to be among so many women playwrights and to understand deeply why it is necessary to create connections with sisters across the globe and create a sense of solidarity in a field in which gender disparity still continues to exist in practically every country. The Greece conference was a mixture of amazing performances, play-readings, panels and discussions. Amidst all the logistical chaos and drama, there was so much beauty and passion in the shared artistic work, conversations about issues facing women playwrights and the diverse experiences and perspectives of women from all over the world in the days that followed in Athens and Delphi. And I met so many, many incredible women during the conference.

Women Playwrights International as an organization was founded just two short years before the conference after years of organizing. On the bus driving back from Delphi to Athens, between having my tarot card read and speaking with playwrights from Scotland and Australia about everything under the sun, Roberta encouraged me to consider running to be part of the management committee. I did, to my

own surprise, and got accepted. What followed for the next three years was a true gift – to be part of the committee, make deep and sustained friendships, working together with women across the world over, what was then,



a clunkier communication system than it is today. No google hangouts and skype conversations! It took forever to connect to a common chatroom. Many of the members of the management committee managed to get ourselves to Greece to both set up further structures for WPI as well as plan the 6th conference in Mexico. And to our utter dismay, for many reasons, Mexico as a conference site, fell through shortly after September 11th. After the initial panic, we rallied around and thanks to the intrepid playwrights in the Philippines, we had a conference site the following year with

one year to plan the conference. Malou Jacob, who became the Conference Director in the Philippines, came to New York to think about the conference and start the work to plan the theme and sessions. Thanks to her hard work and the work of the committee in the Philippines, the conference in the Philippines became a reality with the rather appropriate theme of “Making Theater in a Changing World”. It was a historic first for WPI given that this was the first conference in a non-western country. There are so many images and memories from this conference that stay with me today – the epic T’boli singer Mendung Sabang’s powerful chants, the indigenous playwrights reading their plays in a tiny hotel room sitting on the floor and most of the audience sitting on the floor around them, the workshops that I attended, especially the one with Dijana Milosevic about using memory to create a physical vocabulary. One of the most moving moments during the conference was when the Lola’s (grandmother’s) remembered their ordeal as sex slaves under Japanese occupation vividly. It brought tears to everyone’s eyes and as powerful were the reactions of the Japanese delegates who wept uncontrollably and acknowledged this terrible occurrence and asked what they could do. The Lola’s answers were





simple and powerful – “We want justice and an apology from the Japanese government.” I remember Malou’s play, *Anatomy of a Corruption*, staged at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, vividly and even though none of the audience understood Tagalog, the actors were powerful and managed to convey the ideas of the play. And so many moments of conversation, play readings and forums, powerful keynote speakers like Jessica Hagedorn, Ellen Stewart, Mangai and Virginia Morencio, singing every night at the late night open mics and one day ending with Linda Parris Bailey of Carpetbag leading all the participants and audience at the open mic in an irresistible call and response, “We are going... Heaven knows where we are going.... But we know we will. We will get there.... Heaven knows how we will get there.... But we know we will. It will be hard we know and the road will be muddy and rough... But we’ll get there...Heaven knows how we will get there... But we know we will. Given the hard work that is involved in planning the conferences, it seems utterly foolish to keep doing it again and again and again. The attempt has had ruinous and joyful consequences over the years – apart from the sto-

ries created during the conferences, so many stories of pain and success in the creation of the conferences. A huge attempt to learn from mistakes and keep on moving through rough and muddy roads. What keeps bringing us back together across the oceans to yet another country or gathering place are the valuable networks created, the experiences shared, vastly different points of view and the shifting energy in the universe when a large group of women come together and say YES audaciously – “Yes, our work is important, our voices are important, they need to be seen and heard. Yes, we are in allyship with the voices of those whose voices are often suppressed in so many parts of the world and we are going to work to bring the voices and stories of women playwrights to our world.”

THANKS AND LOVE

My co-conspirators in the Women Playwrights International Management Committee were Vice President and previous conference planner Maria Capsaskis from Greece, Martha Richards from the Fund for Women Artists in Amherst, Massachusetts, Linda Parris Bailey, Artistic Director of Carpetbag Theater in

Knoxville Tennessee, playwrights Aafke Heuvink from Holland and Bilgesu Erenus from Turkey, playwright/actor/director Karen Lawrence from Australia and administrator Ding Pajaron from New York, who served as liaison between the WPI Management Committee and the WPI Philippines Committee. The planning committee included MaLou Jacob, conference director an award-winning playwright based in Manila, Philippines and other members of the local committee were Tessa Belleza Lozano, Dessa Quesada, Luna Sicat Cleto, Bing Tresvalles and Marilee Ilagan.

A huge thanks to the members of the management committee, to Roberta Uno and Anna Kay France who guided and inspired me and to Lynn Hayes and Sandra Shotlander who I turned to often for advice. The hard work of these incredible women and many others laid the groundwork for both WPI and the conferences that followed.

Meena Natarajan
today WPI Senior Adviser



WPI elected for 2012-2015



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

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Lene Therese Teigen	President, Norway
Marcia Johnson	Vice-president, Canada
Vanessa Adams	Secretary, USA
Helena Hoogenkamp	Treasurer, the Netherlands
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Sondos Shabayek	Conference Convenor, Egypt
Catherine Fitzgerald	Communications, Australia
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Marili Fernandez-Illagan	Asian region developer, the Philippines
Valantina Abu Oqsa	Arab region developer, Palestine

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MaLou Jacob, the Philippines
Ratna Sarumpaet, Indonesia
Margareta Skantze, Sweden
Meena Natarajan, USA/India
Sandra Shotlander, Australia

HOST COMMITTEE/SOUTH AFRICA 2015

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