

Preface

The purpose of this volume is to record and to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Association Internationale du Theatre Amateur/International Amateur Theatre Association (AITA/IATA). It is not intended to offer a complete and accurate history of the Association from 1952–2002 but more to mark the significant events and celebrate the personalities whose efforts and energies shaped the Association during its first fifty years. Contributors were invited to share their experiences of AITA/IATA both serious and anecdotal and to offer some thoughts for the future.

In addition to those who have contributed to this volume, Kaja Pöld and I are particularly indebted to, Merle Mandre, Leonardo Tromp, Pierre Cellario, Guillermo Rodoni, Mary Pears, Rob van Genechten, Shirley Harbin, Guy Villers, Raymond Rousseau and Villy Dall for their help in bringing it to completion.

Aled Rhys-Jones
English Speaking Secretary

AITA/IATA – A Brief and Incomplete History of the First 50 Years...

*by Kaja Pöld AITA/LATA Administrator
and Aled Rhys-Jones AITA/LATA English Speaking Secretary*

The upheaval of war and global conflict on a vast scale during the first fifty years of the 20th Century did not stem the continuation of improvement in human social conditions that had begun in earnest in the 19th Century. In fact, war and conflict were contributory factors in bringing about political, social and constitutional changes on a scale never before experienced. Whilst these changes were coming about in many parts of the World the changes in Europe and Asia were perhaps more visible and influential on a global scale.

A direct by-product of improved social conditions was the creation of leisure time, which hitherto had been more or less the privilege of the upper classes. These privileged classes had over many centuries developed ways of occupying their leisure time. Some of these activities still demonstrated strong links with indigenous culture in the shape of music, dance and theatre. Better social conditions, the growth of the middle classes with more free time and the need to occupy that free time, witnessed the growth of leisure time activities for all classes and the development of the 'hobby' culture.

For those not part of the privileged classes, the arts remained a part of intrinsic folk culture and in general a way of celebrating and marking religious or seasonal events. The socio-political changes of the late 19th and early 20th Century began a merge of these two activities; Hobby and Folk Culture.

The visible growth of amateur theatre activity, particularly in Europe is recorded by the number of associations and organisations which sprang into existence during this period. This massive growth and the growing awareness of the world outside one's own village, town, city and country brought about the establishment of personal individual contacts between amateur theatre federations.

Soon, by the very nature of things but assisted by the developments in transport and travel, a network of individuals sharing experiences and the same interest developed into an informal network of organisations. Several attempts were made to unite these amateur theatre organisations into a representative body but the hurdles of distance and communication hampered the ambitions.

The official founding of AITA/IATA finally took place between January 18th-20th 1952. Almost a hundred delegates from twenty-four amateur theatre federations representing sixteen countries gathered together in Brussels, Belgium for the first Congress of AITA/IATA.

The following organisations were represented:

BELGIUM

Fédération des Cercles Dramatiques de Langue Française
Fédération Nationale des Dramatiques Catholiques
Union des Fédérations Wallonnes
Het Verbond der Vlaamse Toneelverenigingen
Nationaal Vlaams Kristelijk Toneelverbond
Nationale Federatie van Vlaamse Socialistische Toneelverenigingen

DENMARK

Fællesrepræsentationen for det Kunstneriske Amatørteater
Dansk Amatør Teater Samvirke
De Københavnske Amatørsceners Sammenslutning

FRANCE

Fédération Française des Sociétés Théâtrales d'Amateurs (FFSTA)
Fédération Catholique du Théâtre Amateur Français

GERMANY

Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Laienspiel des Landes Nordrhein, Westfalen
Arbeitsgemeinschaft für das Kellerlinke Laienspiel
Bund der Theatergemeinden

GREAT BRITAIN

The British Drama League
The Little Theatre Guild
Scottish Community Drama Association

GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBURG

Fédération en Formation (Les Comédiens de la Scène)

HOLLAND

Nederlandse Amateur Toneel Unie (NATU)
Werkverband Katholiek Amateurtoneel

IRELAND

Irish University Players

ITALY

Ente Nazionale Assistenza Lavoratori (ENAL)

NORWAY

Norsk Amatørteater Forbund (NATF)

SWITZERLAND

Fédération Suisse Romande des Sociétés Théâtrales d'Amateurs

Martin E Browne from the Great Britain was elected the first President; Henri Lelarge from France - Vice President, Piet Cleveringa from Holland - Vice President, Daniel Serwy from Belgium - Secretary, Paul Genet from Switzerland - Treasurer and Cesar Giulio Viola from Italy and Eugène Heinen from Luxembourg as Council Members.

At 10.30am on Sunday, 20th of January in the Hall of Marriages of the Town Hall of Brussels the International Charter (the first Constitution) of AITA/IATA was signed by representatives of twenty two organisations stating the official foundation of the organisation. The event was followed by an official gala banquet, described as a grand and hospitable occasion by those who attended.

At this first Congress it was agreed that English and French would be the two official languages of the Association.

In 1953 the 2nd Congress was held in The Hague, Holland where the Council was re-elected for a second term. The Association had by now achieved official recognition by the magazine "World Theatre" which had devoted an entire issue to amateur theatre.

After the 2nd Congress despite concerted efforts it was very difficult to find a place to hold the next gathering and it was four years before the 3rd Congress held in Monaco. The difficulty in finding countries willing to host the biennial Congress was soon to change as the profile of the Association grew.

At the 3rd Congress in Monaco in 1957 there were no less than four offers to host the next international festival and Congress to be held in 1959 - from Belgium, Denmark, Italy and New Zealand - from which Italy was chosen.

This 3rd Congress established two relationships for AITA/IATA which continue to this day. The invitation from the Studio de Monaco to hold the 3rd Congress in the Principality greatly contributed to the prestige of the Association and offered many opportunities for new international contacts. The 3rd Congress in Monaco in 1957 also saw the first AITA/IATA World Amateur Theatre Festival.

At the 50th Anniversary of AITA/IATA the World Congress and Festival of Amateur Theatre is a biennial event taking place alternately between the Principality of Monaco and somewhere else in the World! The Association's debt to the Principality of Monaco is almost impossible to quantify. The World Festival and Congress has been held in Monaco every four years since 1957 and AITA/IATA has benefitted greatly from the special relationship. The administration of this large-scale event has been undertaken over this same period of time by the Studio de Monaco, which has established models of procedure and protocol for other AITA/IATA International Festivals and events.

With the growth in status of the Association and the accompanying increase in members it became clear that in order to pursue its aims AITA/IATA could

not continue to function solely on good will, commitment and voluntary input and a permanent Secretariat was established. Thanks to financial support from the Dutch Government in 1967 a professional secretariat was set up in The Hague with Peter Schreiber from Germany as the first employed Secretary General of AITA/IATA. His successors were Georg Malvius from Sweden (1974-1977), John Ytteborg from Norway (1977-1992) and Pru Kitching from the United Kingdom (1992-1995). During the latter years of the existence of the post of Secretary General the responsibilities developed to include those of a travelling ambassador and advocate for AITA/IATA in addition to the administration of the organisation and the post became a strain on the financial resources of AITA/IATA. It was recognised that whilst this role was a valid one for the organisation the costs in both labour and finance were too heavy to bear. So in 1995 it was decided to pass the ambassadorial role back to the elected members of the Executive Board and the Regional Representatives to the Council and the post of Administrator was created.

In 1975 the Secretariat moved from The Hague to Amsterdam and in 1982 thanks to an annual grant from the Nordic countries it was transferred to Copenhagen, Denmark where it remained until 1998. Since 1998 the Secretariat has been operating from Tallinn in Estonia where the Estonian Ministry of Culture and Tallinn Municipality support the operation.

At the 9th Congress in Monaco in 1969 it was first decided to create and encourage regional committees. Since 1969 the number of regional committees has increased and the geographical make-up has evolved considerably but they initially took the following form:

- Latin and Mediterranean Europe - Belgium, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Switzerland, Yugoslavia
- Nordisk Amatørteateråd - Denmark, Finland, Sweden
- Central Europe - Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Switzerland
- Pacific Committee - Australia, Japan, New Zealand
- Northern America Committee - Canada, USA

AITA/IATA celebrated its 20th anniversary in Brussels in 1972 by holding a major forum on new writing for the theatre entitled, "The position of the author in today's theatre". In addition to the forum, there were official receptions, celebrations, a banquet, and a host of theatre performances.

In the early years communication within AITA/IATA was mainly through personal contact and direct interaction between individuals. As the organisation grew and AITA/IATA looked more and more outside Europe and with the establishment of a professional Secretariat, the Association began to expand its scope of activities and truly develop into a World organisation. Whilst there have been many notable landmarks in the history and development of

AITA/IATA as a global organisation the following are the key moments:

- first Congress held outside Europe, Oklahoma City, USA in 1975
- official operational relations established with UNESCO in 1975
- first AITA/IATA Congress on the African continent, El Jadida, Morocco in 1999
- use of Spanish smoothly incorporated into the Monaco Congress in 2001.

During the first fifty years of its existence AITA/IATA has struggled with limited funds, but has overcome much of the difficulties owing to the enthusiasm and commitment of its members who have instigated innumerable events dedicated to amateur theatre. Recognition and thanks must also be recorded to the active Board and Council Members over the fifty years who have inspired, encouraged, guided, led and more often than not undertaken the work of the Association without thought or request for remuneration. The financial support received from the Dutch Government and the Ministries of the Nordic Countries to maintain the international Secretariat can never be undervalued and without it the organisation would have a very different profile.

Through fifty years and twenty-five AITA/IATA World Congresses and Festivals and innumerable associated events throughout the World; the Association, its activities and structure have evolved and developed but the ethos and mission remain as true today as first stated in the Constitution in 1952.

Honorary Presidents since 1952:

Guy Brousse, Monaco
Piet Cleveringa, The Netherlands

World Presidents:

1952 - 1957	Martin E Browne	United Kingdom
1957 - 1959	Henri Moine	France
1959 - 1963	Mario Federici	Italy
1963 - 1971	Piet Cleveringa	Netherlands
1971 - 1975	Henri Lelarge	France
1975 - 1979	Art Cole	USA
1979 - 1983	Helena Matouskova	Czechoslovakia
1983 - 1989	Alfred Meschnigg	Austria
1989 - 1995	Hugh Lovegrove	United Kingdom
1995 - 1999	Thomas Hauger	Denmark
1999 - 2003	Jacques Lemaire	France
2003 -	Leonardo Tromp	Aruba

AITA/IATA World Congresses:

1 st	1952	Brussels, Belgium
2 nd	1953	The Hague, The Netherlands
3 rd	1957	Monaco
4 th	1959	Pesaro, Italy
5 th	1961	Monaco
6 th	1963	Leamington Spa, Great Britain
7 th	1965	Monaco
8 th	1967	Hamburg, Germany
9 th	1969	Monaco
10 th	1971	Västerås, Sweden
11 th	1973	Monaco
12 th	1975	Oklahoma City, USA
13 th	1977	Monaco
14 th	1979	Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

15 th	1981	Monaco
16 th	1983	Calgary, Canada
17 th	1985	Monaco
18 th	1987	Utrecht, The Netherlands
19 th	1989	Monaco
20 th	1991	Halden, Norway
21 st	1993	Monaco
22 nd	1995	Ankara, Turkey
23 rd	1997	Monaco
24 th	1999	El Jadida, Morocco
25 th	2001	Monaco
26 th	2003	Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

AITA/IATA Executive Board 2002

President: Jacques Lemaire - France

Vice President, President Elect: Leonardo Tromp - Aruba

Treasurer: Rob van Genechten - Belgium

English Speaking Secretary: Aled Rhys-Jones - Great Britain

French Speaking Secretary: Pierre Cellario - Monaco

Co-ordinator for Children and Youth: Paddy O'Dwyer - Ireland

Co-ordinator for Artistic Matters: Timo Mäkinen - Finland

AITA/IATA Council Members 2002

Asian Regional Committee - Yukihiro Funamoto, Japan

Central European Committee - Mary Pears, Ireland

Caribbean Regional Alliance - Jean Small, Jamaica

Central American Regional Alliance - Julio Cesar Monge, El Salvador

Comité International des Fédérations Théâtrales d'Amateurs Culture Latine - Guy Villers, Belgium

North American Regional Alliance - Shirley Harbin, USA

North European Amateur Theatre Alliance - Jens Halvdan Mosli, Norway

South American Regional Association - Gustavo Ott, Venezuela

AITA/IATA Administrator

Kaja Põld - Estonia

Jacques Lemaire - France

AITA/LATA Vice President 1993 - 1999

AITA/LATA World President 1999 - 2003

When recalling the events that marked the year 1952, historians will recall, according to their disposition, the following: the birth of the first pan-European organisations, the iron curtain beginning to close, the Summer Olympics in Helsinki and Emil Zatopek's three gold medals, the song "Singing in the Rain", the detonation of the first H-bomb and the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Doctor Schweitzer...

My parents and their friends remember 1952 as the year when things returned to normal after WWII and it became easier to live and to buy clothes: the economists would say later that 1952 was in reality a return to the beginning of the glorious Thirties. From my somewhat uncomplicated perspective at the time, it was the year when I turned nine years old and left my village school as a "gifted child" to move on to the boarding school in the town. Here, confrontation with the other "gifted children" of the neighbouring villages forced me to recognise that it was easier to be the cockerel in a small hen-house than on a big poultry farm.

And yet, in this year of 1952 there was an important event that passed seemingly unnoticed by historians, economists, my parents, their friends and myself: the birth of the International Amateur Theatre

Association (AITA/IATA) on the 18th-20th of January in Brussels. This unassuming event was destined to have an enormous affect on my life and those of many others: all those who chose to dedicate a substantial part of their time and energy to the management and co-ordination of the Association.

Now that we have arrived at the beginning of a new Century and a new Millennium and are entering the Age of Communication, it is important to look back and truly evaluate our debt to our founders.

Let us try and imagine a world where ten years earlier certain nations, blinded by crazed and bloody dictators, tried to enslave or eliminate other nations. To the commonplace horrors of war were added those of xenophobia and genocide. Some years after the peace agreements were finally signed, a dialogue was established between theatre enthusiasts leading to the foundation of a big international association, bringing together the national organisations of amateur theatre for the first time.

The way the Association came together was by no means unique and what happened for us in theatre happened equally successfully in many other areas. I am not so much in wonder that the organisation was

created but more by the way in which it came about! Quite how our founders had talks effective enough to bring about a result without the technical advantages of the Internet, fax, telex or even automated telephone systems is simply amazing.

Needless to say, our founders couldn't rely on planes, the high-speed train or the highways for getting from one place to another. When you consider how difficult it is even now to gather a dozen people for a board meeting, you may ask if the world has really changed? I don't think for one moment that our founding fathers had nothing better to do with their time and money but you can bet that any trip, phone call, or meeting must have cost comparatively more, a lot more in both time and money, than it would now. We must assume that our founders' drive and passion for this project swept away all these obstacles and brought to life the Association that we now know.

We acknowledge our debt and gratitude to the people who came together in Brussels in 1952 and in doing so we must ponder on how our successors will view us and our actions when they in turn celebrate the Centenary of the Association in 2052. Do we communicate better with each other now that we have Internet, fax and phone? Do we come together more often thanks to the plane, the high-speed train and the highways? I'm afraid the answer is no. And what strikes me as the main reason for this antipathy is

the perceived lack of a common goal and an obsession with self-interest as a way of living. In putting forward this theory at a time of celebration, it's not my intention to appear pessimistic or negative, but simply to provoke a reaction. Our founders understood, following a period of appalling crisis and chaos for the World, how to establish and bring to life our Association. Our challenge is in comparison a modest one and one which I'm sure we can win.

We cannot foretell what the historians will remember of 2002 but I hope that it will be the year that marked the start of a real dialogue between different civilisations and cultures. The economists will I'm sure remember, with a huge fanfare, that recession followed a period of growth or the other way around. My parents and their friends will get a year older and will talk about the war and the glorious Thirties. And for me...? I will celebrate my fifty-ninth birthday but I will be particularly proud of being the President who was there to celebrate the half-century - the fiftieth anniversary of AITA/IATA. I shall also be proud to represent an association whose sole aim is to enrich human experience and educate through the medium of theatre for the improvement of understanding between cultures for the citizens of Tomorrow's World.

Long live theatre, long live AITA/IATA!!

Piet Cleveringa - The Netherlands

AITA/LATA Founder Member and Honorary President

AITA/LATA Vice President 1952 - 1963

AITA/LATA President 1963 - 1971

It's a long time since I took an active part in the activities of the International Amateur Theatre Association. Although not active anymore in the field of amateur theatre, I have kept a special place in my heart for AITA/IATA and it is with great pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to attend the 2002 World Childrens Festival in Lingen in Germany. I was very pleased to note that substantial progress has been made since the days I was President of the Association.

In particular I was impressed by the fact that the idea of bringing together the amateur theatre people of the whole world was rapidly growing into reality, with the new national centres in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Let me here pay homage to the successful efforts, which have been made by successive councils since I left AITA/IATA and this applies in particular to the input of former Secretary General John Ytteborg, who did such inspirational and impressive work.

In 2002 it will be fifty years since the International Amateur Theatre Association was founded at its first Congress in 1952 in Brussels. This Congress in

Brussels was a direct follow on from a previous international conference held in Rotterdam where the decision to set up an international association for amateur theatre was first taken.

It was possible to move ahead in this way as strong contacts already existed between France, Italy, Monaco, the French speaking parts of Belgium and Switzerland and between the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the Flemish part of Belgium.

Martin Browne, the well-known English Dramatist and Producer, became in Brussels the first President, being succeeded by the Frenchman Henri Moine in 1957 and the Italian Mario Federici in 1959.

We could do little more in those early years than stay in contact with each other and promote the international exchange of theatre groups. It was even difficult to organise a follow up congress after the one which was held in 1953 in The Hague. Then the Studio de Monaco with the help of the Monegasque Government made the significant gesture of offering to organise an international festival and congress in Monaco in 1957, giving the Association its first real opportunity to establish itself. I am happy to record

that these festivals, which have been held every four years since 1957 and are still continuing, have played a crucial role in the history of AITA/IATA.

Nevertheless, for the Association itself the situation remained a poor one and when I was asked to become the fourth President at the 1963 Congress held in Leamington Spa in the United Kingdom, I agreed on the condition that a permanent secretariat be established in order to be able to do some real work at last. In obtaining a grant of 60,000 Dutch Guilders from the European Cultural Foundation, for a period of two years, we were able to achieve this essential goal.

Peter Schreiber, a young German, who had just finished his studies in the history of theatre and drama at the Free University of Berlin, became our first Secretary General and his bureau was set up in The Hague in the same building in which the Dutch Centre of International Theatre Institute (ITI) had its office.

In the following years, we managed to convince the Dutch Minister of Culture to take over the support given by the European Cultural Foundation and to continue this financial help until 1981, when the Dutch Government came to the conclusion that the moment had come for some other country to take over the funding of the organisation.

By this time John Ytteborg had become our Secretary General. I recall with pleasure the name of Lennart Engström and through him and with the endorsement of the Danish and Swedish Centres, the Association

was fortunate in securing the support of the Governments of the Scandinavian Countries willing to offer a new financial base and hospitable home.

With the establishment of a professional secretariat in 1967 we could begin to realise some of the many projects we wanted to develop such as creating a newsletter and setting up workshops. The thinking behind setting up workshops, seminars and other such events has always been to set them up via a member organisation and to promote them through the association.

Perhaps I should mention here that it was Peter Schreiber who initiated and organised the first TIP conferences for young people in Berlin, which became one of the most popular activities of our Association.

Of course we tried in the Sixties and Seventies to widen the scope of AITA/IATA by bringing in new members, in particular from outside Europe. A lot of new contacts were made during the festivals in Monaco and as a direct result the United States became affiliated to AITA/IATA, leading to the 12th Congress in 1975 being held in Oklahoma City with a festival in Detroit. France and the United Kingdom had contacts with Canada, which resulted in a membership and as far as I can remember there were also some contacts through the late lamented British Drama League with Australia and New Zealand but the contacts were hard to pin down. And there was of course Japan, which came into AITA/IATA at a relatively early stage in our development.

Later on Peter Schreiber and George Malvius, who succeeded him as Secretary General from 1974 until 1977, endeavoured to attract the countries of Eastern Europe into the Association. There had been strong contacts with Czechoslovakia from the outset. Hungary was the first of the other countries to join the AITA/IATA family, followed by Poland, East Germany and Bulgaria and last but not least - the Soviet Union. To stress this important stage in our evolution the 14th Congress of AITA/IATA was held in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria in 1979.

The financial troubles with which we have struggled since the very beginning have always been a prominent item on each congress agenda throughout the years. We must therefore be extremely grateful to the

governments of the Scandinavian Countries for the huge financial support they have given to the Association since 1982, which continues albeit at a reduced level, and to the hospitality of the Estonian Government in offering the organisation almost free accommodation.

In founding our Association, one of the guiding principles was that, in bringing large numbers of people from as many countries as possible together in the non-political field of amateur theatre, we could in some way make a contribution to better understanding between the peoples of this world.

My hope is that the Association will continue to work towards this ideal in all its operations and activities.

Max Brousse - Monaco

Honorary Commissioner General of the Monaco "Mondial de Theatre" - the Monaco World Festival of Theatre

It has been my good fortune to have lived life to the full and to have given my support to every one of eleven successive AITA/IATA Presidents.

How did I achieve this? Through twelve "Mondial de Theatre" festivals organised by the Studio de Monaco.

Ah, the unforgettable memories! The 10th of July 1956, Paris...

At the time I was a Local Councillor in Monaco and had been given a special mission by the Mayor of Monaco. I also carried in my pocket a letter giving me power of attorney over the same special mission from the Board of Directors of the Studio de Monaco. I was the Studio Treasurer and had been an active member since its foundation in 1939.

I went to the Brasserie Weber in Royale Street, Paris where a meeting had been called at the instigation of the President of the French National Federation of Amateur Theatre Societies. The purpose of the meeting? To discuss the possibility of organising the first international meeting of amateur theatre in Monaco under the aegis of AITA/IATA. This was to be a joint Studio de Monaco/AITA/IATA project designed by my late brother Guy Brousse, the founding President of the Studio de Monaco and

future Honorary President of AITA/IATA and the then Studio de Monaco General Secretary the late René Cellario.

The high level delegation of AITA/IATA Council Members which travelled to Paris included:

The first AITA/IATA President Martin E Browne from Great Britain: a man of great standing, precision and punctuality;

The Vice President Henri Lelarge from France: an orator and talented lawyer, later in 1971 elected as the fifth AITA/IATA President;

The completely dedicated General Secretary Daniel Serwy from Belgium;

Council Member Mario Federici from Italy: a famous playwright, who in 1959 would be appointed the third AITA/IATA President;

Finally the President of the French Federation Henri Moine: an accomplished organiser and perceptive diplomat, who in turn would become the second President of AITA/IATA in 1957.

With this level of input it was possible, within two sessions of serious deliberation, to agree to hold the first AITA/IATA World Festival in Monaco in September 1957. The festival took place within an atmosphere of great optimism and excitement. The undeniable success of the Monaco event led to the

3rd AITA/IATA World Congress being held in the Principality on the 13th of September 1957. At this 3rd Congress the twenty-five national federations present unanimously ratified the agreement reached between the AITA/IATA Council represented by Martin Browne and the Studio de Monaco, represented by René Cellario. This agreement, subsequently updated, established that the “Mondial du Theatre” would be held in the Principality of Monaco every four years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay a personal tribute to all the other AITA/IATA Presidents with whom I had the great honour to work alongside:

a thousand bravos to Helena Matouskova (1979), Piet Cleveringa the Honorary President (1963), the present Honorary President, Art Cole (1975), Alfred Meschnigg (1983), Hugh Lovegrove (1989), Thomas Hauger (1995) and Jacques Lemaire (1999).

Peter M Schreiber - The Netherlands

AITA/IATA Secretary General 1967 - 1974

Thirty-five years ago - having just been appointed as Secretary General of AITA/IATA - I went to pick up two boxes containing documents: the archives of the first fifteen years of the organisation collated by the Belgian Secretary to the AITA/IATA Council, Daniel Serwy. Despite their value and interest, the contents of the boxes disguised the real strength of AITA/IATA: people, not paper. The “Honorary Secretary” had more or less run the affairs of the organisation single-handedly for fifteen years! It’s people who made AITA/IATA then and it’s the people involved in AITA/IATA now who make it what it is today.

There had been a time when the days of AITA/IATA seemed time limited: a sequence of board meetings and conferences being the only visible activity leading solely to the production of piles of paper and not to any activity remotely relevant to amateur theatre. Monaco saved the organisation in 1957 by offering to host the 1st World Festival of Amateur Theatre. It made the organisation attractive, because it suddenly had something to offer amateur companies. AITA/IATA could now present itself as the representative organisation for the foot soldiers active in amateur theatre and not simply an elitist club for officers only... AITA/IATA: committed to theatre, not to “committees”.

Fully in accordance with the spirit of the time, the Monaco Festival was established with great theatrical aplomb and prestige - taking place exclusively in the Opera House of Monte Carlo with compulsory black tie and evening dress. In 1971, in recognition of the spirit of that time, other spaces were introduced to provide different environments for a variety of theatrical forms and expression.

In the years immediately following the creation of a permanent Secretariat in Den Haag, many ways were explored to strengthen the links between the parent body and theatre activity in the associated countries: summer-workshops for young people were developed, links were made with other international festivals, conferences were held, the Monaco Festival continued and became a highlight every four years...

AITA/IATA had its roots in Europe. Until the late 1960’s it was purely a European organisation, and predominantly Western European! But the organisation had ambitions to look further and broaden its membership base. An Iron curtain divided Europe. Nevertheless: Hungary and Slovakia (then part of the Federal State of Czechoslovakia) joined AITA/IATA and paved the road for others.

It is tempting to go on...so many key moments spring to mind. Who of the founder members in 1952 would have bet that fifty years later AITA/IATA would continue a commitment to serving millions of people all around the world who devote their time, energy and creativity to theatre? Who would have forecast that AITA/IATA would continue to be vital and to be recognised as the international organisation for amateur theatre?

It has taken many small steps, carefully nurtured and developed and undertaken by all the many individuals who have supported the organisation during the course of the last fifty years. It was truly a privilege for me to have been a part of this for a short period of time.

Art Cole - USA

AITA/LATA Council Member 1969-1975

AITA/LATA World President 1975-1979

When I think back on my years working for AITA/IATA, from 1969 to 1975 as A Council Member, and 1975 to 1979 as President, what immediately comes to mind is the excitement I first felt when I discovered the excellence in amateur theatre outside my own country.

The year was 1965. The place was the Monte Carlo Opera House, Monaco, site of the Troisième Festival International du Théâtre Amateur, to which the Midland (Texas) Community Theatre (where I directed for 35 years) was asked to represent the United States. We performed Edward Albee's "The American Dream", with a cast of only five; but a total of twenty Midlanders made the trip and stayed in Monaco the entire ten days of the Festival, attended all of the productions, made many new friends from many countries, attended the AITA/IATA Congress as observers and, most of all, enjoyed both the variety and the excellence of the theatre performances from nineteen countries.

I became acquainted with Piet Cleveringa (Netherlands), the then President of AITA/IATA, along with other officers and founders such as: Henri Lelarge (France), Just Thorning (Denmark), Walter Lucas (England), Jacques Cornu (Switzerland), Albert

DeFrenne (Belgium), Lennart Engström (Sweden), Ben Maessen (Netherlands), all of whom soon became greatly respected and enduring friends. Peter Schreiber, a young theatre person from Berlin, was newly - hired to run the soon-to-be established Secretariat in The Hague, and I was impressed with his energy and vision for the organisation.

At the forefront of the entire Monaco Festival was its Director General, Guy Brousse of the Studio de Monaco. He was the charming and gracious head of a relatively small band of dedicated volunteers who staged this festival every four years, and indeed turned it into a world-class event. It offered the people of many theatres, from many countries and many different languages, a truly unique opportunity to know, enjoy, communicate and respect one another through the universal language of theatre.

I was so intrigued and curious about where these people lived and how they managed to come together in order to create theatre, that in the summer of 1967 I travelled to Europe specifically to visit the Tower Theatre in London, Studio Josef Skriván in Brno, Czechoslovakia, a small theatre group in Basel, Switzerland, and groups in France and the Netherlands, all of whom I had seen perform in

Monaco. It was an exhilarating experience, and I came home more determined than ever to stage a first national festival of community theatre in the United States, and acutely aware of the need for us to connect with amateur theatre internationally. Through the American Community Theatre Association and the American Educational Theatre Association, we held our first festival in 1969 and took the U.S. into membership of AITA/IATA. Our festival, now named ACTFEST, has grown enormously, as has our participation in many international festivals, and the United States commitment to AITA/IATA is as firm as ever.

Following the September 11th horrors in New York and Washington, the many messages from theatre friends all over the world to Shirley Harbin, our representative on the AITA/IATA Council, and thus to all of us in North America, constitute clear evidence of how theatre brings us together. With gratitude let's remember those founders, mentioned above, and all those who have followed and worked to make AITA/IATA truly an "organisation for Understanding and Education Through Theatre".

Georg Malvius - Sweden

AITA/LATA Secretary General 1974 - 1977

AITA/LATA Vice President 1981 - 1985 and 1987 - 1989

...they asked if I was interested. So I said yes! In reality I didn't know anything about my coming task. Theatre is theatre I thought...! The job requirements were:

You must be well experienced in theatre...

OK, I was. I was a young theatre director, I had done a lot of acting and I had good organisational and administration skills. I had already received some prizes for my theatre work and I was teaching in Sweden. So covering that requirement wouldn't be so difficult.

You will be required to speak French and English...

I learnt French at school. But English? Help! There were three months to go before the job started. So, let's learn English! I locked myself away in my flat, hired a full-time teacher and learnt English.

You will be required to relocate to Holland...

That would be nice. I had been to Amsterdam and liked it a lot. I enjoyed travel and was looking forward to meeting people from different countries. The Secretariat of AITA/IATA was at that time in Den Haag, Holland - a very friendly country. So why not! Lets move to Holland.

At that time life seemed so easy. Anything and everything was possible! And I was a young director looking to the world with naive brown eyes, to the new world, of AITA/IATA. And one of the biggest adventures of my life began.

During my time with the organisation I met a lot of wonderful people, organised congresses and festivals, theatre courses and seminars. Teaching in thirteen countries, I learnt a lot about the differences and similarities of the theatrical landscape.

And the work was so interesting, so wonderful! The World Congress in Oklahoma City gave me the opportunity to discover American theatre. The world of musicals was a totally new experience for me. I certainly didn't realise that I would become the first Scandinavian professor in the field of musicals.

It was hard work: I once had my breakfast in Amsterdam, my lunch in Paris and my supper in London. The world of AITA/IATA was very complex: the conceptual differences between the French and the English on how the organisation should be run were a dilemma I attempted to solve. When I joined the organisation, AITA/IATA Board members proposed themselves as members to the

Board, I changed that to the system of today. The regions developed into strong organisations during my period of service and Theatre in Education became an important part of AITA/IATA.

So many memories, many faces of the past flicker before my eyes like a film. A film I play back to myself over and over and it always gives me a feeling of great satisfaction and pride. I am proud to have had the opportunity to play a part in the history of

such a great organisation and to serve it as Secretary General.

Today after some years in the “professional” world of theatre as managing director of theatres in Sweden and Finland and as a prize-winning director of theatre, musicals and operas and headmaster of musical departments in Göteborg, Sweden and Munich, Germany - a piece of my heart still remains with AITA/IATA. And that’s the way it will always be.

Lajos Máté - Hungary

AITA/IATA Council Member 1975 - 1991

I was member of the AITA/IATA Council from 1975 until 1991. These sixteen years formed perhaps the most interesting period of my life. I saw many good and interesting theatre performances and I met a lot of very interesting people. I worked alongside AITA/IATA Presidents: Art Cole, Helena Matouskova, Alfred Meschnigg and last but not least Hugh Lovegrove.

I am from Hungary and during this time it was not easy to travel outside an Eastern Bloc country. It was so difficult to obtain a passport and exit visa or to get the money together for travelling costs and pocket-money. When I travelled to the World Festival and Congress in Oklahoma City I had 30 US dollars for two weeks! When I started working on the AITA/IATA Council I encountered many language difficulties - I spoke, as my colleagues informed me at the time, "creative English".

During my time working with the Association the most important person - we say in Hungarian: "the key-person" - within the organisation was without a doubt the Secretary General. I worked alongside three; Peter M Schreiber, Georg Malvius and John Ytteborg.

Georg Malvius was a very interesting person who spoke several languages: English, French, German and

Hungarian (his mother was Hungarian) - we could literally converse in our Mother Tongue. It often gave rise to some amusing situations during Council Meetings when we would exchange some words in Hungarian, and nobody understood what was said except us. In 1974 we organised the first international festival in Kazincbarcika and Georg was the most important person among the guests. At the official reception he started his speech in Hungarian. The Secretary General of AITA/IATA addressing the assembled guests in Hungarian - it was a great surprise - a real moment of theatre.

The last Secretary General with whom I worked was John Ytteborg. I liked him very much and I think it is fair to say, John and I became good friends. He doesn't speak Hungarian, but sometimes he understood my problems better than Georg. On those occasions when the so-called "Socialist Bureaucracy" started to make things awkward for me he often helped with letters, telegrams, phonecalls etc.

And of course, there was Hugh Lovegrove! I met him first in 1972 in Czechoslovakia where he was delivering a lecture on methods of working in children's theatre and subsequently many times at AITA/IATA meetings and events. Hugh is a great fan of Hungarian amateur theatre; he visited the Kazincbarcika festival three or four times and

organised tours for Studio K and the Arvisura Theatre. I have always enjoyed Hugh's sense of humour very much. Once in Leningrad we had both seen a very good production directed by a person named Smirnoff. Hugh told him: "I am happy to endorse that you are not only making very good vodka, but also excellent theatre!" In Morocco, the AITA/IATA President Thomas Hauger spoke about the amateur theatre: and likened amateur theatre

movement to a ship. Hugh noted: "Thomas forgot to mention that the ship is called the Titanic!" In 1991 in Halden, Norway, Helena Matouskova and I left the Council and Hugh delivered a farewell speech, he spoke with gravitas of our work and what we had achieved for AITA/IATA. At the end of his speech he summed up his thanks with great solemnity: There is a great difference between Helena and Lajos: "Helena only drinks water, Lajos only drinks beer".

Alfred Meschnigg - Austria

AITA/IATA Council Member 1975 - 1983

AITA/IATA President 1983 - 1989

children or puppetry for example, into our concept of what is amateur theatre. We worked with an almost evangelical passion as if we had been called upon to change the World!

Seminars and festivals in many countries opened their doors for the first time to participants from all over the World. High quality workshops, symposia, and international meetings served as platforms for the accompanying theoretical and practical work.

I made my own personal contributions to the debate at the now legendary “Drama in Education” conferences at Villach with contributions from, among many other renowned speakers, Augusto Boal and Ivan Ilyich.

At the AITA/IATA World Congress in Utrecht in 1987 we succeeded in placing the General Assembly, the festival and the fringe events all under one theme. Countries prepared projects to bring to the World Congress on the topic “Growth in a Multi-Cultural Society. History is our teacher, and today this discourse is more important and topical than ever.

My six years as President of AITA/IATA were important years for me, years in which together we were able to give great impetus to a series of

The six years of dedicated service I gave to AITA/IATA as President were six years of emergence and enlargement for the Association.

I first joined the AITA/IATA Council at the Oklahoma City Congress in the USA in 1975 and was elected President in 1983 at the Congress in Calgary, Canada. I was then re-elected for a further two years service as President at the Congress in Utrecht in The Netherlands in 1987.

In my first speech as AITA/IATA President I can distinctly recall inviting the General Assembly in Calgary to open not only the windows but also the doors to let in the light; to ask not only what could be expected from AITA/IATA, but what contribution the various National Centres should or could make to the work of the Association. My speech was well received in many countries, as were my concentrated efforts to bring the common term “theatre” closer in usage to the English meaning of the word “drama”.

Our work was all about doing justice to the stated AITA/IATA mission statement “Education and Understanding Through Theatre”. We worked towards expanding the medium of theatre into a much broader and more diverse context: to include the fields of drama in education and theatre for

extremely important events. The effects of some of these events are still visible today and some of the events continue to take place. I am grateful to all my friends from that period from all over the World - they certainly opened their windows and doors. It was six years of very intense work.

I would like to congratulate AITA/IATA on its 50th Anniversary and I wish the Association all the strength it needs to fulfil its goal of promoting “Education and Understanding Through Theatre” in a responsible way.

John Ytteborg - Denmark

AITA/IATA Secretary General 1977 - 1992

Is there a time to look back? Only if in doing so we can perceive a pattern that leads into the future. Is there a time to celebrate? Yes, if our celebration contains an element of *metanoia*, a change of mind that distils “the old” to make space for “the new”.

How easy it would be for me to succumb to nostalgia. Those years 1977-92 (when I was Secretary General of the Association) were exciting years. Unusual years – even from a historic point of view. The post-1968 vibrations generated a terrific amount of idealism, new thinking and artistic experimentation. Born out of idealistic visions emerged a fighting spirit that pervaded so much of “the new theatre” (now intensely nostalgic!), with its roots in the student and (young) amateur theatre movement of the time. A fight for freedom, of course – what else is there to fight for?

But I speak of “the old AITA/IATA”, mostly European/North American oriented. Congresses during my tenure – between Monaco years – were held in Bulgaria, Canada, Netherlands and Norway. Much of the human and socio-political relevance at the time focused on East-West relations. The Soviet Union joined AITA/IATA. The “Eastern Bloc” countries impressed with their artistic courage and integrity – in spite of political repression. The

exchange of groups between “East” and “West” (notably within the Central European Committee), the significance of cross-fertilisation at numerous festivals and workshops on both sides of “The Wall” was the very core of “the old AITA/IATA”. The series of Brecht-seminars in the former German Democratic Republic, the Stanislavsky seminars initiated by the then Soviet Centre were part of a transformation process – transforming “the old” in preparation for “the new”. Not so much a fight, perhaps – what we remember most keenly are the bonds of friendship – and yet there was freedom on our minds, freedom from oppression. Strangely it was precisely these fifteen years that culminated in 1992 with the emergence of the New Europe. Personally I cherished my first visit to a free and democratic Latvia. The “historic spell” was broken. How nice to think that the commitment of thousands of active members of AITA/IATA – the amateur theatre movement at large – in their way (in *our* way) both helped to prepare and anticipate what was to come. Oh yes, I for one will boldly state that the energy and insights generated by international cultural co-operation *count*.

And the focus of AITA/IATA shifted. Actually it happened the year before, at the congress in Halden, Norway, in 1991, when the Latin American regions

CARA, CEARA and SARA were officially recognised. It hailed the orientation of “the new AITA/IATA” – towards a truly global commitment based on strong regional units. The time was ripe. Latin America was linked to Europe (CEC, CIFTA, and NAR), North America (NARA) and Asia. By that time the Asian Regional Centre (ARC), was already firmly established thanks to the series of TIATF festivals established in Toyama, Japan, 1983, and other successful festivals, e.g. in Chandigarh, India.

Also, AITA/IATA, co-operating with the International Theatre Institute (ITI), initiated and hosted the first Pan African Theatre Conference held in Zimbabwe back in 1983. The now defunct Union of African Performing Artists (established at the conference) failed, but emerging links with the African continent are vital to a global AITA/IATA.

It would be impossible to speak of the years 1977-92 without a mention of TIP – the then annual Theatre International for young People, which perhaps more than any other ongoing AITA/IATA activity reflected “the spirit of that time”, as well as changing theatrical trends. Each TIP involved some forty to ninety young people in four to six workshops. And sure, images of

early TIPs evoke “flower power” and longhaired youngsters madly involved in street theatre and creative improvisation. Though the 1980’s workshops focused more on acting techniques and culminated, approaching 1990, in two visual performance projects. TIP had gone from “passionate” to “cool”.

The hot news was that in 1990 the children of the world were given their own platform within AITA/IATA. That year the 1st World Festival of Children’s Theatre was inaugurated in Lingen, Germany.

This is not “a brief history” of those years. It is a glimpse of “my view” seen from a distance, and which I could elaborate in all directions. I realise that there is not just one story. There are as many stories as there were active individual members. I wish that I could evoke each one of them – not just to recall, but also to re-experience the countless joys we shared. One forgets all the hard work – what remains is a sort of magic.

What, then, emerges from the pattern of the past? Possibly that “global unity” and “global diversity” can and must be reconciled.

Professor Dr Vidmantas Siliunas - Russia

President of Russian Centre of AITA/IATA

AITA/IATA Council Member 1987 -1995

On thinking of AITA/IATA my first thought is always of the many talented, unstinting, dedicated and selfless people who contribute so unceasingly to the Amateur Theatre movement. Alas, I cannot mention them all but I'd like to share unfading impressions of one of the greatest of them.

I first met Hugh Lovegrove in the café at the Princess Grace Theatre in Monaco. He was very keen to buy me a drink. When I said I didn't want any alcohol, but some mineral water would be nice, he uttered indignantly the famous words of the late American actor W C Fields, "I never drink water - fish *copulate* in it".

Hugh was President of our Association for six years. He was the face of our Association. He was full of irony, looking like a highly educated satyr, his expression being intellectual, shrewd and penetrating. He used to crack jokes, not only at the bar or at the table, but during official speeches as well. The official pomposity disappeared and we, the people of different countries, cultures and races, began smiling

happily to each other, feeling as members of one happy family within AITA/IATA.

Hugh treats everything with humour, including himself. He was pleased to share with us, that he was asked at one seminar why he hadn't changed his somewhat "indecent" name? The questioning individual had misinterpreted Hugh's name to mean a large contraceptive – Huge love glove!

He conveyed to us a Dionysian element of play that once gave birth to the art of theatre. It became clear that our Association was not created for boring meetings but for heated and often complicated creative work.

He completed his term of Presidency having left his own personal mark on AITA/IATA's activities - that art and specifically theatre can transform the humdrum into something festive, something for which the memory will stay with us for always. As does Hugh.

Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh - Cameroon

*Secretary General Union of African Performing Artists/UAAS
AITA/LATA Vice President 1985 - 89*

My first encounter with AITA/IATA was in Zimbabwe in August 1983 in the village of Murewa where a popular theatre workshop had been organised in collaboration with the International Theatre Institute and the International Popular Theatre Alliance. Representing the various organisations were John Ytteborg for AITA/IATA, Jean Louis Perinetti for the ITI, and Remelt Hummelen and Ross Kidd for the IPTA. I found John Ytteborg, Remelt Hummelen and Ross Kid particularly sympathetic and we have continued our relationship to this date. I became a Vice President of AITA/IATA in 1985 at the World Festival in Monaco. I attended a Festival of Community Theatre, which took place in Denmark and Sweden ending with a visit to the nudist island of Bonholm where I had a very memorable experience. Despite the persuasive acts of my colleagues, I refused to remove any of my clothing.

My AITA/IATA days were filled with many varied experiences; professional, organisational and travel. It was as a direct consequence of Murewa that the ill-fated Union of African Performing Artists was created. AITA/IATA, through its Copenhagen office assisted with the printing and distribution of some twenty issues of UAPANews, which was the information bulletin of the Union of African Performing Artists. At the World Festival in Monaco in 1989 I learnt about a

Children's Festival, which was to take place in Germany in April 1992. I was invited to bring a children's theatre troupe from Africa to the festival. When I informed the organisers that I couldn't think of any appropriate troupe I was asked if I would form one, and this I did. The Yaounde Children's Theatre Collective created waves. Our production of a folk tale 'Munyenge' and our presence at the Festival in Germany was a success in every sense of the word. I staged another production with the Children's troupe, 'The Magic Fruit'. And, ten years after, I still remain Uncle H to those who were privileged to take part in the Festival.

I also participated in the World Festival of Youth Theatre in Toyama, Japan. My Japanese experience taught me a great deal on how to organise a festival. And over my AITA/IATA years, I made very many friends from the UK, Canada, the US, Japan, Sweden, Denmark, France etc who have been a great support to my work. AITA/IATA worked hard to make UAPA work. Unfortunately, what was a relative success at first was soon to meet its demise owing to the egos of its own Executive and internal strife in general, effectively bringing UAPA and our relationship with IATA to an end. 1983 to 1989 was an unfortunately short period of existence in comparison to AITA/IATA's fifty years. More grease to your elbows!

Hiroshi Koizumi - Japan

Vice-President of AITA/LATA 1987-1989 and 1991-1993

The Twentieth Century may be called the age of “The Great Leap” with the remarkable progresses in the World of science and technology. But at the same time it was the century in which a great number of wars were fought and people of all nations were subjected to suffering and privation more severe than previously endured.

Even now in the 21st Century, many wars are being fought on the grounds of racial and religious hatred, intolerance and poverty. The whole world is in a state of shock - trembling, anxious, in confusion and dismay. A state caused by destructive acts of terrorism and environmental pollution.

We should remember that our theatrical activities couldn't continue without the protective reign of the goddess of peace over our region, our country and our World.

When the going gets tough AITA/IATA members should come together and demonstrate our solidarity. And in answer to the questions “HOW SHOULD WE CONTINUE, HOW CAN WE BEST LIVE?” We should go forward spreading and fostering the spirit and purpose of AITA/IATA to the whole World.

In September 1983 about two weeks before the opening of the 1st Toyama International Amateur Theatre Festival (TIATF), a disastrous event took place. Soviet fighter planes off the Sakhalin coast shot down a Korean civil aircraft travelling from the United States to Korea. The incident surprised and shook the whole world, and our preparations for the Festival were thrown into commotion and complete disarray. Strong anti-Soviet feelings prevailed not only in the United States and Korea, but also in Japan. We focused our energies on drawing up detailed plans to receive the Iron Curtain groups and in making their stay in Japan and return journeys both safe and happy and thus having a successful Festival. We were however, deeply concerned.

I remember with clarity that at this time I wished for Peace in the World more urgently than I did when I stood, thirsty and hungry in the scorching sun, in the middle of the ashes of the burnt-out ruins of my house, following the air raid on Toyama in the summer of 1945.

Maybe geared up by the frenzy of anti-Soviet feelings, a newspaper reporter with a hidden agenda, within earshot of the members of the Russian group, asked Professor Mort Clark “What is your opinion of the Russian group who have come to participate in this

Festival, so soon after the Soviet fighters shot down the Korean aeroplane?”

He replied: “Politics and religion often divide people into sects, but art brings people together. I think that it is important that all the participants will try to understand the situation, try to make sense of it and make friends with each other. This is the very idea and purpose of IATA”.

We took great care not to make the members of the Russian group feel uncomfortable or anxious at all during their stay in Toyama. Every night after the participants went to bed, our staff would strike the

Soviet flag to prevent sabotage and replaced it early in the morning before anybody woke.

The Festival passed uneventfully and was to our great relief a successful and happy festival as were the six TIATFs that have followed since then.

I will never forget the words spoken by my esteemed friend Professor Mort Clark. As long as TIATF is bringing together people from all over the World, this maxim of his which so succinctly and precisely expresses the spirit and idea of AITA/IATA will be repeated over and over to our younger generations.

Pru Kitching - Great Britain

AITA/LATA Administrative Secretary 1991 - 1992

AITA/LATA Secretary General 1992 - 1995

Owing to ill health Hugh Lovegrove invited Pru to contribute on his behalf.

Hugh hates to travel but loves to arrive. Travelling, for him, has been a necessary evil in his lifelong commitment to bringing the world together by celebrating its differences. Hugh's years as AITA/IATA President were fuelled by his passionate belief in its twin tenets, tailor-made for his total dedication to theatre, education and the powerful, beneficial effects to be had from the inter-play between them. His wonderful ability to send himself up - and everyone else for that matter - made travelling, and especially arriving, with Hugh a complete joy.

Everyone will have his or her own anecdote relating to Hugh. I will never forget the fusillade of flatulence at Mr Agrawal's house in New Delhi after too much daal; his bemusement at having his name likened to a condom by Thai students who thought it was 'Loveglove'; his Arnold Wesker-like request for chips, wherever we were; or to a girl wearing a sweatshirt with a *Southern Comfort* logo embroidered to one breast, requesting "And what's in the other one?" Hugh's humour and wry, self-deprecating political incorrectness belies the utter seriousness with which he took his role as World President and his unstinting generosity of mind, spirit and personal economy. I am proud to have been part of Hugh's AITA/IATA.

Mary Pears - Ireland

Secretary of AITA/LATA 1987-1995

CEC Representative on World Council 1999-2003

“Hurry, hurry, hurry there’s a talent scout coming from Dundalk with some American chap.” It was my first encounter with Mort Clark. He arrived at our little theatre in Leixlip and left just as quickly and no, we didn’t get to the World Festival in Monaco in 1977. AITA/IATA was for us somehow directly linked with Dundalk! On one occasion while driving back from Belfast, I spotted some Japanese ladies in beautiful kimonos, outside the Town Hall Theatre in Dundalk. They appeared to be inviting the public to enter. Yes, you’ve guessed. These ladies were members of the Bungeiza Theatre Company. Their fabulous presentation, directed by Hiroshi Koizumi, were worthy winners of the Maytime Festival that year.

Mort Clark was instrumental in getting the Irish Centre of AITA/IATA customised. Mort was instrumental in getting so many countries interested in AITA/IATA. Mort was instrumental in my becoming a member of the World Council some ten years later in 1987. We are all indebted to you Mort.

In 1983, I was lucky enough to attend the first TIATF in Toyama, Japan. It was an introduction to the world of AITA/IATA and so many lovely people. I have wonderful memories of my first visit to the land of the rising sun, of my minders Professors Hirata and

Okohara, of sitting beside John Ytteborg in a restaurant while a ‘*soon to be eaten carp*’ winked out at me from the temporary security of his tank, of being in the theatre beside Lajos Mate from Hungary and trying to translate Beckett’s “Endgame” from Spanish into English for him, of the wonderful hospitality and welcome we received from the Koizumi Family. Subsequent visits to Toyama were also very exciting especially in 1996 when I was honoured to meet the Crown Prince and Princess and further honoured to become an Honorary Ambassador. Domo arigato Toyama.

I met Hugh Lovegrove on a flight to Sofia enroute to a CEC meeting in Blagoevgrad in 1985. He was travelling with Marjorie (Jo) Havard. What fun we had and what stories I could relate about that adventure!! It was the start of a long friendship and a lot of meetings all over the world especially when we both became members of the World Council. There was a very memorable trip to New York City from White Plains and a shopping expedition that must remain forever a secret!! On one occasion while on a visit to Mexico City and the home of Francisco Peredo, someone decided that members of the Council should get involved in a play. Hugh attempted to make a quick get-away on a rocking horse hotly

pursued by Mrs Peredo who jumped on behind him. The stories could go on but luckily space doesn't permit!!

I remember the first Stanislavsky Seminar in Moscow and a wonderful visit to the Ministry of Culture for afternoon tea. I remember Alfred Meschnigg being pursued down a corridor!! I remember Sture Andersson studying form!! These stories really must be told again one day!!

I have memories of Utrecht in 1987, of being driven by the Mayor's chauffeur to the Town Hall reception in company with Eva Moore and being regaled with stories of pussy cats while on a visit to the Council Chambers.

I have memories of visits to the Berliner Ensemble, to the Kirov Ballet in St Petersburg (then Leningrad), of

Sanata Evet in Ankara, of wonderful festivals in Martin, Kazincbarcika, Hronov, Lingen, Aruba, Liverpool (N.S) to name but a few. I remember members of Council and CEC dancing/sitting on the Dead Sea!!

I have very fond memories of Monaco over many years and a special incident in 1997 when I was '*unveiled by Mme Cellario*'. R.I.P. She had such a wonderfully wicked sense of humour!

But perhaps my overriding memories are of CEC meetings and Council Meetings and a lot of work and deadlines to meet, of some misunderstandings and a lot of understanding, of friendships and above all ...wonderful, wonderful people. We still have a long way to go but I hope that we are learning!!

Thanks for the memories AITA/IATA.
Congratulations on 50 Golden Years.

Shirley Harbin - USA

NARA Representative on the World Council

I have so many memories of IATA activities I still feel the joy as I danced down the street to go to the Weinstubin with the Drama and Education Congress participants.

I remember:

- the shock we all felt when Augusto Boal conducted workshops on Forum Theatre and Ivan Illych told us we might be the most dictatorial teachers of all and the Austrian Artist who had used drama in his classroom said to the students “Am I hurting you?”
- the group I taught in 1978 in Portugal where we used folk tales and dances from around the world and the last day, I cried in the early morning on a near by hill with a cock crowing because I had to leave these friends I had made
- the meeting in England when we created a ritual to welcome a drama person into a workshop and the improvisation that gave me goose bumps
- the fringed train windows when Alla Zorina, my host and I traded stories about our sons “through a translator” all the way from Vilnius to Moscow
- the great parties in Monaco and the productions in the Salle de Garnier when everyone dresses in red and white, to honour our hosts
- the outdoor spectacles in Norway, the haunting Poe in Portugal lit by torches after a trek through the woods, the open bowl of the Monaco fort looking down on the Mediterranean, the Sazuki stage in the Japanese mountains
- the shopping mall performances with puppets from the balcony and interaction on the escalator created by the Turkish Youth Encounter
- the 6-year-old Turkish boy carrying the Japanese girl back to back with her legs in the air and then reversing with her carrying him across the large gymnasium floor in Turkey
- the excitement of adjudicating a production of Albee’s “Zoo story” played in Spanish and English by the same actors and a Hungarian and Japanese version of “The Marriage proposal” at Mort Clark’s intimate international festival.

All the many contacts and festivals around the world for children, teens, adults, senior citizens – scripted and unscripted – all coming together to create “Education and Understanding Through Theatre”.

Laura Gardner Salazar - USA

Past President of Theatre USA

AITA/IATA has been my postgraduate theatre study, providing information on how theatre is practised today, and exposure to diverse theatre philosophies. The introduction to a variety of hitherto unknown dramatists and styles of presentation enriched my own practice in directing and teaching theatre history. The return to performance art I made during an amateur theatre workshop in Austria on new trends in theatre education, melded together previous interests and experiences with new methods and techniques. As a result, I worked in the field of performance art for ten years, eventually writing *Making Performance Art* (New Plays, 1999). The wonderful groups I directed and the experiences I had as a performance artist myself would not have been possible without AITA/IATA.

The spirit of AITA/IATA provides an additional kind of learning, one centred on communication and

diplomacy. Its laborious machinations have given me new eyes to see the world and a respect for patience. I still hold in awe people with different points of view and experience who put aside personal gain and come together for common goals.

My students and colleagues have benefited from my association with AITA/IATA. I can give them a much more accurate picture of the world whilst at the same time introducing them to events, theatres and dedicated theatre workers from all over the World.

I hope that I have been able in some way to express my gratitude to AITA/IATA through serving for ten years as the Information Officer for the Americas and as the editor of the newsletter *Americas' Update*.

Norbert Radermacher - Germany

Director of the Theaterpädagogisches Zentrum and artistic leader of the World Festival of Children's Theatre

The World Festival of Children's Theatre began a mere twelve years ago but the event has already reached an exalted status within the field of international festivals. At the beginning, however, there were difficulties. When the then Director of the Theaterpädagogisches Zentrum Lingen (Germany) returned from the 1985 AITA/IATA World Festival of Amateur Theatre in Monaco, he suggested the idea of organising an event for children along similar lines. But many theatre experts shook their heads in doubt.

Would children really be able to perform in front of such a huge audience?

Would children really be able to demonstrate their artistic methods on stage?

Would children be able to travel so far?

Would children be capable of communicating with each other?

These are only some of the hard-hitting questions asked of the idea's initiator. Only John Ytteborg, then Secretary General of IATA/AITA welcomed the idea and contacted Irene Luitz from the Netherlands, who had experience of similar festivals which she had organised on a European level. Hugh Lovegrove, who was at the time President, was also convinced the idea would work. Bernd Ruping developed the outline for a symposium to run parallel with the festival. So, from

14th to 20th April 1990 the first World Festival of Children's Theatre took place with theatre groups from twenty-three countries. The festival was so successful that the Turkish theatre association TOBAV, represented by Tamer Levent, offered to host the Festival in Turkey in 1992. Subsequent festivals took place in Lingen 1994, Hvidovre/Copenhagen (Denmark) 1996, Lingen 1998 and Toyama (Japan) 2000.

At the 7th World Festival of Children's Theatre 2002, more than four hundred children from five continents and twenty four nations will come together under the motto: "Let's fly". The children will satisfy their appetites for discovery, will meet other people, experience other countries and cultures, cross borders, be liberated from the earth's gravity by imagination and plunge into new creative dimensions. The productions will show what needs to be changed to give young people in the 21st Century perspectives for the future. Children will be given a space within a safe healthy environment where they can express their own personal ideas and experience an inter-cultural dialogue without fear or criticism.

This festival would not take place without the input of the people of Lingen: children from all over the world will be hosted in guest families, fathers will take time off to act as taxi drivers etc. Local school classes will

collaborate with the festival participants to create a “Park of Children’s Cultures”. Here the participating countries will have the opportunity to display their cultures in their respective pavilions with the focal theme being the living conditions experienced by children. The whole town lives for and with the festival - this is the lasting impression which the many thousands of visitors take home with them after the festival.

The 7th World Festival of Children’s Theatre opens on 14th June 2002 at the Emsland Stadium in Lingen and

will draw more than 2000 spectators! We hope that - as in previous years - the festival will actually begin when it is already over - that the many contacts and friendships between the children will continue by letters, e-mails, visits, etc.

So the World Festival of Children’s Theatre which had as its original concept, “Dialogue among Civilisations” continues to belong to the peace making projects in a time in which all too often children face violence, war and terrorism.

Thomas Hauger - Denmark

AITA/LATA President Elect 1993-1995

AITA/LATA President 1995-1999

Happy Birthday AITA/IATA and congratulations on reaching your Golden Jubilee. I had the honour of serving you from 1993-95 as President Elect and from 1995-99 as your President. I feel that we achieved a lot together - a lot of hard work and many decisions made; like saving you from bankruptcy by transferring the Secretariat from Copenhagen to Tallinn, and increasing the membership fee by almost 400%. Difficult and fairly unpopular decisions, but thanks to the Executive Board, Council and General Assembly we pulled through. The most important achievements during my term as President from a political and organisational point of view were: the creation of the Solidarity Fund, a 24% increase in voting members and the revitalisation of the South American and Caribbean regions. We also succeeded in diluting somewhat the European domination of the organisation, which was one of my declared aims.

The first fundraising stickers!

The first Dane who tried to help AITA/LATA to survive was the AITA/LATA Treasurer in the 1980's, Bruno Gaston. He was the architect behind the Nordic Grant to AITA/LATA and the transfer of the Secretariat to Copenhagen. He also tried to save its economy by having stickers printed to sell in the North American way of fundraising with War Bonds! AITA/LATA still has thousands of stickers left.

For me it all started at the 18th Congress and Festival in Utrecht, The Netherlands in 1987 - a very friendly town. Following the trend of the time the festival was organised under the theme: "Growth in a multicultural society!"

A very good theme - but asking all the groups to try to perform to a theme made it a difficult and confusing festival, as I remember it. What does remain clear in my mind from that festival is the Congress itself, at least the opening of it. The World Council on the stage: for me a group of very important almost unreachable people, and flags on the tables denoting the nationality of each delegation. A new president was elected - I was very impressed - "How important these people must be?" Later I learned that they are not so important, they are simply individuals like myself totally committed to our world association AITA/IATA.

The 'Moose head' photographer!

At the festival in Utrecht a Danish Viking photographer - an independent visitor from DATS at the festival - told Bent Jacobsen and I that he was on a mission from an international media bureau. Which one he wouldn't tell. His equipment consisted of one camera and two gigantic flashes. The whole paraphernalia looked like something a hunter would have on his

wall from his last moose hunt. Every time he shot a photo there was blinding light everywhere.

Rule number one for a theatre photographer: Never use flashlight!

But Benny "the Conqueror" would not stop and went on disturbing the performances so we threatened to throw him, his camera and the whole "moose head" contraption into the nearest river.

*We never did, but Benny went home telling us that his world agency had asked him to "close down the operation."
Even if there was no "World Agency" - We Thank You!*

Has the presence of AITA/IATA today any meaning?
- is a question I asked myself on many occasions whilst travelling and working as the AITA/IATA World President: visiting many member and potential member countries. AITA/IATA has not yet developed into a big strong organisation with enough influence to have any real impact even within UNESCO itself. And what about the development of artistic quality in amateur theatre? Has AITA/IATA had any real impact on this fundamental issue?

Having said that, the importance of AITA/IATA should never be underestimated. It is largely owing to the efforts of our Association that today we face a stronger representation and commitment from the Latin-American regions and from new members in Africa and Asia. We form a network that they need and can tap into just as all our members can and do. And perhaps this is the most important attribute of

AITA/IATA today - it is a worldwide network, which primarily makes access possible to festivals all over the World.

The continuing development of new festival concepts is one of the main challenges for AITA/IATA in the future. Small festivals where two to four groups meet, play and make workshops together: festivals where the focus is on the groups rather than on strict festival rules such as the length of plays, the number of participants, the number of days the group is hosted etc. And are we really willing to continue with outmoded methods of adjudication? Isn't it possible to develop new ideas where the focus is on the groups rather than on the adjudications? Where the starting point is the vision and the working methods of the groups, rather than the skill of an adjudicator? And what about the important debate on competitive theatre and prizes that no one dares to mention but which is in my opinion a complete contradiction in the world of art?

The basic need for all those devoted to amateur theatre, is the need for a vibrant, well functioning AITA/IATA whose mission statement could be: "To foster the artistic development of amateur theatre, whilst respecting different cultures and traditions with the courage to challenge the past in order to improve the future!"

Leonardo Tromp - Aruba

President of the Caribbean Regional Alliance - CARA

At the 19th AITA/IATA World Theatre Festival and Congress in Monaco in July 1989 one of the regional classifications that existed within AITA/IATA was the “The Americas”. This was the official title for the region that included Canada, the USA, the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

At the 1989 General Assembly, Aruba was accepted as a new Associate Member. For the Aruban delegation it seemed an impossible task to represent all the different cultural regions under the one umbrella: “The Americas”. This was discussed with the Board members of “The Americas” region who were in complete agreement that the region should be divided into smaller regions. A motion to this end was duly prepared and presented to the 20th World Theatre Congress in Halden, Norway and four new Regions were ratified:

The North American Regional Alliance - NARA
consisting of the USA and Canada.

The Central American Regional Alliance - CEARA

The South American Regional Alliance - SARA

The Caribbean Regional Alliance - CARA.

Although there were members of all four of the regions attending AITA/IATA events, CEARA, SARA and CARA had yet to be officially founded and constituted.

At the 10th Aruba International Theatre Festival - FITA '96, as Festival President, I invited countries from the three fledgling regions to a meeting in Aruba, where they were encouraged to become more involved within AITA/IATA. In April 1997 a Theatre Conference was organised on the island of Grenada, where twelve Caribbean countries came together to officially form the Caribbean Regional Alliance – CARA. I was elected President of CARA and became the first CARA Representative to the Council of AITA/IATA.

Through my role as President of CARA I then helped with the official formation of the South American Regional Alliance at the First International Theatre Festival of “Teatro San Martin” in Caracas, Venezuela in December 1998. I also organised a meeting of Central American countries in Aruba in October 2000 when a temporary board of CEARA was formed.

Julio Cesar Monge - El Salvador

President of the Central American Regional Alliance - CEARA

The possibility to form a new Central American Region called CEARA was approved by the General Assembly at the 19th World Congress in 1991.

Several efforts were made to get this region started and the National Centre of AITA/IATA in Mexico started making contacts in the region, consisting of the countries: Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador. At that time, of these countries only Mexico was a member of AITA/IATA. The formation of this region was not an easy mission, as several of the Central American countries, during those years were going through difficult periods. During recent years the National Centre of Mexico has also gone through a period of re-organisation and was unable to partake in the formation of the Central American Region.

The President of CARA (The Caribbean Regional Alliance) Leonardo Tromp took the initiative in October 2000 to organise the 1st Central American Encounter of Theatre in Aruba during the XIIth Aruba International Festival - FITA 2000.

Representatives from Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador accepted the invitation to attend and the encounter was a success.

I was appointed as the temporary representative for the Central American Regional Alliance - CEARA until a Board of theatre representatives from the countries of CEARA could be convened.

Lenka Laznovska - Slovakia

President of the AITA/IATA Central European Committee - CEC

The principal aim of AITA/IATA is to enrich human experience and support artistic understanding among people and nations through the medium of theatre as well as the artistic and social development of amateur theatre itself. The Central European Committee works to this common goal. The CEC is currently the largest AITA/IATA Regional Committee involving eighteen countries. CEC members cover Central Europe and far beyond: stretching from Ireland in the West to Israel in the East (not counting the Russian far eastern border) and welcomes new members from within this region. From the beginning, the CEC - a multi-cultural and multi-lingual organisation - has served as a bridge between different cultural and

political structures within Europe, and as an organisational and informational point for different cultures, languages and backgrounds. The Committee is based on activities and contributions of national centres. In consequence it endeavours to be pro-active to the changes of national boundaries within Europe.

CEC believes that amateur theatre should aim for the highest artistic quality and it is with this goal in mind that we are developing our future strategy. We believe that we can realise our dream through co-operation with the other AITA/IATA regions in Europe and the rest of the World.

Denis Leblanc - Canada

President of the Comité International des Fédérations Théâtrales d'Amateurs Culture Latine - CIFTA

CIFTA congratulates AITA/IATA on its fiftieth anniversary and wishes to officially mark this important milestone in the history of the organisation. Fifty years that have seen AITA/IATA's unwavering efforts in raising awareness to amateur theatre as the number one cultural activity in the world. Fifty years that have witnessed thousands of amateur theatre participants sharing their passion with actors from all over the World in international theatre festivals and at the World Festival of amateur theatre in Monaco.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the success of AITA/IATA; the hundreds of people who have given their time and energy in planning strategy and in organising and promoting amateur theatre through its World organisation. I would also like to thank those pioneers who, fifty years ago, with their shared passion, took

the initiative to establish a global structure for amateur theatre, despite borders, distances, languages or social and cultural inequalities - a world organisation that unites the amateurs of theatre within an amateur theatre context. An organisational union that succeeds in bringing together our differences into a shared common richness: through cultural exchanges and meetings thus creating global friendships.

In CIFTA, we continue to be active in the development of amateur theatre in collaboration with AITA/IATA. We are actively supporting our African and Maghrebian members and friends in their shared goal to create their own regional committees. We continue to develop our creative festival ESTIVADES and our training project initiatives and to promote theatrical exchanges between CIFTA members and other countries.

Shirley Harbin - USA

President of the North American Regional Alliance - NARA

The North American Regional Alliance (NARA) was established in 1973 at the AITA/IATA World Festival and Congress in Monaco. Members of Theatre Canada and Theatre USA are represented on the Board of NARA. Theatre Canada grew out of the Dominion Drama Festival, which first took place in 1933 and Theatre USA grew out of the American Theatre Association (ATA) which began in 1935.

Theatre Canada and Theatre USA and their member organisations embrace the 1977 AITA/IATA resolutions. These resolutions encourage:

- Workshops by trained leaders at local, regional, national and international levels
- Adjudicated Festivals at local, regional, national and international levels
- Conferences at local, regional, national and international levels
- Educational programmes
- Creation of bibliographies, libraries and information/networking centres
- Support for new playwrights through publication, performance, and seminars

- Experimentation in theatre form, performance spaces and text
- Equal opportunities for all to take part in theatre with special initiatives for senior citizens, prisoners, minority groups, youth and children
- Pro-am cooperation including national chapters of the International Theatre Institute (ITI)
- Recognition of quality and excellence through award programmes etc

Canada will host the AITA/IATA World Festival and Congress in 2003 in Nova Scotia and the International Drama in Education (IDEA) Congress in 2004 in Ottawa. The USA is planning an International Festival of Amateur Theatre in 2004.

NARA congratulates AITA/IATA on its 50th Birthday and pledges to continue to work with the Association in our shared goal to bring a greater level of peace and understanding to the world through participation in amateur theatre.

Villy Dall - Denmark

President of the North European Amateur Theatre Alliance - NEATA

As mankind moves uneasily into the 21st Century, the tragic events on and after September 11, 2001 continue to influence us in all our international relationships. The emphasis must now be placed on genuine, friendly, fair, and reciprocal collaboration with organisations outside our own countries. Theatre and other non-governmental cultural organisations must be in the forefront of our endeavours to make the world safer, fairer, more peaceful, and more humane - for people from all walks of life and from every culture. Our focus must be on ordinary people, for amateur theatre is the theatre of ordinary people.

When NEATA was established in 1998, the focus was placed on facilitating exchanges, providing education, and developing grass-roots amateur theatre. Whilst we have already achieved a lot in this direction there is still

a lot of work to be done in developing and consolidating what we have already achieved.

The regions of AITA/IATA are essential and provide the only available tools, not only in raising the number of member countries in AITA/IATA, but also in making the necessary changes that are required to transform the Association into a global network of non-professional and non-institutionalised theatre.

From the Nordic and Baltic corner of the World we salute our World Association on its 50th birthday and wish everyone involved in amateur theatre a prosperous future, citing with renewed vigour the motto of AITA/IATA: "Understanding and Education Through Theatre".

Gustavo Ott

President of the South American Regional Alliance - SARA

The idea of a South American Regional Alliance was first discussed at the 19th General Assembly of the World Theatre Congress held in Monaco in July 1989. At that time, South America formed part of “The Americas” together with Central America, the Caribbean, USA and Canada.

SARA came into existence at the World Theatre Congress of 1991 and soon thereafter knew its first Associate member – Colombia, although the official formation of SARA took a while longer.

In September 1996 during the “International Theatre Festival of Aruba – FITA”, groups from Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Chile and Venezuela held a meeting

to discuss the possibility of the formation of SARA. A follow-up meeting was organised to take place in December 1997 during the First International Theatre Festival – “FIESTA”, in Caracas, Venezuela.

I was chosen as the first official Representative of SARA to the AITA/IATA Council in 1998 and to the World Theatre Congress in Morocco in 1999.

The South American Regional Alliance is a relatively young region in AITA/IATA terms but it has huge potential for growth and development. South America is rich in theatre and is very eager to show it to the rest of the World.

Leonardo Tromp

AITA/IATA Council Member 1997 - 1999

AITA/IATA Vice-President 1999 - 2003

AITA/IATA World President Elect 2001 -

At the 5th Aruba International Theatre Festival in 1986 one of the participating groups and one of the workshop leaders came from the Netherlands. They informed us that the International Amateur Theatre Association - AITA/IATA would hold its 18th Congress in the Dutch City of Utrecht. Oh yes, very nice - who are they?

Our co-ordinator and stage manager were duly delegated to travel to Utrecht as observers, as we had never heard of AITA/IATA before. They came back full of enthusiasm and proposed that our foundation should attend the following Congress to be held in Monaco in 1989 where we became members, falling under the umbrella of the region The Americas. This was my first great experience with the AITA/IATA family but it came as a surprise that very few Caribbean, Southern or Central American countries were AITA/IATA members. It was clear that something had to be done to change this! At the 20th Congress held in Halden, Norway in 1991, the one Region "The Americas" was officially reorganised into four smaller regions.

We soon discovered that forming regions was one thing, making them work was quite a different task as

few of the countries involved understood AITA/IATA and its operation. In 1997 the then World President Thomas Hauger made exhaustive efforts to raise the profile and understanding of AITA/IATA within the recently devolved regions and in turn revitalise them. The Aruba Cultural Centre Foundation and the FITA festival were instrumental in encouraging and stimulating CARA, SARA and CEARA into action.

Whilst attending my first AITA/IATA General Assembly in 1989 and meeting so many wonderful people, I never dreamt that one day I would be sitting at the same table in an executive capacity, but the future obviously had other designs.

Over the past 50 years, AITA/IATA has grown into a truly global theatre organisation thanks to the pioneering efforts of our members and consecutive councils who have guided the Association over the years. We are committed to our forebears to continue along the path they have mapped for us. We can only succeed in our endeavours if we ensure our continued labour to support and promote our Association in the future.

I'm sure we are all in agreement that there are some areas that require further development: we need to improve the quality and frequency of our communications, we need to improve and up-date the web-site, we need to promote quality festivals, seminars and workshops and offer support and guidance where possible and we need to react constructively to the issues highlighted by the members' questionnaire undertaken in 2000.

I truly appreciate the members' vote of confidence I received at the 25th World Congress in July 2001 in Monaco and I look forward with great hope and anticipation to the 26th World Congress and Theatre Festival to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada from the 13th to the 22nd of July 2003.