

10th Women Playwrights International Conference

Cape Town - South Africa 2015 | Newsletter #1

Planning for the Cape Town conference is slowly starting to take shape. Our small team (of three!) have been in discussion to brainstorm the logistics for 2015 Cape Town conference. In January 2013, we will finally introduce the conference to Cape Town by calling a meeting for interested local playwrights, directors and companies. Already the word has gotten out and artists are excited to get involved! During this meeting we will decide on a small South African committee, and the call for scripts will go out in September 2013. Although we're still in the early planning stages, there is already a lot to think about. Soon we'll be deciding on a theme and focus for 2015 and get to the always challenging part of applying for funding.

We'd love to hear anything you have to say, so please keep in touch with us and send your ideas, comments or suggestions to wpic2015@gmail.com

Karen Jaynes *Amy Jephtha* *Zara Trafford*

You can follow us on twitter [@womenplaywright](https://twitter.com/womenplaywright)



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

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



Feel free to spread this news letter among your colleagues!

Homepage for WPI, www.wpinternational.net

Hello all WPI-members!

I hope you are all well and that your work is progressing.

I still have the joy of bringing some of you together in Stockholm fresh in my mind, but I am also slowly adapting to the idea of going to South Africa in July 2015 for the next WPI Conference. Hopefully we will meet there!

The planning has started, I can assure you that our host committee is doing a wonderful job. We are also lucky to be able to work closely with Mireille, our Stockholm project leader, so both she and I can give valuable experience on to our next hosts. Now I really hope a lot of you will want to come and be able to come. We will do our best to support the work of getting you there.

Hopefully you have some new wonderful theater projects that you can share with us in just 2,5 years! In the process of developing new work you might also be able to use your WPI network to get valuable comments from WPI colleagues.

For the time to come my wish is that you all work to strengthen your regional WPI-groups, be it country-wise or in a broader or narrower sense. Please give us information about this as soon as you have your contact-persons ready. Use these groups as a network for sharing experience, dramaturging each other and sharing information about relevant happenings in your region. Or more!

I wish you all the best for the holiday season!



Lene Therese Teigen
WPI president

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A Walk Down Memory Lane by Margaret Hollingsworth:

Toronto, 2nd WPI conference - 17th-20th May, 1991

Back in the 80's we weren't all connected by the internet but somehow the news of the 1st WPI conference in Buffalo found it's way over the border to Canada. I remember jumping up and shouting 'This is what I've been waiting for'.

I'd written an article a year or so before called *Why we don't write* in which I proposed various reasons why women's voices were largely silent on world stages. The article, published in the Canadian Theatre Review, didn't make many ripples and when it was taken up by the organizers of the WPI conference and used in their promotional material I was overjoyed. I believe I was only one of three official Canadian registrants at that first conference, (we've built up our national showing considerably since then). I found myself co-opted onto two panels, taking part in administrative planning and, lending my voice to the general excited clamour about when and how the next conference would happen. We all agreed that what we had to say couldn't possibly be contained in the confines of a single gathering, the ball of international co-operation and exchange among women playwrights was well and truly rolling.

It seemed logical to everyone but me that the next conference should be in Toronto, since Canada was a 'foreign' country, and Toronto was close enough to Buffalo to make it possible to liaise easily. I carried the baton back to Toronto a little reluctantly since I don't have Anna Kay France's

organizational talents, and, at that time, I lacked the necessary links with a university which would ensure some administrative support.

I managed to draw together a team of very able women led by Ann Wilson from the University of Guelph. We started with a relatively clean slate since none of the others had been at the first conference and, with typical Canadian resolution, they resented too much interference from our American neighbours however informed or well meaning. We chose the title *Voices of Authority*, following on from *Voices of Identity*. It set the tone for the second conference, provoking otherwise peaceable factions into loud eruptions and arguments particularly when they felt they weren't being heard. It was certainly the scrappiest, most contentious Woman Playwrights conference I've attended, some say it was the best, some the worst. Perhaps it was a sign of the times, feminism was at a crossroads, having engaged with inequality, multi-culturalism and sexuality, it was beginning to take on race and gender issues. There were times when it seemed we'd come to blows about whether to allow men into the sessions, lesbians wanted exclusive sessions, many delegates argued against political correctness and the curbing of imagination. I remember Terri Baum shouting out that respectfulness is crippling and Irene Fornes being booed when she called for 'humanistic standards of excellence' as a way of judging work. Articles

written after the conference had titles like 'How a meeting of visionary goals missed the boat'. Personally I revelled in the conflict and found the whole event stimulating, provocative, unladylike – it stirred up ideas and reflections on the issues - did we really think we'd resolve them?

A great deal was, in fact, accomplished. An International Advisory Committee was set up to plan the next conference and to provide advice and assistance to its directors. Native women like the Canadian group Spiderwoman made their presence known to the world, Monique Mojica declared that they were word warriors, who should fashion their own gods out of their entrails. Mexico's first two Indian women playwrights emerged and their work went on to form part of a revival of theatre in Chiapas – and there was much, much more.

In the more than twenty years since '91, we've gone from strength to strength. I've been present at seven of the conferences; all had a different character, all were major achievements. Although it was more than twenty years ago, the Toronto conference is still vivid in my memory, I think fondly of making new friends (some sadly departed), of new ideas exchanged, of new seeds planted. It was a bulwark, a sort of sounding board between the excitement of the breaking of new ground with the Buffalo conference and the immensely successful Adelaide conference which was to follow. ■

WPI elected for 2012-2015



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

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Lene Therese Teigen	President, Norway
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Vanessa Adams-Harris	Secretary, USA
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HOST COMMITTEE/SOUTH AFRICA

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

Do you want to check WPIC 2012?

Did you attend the conference in Stockholm? Or did you miss it? You can still take part in some events on the net. All info at the WPIC 2012 web site: <http://wpic.riksteatern.se>

Five seminars are still possible to follow. If you like to watch, you don't need any special computer demands but good Internet speed is recommended.

- **The Arab World**

- Years of Ember and Ashes**

- With Nidal Al Achkar, founder & director of Al Madina Theatre, Beirut

- Young Arab Theatre Makers: Challenges and Opportunities and Initiatives**

- With Mona Knio, Department of Communication Arts, The Lebanese American University

- Storytelling to resist and remember**

- With Sondos Shabayek, Egyptian journalist, dramatist, director & activist, part of the protesters at Tahrir Square in Cairo. Now working with the Tahrir Monologues, stories from the revolution.

- www.tahrirmonologues.com

- **Etel Adnan Award**

- Founded by Al Madina Theatre and Riksteatern, this award aspires to increase the number of plays penned by women playwrights residing in Arabic-speaking countries, and making them acknowledged by the rest of the world.

- **Young women playwrights around the Baltic Sea**

- Six languages. Six voices. A staged reading in a collaboration between Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. Playwrights: Emilia Pöyhönen, Sofia Aminoff, Maria Lee Liivak, Madara Rutkevica, Gabriele Labauskaite, Lyubov Mulmenko.

- www.adelfa.fi/playwrights/

- **Theater impact on children and young people**

- With Suzanne Osten, founder and leader of the well known Swedish theatre Unga Klara, talks with Marina Barham, head of Al Harah Theatre in Palestine.

- **Women Writing Africa**

- With Fatima Dike & Amy Jephta, South Africa, and Patricia Olwoch, Uganda.