

EUROPEAN Insights

Spring 2008

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM THEATRE ALLIANCE - EUROPE

European Affiliate of the International Museum Theatre Alliance

EDITOR'S CORNER



he Power of Performance

Hello once again to you all. I am delighted to say that since our last newsletter went out to you all, the Performing Heritage International Conference at the University of Manchester has taken place. I was most fortunate to be able to attend though I missed the last day due to work commitments.

I have to say first and foremost what a great success this conference was. Over 100 delegates from all over the world, presentations, workshops and performances that not only informed but inspired as well as an opportunity to gain an insight and understanding into the immense research project that Tony Jackson and his team have been carrying out over the last three and half years.

The Challenges of Slavery

Although I know that there will be reports and articles about this conference in the next IMTAL Europe Newsletter, I thought I would say a few words on my experience there. Perhaps, for me, the most powerful aspect of the two days of the conference that I was able to see was the performance of "The Accursed Thing" by Andrew Ashmore and Paul Etuka, in the Manchester Museum.

I know for those of you working in our field in Great Britain, the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, was a very busy time. In Ireland, however, the anniversary found very little attention. So I was watching this performance with little knowledge on the subject and broad ideas and images of Slavery in my head.

WHOW was I moved by this performance. It is many years since I can say I felt truly moved by a piece of museum theatre, but here and now and for the third time in two sentences I can say I was truly moved. The characterisation, the setting, the use of the artefacts surrounding us, relating to what was being performed, the delivery, the sentiment, the message were very moving indeed and I felt not only had I been entertained, but I had learned something as well.

Brain V Braun

This leads me to Catherine Hughes's key note address, on the opening day. I have known Catherine for many years now, we have even been known to dance 18th century jigs in the middle of Richmond Virginia, when the bus had broken down between venues, and in all that time I have come to realise that Catherine is one smart lady.

Her current studies relate to the affect of Museum Theatre on the brain. I am not even going to try to go further into this subject as I am quite sure it's well beyond my understanding. However, an interesting debate ensued and seemed to continue throughout the days ahead. Does Museum Theatre always have to mean something?

I asked this question because in my own particular area there are many performances we do, whether it be Murder Mystery nights or corporate entertainment or storytelling for reception children, where our main focus is to entertain and learning is not a priority. Do we always have to send our audience away feeling that they have learnt something or is it ok to say they came, they say, they were entertained?

Challenging Triangle

Richard Talbot, Triangle Theatre, gave a delightful performance/presentation that looked at how performance in a National Trust Property does not always have to be serious historical based interpretation but can be experimental, improvisational and lots of fun. Really this man has more creativity running through him than can be possibly imagined.

The second part of the Triangle presentation looked at their latest work "the Last Woman". It looked at their rehearsal and development style from an academics point of view. It yet again was most interesting. I am always challenged by Triangle and believe that the work that they do is some of the most inspirational yet challenging performance out there.

The Naked Truth

Loic Benot, a director of IMTAL Europe, gave a presentation that was a real eye opener in many different ways. Loic wrote an article in our last edition that questioned whether or not performance should provoke. Well by the looks of it Loic decided that it should.

His presentation was a look at Art, set in Paris, the difference between old School and Avant Garde. His character was a professor from 1966, and the material we were looking at was controversial and provocative. We were challenged in a gifted manner to decide whether a piece of art was truly what it seemed.

All the while Loic's character regularly removed an item of clothing. At first you didn't realise, then suddenly there he was standing in his shirt and whipping off his boxer shorts. Thankfully this was to shock and he was not truly naked underneath, otherwise we would have been looking at, in the words of Captain Blackadder, "his suspension with disbelief". It was hilarious, thought provoking, controversial, and provocative.

Museum Theatre is a living breathing vessel and it evolves and changes all time. All we need to do is let our imaginations go and try to see the true endlessness of possibilities that we have out there.

The Newsletter

I hope that you will enjoy this edition of the IMTAL Europe Newsletter; there should be something for everyone inside. May I also take this opportunity to highlight the AGM for IMTAL Europe will be in Bath on Sunday July 6th 2008, with a whole day of activities and presentations taking place on Saturday July 5th 2008? For further information please read the article inside or visit the website www.imtal-europe.org

Finally I would like on behalf of the board and the membership of IMTAL Europe wish Chris Bailey a speedy recovery from his recent illness. My prayers are with him at this time.

Robert Forshaw

IMTAL Europe Chair

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MEMBERS' CORNER

WELCOME to our new Members

Institutional Members:

Fotevikens Museum, Sweden

Individual Members:

Lucy Bradley - Bristol Marita Hesjedal - Norway Jenniefer Gadsby - Birmingham Emily Capstick - Manchester

MEMBERS SUBSCRIPTION 2007-2008

As announced in our previous edition, June 2007 is the month to renew your membership. We encourage you to visit our website to check the difference between institutional benefits and individual ones.

Institutional:

£70 OR 102€ peryear

Individual:

£30 OR 44€ peryear

So, please just send a cheque (made payable to IMTAL-Europe) to Jo Kemp-Treasurer/Membership Secretary-IMTAL Europe, Castle Museum, Nottingham, NG1 6EL United Kingdom.

Or pay by bank draft to IMTAL Europe.

In £ Sterling: IBAN GB74 BARC 20-80-57 80132187 SWIFT: BARCGB22
In Euros: IBAN: GB24 BARC 20-80-57 67355277 SWIFT: BARCGB22

INSTITUTIONS: make the most of the membership benefits!

Please have another look to the list of benefits for institutions. The fee is a bit higher than for individuals but you are offered much more. For instance, we encourage you to send us articles and adverts (one free per year) and a website banner if you want to be the 'member of the month' appearing on our website mainpage.

Do not let us decide for you...

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CREARTHIS is a French association created in 1997, whose aim is to create and produce all forms of demonstrations and cultural activities that supports the material or immaterial heritage. As a goal, we want to encourage local associative life by developing achievable actions undertaken by local people.

Directed by two former professionals of Parisian Theatre and Shows (3 Molières, many tours, more than 15 years of experience), this association proposes a high level of requirement and realization, anchored in a rigorous historical research related to a practice of the occupational spectacle.

Sophie, one of the directors is currently a PH D student and undertakes academic research on the practices related to the historical animation of heritage.

Directors:

Richard Jousselin, 41, producer of spectacles, director, 2 Molières.

Sophie Lacour, 44 years, creator and director, 1 Molière, PH D student at the University of Paris-Est and active member of several professional associations of tourism.

Reference: sophie.jousselin@laposte.net



Massimo Abbamonte Coordinator "Theatre at the Museum"



Massimo Abbamonte is a physicist and an actor, born in 1974, and he is the coordinator of the project called "Theatre at the Museum", at the National Museum Of Science And Technology Leonardo Da Vinci – Milano, Italy.

This Museum is a science and technology museum and also a science centre. Theatre is one of the ways we use to engage visitors. For example: visitors can talk with Leonardo da Vinci and ask questions about his projects; they can listen to the stories about steam trains told by a 19th century engine driver; they can play a role game in which they become sailors on the reconstruction of Magellan's ship. The aim of this project, in few words, is "learning through emotions".

For Further information on the Museum of Science & Technology Leonardo da Vinci in Milango to:

www.museoscienza.org

"MINDA. The girl at the pharmacy."

by Mariëlle Malmo, Museum Educator

An educational programme on sexual assault. A challenging theme at the Sverresborg Trøndelag Folk Museum. (Trondheim, Norway)

Why does a traditional open-air museum want to present sexual assaults as one of the topics in its educative programme? What is this thought based on? From what needs do we want to tell about Minda, and how can we convey her story from 1888 and at the same time show that it does not belong only to history, but is incredibly relevant for the present also. Recent reports tell that 50 % of the Norwegian male population thinks that if a girl gets raped it partially is her own fault. 17,5 % of 19 year old girls have had involuntary sexual experiences.

These are cold facts, and numbers we should not overlook. Can we as a museum contribute to make people, and especially youth, reflect on subjects as responsibility, personal boundaries, prejudice and sexuality, so that we can create a greater awareness and safer present in the future? Or are we naive and starry-eyed to set out for this goal?

Experience

Our experience, at the Trøndelag Folk Museum, on working with challenging themes in particular, sprung out from a wish that we wanted to try out new methods for making heritage learning meaningful for people today. Our first project was an exhibition on the history of deaf presented in a division of our museum, while the two last projects were theatrical, and both based on the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian Union in 1905.

The Minda Project

An October morning in 1888, a girl is found lying on the cobblestones outside the pharmacy at the city square of Trondheim. She's unconscious and clearly intoxicated, unable to stand up. Two

witnesses, who found her, could tell that her clothes were in a rather disorderly fashion. Minda was put into drunk cell until she got The police sober. examination tells that Minda explained that she was invited inside the pharmacy the night before, while waiting for her aunt to finish work.

Further, she was offered something to drink, which she commented tasted peculiar. After this she remembered nothing. There was no medical examination and the case was dismissed due to lack of evidence. Her mother

and aunt reacted intensively on this, demanding to know how the Head of Police could not pursue a further investigation – Minda had been raped inside the pharmacy, and she was only 14 years old. They now took the case in to their own hands and talked with the editor of one of Trondheim's main newspapers, Dagsposten.

They printed a story about Minda and how her case got dismissed because she was a girl from the lower working class, as opposed to the men in the pharmacy, who were from a higher social class. This led to a riot among the people in Trondheim outside the home of the Head of Police. The newspaper Adresseavisen angled it differently, indicating Minda was a prostitute, not an innocent girl. Minda now became a victim also in the ongoing class struggle at the end of the 19th century Trondheim.

It was difficult for her to get work – because no one wanted to hire the girl

An early October morning in 1888 in Trondheim, Norway, A voung garl is found lying unconscious on the pavement at the city square. She is partially undressed and seemingly drunk. Later it is revealed that she was invited inside the pharmacy nearby by three men. They gave her cognac to drink, and after that she remembers nothing. The gard is 1+ years old. Her name is Minda.

from the pharmacy. It seems that Minda led a promiscuous life after this. She had to live with the shame and the blame. In 1894, only 20 years old, she stepped on to the emigrant ship Juno, with a ticket to Chicago – and, we expect, a new life.

What do we want to achieve by telling Mindas story? Our goals are diverse. We want:

- an active audience, not merely spectators, but people who participate physically or mentally
- · to strengthen our role in society
- to show how historical incidents and contradictions can be used to lift forward current problems based on the same topic(s)
- to use this specific story to shed light on sexual assaults on youth today, and contribute to giving young girls and boys the courage to tell about sexual assaults, inflicted either upon themselves or others
- to strengthen our interpretation skills and our museum pedagogy
- · to use museum theatre as a method

(1): Nova Rapport 18/07. "The Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescents' Sexuality."

"Minda. The girl at the pharmacy." (continued)

interpreting controversial themes and challenging issues

- to get to know this particular target group better (14 to 19 yrs)
- to focus more on darker aspects of Trondheim's history by creating a vivid interpretation in our city department in the open-air museum

Museum theatre

The reason we want to use museum theatre is primarily based on our experience – this is a way for us to connect with an audience, and create a connection between a today's audience and a story from the past. It is also a way of making the museum more real, a place where one can get an experience that activates emotions, which again can be applied to ones own life and situation today. "We must shape museum theatre so that it is part of the world, can be assimilated into visitors' experience, and be used to build on their future experience." (2)

Museum theatre also gives the audience a choice of different degrees of involvement. Especially when it is based on a difficult matter, such as sexual assault, our audience should have the opportunity to distance themselves from it whenever necessary. We must also be prepared to some people in our audience being victims to sexual assaults, or even sexual criminals. How will they react? And how do we cope with that?

"By getting visitors involved, we have a

responsibility to ensure that they are not manipulated or judged in the process. (...) We have an obligation to be honest about our values, providing balanced points of view, and very clear about what we are doing. How do we conduct ourselves in museum theatre, and how do we address subjects coloured by ethics and values?" (3)

We will address these subjects with a "Brudd" based interpretation – daring to ask questions and to shed a light over sexual assaults today, this, of course, in cooperation with professional psychiatrics, the police, and other (interest-) organizations.

There are a lot of subjects to be addressed, for example: Where does the line go as far as what is concerned being immoral of a young girl's behaviour? What about a young boy's behaviour? How many sexual assaults lead to a riot today? Who is to blame? How do we react when we hear about these types of assault, or read about them in the newspaper? How are cases like this described in the media? And do the media have a role concerning these types of issues?

Even though there are no right or wrong answers, it still is important to ask these questions and to make people reflect upon them – in regard to oneself and others. For us it is important to act responsible and to be as real as we can be, basing our interpretation on empiric truth, and tell Mindas story to today's people in a respectful way. And, hopefully,

this experience at out museum will have an affect on people's attitudes and choices.

Creating a connection

I would like to close with the following words from Catherine Hughes: "Drama and museums can provoke and motivate the desire to learn. Because of all of this, I believe

museums need theatre in order to be more accessible as social institutions, more effective as educational institutions, and more honest as cultural institutions."(4)

Here we are getting somewhat closer to the core. We must be relevant for todays and tomorrows visitors, so that they can identify, have the opportunity to put themselves in an other persons time and situation, and feel that those lives matter to the life they lead today. That the history we are telling also becomes a part of their own real history. What do we want people to learn from Minda – the girl from the pharmacy? History? Something about themselves? Neither, we want them to see the connection between the past, the present and the future.

Mariëlle Malmo Museum Educator



ABM skrift #26: Brudd. Om det ubehagelige, tabubelagte, marginale, usynlige, kontroversielle. ABM-utvikling, Oslo 2006.

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Svein Mossige, Mare Ainsaar, Carl Göran Svedin (eds): The Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescents' Sexuality. NOVA Rapport 18/07

Storsve, Kristine.: Teater i museum. Dilemmateater som formidlingsform. Masteroppgave, NTNU 2007.

Storsve, Kristine: Unionsdramatikk 1905. En dilemmaforestilling for et deltagende publikum. Trøndelag Folkemuseum, Trøndheim, 2005.



(2): Hughes, Catherine: Museum Theatre. Communicating with Visitors Through Drama. 1998. p. 118 (3): Hughes, Catherine: Museum Theatre. Communicating with Visitors Through Drama. 1998. p. 124-125 (4): Hughes, Catherine: Museum Theatre. Communicating with Visitors Through Drama. 1998. p. 11

MEMORANDUM of Understanding between the Allies of the International Museum Theatre Alliance

As a result of the Global Conference in Belfast September 2007, the boards of directors for the IMTAL Americas, IMTAL Europe and the associated members of Australia have come together to firm up the International arrangement of IMTAL as a whole. The following document was drafted and agreed by all boards and now is the foundation of cross board cooperation.



Shared Vision

The shared vision of the allies of the International Museum Theatre Alliance is to advance the field of museum theatre. By maintaining a supportive network for practitioners in the field of museum theatre, we will provide credibility to our members' work, and raise the quality of museum theatre on a global scale.

Allied organizations

The International Museum Theatre Alliance (IMTAL) originally formed in 1990 with governance established in the United States. As this organization evolved a group of members in the United Kingdom and Europe decided to officially organize as IMTAL-Europe in 1999 to better serve the needs of members living in that geographic region.

In 2007 a group of members in the Australasia geographic region are now on the verge of officially organizing as a third ally of IMTAL. Thus the leadership from all three of these groups met at the Biennial conference of IMTAL in Belfast, Northern Ireland to discuss the ways in which the three allies can best coordinate, collaborate, and cooperate with one another in order to best meet the needs of all of the membership.

Let the following document serve as an initial mutual agreement between the following parties: the International Museum Theatre Alliance-Americas, the International Museum Theatre Alliance-Europe. Upon officially forming IMTAL-Australasia will have the opportunity to ratify this agreement and join the alliance. Each ally is equal and independent.

Memorandum of Understanding between the Allies of the International Museum Theatre Alliance (continued)

Governance and Finance

- Each of the allied groups will maintain its own independent governance, membership, and treasury.
- All allied groups will communicate with each other regarding membership rates and will try to maintain a level of parity between the groups
- Voting rights are determined by each individual allied group and are limited to the membership of that ally.

Communication

The allied groups recognize that sharing information will mutually benefit all groups and the memberships of each.

- Each allied group will share newsletters with the board of the other allied groups.
- Each of the allied groups commits to further exploring ways to share member benefits within the global community.
- IMTAL-Americas currently owns the right to the www.imtal.org url. This ally will host a landing page on the website that will direct web visitors to all of the allied websites.
- Each allied group will contribute to an online master calendar accessed from the "landing page" on the website hosted by IMTAL-Americas.

Conferences

- The Biennial Conference will continue to be offered in a way that includes all
 membership from all allied groups. This conference will be held on odd numbered
 years and the location and planning responsibilities will rotate among allied
 groups to maximize the potential for members in geographic regions to be able to
 participate. The hosting ally group will independently manage the finances of the
 conference that they are hosting.
- Allied groups may offer conferences aimed primarily at their membership as
 well, but will schedule these events in communication with other allies so that the
 least amount of conflict is achieved. Members from the allied groups will be
 invited to participate in these local conferences.
- There will be cooperation in sharing information and promoting regional and global conferences with the total membership.
- Members in any one of the allied organizations will be entitled to reduced member rates at any conference sponsored by one of the allied groups.

Uniform Branding

The allied groups agreed that establishing a uniformity of "branding" would be advantageous to the overall alliance.

• IMTAL-Europe has recently developed a new logo and look for their website. The other allies will find ways to either use the logo as is, or as the basis of their logo.

These items are not exhaustive and additional items can be added if all parties mutually agree. This initial agreement is a starting point and will be reviewed by the combined International board at the 2009 conference.

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

In December 2007 and March 2008 the board of IMTAL Europe met in Bristol and Nottingham respectively. During these two long but beneficial days the board discussed an array of topics, including developing training packages that could be offered to both members and non members alike; the development of a stronger member database that could be used by potential clients; the conducting of a member survey as part of a lengthy process in developing a long term strategy for the future of IMTAL Europe; the creation of a guidelines for organising IMTAL conferences which will be available to all IMTAL Members; developing stronger links with Europe and much more.

From these talks we have a Guideline for organising conferences which will be shortly, if not already, available on the

website; in the pipeline is a pilot training scheme; the survey is being developed; we are developing links with cultural organisations in Belgium and Croatia; The AGM will now be in Bath in July 2008; we have a training day scheduled for October 2008 entitled "engaging characters for sites stories and stuff" - aimed at beginners and focusing on developing characters and characterisation for performance; we have a training day scheduled for February 2009 entitled "growing your own - getting the best out of your own staff, volunteers and freelancers" aimed at beginners focusing on how to start a programme with existing staff or volunteers without experience in live interpretation as well as getting the best out of freelancers. We also received the final financial report from the Belfast



Conference which states:

Income - £18530 Expenditure - £18900

All of the discussed material has come from comments and suggestions made by you the members of IMTAL Europe, so if you have anything you would like us to consider please do not hesitate in contacting any member of the board so that we can take your views on board. After all IMTAL Europe is your organisation and without your input it cannot develop into the beneficial and supportive organisation we know it can be.

r.forshaw@imtal-europe.org

NOT QUITE "Live Interpretation"!

by Chris Cade

You feel more vulnerable making a recorded interpretation



The Mission

'Can you write and narrate an audio trail for Wilberforce House?' I was asked by a Hull Museum Education Officer. I had played the great man a year earlier, live, in Hull Guildhall for schools. Apparently, the exhibition marking the bi-centenary of William Wilberforce's greatest achievement, within the four walls where he was actually brought up, had received some criticism, locally. What was needed, it seemed, was a warm narrative to put the domesticity back into the Wilberforce family home.

Objects are on display from three continents: Europe, Africa and the

Americas. The slave trade involved all three. It was the 'triangular trade'. Wilberforce's political career, notably as the figurehead for the Abolitionist movement, is of course, prominent in the exhibition. William's birth room is identified upstairs and his formative years in Hull are dealt with in one room downstairs.

There was no natural chronological route, therefore, to follow around the house. The exhibition asked some uncomfortable questions about present day 'slavery', too, in the old servants' quarters! Could all of this be logically addressed in a 45 minute tour for visitors

who chose to be guided by individual PDAs or their own downloaded MP3 players?

The Planning

Well, there were several re-writes and directions around the house had to be inserted before family and school groups were let loose around the museum with a wireless sound guide.

had decided to assume a neutral and natural narrator's voice, though unable to completely disguise my own Hull accent, adopting 'received pronunciation' for the words of Wilberforce himself.

Not quite "Live Interpretation"!

But that was not enough to put the home back into the house or to transport the visitor around the Georgian world of commerce and accepted cruelty as Wilberforce portrayed it. I suggested we should approach a colleague of mine whom I had worked with the National Railway Museum. also a freelancer. He understammuseums and their audiences. was the man who could record

mine whom I had worked with before at the National Railway Museum. He is now also a freelancer. He understands museums and their audiences. I knew he was the man who could record my true storytelling to best effect and subtly add in atmospheric sound effects which would take the listeners on an auditory journey from Hull to Hell and back via Westminster, West Africa and the Caribbean, 200 years ago.

There are several artists' impressions of William Wilberforce in the museum at different stages throughout his life, though not in sequence. I tried to present my own interpretation of him. The narrative, to me, had to be more than just a tour. It had to give an insight into the upbringing which made young William grow up to be a true 'gentle-man' However, as an actor who is not performing live, you have to hand over your work and be prepared to be judged on your delivery. You reach a wider audience, but you have not got the reassurance of eye contact. It is no longer instantaneous and immediate. You do not feel as much in control. You feel more vulnerable making a recorded interpretation. Much though I enjoy working in a studio, where you can deliberate and experiment with every nuance of every line, you are detached from your context. I shall await with interest the feedback from the pilot groups this Easter-time.

Something Totally Different

On another subject, I was commissioned to write and play Edwin Chadwick, secretary to the Poor Law Commission, to a class of secondary students in the Victorian street at Thackray Museum in Leeds. The street graphically highlights the intolerable living conditions of the working people in 1842, the year he would present his report on the 'Sanitary

You can't beat live interpretation for really making an impact

Conditions of the Labouring Classes of Great Britain' to both houses of parliament.

Leeds was just one of the cities he visited to build up a body of evidence which highlighted the plight of

the poor and demanded Public Health legislation. The performance was to act as the introduction for the students to the 'Campaign! Make an Impact' project, now in its second year, where young people move on to develop their own campaign strategies about contemporary issues dear to themselves and relevant to their communities.

Thackray's Education Officer wanted my performance recorded, without an audience, as a DVD to send to schools for teachers and students as preparation or follow up to a visit. Again, I recommended the skills of Edmonstone Productions. The live performance had lasted forty minutes including the launching of a 19th century style campaign in the classroom after our street experience.

The recording was to be a maximum of twenty minutes. It took 12 hours to film spread over three evenings after the museum had closed! Eddie Affleck could not capture the 'noxious fumes' of the steaming dunghill in the street, but he could enhance my performance by superimposing images on the screen and weaving sound effects into the monologue delivery when appropriate. The film 'set' was superb. I couldn't go wrong, surely?

The original piece had placed the young visitors in role as middle class citizens of the time, capitalising on their disgust at the poverty and squalor all around them then rousing them to do something about it. Its immediacy was its strength.



It was much harder work delivering the same message looking directly into the lens of a camera. There is no apparent response.

Some scenes are, of necessity, shot out of sequence and the urgency of the here and now disappears. Camera angles, lighting, sound and technical considerations slow the process. Then there were my inexcusable mistakes. It took six or seven 'takes' for each scene, sometimes more. Yet a few months previously I had delivered the whole script live without a hitch. Well, nothing wrong that any body noticed. Now, here I was more tired after each evening 'shoot' than after a whole day of live performances, yet missing that satisfying glow of achievement. It's something to do with the fact that your performance can be paused, re-played and . scrutinised.

However, Eddie (after all the editing miracles) and I are very pleased with the end product of both projects. More importantly, so are our clients. I am sure the audio and visual productions, accompanying a museum tour or providing a virtual one, will do the jobs they were designed for. Different media satisfy different aims. But, it has to be said, it's not quite the same. You can't beat live interpretation for really making an impact!



Chris Cade

For more details of either project, visit **www.mylearning.org** and search for the learning journeys: 'Wilberforce audio tours' or 'Campaign! Make an Impact!'

Chris Cade www.chriscade.co.uk

Making a Case for Museum Theatre Thanks to the I in IMTAL

by Jennifer Boyes-Manseau, Publications Officer, IMTAL Americas

Strengthening the links between IMTAL members worldwide means that you will now have one article taken from Americas or Australasia's Newsletter in our European edition. And to start with: some news from Canada...

Museum theatre: a worldwide practice.

In response to the theme "Challenging Museum Theatre," the conference organizing committee, speakers, and participants managed to both challenge ourselves as museum theatre practitioners and give examples of how we are challenging our institutions and our visitors. Triangle theatre from Coventry provoked us into lengthy, heated debates about our work. We were confirmed in our work and made contacts for future collaboration and exchange of ideas. These global conferences also serve another role. They show our museum colleagues, managers, and CEOs that museum theatre is being practiced worldwide. It is a growing form of interpretation in cultural organizations. Before going to Belfast, I would tell anyone who would listen, "I am going to an international conference in Belfast, Northern Ireland," and watch them turn green with envy. This conference confirmed that museum theatre is alive and well and growing all over the world. There were more than one hundred people at the conference including speakers, delegates, and performers. Countries represented were England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Norway, Austria, Congo, Australia, New Zealand, France, the Netherlands, and Canada.

Dark and complex content

The keynote speaker, Mike Jones, was inspirational. He is a history writer that digs deep into very potent content. In his current book, he is working with General Anatoly Mereshko to examine how the Red Army won in Stalingrad. He believes that the stories of the dispossessed are



important. As part of a diversity panel, I shared how the Canadian Museum of Civilization is using museum theatre to tell stories about Aboriginal people in both French and English.

Jane Glennie of Milestones - Hampshire's Living History Museum dared to create two pieces about the Romany people in their area. Romany visitors wondered if the performers were Romanies themselves because they had taken such care to represent them authentically. This session raised some good questions. Is museum theatre a forum for opening

up dialogue with marginalized communities? Are museums a site to stage encounters between different cultural groups, and how can theatre facilitate this? Tony Jackson and Jenny Kidd from the University of Manchester presented video clips of "This Accursed Thing," the museum theatre piece they commissioned as part of their three years evaluation project. This piece and Anna Farthing of Harvest Heritage's highly inventive work using electronic media to deliver sensitive content were other fine examples of how our European colleagues are creating

Making a Case for Museum Theatre (continued)

museum theatre that does not shy away from dark and complex content and the stories of the dispossessed. Many of us are exploring how to reach out to diverse audiences. Simone Mortan of Monterev Bay Aguarium reached out to the local Hispanic community by collaborating with a Hispanic theatre troupe to present a conservation issue play with touches of Spanish and Latin music. Jillian Finkle of the National Children's Museum showed us how to reach out to hearing impaired audiences by creating visually stunning pieces that integrate signing right into the production. Emily Capstick of Peoplescape Theatre in London presented her highly creative piece of museum theatre that reached out to severely disabled children by incorporating ways to play to all of their senses. Daina Harvey of the National Museum of Australia presented an impressive promotional video of her recent production with a target audience of the aging population.

Several of us agreed that reaching out to a certain audience did not have to exclude other visitors. In fact, in many cases, the theatre that was created for a specialized audience gave us new ideas of how to create museum theatre that transcends language and speaks to all ages.

The purpose? To improve the quality of our work.

Museum theatre people may have a reputation for appearing to have fun, but we work hard to make our productions as good as they can be. To this end, several presenters offered workshops to hone our practical skills as museum theatre practitioners. Jon Lipsky and I co-led a workshop in actor-driven playmaking, and participants said that they took away new tools to apply to their

Barry Kay of Sovereign Hill in Australia's workshop gave us ways to use games in the rehearsal process to improve the quality of our actor's performances, and Anna Farthing had us playing with and thinking about how we could use popular theatre styles in our pieces, matching the style to the time period represented and thereby enhancing the authenticity and the theatricality of the performance.

You can't beat live interpretation for really making an impact

We also explored serious topics that museums are addressing worldwide. Margaret Griffith of Melbourne Museum led a panel

workshop to get us thinking about how to form effective partnerships. Tony Jackson and Jenny Kidd got us thinking about the vital importance of evaluation. Chris Krishna-Pillay of CSIRO Education in Australia shook us up with a rousing debate about electronic media and museum theatre. This is another issue facing museums today: how to stay current with the latest technology. So how is museum theatre surviving? Well, after attending the conference in Belfast,

would say that we are thriving. Paul Taylor, Robert Forshaw, and Daina Harvey presented a global survey that showed that we are more than just hanging in there.

We are growing in numbers and improving the quality of our work. I will continue to brag about my trip to Belfast and tell whoever will listen about the I for international in IMTAL. Being part of a global community of museum theatre practionners is helping me to make a case for museum theatre.

Jennifer Boyes-Manseau, **IMTAL** Americas



From the International Museum Theatre to affiliate of the American Association of Mass

Promoting theatre as effective education for museums, zoos, and aquariums

THEME: MAKING A CASE FOR **MUSEUM** THEATRE

Special points of interest:

Inside this issue:

Take Me Out to the Exhibits

Making a Case for Muse

Membership Application

me to Our New Members

A Word from the President

George E. Buss, Jr.: MTAL Fresident

My faith in theatre as a medium My faith in theatre as a medium and art form has a times been viewed as functions. I hold the belief that theatre has the power to educate, to inspire, to change lives. That conviction has led me on many holy wars to convert the unbelievers, making a case for theatre in every corner in every museum. Unfortunately, I have been going about it the wrong way.

of a museum's programming or fiscal needs, sometimes there are better solutions.

Shocking, I know

We must learn to recognize when theatre is the solution to our institutional needs, which means we must be aware of the challenges facing our institutions. Once we know that, we must make the case for theatre as the best option. I am not educating the sacrifice of aesthetic or educational value but instead unarging for a case made for museum theatre that starts with the museum.

Museums define our field, and if we distniss their needs when we make a case for our existence, we are raissing the point and relegating our programs and our currents to me cutting room floor of tough fiscal years. Without our institutions we could just as easily be hospital. mail or church theatre. Museum theatre programs di-vorced from the organizations they are working within are

nothing more than renters awaring the day of eviction. We must not be renters but must integrate as part of the family. We must be active partners in our institutions, forwarding the goals and massion of our muse-ums first and our artists expenses second. As citche as it may be, we must be team players.

sion, we have already lost.

Theatre at the National Museum of the American Indian: A Premiere Venue for Indigenous Performing Artists from the Americas

Vincent P Scott

The inssion of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is to celeorate the life-weys, languages, literature, history, and art of Native Americans. Through its exhibitions, professions and publications the programs, and publications, the museum presents the extraordinary achievements of the in-

digenous peoples of the West-ern Hemisphere

Theatre and the performing arts are universal mediums for sharing perspectives of Native artists who speak with their own voices to visitors who attend programs in the NMAI's mu-

seum on the National Mail in seum on the National Mail in Washington, D.C. and in the George Gustav Heye Center (GGHC) in New York Cty. The MMAI aims to become the Nation's première institution for showcasing Native American performing arts. To this end we (Consissed on page 2)



FESTIVAL OF LIVE INTERPRETATION

Where the Heritage of Theatre meets the Best of Heritage

24th-26th of September 2009





at the The Best in Heritage Conference,

Dubrovnik, 24-26 Sept 2009

by Professor Tomislav Sola and Loïc Benot

The Best in Heritage & IMTAL Europe present...

Some of you already know 'The Best in Heritage' as a regular Conference gathering Heritage sites which receive recognition for best practice, conservation or outstanding action. The objective is not to evaluate, nor give prizes or awards but to present 'the best'. So far it has not necessarily concerned Live Interpretation...but it should be the case from 2009.

In January, the European Heritage Association, a non-governmental structure based in Zagreb, contacted IMTAL Europe for a partnership in organizing a Festival of Interpretation in September 2009 and the following years if successful. Planned at the same time of The Best in Heritage, this rendez-vous will invite professional Live Interpreters and actors working in the Heritage field. Whether they are involved in Museum Theatre, Living History or more traditional Theatre, they work on cultural sites and their goal is to make people understand and react.

In due course, we will contact you, dear reader, for help and suggestions and arrange for some of IMTAL Members to travel to Croatia to show what they are up to! The local government is very keen and this event should be supported by UNESCO, ICOM, Europa Nostra...

But as a start, IMTAL Europe will be present in Dubrovnik in September 2008 and give the flavour of the passion-missionrecognition that motivates live interpretation.

Icon of the organizing team on site and true Francophile (he wears a beret), I now

give you Tomislav Sola, famous Professor of Museology at Zagreb University.

Concept

The heritage will be more and more important in the world that feeds this motivation from different angles and out of different motives. To communicate is going to be the obsessive obligation of collective memory institutions.

The Best in Heritage is about practical professional excellence and much about the ultimate public value of heritage institutions, museums, conservation and other institutions included. We intend to add to the six years of success a quality of the Global Heritage Forum, - as the name of one part of our programme suggests.

As the core event, the present successful conference is a good context and will offer a favourable starting position for the new event.

The pressure of tourist industry (turning being transformed into the experience industry) is growing. It is still too insistent upon creating uniform product with the like criteria and for the sake of profit. We need to challenge this danger by quality and creative communication.

Therefore, an effective and yet reliable interpretation using the synergy of arts and sciences will be the only long-term solution.

The usable collective memory must reach more eyes and ears. Media are manipulating masses with their

ephemeral contents. Globalisation requires counter-action that will lead to better self-knowing and resistance to acculturation. Museum or, probably heritage theatre, is going to need more and better international exposure, in an increasing professional context. This festival starting in 2009 would help the quality of this development.

see

www.thebestinheritage.com

Museum or, probably heritage theatre, is going to need more and better international exposure, in an increasing professional context.



SYMPOSIUM PUBLIC HISTORY: Leiden University 22 February 2008

by Martine Teunissen MPhil, Live Interpreter

This symposium was meant to create a better understanding of the different aspects of representing the past to a general public, placed in the context of academic discussions about identity and memory. It was meant to improve cooperation between public institutions and universities. Stimulating debate about public history and promoting cooperation between public institutions and universities will benefit the critical representation of the past.

What happened that exciting day of February in the Netherlands is a story which can be told, as key questions were reached and minds questioned. Three live interpreters threw themselves in the lions' pit...and got out safe and sound!

The context

Since the 18th and 19th centuries people have become greatly occupied with the question of accessibility of the past. Yearning for lost pasts and the recognition of a historical difference has led to an historical awareness or historical consciousness. This concern led to collecting remnants of the past, often shown in museums, and to the development of professional historical scholarship. Both fields are united in their concern to reconstruct and present a past that is as objective as possible, reconstructed according to historical and museological methodologies. These reconstructions of the past necessarily involve selection, but this selection is not always shown. The representation of the past then seems an end-product in itself, and can involve a mythologization of the past. Despite the critical distance to the past, the past is always seen from a present perspective, and often used in a context of past-present-future relations.

Who said what,.

Ed Jonker started by explaining the debate on professional and public history. This debate is to a great extent discussed among professionals and has epistemological, cultural, and political dimensions. Whose history should we choose? The nationalistic narrative promoted by politics, or the critical academic standards? There are bad memories and good history, but also bad history and good memories. According to Jonker we need professional standards "to tame wild memories".

Herman Beliën argued for the creation of an academic centre for public history. Ignoring this field of research does no longer fit in modern times. The University of Amsterdam has created a master in public history in cooperation with Anno, an institution that promotes Dutch history. Public history is especially important in reaching a big audience for the purposes of history education.

Ad de Jong spoke about the practice of the representation of the past in the Open Air Museum in Arnhem, and the practical application of theoretical concepts on public history. He explained the concept of musealising local cultures in open air museums as an instrument of nationalism. The quest of identity continues in recent times with the development of Moluccan barracks, and the creation of the New National History Museum. According to the Jong, this new museum should not focus on the creation of a national identity, but rather on creating historical consciousness.

Willem Melching explained on the basis of various monuments in Berlin how

different regimes in German history have remembered the Holocaust and the Second World War. He showed in what way monuments were the products of collective memory and of a certain interpretation of the past.

I personally examined the representation of the past in Colonial Williamsburg, the detailed reconstructed and restored 18th century town in Virginia. I presented the findings of my research, with a main focus on the evaluation of the Revolutionary City program, a daily, two-hour historical theater program. Despite the limits caused by contrasting interests (commercial and academic) the Revolutionary City program presents a critical perspective on early American history, embedded however, in the patriotic narrative.

Bruno de Wever and his assistant Lieselot Leuridan showed how historical films shape people's perspective of history on a grander scale, and thus create a historical consciousness often ignored by professional historians. Problems in this genre are Hollywood movies, which are often not willing to show historical truths. Still, movies could be teasers for further historical interest.

The Golden Age

Finally, Past Pleasures: Mark Wallis, Kate Mechedou and Loic Benot performed an interpretation set in the Leiden of 1689, where social, religious and political issues where debated. Trade, romance, Huguenots, William of Orange and Louis XIV became hot topics and the audience felt comfortable, after all, to be taken into 'the game'.

At the end of the day, it seemed that the living history interpreters did indeed change some mindsets in the academic audience. The Historical Live Interpretation had shown a different way of approaching history and made the audience aware of historical facts and atmosphere through performance. Whether you talk about Museum Theatre, Living History or Re-enactment, research is always in the focus. The question whether living history presents a correct view of the past kept being discussed during the final debate, but the focus was curiosity on the different methods, and it seemed that people did not question the core validity of living history. The problem of a correct view of the past can of course not be solved in living history presentations, nor in the academic narrative.

Jennifer Boyes-Manseau, IMTAL Americas

WELCOME TO Performing the World

Performing the World '08 Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

Announcement and Call for Proposals

The conveners of Performing the World, the conference/festival of the growing international performance movement, are excited to announce that the fifth Performing the World will be held in New York City from October 2-5, 2008. The event will showcase innovative practice and scholarship and provide a rich context for learning and performing together.

A New Location, A New Kind of Conference

Performing the World '08 (PTW '08) builds on the momentum of 2007's PTW 4, which brought together 300 practitioners, scholars and community activists—educators, youth workers, researchers, psychologists and therapists, health and helping professionals, business people, artists and activists from 27 countries. PTW '08 is bringing the international performance movement to the streets of New York—and introducing the performance movement to the communities of New York City.

For the first time, the All Stars Project, an organization recognized for its highly successful performance-based outside-of-school developmental programs for young people and its Castillo Theatre, joins the East Side Institute as a co-sponsor of the conference. PTW '08 will be based out of the All Stars' performance and development center on 42nd Street near Times Square, and will be hosted by young people from around the city. Workshops and performances will take place there and at theatres, schools and other venues throughout Manhattan and other boroughs. New Yorkers from virtually every neighborhood will open up their homes to out-of-towners, not only to save on hotel costs, but also to incorporate the diversity of family and neighborhood into the experience of the weekend and to build person-to-person ties between ordinary New Yorkers and performance activists and scholars from around the world.

Proposals

PTW '08 invites proposals from all who are involved in performance work that is related to cultural, economic or psychological development, community-building, social justice, citizenry, individual and social transformation, social entrepreneurship, etc. We are looking for a variety of presentation types, including workshops, conversations, demonstrations, discussions and panels. We encourage a playfulness and experimentation for all presentations, especially with regard to theory and data.

This year's theme, "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," encourages participants to attend to history and process—their own and that of the performance movement. We are particularly interested in examinations/explorations of the shift from a cognitive to a performative approach to understanding, interacting with and (re)creating the world as embodied in the work of the participants and/or those they with whom they work/play/ study. Also of interest is the performance movement's interaction with and impact on the "big issues" facing the world— poverty, war and peace, sustainability, democracy, globalization, cultural diversity and creativity, the list could go on. The second day of PTW '08 will be devoted to "An International Celebration of Youth" and we encourage those interested to submit proposals relative to youth, youth performance and youth development for that day.

WELCOME TO Performing the World

Fields of Interest:

- Applied Theatre
- Improvisation
- Performance Studies
- Youth Development
- Participatory Research and Evaluation
- Political and Community Organizing
- Education
- Drama in Education
- Psychology and Psychotherapy
- Community Development
- Medicine and Health Care
- Organizational Change, Business and Management

Conveners:

Dan Friedman, All Stars Project, NY

Lois Holzman, East Side Institute, NY

Dian Marie Hosking, Utrecht University, The Netherlands Ana Marjanovic-Shane,

Cultural Educational Center "ZMAJ", NY & Philadelphia Sheila McNamee,

University of New Hampshire, Durham Paul Murray, University of Winchester, UK

Fred Newman, East Side Institute, NY

A sampling of conversational themes, panels, workshops and performances:

- · Performance as a Community Building Methodology
- Postmodern Creativity and Performance
- · Knowing, Not Knowing and Performing
- Performance and Politics
- Performance in Daily Life
- The Therapeutics of Performance
- The Creativity of the Group, Ensemble and Community
- · Theatre and Community
- · The Creativity of Improvisation
- Performing, Improvising and Learning
- · The Power of Play
- · Conflict Resolution and Performance

Registration Fee

Before August 1: \$195 (US) After August 1: \$225 (US)

Proposals are due **April 1, 2008** and should be e-mailed to Lois Holzman at ptw@eastsideinstitute.org. The subject headline should be PTW Proposal. If you can't e-mail, then mail or fax to:

Lois Holzman, Director

East Side Institute for Group and Short Term Psychotherapy 920 Broadway, 14th Floor New York, New York 10010 U.S.A.

Fax: 212-941-0511 Tel: 212-941-8906

GUERNSEY HISTORY IN ACTION COMPANY

"Mum, can we go to a Museum today?"
"What on earth for? Museums were really boring places when I used to go when I was a girl".

"But they're not now. My friend James went to the Castle and he said it was really good."

"Well what was so good about it?"
"He said there was lots going on, and things for kids to do. But the best bits were the plays."

"Plays? At a museum?"

"There's different plays on nearly every day in the afternoons, and James says that it was a really good way of learning about our history."

"What sort of plays?"

"James gave me a booklet with them all in.... There's stories about Privateers, famous shipwrecks, the escape by Admiral de Saumarez, the burning of witches, how Guernsey was lost by the French in 1204, what happened when the Castle was besieged for nine years, and lots more."

"Well who puts these plays on? Is it a professional company from England?"
"No it's all local people. James says his Grandad and a few of his friends get them ready in the winter to perform in the summer. He's got some great photos of them all in period costume. In some plays they get children in the audience to take part, get them dressed up and all that. Mum, can we go?please?"
"Well why not. It sounds a great idea. Things have certainly changed since I was a girl!"

"We can also go to Fort Grey. That's another Museum where they put on plays. I think they're on on Tuesday mornings"

"Well it looks like we're going to have a busy summer – and an expensive one" "Not really, because we can get a season ticket for the whole family for only £30." "You've certainly got all the answers!" For over 10 years Guernsey Museums and Galleries have supported 'Live' Interpretation to enable their visitors to discover information about the Island, its people and its Heritage. This year, with the support of the SetSail Trust the Museum is running a free programme at Castle Cornet throughout the season and doing shows for schools and colleges.

The Guernsey 'History in Action'
Company is also offering additional free
presentations at Fort Grey and Guernsey
Museum.

Look out for the extra shows during school holidays. Please call 726518 /713888 or collect information leaflets from the Museum, Guernsey Information Centre, Castle Cornet and around the Island.

IMTAL Annual General Meeting & Special Weekend

AGM, site visits, discussion and debate for members and guests

BATH, England

Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th July 2008



IMTAL AGM and Special Weekend in Bath, 5th & 6th July 2008

What's on offer?

A weekend in the "World Heritage Site with a cosmopolitan buzz" and "City of Festivals" with specialist site visits, meals, and lots of opportunities to network.

www.visitbath.co.uk

The Natural Theatre Company – at their specially converted HQ

The Naturals' Harf Morgan and Roman Baths Manager Stephen Clews discuss introducing costumed interpretation to The Roman Baths. There will also be a tour of the building housing the teams that create The Naturals' globally renowned street theatre performances.

www.naturaltheatre.co.uk

The Fashion Museum at The Assembly Rooms

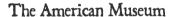
A visit to this important design and textile collection, housed within a spectacular National Trust building, followed by an expert led research workshop.

www.fashionmuseum.co.uk

The Roman Baths - by candlelight

A magical evening visit to this ancient site. Dine and sample the waters in the magnificent Georgian Pump Rooms, and tour the Roman Bath and Temple by candlelight to see the **live costumed interpretation** in situ. (Dinner booking tbc)

www.romanbaths.co.uk



After the IMTAL AGM, Education Officer Laura Brown will discuss using re-enactors from both a US and UK perspective. Visit the indoor museum, take coffee on the terrace, and watch The Association of Crown Forces 1776 display their military prowess in the grounds.

www.americanmuseum.org

ORGANIZATION & COSTS:

IMTAL have negotiated fantastic group discounts and are therefore able to offer this wonderful weekend in Bath for a bargain price.

Delegate fee: £75 non-members £65 members

Includes buffet lunch and two course dinner on Saturday, refreshments and all entry tickets on both days. (Details of IMTAL membership at www.imtal-europe.org).

Accommodation fee £40

Includes single bed and breakfast at the University of Bath, (rooms not ensuite) and shared transport to the accommodation on Saturday night. Additional accommodation from Friday 4th July can also be arranged.

Those arriving early may wish to visit the Thermae Bath Spa, The Taste of Bath Food Festival, or join the American Museum for their Independence Day celebrations (at own cost).

Travel

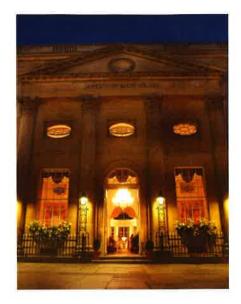
For general travel advice visit http://visitbath.co.uk/site/help/travel

Full details of events, speakers, venues, maps and schedules, will be sent to delegates on booking.

Remember that one of the main qualities of IMTAL is focussing on the networking.

Join as and you will feel backed up and understood.

Meet as and you will return home full of energy and ideas.









IMTAL AGM and Special Weekend in Bath, 5th & 6th July 2008 Booking Form

Name (and Institution):
Address:
Email:
Phone:
Mobile Phone: (while in Bath)
Number of day delegates at members rate: £65
Number of day delegates at non-members rate: £75
Accommodation and transport Saturday 5th July: £40
Accommodation Friday 4th July: £35
Total Fees:
Payment method enclosed: ☐ Cheque ☐ Purchase Order/Invoice ☐ Euro (see note)
Dietary Requirements:
Access requirements (Bath is best explored on foot, however taxis can be arranged for those unable to walk for 15-20 mins at own cost)
Any other information you think we need to know.
Bookings from the UK should be accompanied either by a cheque (made out to IMTAL Europe) or an institutional purchase order if an invoice is required. Those wishing to pay in Euro will be provided with a convenient payment method by the Treasurer.
Booking forms should be sent to the address below. Jo Kemp, Secretary, IMTAL Europe, Castle Museum, Nottingham, UK. NG1 6EL.
For specific queries regarding the weekend contact Anna Farthing on 0117 9744823.

ABC6EF9hlT NL noparstu MAIN CONTACTS



IMTAL ONLINE

Don't forget to visit your Website, www.imtal-europe.org!



ENGAGING PEOPLE THROUGH PERFORMANCE

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Hella, Loic ! lease check your special men MEMBERS LIST NEWSLETTERS



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www.imtal-europe.org