

## Central European Committee – The President’s Report

Our **regional committee** CEC is an important integral part of AITA/IATA asbl. and is one of the larger regional committees in Europe including currently as active members (means, we have contact to each other, we know each other) Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, The Republic of Macedonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Tyrol, Switzerland, Turkey and The Ukraine. In addition it has numerous associates too. CEC’s negotiations (initiated by Norbert Radermacher) with Poland for becoming an active member again were followed by negotiations of our Croatian and Slovenian colleagues with their neighbouring countries, like Serbia, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania also to join our organisation. These are the facts just now and we hope to get positive results in the period to come, as with Romania, Byelorussia and Greece.

More efficiency and **new memberships**, especially from the Balkan regions, still belong to the main targets of the Board for the current period. The economic situation makes it not easy to get new countries on board, on one hand because of the membership fee on the other hand because of lack of national structures. Single groups have contact to AITA/IATA/CEC structures in the sense of common festivals or seminars, but if they are asked to become a member, they disappear or try to avoid. There are in fact only very few persons in those countries who promised to try to build up respective structures and to see responsible people for help as to the support of an “umbrella”. It means, what the Board has targeted is not finished yet, the pioneer work is still ongoing.

In relation to these facts the main question remains unanswered: when asking countries to either remain or to become a member, the question of vital interest is – **what are we getting from CEC** (aitaiata) as a single group once we have paid the membership fee as a NC: /visible/appreciable/arguable outcome- **what are the expectations** of the international community from my NC and **what is my contribution** as a single group, as NC, **how can I be heard**.

In that connection I’ll call your attention on our **CEC-festival**. Our last festival was three years ago in the Czech Republic. The next should take place the coming year. No applicants until now... What is the reason? Each of us knows that everyone in his/her country has several festivals, international ones too, but... To invite the CEC-GA does mean to host around 20 people for two days (accommodation, food), to have to accept two persons for the selection of the groups, to invite and host them on a certain date to be part of the national jury, to accept a group from CIFTA and from NEATA without any influence on the selection and so on. Is it because we bother existing national intentions, is it because of money we take away from the groups?

**Do we have an efficient administration for the needs of our members or are we creating the needs they never would have?**

If I am looking back over the last decades, it is more or less always the same persons dealing with the administration, with the “government” of our institution (including me!). Fossilised structures because of fossilised leadership or because of fossilised leadership fossilised structures? Sometimes we are forced to change small things, and we do it and are happy, that something at least happened, but big steps??? Why are no new and especially young people interested to take on responsibility? Do they see the hopelessness of the old structures? Is our family so tight that they would have no chance to get in and be heard? Is it worthwhile to spend energy, time and thought if you have the feeling there is no clear common aim, no perspective to influence, to change, to realise a vision.

Do we have as an international Committee a message to our theatre-groups, to our cultural departments, politicians, to the opinion-leaders in our countries on the importance of our artistic work, on our basic educational/cultural work and if we have one, is our message heard by the target group, is the message visible or well known. Who would miss us if we did not exist? Are we existing only for our own purposes, may be? I personally think, we should suspend our current structures and set up a new organisation under the same label but with a new slender administration under the aspect of what our members would need from an amateur-theatre-umbrella; we should give access besides to NCs, also to groups, individuals etc., we should define an acceptable/reasonable (for example 15.- US \$) membership-fee; our offer could be the maintenance of our network, every second year a festival with the “best/most important” productions from all over the world every time on another continent, supported by a working group of aitaiaata-volunteers and with the financial support of aitaiaata, every second year a world-festival for children and every second year one for youths, we would run every year two or three international master-classes always in another country, would alternately organise one big international Congress on theatre-matters and one on theatre and drama in education/theatre in education. I am sure, with the help/with the work of a small group of people we could have an efficient web-service and we would also be able to raise additional money for our activities. And events could be done together with partner organisations, not least with official bodies and structures. We have thousands of groups for example lone in Europe, but I am sure thousands and thousands of groups and individuals from all parts of the world would like to contribute if they can see we are doing something for them, we have an offer for them and we are the megaphone for all the world in matters of basic-culture/amateur-theatre and drama too as the bridge between amateur-theatre and school-theatre and drama. We could be worldwide accepted as **the** international theatre-organisation, which has to say something, which has the competence as an intrinsic important representative of basic culture/education, which is fighting too for a better world.

Our Board decided to follow an initiative of Germany to have strains for a stronger cooperation within the European regions and after intensive and hard work we succeeded. **EFAT** is now a matter to be decided. Some of our colleagues maybe do not understand: that our main work is happening at first in our own National Centres. There we find our main targets there is where we are first and foremost asked to give guidelines, to help and to support. We – as the players of the first row of administration and counselling - we have to have our concentration at first on the cultural and educational work in our own countries. At first it is important to mind our own business. And if a National Centre is an efficiently working one, if it has to offer something to its member-groups, and if this Centre is giving us a good example because of best practice or because we realise their daily and actual fight for a better or more efficient national structure, we should be ready to invite this National Centre to delegate a representative into our administration to be able to adapt our work with their help for the needs of our members. Sometimes I have the feeling we have colleagues among us that never experienced the hard daily theatre-/drama-work but still know everything better and are always ready to present what they think they know. If we speak about a common Europe we should have common visions, we should be able to take matters in our own hands and to plan and realise activities and projects (congresses, seminars, festivals, workshops, think-tanks, exchanges and so on), if possible by the support of the resources of the EU. Nobody of us is questioning our belonging to aitaiaata, but it must be allowed to have visions, to realise visions, and to develop new structures in between the old ones; apart from that we do not know each other very well and more exchange would not be amiss, it could lead us to more fruitful co-operation. In this spirit let us discuss, let us balance reasons and after that let us decide.

Our secretariat is still placed in Prague under the roof of NIPOS/ARTAMA, the Czech National Centre and the big offer from Lenka L. to CEC is to use the infrastructure of NIPOS

for our **website**. If or if not the website will be functioning depends wholly on the contribution of all our members, therefore do not ask what CEC can do for you but answer with your contribution on your activity. Our member-countries are still asked to explain their opinion on the actual version and the efficiency of interactivity. We need a really functioning **communication** between all of us to be able to say we are in the same boat.

Our elected **secretary**, Katerina, is since March 2012 on maternity leave and we could count ourselves lucky to get the offer from Lenka in the person of **Karel Tomas**, who has been known to many of us for years, as the successor of Katerina in the secretariat. Katerina explained not to come back to the office immediately, maybe after a couple of years. Therefore I asked Karel if he would like to take over the secretariat in case our GA would elect him. He agreed and now he is the candidate for the scheduled election.

The aim of CEC to become a **legal body** is still a necessity and will be finally discussed during the GA in Monaco as well as the **adaption of the statutes** in connection with EFAT. The position of the CEC-delegate to the Council will be discussed too, hopefully with a result accepted by all members.

The project **European Theatre-House** in Lingen/Germany has become a reality in the meantime and CEC got the mandate to represent aitaiaata on the Board of the association. The main task of the project is more or less only for activities in connection with the World-Children's-Theatre Festival taking place every four years in Lingen and supporting programmes with the TPZ/Lingen and with the University of Osnabrück/Lingen. AITA/IATA/CEC is asked and an accepted partner and we are looking about how we can bring in our resources and experience and what we can realise together in a future with less and less resources and possibilities.

The **team for artistic development** under the coordination of Matjaz Smalc of Slovenia is still working on the adaption of the international list of well skilled workshop-leaders and lecturers. The members are still asked to fit the list with the names of colleagues from their country. The list should be permanently updated and be seen on our website. The continuation of the traditional AITA/IATA project for young people - **TIP** – is this year taking place in Slovenia. The project lies in the experienced hands of the team. The **criteria** for international festivals are constantly audited and adapted. A **list of national and international festivals** is since years established by Joke Elbers and is constantly updated and to be found on the net. Joke E. is still involved in this very important matter and her work is a very useful contribution to our website.

The future of our biannual aitaiaata-World Congress 'Drama in Education' in Austria should be discussed very seriously in our Council. The participation of altogether only 37 persons in the Congress makes a continuation useless, which means, aitaiaata is losing a traditional common international project of its activities.

The **daily substantial amateur-theatre work, educational-theatre-work** in all the different countries gives us – despite all known difficulties - a picture of efficient cultural and educational activities. A lot of festivals, events, congresses, seminars, courses and trainings are taking place every day somewhere within our member-countries: a fruitful and immense important human work for a better society and a better world. Without our activities the world could be much poorer, basic culture would not be imaginable. We should never forget these facts. Each of us is doing his/her best under the given circumstances, but we never give up!

Some of the best known activities/festivals in our member countries take place in:

Hronov/Czech Republic, Kazincbarcika/Hungary, Martin/Slovakia, Gatchina/Russia, Paderborn/Germany, Friedrichshafen/Germany, Brixen/Italy, Aarau/Switzerland, Turnhout/Belgium, FOCUS/Austria, Youth Theatre-Festival in Rudolstadt/Germany, Drama

in Education World Congress in Austria, Denizli-Festival in Turkey, World Children's Theatre Festival in Lingen, Festivals in Slovenia, in Serbia and so on...

The present Board was elected at the General Assembly in Tromsø/Norway in July 2011.

President:	Josef Hollos/Austria
Vice-President:	Lenka Laznovska/Czech Republic
Treasurer:	Franz Josef Witting/Germany
Coordinator for artistic matters:	Matjaz Smalc/Slovenia
Secretary General:	Katerina Klementova (Dolezalova)/Czech Republic

Members of the Artistic Development Committee:

Iva Peter-Dragan/Croatia

Kevin Dowsett/United Kingdom

Stephan Schnell/Germany

Roman Cernik/Czech Republic

Counsellor: Joke Elbers/Netherlands

Josef Hollos, CEC president, August 2013