Editorial

We are happy and proud to present with this book a selection of the papers presented at the third ITYARN conference *Theatre for Young Audiences and Perceptions of the Contemporary Child* in Warsaw, 2014. The process had already started a little earlier. It is a cold winter day, in 2006. Six people from six different countries – USA, Korea, Japan, Norway, Germany, Turkey – are sitting around a table in a warm room, in Kristiansand, Norway. They are talking about their experiences as researchers in Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) in their countries, sharing similar experiences as being one of few researchers in the field in their countries, and thinking about having a network to reach researchers all around the World, to advance critical inquiry in the field of TYA through the exchange and discussion of papers from scholars in and outside of the field of TYA.

It was not easy to guess that ITYARN (the International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network and now the research network of ASSITEJ) would spread so fast and grow so much in such a short time.

Immediately after its foundation ITYARN started to organize and to take part in international projects, conferences, seminars, and forums such as:

- The first ITYARN Conference within the 16th Assitej World Congress and Festival in 2008.
- Forums at the Schaxpir Festival in Linz, Austria, 2009 and 2013.
- The second ITYARN conference, under the title of TYA, *Culture, Society* in Malmö in the scope of the 17th Assitej World Congress and Festival in 2011.
- The Forum “TYA in Times of Crises” at the Kijimuna Festa, Okinawa, Japan, 2012.
- The International Symposium on “ART MEETS RESEARCH” Hildesheim, Germany, 2013.
The third ITYARN conference. The title is TYA and Perceptions of the Contemporary Child Warsaw, Poland as a part of the 18th Assitej World Congress and Festival, 2014.

All these activities attracted great attention from scholars and artists in and outside the field. The number and the variety of the activities have been increasing rapidly. The situation gives more responsibility to ITYARN in terms of broadening its scope and reaching more people from the field. Publications are quite useful in this sense.

This publication is the outcome of the third ITYARN conference in conjunction with an Assitej World Congress and Festival held in Warsaw, Poland in 2014. This new publication is a continuation of ITYARN’s commitment to publications that connect research across and beyond geographical and cultural boundaries. Previously selected articles from the first conference were published in two works: *Youth Theatre Journal* 23.1 (2009) and *The Assitej Book 2008-2009*. Next, selected articles from the second conference were published in an Assitej and ITYARN publication: *TYA, Culture, Society* (2012). In this book you will find a collection of papers which were presented at the most recent conference and selected through a peer review process and supported by a group of the ITYARN board.

The conference in Warsaw also received considerable interest from both participants and observers, highlighting ITYARN’s growth in the global field of TYA. There were 27 papers including one keynote, three plenaries and twenty three presentations in four working groups. The discussions both in working groups and after the presentations were quite lively and inspiring. Observers were also enthusiastically involved in the discussions.

Fifteen of the papers were selected to be published by Geesche Wartemann, Tülin Sağlam and Mary McAvoy. All papers were notable in terms of scholarly standards and were relevant to the conception of the “contemporary child”. But the space was limited for the publication and the diversity of perspectives and authors were equally important. The papers were also selected to cover a wide range of topics and geographic spaces. They are addressing *Youth and Performance: Perception of the Contemporary Child* from a variety of perspectives, such as media, aesthetics and art forms, social interventions through art, psychology, theoretical concepts of child and childhood, social and economic conditions, race and ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexual orientation. The authors are from all over the world; namely from Australia, Brazil, Croatia, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Mexico, Scotland and USA. We had compelling contributions from Erika
Hughes, Manon van de Water, Geesche Wartemann, and Jackie Chang and Young-Ai Choi. Several of those talks are included in the volume in essay format.

The three plenary papers approach the subject matter from different perspectives and this gives us a deeper grasp of the issue.

In her plenary paper Technology, Pop Culture, and The Classics, or: What and Why for Whom? Manon van de Water questions the categorising and defining of the terms Technology, Pop Culture, The Classics and looks at how they connect to the meaning making process of contemporary audiences. Then she argues that these terms are neither fixed nor stable concepts but dynamic manifestations of socio-cultural structures and relations. And finally she demonstrates that as ambiguous terms, ideologically and culturally charged, these terms carry their history within them and we should embrace that inherent ambiguity in the process of making theatre for a contemporary young audience. And we should give the contemporary child more credit to create and experience their own cultural life.

Geesche Wartemann discusses the role of young people in theatre as participants in *Children as Experts: Contemporary Models and Reasons for Children's and Young People's Participation in Theatre*. She offers some contemporary examples of theatre performances in which young people take part and examine this position thoroughly in terms of giving young people the chance to be agents of themselves as well as for everyday-life.

Jackie Eunju Chang’s and Young Ai Choi’s paper *Perception of the Contemporary Child and Theatre for the Very Young* offers us new findings of Neuroscience research on babies and discusses the effects of these findings on perceptions of the contemporary child and theatre for the very young. They write about the positive effect of theatre on babies in terms of emotional and intellectual development.

In the seminar papers, the authors share their ideas, experiences, observations, findings and projections in search of discovering the world of contemporary child and the role of dramatic arts in it. Each paper offers us a new perspective and new questions at the same time. The authors shed light on the subject and make us realize the profoundness of the issue.

Tom Maguire, in *Beyond the Culture of Concern: the Context and Practice of TYA in Contemporary Northern Ireland* argues that especially after the peace agreement in Northern Ireland children and childhood have been the focus of much academic research and there have been significant initiatives in legislation that regulate childhood. But children’s engagements with the arts in general and specifically theatre have not been the focus of
these attempts. He states that in the same period TYA artists have largely focused on celebrating children’s resilience and developing the imaginative engagement of spectators with performance. He explores the reasons for the gap between the research and regulatory context and the artistic practice and argues that this creative practice fills the gaps left by research and regulation.

Stephani Etheridge Woodson, in her theoretical work *Building Third Space in US Theatre for Youth* sees TYA as a conservative field in the United States in terms of perceiving “children/youth as audience” and “children/youth as learners”. She discusses an expanded model of “childhood” and “youth” and explores some practices in which children and young people are not subjects of education but objects of democratic processes; she calls the practices as TYA third space. She refers to the scholars as Homi Bhabha, Harry Boyte, Hannah Arendt and David Studdert’s conceptualisations in her work.

Lorenzo García’s paper *Theatre for and with Children in North Texas: The Valuing of Community Memory in the Face of Power* questions how to bring the voices of the excluded into a discussion of history and what theatre practices are utilized for supporting the sense of solidarity, inclusion and belonging. García examines the production *Searching for the Six Flags of Texas* which involves stories from mythologized Texas history and gives children an opportunity to participate. He argues that the production might be seen to correspond with the efforts of valuing community memory. He borrows the term “community memory” from Delores Delgado Bernal.

*What We Have in Common Core: Performing Cultural Anxieties and Cultural Difference in Arizona State University’s ‘There Was and There Wasn’t’*. Giles tells us about a misguidance of new American education policy on exploring cultural diversity: the policy, for her, exposes the policy makers’ hegemonic control. Miranda Giles examines her own production *There Was and There Wasn’t* as a case study of the struggles for developing different suggestions addressing cultural difference in the American classroom. She gives an account for the failure of the production about catching an opportunity to develop new approaches to examine cultural difference with young people.

Paulo Merisio, *Breaking some Eggs: Reception Experiences in the Theatre for Children* in Brazil writes about a “time tunnel” in children’s theatre in Brazil: theatre for “future” audiences is mostly grounded in “old” paradigms. And he also mentions the presence of those productions which
consider children’s life separated from adults. He questions this perception and analyses a performance (Simbad, the sailor) which supersedes the artificial separation of lives and theatre of children and adults.

Aracelia Guerrero in Theatre in Rough Neighborhoods tells us out of a practitioner’s perspective about a long-term theatre workshop which she ran with teenagers who had been exposed to violence in Mexico City. She discusses the ways to specify the mechanism of violence and to give teenagers a chance to become an agent of change in relation to their own experience through a highly creative process; staging a theatre performance.

Marina Petković Liker and Iva Grujić question in their joint written article Children’s Reception of a High-Pitched Voice of Reduced Expressive Power in Theatre almost a universal problem; the “protective” simplifications both in content and form in children’s theatre. They address the problem of simplifications by the example of the use of the actor’s vocal performance. They ask the question how the reduced expressive power in actor’s vocal performance influences children’s perception and understanding. The article offers us the outcome of the experiment that they carried out to approach the issue empirically.

Ben Fletcher-Watson, in The Impossible Audience? New Developments in Theatre for Unborn Children explores the recent developments in performing arts in the UK about a new possible audience—though sounds like impossible—formuses. The paper examines three recent performance experiments for foetuses and highlights the opportunities offered to artists, scholars and the public by the reconceptualization of the unborn as a potential audience.

Ha Young Hwang writes on the effect of interculturalism in TYA and questions the issues arising from different cultural encounters in her paper Here Somewhere Far: Translating ‘Yellow Moon’ for Contemporary Korean Young Audience. She discusses the issues through examining a multicultural performance process in which she is actively involved: a play written by a Scottish writer, directed by a British director, produced by Korea National University of Arts.

Mary McAvoy, Not Not Anonymous: ‘Pussy Riot’ and ‘Riot Grrrl’ as Performative Girl Resistance examines punk performance as a radical feminist youth culture. She employs theories of the avant-garde to suggest that punk performance is both inherently theatrical and grounded in the tradition of radical resistance. She discusses punk as a youth activity working almost completely outside adult supervision, and allowing youth voices to
find a space of expression with limited censorship. She presents punk as a new lens for examining TYA.

Christine Hatton, The Tough Beauty Project: Interrogating Girl to Girl Violence through Theatre and Drama. She writes on the recent research on dramatic processes which might be used to examine girl’s stories and links this research to an Australian theatre Project Tough Beauty – for young audiences focused on girl2girl violence. She reports on the challenges of staging such a work and considers the critical engagement of youth as both audience and active players. She discusses the performance as an “inviter” for youth audiences to be active meaning makers and empathetic players.

Teresa Simone in Hear Me, See Me: Towards a Collaborative Theatre for Deaf and Blind Youth questions the interaction between theatre and disabled young audiences; how perception of theatre and the disabled might change through this confrontation. She explores a series of performances made in collaboration between the Arizona School for Deaf and Blind (ASDB) and Stories That Soar (STS) and examines the challenges, achievements, and failures in creating theatre for deaf and/or blind audiences.

The ITYARN conferences’ themes always give a very broad frame to invite researchers from different countries and with diverse TYA traditions as well as diverse academic cultures to contribute to an international exchange about TYA. While exciting, this exchange is always a challenge. How to talk about aesthetic experiences and concepts of childhood in an intercultural dialogue? This is not just a question of translation but also of culturally determined concepts of TYA. Last but not least are the academic attitudes and modes of (critical) discussion themselves, which are culturally informed and shaped by individual experiences. With this publication ITYARN takes up this most interesting task of developing intercultural exchange about TYA. It offers space for a diversity of author contributions, and it invites readers with academic and/or artistic backgrounds to look for new inspirations for his or her reflections on TYA.

We would like to thank all the participants for their unique contribution.

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