In October 2006, the University of Agder, Norway, in collaboration with the University of Hildesheim Faculty of Cultural Sciences and Aesthetic Communication, Assitej International, and the Norwegian Children's and Young People Center SEBUT, organized a symposium in Kristiansand, Norway. Nine representatives from universities of six different countries (Japan, Korea, Norway, Germany, Turkey, and the United States) were invited to Kristiansand to examine the status of scholarship in the field of theatre for children and youth, or Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). Despite the enormous output and activity in the field, illustrated by the work of Assitej and its national centers, they perceived a noticeable lack of research on Theatre for Young Audiences. Each of the researchers (many of whom are also practitioners in TYA) conducted and published their own studies, and all were connected to a university, but they shared a common concern: despite the enormous artistic output, serious research, such as that seen in general theatre scholarship, in the field of professional theatre for children and youth was in short supply.

In an attempt to bridge this gap and galvanize international TYA scholars and scholarship, we started ITYARN, the International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network, as the international research network of Assitej and as a collaboration between universities, namely the Universities of Agder (Norway), Hildesheim (Germany), Ankara (Turkey), Arizona State University (United States), the Korean National University of the Arts (Korea), and the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (United States). ITYARN aims to further all scholarly research on theatre for young audiences, facilitate exchange, and support international cooperation and new research projects. The first order of business was to set up a website, www.ityarn.org, where anyone interested in research in TYA can join, and where activities can be announced. The second was to organize the first ITYARN conference in Adelaide, Australia, in conjunction with the XVIth Assitej World Congress and Festival in May 2008.

The ITYARN conference was held on the opening day of this Congress and Festival and was a success. The attendance was beyond expected, and demonstrated a genuine interest in the work from practitioners and researchers alike. Clearly there was a need for the kind of international exchange we envisioned. To further disseminate the research, some presentations and papers were selected
for publication in two works, *Youth Theatre Journal* 23.1 2009, and *The Assitej Book* 2008–2009. Based on the achievement in Adelaide, the board became more formalized and introduced seven members from seven different countries, which would organize and participate in international events in anticipation for the next conference at the Assitej World Congress and Festival in Malmö and Copenhagen in May 2011.

Over the past three years ITYARN has been steadily involved in international projects, including the Forum on Theatre for the Very Young in Bologna, Italy, March 2009; forums at the Schäxpir Festival in Linz Austria, June 2009; the Artists Meet Researchers Symposium in Kristiansand, Norway, October 2009; and, the first International Researchers and Critics Forum on Taboos in Theatre for Children and Youth in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2010.

The 2011 *TYA, Culture, Society* conference was the second ITYARN conference, modelled after the one in Adelaide. It was held on May 20th, the first day of the XVIIth Assitej World Congress and Festival before the opening. The call for papers rendered almost twice as many proposals as for the 2008 conference. Scholars were invited to submit proposals that would address material contexts under which productions are generated and perceived: for example, proposals could ask questions, such as how issues of gender, media, or diversity are reflected in content and form? They could inquire about the role of ethnicity and race, the affirmation or rejection of dominant ideologies in theatre, or reflections of class and local material circumstances in TYA. Proposers were encouraged to address how the concept of child and childhood is reflected in TYA and what this says about the society in which this theatre has been originally conceived. Proposals could also reflect on the intersection of culture and aesthetics. Or: how do these issues affect perception and the generation of meaning?

Ultimately a section of the ITYARN Board, the conference committee, consisting of Geesche Wartemann, Gunnar Horn, Tülin Sağlam, and Manon van de Water, selected 34 proposals, which included three plenary papers. The whole conference consisted of a keynote, three plenary papers, and three simultaneous seminar groups (see appendix I for the full Agenda). Seminarians were to read the papers in their seminar beforehand, then were paired with a partner and each pair had about 30 minutes focused discussion of their papers. The seminarians were also asked to anonymously select their top four choices of papers from their seminar (excluding their own) for publication purposes and include some editorial comments. What is published here is the result of that selection, making this in effect a peer-reviewed publication. It needs to be noted that there were some external considerations: some of the participants opted out of being considered for publication for various reasons; and, since the turn-around time for this volume has been unprecedentedly short, in cases of doubt or close ranking the conference
committee took into consideration the shape the paper was in for publication, including length requirements and the MLA style guidelines sent out with the acceptance of proposals, as well as the amount of revisions required and the time this would take. In addition, the committee attempted to have broad representation of subjects and cultures in the content of the articles.

This may be the first scholarly publication on TYA that is truly international in its range and scope and research methods. All articles went through a double revision process, and I have to thank all authors for staying on top with the tight deadlines and quick turn around times. While all articles are edited in US English, and in the standard MLA style that is used in the humanities, an attempt has been made to preserve the cultural flavor, and the voices of the respective authors. Each article, then, stands by itself, making its own argument.

Beth Juncker's keynote "What's the Meaning," discusses professional theatre performances for children and young people, focusing on the cultural aspects. She investigates the relations between the meaning of aesthetics in children's cultural lives— their everyday life—and the meaning of aesthetics in theatre performances/experiences for children and young people. This keynote did exactly what we hoped for because it posited TYA as an aesthetic art form, rather than an educational or social tool.

The three plenary papers look at TYA from different angles and are at the same time culturally situated. Tülin Saglam gives us historical and theoretical insights in the development of Turkish TYA, constructing a narrative that illustrates the specific nature of Turkish TYA from ideological perspectives. Roger Bedard looks at the developments of TYA in the United States and questions the normalizing tendencies, calling instead for artists and scholars to embrace their role as active agents in the production of cultural hegemony. Pamela Arnold Udoka offers a compelling narrative of TYA in Nigeria and how this intersects with Nigerian concepts of child and childhood.

The seminar papers are published in order of the agenda. It needs to be noted that seminars were not necessarily grouped by subject but by getting a diverse group of scholars together, from different nationalities, and from senior faculty to doctoral students.

The four papers selected by Seminar I are covering a wide range of topics and geographic space. Tristan Jacobs leads off with an innovative paper on virtual puppetry in the machinima movement, reminding TYA scholars and practitioners that the current and future media literacy of 21st century children will undoubtedly impact their generation and perception of TYA and theatre in general. Michelle Solberg writes about the rise of TYA in 1960s-70s Japan, using her experiences living, working, and teaching in Japan. She argues that postwar theatre for young audiences in Japan reflects a constantly shifting mosaic, often blurring the
lines between local and global concerns, past and present, parent and child, and other binaries. Erika Hughes, too, has been living abroad for years, studying the impact of Holocaust plays and youth in Germany and Israel. She juxtaposes the different nature and perception of holocaust plays in the United States, Israel, and Germany, which are shaped largely by the differing ideologies of Holocaust commemoration and remembrance, and how each nation defines a child. Last of this seminar, Finegan Kruckemeyer uses his own plays to question the taboo of death and loneliness in TYA, arguing that the child should be allowed to experience sadness through TYA and that the tendency to remove sadness is based on fallacies. These papers all reflect different research methodologies: media research, historiographical/archival research, qualitative research, and philosophical criticism.

The same variety holds true for the papers in Seminar II. Andy Wiginton uses his vast experiences in Mexico to analyze the relevancy and success of Prinipe y príncipe, the last play by Perla Szuchmacher in the context of the socio-political developments in Mexico City at the time the play was produced. His method is a close reading of the play, the production process, and the performance in cultural context. Roxanne Schroeder-Arce who is, among others, a playwright of bilingual plays in Spanish and English, and Chris McCoy use their experiences with Mexican-American culture to question how we can offer latino/a plays for youth in the United States when the majority of the acting and directing student- and faculty body is Caucasian? Faiza Giannoni looks at issues of immigration and identity formation in US immigrant youth, questioning the search for “American Freedom” by analyzing two plays. And, finally, David Broster gives an account of how TYA in the United Kingdom has been shaped by the Theatre in Education (TIE) movement of the 1970s and 1980s, situating it firmly in an ideological and political context. As in Seminar I, these four papers reflect different research methods, topics, and angles of research.

The papers in Seminar III are again of a different nature. Iva Grujić, in her quantitative study, tackles the more or less universal assumption that teachers are conservative and demand certain kinds of plays, which leads to artistic censorship and self-censorship. Her analysis, based on data from 231 participants in Zagreb, Croatia, both confirms the notion that teachers like to see educational content, and contests what “educational” for these teachers entails: no clear messages or morals or subject teaching, but positive emotions yet challenging “heavy” content. YiRan Tsai, native of Taiwan, sheds light on why the majority of Taiwanese plays for young audiences lack child characters, while at the same time she tackles western assumptions on Asian families, child-rearing, and gender. Merete Illman has been following the work and methods of Suzanne Osten, arguably the best-known TYA artist in the field, for nearly fifteen years and
looks at how notions of children and childhood can influence the generation and
derception of TYA. She uses the theories of French philosopher Jacques Rancière
to support her assertions. And, last in this seminar, Faith Guss's article will echo
with those who saw *Wolfed Down!* (Faim de Loup) by Ilka Schönbein, a joint pro-
duction of Theatre Meschugge/Le Grand Parquet, during the Assitej festival in
Malmö. *Wolfed Down!,* a provocative reading of *Little Red Riding Hood,* evoked
some controversial discussions among the audiences, but Guss's research dem-
strates the relevance of this particular performance to young children's play
and children's ways of coming to terms with death and an ever-resurrecting wolf.

Together, these papers are illustrative of the many opportunities for research in
TYA. They cover six continents; include quantitative, qualitative, ethnographic/
action; and historiographical methods, as well as critical theory, philosophical
discourse, play analysis, and other approaches. They deal with a wide variety of
issues, including representation, cultural contexts, questions of identity, race,
class-, and gender theory, notions of child and childhood, aesthetics, and the in-
fluence of media and dominant ideologies.

As chair of ITYARN, I have been incredibly blessed over the past five years to
be able to play an active role in facilitating international exchanges and contribu-
tion to research and publications. These experiences have made me more cultur-
ally sensitive, more perceptive of difference and similarities, and forced me to
examine what exactly I aim to achieve in engaging in and promoting scholarly
research.

In May 2011, ITYARN was expanded with two more board members from
two different countries (see appendix 2). Conferences and forums are planned for
July 2012 in Buenos Aires, Argentina; August 2012 in Okinawa, Japan; February
2013 in Hildesheim, Germany; June 2013 in Linz, Austria; May 2014 in Warsaw,
Poland. This is an exciting time to be working in the field of theatre for young
audiences, whether as a practitioner or scholar or both. We are inviting you all in.

Manon van de Water
Chair, ITYARN