

**41<sup>st</sup> AITA/IATA asbl General Assembly**  
**Saturday 23 August 2025 at Auditorium Rainier III, Monaco**  
**and online via Zoom**

**1. Official opening of the 41<sup>st</sup> AITA/IATA asbl General Assembly (GA)**

- a. Patrice Cellario, Commissaire Général of the Mondial du Théâtre welcomed all delegates to Monaco. The Commissaire General wished everyone a fruitful event.
- b. Delegates and Observers were invited to a short reception hosted by His Excellency the Minister of State of Monaco.

**2. Introduction and welcome from the President of AITA/IATA asbl**

- a. President Aled Rhys-Jones thanked Madame Melanie-Antoinette de Massy and the Commissioner for his kind words. He noted that AITA/IATA had returned to Monaco, its spiritual home, for the 18<sup>th</sup> time and the Association was very grateful to the Principality for their support. He was delighted to welcome the Deputy Director of ITI Madam Chen Zhongwen, who will be appointed Director next month and former Presidents Rob Van Genechten and Beatrice Cellario. It was also his honour and duty to pay tribute to those Members whom AITA/IATA had lost. Paddy O'Dwyer was a great man of theatre and served on the Standing Committee for Children and Youth and as President from 2007 to 2011. He was unique and welcomed wherever he went and could give calm to troubled waters. His last contact with him was to thank him for attending PAT - Performing Arts Toyama - event in Japan. Many tributes have been paid to him and he will always be remembered for his gentle smile. President Aled also remembered former AITA/IATA Vice President Dr Roger Ellis who edited the printed AITA/IATA Newsletter and had a great love of text based theatre. A little known fact about him was that, despite being a conscientious objector, he was drafted to fight in Vietnam and was awarded a purple heart. Our thoughts also go to Anna Karen-Waldemarson an AITA/IATA Councillor who served for many years in both NARA and NEATA. At the Debrecen General Assembly, we paid tribute to Bernard Cellario but it is absolutely fitting that we record his memory here in Monaco. He also remembered Bernard Soenens a much respected director of Opendoek from Belgium who has passed who was accompanied by Luc Vloeberghs from Flanders who also passed this year. He wanted to recognise their lives and their passing with a round of applause from delegates in Monaco.
- b. On a much happier note, President Aled reported on a note he had received Dr Alfred Mechnigg an AITA/IATA Honorary President and a former President of AITA/IATA who wrote: "Dear President Rhys-Jones, dear friends at Studio Monaco, dear General Assembly, dear theater lovers from all over the world! I am following the rapid development of IATA AITA with great joy – especially seeing how it is trying to keep pace with the technological megatrends of the time that are radically changing the world, in keeping with the

association's motto. As President, I had the honor and the fortune of steering the IATA IATA vehicle with the media of theater and "Drama in Education" through difficult but exciting times for six years with my co-pilots Georg Malvius and John Ytteborg. I am sorry, this time, I am unable to attend due to an urgent appointment in Estonia.

I wish you, dear Mr. President, a successful General Assembly. May the willingness to progress and consensus prevail on difficult problems.

Thanks and appreciation to the friends at Studio Monaco for their willingness to continue inviting national centers and groups from all over the world every four years.

May the many ensembles from all over the world contribute to building bridges through theater to the AITA IATA motto: Understanding and Education through Theater!"

c. President Aled then moved to the third item on the Agenda, the appointment of the Presiding Chair of the 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (GA).

### **3. Appointment of the Presiding Chair of the 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly**

a. Council proposed Dirk De Corte, Flanders (SGT) as the Presiding Chair.

**Unanimously approved by a show of hands**

b. The Presiding Chair noted that delegates had the agenda on page 3 of the Forum Book. He sought permission of the GA that the meeting be recorded and that the agenda was agreed to.

### **4. Agree the agenda of the General Assembly**

a. Council sought the agreement of delegates to the agenda of the General Assembly.

**Unanimously approved by a show of hands**

### **5. Roll call of all Members in attendance (Monaco and online), confirmation of voting rights and notification of proxies**

a. The Presiding Chair asked those who were either present in Monaco or attending online by Zoom to confirm their presence. Delegates from the following **27** Members (NC - National Centres) were present at the start of the GA and responded to the roll call:

b. Austria - 6 votes; Catalonia – 6 votes; Bangladesh – 6 votes; Belgium, Flanders (SGT) – 6 votes; Denmark – 6 votes; Estonia – 6 votes; Faroe Island – 6 votes; Finland – 6 votes; France – 6 votes; Germany - 6 votes; Great Britain (SGT) – 6 votes; Hungary – 6 votes; Iceland – 6 votes; Indonesia – 6 votes; Italy – 6 votes; Japan – 6 votes; Latvia - 6 votes; Lithuania – 6 votes; Monaco – 6 votes; Slovakia – 6 votes (carrying the proxy of Czechia – 6 votes); Slovenia – 6 votes; Sud-Tyrol (SGT) – 6 votes; Spain – 6 votes; Sweden (ATF) – 6 votes; Sweden (ATR) – 6 votes; USA – 6 votes.

c. The Presiding Chair noted Norway was not included because they were not yet Members. The Presiding Chair then invited the Associate Members (AM) who were either present in Monaco or attending online to confirm their presence. Delegates from the following **18** Associate Members responded to the roll call:

Patrick Russell (Australia) – 1 vote; Josef Hollos (Austria) – 1 vote; Rob Van Genechten (Belgium, Flanders (SGT)) - 1 vote; de WAANzin (Belgium, Flanders (SGT)) – 1 vote; The Saint John Theatre Company (Canada) – 1 vote; Zillur Rahman John (Canada) – 1 vote; Theatre de la ROËLE (France) – 1 vote; TPZ, Lingen (Germany) – 1 vote; Aled Rhys-Jones (Great Britain (SGT)) – 1 vote; Mary Pears (Ireland) – 1 vote; Theatre New Zealand (New Zealand) – 1 vote; Teatro de Balugas (Portugal) – 1 vote; Grémio Dramático Povoense (Portugal) – 1 vote; DUPLAFACE - Companhia das Artes (Portugal) – 1 vote; Piano Theatre (Russian Federation) - 1 vote Theatre Association Partizánske/Divadelné združenie Partizánske, (Slovakia) – 1 vote; Südtiroler Theaterverband/Theaterpädagogisches Zentrum Brixen (Sud Tyrol) – 1 vote; Federació de Teatre Amateur de la Comunitat Valenciana (Spain) – 1 vote; Carlos Taberheiro (Spain) – 1 vote. Other AM's may have joined during the GA.

d. The Presiding Chair confirmed that 27 NCs and 18 AMs were present making a total of 45 out of 75 Members with a total vote of 180 which gave 60% attendance and made the General Assembly quorate. He noted that each NC had six votes and each AM one vote.

## **6. Appointment of Tellers and appointment of Drafting Committee**

a. The Presiding Chair explained the need for Tellers and Drafters. Drafters would check new text, although this requirement was unlikely. Tellers would count the number of votes cast. All voting would be anonymous and only Barabara Cellario and the Presiding Chair would see the figures on the laptop. Thus, two 'innocent' pairs of eyes would be needed to check the figures on the laptop.

b. Council recommended Michalis Karampelis (Great Britain) and Arnfinnur Nesa (Faroe Island) as Tellers and as Drafters, Mary Pears (English), Gilles El Zaim (French), and Brigitte Auguet (Spanish).

**Unanimously approved by a show of hands**

## **7. Confirmation of new Members (Associate and National Centre 2024 – 2025)**

a. The Presiding Chair noted that one new NC Member and 19 new AM's were listed in the Forum Book on page 17. The Presiding Chair explained the voting procedures and asked for the patience of delegates as the process would take some time. He reminded everyone that when voting, abstentions would not count. A test poll was made to ensure that the voting worked.

b. Delegates were reminded that, as in previous years, the first round of voting would be for NC's with AM's Associates in the waiting room and they would then be reversed for the second round of voting. In case of issues with the Wi-Fi in Monaco, some manual voting might occur. A total of 45 were voting, so it was important to distinguish between current and future NC's and AM's and also to note that not all Members had logged in or named their organisation or individual and he asked delegates online to do so.

c. The first action was to approve the new NC and Members so they could then vote. The first vote was:

- i. To accept Norsk Amatørteaterforbund, Norway as a National Centre Member of AITA/IATA asbl

**Using the online poll, Norsk Amatørteaterforbund was unanimously approved**

d. In respect of the confirmation of the 19 AM's, the Presiding Chair outlined two options. The first was for delegates to confirm *en bloc* that all 19 Associate Members be accepted. This would require the unanimous agreement of all voting delegates. If one delegate did not wish to proceed this way, delegates would be asked to say yes or no to each of the 19 Associate Members. The Presiding Chair launched the *en bloc* vote.

- i. To accept *en bloc* the 19 organisations and individuals approved by Council as Associate Members

**Using the online poll, the 19 organisations and individuals approved by Council as Associate Members were unanimously approved by delegates as Associate Members *en bloc***

e. The Presiding Chair welcomed the 19 new Associate Members and in particular the ones who had been able to join the Zoom:

- Neretva, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- LITF - Liverpool International Theatre Festival, Canada
- Theatre 11, Bremen, Germany
- PLATS (Latvia), Great Britain
- Theatre Group "Other Side", Greece
- Teatro la Fragua, Honduras
- Mudra A Creative Gesture, India
- Saaduddin, Indonesia
- Vilnius University Drama Theatre, Lithuania
- FITAS Agadir, Morocco
- Hassany Anouar, Morocco
- James Bell, New Zealand
- Lithuanian Amateur Theatre, Norway

- Grémio Dramático Povoense, Portugal
- Opera Academy, Singapore
- Theatre Studio BELOE, Switzerland
- Ömer Şahinbaş, Türkiye
- World Stage Theatre Co, USA
- CHIPAWO, Zimbabwe

f. The Presiding Chair noted that the Association now consisted of 30 National Centres and 65 Associate Members.

### **8. Call for written questions to Candidates for Election to Council**

a. In preparation for the voting of the President and Councillors, the Presiding Chair asked any delegates who wished to submit a written question to do so.

### **9. Approval of the Minute of 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly by Zoom 15 June 2024**

a. The Presiding Chair directed delegates to the minutes of the 2024 General Assembly in the Forum Book on page nine. There were no questions or comments on the minutes.

**On a show of hands, one National Centre Member voted not to accept the Minutes of the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

### **10. AITA/IATA asbl review 2020 – 2021**

a. *Council review from President Aled Rhys Jones* – President Aled noted the Council activity report on page 20 in the Forum Book. He proposed only to highlight some areas of the report. He had attended the AITA/IATA World Festival of Children’s Theatre in Lingen, Germany and noted that the Director, Nils Hanraets would give a short report later in the day but he wanted to thank Nils and his team for a tremendous event after a seven-year pause due to COVID. The extreme temperatures and a freak storm did not make it any easier for the organising team but they worked round these issues and on behalf of the AITA/IATA Members he offered thanks. Delegates applauded.

b. He was pleased to note that the FITAS Festival, Morocco had just been accepted as a new Associate Member and he asked their Director Hamza Sbai to stand for delegates to recognise him. He and Hamza were working on behalf of AITA/IATA to make contact with amateur theatre companies in the Gulf States with a view to convening a meeting of theatre representatives from across the region. He hoped that the new AITA/IATA Council would continue this work. He handed over to Councillor Kelli McLoud-Schingen to talk on visa issues.

c. Kelli McLoud-Schingen noted that many companies struggled to attend international events because of visa issues and AITA/IATA wanted to partner with other international

organisations such as ITI to gather information and to start to advocate for an improvement. Indeed, she noted there had been difficulties for some of the groups attending this festival. On behalf of Council, she would work with organisations to gather information to try and improve the situation. She invited delegates to see her in the breaks to let her know any problems they had encountered and hopefully, AITA/IATA could help to mitigate them in the future.

d. President Aled then asked Vice President Sofia Wegelius to report on Children and Youth and digital matters. Sofia noted that since last year, not all AITA/IATA's plans had succeeded, partly due to the lack of finance. The proposed youth event had been postponed but AITA/IATA planned for it to happen in summer 2026 in Brixen, Sud-Tyrol. On digital developments, AITA/IATA had continued with the digital Masterclasses and she hoped to make these more engaging in the future and offered in different languages: one in English and French had taken place and plans were in hand for one in Spanish. AITA/IATA continued to invite people to put their theatre on the world map on the AITA/IATA Website and indeed only today she had approved a new theatre and she hoped to develop this further to show how large the amateur theatre family is around the world. AITA/IATA was also active on social media which was a great way to get the word out to our theatre Members and to seek new Members.

e. President Aled noted the notable absence in the form of Anne Gilmour who had been with AITA/IATA as the Secretariat working freelance since 2012. Despite her health issues, she had decided to continue her work until a replacement had been found. Taking the minutes today would be one of her last official duties for the Association. He agreed with Councillor Stephen Tobias's view that Anne's input to the organisation was the single greatest contribution and support to AITA/IATA's health and continuity through five AITA/IATA Presidents. He noted his great working relationship with Anne and he could not thank her enough for the work she had done, especially over the last 12 months under the most challenging circumstances.

f. The council had not, however, been idle in finding a successor for Anne and he announced the appointment of Alexandra Mihály, from Hungary who many delegates would remember from the 2023 Festival in Debrecen. She would start work tomorrow and Anne would slowly hand over the work during the coming weeks. He also offered many thanks to Ksenia Nesterova, who was standing down from Council, for her work and contribution to AITA/IATA. He also thanked the Members of AITA/IATA for their trust and confidence in electing him to lead the organisation as President for the past four years.

g. In conclusion, President Aled noted he had stood for Council under President Thomas Hauger as the English Speaking Secretary had become Vice President and then President. It had been the greatest of duties and the greatest of honours and during that time he had worked with fabulous people and made many friends. He found it a truly wonderful organisation and he had great faith in its purpose and in its future. Alfred Meschnigg had noted it was a challenging role but what greater and more worthy challenge than working towards a truly global organisation that brings people together in a common love of theatre. Delegates stood to applaud President Aled Rhys-Jones.

**Council's report unanimously approved by a show of hands.**

## **11. Finance review 2024 – 2025**

*Review of finance and approval of finance report by Treasurer Patrick Schoenstein* – Patrick Schoenstein reported that, the results of the income statement are similar to those from the previous financial years. The statement shows a reasonable deficit for the financial year of €2,793.95 for a total income of €20,736.32 and total expenditure of €23,530.17.

Our association's only income comes from the Membership fees of NC's and of AM's and expenditure consists mainly of the cost of the Secretariat, Accounting, Internet and Zoom subscriptions along with the administrative costs of registering the Association in Belgium, which are unavoidable.

There were no questions for Patrick Schoenstein and the Presiding Chair confirmed that the GA would proceed to the vote on the budget for the 2024 - 2025 financial year.

**The Review of Finance and Financial Report 2024 – 2025 was unanimously approved by Zoom.**

a. *Granting Discharge to Councillors* – the Presiding Chair explained this requirement under Belgian Law that Members of AITA/IATA gave the task of running the organisation to Councillors and thus they carry the legal responsibilities of the organisation in good faith. By granting them Discharge, Members say they are fine with all the deeds they have done over the past year from a legal perspective.

**The Granting Discharge to Councillors unanimously approved by a show of hands**

b. The Presiding Chair noted that any delegates with a written questions for the those standing for election could present them to him over lunch.

**The General Assembly broke for lunch and reconvened at 14:00.**

## **12. Preparation for the elections**

- a. The Presiding Chair had received no questions for the candidates. There was only one candidate for the role of President, Sofia Wegelius and her statement was in the Forum Book: he invited her to take the floor.
- b. Sofia confirmed she was from Finland and was President of NEATA, where she worked specifically with Children and Youth and had worked with President Aled as the AITA/IATA Vice President for four years. She was standing for President because for her, it was about the work and she got excited about the work that could be done. She had a lot of visions and ideas about what she wanted to do and what she could work on which is why she wanted to run for President. It was a task that, if elected, she would work together with the Council as for her, teamwork was the key word and she would work together to achieve a more engaging organisation for Members. She wanted Council's thoughts for the future to be for you, the Members, and she wanted AITA/IATA to be more engaging and pro-active about contacting and engaging with theatre people and to have a louder voice.
- c. Yesterday, during the forum, those who had attended were asked what they found exciting about international work. To answer that question from her point of view she noted that when she returned home from AITA/IATA events she was sometimes asked why she should be supported on international work. She replied saying that when she travelled she got new ideas and visions and crazy thoughts about how she could do her job better and how she felt international work benefitted theatre back home. This was what she found most inspiring about the international context.
- d. She wanted to continue to develop the Masterclasses and indeed, new ideas had been generated at the forum. She also wanted to continue the Curtain Up! events which are not always easy to finance but she felt that events between festivals were needed. She also wanted to focus more on youth work and already AITA/IATA had involved youth in decision making and they had confirmed they wanted events that brought them together. She was pleased to be able to say that this is what will happen next summer in Brixen.
- e. She also wanted to support all of Members who work with festivals. Here in Monaco, she had noted the volunteers and the staff who made the event possible and, as a festival organiser, she knew how tiring this was. She wanted to be a supportive figure and to help, where she could, the organisers of international events. Council had talked about communication and how we all struggle with it and she hoped to improve this. She asked what would Members get if they elected her? She had said to Council, that she was not going to beat about the bush: she was a mum and she had a full time job but she would work incredibly hard to make the organisation as great as it could be and to work with

Councillors to make it as relevant as possible for its Members. She believed in teamwork and would seek to find the strengths in the new Council and find out what could be achieved together.

f. It was clear that things would change because Anne was leaving. She noted that Anne had meant a lot to the organisation and she thanked her for taking care of her while on Council. She was very thankful to have a great person taking over from her and she was confident that they would work well together as there was good chemistry and they had trust in each other. She wanted to build on the foundations built by previous Presidents but she would work hard and make changes to make sure the organisation thrives. While she might not be able to travel round the world and attend all Members' events, she would do her best to make the organisation relevant for its Members.

g. The Presiding Chair invited those standing for election as Councillors to speak to delegates.

h. *Kevin Dowsett, Great Britain* - said he had been on a long journey and was of the older fraternity and, therefore, he could bring experience. He asked what were the challenges for the organisation? One was finance and so a question was how to generate more income, a tough thing to achieve. Another challenge was the digital world: the procedures during this GA were a case in point. Members had to meet but also be sustainable: but you have to be in the same room to meet and, if I am talking with people and talking to them and finding solutions I like to see their eyes and their body language and feel a rapport. Meetings can be online but they are not really 'there'. Thus, you needed a Council that was live and held meetings and was looking to the future. He agreed that this was a challenge.

i. He asked what he could bring if elected. He thought it would be an understanding of young people as he had been a teacher. What he loved about international work was that it reminded him of the common humanity of being alive, enthusiastic and truthful: he thought all knew truthfulness when they saw it. He would bring this knowledge to Council if elected. He felt that theatre is a space where the world was, where the world is, and a place where the future can present itself as a story with which people can connect and come together. At the end of the day the most important thing is that we bring is understanding and education through theatre.

j. *Joke Quaghebeur, Belgium* – said hello to everyone and noted she was the General Manager of Opendoek and that some delegates might know her from the Spots Op West Festival held in Westouter, Belgium at the same time as the 2015 AITA/IATA General

Assembly in Ypres. She spoke in French and, for the English and Spanish Minutes this is a translation. "Following my statement, I would like to emphasise, as the only female candidate, that I am not here to add another title to my CV but to dedicate myself to the wonderful world of theatre. Our organisation needs of an infusion of youth. And yes, I may not be the youngest member of the group, but I am open to it and ready to help to bring this to life by campaigning and actively reaching out. Digitization is no longer something we can ignore in today's society. How will we, as an organisation, embrace this? Let's inspire each other, share our knowledge, because honestly, we all face the same challenges, work towards the same goals, and share the same passion: theatre. Believe me – and those who know me can confirm this – I am bursting with energy and love a direct approach that brings everyone along in the same story."

k. *Lakó Zsigmond, Hungary* – referred to the previous day's forum and thanked Sofia and Kelli for its organisation which had made him reflect on why he had started in theatre. He had been an introverted child but had opened up through theatre and thought that if he could do theatre, anyone could. He saw it as both an education and an art form. As far as his connections with AITA/IATA was concerned, back in 2019 one of his theatre's productions was accepted for the AITA/IATA Festival in Saint John, Canada and he was so impressed by the event and by the cultural life generated and the organisation and that he got the funds to organise the very successful AITA/IATA festival in Debrecen in 2023. He was pleased to note that he still received good comments and feedback from those who were there. He was then elected President of the Hungarian NC, a very busy job, along with his work at the University of Debrecen. As for his vision of AITA/IATA, he believed that an organisation needed a firm structural background: theatre was very free but also very concentrated. And when organising an international event, there had to be a system that is safe so others can play on it and he wanted to strengthen the structure of AITA/IATA. He would want to bring in as many people as possible and take care of these friendships and given them a chance to play together in ATIA/IATA.

l. *Patrick Schoenstein, France* – The president had asked him if he wanted to take on the role of treasurer in 2023, which he did. He has a theatrical career and, like many people there, it started when he was young and he had dedicated himself to theatre all his life. He had been Vice-President and then President of the French National Centre for more than 30 years. He had always been impressed by the quality of the IATA/AITA Congresses and had attended many events in Monaco as well as in Ankara, Ypres, Halifax, and St John, thus acquiring a good knowledge of the organization. He had contributed to the implementation of the French-language master class and had thought that AITA/IATA should do more in this

direction. He had been eager to develop relationships in the professional theatre community and to ask friends and acquaintances to come help with the operation of amateur theatre. It had also been important to develop and increase the number of national centres and associate members because the organization depended on these finances for survival. But he also noted that amateur theatre is represented by only two continents in the AITA/IATA Council: The Americas and Europe. It is important to try to integrate representatives from other continents into Council so that a real exchange of theatre that concerned the whole world could take place. The Council still had six Europeans and two Americans, so more work had been needed on this point. He thanked the delegates for listening to him.

m. *Cândido Sobreiro, Portugal* – he was the director of Teatro De Balugas in Portugal and also the director of three festivals: Palco De Terra Festival; the Língua Festival for Minority Languages; and the Gil Vicente European Amateur Theater Awards. He thanked AITA/IATA for the opportunity to say a few words and noted that through amateur theatre, he had learned that theatre is the most courageous of all the arts. It rescued small communities and preserved minority languages and empowered us to tell our own stories in a truly global world. He felt that when there is a stage for this, we can all tell stories with a profound sense of mission. Whether or not he was elected he would continue to dedicate his life to building a better world and he thanked delegates for their time and their trust in him.

n. *Election of the President of AITA/IATA* - the Presiding Chair explained that the GA would first proceed to the voting of Sofia Wegelius for President. He noted that this would be a yes / no vote and provided she received at least 50% + 1 of the votes she would be elected President. The NC voted first followed by the AM's. Once voting was complete and the Tellers approved the outcome, the Presiding Chair noted that Sofia Wegelius had received 154 yes votes and 28 no votes meaning she had been elected with 85% of the vote.

**Sofia Wegelius was approved as President of AITA/IATA with 85% of the vote.**

o. Sofia was congratulated and presented with a badge of office by the now former President with much applause by those in the GA.

p. *Election to the Council of AITA/IATA* – The Presiding Chair turned to the election of new Councillors and explained there would be two rounds of voting. In the first round, delegates should vote for a maximum of four of the five candidates. Those who received the two highest number of votes would be appointed Councillors. In the second round of voting, delegates should vote for a maximum of two of the three candidates. The Presiding Chair

noted the need to check that there were no invalid votes – an invalid vote would be one where a delegate voted for more candidates than appropriate.

q. The Presiding Chair confirmed that valid votes had been received had been counted and agreed by the Tellers. The voting was as follows:

- Candidate Kevin Dowset received 95 votes
- Candidate Joke Quaghebeur received 112 votes
- Candidate Lakó Zsigmond received 147 votes
- Candidate Patrick Schoenstein received 145 votes
- Candidate Cândido Sobreiro received 147 votes

Thus, in the first round, Candidates Lakó Zsigmond and Cândido Sobreiro were elected to the Council of AITA/IATA and the Presiding Chair offered them his congratulations.

r. The Presiding Chair confirmed that in the second round of voting, delegates now needed to elect two of the remaining three candidates who were Kevin Dowsett, Joke Quaghebeur and Patrick Schoenstein. The voting was as follows:

- Candidate Kevin Dowsett received 97 votes
- Candidate Joke Quaghebeur received 110 votes
- Candidate Patrick Schoenstein received 129 votes

s. Thus, in the second round Joke Quaghebeur and Patrick Schoenstein were elected as Councillors of AITA/IATA. The Presiding Chair congratulated the four successful candidates.

*There was a 20 minute break and then the newly elected President and Councillors joined  
took their seat at the table*

t. Aled handed President Sofia Wegelius the badge of office as his last official role in AITA/IATA.

### **13. AITA/IATA Vision statement by the new President Sofia Wegelius**

a. The Presiding Chair invited the new President Sofia Wegelius to address the GA. President Sofia said her first task was to work with the new Councillors and with the new Secretariat and she hoped that delegates would have patience while that change took place. She felt that the digital costs were unnecessarily high and she would work with Council to reduce these costs in order to make the budget more stable. She would then start to plan for the coming year and this would be the focus of the first meeting of the new Council taking place the following day.

b. She first thanked the now former President, Aled Rhys-Jones. She noted that as long as she had been on Council, Aled had always been there and she felt they had gone forward together. He had been supportive from the start and she presented him with a small gift. She also thanked former Councillor Ksenia Nesterova who was stepping down. Ksenia had been the bubbliest Council member who was dancing on the balcony in true bubbly manner and had a small gift for her. President Sofia was looking forward to working with the new Council and getting to know everyone better: together we are stronger.

**14. Other proposals submitted for consideration by the General Assembly** – The Presiding Chair confirmed no proposals had been received.

**15. Budget 2021 – 2022**

a. *Proposed budget and proposals for fees and subscriptions* – Patrick Schoenstein addressed delegates on the finance matters in page 42 in the Forum Book. He noted that on the last page of the Forum Book, delegates would find the proposed Provisional Budget for the 2025 - 2026 financial year which was a balanced Provisional Budget. He was able to do this because fortunately he had been helped by the very good results of the membership campaign that which had resulted in an increased NC Membership and a significant rise in the number of AM's. This had enabled him to present a balanced provisional budget with expenditure of £24,780.00 and income of £24,780.00. There were no questions from delegates.

**The proposed budget was unanimously approved by a show of hands.**

b. The Presiding Chair, on behalf of Council and delegates, thanked Barbara Cellario for her considerable assistance with managing the Zoom and the voting procedures.

**16. AITA/IATA World Festival of Children's Theatre, Lingen, Germany 2028**

a. The Presiding Chair invited Nils Hanraets to make his presentation. Nils confirmed he was the Vice President of the German Federation and of TPZ in Lingen and the Artistic Director of the Lingen Festival. He congratulated the new members of the Council. He then showed a short video about the festival which he noted had been held after a break of seven years. The festival had been jointly hosted with the city of Lingen and in co-operation with the University of Applied Science in Lingen and the European Theatre House. Fifteen groups had attended with about 280 participants bringing 18 performances which had reached about 7,500 spectators in two venues. This had only been made possible by the large number of volunteers – around 140 - that help make it such a success. After a seven year break it had been important to get it 'right' and also to make it fit for the future and he

thanked CEC for their co-operation and their panel discussion on the sustainability of festivals and about learning from each other. He also thanked AITA/IATA for their co-operation. He felt that festivals like this were even more important in today's world when we need to bring people together. He thanked delegates and hoped to see them in Lingen at the next festival in 2028.

## **17. Hosts for future AITA/IATA Festivals**

a. *Presentation by Joke Quaghebeur and Joke Bereton, OPENDOEK for the AITA/IATA World Children's and Youth Performing Arts Festival 2026 in Antwerp* - the Presiding chairman invited Joke Quaghebeur and Joke Bereton to the stand. Joke Quaghebeur had been very inspired by the Lingen Children's festival and wanted to bring something similar to Antwerp. She had put flyers out for delegates to take back to their country and then invited Joke Bereton to talk about ITAC 8 (International Teaching Artists Conference) which will take place alongside the Festival. Joke B said that Opendoek were proud to present Antwerp as the next venue for the World Children's and Youth Performing Arts Festival and showed a video about Antwerp.

b. She noted that between 21 and 30 August 2026, 15 theatre groups for those aged 8 – 20 will be welcomed to a fun event which would cater to these different age groups. They felt it was crucial to give youngsters a voice not only on the stage but also in the organisation of the festival and they would seek their feedback. One of their main focus points was accessibility on all levels – financial, mobility, access, gender and language. She noted that the festival would take place alongside ITAC 8 – International Teaching Artists Congress - who are connectors who make the world a better place through the universal language of the arts. She noted there were many good city centre venues in Antwerp for events. The broader age range meant they could create a catered programme for the children and performers who would be hosted both with people and in hotels. They plan to have a full programme ready by April 2026 and tickets would be on sale at the of May 2026. The Royal Conservatory of Antwerp, Opendoek, ITAC and AITA/IATA are partners and the festival is support by the Government of Flanders and of Antwerp. She then showed a second video about the Louder Together event.

c. The Presiding Chair thanked both Joke Quaghebeur and Bereton and Opendoek for their presentation. He noted that, between Antwerp and Lingen in 2028, it was hoped to hold the 2027 AITA/IATA World Festival and General Assembly in Wellington New Zealand which would be very special as AITA/IATA had never before held a festival in the Southern Hemisphere. He asked Paul Percy from Theatre New Zealand to take the stand.

d. *Presentation by Paul Percy Theatre New Zealand for the AITA/IATA International Amateur Theatre Festival 2027, Wellington, New Zealand* – Paul welcomed the new members to the Council and thanked Monaco for their hospitality and support.

e. He noted that New Zealand was a whole different world and he offered a slide presentation behind his words. He stressed that in the vibrant heart of Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, there were many different theatres and a thriving and vibrant arts community. New Zealand was a special place with a formal treaty with the native people and was a very multicultural country. He thought there was something for every taste and type of theatre and was a place where people come together and celebrate their unique voices. He said Art was not a luxury, it was soul of who we are in New Zealand. It was also the first country in the world to give women the vote.

f. He agreed that it was a long way from Europe but the air was fresher and the journey was easy, once there, leaving was the hard part. He noted that in Wellington the theatres and shops and restaurants are all on the waterfront and can be easily reached. Beyond, was the wild countryside, beautiful beaches and vineyards and forests no more than an hour away where every corner holds a new wonder to be discovered. He said that if delegates went beyond Wellington they would see the wonderful regions and striking contrasts they offer. It was a land of striking contrasts and he asked delegates not to forget where they would be in March 2027, in Wellington. He showed a second video. The festival motto would be Standing on the Edge and he wanted the festival and conference to serve as a vibrant platform for courageous artistic exploration. In summary, he said they were forward thinking and he would be able to confirm the dates very soon. He invited delegates to come and experience the New Zealand culture and art. Come fly with us.

g. Delegates were asked to approve the three festivals.

**The proposals for the three festivals to carry the AITA/IATA title was  
unanimously approved by a show of hands.**

## **18. Other business**

a. The Presiding Chair asked if anyone wanted to take the floor. Josef Hollos, Austria spoke about the Drama in Education Congress taking place in Austria, 27 March – 1 April 2026 and he invited delegates to send in their proposals. There were no further questions from delegates and the Presiding Chair thanked the delegates for their co-operation and patience and handed over to new President of AITA/IATA Sofia Wegelius.

**19. Closing of the 37<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of AITA/IATA asbl** – President Sofia Wegelius thanked Dirk De Corte for his fantastic role as Presiding Chair and asked delegates to give him a round of applause for his excellent work to keep the GA on track and shen then declared the General Assembly closed.

**Meeting ended 16:30**

DRAFT