



Report on the AITA/IATA Council Meetings Nov 2023 & Jan, Mar & May 2024

Dear Members (National Centres & Associates)

A number of online and face-to-face AITA/IATA Council meetings have been held since Members last received an update on the work of Council and before the online GA. President Aled Rhys-Jones has chaired the meetings. Contact details of Council Members are on the AITA/IATA Website [HERE](#).

1. Council meeting 30 November – 2 December 2023, Midland, Texas, USA

- a. This meeting was hosted by former AITA/IATA Councillor Tim Jebesen and Midland Theatre, Texas of which he was at the time of the meeting, the Executive Director. It was an opportunity for the new Council members – Heidi Troi, Italy; Kelli McCloud-Schingen, USA - to get to know Council, and vice versa, and to discuss topics in depth.
- b. *Finance* – President Aled Rhys-Jones updated Council on the closing issues relating to the former Treasurer and it was agreed to employ a bookkeeper to manage and prepare the annual accounts. Councillor Patrick Schoenstein was also confirmed as the AITA/IATA Treasurer.
- c. *Vacant Councillor post* – Council discussed the skill set needed by a new Councillor and identified fundraising as an area that Council was lacking in expertise.
- d. *Members* – Council were pleased to learn that Slovakia would as once again be represented as an AITA/IATA National Centre and that the Norwegian Amateur Theatre Association would apply for membership¹. It was hoped that new members might be found in Latin America and in the former USSR.
- e. *Festivals* – Council confirmed that the now out of date festival handbook would be updated and would include a section on hybrid festivals. After discussion, it was agreed to further examine the difficulty that some individuals and groups faced to obtain Visas to travel to festivals. The 2025 Lingen Children’s Festival would now take place a month before the Monaco Festival and arrangements for both events were in hand. Also, an initial meeting to explore options for an AITA/IATA Festival for young people in Antwerp 14 – 23 August 2026 had been held and matters on this were also progressing.
- f. *Drama in Education Congress, Austria March 2024* – AITA/IATA had offered a bursary for up to two individuals to attend this event and nine applications were received.

¹ Since the meeting both Slovakia and the Netherlands have joined as National Centre Members and were approved at the 2024 GA. Norway have also joined but not in time for approval at the 2024 GA.

AITA/IATA had awarded two bursaries: one each to candidates from Sri Lanka and Uganda. Sadly, the candidate from Uganda was unable to get a Visa to attend the event.

g. *AITA/IATA Sub-groups: Children and Youth* – Aled and Sofia Wegelius outlined for the benefit of new members the background to how AITA/IATA handled Children and Youth matters. It was noted that the first *Curtain Up!* online event in 2023 had a theme of post-COVID return for Children and Youth and had used simultaneous translation. Participants had been charged with a 50% discount for AITA/IATA Members. **The event had been a steep learning curve but lessons had been learned and the next one was now being planned.**

h. Council agreed the need to develop a strategy for its approach to Children and Youth matters and debated various approaches suggested by Councillors. NEATA had recently held a free online festival where each country attending had contributed a workshop which could be booked individually. Perhaps this was a model that could be replicated by AITA/IATA. Finding funding for such events was also discussed.

i. Council discussed holding a series of Masterclasses with the speaker receiving a fee, offset by a charge to attend with AITA/IATA members offered a discount. It was agreed to hold these in the three languages of AITA/IATA and Council discussed various funding options especially for the event held in Spanish and French. Council also discussed developing AITA/IATA Merchandise such as Tote Bags and T Shirts and the need to create an AITA/IATA logo for such items. Heidi Troi agreed to speak to her nearby High School for graphic students to see if they could be tasked to create an image for merchandise.

j. The need to better publicise AITA/IATA through a Newsletter was discussed and the suggestion by Kelli of support through an Intern in the USA was welcomed. It was agreed that there was a need for a communications strategy that would encourage new members.

k. *World Theatre Day* – Council noted the new digital arrangements for World Theatre Day on 27 March 2024 for which Carlos Taberneck had taken on the technical side. It was agreed that a message from a high profile person to promote the event and AITA/IATA would be helpful and Anne agreed to ask Sir Ian McKellen if he would record one.

2. Council meeting by Zoom 11 January 2024, Zoom

a. *Fees & finance* – Council agreed that the Fee Invoices should now be sent, but there was no requirement for Anne to send receipts unless specifically requested by a Member. It was agreed that once again AITA/IATA should open a PayPal account in the name of the organisation, not an individual.

b. *Visas* – Kelli McLoud-Schingen had started to explore the issue of visa rejection with other large international arts organisations.

c. *Masterclass* – Council agreed that the first Masterclass in English would be on Intimacy Direction from Elodie Foray and the feel level was discussed. It was agreed the next Masterclass would be in Spanish and Aled agreed to follow up with Spanish Members, possible presenters.

d. *Curtain Up!* – **the next event in the series would be held on towards the end of the year and would celebrate** the effects and benefits of amateur theatre in the community and wider. It would be a one-day event with no sessions held in parallel. Council also discussed options for possible funding from organisations promoting the French and Spanish language.

e. *Drama in Education Congress March 2024* - it was agreed that Councillor Heidi Troi should attend the event as the official representative of AITA/IATA.

f. *Social media* – Council noted the success in getting any amateur group to pin their location on the digital map on the front page of the AITA/IATA Website and also getting Members to sign up for a week to the Instagram [weareamateurthertheatre](https://www.instagram.com/weareamateurthertheatre) page. Anyone who signed up was also asked if they would like to receive an AITA/IATA Newsletter and the next step was to set this up. It was hoped that an Intern or Student could be found to do handle this.

g. *World Theatre Day, 27 March* – the WTD website was now embedded in the AITA/IATA Website and a welcome message was being arranged.

3. Council meeting 8 March 2024 by Zoom

a. Council noted the ongoing issues with the Belfius Bank account, which were in the process of being resolved. Patrick had not been able to open a cheaper alternative to PayPal and it was agreed to revert to using PayPal as the alternative payment method to that offered by Belfius.

b. *AITA/IATA online General Assembly (GA) 2024* – Council discussed the arrangements for the online GA. There were no elections so it would be straightforward. It was likely that Council would need to propose an increase in the Membership Fee.

c. *Publicity* – Heidi had briefed local Brixen students about developing a new AITA/IATA logo and it was hoped they could produce some ideas in the next few weeks. It was possible that items with the AITA/IATA logo could be on sale for the first time at the Monaco festival.

d. *Festival Handbook* – work to update this was continuing and Council noted it would need to include information and guidance about Hybrid Festivals.

e. *Lingen Festival of Children's Theatre 27 Jun – 4 July 2025* – Aled reported on a successful meeting with festival organiser Nils Hanraets of TPZ Lingen and noted that the age range would be 8 – 14 years of age. The need to consider the legacy of the festival was noted and ideally this would be an opportunity to build something around the children.

f. *AITA/IATA Festival, Wellington, New Zealand February / March 2027* – Aled noted that Paul Percy, Director of Theatre New Zealand was keen to host this. The proposed dates would preclude AITA/IATA from holding a GA because the financial year would not have ended. While many groups and individuals from Europe could not make the journey, it would enable new participants to take part and Council were happy to respond positively to this approach.

g. *Social media* – Council discussed the need for a policy for the Instagram weekly sign up to [weareamateurthertheatre](https://www.instagram.com/weareamateurthertheatre) in case unsuitable images or videos were posted.

h. *World Theatre Day, 27 March* - It was noted that initial interest had been slow but it was picking up. Sir Ian McKellen had agreed to submit a short video for publication on the website. It was also hoped that an edition of the Newsletter could also be sent out to further raise the awareness of the event.

4. Council meeting 10 May 2024, Zoom

- a. *Finance* – Aled reported that some issues with the Belfius Bank account were still not resolved. He and Anne would be in Antwerp for the FEATS Festival and they would visit the Bank with Dirk De Corte to try and resolved the issues once and for all.
- b. *Fees received* – Anne reported on the Members who had and who had not paid. Council agreed that Members who had not paid in 2024 would be shown as Dormant on the website and those who were shown as Dormant (not paid last year) would now be removed.
- c. *Annual Accounts* – the draft accounts to be added to the Forum Book for the 2024 GA were almost ready and showed a shortfall. Aled was confident that this was for very good reasons which he would explain at the GA and Council agreed the figures.
- d. *Budget 2024-25* – these were based on the previous year’s budget and showed a deficit, mostly the result of the failure to increase the Membership Fee. Hence the need at the GA to propose an increase to the Fee.
- e. *Membership Fee* – because the fee had only been increased once since the major decrease in 2015, there was in effect a huge reduction in the ‘buying power’ of AITA/IATA. If an increase was agreed at the 2024 GA, it would take effect in 2025 and the need for one had been flagged up at the 2023 GA. Council agreed that the increase for National Centre Members in Category 1 should be kept under €600 and the fee levels in Categories 2 – 4 and for Associate Members had been increased proportionally.
- f. *Masterclass from Elodie Foray* – Aled noted that the first Masterclass had been a real success and, it was agreed that might be good to repeat the workshop later in the year in French.
- g. *Mondial du Théâtre 20 – 27 August 2025* – Aled noted that the first meeting of the Joint Committee (JC) had taken place and that the rules were on the AITA/IATA website. The festival would last 8 days with 18 groups offered 6 night’s accommodation and only two venues would be used. It is hoped that the GA will be back in the Auditorium Rainier III along with the festival club. The deadline for groups to apply was 10 October 2024 and the next meeting of the JC would be in November to select the groups.
- h. *Sustainability* – it was noted that Dirk De Corte would propose that a master’s student would undertake some research on sustainability during the Monaco festival.

5. AITA/IATA 2024 online General Assembly

- a. The draft minutes of the 2024 General Assembly are now on the AITA/IATA Website on [THIS](#) page.

The Council of AITA/IATA offers best wishes and good health to all Members.

The Council of AITA/IATA

13 January 2025