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THE REPORT ON INTERPLAY EUROPE 2006

Turkey joined for the first time in Interplay Europe (Festival of Young European Playwrights) which has been organized since 1995. I had the chance to take part in this festival as a university staff member and as the leader of the Turkish delegation. This participation was an invaluable opportunity for the young Turkish playwright, Fatma Kandemir, as well.

Festival Director Mr. Henning Fangauf's courageous attempt to invite a Turkish delegation to the Festival is not only a new proof of the fact that cultural initiatives always precede political initiatives but also a clear indicator of democratic attitude of artists and scientists under the auspices of Mr. Henning Fangauf, while Turkey, whose negotiation talks with the European Union has recently started, occupies a controversial position within the Union. Mr. Fangauf's efforts to introduce the participants to each other, to establish communication among the participants and to do his best to provide utmost benefit from the festival are praiseworthy.

The host of the festival was young Liechtenstein Assitej. The head of Assitej, Mr. Georg Biedermann, and other members of the executive board performed the part of the host unforgettably. Besides, they performed this part rather calmly and modestly. I am sure that all participants of the festival were as pleased as us with this hospitality.

The participation of 28 young playwrights from 14 European countries is, in the first place, of great importance with respect to cultural richness. This cultural meeting proved to be functional since it provided the opportunity to question prejudices, to perceive life from a wider perspective, and to exchange and combine experiences.

It was an intentional decision to coincide the date of Interplay Europe 2006 with the date of International Children's and Young People's Theatre Festival "Luaga & Losna" organized in Nenzing, in the neighboring country Austria. Therefore, the participants of both festivals organized joint activities and took part in the activities of

both festivals. The director of Luaga & Losna, Sabine Wöllgens, and the members of the executive board displayed a unique hospitality, full of surprises, during the festival.

Interplay Europe 2006 fulfilled its objective since the participants who took the most advantage of Interplay Europe 2006 were young playwrights. Their plays were read and evaluated by 9-10 people. Some of these readers were university staff and some of them were colleagues. It was certain that the plays would be evaluated from different perspectives since both readers and playwrights come from different European countries and different cultures and have different experiences and points of view. These different points of view were not only astonishing but also fruitful. At times, the plays were evaluated from a perspective that young playwrights had not considered or expected. Some participants even found certain elements which were unintentionally incorporated into text by the playwright, and added unintentional functions to these elements. These multidimensional evaluations did not disappoint young playwrights, but excited and inspired them. The “one-to-one chats” program within the festival fulfilled a reinforcing function for young playwrights. A young playwright spends at least four hours in two meetings with a tutor to whom they sent their play beforehand; and the play is considered at length throughout this calm meeting. The tutor who is more experienced and well-informed makes recommendations about the play to the young playwright. Hence, the play is decomposed, analyzed and reconstructed together. All these efforts make great contributions to the creation of a more competent essence and form.

Some seminars and workshops were also organized during the festival though their number was limited. It seems that these efforts are fruitful and should increase in number.

Observations about the Plays:

It is observed that the plays which are written to be evaluated in the festival and discussed throughout the festival show the following general characteristics:

- The contents of plays focus on individual problems rather than social problems. The plays are not extroverted, but introverted.

The problems of individuals are generally treated in isolation from social resources.

- The general themes of the plays were loneliness and lack of communication. Solidarity, public spirit and cooperation did not evoke any enthusiasm. I had the impression that the belief in these values has disappeared.
- Undoubtedly, it is an honorable attitude that young playwrights deal with the problems they know about and treat these problems in their works. This is the appropriate act which will bring success to them. However, it is significant not only for the art of playwriting but also for the future of the world that they do not have interest in the themes that they do not know about. It is striking that young playwrights are not willing to know about and treat in their plays the problems (torture, discrimination, difficulties concerning immigration and integration, impacts of ethnical and religious conflicts on individuals, war, exploitation, abuse, etc.) that they are ignorant of or they have not witnessed.
- The guiding role of contemporary values was not obvious in the plays. The values such as human rights, democracy, equality and freedom are not upheld; or these values do not create a perspective about the problems treated in the plays. Young playwrights are interested in psychology rather than philosophy, sociology, economics and politics and try to understand and define human beings within the scope of only this discipline. Is it normal when their ages are taken into consideration?... Maybe...

How can we create a better Interplay Europe?

- Interplay Europe should not only be a festival where plays are discussed, and opinions and experiences about plays are exchanged. Young playwrights can take more advantage from this festival thanks to some support programs. These support programs can be composed of seminars where playwriting traditions of various countries (each festival can be dedicated to a guest country) are explained (hence, European playwriting tradition will be revised), workshops which deal with playwriting techniques or analyses of certain play texts.
- Inviting theatre directors and producers as well as tutors and young playwrights will contribute to better promotion of the festival. These guests will not only uphold the festival but also increase the enthusiasm of young playwrights.

- The website of Interplay Europe may serve for the promotion of the works of young playwrights. A new page can be designed for the playwrights who take part in each festival. The whole version or a summary of plays which take place in the website with introductory information can be remarkable for theatre producers or directors. Directors and producers who seek for new plays can be informed about the new plays added to the website via letters and newsletters.

Afterword

In conclusion, Interplay Europe is a festival which fulfills its objectives and proves its success. It assumes an important function in the development and promotion of young playwrights and plays an important role in the exchange of experiences and products in playwriting. It is possible to improve the quality of the festival with the recommendations mentioned above. The improvement of Interplay Europe will not only contribute to the development of the European playwriting, but also make great contributions to the world playwriting since Europe serves as the locomotive of the world theatre.

I am very pleased to participate in Interplay Europe 2006. I hope that I could have contributed to the festival as much as I benefited from it. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Festival Director Mr. Henning Fangauf, the Head of Liechtenstein Assitej Mr. Georg Biedermann and the members of the executive board, the Director of "Luaga and Losna" Sabine Wöllgens and the members of the executive board, and all the participants.