

# ASSITEJ/USA TIMELINE

Researched and Compiled by Jeanne Klein

This timeline is but a snapshot. It does not pretend to be complete. Its purpose is to contextualize the most significant events that led to the founding of ASSITEJ/USA and the first international and national breakthroughs that led to the artistic and managerial professionalization of Theatre for Young Audiences in the U.S. today. Making decisions about what information to include was extremely difficult, and there may be some disagreements with these choices. Those with different perspectives are encouraged to write to *TYA Today*. Given the available sources provided here, we hope that future scholars will reinterpret this history from their standpoints in years to come.

- 1930 .....Junior Leagues of America hold first national children's theatre conference in Chicago.<sup>1</sup>
- 1937 .....Children's theatre made standing committee of American Educational Theatre Association (AETA).
- 1944 .....Children's Theatre Committee (CTC) [future American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE)] founded by Winifred Ward.
- 1947 .....UNESCO creates International Theatre Institute (ITI), prompting CTC and Thespians resolution to support children's theatre programs around the world.<sup>2</sup>
- 1958 .....Children's Theatre Foundation (CTF) founded as endowment to raise funds for projects.<sup>3</sup>
- 1961 .....Theatre Communications Group (TCG) of non-profit regional theatres founded.
- 1964 .....CTC sends seven U.S. delegates to London meeting to plan international children's theatre organization with thirty-two countries.  
Sara Spencer represents U.S. at constitutional meeting in Venice. European countries debate inclusions of creative drama and child actor companies into new international children's theatre organization.<sup>4</sup>
- 1965 .....ASSITEJ International founded in Paris.  
U.S. Center for ASSITEJ founded in Miami at CTC/AETA convention. Nat Eek (University of Oklahoma, Norman) becomes U.S. Center Chair and CTC Director. National office based in Norman, OK. First Executive Committee includes Jed Davis (University of Kansas), James Popovich (University of Georgia), and Muriel Sharon (Pocket Players, New York City), a professional representative invited by Sara Spencer.<sup>5</sup>
- 1966 .....First ASSITEJ International Congress and Festival held in Prague, Czechoslovakia. U.S. Center distributes its first publication, *Children's Theatre in the U.S.A.* U.S. Executive Committee expands to include Orlin Corey (Everyman Players, LA), Ann S. Hill (Nashville Academy Theatre [now Nashville Children's Theatre]), George Latshaw (puppeteer, OH), Barbara McIntyre (University of Pittsburgh), and Sara Spencer (Anchorage Press and Louisville Children's Theatre [now Stage One]).<sup>6</sup>
- 1967 .....First open meeting of U.S. Center of ASSITEJ at CTC/AETA convention.
- 1968 .....At CTC/AETA convention, members elect Nat Eek, Chair; Sara Spencer, Vice-Chair; Ann S. Hill, Secretary-Treasurer; and Moses Goldberg (University of Minnesota) and Patricia B. Synder (SUNY-Albany) to join Executive Committee. U.S. Center adopts operating code and moves base to Nashville Children's Theatre.<sup>7</sup>
- 1969 .....First U.S. Center of ASSITEJ membership subscription form published in *Children's Theatre Review*.  
First Actors' Equity contract for theatre for young audiences is established.
- 1970 .....At third ASSITEJ International Congress in Venice, Everyman Players becomes first U.S. professional company to perform at an ASSITEJ Festival.  
Producers Association of Children's Theatre (PACT) holds first Equity Showcase, New York City.
- 1971 .....At Chicago conference, 150 people hear ASSITEJ reports. Orlin Corey elected U.S. Center Chair and President of renamed Children's Theatre Association (CTA).
- 1972 .....Fourth ASSITEJ International Congress and Festival, held in Albany, NY and Montréal, Québec, includes 450 delegates from fifteen to twenty-five countries, including 250 from U.S.—a watershed event. Welcome messages read from Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Shirley Temple Black (United Nations representative), and President Richard Nixon. Five U.S. companies, pre-screened by critics Dan Sullivan (*Los Angeles Times*), Clara Hieronymous (*Nashville Tennessean*), and Orlin Corey, perform to mixed reviews. National articles critique changing image of U.S. children's theatre. Debate continues over inclusion of creative drama when European countries boycott creative drama sessions.<sup>8</sup>

# 1965

**ASSITEJ  
International  
founded  
in Paris**

**U.S. Center  
for ASSITEJ  
founded  
in Miami**

- 1974 .....First *U.S. Center for ASSITEJ Newsletter-Bulletin* published (one page).
- 1975 .....William Gleason (Florida State University) and Ann Shaw (Queens College, NY) begin elected terms on Executive Committee.  
CTA renamed Children's Theatre Association of America (CTAA).
- 1976 .....ASSITEJ/Germany (GDR) launches first International Director's Seminar, which U.S. directors will continue to attend.<sup>9</sup>
- 1977 .....ASSITEJ International Executive Committee formally excludes creative drama by directing educational organizations to join the International Association of Amateur Theatres instead.<sup>10</sup>  
At first Wingspread conference, CTAA redefines "Theatre for Young Audiences" with "preferably highly skilled adult actors . . . [and] with especially talented child actors in child roles."<sup>11</sup>
- 1978 .....First Winifred Ward Scholarship, for "a graduate-level scholar of demonstrated intellectual and artistic ability in child drama/theatre," awarded to Roger Bedard (University of Kansas).  
CTAA begins Unpublished Playscripts Project, chaired by Edward Kessel (St. Louis).
- 1979 .....First national CTAA Showcase of professional producers and presenters held in Evanston, IL [now IPAY—International Performing Arts for Youth].<sup>12</sup>
- 1980 .....International Executive Committee meets in Washington, D.C. with Kennedy Center's Imagination Celebration festival. First time that Kennedy Center produces own work for young audiences, *Maggie Magalita* by Wendy Kesselman.<sup>13</sup>  
National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) abolishes TYA as category for funding.<sup>14</sup>  
Arizona State University (ASU) Child Drama Archives is established by Roger Bedard and Lin Wright with Katherine Krzys, curator, as a repository for national and international materials.
- 1981 .....ASSITEJ/USA becomes an independent, tax-exempt organization (July 29, 1981) at CTAA/ATA Convention in Dallas and "expresses deep appreciation and gratitude to [CTAA] for instituting the U.S. Center for ASSITEJ, for fostering its growth, for encouraging its independence and autonomy, and finally, for welcoming ASSITEJ/USA as another strong voice for Theatre for Young Audiences in the United States of America."<sup>15</sup>
- 1982 .....When University of Washington cuts its TYA program, University and College Theatre Association (future Association for Theatre in Higher Education) resolves that "child drama should be included in the study and practice of theatre in colleges and universities."<sup>16</sup>
- 1983 .....Second ASSITEJ/USA Wingspread Conference on The Role of TYA in the American Regional Theatre and in International Cultural Exchange (funded by Johnson Foundation)—a turning point. Chaired by Moses Goldberg (Stage One: Louisville Children's Theatre), invited professional TYA leaders, representatives from theatre agencies (e.g., Actors' Equity, FEDAPT, TCG), and international theatre organizations collaborate on five-year strategic plan to: 1) Improve artistic quality; 2) Achieve parity with regional theatres in management and compensation; 3) Increase income while diversifying funding sources; 4) Improve communication to level found in "adult" regional theatre; and, 5) Increase public and peer recognition of artistic achievement.<sup>17</sup>  
Board hires first paid staff, Wendy Perks, director of development, and TYA companies begin to improve management with TCG and FEDAPT assistance.
- 1984 .....ASSITEJ/USA World Theatre Festival, cosponsored by Louisiana World Exposition, New Orleans, integrates: 1) Performance Series with eleven companies from eight

## Outstanding Plays for Young Audiences International Bibliography (ASSITEJ/USA)

- Vol. I, 1984 (Patricia Whitton, Editor):  
*Androcles and the Lion* by Aurand Harris  
*The Ice Wolf* by Joanna Halpert Kraus  
*The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson  
*Step on a Crack* by Suzan Zeder
- Vol. II, 1987 (Harold R. Oaks and Erin Caldwell, Editors):  
*Mother Hicks* by Suzan Zeder  
*The Arkansaw Bear* by Aurand Harris  
*The Odyssey* by Gregory Falls and Kurt Beattie  
*Most Valuable Player* by Mary Hall Surface
- Vol. III, 1990 (Harold R. Oaks, Editor):  
*Wiley and the Hairy Man* by Suzan Zeder  
*Newcomer* by Janet Thomas  
*Maggie Magalita* by Wendy Kesselman  
*The Diary of Anne Frank* by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett  
*Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, adapted by Joseph Robinette, music and lyrics by Charles Strouse
- Vol. IV, 1993 (Harold R. Oaks, Editor):  
*In a Room Somewhere* by Suzan Zeder  
*Amber Waves* by James Still  
*Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep  
*A Woman Called Truth* by Sandra Fenichel Asher  
*The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, adapted by Pamela Sterling
- Vol. V, 1996 (Harold R. Oaks, Editor):  
*And the Tide Shall Cover the Earth* by Norma Cole  
*Afternoon of the Elves* by Janet Taylor Lisle, adapted by Y York  
*The Rememberer* by Steven Dietz, adapted from memoir  
*As My Sun Sets* by Joyce Simmons Cheeka  
*The Yellow Boat* by David Saar  
*Hush: An Interview with America* by James Still
- Vol. VI, 1999 (Harold R. Oaks, Editor):  
*Selkie* by Laurie Brooks  
*Still Life with Iris* by Steven Dietz  
*The Taste of Sunrise* by Suzan Zeder  
*And Then They Came for Me* by James Still  
*A Village Fable* by James Still, adapted from *In the Suicide Mountains* by John Gardner
- Vol. VII, 2002 (Harold R. Oaks, Editor):  
*Black Butterfly, Jaguar Girl, Piñata Woman, and Other Superhero Girls Like Me* by Luis Alfaro, based on writings of Alma Elena Cervantes, Sandra C. Muñoz, and Marisela Norté  
*Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes, adapted by Kevin Kling  
*Salt and Pepper* by José Cruz González  
*Tomato Plant Girl* by Wesley Middleton  
*The Wrestling Season* by Laurie Brooks
- American Theatre* (TCG):  
*Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep (September, 1992)  
*Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* by José Rivera (December, 1996)  
*The Wrestling Season* by Laurie Brooks (November, 2000)  
*Holes* by Louis Sachar, adapted from his book (April, 2002)
- Plays in Process: Plays for Young Audiences* (TCG):  
 I. Vol. 7 (11), n.d. (1987?):  
*Yes No Yes No* by Tony Kushner  
*Medea's Children* by Per Lysander and Suzanne Osten, translated by Anne-Charlotte Harvey  
*Remedial English* by Evan Smith
- II. Vol. 8 (12), n.d. (1988?):  
*Troubled Waters* by Brian Kral  
*Takunda* by Charles Smith  
*The Changeling* by Göran Tunström, translated by Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey
- III. Vol. 9 (12), n.d. (1989?):  
*The Nose* by Elizabeth Egloff  
*The Small Poppies* by David Holman  
*Women and Wallace* by Jonathan Marc Sherman
- IV. Vol. 9 (12), n.d. (1990?):  
*Rembrandt Takes a Walk* by Constance Congdon and Mark Strand  
*According to Coyote* by John Kauffman  
*Bocón!* by Lisa Loomer  
*Touch Me* by Ken Prestininzi
- TYA Anthologies of Contemporary Plays (Since 1981 founding of ASSITEJ/USA)  
 1981 Harris, Aurand, and Coleman A. Jennings, eds. *Plays Children Love*. Vol. I. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.  
 1986 Jennings, Coleman A., and Gretta Berghammer, eds. *Theatre for Youth: Twelve Plays with Mature Themes*. Austin: University of Texas Press.  
 1988 Harris, Aurand, and Coleman A. Jennings, eds. *Plays Children Love*. Vol. II. New York: St. Martin's Press.  
 1990 Pearson Davis, Susan, ed. *Wish in One Hand, Spit in the Other: A Collection of Plays* by Suzan Zeder. New Orleans: Anchorage Press.  
 1993 Slight, Craig, ed. *New Plays from A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory*. Vol. I. Lyme, NH: Smith & Kraus.  
 1995 Ellis, Roger, ed. *Plays for Young Audiences: Featuring The Emerald Circle and Other Plays* by Max Bush. Colorado Springs, CO: Meriwether Press.  
 1995 Rosenberg, Joe, ed. *Aplauso! Hispanic Children's Theatre*. Houston, TX: Piñata Books.  
 1996 Sharrar, Jack, and Craig Slight, eds. *Short Plays for Young Actors*. Lyme, NH: Smith & Kraus.
- 1996 Slight, Craig, ed. *New Plays from A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory*. Vol. II. Lyme, NH: Smith & Kraus.  
 1996 Swortzell, Lowell, ed. *The Theatre of Aurand Harris*. New Orleans, LA: Anchorage Press.  
 1997 Smith, Marisa, ed. *Seattle Children's Theatre: Six Plays for Young Audiences*. Lyme, NH: Smith & Kraus.  
 1997 Swortzell, Lowell, ed. *Theatre for Young Audiences: Around the World in 21 Plays*. New York: Applause.  
 1998 Jennings, Coleman A., ed. *Theatre for Young Audiences: 20 Great Plays for Children*. New York: St. Martin's.  
 1998 Smith, Marisa, ed. Timothy Mason, *Ten Plays for Children: from the Repertory of the Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis*. Lyme, NH: Smith & Kraus.  
 1999 Jennings, Coleman A., ed. *Eight Plays for Children: The New Generation Play Project*. Austin: University of Texas Press.  
 1999 Slight, Craig, ed. *New Plays from A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory*. Vol. III. Lyme, NH: Smith & Kraus.  
 1999 Surface, Mary Hall. *Most Valuable Player and Four Other All-Star Plays for Middle and High School Audiences*. Lyme, NH: Smith & Kraus.  
 2000 Frockt, Deborah, ed. *Seattle Children's Theatre: Six Plays for Young Audiences*. Vol. II. Hanover, NH: Smith & Kraus.
- See also Award-Winning Plays from the Playwrights Network of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) (Sandra Fenichel Asher, Editor) 1997 (with updates at [www.aate.com](http://www.aate.com)).

# 1980

## First U.S. Center Membership Directory Published

nations; 2) World Theatre Symposium with 306 delegates from sixteen countries; 3) Internship Program with thirty emerging leaders; and, 4) Festival Publications, including radio/TV coverage. First time that U.S. TYA festival pays performance fees and living expenses for professional groups. As a consequence, ASSITEJ/USA company membership rises 38%.<sup>18</sup> First *Outstanding Plays for Young Audiences: International Bibliography* published (with initial funding from Alcone Foundation).<sup>19</sup>

- 1985 .....First issue of (renamed) *TYA Today* includes first *Marquee* of members' seasons. International children's festivals (Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, 1985; Seattle, 1987) create touring networks with Canada (Vancouver, 1978; Toronto, 1981; Edmonton, 1983; Winnipeg, 1985; Montréal, 1990) and Mexico (1982).<sup>20</sup> First biennial National Children's Theatre Playwriting Competition and Symposium held in Indianapolis (IUPUI/Bonderman/TRT) established by Dorothy Webb.<sup>21</sup> Professional TYA begins to receive coverage in *American Theatre*.<sup>22</sup>
- 1986 .....ASSITEJ/USA awarded first NEA Services to the Field grant to advance *TYA Today*, networking, and regional theatre involvement. By now, twelve international theatres have performed in U.S. and six U.S. member theatres have performed abroad. Over 120 international theatre artists and scholars tour and participate in U.S. conferences, while sixty-one U.S. members participate in seminars around the world.<sup>23</sup> Empire State Institute for the Performing Arts [now New York State Theatre Institute] performs *Raggedy Ann* by William Gibson and Alliance Theatre Company/Atlanta Children's Theatre performs *So Long on Lonely Street* by Sandra Deer on Broadway.<sup>24</sup> *Time* magazine names Young ACT's production of *The Odyssey* by Gregory Falls and Kurt Beattie among the top ten best plays in the nation in 1985.<sup>25</sup>
- 1987 .....ASSITEJ/USA base moves to International Theatre Institute suite in New York City.

### ASSITEJ/USA Presidents

Nat Eek .....	1965-1970
Orlin Corey .....	1971-1974
Patricia B. Snyder .....	1975-1978
Ann M. Shaw .....	1979-1986
Nancy Staub .....	1987-1988
Harold R. Oaks .....	1988-1995
Thomas Pechar .....	1996-1999
Scot Copeland.....	2000-2004
Kim Peter Kovac .....	2004-2008

### ASSITEJ International Officers

Nat Eek .....	2nd Vice-President 1968-1972; President 1972-1975; Honorary President 1984
Ann M. Shaw .....	Co-Vice-President 1981-1987
Harold R. Oaks .....	Treasurer 1993-2002; President 1999-2002
Kim Peter Kovac .....	Executive Committee 2002-

### Executive Secretaries/Treasurers (memberships)

Ann S. Hill .....	1965-1973
Nicholas Wandmacher .....	1973-1977
Ann M. Shaw .....	1978
Helane Rosenberg .....	1979
William Gleason .....	1979-1989
Patricia Angotti .....	1989-1993

### Executive Directors/Assistants

Wendy Perks.....	1983-1986
Francie Frankel, David Pankratz .....	1991-1993
Jolly Sue Baker .....	1993-1995
Jen Marlowe .....	1995-1996
Steve Bianchi .....	1999-2004
Susan Forester .....	2004-

### Honorary Members of ASSITEJ International in Memorium

Charlotte Chorpenning .....	1975
Sara Spencer .....	1977 (Advisor, 1972)

## Sara Spencer, Founder of the U.S. Center of ASSITEJ:

"Indeed the whole idea of this International Children's Theatre Association, in its present form, was more or less breathed into life on my front porch one lazy summer evening in 1963, when Gerald Tyler [visited] me from England ...."

In a January 13, 1964 letter to Jed Davis (CTC Director, 1963–65), Sara Spencer wrote:

"To be quite crass about it, I believe the British sponsors look hopefully to the American delegation for officer material—and if so, we must send a man. Is it remotely possible that you might go yourself?"

Davis did attend—with Agnes Haaga (CTC Director, 1961–63) serving as the official U.S. representative—yet they made Spencer a member of the ASSITEJ Executive Committee:

"It fell to me, then, quaking in my orthopedic shoes, to represent the United States in actually bringing this organization into being."

As the U.S. representative at the constitutional meeting in Venice, Sara Spencer recalled:

"... I went with two determinations: 1) to eliminate a proposed clause excluding child actor companies; and, 2) to see that creative drama was included in the total concept. I succeeded in both ... But I paid a price for eliminating the exclusion clause. I had to accept... separate categories of membership—professionals get two votes per country, and amateurs [i.e., child actor and university companies] one. ... But in the end, my friends, I came to the conclusion that they were right. ...

[W]hy does our children's theatre not have more professional staffs, or full professional companies?"

After this meeting, she realized that:

"...the first order of business for the children's theatre in America, was to develop a strong professional movement."

## Ann Hill, Past Executive Secretary/Treasurer, ASSITEJ/USA:

**1964:** "At the first meeting to discuss the forming of ASSITEJ, I spoke about my theatre, the Nashville Children's Theatre, in which children performed. The Europeans thought that having children perform was dreadful exploitation, and the French delegate, who later became head of ASSITEJ, said to one of the Americans that she'd like to kill me."

**1972:** "Before going to Albany, the Congress met in Montréal. The Russians arrived with train cars full of equipment and hundreds of people. They performed in a huge theatre at the world's fair site. A company from Bucharest, Romania was only thirteen people with everything in their duffle bags. They played their folklorish fairytale in a modest theatre and it was fabulous in its simplicity. The audience, except for the Russians who sat unresponsive, threw flowers on the stage and the performers threw the flowers back to the audience. For what seemed like thirty minutes, the flowers flew in celebration."

# 1995

## First One Theatre World Symposium held in Seattle

- The Best Available* play project begins (1987–88, 1990–91). TCG begins to publish TYA plays in *Plays in Process*. After CTAA's parent organization, American Theatre Association, disbands in 1986, its members reorganize as the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE).
- 1988 ..... Joint conference of ASSITEJ/USA and TCG (seventh biennial) held. John Kauffman (Honolulu Theatre for Youth) performs *According to Coyote*. Peter Brosius (Improvisational Theatre Project) receives Alan Schneider Directing Award. New Generation Play Project idea hatched to commission playwrights of "adult" theatre to write for TYA.<sup>26</sup> First issue of (quarterly) *International Hot Line*, Harold R. Oaks, Editor. Sundance Children's Theatre Playwright's Lab begins to develop TYA plays.<sup>27</sup>
- 1989 ..... First (separately published) Membership Directory, maintained by THEatre Service. First (separately published) *Marquee*. International Theatre Institute (ITI) of the United States joins ASSITEJ/USA.
- 1991 ..... First biennial New Visions/New Voices New Play Development Festival established by Kim Peter Kovac, Deirdre Kelly Lavrakas, and Carole Sullivan at The Kennedy Center.<sup>28</sup> New Play Development Program created by Suzan Zeder, first Endowed Chair in Theatre for Youth/Playwriting at University of Texas at Austin.<sup>29</sup>
- 1992 ..... *Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep becomes first TYA play published in *American Theatre*. Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest funds New Works for Young Audiences Program to support TYA playwrights.
- 1993 ..... Board moves base to Seattle Children's Theatre.<sup>30</sup>
- 1994 ..... Roundtable on Programming for Young and Family Audiences at tenth biennial TCG meeting discusses ways of reaching teens and the "audience barrier" of teachers and parents.<sup>31</sup>
- 1995 ..... First One Theatre World Symposium and thirtieth anniversary of ASSITEJ International cosponsored by Seattle International Children's Theatre Festival and Seattle Children's Theatre (with

# 1997

## ASSITEJ/USA Observerships begin, now called Ann Shaw Fellowships

grants from Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and NEA). Over 600 delegates from fifteen countries attend opening celebration, and 300 participants, including TCG and AATE members, attend Symposium and New Generation Playwrights Forum.<sup>32</sup> U.S. membership approves *White Paper* with redefined mission "dedicated to the promotion and development of professional theatre concerned with the unique perspectives of young people."<sup>33</sup>

ASSITEJ/USA archives move to ASU Child Drama Collection. New Victory Theatre for young audiences opens on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in New York City.<sup>34</sup>

First representative from a TYA theatre, Linda Hartzell (Seattle Children's Theatre), joins TCG Board.

1996 .....Website ([www.assitej-usa.org](http://www.assitej-usa.org)) and email (USASSITEJ@aol.com) launched.

1997 .....Second One Theatre World Symposium held in conjunction with Philadelphia International Children's Festival.<sup>35</sup> ASSITEJ/USA Observerships, modeled after TCG, begin [now Ann Shaw Fellowships].<sup>36</sup>

First time that TCG awards National Theatre Artist Residency Program Grants (funded by Pew Charitable Trusts) for TYA projects. Grants awarded to members James Still and Indiana Repertory Theatre, Kari Margolis and Children's Theatre Company (Minneapolis), and Graham Whitehead and Childsplay (Tempe).

New York University, Program in Educational Theatre, begins New Plays for Young Audiences at The Provincetown Playhouse, a month-long development program for new plays, founded by Lowell Swartzell.

First time that member company, Stage One, performs at New Victory Theatre, New York City.

1999 .....Board moves base back to Nashville Children's Theatre. TCG becomes U.S. Center of ITI to consolidate cultural exchanges.

2000 .....New Visions 2000: One Theatre World Festival and Symposium, in partnership with New Visions/New Voices at

### Barbara McIntyre, U.S. Committee Member at First ASSITEJ International Congress (1966):

**1964:** "I gave a speech about how we did things in the U.S., focusing on the difference between creative dramatics and children's theatre. The Russians, through their translator, responded, "Why do we have to listen to this stuff? It sounds just like a teachers' meeting!" At the end of the meeting, Gerald Tyler organized a small party away from the Institute (at a place where wine could be served). The Russians began to try to communicate and, by the end of the party, had expressed their interest in a "new" idea—not just performing for children but having discussions with the children after the performance."

### Nat Eek, Past President, ASSITEJ/USA:

**1968:** "When Patricia Snyder presented the State University of New York at Albany's invitation to hold the 1972 World Congress on their campus, the U.S. Center committee burst into laughter. Mrs. Snyder was quite upset that we were treating this generous offer in such a cavalier fashion until it was explained that the laughter was a result of immense relief. By a unanimous vote the remarkable invitation was accepted."

**1975:** "My son, Konrad, and I awoke at two A.M. in our hotel on Karl Marx Strasse to the sounds of tanks, armored vehicles, and heavy motors on the move. At first wondering how we would get out of East Berlin if a war had been declared, we were relieved to find out that it was just the East German army returning from spring maneuvers."

### Orlin Corey, Past President, ASSITEJ/USA:

**1972:** "The 1972 Congress had backing from New York's Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Senator Jacob Javits but the most impressive political support came just as Sara Spencer was about to deliver her keynote address when a congratulatory telegram arrived from President Nixon. No head of state had officially welcomed ASSITEJ before—or since. Foreign guests were so impressed they wanted copies to take back home."

**1972:** "All 800–900 people ate together in the university's great dining hall in Albany. This may have been the largest gathering of children's theatre people ever and it happened three times a day for a week."

**1972:** "The Soviet Union's Natalia Satz, always forceful in expressing her opinions, launched one of her most violent attacks on John Donahue's brilliant *Hang onto Your Head*. In her striking combination of Russian, English, and French, Satz accused it of being unfit for children, for it portrayed a child choosing art over her parents."

**1972:** "On the last day of the Congress, the actors of the wonderful Romanian company disappeared. They had defected, leaving only their director/leading actor to return home alone."

**Ann M. Shaw, Past President, ASSITEJ/USA:**

**1984:** "I was 'held hostage' in Natalia Satz' office of the State Musical Theatre for Children where leading representatives from the Soviet Ministry of Culture and the Ministry for Foreign Exchange tried to persuade me to decline if any country nominated me for President of ASSITEJ at the elections to be held the following day at the Moscow Art Theatre. They held me for hours, not returning me to my hotel until after 1:30 A.M. on Election Day!"

**Ann M. Shaw and Nat Eek, Past Presidents, ASSITEJ/USA:**

**1983:** "At the ASSITEJ/USA Wingspread Conference Hugh Southern, Deputy Director of the NEA, described the heated discussions as 'one of the most spirited, honest debates I've heard in the theatre world.' It was agreed that too much of the theatre we offered young audiences was substandard, often embarrassing. Greg Falls, Artistic Director of ACT, Seattle shouted, 'We must get theatre for young audiences out of the station wagon and into the theatre!' Someone suggested people producing substandard theatre for children should either 'shape up or shut down.' At which point Suzan Zeder suggested, 'How do we bring this about? Should someone just stand up and say, "OK, all of you who are doing shit, stand up and leave the room."' We all laughed. Complaints of being mistreated by people in the adult theatre were frequent. Finally Martha Coigney, Director of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), threw down the knitting she had attacked with increasing fervor and said, 'My advice to you children's theatre people is, "GET OUT OF YOUR GHETTOS! Stop feeling sorry for yourselves! Devise a plan and pursue it."' We did!"

**1984:** "Jim Henson agreed to introduce the Classical Puppets of Sicily for a fair pass and dormitory lodging and food for himself and his child. The puppet plaza was packed with youngsters and oldsters more eager to see Jim than to enjoy the group from Sicily. Shouts for 'Kermit' and 'Miss Piggy' greeted him. Somehow he managed to enchant them and transform them into an attentive audience."

**1984:** "The capstone of the Symposium was Swedish Playwright Suzanne Osten's description of her gripping play, *Hitler's Childhood*, and the remarkable soliloquy from that play performed by Etienne Glaser, a famous Swedish director/actor who, because there was no stage available, leapt onto a high laboratory table and brought the abused/disturbed child Hitler to life before our eyes."

**1993:** "At the Cuba Congress one evening we attended a theatrical performance at the National Theater, and upon emerging from the performance onto La Plaza de la Revolución, we found no bus, no taxi, no side-walks, only a few streetlights, and our hotel several miles away. The twelve of us started walking. When a Red Cross ambulance drove by, in desperation Flora Atkin signaled it to stop. Eek explained our plight in minimal Spanish, promising a major donation to the Cuban Red Cross. The driver reluctantly agreed to help. Two of us rode in front, and the rest stood among the tires on the floor in the back of the van holding onto whatever provided a grip. Our driver deposited us a few blocks from our hotel to avoid being seen transporting illegal merchandise, and we gave our driver the money. Whether the Cuban Red Cross ever saw it or not is another story."

# 2004

**ASSITEJ/USA Board  
revises the  
mission statement:  
The national service organization  
promoting the power of professional  
theatre for young audiences through  
excellence, collaboration, and  
innovation across cultural and  
international boundaries**

The Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. (with additional funding from Children's Theatre Foundation), celebrates TYA in U.S.A.—a millennium event. National festival includes seven productions (out of seventy applicants), six staged readings, and playwrights' slam. Keynote by Ben Cameron (TCG) affirms professional connections with culturally diverse, regional theatres. As a consequence, ASSITEJ/USA membership rises 20%.<sup>37</sup>

*TYA Today* re-envisioned by Laurie Brooks, Editor.

2003 .....Fourth One Theatre World held with Philadelphia International Children's Festival. Membership rejects Board's proposal to change organizational name to TYA/USA in favor of maintaining ASSITEJ/USA. The next generation of emerging professionals creates their vision for the future.<sup>38</sup> First TYA theatre wins Regional Theatre Tony Award, Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis.<sup>39</sup>

2004 .....Board revises mission statement: "The national service organization promoting the power of professional theatre for young audiences through excellence, collaboration, and innovation across cultural and international boundaries." Emerging professionals launch *NEXT* online. NEA awards first grant solely for *TYA Today* to ensure ongoing professional staff.

*Time* magazine spotlights TYA: "Setting a New Stage for Kids," by Richard Zoglin.<sup>40</sup>

Board leads international fundraising campaign to send Arabic-language books to Iraqi children.

Fifteenth Congress and fortieth anniversary of ASSITEJ International hosted by ASSITEJ Canada and International Festival Les Coups de Théâtre in Montréal, Québec—first time on North American continent since 1972. ■

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