

# Across the

*Jennifer Nicholls reflects on the performances and workshops of the 14th ASSITEJ Congress and Performing Arts Festival.*

Take nine hundred people, thirty productions, ten workshops, and various other conference accoutrements, put them all in Seoul for nine days and you have a stimulating recipe for the 14th ASSITEJ Congress and Performing Arts Festival. This was an important congress in that it was the first to be held in Asia and the first of the new millennium. And as South Korea already boasts more than a hundred theatre companies that specialise in young people's theatre, it seems an appropriate choice to host this triennial event.

The congress was characterised by significant divisions, in age (average age of delegate, 55; average age of performer, 25), in quality of performance, in gender equity and the great divides of distance and culture that separate East from West. For many delegates it was their first trip to an Asian country and the sights, smells, tastes and unending warmth and hospitality extended to visitors by the people of Seoul provided a wonderful context for this exciting event.

An impressive opening ceremony was staged at Seoul's National Theatre. Sixty-five young people graced the main stage in an interesting juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary performance, mixing Korean court music and dance, traditional percussion and hip hop. Outgoing ASSITEJ President Harold Oaks provided a warm welcome to delegates, as did Kim Woo Ok, organiser and Artistic Director of the 2002 Congress.

It was impossible to attend everything on offer at ASSITEJ but I hope the following overview gives a taste of the smorgasbord of theatrical offerings, workshops, provocations and discussions.

One of the highlights of the Festival was the theatrically rewarding performance of 'Hamlet', performed by the Danish Small Touring Theatre Company. Two actors and two double-bass players presented a contemporary interpretation using excerpts from the text, storytelling, musical motifs and a small selection of props and costumes as powerful symbols and metaphors. Rarely have I found a re-working of a Shakespearean text so dignified and engaging. The musicians both accompanied

the action and at times, doubled as props and sets. The two actors played all roles – none more poignant than Morten Neilson's portrayal of Ophelia with a simple orange cloth draped over his arm. Later with Ophelia's death the cloth was symbolically draped over a double-bass, which was extended horizontally into the air and moved as if part of a funeral procession. Judging by international interest I suspect this small touring company will be doing business from one end of the planet to the other for a number of years.

Another Scandinavian production, Sweden's 'It Feels Like Mad' from Regionteatern Blekinge Kronoberg, also stood out. A gentle piece of early childhood theatre, it's the story of Nils and the Old Man, who has a double bass that conceals many surprises and who speaks in Swedish rhymes and jingles. The Korean children adored this show, with the Swedish becoming like a musical 'made-up' language to them.

'Tai-Yo', from Belgium's Théâtre de L'E.V.N.I. was an intriguing solo performance by actor Fuijo Ishimaru. With no words spoken, the actor relied on his impressive skills in mime and butoh to 'retrace the history of the world and men who populate and exploit'. Attached by a wire, the actor clambered over a large hemisphere that filled the performing space. Ingeniously he could glide, swing and trapeze over and around the earth-like structure as he invented and nurtured, first a garden, later machinery, and finally explosives. It was indeed an unusual performance – though not necessarily shedding any new light on man's quest for knowledge, and his inherent destructive nature.

Also drawing on traditional notions of performance but far more satisfying was 'Tiger Hunt in Mt Kumgang', presented by Operetta Theatre Tomoshihi from Japan. Incorporating elements of storytelling, masks, puppetry, music, dance and text, the play effortlessly moved from one theatrical form to the next, enchanting the audience who didn't seem to mind that it was in Japanese. A highlight was a particularly impressive bunraku tiger puppet that practically filled the entire stage of the small proscenium theatre.



'The Journey to Dragon King's Palace' (National Changguk Company – Korea)

For the light hearted and whimsically inclined there was 'Daily' from Spain and 'Chu-ha-ha' from the Samara Youth Theatre in Russia. The former was a production relying on mime, clowning and gibberish to explore an episodic parody of the daily encounters and routines of people and objects. At times verging on slapstick, the four actors romped their way through the traumas of eating breakfast with a toddler to the trials of getting to work on time. The latter production also relied on traditional clowning, circus and song to dramatise a number of stories by Russian writer K. Chukovsky, including 'The Buzz Fly Tale' and 'The Phone Tale'. The lack of any translation or simple synopsis made it extremely difficult to understand what little plot there appeared to be in the Russian performance. However, the axiom of colour and movement in children's entertainment appeared to work well. The mainly Korean family audiences seemed quite happy to dispense with meaning and clap along with the singing and dancing.

The issue of whether to provide any form of translation for an international audience is a vexed one. On one level it is probably sensible to bring productions that are not heavily text based, or for Festival organisers to specify a preference for a particular language. Another alternative would be to encourage some form of translation through the use of technology, which some companies chose to utilise.

Having said that, the turgid production 'A 17 Year Old's Music Box', by Japan's Seinen Gekijo youth theatre company, may well have been disadvantaged by the laborious English text that was projected on screens on either side of the stage. Centred on a young girl with cerebral palsy, the play dealt with issues of abortion, disabilities and friendship. Unfortunately I found the play

quite stereotypical. 'Teasing 17 year olds girls', 'struggling single mothers', 'fathers left out of the picture' all contributed to a long and drawn out drama made a little absurd by teenage swearing appearing in a delayed text after the action.

'The Hat Seller', performed by Sri Lanka's Lanka Children's and

hammered the message that 'true happiness is only found through hard work'. A cross between a Busby Berkeley production, Andrew Lloyd Webber and a touch of Gilbert and Sullivan, it was spectacularly awful. It was also grating that despite the all-female cast, the central protagonist was always referred to as 'he' and everyone else as 'his brothers'.

The enchanting production of 'The Brave Tin Soldier', by Das Puppentheatre am Meiningen Theatre

created a tightly focused production that was both stylish and moving.

One of the strongest female performers I witnessed was only thirteen years old, but she played a cunning rabbit in the impressive production of 'The Journey to Dragon King's Palace' by the National Changguk Company. Truly a wonderful, epic production that successfully mixed adult and child actors in a completely professional production that was both beautiful to listen to and visually satisfying.

There were twelve productions on offer from Korea. 'The Tale of Haruk', by Performance Group Tuida, was based on a traditional Korean myth. Recent graduates of the Korean National University of the Arts devised the play using recycled materials to build the sets, props and puppets. This play won Best Production at the recent 2002 Seoul Children's Theatre Awards.

Roger Rynd from Australia's Rem Theatre directed 'Children of the Stepping Stones' for Korea's Sadari Theatre. This was a highly theatrical production drawing on elements of technology, music and dance to tell the tale of hostile villagers separated by a river, and the choices they make when the God of River, Ha-Baek provides firstly a bridge and later the stepping stones so they are able to cross the water. Fellow Australian Tony Lewis composed the music, using varied textural and melodic motifs to represent the opposing villages. This was also one of the few productions to integrate live music within the narrative, and have the musicians and their instruments woven into the set. The production was originally created in 1997, and this restaged production, which toured throughout Korea in the first half of 2002, was specially mounted again for the Festival.

Korea's answer to London's long running West End musicals was 'Cookin', by PMC Productions. This was primarily a non-verbal performance highlighted by the use of rhythm, particularly drumming, to create a number of scenarios surrounding cooking and food preparation. Kitchen utensils, pots, pans, brooms, knives and chopping boards were played upon with relentless enthusiasm. With little attention to dramatic structure the show switches madly from tepid storylines of preparing wedding banquets to invited audience members preparing dumplings on a treadmill. 'Cookin' has been playing to sell-out houses in Seoul for the past five years, and a number of producers scouting for shows were busy booking 'Cookin'.

Image: 'It Feels Like Mad' (Regionteatern Blekinge Kronoberg - Sweden)

Youth Theatre Organisation, was a good example of a play whose simple storyline was easily followed without the need for dialogue. In keeping with traditional elements of performance, Ravibandu Vidyapathi treated the audience to an opening ceremonial dance - a wonderful introduction to traditional dance in Sri Lanka. On talking to the performers later it was revealed that the play is often performed outside in Sri Lanka, making use of the natural environment to tell the tale of the peddler who has all his hats stolen by a bunch of mischievous monkeys. The relatively large cast was wonderful in their portrayal of monkeys, conveying detailed observations of these animals through gesture and acrobatics, and the children in the audience responded well. However, the small black box theatre space in Seoul probably did not do it justice, nor did the tired full-bodied leotard suits for the monkeys.

Despite enjoying such diverse productions, I was sometimes left with an impression of tired ideas with little real engagement with technology (one of the criteria for Festival selection). I was also concerned with issues of gender equity both within the administration of ASSITEJ (as evidenced by the number of male speakers in various forums and elected committee members) and in the roles women had in performance. Of the seventeen shows I saw, only one had a woman in a role of leadership and only one in a role of significant decision-making.

The exception to this was a highly questionable production from China titled 'The Happy Bird'. Presented by the Hangzhou Yue Opera Troupe, with a cast of twenty-five young women, this production

from Germany, transported the audience literally out of their seats and into an enormous parachute-like bubble, which became an all-encompassing shadow puppet theatre. Puppets were sometimes small figurines danced across the parachute wall by the narrator, who also doubled occasionally as the tin soldier. At other times, a row of paper cut-out soldiers was marched effortlessly across the roof, tripling in size with every step. Disappointing, however, was the brief appearance of the beautiful ballerina, the object of the tin soldier's affections. In complete ballet tutu and ballet pointes, the real actress entered the bubble, pirouetted from one side to the other and exited, only appearing again for a bow!

The Argentinian production of 'The Steadfast Tin Soldier' was a striking contrast to the German production of the same Hans Christian Anderson story, and featured superlative work by 'puppet player' Omar Alvarez. In this staging, the story is narrated in a child's 19th century bedroom. Using table puppets, shadow theatre, transparencies and lighting, Alvarez



At the other end of the artistic spectrum from Korean companies, was the highly derivative and uninspiring 'Being 1 & 2' performed by the Seoul Ballet Theatre. The impressive set and lighting design was rather wasted on this rock ballet, which resembled a high school Rock Eisteddfod entry in the '80s. According to the program, 'the dark temptation of violence and prostitution and drugs...is expressed through fierce and violent dance on stage'. Twenty-one dancers wearing everything from cut-off denim jeans, leather jackets and bulging kneepads performed tired dance routines in unison, while an American voice-over urged everyone to seek out their own individuality. A touch ironic!

Australia's contribution to the Festival was 'The Cave', by Buzz Dance Theatre from Western Australia. Four dancers took us on an adventure in and around 'the cave'. At times they appeared as drops of ice or stalactites. At others, they were caving adventurers or snot emitted from a Giant's sneeze! Although it was great to see a dance company represented at ASSITEJ, the production seemed underdeveloped. Uninspiring costumes – appliquéd singlet tops and cotton pants – and an odd sequence involving a fairy princess fainting at the sight of a cave monster weakened what might have been an imaginative and scary journey into the unknown. Music by Perth composer David Pye was a highlight, particularly an evocative duet for double-bass and cello. A strange filmscape in the last third of the performance did not appear

workshop conducted by Suzanne Osten, Artistic Director of Ungar Klara, the Stockholm City Theatre and recipient of the ASSITEJ Honorary President's Award 2002, and 'Creating Children's Play with Traditional Games', conducted by Koguma Yumiko, who appeared in 'Toppinshan' at the 2000 Out Of The Box Festival in Brisbane.

I attended a series of workshops by British drama educator Cecily O'Neil, whose work on Process Drama has been widely adopted by drama teachers across Australia. This was certainly a highlight for local Korean drama teachers attending ASSITEJ. Unfortunately, I found the workshop's pretext disappointing and did nothing to quell my nagging dissatisfaction with gender equity issues throughout the Congress. Cecily played the 'King' and the primarily female workshop participants played the role of disgruntled villagers bargaining with the 'King' for lower taxes in return for their first-born 'son' to fight in the 'King's' army.

Other popular events at the Congress were the Saranbang or Critics' nightly forum, and the Symposium with its theme, 'Technology for Children's Theatre, Challenge or Risk'. I was unable to attend this session but, as I saw little evidence of theatre companies seeking to integrate technology in innovative and meaningful ways into performance, I wonder if it might have ended up in the 'risk' category.



'Hamlet' (Det Lille Teatre - Denmark)

Criticisms of the Congress and Festival on the whole were generally minor and mostly forgiven. The logistics of getting such large numbers of delegates from performances to workshops to forums to parties was obviously a challenge for conference organisers. Criticisms relating to lack of adequate information being sent out to delegates beforehand was common, mainly because there was so little flexibility in changing tickets once we arrived. Although the cost was probably prohibitive, it was unrealistic, I feel, to ask delegates to choose their program before arrival without any indication of theatre locations, distances between them and some basic information regarding public transport.

However, the army of conference volunteers worked tirelessly throughout the congress to try and accommodate everyone's needs. I was surprised that in a city of well over ten million people I could so easily spot a volunteer in a familiar green shirt in dozens of places away from the Congress hub.

So across the great divide, East meets West, and the ageing European delegate meets the youthful exuberance of Korean artists, teachers and volunteers. Women lose out a bit, under-represented in everything from theatrical protagonist, workshop subject material, to committee membership. However, the opportunity to observe each other's work and participate in cultural exchange and shared dialogue cannot be overstated. It is only through these international events that our voices and stories are heard – and maybe that great divide will begin to close.

JENNIFER NICHOLLS

'The Happy Bird' (Hangzhou Yue Opera Troupe - China)



to fulfil any theatrical objective other than adding a piece of multimedia technology at the eleventh hour. However, the final audience participation sequence where children were invited to be a stalagmite was a hit with the young audiences.

Registration for ASSITEJ included tickets to three workshop sessions. These were stimulating and varied. I heard good feedback on the 'Childhood and Theatre'

# INVESTING IN CULTURE

*Many Lowdown readers were fascinated by Roger Rynd's new Korean venture, featured in the June issue. While in Korea Jennifer Nicholls managed to interview Park Myung Shin, the man backing LATT – a successful businessman with a vision for children and theatre.*

During the ASSITEJ Congress in Seoul I met with Mr. Park Myung Shin, President of Unibooks, a company which specialises in English language learning programs in South Korea. Mr. Park is presently financing LATT Children's Theatre, a new theatre company in Seoul, headed by REM Theatre's Roger Rynd from Australia. The principal objective behind this multi-million dollar venture is to introduce and expose children to English language through theatre. But, as I discovered during our interview, Mr. Park's vision for children in South Korea goes well beyond merely learning a second language.

More than 150,000 Korean families already subscribe to Unibooks' language programs. These programs work to counteract the English language learning that is typically found in Korea's education system. Mr. Park describes this as relying too much on memorising, rote learning and rules of grammar. 'It's like learning to walk by analysing it', he says. Mr. Park believes that many children are miserable as they struggle to learn English in an environment that often provides no context for language learning. LATT will work towards providing a theatrical context in which young children's imaginations can be ignited, along with their curiosity to explore the English language. 'We all learnt the process of crawling and walking by doing it', says Mr. Park, 'not by sitting around and discussing it'. He continues, 'I believe that children need to be engaged and inspired to learn and I believe that drama and theatre hold a key to learning.'

Recognising drama as a great tool for learning, and concerned that Korean children were having little opportunity to explore their own creativity, intellect and imagination, Mr. Park decided to create LATT as a natural extension to his successful English Language programs.

The cynic in me sought the capital motivation behind this venture ('See the play and then buy the book'). But as I talked with him I realised that this was not the intention at all. Mr. Park is merely investing in what he refers to as 'the cultural future of South Korea'. As such, LATT is an innovation, an exciting experiment to give

children a joyful experience in the arts, one that hopefully will be remembered for a long time and one that will, in his words, 'make them happy'.

Mr. Park comes across as a visionary. 'Many Korean people abandon learning. They abandon their inner training and thoughts', says Mr. Park. This extraordinary individual is committed to the aesthetic development of young children with such passion that he would make most arts educators weep for joy. His dedication to motivate and encourage children in the pursuit of learning – all learning well beyond English language learning – was truly inspiring.

As well as mounting at least three productions for LATT in its first year, Rynd has also been given the 'go ahead' for a youth theatre arm which commences in September. He is also redeveloping language vacation camps for primary children. These will focus on introducing drama and theatre as a learning tool and as a forum for cultural exchange.

In keeping with the aims of the project Rynd has employed English native speakers and is working with six actors from around Australia on the first production, 'The Little Dragon'. This opened in Seoul in the company's brand new 375-seat theatre in early September. The company also includes two local performers, understudies

and at least 20 technical artists. Musician Peter Winkler, also from Australia, is working with Korean musicians to create original music for the production.

Rynd is also keen to see an emerging artists' program and an internship program established within the company. He and Mr. Park share a vision for encouraging young Korean artists to work in a positive and happy environment that is both artistically challenging and spiritually rewarding. He is also committed to cultural exchange and providing ongoing opportunities for Australian performers to join the company in Seoul.

A vision of this stature is much needed in Australia. After returning from ASSITEJ, watching theatre companies from Korea and hearing of the wonderful plans for LATT Children's Theatre, I can't help thinking that here is a country that is generally moving forward and I am living in a country that is, at best, hovering.

I wish Mr. Park, Roger Rynd and the company all the best for a long and fruitful association. The children of South Korea will definitely be all the richer for this exciting creative and educational initiative.

JENNIFER NICHOLLS

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***Lowdown Editor Tony Mack talks to the Artistic Director of Buzz Dance Theatre, Carol Wellman, about performing at the 14th ASSITEJ World Congress and Festival in Seoul.***

*TM: How did Buzz come to be selected for the Festival in Seoul?*

CW: Prior to my appointment as Artistic Director for 2002, Paige Gordon (currently on a one-year sabbatical from the company) had already established a very good professional rapport with Kim van der Boon, former Vice President of ASSITEJ International and Director of Danstheater Arena in Amsterdam. Courtesy of a Churchill Fellowship for 2000, Paige chose to research and spend time with Danstheater Arena, a company with a similar philosophy to Buzz Dance Theatre. This visit was reciprocated the following year when Kim came to Perth to choreograph a work from her company repertoire on Buzz Dance Theatre.

For many years Kim van der Boon has been a strong and consistent advocate for dance. Her conviction that dance is essential to the artistic development of children and young people, enabled the artform to be included for the very first time in the 2002 ASSITEJ International and Performing Arts Festival. Her knowledge of Buzz Dance Theatre meant that she was in a position to confidently make a positive recommendation on our behalf when our application to perform in Seoul was being considered. We became aware of the invitation to participate in the Festival when Kim van der Boon emailed us to inform us of our inclusion on the list of participants on the ASSITEJ web site. What a surprise, a delightful surprise!

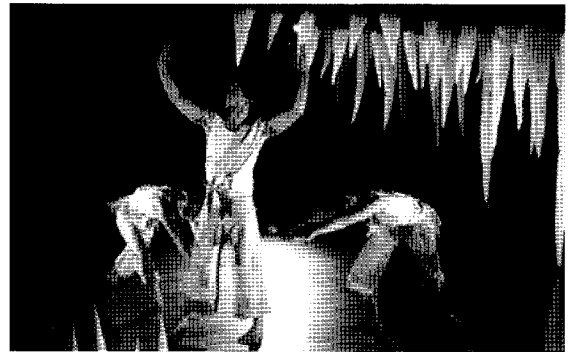
*TM: Did you know much about ASSITEJ before Korea?*

CW: Personally I was not aware of ASSITEJ prior to arriving at Buzz but I suspect that Paige and the Company were aware of the organisation.

*TM: What kind of obstacles did you encounter in preparing to get there?*

CW: Well...the first question for any company invited to perform outside of its home base is, 'How do we afford to go?' In our case, correspondence with the Director of the ASSITEJ Festival revealed that they, as the host organisation, were in a position to provide accommodation, living away expenses, the venue and ground transport. This was fantastic but the problem with regard to airfares and additional costs such as freight and excess luggage still had to be solved. An application was made to a local arts agency but was unsuccessful so the quest then was to seek other alternatives. This was the eleventh hour and time was of the essence. Meanwhile, we had already scheduled our season of work here in Perth for this same period and there was the pressing issue of publicity in terms of promoting these performances. Reluctantly, we decided not to go to Korea, a sensible and considered decision. Then there was the difficult task of advising the Festival organisers of our decision. The response from the Director of the Festival was that pulling out of the Festival was not an option! Tickets had been sold and surely a solution to this problem could be found. We made a hurried submission to the Australia – Korea Foundation and to the Australia Council through Youth Performing Arts Australia. Both

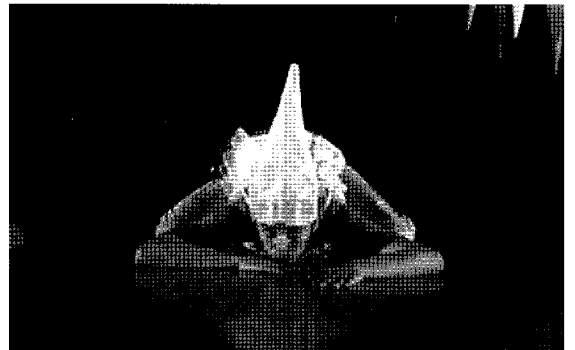
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applications were successful and provided the support for our attendance.

The next question was 'How do we pack up our set to make it as portable as possible?' Eventually we managed to fit the entire set, costumes and extras into two suitcases. I felt like a travelling vaudeville act from yesteryear! Fortunately the simple design and requirements of our set allowed the Korean technical team to provide us with the extra equipment, which was relatively simple to access. This allowed us to complete our technical requirements and get the show up and happening.

Airline tickets, passports and promotional material were gathered together at extremely short notice and two



weeks later, we departed the shores of Perth for South Korea. An amazing team effort and commitment from everyone.

*TM: And what about when you arrived in Korea? How difficult was it to stage your show in such a short time in a non-English speaking country – and in such a large city?*

CW: The 'bump in' process went remarkably well. Fortunately the head technician, Mr. Lee, could communicate well in English, which helped the process enormously. Many of the technical staff working at the Dongnang Arts Center Theatre were lecturers in various



theatrical departments at the University and most of the helpers were their students. Once Ean, our production manager, had solved the problem of stabilising the set by securing it to a portable ballet barre, nailed the trap doors in the floor to close the 5-mm gaps and sourced a tarket from the University Dance Department, we were well on the way to getting the show up and running in plenty of time. Everyone went out of their way to provide us with whatever we needed. With a large circular thrust stage in front of the proscenium, the dancers and I needed to make a few adjustments to the spacing of the work. The audience area circled the thrust so sightlines also needed consideration. With relatively few technical hiccups – one in particular left the dancers hanging upside down for rather too long – the show was running smoothly by the second performance.

The temperature in Seoul at this time of year (summer in July) was very warm and humid. The wet season had begun and we welcomed the rain as it washed a layer of city grime from our skin and our surroundings. Company class took place upstairs in an old dance studio with the windows wide open and views of the hillsides nearby. Seoul is nestled amongst the mountains with a tropical lush terrain. It doesn't take long to get out of the bustle of the city centre to witness some greenery and space. The warm weather was conducive to warming up and staying warm for our performances, contrasting greatly to the bone-chilling season we had just left in Australia. Fortunately, the organisers had accommodated us in a hotel only one-train stop from the venue. We often found that walking to and from the venue was a pleasant way both to unwind after a show and to also experience 'the scene' locally. Jumping in a taxi was definitely the longest way to get to any destination. Not only that, but the ride was akin to being on the rollercoaster at Luna Park – an adrenalin rush! The underground system is efficient and, as long as you get on the right side of the platform, you end up where you want to go!

*TM: What was the reaction from the Korean kids?*

CW: The majority of the audiences were Korean children between the ages of 4 and 12 years old, accompanied by their parents and guardians. After a short preparatory announcement in Korean, the performance area blacked out, leaving the fluorescent ultraviolet lights to create the illusion of glowing white stalactites hanging in midair. The children were able to sit quietly with great concentration throughout the entire show. This was a surprise as we had experienced a shorter concentration span in general from children in Australia. I suspect that traditional Korean theatre lasts a lot longer and the children are accustomed to watching over longer periods of time, but also the sights and sound they were

experiencing may have been new and unusual. Perhaps the novelty of something new kept them entranced or maybe it was that the dance was communicating something special to them.

Even though a small description of the work was translated in the program, I decided to challenge Anna, our interpreter, by asking her to translate one section of the performance over the microphone from the sound box. When the dancers asked for volunteers to dance with them on stage the majority of children, in three of the four performances, flooded onto the stage once they had understood the request. The dancers were invigorated by both the children's enthusiasm and their parents' delighted applause. (What is the age-old saying? Never work with children and animals on stage!)

At the conclusion of the first performance, the children again ran onto the stage to explore the magic of the performance space. The theatre staff announced at the beginning of subsequent performances that this was not to happen. I thought that was a shame. I would have liked the performance to be something they could see, hear, feel and touch – gently – but we were thrilled with their response. During the following days while we were out and about, a few parents approached the dancers to thank them for the performance.

*TM: Did you get to see much work from other companies?*

CW: The opportunity to make contact with artists and organisers of performances from other countries was invaluable. It was so apparent that the field of performance for children and young people is a specialised area of practice. Over 35 countries were represented at the Congress and over 12 countries presented work for us to witness at this Festival. This was a wonderful opportunity to speak to, exchange information and share ideas with so many people from different backgrounds. I was impressed with the constant efforts of our Australian colleagues, and indeed the Buzz Company members, to engage with others during the short time we had in Seoul. In order to keep the connections made in Seoul there has been a constant stream of emails since our return to Australia.

As with all festivals, there is so much to see and so little time to digest it all. Difficult choices had to be made to cover as much territory as possible. The performances we did witness amongst the six members of our touring party gave us a good indication of the commitment and attention being paid to the importance of producing high calibre work for young people around the world.



*TM: Looking back on the experience, are there any tips for other small to medium sized companies looking to embark on an overseas tour?*

CW: Seize the Day!

Open your minds and hearts to the notion that 'anything can, and probably will, happen' when performing overseas. Find out as much as you can about the environment you are going into and let the rest unfold. You can only do so much to prepare and the rest will fall into place and bring with it the gift of a new experience. Your creative problem solving skills will be honed to a fine art! Everyone's experience will be unique.

*TM: Any final thoughts from you?*

CW: Experiencing the daily life, sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the city of Seoul was challenging and exciting. The people of this Korean city and the blend of old and new influences in their society have opened my eyes and mind to a different way of life. I suspect this experience has promoted change for myself and the other members of the Buzz touring party.

I felt proud to be a part of a genre of performing arts that obviously has so much importance around the globe. It was reassuring to realise the strength of the ASSITEJ organisation and the number of people worldwide who have performing arts for children and young people as their primary focus.

●  
**TONY MACK**