

## **IFTR ExCom Meetings in Accra, 23 and 28 July 2023**

### **23 July 2023**

**Elaine Aston (the outgoing President)** reflected on:

- her experience of the pandemic and its aftermath, suggesting possibilities for different appropriate models of presentations, and distributed participation from different parts of the world in the IFTR conferences.
- as the outgoing president, she thanked everyone who was in service over the period of her presidency.

**Milena Grass Kleiner (Vice President - Publications)** reported on:

- the new concept for the series “Themes in Theatre” (Brill) to encourage book proposals from the membership;
- proposals for workshops and transregional conferences again encouraged from the membership.

**Bishnupriya Dutt (Vice President – New Scholars)** reported on:

- the Accra conference which will be attended by 64 new scholars, who will present papers in the New Scholars Forum;
- pre-conference workshops were organised online in October 2022 to encourage new scholars from Africa to attend the IFTR conference in Accra and should become a permanent feature moving forward;
- two workshops on Arts and Justice in a Global Frame (Jisha Menon) and on publishing (Silvija Jestrovic and Lise Fitzpatrick) organized during the conference week.

**Meike Wagner (Secretary General)** reported on;

- the 2022 elections of the IFTR executive committee;
- future plans to ensure a higher voter turn-out from the membership by creating a more interactive interface between candidates and membership at large.

**Tim White (Treasurer)** reported on:

- the present healthy surplus could be invested in new projects mindful of the need for a long term sustainable budget to balance expenses with unforeseen impact of open access which was now in place through Cambridge University Pres;

- bursary funds with allocation for a host country might be an option to encourage local participation.

**Magnus Thor Thorbergsson (Reykjavik conference organiser)** reported (via Zoom) on

- online presentations and/or blended mode of conference delivery was a widespread request in 2022 though not possible to offer due to technical and financial reasons;
- problems arising from the delayed transfer of payment from Cambridge Core and the increasing need for a conference app.

**Ameet Parameswaran** (Bursary committee chair) reported on:

- a good number of applications from African scholars and Band B members in 2023;
- the possibility of an increase in the bursaries' funds. For the 2023 conference, resulting from the high expenses involved, less than half of the applications were successful.

**Maria Delgado (New Scholars' and Helsinki Prize committee chair)** reported on:

- the high quality of the applications received, although there was a drop in submissions in 2022/23 compared to the previous few years.
- the committee is willing to give feedback on individual requests.

**Vicki Ann Cremona (Working Groups committee chair)** (provided a written report) on;

- the formats for working groups review to be circulated;
- identification of at least one convenor to facilitate communication;
- the report of working group meeting held at the conference to be circulated amongst convenors.

**Silvija Jestrovic and the current TRI team (Lisa Fitzpatrick, Nesreen Hussein)** reported on:

- the five issues (47.1, 47.2, 47.3, 48.1, and 48.2) published by the editorial team to date with 48.3 in production to be published in the Fall (October 2023). TRI has a diversity of submission, 50% come from the Northern, 50% from the Southern hemisphere and.

a good mix of established scholars and early career researchers. Initiatives have been taken on creating collaborative works and video essays during the Covid pandemic;

- open access that has proved to be a challenge.

**Awo Asiedu (convenor of Accra 2023 conference)** reported on:

- over 500 abstracts, 335 registered;
- 20 WGs plus one new WG will have meetings in Accra;
- 50 General panels are scheduled;
- the social program that includes film screenings, story-telling sessions, theatre performances, drumming and dance workshops, concerts.

**Sir Anril Tiatco (convenor of Manila 2024)** reported on:

- preparations for Manila which are underway;
- dates (15-19 July 2024);
- the college being the main sponsor;
- responsibilities that will be taken up by all faculty members;
- cooperation partners that are already on board;
- on keynotes ensuring diversity.

**Discussion Items (introduced by Elaine Aston):**

- The need to ensure respectful language and behaviour on IFTR's social-media platforms – this in light of two incidents during the presidential cycle that involved posts/communications using foul language and engaging in abusive behaviour towards the Secretary General for Communications. It was proposed and agreed to have a notice on IFTR's Facebook page reminding the membership that IFTR will not tolerate offensive behaviour and language. Those deploying such language will be blocked from the site/platforms.
- The challenges and possibilities of future online conference presentations and activities: this has been and remains an ongoing major discussion topic. It was noted how challenging it is (financially, technically & organisationally) for IFTR to entertain the idea of dual conferencing and yet there are online opportunities that can be and need to be explored. A wide-ranging discussion touched on: online activities for New Scholars; formats for online presentations, e.g. webinars; recording facilities for presentations; technical hardware; modelling days set aside for online presenting in combination with in-person conferencing.

**28 July 2023**

**Marcus Tan (Secretary General, Communication)** reported:

- Difficulties in receiving IFTR emails by members; this happens because University Servers do not recognise an email address, especially if it is received as part of a mass/bulk mail, or it detects malware or viruses, or believes it to be spam.
- The alternative is to send direct emails to the membership.
- Evaluating the situation, ExCom decided to retain Mailchimp but to communicate to IFTR members that they should regularly check their spam folders.

**Priyanka Pathak (incoming student member)**, reported:

- the new scholars caucus, 28 July 2023) was attended by c. 40 NS.
- 43 New scholars presented in the NSF panels;
- workshops on 25 and 27 July were well attended;
- the time allotted (10 mins) for the presentations;
- possibilities to create one page flyer to disseminate information pre- and during the conference.

Discussion followed on:

- scheduling of the panels and the price of conference dinner.
- a donation fund box to sponsor the dinner for new scholars.
- since Accra evoked a positive response from African scholars, strategies of further communication, particularly with NS would be a focus to maintain and strengthen a continued relationship and further participation;
- 2023 schemes and a subsidy of the registration fees by the local department helped to bring the local students to the conference;
- an early introduction to the working routines and schedules of WGs could encourage NS to continue with IFTR after having been part of the NSF.

**Accra 2023: wrap up with conference organisers**

- The ExCom members extended thanks to the conference hosts.
- The organizing team and volunteers were outstandingly helpful and friendly during the conference.
- Awo reports that ca. 350 had registered at the conference and thanked IFTR for the opportunity to host the conference in Accra.
- Local students were very happy about engaging in the conference, however, in regard to the local staff there was limited attendance.

Discussion followed on:

- encouraging local staff/faculty to engage in future conferences.

### **Manila 2024: reflections from the conference organisers**

- Sir Anril Tiatco proposed new dates for the Manila conference: 15-19 July 2024. Responding to the issue of accessibility, Anril proposed to employ more individuals to assist differently abled members.
- the conference hosts will make sure that the WG Disability, Theatre and Performance will have their meeting venues on the ground floor.
- some suggestions for hybrid items: including streaming keynotes and some sessions. A survey will be sent to all WGs to request information on the different needs with the offer to host one hybrid session per WG.
- four keynotes are proposed: 1. Philippine speaker as opening keynote, 2. Asian scholar, 3. Latin American/African scholar, 4. Round table of artists from the region. Supported by the subcommittee on Future Conferences, the conference hosts will explore possibilities to use a conference app. A general decision on a potential implementation of an IFTR app would need further assessment and might not be in place yet for Manila.
- decisions of admission should be communicated as early as possible to facilitate early travel bookings.

### **Working Groups**

Tracy C. Davis and Alyson Campbell reported on a fresh start with WG conveners (the incoming president and vice-presidents attended the WG meeting with the WG Conveners):

- working on improving the quality and transparency of communication.
- the chairs of the subcommittee plan to offer online office hours for drop-in meetings.
- WGs have asked for help from conference hosts to identify local artists for contact with WGs.
- FAQs will be produced by the Chairs of the WG for WG Conveners.
- at the registration a 'sign-up' for WG info should be created, so conveners can get in touch with delegates interested in WG activities.
- there are several proposals for new WGs (Performance and Economy, Performance and Migration) but for now, IFTR is at full capacity for WGs, therefore possibilities to dissolve currently inactive WGs need to be discussed with their conveners.

## **Future Conferences**

Bishnupriya Dutt reported on future conferences. IFTR has received a proposal draft for the 2025 conference and a letter of intent for the 2026 conference.

## **Budgets**

Tim White (Treasurer) reported on planned adjustments. He proposed:

- increasing the budget for bursaries to a maximum of €40.000
- adding €2.000 for the development of online conferencing items.

The potential introduction of a conference app needs some consideration due to the fact that it might interfere with the submission/registration schemes of Cambridge Core.

For interim meetings of the ExCom a fund will be set aside over a period of 4 years. A partial return of the subvention of the Reykjavik conference is expected.

## **Subcommittees**

All ExCom members were assigned to their respective Subcommittee (list updated on website).

## **Communications and Online Provisions**

An ad hoc subcommittee for “Communications and Online Provisions” was established to develop ideas and concepts that might come to fruition at the conference in 2025.

Discussion followed on:

- online conferencing in general. Meeting physically has been the foundational spirit of the Federation but it is important to devise strategies to foster inclusivity in face of high travel costs through partial online engagement;
- the cost involved in the labour around online facilities. There is a general expectation that online is free; there is a need to communicate the actual cost of these;
- finding out about the actual needs and demands from members, and rather plan on smaller online events/items in the first instance than thinking about an online/hybrid conference at large;
- on the potential key role of WGs in developing such smaller online but hybrid formats.

## **Discussions were held on:**

- There was a common understanding that coming to Ghana was an important step for IFTR in order to develop stronger ties with the global South.
- The issue of the anti-LGBTQ bill in Ghana; IFTR recognizes and abides by the principles and practices of equality, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI). These are enshrined in our constitution: “The Federation shall be free from any political, religious, ethnic, gender or other form of discrimination” (Article VII 1). As an organisation that meets in different parts of the world, IFTR is committed to working towards the provision of accessible sites, facilities, and inclusivity. IFTR will stand in loyalty to any oppressed minorities, however, any kind of action/communication needs to carefully be drafted in accordance with local hosts and local activists. The opening statement of the in-coming president was received positively - a similar tone should be set at the closing. In-depth conversations with people on-site should remain the guiding line for IFTR’s political action not to endanger and expose activists or organizers on the ground. During the conference several meetings with local artists and activists took place that led to very intense discussions. A proposal was discussed whether waiving membership to local artists could be a possibility to stay in touch.
- Sadly, some incidences of inappropriate behaviour have been reported. This included: an incident after the farewell dinner when a male delegate harassed a female member after excessive alcohol consumption. A code of conduct should help to prevent such incidences and to give a frame for a procedure if still such cases happen. As an immediate action, a letter should go out to membership to express concern about such inappropriate behaviour.
- The Federation’s journal *Theatre Research International* would benefit from a higher profile presence at the conference. This might involve a prominent exhibition of issues if the publisher is physically absent; the Senior Editor should be visible during the opening ceremony. The call for applications to find a new TRI Book Editor Europe/Africa did not receive any applications. The call needs to go out again, potential candidates should be encouraged to apply.