

Activity Report 2017-2022

Swedish Centre of International Theatre Institute



Swedish Centre
of International
Theatre Institute

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Report from Swedish ITI for the 36th ITI World Congress 2023

Office Bearers:

Ulricha Johnson (CEO, Managing Director), Johanna Byström (Project Manager), Sandra Karlung (Operations Coordinator and Head of Member Service), Jenny Baumgartner (Communications Officer), Inger Einheri (Chief Producer Performing Arts Biennale), Casia Bromberg (Manager of Colleagues in Crisis), Joppe Svensson (Web Manager), Valdemar Seflin (Accounting), Angelica Adolfsson (Accounting)

Board:

Chairman Petra Brylander (CEO and Artistic Director), Vice Chairman Pontus Plaenge (Director/Actor)

Board Members: Minna Krook (Choreographer), Stefan Hansen (CEO), Niklas Hjulström (Artistic Director), Daniela Kullman (Playwright), Isabel Cruz Liljegren (Playwright), Nasim Aghili (Artistic Director), Amy Fee (Dance Manager), Therese Hörnqvist (CEO, Director), Rolf S Nielsen (Theater Manager), Birgit Berndt (Artistic Director Dance), Hellen Smitterberg (Artistic Director Circus)

Tommy Nilsson (Auditor), Puma Lagos (Elected Official Auditor), Tomas Nodbrink (Elected Official Auditor)

Election Committee: Anna Carlson (Actress), Hanna Falk (Dance Producer), Maria Hägglund (CEO), Lena Gustafsson (National Theatre Manager)

About us:

Swedish ITI/Swedish Performing Arts Coalition (SPAC) is the country's largest member organization for the Swedish performing art sector and a national and international competence center to promote and develop professional performing arts domestically and abroad. Our funding comes from members fees, the Swedish Arts Council, Swedish Institute, Swedish Art Grants Committee and other collaborators. We are also members of ISPA, IETM and Europe on the Move.

By collaborations, sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas our aim is to deepen the understanding of the art form and shaping the possibilities of tomorrow, as well as finding new partnerships and international exchanges for our members and the entire sector. Our members consist of large institutions, independent creators, artistic universities, the union, the employers, interest organizations, agents, alliances and critics. We house an education committee and a cultural politics committee.

Together with our members we are a voice for artistic freedom and diversity of the arts and our mission is to safeguard the freedom of expression and to be a partner in the global dialogue of the arts.

Every year we host our annual General Assembly in Stockholm in the spring and a Council Meeting in Gothenburg or Malmö in the fall.

Activity Report 2017-2022 of ITI Sweden

2017

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Swedish Drama in St. Petersburg

For three days at the Alexandrinsky Theater, new Swedish drama was introduced to the public in Russian, through staged readings, panel talks and a guest performance. A book was printed and distributed with the new translations, in collaboration with the Russian ITI. Playwrights Paula Stenström Öhman and Rasmus Lindberg participated in talks after staged readings of their plays by Russian actors. Unga Klara performed “My true selves” for children, with one Swedish-Ukrainian actress and one Russian actor. A group of BFA playwright students from Stockholm University met with fellow students in St Petersburg and had joint workshops and collaborations.

Queer voices of Russia

Swedish ITI traveled with playwright/director Mattias Brunn to St. Petersburg to meet journalists, researchers and activists from St. Petersburg and Moscow, for a Swedish Institute funded project with Russian partner Side by Side LGBT Film Festival.

Getting Swedish productions around the world

The results of the 2016 Swedstage exceeded expectations and the majority of acts received international invitations after participating in the event. In 2017, several productions went on guest performances and tours.

We participated in:

The World Theatre Congress in Segovia

- Retired Director Ann Mari Engel became an Honorary Member of ITI, and the new Director Ulricha Johnson represented the Swedish Centre. Web Manager Joppe Svensson participated within the young practitioners group, with the goal to find new and easy ways to improve the digital communication of different levels, such as committees. Several Swedish choreographers and dancers participated in the Dance Symposium.
- At the congress, the Swedish Centre announced that they will be the contact platform for a new workgroup: the ITI Proud Performing Arts LGBTQ+ Workgroup and Network. ITI had not previously engaged jointly in these perspectives. The first meeting was planned for EuroPride in Stockholm 2018.

The ITI European Council in Rome

Ulricha Johnson participated in the conference, as well as the generous Premio Europa Festival. She presented more info on the Proud Performing Arts work to the fellow centres.

Europe On the Move/Mobility Info Point

Ulricha Johnson participated in conferences in Cardiff, Wales and in Brussels, Belgium with the topic of how to digitally create easier information paths for producers touring in Europe, as well as how to work for easier processing of visas.

2017

NATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

The Swedish Performing Arts Biennale

The Biennale 2017 was held in Norrköping with 1400 visitors, who enjoyed 16 selected performances and international guest performances from Iceland and Canada. Among our guests were colleagues from Kenya, Japan, Korea and the board from the International Critics Association.

Proud Performing Arts 2nd Edition and official National Network formed

With support from the Swedish Arts Council and in close collaboration with Stockholm City Theatre, Unga Klara and Stockholm Pride, four days of productions and seminars were presented. Our members programmed editions at Malmö and Gävle Pride.

A formal national network was created at our member theatre in Växjö during Växjö Pride.

We participated in:

Documentation and analysis

Swedish ITI was part of two different reference groups at the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis, and talks about a collaboration in 2018. At the end of 2017, our documentation database received a grant from the Culture Council.

2018

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Swedstage

In collaboration with ASSITEJ, the Swedish ITI arranged the export festival Swedstage on various stages around Stockholm. With support from the Swedish Institute, Arts Council and different embassies and partners, we offered 13 productions and 10 pitches to guests from South Africa, Sri Lanka, Germany, Russia, USA, Poland, Lithuania, Rwanda, Ukraine, Turkey, Netherlands, Serbia, United Kingdom, Estonia, China, Belarus and Latvia.

In a panel talk representatives from our members the union and the employer's organization talked about their joint work through the #metoo movement in Sweden,

Reflecting Trans Identity through Performing Arts

After an initiative from the Georgian ITI this collaboration started, with funding from the Swedish Institute. The aim of the project is to enlighten the public and supporting the LGBTQ community, with focus on violence toward transgender people in Georgia, through theatre and exchange. A delegation of 5 Georgian participants were featured in a panel talk about the project and situation at Proud Performing Arts at Stockholm Pride.

Proud Performing Arts at EuroPride in Stockholm

With funding from the Swedish Arts Council, Swedish Institute and Stockholm City, we were able to host the first international meeting. Through Indian ITI we invited a guest from India, and with help from Swedish Embassies we got visas for guests from South Africa and Russia. We collaborated with Stockholms Stadsteater and played one US dance production, one Spanish dance production by a choreographer we met at the Segovia congress, and one Russian theatre production. We also hosted a guest from Iran. National Proud festivals were created by us and our members in Gothenburg, Malmö, Växjö, Jönköping, Gävle and Umeå.

International guests at BIBU

Together with ASSITEJ, Swedish ITI were commissioned by the Swedish Institute to coordinate international guests to the children's and youth festival BIBU in Helsingborg.

We participated in:

APAP and Under the Radar in New York

During APAP (Association Performing Arts Presenters), Ulricha Johnson was part of the Swedish Arts Council's delegation, among producers and organizations that work with the US.

Nordic and Baltic networks

Ulricha Johnson met Finnish ITI/Tinfo in Helsinki, and also participated in a meeting with the Baltic network IRIS.

2018

NATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Seminar at Folk and Culture

The seminar "Queer performing arts for children and young people" was held at this national cultural politics conference.

Seminar at BIBU

The seminar, "We've come such a long way in Sweden with this LGBTQ thing, haven't we?" was created by our two interns and contained a large panel.

2019

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Reflecting Trans Identity through Performing Arts in Georgia

The Georgian team had a writing workshop in Stockholm with playwright and director Mattias Brunn. He visited Tbilisi, joined by transgender actress Aleksa Lundberg and documentary filmmaker Mette Aakerholm Gardell. Later the Swedish ITI visited the Georgian ITI, the queer community, The National Theatre and the Swedish Embassy in Tbilisi. The collaboration with Georgian ITI intensified.

Playwright exchange Russia

By invitation from the Swedish Cultural Council Stefan Ingvarsson at the Swedish Embassy in Moscow, we deepened our continuous work with Russian translation of Swedish modern drama. This time striving for a playwright exchange between Sweden and Russia. Meetings at Meyerhold Center, Teatr Doc, Gogol Centre and Elektroteater were arranged. The plan was to collaborate with Meyerhold Center and Lubimovska Youth Festival.

Proud Performing Arts meeting and festival at Stockholm Pride

This year we had many productions from all over Sweden, and a large group of international guests. ITI centers from Finland, Algeria and Congo Brazzaville came, and through embassies and consulates we could invite guests from South Africa and Turkey. Also new network organizations from the USA, Ireland and Norway participated. Our new partner Stockholm City Park Theatre was the main venue, as well as dance theatre MDT, the Modern Museum and the Museum of Womens History.

We participated in:

The Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers conference in Copenhagen with the topic of strengthening the collaborations.

TCG conference in Miami

The US ITI/Theater Communications Group arranged their national conference, and Ulricha Johnson was in several panels together with queer US performers to spread the knowledge of the Proud Performing Arts Network and Workgroup.

ITI European Regional Council Maribor

Swedish ITI participated in the conference and enjoyed the Maribor Theatre Festival, where we brought Swedish productions and translated Swedish drama for readings on our last visit.

2019
NATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

The Swedish Performing Arts Biennale

This year the Biennale took place in Sundsvall and Härnösand. 1500 visitors enjoyed 15 selected performances and 3 international guest performances from Lebanon, Germany and Denmark. We invited 23 international professionals from Finland, USA, UK, South Africa, Chile, Russia, Turkey, Belgium, Denmark, Lithuania, Georgia, Kenya, France, Romania, Germany, Czech Republic.

2020
INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Proud Performing Arts meeting New York

Curtsey of the Swedish Consulate we held a long table discussion and workshop in collaboration with TCG, to bring together Swedish and US queer performers to engage in structuring the future and exchanging knowledge. The long table was moderated by ITI Honorary Member Emily Cachapero.

Swedish plays for US launching

With funding from the Swedish Arts Council 10 playwrights were chosen to represent the contemporary Swedish drama. Excerpts from their plays were translated into American English, and readings in Washington and New York of full plays were planned.

Reflecting Trans Identity through Performing Arts in Georgia

The most intensive and concrete period was supposed to take place in 2020, but due to the pandemic the meetings and workshops were held online. The Georgian ITI and its collaborators made heroic efforts to keep the process going to create a production with restrictions coming and going.

Swedstage

Due to the pandemic Swedish ITI and ASSITEJ made a digital edition of Swedstage. Together with a professional film crew we made high quality trailers and pitches for the chosen productions. We arranged a digital panel talk, "Create or decrease" about freedom of speech and democracy and invited Dr Srirak Plipat from Freemuse to an open webinar. We used our international network to gather testimonies about freedom of speech that we published on our website. The films were spread by the help of all Swedish Embassies and Consulates, and gained positive feedback.

We participated in:

ISPA, APAP, Under the Radar and In the Works in New York

With the ambition to level up our international collaborations Swedish ITI attended all these festivals, and participated in pitches, talks and social events. Our guest and member Åsa Simma from Giron Sapmi Teater performed a traditional indigenous Sami music piece at the ISPA stage.

Sustainable Leadership in the Arts

At this digital pandemic version of Cut the Cord festival in London, Ulricha Johnson was part of the panel on the theme of Diversity and Inclusivity Leadership.

ITI European Council

We participated in this year's digital edition, and were happy to see so many colleagues online.

Freemuse Global LGBT Action Group

We are one of the core organizations in the forming of this network. Together with colleagues from all over the world we will put special focus on threats and punishment aimed at queer performers.

2020

NATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Address to the Nation

We commissioned playwrights Ebba Petrén and Alexandra Loonin to write a speech that political leaders give in times of crisis. They made it into Speech to the relationship, and our members all over Sweden participated by filming themselves reading parts of the monologue, which was later edited and spread online.

Performing Arts Biennale postponed

The board made the inevitable decision to postpone, and our funders approved to keep the funding for one year longer.

Proud Performing Arts

Stockholm Pride was cancelled, but we managed to make a limited audience one day festival in collaboration with MDT in Stockholm, where two dance productions performed.

2021
INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Reflecting Trans Issues through Performing Arts

The Swedish Institute agreed to let this project run a year longer due to the pandemic. Swedish director Johan Paus worked online with the director Irina Gvimradze and actors. The Georgian ITI and the artistic team did a fantastic job keeping this project running. A filmatization was made instead of a stage production.

2021
NATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Digital Performing Arts Biennale

The planned biennale in Västerås was postponed until 2022. With quick Covid support funding from the Swedish Arts Council we created a digital festival. With a professional film crew we recorded and edited panel talks and seminars in a film studio in advance. During the festival week the team isolated ourselves in a hotel and built a livestream studio. Everyone was tested for covid by a nurse every morning. The Minister of Culture made two live interviews in our studio, and members all over Sweden arranged seminars and participated live. The selected performances were able to choose how they wanted to present their productions. The Royal Dramatic Theatre decided to make a filmatization of a large production, another was made as a documentary film, one was performed live with 8 people in the audience etc.

Proud Performing Arts at Stockholm Pride

Due to the collaboration with outdoor stage Stockholm City Park Theatre, we were able to perform a full program of productions, with the audience sitting with distance between them.

70 Year Anniversary

The Swedish ITI turned 70 in 2021. We worked through our archives and made a timeline with information and photos from our past, as well as a graphic design to complement our logo. Because of the pandemic we did not arrange a live celebration.

2022
INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

Colleagues in Crisis

An information platform for organizations and individuals to post initiatives regarding artists at risk, with immediate focus on Ukraine. A dedicated project manager is in touch with the

refugee residences and projects around Sweden. Our members can look for artists to host or hire, and share content and events. We have published and shared calls for Ukraine and Iran. We also work to support Russian artists at risk, and are in touch with several exile theatre makers in Europe. We make sure to always invite the refugee theater artists pro bono to our festivals, to introduce them to the community and to give lectures or panel talks. So far we have had artists from Palestine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Ukraine, Lebanon, Belarus and Russia participating. At the biennale in 2022 we arranged one seminar on “How can we support our peers in Ukraine?”, “My forbidden poem” about Palestine, and “Russia on the inside”.

The Garden, dance collaboration

With funding from the Swedish Arts Council to rebuild international connections post covid, we were able to contract four Swedish freelance dancers, who together with US choreographer Nichole Canuso created a site specific public work at the museum of Västerås, during the biennale. The performance was called The Garden and had 4 audience members at the time be part of the work through movement and earphone instructions.

Russian exchange revised

At the beginning of 2022 we had 3 new Swedish plays translated into Russian, by a freelance translator who has now fled.

After the invasion we could not go through with the playwright exchange, as we will not work with state funded organizations there, and won't send Swedish playwrights to Russia at this point. We recently hosted a small group of dissidents, who were able to meet Swedish creators, especially the ones working with activism, community theater and participatory art with young people. They are hoping to work with Russian youth to create awareness of politics and raise hope for the future.

2022

NATIONAL PROJECTS

We arranged:

The Swedish Performing Arts Biennale

This year the Biennale took place in Västerås. We had 1000 visitors enjoying 14 selected Swedish performances and 1 US collaboration performance. We invited international guests from Ukraine, South Africa, Greece, Spain, Russia and USA. Some of the key topics in the 100 seminars were mental health, supporting refugee artists, defending artistic freedom and work collectively through the grief after what we lost in the pandemic.

Take care

With funding from the Swedish Arts Council to heal the sector and community after covid, we created the project Take Care, to share knowledge and experiences about selfcare, grief, self leadership, minority stress and NPF diagnosis among artists. An analyst performed 15 deep interviews with various people in the business, and held several lectures, both at the

biennale but also at our council meeting. She will now go on to investigate how the acting students who are getting their exams next year are feeling and handling their thoughts and worries.