

Statement of the position of the 91st AITA/IATA asbl Affiliate from Poland

A Polish NGO called Fundacja Graj! asked for Membership of AITA/IATA asbl in Monaco in August 2013. Simon Blaschko and Philipp Kempa declared they would set up, or help to create, a new Polish amateur theatre network. For 33 years, there had been no Polish functioning, nor active representation, for international amateur theatre in Poland. The General Assembly of AITA/IATA asbl unanimously agreed to accept Fundacja Graj! as an Affiliate. This was the official start of three years of preparation. The Polish team asked in 2015, after getting its first European start-up funds for two more years before becoming a National Centre. The Council of AITA/IATA asbl agreed that the Polish Affiliate could work for two more years on a new theatre network in Poland.

Today, after 3 years of preparation from 2010 to 2013 and 3 more years of realisation from 2013 to 2016, we are happy to announce great progress. While we worked both nationally and internationally to find working solutions, the idea spread around Poland. Tens of theatre groups started to believe in the idea of a network. The strongest impact on the common success of the new Polish network is the regional network West Pomeranian Theatre Offensive, which has run for five years. Their good example made the theatre society believe in the possibility of success.

The first General Assembly of the Polish Theatre Offensive was in Łódź on 1st June 2016. Discussions took place in a forum of 60 people representing around 40 theatres. The second General Assembly took place in Poznań from 1st to 2nd October 2016. There we met those from the first meeting and some new interested theatres. Our third General Assembly will be held in Warsaw on 17th to 18th December 2016.

The **Polish Theatre Offensive** is organised as a non-formal network of tens of theatres with hundreds of individuals represented. The growing community is documented on www.off-teatr.pl in cooperation with the magazine *nietak!t* from Wrocław. Each theatre has its own profile. There is no hierarchy, no legal structure or single representative. The Polish off-theatre network functions through working groups. Each group is coordinated by professionals from all over Poland. The main decisions are made in the GA forum, more specific decisions are made in special working groups which cover education, finance, organisation, law and international affairs. The average age of the GA participants is around 30. The Polish Theatre Offensive consists of amateurs and professionals from the youngest to the oldest. This network is an inclusive theatre society hybrid with a flat, specialist-related, democratic structure. Instead of membership with expectations, this network visualises hundreds of existing co-operations, and gives them a forum to develop and grow.

The Polish Theatre Offensive, internationally represented by Towarzystwo Teatralne im. Jędrzeja Cierniaka, is ready to ask for full membership at the 16th Mondial du Théâtre in Monaco, in August 2017.

We are young, flexible and happy to have the possibility to promote understanding and education through theatre in cooperation with AITA/IATA asbl, AITA CEC and EDERED in Poland and overseas.

Simon Blaschko

President of Towarzystwo Teatralne im. Jędrzeja Cierniaka

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