

ASSITEJ International Award for Artistic Excellence – the Honorary President's Award

The ASSITEJ Honorary Presidents' Award is given every three years for noteworthy achievement in the field of theater for children and young people, and is the most prestigious award given by the organization.

The award is given to an individual or to a company working in the field of theater for children and young people, nominated by their national ASSITEJ Center, and based on innovative work done in the three years prior to the application deadline. The committee adjudicating the award will give special priority to emerging artists, new and exciting companies, although established individuals or theaters that begin working in a new and innovative way will also be considered.

Awardees

1996

Volker Ludwig, Germany
Ray Nusselein, Denmark
Michail Bartenev, Russia
(Honorable mention)
Barking Gecko Theatre
Company, Australia (Honorable
mention)

1999

Arena Theatre Company,
Australia

2002

Suzanne Osten, Sweden

2005

Zeal Theatre, Australia
Dr. Kim Woo Ok, Korea



Theatre is the art of the moment. This is true to all of who works with theatre – it might be obvious, but it is still true.

We might use working books, notes, DVDs to record our performances and our work – it is still in the moment – in the meeting between stage and audience theatre is created and experienced. When it comes to theatre for children and youth this magic moment, this fantastic instant, should also be in the eye-level of the children. A moment when the eyes of the actors meet the eyes of the children.

Nevertheless – also to theatre and theatre practitioners – history is important. We need to record, categorize and archive our activities. We need to remember what has been in order to create the future. We need a common memory... For an international organization the collective memories and stories are vital for tomorrow's direction.

We also need to celebrate our outstanding artists – to encourage artistic innovation and bravery, to promote theatre artists in an international context.

We are in debt to Nat Eek for having founded the ASSITEJ International Award for Artistic Excellence – the Honorary President's Award. Nat Eek has for decades worked tirelessly to promote ASSITEJ and to put forward artistic excellence all over the world. This presentation of the Award shows the history of the organization, celebrates the work of individual artists and theatre companies and encourages future theatre work for children and youth.

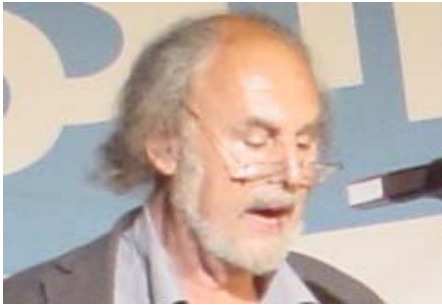
The Award will be given for the fifth time in a special Award ceremony during the ASSITEJ World Congress in Adelaide, Australia in May 2008.

Niclas Malmcrona
Secretary General

www.assitej.org

1996 Awardee

Foto: Julia Hillgärtner



Volker Ludwig, Germany

Our children have long since felt the effects of globalisation. The 'carefree childhood' comes to an end ever earlier, even in the rich countries. Dreams for the future turn into nightmares, the rat race begins in early childhood and the fear of unemployment can be felt in Primary Schools. [...]

Theatre cannot save the world. But it can fill the hearts, the senses and the reason of our children and teenagers with the certainty that the world can be changed. And that it is worth fighting for.

Volker Ludwig, 2005 World Day message

Volker Ludwig was born as Eckard Hachfeld in 1937, studied German and Art History. In 1965 he founded the revue Reichskabarett Berlin and in 1966 the Children's Theatre in the Reichskabarett, which in 1972 was renamed GRIPS Theater. Since then he has been the artistic director of the GRIPS Theater. He is the author of more than 30 Plays, translated in more than 40 languages and played all over the world. One of them the musical 'Linie 1', considered the most successful German musical. He has received several awards, i.e. the highly acclaimed Playwright Award of Mühlheim 1987 or the Carl-von Ossietzky-Medaille of the International League of Human Rights 1994. Volker Ludwig lives in Berlin.

www.grips-theater.de

[A short chronicle \(1969-2001\).PDF](#)

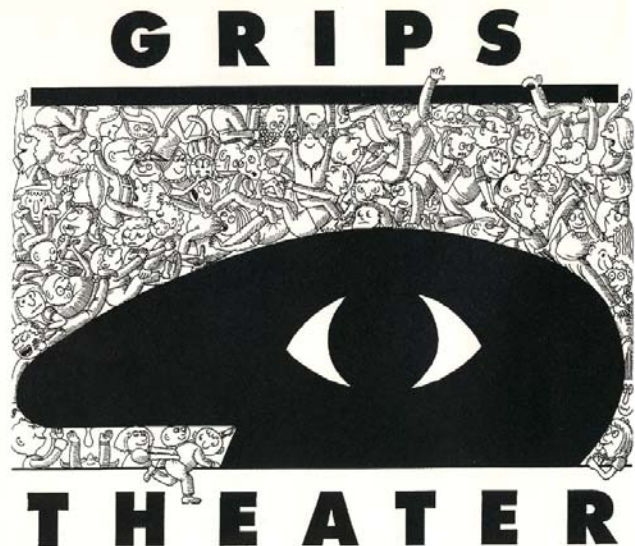


Illustration: Rainer Hachfeld

1996 Awardee

* 1944 – † 1999

Ray Nusselein, Denmark

Ray Nusselein was born in Holland, lived in Denmark and travelled there with his theatre, Paraplyteatret (The Umbrella Theatre), and all over the world, playing in Danish, Dutch, Swedish, French, German, English - all of his productions were of high value and nuances, not missing the dialogue with children, which was an important part of his one-man-performances. His plays and performances came into existence in the interaction between inventing things, finding images and expressing feelings - one not without the other. Having found the true combination he could develop his performances in the interplay with children as an audience.

His Very-Best Puppet was a handkerchief with a knot. "My Very-Best Puppet", Ray said. - "My Very-Best Person", said the Puppet. - "I hugged you." "And I hugged you." - "But you couldn't hug me all the way round." - "I did it as well as I could."

The umbrella shielded both, him and his puppets, things and objects. A house to take with you and unfold where there was room for it.

Round and safe as a pregnant stomach but with a framework that can free itself of its fabric and material and be obstinate. One that makes you go into the air makes you take off and fly. The umbrella contained so many of the things Ray wanted to say. It challenged him to say things he hardly knew he wanted to express.

Biba Schwoon, For the Smallest in the Big Ones...



1996

Honorable mention

Foto: Gudrun Bublitz



Michail Bartenev, Russia

In the conception of 'The Magic House Project' we have a combination of a specifically designed framework - eight member-countries reproducing on stage one of the eight periods of the European theatre history - and enormous freedom for the participants to implement their own ideas in the given space.

A construction like that suggests a lot of possibilities for a festival. The educational aspect of the Project is also extremely important.

However we believe the main advantage of the Project is in the concept 'the classics – the present time – teenager'. [...]

We expect the participants of the Project to bring their own ideas, we want to stir imagination, provoke new discoveries, so that we could all create a new theatrical language to be spoken with younger audience. The language that will not be didactic and which will enable us to speak without looking down at them.

Michail Bartenev and Sergei Pozov

Michail Bartenev was born in 1953. He studied at the Moscow Institute of Architecture and worked as an architect from 1976 to 1987. During this time he already wrote poems and stories for children. In 1986 he wrote his first play, 'Vanya and the Robbers'. Since then he has been working as a freelance playwright. He has written 12 plays for children and young people which have been performed on more than 60 stages. In 1989 a festival of his plays took place in Nishni Nowgorod. Since 1987 he has been coeditor of the children's magazine 'Wesolyje Kartinki' ('Funny Pictures'). In Cooperation with the director Sergej Rosov he founded 1990 the 'Experimental All Russian Centre for School Theatre'. He was also the Co-Author of the International Theatre Cultural-Educational Project 'The Magic House' realized under the auspices of the Russian and German ASSITEJ.

1996 Honorable mention

Illustration: Barking Gecko



Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Australia

Barking Gecko Theatre Company is Western Australia's leading professional theatre company for young audiences, committed to producing inspirational and provocative theatre. Established in 1991, Barking Gecko has an international reputation for excellence and innovation and has delighted audiences in Sydney, Canada, Korea, Singapore, USA and Mexico. Barking Gecko produces 3 new works, presents more than 500 performances and reaches more than 70.000 young people each year. Barking Gecko's target audience is young people between the ages 5 and 17. During the year, certain productions are commissioned specifically for particular age groups. As well as producing in-theatre plays at the Subiaco Theatre Centre, where it is resident, the company regularly tours to metropolitan and country schools.

www.barkinggecko.com.au



1999 Awardee

Illustration: Arena



Arena Theatre Company, Australia

Theatre can speak **loudly**.
It can **strip** naked.
It can **sensory** overload.
It can produce **adrenaline**
and cannot **be** ordinary.

Theatre is an **ancient** form
that has been **mistaken** for a relic.
Theatre lives in the contemporary
world.
Theatre is a micro world.
Every way in which **meaning** is
conveyed
can be **duplicated** there.

In an age of **technology** and
media,
where a **mass** politic pervades,
theatre must
re-look
dissect and
reassemble

It must seek to **invade** the mindset
of the
mainstream **propaganda** -
the notion of a singular **answer**.

Rosemary Myers, *Manifesto*

Arena Theatre Company, known today for its adrenaline pumping, multi-media productions for young people, began modestly in 1966 with an amateur drama group called The Toorak Players. This group, which took inspiration from British children's theatre, toured two shows to Melbourne primary schools between 1966 and 1968. Due to the popularity of these productions, a professional company, Children's Arena Theatre, was founded in 1968. Expansion and development characterised the next six years. Arena obtained annual state and national funding, as well as a full time administrator (Cynthia Mountstephan) and a full time Artistic Director (David Young). Arena also acquired a permanent home in the Viaduct Theatre in South Yarra, a touring vehicle and a strong following with the youth of Melbourne and regional Victoria. Initiatives in these early years included the creation of original Australian work and a direct relationship with the school system, through a Theatre in Education program called 'Common Ground'. The search for an intimate dialogue with young people has taken Arena from British theatre to original Australian work, from bus touring to world touring, from library readings to revolving robotic screens, from 'The Rainbow Makers' to 'Eat Your Young'. The evolution of Arena has culminated in a style of production that fuses live performance with new technologies, bringing an ancient art form into the contemporary world.

www.arenatheatre.com.au



2002 Awardee

Suzanne Osten, Sweden

Foto: Suzanne Osten



- Nothing has become fairer since the 70's. To go to the theatre is still a matter of class. To reach an audience unused to going to the theatre is just as important a goal as it always was.

- If, like me, you were forced to live on benefits during your formative years, you're against the class society. I don't forget such a humiliation as being given clothes by the public authorities.

- It's a dream about justice which is important to keep alive.

Suzanne Osten

Suzanne Carlota Osten was born 1944 on Stora Essingen in Stockholm. She directed theatre in the free group Fickteatern during 1967-71, then went on to Stockholms City Theater in 1971. In 1975 Suzanne Osten was asked to form a special division for children and young people within the Stockholm City Theatre. She has since then guided the group through completely unique and revolutionary team efforts, such as the children's tragedies 'Medea's Children' (Medeas barn) from 1975 and 'Hitler's Childhood' (Hitlers barndom) from 1984. (The latter is based on a chapter from a book by psychoanalyst Alice Miller.)

Suzanne Osten was installed as a professor of directing at the Dramatic Institute in Stockholm 1995. She has received many prizes through the years, here are the latest: 2002 Swedish PEN-clubs Berns Prize; 2002 Assitej International Prize (ASSITEJ Honorary President's Award) in Seoul, Korea; 2002 Expressens Theatre prize; 2003 Natur och kulturs stora kulturpris.

Illustration: Unga Klara



Suzanne Osten

Unga Klara

2005 Awardee

Illustration: Zeal Theatre



Zeal Theatre, Australia

Zeal's commitment to remain in constant dialogue with the audience they are performing to, and shifting the details to continually expose a contemporary and cultural relevance, is surely one of the many reasons why the company has so much international respect.

Elena Vereker (Lowdown)

ZEAL THEATRE is a touring theatre company based in both Melbourne and Sydney, Australia. Founded in 1989 by actor/writer/director Stefo Nantsou, Zeal is dedicated to creating original, educative and entertaining theatrical productions for theatres, schools, universities, national and international festivals. Zeal has created 35 original productions; more than half have been specifically created for teenage audiences. Some Zeal highlights include the co-production 'TATAU' with New Zealand company Pacific Underground and the Samoan community which performed sell-out seasons in Auckland and Sydney in 1996, 'JOYRIDE' written with police and street-kids which was performed over 600 times around Australia between 1992-96, and the world-renowned 'THE STONES' created by Stefo and actor/writer/acrobat/musician Tom Lycos in 1996 which has since been performed over 900 times and has toured extensively throughout Australia, Europe, Asia and North America. 'THE STONES' has also been translated and performed in 18 other languages, Stefo and Tom having directed the show in Dutch, Welsh, Hungarian, Danish, German and Canadian.

www.zealtheatre.com.au



The Stones | Foto: Zeal Theatre

2005 Awardee

Dr. Kim Woo Ok, Korea

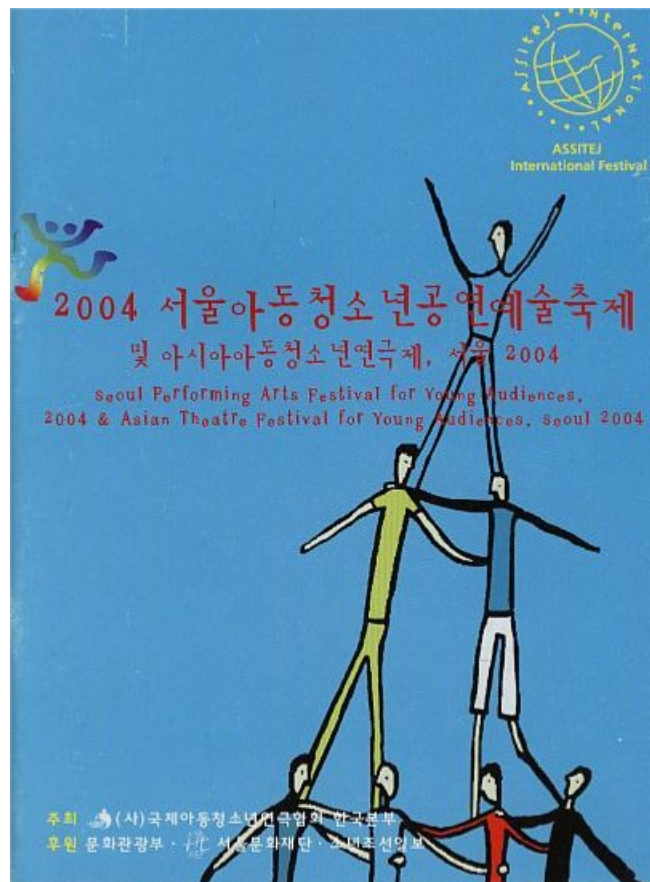
Foto: ASSITEJ



Kim Woo Ok has played a leading role in developing and improving children's and youth theatre in Korea. He is a founding member of ASSITEJ Korea and was its President for several years. He founded the Seoul Performing Arts Festival for Young Audiences in 1993 and has successfully managed it so as for it to become a great motivation for development of children's theatre in Korea. As an educator he opened the Children's Theatre Program for the first time in Korea at the graduate level of the School of Drama, the Korean University for the Arts of which he worked as the first Dean from 1996 to 2000. He has served as an E.C. member of the ASSITEJ International since 1991 and put a lot of contribution to renewal and exchange of ASSITEJ. As an artist he founded the Dongrang Theatre for Young People, the first professional theatre company for youth, in 1995, and directed five original plays for youth, giving a great impact to the theatre world of Korea.

...considering the general decline of children's theatre around the world in competitiveness and liveliness. Historically, Western theatre practitioners have received inspiration from the theatre of the East – Artaud and Brecht, to name a few. It may well be that Western children's theatre will likewise receive fresh energy and ideas from the children's theatre of the East.

Kim Woo Ok



International ASSITEJ Festival Seoul 2004

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IMPRESSUM



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