

## ASSITEJ International - Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What does the association do?***

ASSITEJ unites theatres, organisations and individuals throughout the world who make theatre for children and young people. ASSITEJ is dedicated to the artistic, cultural and educational rights of children and young people across the globe and advocates on behalf of all children regardless of nationality, cultural identity, ability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion.

ASSITEJ brings people together so that they can share knowledge and practice within the field of theatre for children and young people in order to deepen understandings, develop practice, create new opportunities and strengthen the global sector. The members of ASSITEJ are National Centres, Professional Networks, and Individuals from around 100 countries across the world.

(If you are interested, the acronym ASSITEJ comes from the original French: Association Internationale de Theatre pour les Enfants et le Jeunesse. It is a consistent problem that no one knows what the acronym means or how to say it! In Africa they call it ASSI-wha-wha?).

- ASSITEJ International has a presence in more than 100 countries worldwide. The body of shared research and experience as a network is huge.
- Each ASSITEJ member is either a National Centre or a Network or an Individual. The Centres and Networks have memberships ranging from 5 to 450 individuals or organisations.
- Theatre Network Australia has the role as the Australian ASSITEJ National Centre, since the folding of Young People and the Arts Australia (YPAA).
- There is a distinct International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network (ITYARN) that creates research conferences at all ASSITEJ Conferences and Artistic gatherings.
- ASSITEJ abides by a clear constitution, with rigorous and democratic operations. The Executive Committee works to a three-year plan agreed to at each Congress.
- ASSITEJ has a long history - the association is in its 52nd year and has had consistent steady growth both in membership and activity.
- Research (ITYARN), Diversity (IIAN), Early Years (Small Size) and Dance networks within the organisation give it multiple focuses and an impressive reach.
- ASSITEJ International strives for inclusivity and diversity in an ever-changing global environment and actively creates initiatives to expand on the membership's knowledge.
- The association has a strong framework of events – including annual international Gatherings and a three-yearly world Congress.
  - The annual **ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings** are hosted by festivals who bid for the rights. The focus is on exchange and sharing of knowledge.
  - The three yearly **ASSITEJ World Congress** is centred on a festival, presenting the world's most outstanding works in theatre for children and young people, and a Congress which establishes the working plan for the next three years.

- ASSITEJ fundraises for projects throughout the year: the Next Generation program where emerging professionals (under 35) are brought together during Artistic Gatherings; and Regional Workshops where a region can specify skills workshops. Eg: writing workshops run by ASSITEJ France in Yaounde, Cameroon.

### ***The ASSITEJ Artistic Gatherings - what are they?***

The Artistic Gatherings are designed to stimulate and encourage artistic activity and exchange. An Artistic Gathering is a space in which members of ASSITEJ have the opportunity to meet to discuss the artistic life of the organisation and their own artistic work within the field of theatre for young audiences. It is a face-to-face gathering, with interaction taking place through Forums, Workshops, Seminars and other related events. The interaction also takes place in informal settings around the festival and through new and innovative mechanisms, as these are developed.

This focus makes it very different to a market. The purpose of the Artistic Gathering is to bring people to an event, somewhere in the world and a different place each year, where they will experience work they haven't seen before and engage deeply in the discussion and exchange that keep the practice alive.

These exchanges are the life-blood of the association and it is essential that Australian voices and experience is heard and recognised – we have so much to offer.

### ***How does the Australian ASSITEJ National Centre work?***

Theatre Network Australia is a National Centre member of ASSITEJ International. Previously, YPAA (Young People and the Arts Australia) had this role until it folded in 2015.

TNA's role continues a 40 year-plus relationship with the global association of ASSITEJ International.

Theatre Network Australia uses its existing infrastructure, programs and networks to reach interested members with opportunities and news, as well paying the membership fee to ASSITEJ International. TNA supports Australia's ASSITEJ representative (currently Sue Giles) in her work promoting the Australian TYA and Youth Arts sector internationally, and reporting back to the sector here.

TNA's role is wider than ASSITEJ's remit – as a service organisation for broad-church theatre, dance, circus, music theatre, hybrid work etc, we also advocate for and support the work of youth arts organisations – those working with young people as the makers of performance.

The opportunities through this international association are many, with over 100 countries as members, bringing people together around performance in a huge array of projects and artforms; information about festivals around the world; up to date trends in theatre; global movements; research; and advocacy at the core. Check out the website for action and inspiration: [www.assitej-international.org](http://www.assitej-international.org)

*Compiled by Sue Giles for Theatre Network Australia  
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