



Women Playwrights International
Academy of Theatre Arts,
University of Mumbai
Stree Mukti Sanghatana

8th International Women Playwrights Conference

8TH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS' CONFERENCE

MUMBAI – NOVEMBER 1-7, 2009

Background

Since 1988, Women Playwrights International (WPI) has organised an International Women Playwright's Conference almost every three years in different parts of the world. Since the inaugural conference in Buffalo, USA, conferences have been held in Canada, Australia, Ireland, Greece, Philippines and Indonesia.

SMS extended an invitation to Women playwrights' to hold its VIII conference in Mumbai in 2009. After obtaining the consent of WPI steering committee SMS approached Mumbai University to co-host and now The **8th Women Playwright's Conference** is proposed to be held in **Mumbai, India**, from **1st to 7th November 2009** and will be co-hosted by the Stree Mukti Sanghatana (SMS) and the Academy of Theatre Arts, University of Mumbai. An apex committee comprising of Jyoti Mhapsekar, Sushama Deshpande and Waman Kendre has been appointed to further the work of the conference.

The conference will be held at the University of Mumbai, Vidyanagari Campus, Kalina. The theme of the conference is **Liberty and Tolerance**.

It will be attended by national & international delegates working in various capacities such as writers, directors, actors, producers etc. The cultural activity conducted in the project period throughout will create an atmosphere conducive to holding national festivals of plays by women playwrights. It will also enthuse women activists to pay special attention to creative instincts.

Correspondence

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Venue

Academy of Theatre Arts, University of Mumbai, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Bhavan, Kalina, Santacruz(E), Mumbai 400 098 INDIA



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Organisers

1. Women Playwrights International (WPI) - www.wpinternational.net – Main Organiser

Women Playwrights International (WPI) is dedicated to planning and convening international conferences for women playwrights, which have brought together women playwrights and allied theatre artists, cultural workers and scholars together since 1986. WPI is dedicated to maintaining ongoing international Women Playwrights Conferences every three years at different locations in the world, and to facilitating communications, meetings, interchanges, and activities among the international community of women in theatre.

WPI was founded to maintain the continuity of triennial conferences, communication and planning support to countries hosting the conference, reach out to women in regions underrepresented by the conference and expand and widen membership and participation of women in theatre.

Stree Mukti Sanghatana's association with Women Playwrights International goes back to 1994 when SMS' President, Ms. Jyoti Mhapsekar first participated in the International Conference in Adelaide. Since then, this association has been strengthened with the regular participation of SMS in all subsequent conferences. Ms. Mhapsekar went on to serve on the Executive Committee of WPI for 6 years. She, along with Sushama Deshpande, another playwright and activist with SMS, now serve on the Advisory Council of the organisation. Both of them have received several awards for their contribution to the women's movement.

It was the Stree Mukti Sanghatana that proposed to WPI that the 8th International Conference be held in Mumbai. Since the last two conferences had been held in Asia after the first five held in the western hemisphere, Ms. Mhapsekar felt it appropriate that the Conference move to an Asian country whose history, heritage and rich tradition of the performing arts are known far and wide. This proposal was approved by WPI in 2008 and SMS was appointed as local host and organiser with Ms. Mhapsekar being entrusted the work of Convener.

SMS, in turn, approached the Academy of Theatre Arts at the University of Mumbai to co-host the conference, a proposal that was promptly accepted by University. Mr. Waman Kendre, Director of the Academy, was appointed Conference Director.

2. Academy of Theatre Arts – Mumbai University – www.mu.ac.in - Local Co-Host Organisation

The Academy of Theatre Arts was established in 2003. The University of Mumbai initiated this Academy keeping in mind the dearth of theatre training institutes in Mumbai, despite the city being the main centre of theatre activity in the country. The Academy offers a two year full time comprehensive Masters Degree course in Theatre Arts.

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Aims and Objectives:

- a) To create an additional avenue of self-employment for students of the University of Mumbai and also to benefit the cultural arena by providing it with suitably trained persons in the field of Theatre Arts and Dramatics
- b) To prepare students to exploit opportunities in the field of Theater and other Performing Arts, Art Administration, Theatre Research and Education, Films, Electronic Media and Mass Communication
- c) To provide adequate professional understanding about Acting, Production, Direction, Stagecraft and Playwriting with adequate emphasis on theory and practicals
- d) To inculcate training and a practical approach using modern technology in the fields of Theatre and the Performing Arts
- e) To train all round theater professionals, who will provide leadership to the theater culture of the country and work as facilitators for National and International theatre
- f) To undertake to plan and implement degree and diploma courses and conduct short-term, intensive, specialized courses as per the requirements
- g) The overall approach will be flexible and open to accept new challenges and execute programme independently, in collaboration and even as an extension activity in order to provide a professional theatre training model of the highest standards

Mission : The mission of Women Playwrights International (WPI) is to promote, encourage and assist the development of their works and bring international recognition.. "Women Playwrights" comprise all women working in the theater irrespective of race, class, age, ethnic or religious background, sexual preference, and women with disability.

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The Programme

The main theme of the 8th International Women Playwrights' Conference is **Liberty and Tolerance**.

The activities over the week of the conference, from the 1st to the 7th November, will broadly follow the sub-themes listed below:

1. Identity, Culture and Diversity
2. Non-Violence - A Way of Living
3. Challenges of Patriarchy
4. Role of Theatre in the Socio-Political World
5. Humour in Theatre

The conference will be held at the University of Mumbai's Vidyanagari Campus in Kalina, North-West Mumbai. The University of Mumbai is one of the oldest universities in India with a sprawling campus, near both domestic and international airports, 1.5 to 3 kms away.

The conference will be inaugurated on Sunday, the 1st of November and will close with a Grand Finale and Closing Ceremony on Saturday, the 7th. The seven days will see a rich blend of discussions, seminars, roundtables and panel discussions besides numerous play readings, skill workshops and performances from various states of India as well as some International performances.

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Organising Team

1. Ms. Jyoti Mhapsekar, President Stree Mukti Sanghatana—Conference Convenor

Jyoti Mhapsekar, the Conference Convenor, is one of the founder members and at present President of Stree Mukti Sanghatana (Women's Liberation Organization), which was founded in 1975, and has an active Theater Group. The organization has also been accredited by ECOSOC (U.N.).

The official conference sponsors are Ms. Mhapsekar's own organization, Stree Mukti Sanghatana (the first feminist organization to be a primary WPI Conference sponsor) and the University of Mumbai (which will provide venue, and office space, as well help in logistics etc.).

Ms. Mhapsekar has been involved in WPI since she brought her feminist theatre to the 3rd Conference in Adelaide, Australia, in 1994. She has participated in every conference since, as well as WPI planning sessions in Athens, Greece.. She was the editor of WPI bulletin in 2001. She served as a member of the Executive Committee of WPI for two consecutive terms. She brings her own organizing skills and the support of a highly developed feminist support network to the planning of the conference.

Ms Mhapsekar is a Librarian by profession and an Activist, Playwright and Song writer by choice. She is postgraduate in Sociology with additional degree in Library Science. She composes music for her plays and also known as singer and has acted in several performances of her plays. She has received several awards for her contribution to women's movement in India including Best music director award from Government of West Bengal. Her first play Mulagi Zali Ho(Girl is born) has been translated in several languages. A song written by her (half the sky is ours) is included in the post Beijing poetry published by University of Minnesota. She has written two scripts for short films on Women's rights and water literacy, produced by women's development Board of Maharashtra (MAVIM), are very popular in Self Help Groups of Maharashtra. She has edited three books on social issues and she is also on the editorial board of Prerak Lalkari magazine since 1986 and has contributed several articles to the same and also other news papers and magazines. For two years was also a columnist for the news paper on various social issues. She is also known for her work with adolescent children and rag pickers of Mumbai and surrounding areas. For her social entrepreneurship work with rag pickers in Mumbai she has been awarded Ashoka fellowship. Both Jyoti Mhapsekar and Sushama Deshpande are recipients of **Savitribai Phule Award** by the government of Maharashtra which is conferred for the outstanding contribution to the women's Cause.

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2. Prof. Waman Kendre, Director – Academy of Theatre Arts – Mumbai University

– **Conference Director**

Prof. Waman Kendre, the Conference Director, has served since the last five years as the Director of the Academy of Theatre Arts- Mumbai University that is an official sponsor of the Conference and a co-host.

With a rich academic background in Dramatics & Dramatic Arts, Prof. Kendre has conducted more than 150 workshops throughout India and abroad and imparted theatre training to professionals and amateurs for the last 20 years and created a generation of talented actors, directors, playwrights and designers who have made a great impact on regional and national theatre scenes. He has created a rich body of work that not only reflects his superior craft but also his sensitivity to social, cultural and political issues thus transforming theatre into a potent platform to project his concerns for the sufferings of the neglected and ignores sections of society that are rarely thought or talked about. Prof. Kendre is the recipient of numerous awards at both the State level as well as the National level.

2. Sushama Deshpande

For Sushama Deshpande, Theatre is a passion and communication a profession. She is a proprietor of Anjor communications through which she has made several documentaries in last two decades. She is conducting workshops for different women organizations to develop leadership skills in rural area (Using theatre of oppressed techniques for this). She is known all over Maharashtra for her One-person performances ('Whay mi Savitribai' and 'Tichya aaichi goshta artat mazya athavanicha fad) and she is deeply attached with Theatre movement in Maharashtra. She has attended 2 conferences of WPI in 1997 and 2003 respectively and at present she is on the advisory committee of WPI. Recently she has directed the play, 'My Mother, Her Gharawali, Her Malak and His Wife.' with Sangram and Vamp Sangali in which artist are from community. (Prostitutes and their Children). **Sushama- She has worked as** a consultant for the **World Bank** on the issue of **Gender participation in water conservation and sanitation program to mobilize rural women. She has been working** with rural women through NGO Ramleela Sarvajanik nyas. Film Sparrow Documentation center Made a film and a booklet on the theater work of Sushama At present she is working on the Script 'Baya dar Ughad'(Dear women friends open the door of mind) Script is about women saints of Maharashtra, India..

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3. The team from Women Playwrights International (WPI)

The Mumbai Conference organisers will be assisted by the rest of the international WPI advisory committee. Members of the committee are as follows:

Beverly Andrews (UK)
Marilie Fernandez Ilagan (Philippines)
Karen Kinch (US)
Helen Shay (UK)
Karen Jeynes (South Africa)
Patrizia Monaco (Italy)
Lene Therese Teigen (Norway)
Monica Raymond (US)
Suzy Messerole (US)
Naghmeh Samini (Iran)
Denise Walsh (New Zealand)
Margareta Skantze (Sweden)
Ngoc M. Nguyen (Vietnam/US)
Sandra Shotlander (Australia)
Rosemary Johns (Australia)
Li Ying Ning (China)
Shim Jung Soon (Korea)

The WPI Steering Committee overseeing the conference consists of the following:

Anna Kay France (Buffalo 1988)
Julie Holledge (Adelaide 1994)
Malou Jacob (Manila 2003)
Ratna Sarumpaet (Jakarta 2006)

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Contact Details

The contact details for the Conference are as follows:

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Jyoti Mhapsekar Conference convener WPI09

Stree Mukti Sanghatana (Womens Liberation Organisation)

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Women Playwrights International (WPI) - Organisational Chronology

1988 - The first international conference was held in Buffalo, NY. The Buffalo conference brought together more than 200 women playwrights from over 30 countries around the world.

1989 - International Center for Women Playwrights (ICWP) established in Buffalo, New York to continue the work of the conference and serve as a communications center for women playwrights internationally.

1991 - 2nd International conference held in Toronto, Canada. International Advisory Committee (IAC) formed to choose the site of the next conference and to provide advice and assistance to its directors.

1994 - Adelaide, Australia hosted the 3rd International conference and was by far the most successful in international attendance.

1997 - Galway, Ireland hosted the 4th International Conference. Role of IAC extended to bring members into more active roles in planning and supporting the conference. An Organizational Committee with a core committee of 22 women volunteers from 10 countries; Australia, Egypt, England, France, Greece, India, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sweden, and the USA was formed to create a new organization before the 5th International conference in 2000. International Women Playwrights Centre closed its office in Buffalo and became a virtual centre, limiting its resources to women with Internet access only.

1998 - Greece approved as the site of the 5th conference by the IAC Charter drafted for a new international women playwrights organization, Women Playwrights International.

2000 - The 5th international conference held in Greece. Mexico chosen as the site for the 6th conference.

2001 - The WPI Executive Committee in Mexico voted to cancel the conference in Mexico City.

2002 - Philippines selected as the site for the 6th international conference by the Management

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Committee of WPI.

2003 - The 6th international conference held in Manilla, Philippines.

2006 - The 7th international conference held in Jakarta and Bali, Indonesia. Theme: Cultural Liberty in a Diverse World

2009 - Mumbai Selected as site for Eight International Women's Playwrights Conference to be held in November 2009

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