



The World Conference of Screenwriters **Building International Solidarity by and for Screenwriters**

WCOS Berlin 2018 is the fourth major meeting of international screenwriters and their professional bodies. It reflects the maturing relationship among screenwriters' guilds, the growing sense of community among screenwriters, and the need for a united approach to the globalisation of the audiovisual industry.

A European Scriptwriting Festival 2004

The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE) initiated the first ever European-wide scriptwriters and scriptwriting festival. RISE (Rencontres Internationales des Scénaristes Européens) took place in Strasbourg, France in November 2004. Though its main aim was to highlight the craft of scriptwriting through a multi-faceted programme, it was the first time for most participants that they could exchange ideas and discuss their working conditions at a European level: intellectual property, contracts, remuneration, collective bargaining, emerging digital environment, changes in the industry, European policies, etc. They came to the conclusion that the solution to the problems of the European film and television industries lies in improving the condition for writers which will in turn improve the quality of scripts and the resulting films upon which they are based.

The European Screenwriters' Manifesto 2006

Quite naturally, the next event took a different shape to match this need for a common political action. The European Conference of Screenwriters in Thessaloniki, Greece, (organised on the occasion of the Thessaloniki Film Festival in November 2006), climaxed with the signing of a Screenwriters' Manifesto by the 120 participants. This manifesto has been translated into 15 languages, circulated and signed not only in Europe but all over the world. It was also supported by the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG). To quote from the Los Angeles Times "it is about as direct, succinct and no-nonsense as they come. Its first three planks are like sharp gunshots across the bow of the filmmaking industry:

- The screenwriter is an author of the film, a primary creator of the audiovisual work.
- The indiscriminate use of the possessory credit is unacceptable.
- The moral rights of the screenwriter, especially the right to maintain the integrity of a work and to protect it from any distortion or misuse, should be inalienable and should be fully honored in practice.” (Jay A. Fernandez, European writers issue a manifesto, in SCRIPTLAND, Special to The LA Times, February 21, 2007.)

Worldwide support to screenwriters’ strike in the US 2007

Meanwhile, in the United States, screenwriters started their long and successful strike against multi-national media conglomerates. In November 2007, the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG) co-ordinated an International Day of Solidarity in support of the Writers Guild of America (WGA). Writers demonstrated in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, English and French Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, France, Germany, Belgium, etc. The FSE and its national members fully supported their American colleagues. It was time for a global understanding of the shift in the industry and a strong mobilization to promote the creative work and working conditions of screenwriters in the world.

The First ever World Conference of Screenwriters 2009

FSE and IAWG co-organised the First World Conference of Screenwriters in Athens, Greece, in November 2009. It gathered more than 160 participants coming from 30 countries and representing 40 associations, guilds and unions of screenwriters. There were also several lawyers, specializing in copyright and “droit d’auteur” in the audiovisual sector, academics, leading staff members of the guilds, journalists, representatives of the industry, collecting societies and film academies. “Famous Oscar-Prize winners chat with busy telenovela-writers and internet rebels converse with old hands of the silver screen”, reported Dorothee Schön, German screenwriter. Indeed several worldwide renowned screenwriters of film and television contributed to the lively and high-level discussions.

The program addressed a range of issues relating to the changes in the production and distribution of film and television programmes worldwide as a result of the digital revolution and the changing strategies of the multinational conglomerates that dominate the industry. “The internet revolution has and will have more and more of an inexorable impact on storytellers and storytelling, through the new interconnectedness of our world”, said Christina Kallas, former President of FSE: “Screenwriters are the storytellers of our time and as such are at the very centre of such impact. The creative and financial challenges which we face can only be met if, in the true spirit of such interconnectedness, we join forces and work together.”

The conference concluded on a joint Declaration and a Joint Activity Programme that has reinforced the close collaboration between FSE and IAWG. “We understand the role of the written word and of the story well told. We understand the role of the writer in shaping the way people think about themselves, their culture, and their futures. And we understand the role of guilds and unions in making sure that all writers have the means to create their work in economic and artistic freedom” said Michael Winship, President of the WGAE.

> *Blog of the conference* <http://wcos.wordpress.com/>

Storytelling in the 21st Century: WCOS 2.0 2012

As a result of the success of the first world conference, FSE and IAWG have developed a major event for screenwriters’ guilds with the “WCOS model”: hosted by a national guild, two days of intense lectures, debates, workshops and social events to explore both craft and practical professional issues common to screenwriters, combined with FSE and IAWG annual general meetings and a spotlight on the audiovisual production of the host country.

The Second World Conference of Screenwriters, organised by FAGA, took place in Barcelona, Spain in November 2012. It focussed on understanding how the digitising of content and new production and distribution models affect both storytelling and the professional environment. The event was tailored for “the writers of Hollywood to those of Europe and beyond, writers of blockbuster films and writers of low budget local films, writers of television drama and of cinema films and of the first web series, sharing in common their fascination with story, to exchange information, debate issues, to talk about how they work and how the immense changes of the digital era will impact, not just on the stories they tell, but how those stories will be changed by the new technologies” said David Kavanagh, Executive Officer FSE.

Screenwriters are convinced by the internet's potential to boost the development of the sector, however the challenge they are now facing is to find new ways of organizing worldwide to share what is happening in each territory and seize the new opportunities that arise, including fair remuneration. “Writers are irreplaceable” said David J. Young, Executive Director of WGAw in an interview in which he explains why it is so important for screenwriters to develop collective power <http://vimeo.com/61121553>. (part of a series of interviews made by ALMA for the documentary film *Writing Heads*).

> *Blog of the conference* <http://wcos2012.wordpress.com/>

The third act! WCOS in Warsaw 2014

The conference in Warsaw in October 2014 focused on writing for television and the incredible success of TV series all over the world. Prominent speakers and guild representatives discussed the impact of developments in international production and distribution models on craft, copyright and contracts, how the evolution of writers' rooms has affected the careers of professional writers, and highlight the success of film and television in Poland and Scandinavia.

Chris Keyser, President of the Writers Guild of America, West concluded the conference with these words : « Great television is the work of great writers. And great writers are at their best when they are unhindered, when their work is unfiltered and undiluted (...) But whenever I speak to members of my own Guild, I remind them that we write alone, together. Within our own countries or across cultures, we are engaged in an extended written conversation – an endless typewritten braid – that, taken together, is a record of what it means to be human and alive in the 21st century. (...) And every once in a while, we get together in one room, to complain about how hard it is to do what we do – or to marvel at how much power we have to move the world ».

Participants adopted the Warsaw Resolution : “30 screenwriter guilds present in Warsaw at WCOS03, representing 56,000 writers, assert the essential role of the creator and his/her singular vision in the production of quality television (and) call for the financial means necessary through collective bargaining for all writers to be able to focus on their craft in order to support, encourage and preserve the professional quality of the stories the audience expects and deserves”. The participants also called “upon our commissioners, funders, studios, networks and broadcasters to set the goal of having 50% of scripts across genres and at every budget level written by women" through the Womens' Resolution.

Screenwriters are willing to write their future together!

**We are getting ready for the Fourth conference of Screenwriters
in Berlin on 10 and 11 October 2018 !**

THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF SCREENWRITERS WHAT THEY THINK OF IT

“ I’ve just spent five days in Athens, as a WGGB delegate to the First World Conference of Screenwriters. Writers spoke with a passion I hadn’t heard in a long time. I felt so inspired that if I wasn’t already a writer, I’d immediately become one ”. **Gail Renard (UK)**

“Our Guild’s agenda centers on the vital effort to elevate the craft of screenwriting, and to establish and defend the legal rights of screenwriters. We are stronger when this happens everywhere. In pursuit of this important goal, there is no substitute for gathering representatives of screenwriters worldwide in one place. Together we hear from each other and exchange experiences and best practices. Our employers, producers, and distributors are evermore global; so must we be. The World Conference of Screenwriters meets this important need perfectly”. **Chris Keyser, WGAW, USA**

“The World Conference of Screenwriters (WCOS) has evolved into an essential gathering of professional guilds and writers in film, television, and digital media. It is a place for dialogue on common struggles, the celebration of members’ successes, and a rare opportunity to engage with some of the most illustrious writers from around the globe. **Sarah Dearing, IAWG, Canada**

Bringing together the leading practitioners in contemporary screenwriting around the world, many of whom are also leaders in their national Writers' Guilds, makes for a thrilling, illuminating and provocative exploration of storytelling at the cutting edge, for a lively and intensive examination of current best practice, future trends and the challenges for writers, producers and audiences.” **Olivia Hetreed, Writers' Guild of Great Britain**

“After only three editions, the World Conference of Screenwriters has become an invaluable resource and platform for us. Every two years, it not only gives us the opportunity to benefit from the writing experiences of the most celebrated writers and creators in international tv and film, it also allows us to gain insight into the business end of things, the evolving technology which puts our writing on new platforms and the ever shifting sands of international legislation. It has

also provided our guild with contacts we can access for information the world over.” **Michel Sabbe, Flemish Screenwriters’ Guild, Belgium**

“The World Conference of Screenwriters connects storytellers and film makers from all across the globe. It gives the opportunity of an important multicultural dialogue and the exchange of ideas and experiences that encourages solidarity amongst the writers of the world. There is no doubt that the participants not only benefit personally from the experience (networking and inspiration) but also bring valuable information and knowledge back home with them for the advantage of their community.” **Margret Ornlfsdottir, FLH - Icelandic Dramatists’ Union, Island**

“Turkish screenwriters are deeply aware of the developments that are discussed in world conferences of screenwriters. The knowledge that we obtain in those conferences shed light onto our writers who have not reached their aim on copyright laws and fair remuneration. **İlker Barış, Turkish Screenwriters Association**
