

8th annual Conference of the Federation for European Storytelling
(FEST)

19 - 22 July 2015 on Kea Island, Greece

Hosted by the Centre for the Study and Dissemination of Folktales:
Mythos.



Kea Island

Attendance.

The Conference was attended by 75 storytellers including observers from Canada and South Korea. 19 European countries and 44 storytelling organisations were represented. 32 of these were members of FEST.

Arrival.

For the last few years it has become traditional to gather on the Sunday evening before the opening of the formal programme and all those who are able bring a small sample of typical food or drink from their countries. All contributors give a brief (1 minute, but nobody keeps to it!) introduction to their food



and their country and organisation and we then get to sample these offerings before going on to the evening meal. On this occasion we were also

Traditional dancers

treated to some traditional Greek dancing and, later, invited to join in.

Monday Morning

We gathered at the Cultural Centre in Korissia, where we were treated to an opening ceremony involving Greek mythology and music performed by four members of the host storytelling team. There followed the welcome from the FEST executive group and a presentation from our host, Giorgos Evgenikos: "The Symbolism of Fire in Mythos"

After coffee we heard a presentation led by Mr. Stavros Benos from an organization called Diazoma that works to revitalize ancient Greek theaters, and bring new cultural events to the ancient stages. They talked about research and restoration work, tourist programs, and ideas for future projects.

Three other presentations followed:

Marina Granlund (Sweden) introduced us to Project Hermes through a ritual invoking the Greek gods and a beautiful telling of the myth of Demeter and Persephone.

Maria Vrachionidou (Greece) gave a presentation about motifs of mythology possibly originating in folk tales and gave some interesting examples.

Stella Kassimati from Friends of Amari in Crete talked about how mythology and personal or family stories can be intertwined, and brought the story of Europa and Kadmos as an example.

This took us to a lunch of traditional Greek food, as were all the meals provided. We took a short bus journey to and from the restaurant and, this being Greek summer, retired until the early evening.

Monday evening.

For the evening we split into two groups:

Group A had presentations and discussions on "Training the Storyteller - Methods for developing performance skills." The presenters were:

Heidi Dahlsveen, Associate Professor in Storytelling, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences,

Ragnhild Morch, Artistic Director "Storytelling in Art and Education", Universitat der Kunste, Berlin,

Abbi Patrix, Director of Teaching, La Maison du Conte, Paris.

Sadly, I was not at this session but informal accounts were very enthusiastic, which is hardly surprising bearing in mind that all three presenters are formidable storytellers.

Group B considered "Storytelling in Education - Using Storytelling in Schools and Other Educational Centres." Here there were four presenters:

Guy Tilkin, Artistic Director, Alden Biesen Storytelling Castle, Belgium,

Regina Sommer, Director of Haus der Marchen und Geschichten, Aachen,

Jennifer Ramsay, Storyteller and teacher Trainer, Spain - and (after a quick change of venue)

Heidi Dahlsveen taking on her second stint of the evening..



Guy introduced us to the Tales Project (for more information visit

www.storiesforlearning.eu) The project had identified 8 key competences in education: Competence in mother tongue, competence in other language, Maths competence, digital competence, learning

to learn, social and civic competence, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and

Guy talks of the Tales Project expression.

Regina talked about narrative thinking in differing forms and introduced some quantitative and qualitative analysis showing that in mixed race groups the application of storytelling reduces conflicts and anxieties and increases perception of atmospheres and how others feel.

Heidi reported on a pilot scheme for boys aged 16 - 18 using a democratic story circle in which anyone is free to speak without interruption. Chairs are spaced at arms length distance from each other. In an intense two hours, story sharing happens naturally. Heidi is a compelling speaker and a huge personality and it is not difficult to see how she would achieve success but I wonder whether such a scheme for such a challenging group could be viable with a less able and energetic animator.

Jenny's subject was "active listening" using a short meditation to introduce awareness and then building on that to inspire storytelling. It is clear from conversations that both groups had a very stimulating experience and the fact that supper was 20 - 25 minutes walk away provided a good opportunity to share experience and (as if we needed it) sharpen appetite for the food to come.

Tuesday.

We were up bright and early for a bus at 8.30 to take us to the start of a brilliant story walk on traditional paths punctuated by traditional stories of the region. We were divided into three groups to make communication easier for the



storytellers. but We all shared the same experience and heard the same stories, albeit from different people. Finally we reached our destination, the Veniamin Fountain, where we wegathered under a magnificent old oak tree Lunch under the oak tree

to talk about storytelling and local tradition and heard examples from several storytellers from different countries as illustrations. The Women's Association of Kea "Meliti" arrived with a splendid lunch after which we were taken by bus back for the afternoon siesta.

Tuesday Evening.

We walked another 20 - 25 minutes (exercise was good in this Conference) to the Museum of Rural Folklore and Cultural Heritage at Mylopotamus for the evening round table discussions followed by supper.

There were four discussion subjects each occurring twice so that anyone could attend two subjects during the evening.

The subjects were:

storytelling festivals,

storytelling and inclusion - social, political, economic, immigrants,

Performance Storytelling and Theatre,

Storytelling as a healing art.

I attended storytelling and inclusion and we started by going round the circle to hear every individual's view of what inclusion meant to them. In the event the discussion widened to include education, immigration, disablement, prisons, refugees and Roma and to look at the roles of those who have authority or "care" over any of the above. The discussion was highly stimulating and many round the circle had first hand experience in one or more of the areas of discussion but the final conclusion was that there were two themes common to all: the storytellers must know what their role is and trust must be created between all parties to the activity if it is to have any chance of success.

The healing art session was attended by some of the nine Turkish delegates visiting FEST for the first time and they reported that they had just heard that terrorist activity in their country that day had resulted in the death of one of their close friends, devastating news that changed considerably the content of that session and, indeed, the mood of the Conference. Somehow we all got to breathing again and the business of the evening continued. If FEST issues more detailed accounts from the

discussion or workshop groups I will add them as appendices to this report.

After
Greek

French
blazed,
dancing,

entertainment with a mouth-watering presentation from the French of what would come next year.

Passing the torch



dinner, it was time for the delegation to pass the Conference "torch" to the delegation for 2016. Real fire there was singing and great and lively

Wednesday.

The last day is the day of the official members' meeting and any decisions that have to be made for the future.

Structures

The new structures proposed in Sweden in 2014 were confirmed so that FEST is managed by three officers on 5 year terms: Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, and an executive group of which each member serves up to three years.

The Officers are Guy Tilkin (Chair) (Belgium) with Abbi Patrix (France) and Regina Sommer (Germany).

Following elections, the new executive is:

3rd year: Davide Bardi (Italy),
Markus Luukkonen (Finland)

2nd year: Marina Granlund
(Sweden)

New: Ana Dusa (Slovenia),
Csenge Zalka (Hungary),
Sonia Carmona Tapia (Spain),



Sam Cannarozzi (France)
and Abbi Patrix as the management group representative.
New executive group with Guy Tilkin (Chair)

Future Conferences

2016 France

Following presentations and voting:

2017 Ireland

2018 Slovenia

Future

The aim is to raise funds by becoming participants in the Creative Europe Programme, "Networks". We have to contribute 20% and we get 80%

15 countries have to participate

Applications open July 2016 and close October 2016

Sonia will send links to use to get a PIC no.

Thanks

Finally, thanks to the FEST executive group for all the work that went into a splendid conference and also heartfelt thanks to Giorgos and all his very talented team for their welcome and support throughout the Conference. They were brilliant. Many of us stayed on to participate in and to enjoy the 13th Kea International Storytelling Festival.



Giorgos Evgenikos and the Greek hosting team

Martin Manasse.
2015.

July