Report concerning the jury nominations at the 3rd Hawler International Theater Festival, Erbil, Kurdistan/Iraq, October 7 – 13, 2013

Before the first session the jury was informed about the following:

The evaluation of awards is to be based on the rule that no production shall be awarded with more than one prize.

This principle was the essential base for the debates and the nominations of the international jury. Without this principle, the decisions might have been generally different.

The jury formulated the results of their evaluation and closed the discussion with the list of nominations on Saturday, October 12th, 2013 at 11:30 p.m. (after the last performance in the competition). At that time, the jury had the information, that two performances would not be in the competition: The dance performance “Waves” (Johanna Devi, Germany) and the performance „The Patience Stone“ (director: Mahde Hassan, Kurdistan/Iraq).

These were the decisions at the end of this last complete jury meeting:

**Best production**
- „More Than Rain“ (Belarus)

**Best Dance Production**
- “Ballet Bar” (France)

**Best Direction**
- Hafez Khalifa, “Relay”, (Tunisia)

**Best Scenography**
- Karokh Ibrahim “One Day in Ten Nights” (Kurdistan/Iraq)

**Best male actors/performers**
- Robert Kijogwa, “Three Levels above the earth” (Uganda)
- Bahman Haji* (Great Wall of China a.o.) Kurdistan/Iraq
  *This actor was nominated for a prize, because he was positively noticed in two productions. For this reason it was decided not to name a preference for a production, because his achievement was as good in one production as in the other.

**Best female actors/performers**
- Carmen Romero, “Little Changes”, (Germany)
- Trifa Karimiyan, “Darkening of White...”, (Iran)

**Jury Prize**
- Sami Abdulhameed, “Death of a stubborn citizen” (Bagdad/Iraq)

In addition, the jury made the following recommendations:

1. Productions should be chosen exclusively by an artistic commission who should watch live performances or a dvd in advance.
2. The Festival should concentrate on contemporary theatre forms from across the world.
3. The jury should be made aware from the start of the Festival which plays are not in the competition; and should have more time for consultation.
4. Planning for the Festival should begin earlier: it is suggested that as soon as one Festival is over, planning for the next should begin.
5. Communication and information about venues, plays, groups, etc, should be more easily available in different languages and in plenty of time. A constantly updated website would be best for this.

6. The organisers need to respect the audience, and not keep them hanging about outside the theatre before a performance; the audience should respect the performance by not using mobile phones, no flash photography, no walking about in the auditorium, etc. If plays were scheduled for 11am and 6pm, this point, and the point about the jury having more time between performances, might be solved.

7. Specialist practitioners at the Festival should be invited to give workshops, with participants in the Festival being given first choice of attending any such workshops.

8. The technical facilities at the theatre venues need to be improved.

9. There should be many more women involved in all areas of the Festival.

10. The budget should be more precisely targeted, and spending priorities clearly established.

It was also suggested that there might be a festival of Kurdish drama a few weeks ahead of the International Festival, when Kurdish groups from Iran, Turkey and Syria, as well as from Iraq, could compete, and the best one (or two) promoted to the main festival.

These results of the jury debate/process were to be proclaimed at the closing ceremony on October 13th.

On October 13th in the afternoon Dr. Fadil Jaf was informed by the festival direction, that the play „Darkening of White…“ (Iran) was not in the competition, because it is a monodrama. This information led to the misunderstanding that the jury had to nominate, in the short time still available, another person for one of the prizes for the best female actor.

At that time – about 2 hours before the opening ceremony - Dr. Fadil was with Robert Leach in the hills of Shaklava, to show the guest some of the touristic sides of the country.

I myself had left Erbil already in the night some hours after the last jury meeting and was on my journey back to Berlin. That’s why I can report on this difficult situation only based on what I learned from email correspondence and telephone conversation with Dr. Fadil Jaf, Hewa Suaad, Abdelwahed Bnou Yassir und Robert Leach.

Abdelwahed Bnou Yassir was on his way in a Taxi to the airport and was available on the phone for only a few minutes. Also Ghotbedin Sagheedin could be informed and asked about this sudden difficult situation only for a short time because of a bad telephone connection.

To find an honourable solution for this unforeseen problem it was agreed to give the Iranian actress the “jury prize” (The rules for the jury allow this possibility as exception).

Now one of the two prizes for the best female actor/performer was left unfilled. So the decision was made, that Ms. Gelaz Nasr, who was a previous proposition on the list, should move up for the prize.

These decisions were made under tremendous pressure of time and inadequate communication. Under these conditions, it was overlooked, that with this decision “One day in ten nights” would receive two prizes, which contravened the principal rule of the jury evaluation. The result of this chain of mistakes in the organisation of the festival, of ongoing communication problems and lack of time was a false picture of the structure of evaluation.

In no sense does the fact that this production was given two awards mean that the Jury considered this production to be better than other productions that also won awards.

“More than rain” (Belarus) was - and is – considered to be the best production by the Jury. It is not excluded, that awarded productions could have shown more than one outstanding achievement. But the rule not to award any production more than once excludes these multiple achievements from being awarded with further prizes.
The modifications of the nominations were made with the most well-meaning intentions under tremendous time pressure and in the most inappropriate conditions. They are obviously regrettable; but they are now in the past, and cannot be further changed.

The jury was not correctly informed about which plays were in the competition. If the jury had had the possibility to discuss the altered composition and the changed conditions at the right time and in the correct circumstances, decisions might have been generally different.

The jury declares: It is not correct, that the jury gets information that has an essential impact on the debate after their last meeting and after their decisions have already been formulated!

In addition, the jury declares that in the future the schedule for the jury members should be organized in such a way so that all members can stay in Erbil until the closing ceremony.