

STORYTELLING FOR FAMILIES

Chris Smith, Sally Pomme Clayton, Vergine Gulbenkian

Top British story-tellers performed tales from around the world. Entertaining the audience with word and song, Smith, Pomme Clayton and Gulbenkian took their listeners to Armenia, Palestine, Central Asia, and England with their tales.

"ENFANTS D'ICI, CONTES D'AILLEURS"

Using videos to illustrate his talk, Thomas Chullikal described the work of the Menuhin Foundation, Brussels. He focussed on their ongoing, long-term project "Enfants d'ici, Contes d'ailleurs" (*Children from here, stories from outside*). He brought along examples of the books produced to introduce the history, culture and folktales of different groups. One of these is about Armenians and the Foundation was assisted in its production by the Armenian Institute. The project also focussed on Kurds, Gypsies and Berbers, with storytellers from each of these groups visiting schools in Belgium, France, Spain and Greece. After listening to the stories, the children would be assisted in illustrating them - and then be treated to entertainment and more storytelling by musicians from these peoples.

Susan Pattie, IWB Project Director

EVALUATION BY PARTICIPANTS

All participants were asked to provide written feedback and critique of the events. These are on record in the archive of the Armenian Institute and are summarised below.

Most important ideas to emerge

Diaspora is as a "general, significant fact" in life today, changing the structures of societies. It is important to explore comparisons between peoples, other models, etc. as discussed at this conference.

Diasporas are diverse themselves with implications for individual choice as well as representation.

We need to bring together people from different specialities, disciplines to build a more complex, realistic picture of the experience of diaspora living. Furthermore, to find a coherent underpinning for society, along with an educated appreciation of diversity.

Evaluation of the programme

10/10, wonderful. Stimulating. Warm, friendly, comfortable organisation. Well-balanced and informative. The mix of academic and practical was "a real aid to new insights". Excellent organisation and format. Very worthwhile and interesting. Could have been linked together more effectively. Discussions could have been more focussed and would have been aided by shared definitions stated at the beginning. Perhaps too many themes and not enough time for full discussion.

Suggestions for follow-up

Conflict should be explored in more detail and depth. Organise something similar focused on young people and children.

Explore the meaning of the Armenian diaspora for second, third generations, including those of mixed parentage. Need for research into persistence of Armenian identity.

Explore the opposite. majority identities and how they are constructed and reinforced in relation to contact with diaspora groups.

How to formulate educational policy to assist in the integration of migrant groups?

Organise future events around one practical theme and bring in experts to develop curricula, resources, training programmes.

Other comments

Focus on the "results" that we need to achieve for a specific place, i.e. it is difficult to find solutions that work everywhere and thus a specific focus would be useful when looking for practical results.

New funding would be most productive if used to bring together artists, pedagogues, etc. in a forum where they could come up with new texts, videos, other resources that could then be distributed for use.

A most useful future workshop would be training sessions for western journalists in new attitudes towards immigration, refugees, diversity.

Need for specific discussion of the London Armenian community.

Dr. Susan Pattie, Project Director; Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian, Project Development, Dr. Razmik Panossian, Advisor

The **ARMENIAN INSTITUTE** is dedicated to making Armenian culture and history a living experience through innovative programmes, educational resources, workshops, academic events, exhibits and performances. Particular attention is paid to contemporary diasporan life. The Institute seeks new ways to combine the richness of the past with the needs of future, thus making Armenian heritage relevant to present diasporan life. The Institute builds multicultural bridges within Britain and beyond, promoting cross-cultural interaction, collaboration and networking. Since its founding in 2001, the Institute has organised over 30 educational, cultural, academic and community events, including workshops for children and adults, lectures, seminars, film screenings, concerts, and publications.



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