



FIA President's First Message – September 30th, Toronto, Canada

I am deeply honoured to have been elected FIA President at our 20th World Congress in Toronto in September, 2012. On behalf of myself, of my home union ACTRA, and of my country, Canada, I promise to do my best to deepen the ties that bind our FIA family together.

It's quite a journey that we undergo individually as artists. As performers we share many challenges because the life of an artist is never an easy path. It's a precarious career filled with uncertain work opportunities and fluctuating paycheques; it's built on taking risks, embracing change and reinventing oneself. The pressure to adapt is constant and with the digital revolution that pressure has never been more persistent. Fifty years ago the great Canadian thinker Marshall McLuhan looked into the future and saw the rise of what he called "The Global Village". And that is the community we live in today.

As young artists, strength and solidarity first comes from being part of a company of actors. We find our "home" and in time we realize that no matter where we live in the world, we all share the actor's dream of creating a performance that transcends its individual components and connects with an audience in a deep and transformative way. We acknowledge the difficult work on the path in front of us.

As producers consolidate their power-- becoming large, vertically integrated corporations with ever greater international reach -- professional performers must build even stronger international solidarity and work towards global agreements to protect performers' rights.

Let's us also take time to celebrate what we've achieved together. The Beijing Treaty is proof of what can be done when we resolutely work together with a long view of what the future may hold. FIA invested 20 years of determined, focused, persistent advocacy to create a moral, practical and legal consensus on the rights of performers. Together, we achieved a treaty that is our launching pad for critical IP protection for audiovisual artists.

Globalization truly has transformed the fabric of society and FIA's global membership will continue to tackle the challenges that face performers worldwide. We are living through a digital revolution as profound and challenging as The Industrial Revolution that changed the world not so very long ago. The disparity between the weak and the strong has become even greater - but at the same time our awareness of injustice and inequity has also grown.

I pledge to help FIA unions organize; harnessing and building on the international solidarity of performers within this digital universe. We will keep alive the spirit of those who have gone before us and achieved so much on our behalf.

I will always honour Agnete Haaland as our FIA (Past) President and Dominick as our General Secretary for their steadfast commitment to our members. Agnete has proven to be a vital, passionate leader - and I would have never had the courage to try and fill her shoes without her support and inspiration.

I am buoyed by the experience and depth of knowledge that our devoted Secretariat and hard-working Presidium and Executive Committee bring to FIA. FIA Congress 2012 brought us clear and well-defined priorities that will be the road map for the next four years. We will keep our eye on the prize – which is to make a meaningful difference in artists' lives. I am heartened by the respectful conversation at FIA about inclusion, diversity and non-discrimination and the important work we will do to assist developing unions grow strong and healthy.

Global solidarity must be the bedrock upon which FIA will continue to build. We will campaign to secure the right to freedom of expression for all performers in all countries. We will resist any power that conspires to work against our best interests. We will pursue our ideals – and make them real.

Together, we will accomplish great things.

Thank you. Merci. Gracias.

In solidarity,
Ferne Downey