

## **INTERVIEW WITH ATHINA RIKAKI**

Athina Rikaki was elected on CIFEJ's board of directors in September 2000 during the General Assembly held in Montreal. Renowned for her strenuous work at ECTC, we wanted to know what keeps her going so strong.

1. For nearly 10 years you have been directing the European Children's Television Center. What was the decisive factor for you to get involved in this procedure?

It was a unique moment in my life when I was freed of previous obligations and was able to dream, even of things that have never existed. Children and communication have always been my specialty. Communication was acquiring unheard of dimensions and children were the natural users of and beneficiaries from that communication because they had familiarized themselves with the new media. I conceived a plan for a cultural and political movement, which would be addressed to professionals in Southern Europe and could potentially acquire a voice internationally. A young academic and government Minister, Mr. Evangelos Venizelos, perceived the value of the project, and placed the ECTC by Presidential Decree among the projects being supervised by the Press Ministry and presented it to the European Union as a national initiative from Greece. European Union support for the innovative programs we were drawn up establishing ECTC as a key Hellenic initiative in the European audiovisual field.

2. What has been your biggest challenge since then?

The Mediterranean is a maritime region of magic and fascination, with a host of different languages, religions and cultural traditions. The problem of communication is magnified here. The professionals of the Mediterranean are nevertheless in a position through joint effort to display the audio-visual potential of the region. In order to rise to this challenge, we are now working in close co-operation with European, Arab, and Middle East countries. This year we are announcing the establishment by ECTC and the Giffoni Film Festival of an Audio-Visual Summer School. In 2003, Raisat Ragazzi is organizing and hosting ECTC's annual event, AGORA, in Italy. In the framework of the Greek presidency of the Council of Europe there will be a presentation of Med Observatory, which monitors developments in the children's audiovisual sector. We are moving ahead!

3. How do you assess the state of children's media in this new millennium?

In all my educational and television experience I have followed a single approach. For users of each medium to be assisted in finding their own path to knowledge. It is for this reason that ECTC seeks to have children becoming creators of their own audiovisual work and, when they have familiarized themselves with and mastered well-tested production

methods, expressing themselves in their own audiovisual language. It is also one of our objectives that professionals get to know the workings and the use of the new media and recommend the tools that are needed to express the content they have at their command. The new media offer numerous different methods for tailor-made construction of tools and software if only we can describe the features that would best serve the content.

#### 4. How important is the work of CIFEJ?

The work of CIFEJ interests me for two reasons: Firstly because cinema “calls the shots” as it were in shaping the international audiovisual environment. Most creators of children’s cinema who are in a position to bring professionals in the audiovisual milieu to quality artistic expression of their content are members of CIFEJ. Secondly, CIFEJ is a world-wide organization and is now attempting to open up to the new media. CIFEJ has a platform for disseminating information on the international audiovisual scene and this can be utilized by national and international bodies seeking to make their activities known to professionals throughout the world and to children. It is for this reason that I proposed both to CIFEJ and ECFA to undertake the organization of the Kids for Kids Festival, which is held each year and promotes audiovisual creations by children which have won awards at festivals throughout the world.

#### 5. If you could start your career all over, would you choose the same path?

I have never been a career person, so I don’t really know what it involves and it rather frightens me. All I have done is take some social and political initiatives in the field of education and culture. If we are speaking merely of a life-course then I think that everyone chooses to do what he can do best in the environment in which he lives. If you want to talk about hypothetical environments and other possibilities of that kind, then dreams are incomparably greater than the years of one’s life.