Changing of the International Liaison Chairs
by Carol Pendergast

Though we haven’t yet devised an appropriate ceremony for the “Changing of the Chairs,” I am in the process of vacating my International Liaison Chair and turning it over to Naomi Frenkel and Marlene Johnson, who will be sharing it and expanding VASTA’s International Liaison work. I will still be glad to provide them and other members with information and ideas when asked, but am now so busy with my own “international liaisons” (see Regional News, Southeast, for my details) that I thought it best to pass this work on to other volunteers who will be able to keep you informed more regularly of international events in which you may wish to participate. In fact, as you read this, Naomi will be in Europe making some contacts and getting more news for all of us. She and Marlene will also be glad to receive any news and ideas you may have about international festivals, workshops, courses, etc.

As I conclude my International Liaison Chairpersonship, I want to inform you of a great way of furthering your own international contacts: that is by attending the 11th International Session of ISTA (International School for Theatre Anthropology), which will be held in Portugal from Sept. 14-20, 1998 (announced early enough to allow time to apply for grants). Before giving you further details on this, I want to let you know that I’ve attended two of the ISTA sessions, one in Umea, Sweden, and one in Copenhagen (which was also attended by VASTA members Katherine Fitzmaurice, Joan Melton, and Lynn Kremer). In addition to always having fascinating subject matter and outstanding speakers and performers from many parts of the world, these conferences offer great networking possibilities! It is thanks to contacts made through ISTA that I went to Brazil in September and am lecturing in Paris in December.

Here are more details on the 1998 ISTA: the cost will be only $350 for the week (Sept. 14-20), which includes registration, board and lodging for the week, as well as attendance at the performances and lectures that will be presented at the Lisbon Symposium from Sept. 23-25. The deadline for application is May 15, 1998. Official languages will be English, Portuguese and Spanish. For further information and the attractive ISTA brochure, contact Gruppo Teatrale Immagini, Festival Sete Sois Sete Luas, Largo General Humberto-Delgado 7, 7050 Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal; Phone and Fax: 011-351-66-891392; e-mail: immagini@pontedera.pisofit.it; internet: http://www.pisofit.it.7sois7luas

Adieu for now — must hurry and get my bags packed for the Brazil trip tomorrow!

A Report on the London Voice Intensive
by Rena Cook

I traveled to London this summer to participate in a course entitled, "International Voice Intensive" with Patsy Rodenburg. I had experienced Patsy’s work at the VASTA Conference in San Francisco and thought I knew what to expect. But, my expectations were far exceeded.

The focus was, of course, the voice work under the tutelage of master teacher Patsy Rodenburg, head of the voice departments at the Royal National Theatre and Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In addition, the course participants were exposed to and interacted with some of the finest artists working in Western theatre today: Judi Dench, actress; Richard Eyre, Artistic Director of the Royal National Theatre, and director of three of the shows currently in Rep at the National; Trevor Nunn, former Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company and Artistic Director Designate for the National; Joan Washington, British Dialect; Jeannette Nelson, singing and RP dialect; Toby Jones, director and actor; Celina Cadell, actress and teacher; Dr. Garfield Davies, Otolaryngologist; Nicholas Wright, playwright; David Carey, Coordinator at the Central School of Speech and Drama. We also had singing coaching with Jeannette Nelson and daily Alexander work with Kelly McEvenue (both of who assisted Patsy at the VASTA conference in San Francisco).

Our small group of 11 consisted of eight American voice coaches and professors, an actress from South America, a voice teacher from Ireland, and an actress/singer living in New York. This number was perfect to afford each of us plenty of individual work including private tutorials with Patsy, Jeannette, and Kelly. Patsy had also arranged a rare opportunity for us to try our hand, or rather our voices, at projecting on all three of the National stages: the Olivier, the Lyttelton and the Cottesloe.

Patsy’s work provided the foundation. She is distinguished by her gentle nature and by the passion with which she conveys her views about voice, actor training, and her love of Shakespeare. She is an advocate of intense and specific technique training for actors. Her method is simple and straightforward, divided into seven parts: body, breath, support, placement, resonance and range of the voice, speech and text. The various exercises she took us through each day are accessible and yield results for both the novice and the seasoned professional. Her work is clearly laid out in her new book The Actor Speaks, which will be available in the U.S. in January.

We attended four shows in the National’s current repertoire: Amy’s View by David Hare; King Lear; Lady in the Dark; The Cripple of Inishmaan, a new play by Marin McDonagh. I was also fortunate enough to get a much sought-after ticket for the National’s production of Guys and Dolls. It was apparent that all these shows possessed commonalities: a standard of clear, articulate, confident delivery of dialogue and accurate, non-self-conscious use of dialects. The importance placed on voice, text, and language feed into a London theatre aesthetic marked by clarity, vitality, and a richness of storytelling that underlies all work.