



The World Poetry Academy creation took place on 23 June 2001 in Verona. Actually in this city which gave birth to the Latin poet Catullus, which welcomed Dante and let him finish his “Divina Commedia”, which inspired Shakespeare and which received Goethe, Dickens, Lord Byron and many other writers and artists, it was held the constitutive assembly of the World Poetry Academy, with the support of the Municipality of Verona and of the General Directorate for Cultural Promotion and Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UNESCO, Region Veneto, Province of Verona and the University of Verona showed their interest and support. Many private sponsors made contribution to the success of the event: the Insurance Company Cattolica, Volkswagen-Vicentini, the newspaper L’Arena, Verona Fairs organization, Verona Tourist Board, Association of Industrialists of Verona, Air Dolomiti, Group of Young Entrepreneurs API Industry. The creation of the World Poetry Academy actually answered both to a general need and to an institutional worry. In these days when the globalisation of the economy and of the communication aims at unifying behaviours and ways of life, at extolling a consumer pattern of expression and exchange and at minimizing the cultural differences and of the individual peculiarities, and when the barbarity threatens the foundations of civilization, the defence of poetry and of values both singular and universal which it spreads seems to be more than ever a matter in the agenda. This is the political and cultural reason of the action taken up. On the other hand, there was also an opportunity of institutional nature which had to be seized. Actually, in the 30th session held in Paris in 1999, the general Conference of UNESCO adopted a resolution (n. 29) that proclaimed the 21 March of each year the World Poetry Day. In order to carry out this resolution it was necessary not only to watch out that each country member of UNESCO celebrated the 21 March as World Poetry Day in its territory, but also to establish an organization that brought together permanently an Aeropagus of poets all around the world to create a “conservatory” of the excellence of poetry and a creative link among the different poetic expressions of the five continents. Therefore, from 22 to 24 June 2001 Verona, declared by UNESCO World Heritage City as well as city of art and culture, welcomed about fifty poets coming from the different geo-cultural

VERONA WORLD CAPITAL OF POETRY



areas of the world:

from Africa the Nobel Prize for Literature 1986 Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Jean Baptiste Tati Loutard (Congo) and Babacar Sall (Senegal);

from Latin America the President of PEN Club International Homero Aridjis (Mexico), Haroldo de Campos (Brazil), Marcia Theophilo (Brazil) and Luis Mizon (Chile);

from Asia Ayyappa Paniker (India), Gozo Yoshimasu (Japan) and Ko Un (South Korea);

from the Arabic world Adonis and Mahmoud Darwich;

from Europe Mario Luzi (Italy), Kenneth White (Great Britain), André Velter (France), Andrei Voznesenski (Russia), Ana Blandiana (Romania), Jean Portante (Luxembourg);

from North America Nicole Brossard (Canada) and Jerome Rothenberg (United States); just to name some of them. Great poets, like Leopold Sedar Senghor, Seamus Heaney (Nobel Prize for Literature), Yves Bonnefoy and Andrea Zanzotto, who accepted to be members of our Academy, could not be physically present in Verona. In the morning of 23 June 2001 there took place a constitutive assembly in the Sala Arazzi in the City Hall of Verona. During the meeting a project of statute and a programme of activities were adopted. The Chancellor, Prof. Nadir M. Aziza, was elected. In the afternoon of the same day a solemn ceremony of creation of the World Poetry Academy took place in the Teatro Filarmonico in Verona. The birth of the World Poetry Academy is the challenge of some people who, in a world weakened by the lack of landmarks and by the denying violence, wanted to build a compass to lead our steps in the paths of light where the flowers of beauty, of realization and of tolerance bloom. But it is a task for everybody to accept this challenge and to give back to poetry the prestigious place it had at the dawning of mankind, when the Homeric bards could talk and sing on behalf of the tribe and deny death and finiteness through the fire of memory in the hollow of praying hands.