

# Lecture

## PASSION PLAY CONFERENCE



*STAGE IT IN YOUR CITY!*

2ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
2ND FEB 2013

WOODLAND GRANGE  
CONFERENCE CENTRE,  
LEAMINGTON SPA

## INTRODUCTION:

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for inviting me to this conference to tell you more about Europassion.

First I would like to introduce myself.

My name is Lex Houba. I am member of the board of the Passion Play in Tegelen in the Netherlands. Tegelen lies in the most southern province of the Netherlands at the German border. The Belgian border is about 30 kilometers to the west.

Although I am Dutch, I also speak German, French and English, but my English is probably not my best language, so please my apologies for that.

The Passion Play in Tegelen started in 1931. Our Passion Play is performed by around 400 performers, every five years in an open air theatre, lying in the centre of the village. 2010 was our last season, where we had 46.000 spectators in 23 performances.

I am proud that I can say that we had three times royal visit; in 1948 by queen Wilhelmina, in 1990 and last season 2010 by queen Beatrix.

In 2010 I had my 60 years jubilee as a member of the Passion Play in Tegelen, the last 20 years as a member of the board.

I have always been interested in Passion Plays all over the world. Through the internet I searched and found lots of Passion Plays; also more than 120 Passion Plays in the United Kingdom.

I contacted several Passion Plays (also in the UK) by email, asking them to send me some information about their Passion Play.

In 2011 I had my first contact to Alex Stewart Clark. He told me about the Passion Play Conference, to be held in London on the 14th of February 2012 and invited me to his congress.

Unfortunately that date was not possible for me, so I invited him to the annual general assembly of Europassion, to be held at Schönberg in the German part of Belgium.

We were very happy to welcome in the second weekend of April 2012 Alex Stewart Clark. Linzy Brady, Sally Mears and professor Jolyon Mitchell from the University of Edinburgh as well.

And today I am for the first time in the United Kingdom for your second Passion Play Conference.

I have to apologise our Secretary General, Josef Lang, but today I am together with another member of the board of Europassion, Hermann-Josef Christen from the earlier mentioned Schönberg, where he is also member of the board of that Passion Play.

As Schönberg organised the general assembly last year, Hermann-Josef will tell you how it is to host such a general assembly.

## EUROPASSION

The interpretation of the Passion has a long tradition in Europe.

Nowadays Passion Plays are performed in many European countries, and additionally there are a lot of representations of the Passion and a lot of Passion processions during the Holy Week.

Already for a long time, single towns had friendly relations, especially on national and sometimes also on international level.

The Passion Play of Tegelen has since about 40 years contacts to the Passion Play of Ligny (in the French part of Belgium) and Nancy in France.

The idea to unite groups, performing Passion Plays, was born almost 30 years ago.

Maurice Clos from the Passion Play of Paris-Menilmontant, who died in 2009 at the age of 98 in Paris, was one of the tireless fighters for this idea. His motto was:” Aimez-vous les uns les autres” or in English “Love each others.”

First I will tell you something about the history of Europassion, followed by what is Europassion today.

## HISTORY OF EUROPASSION

In May 1982 there was a meeting in Esparreguera (near Barcelona in Spain) with the participation of the Passion Plays of Loudéac, Nancy and Masevaux from France, and the Passion Plays of Uldecona, Olesa de Montserrat and Esparreguera from Spain.

The idea for this meeting was born in the Abbey of Montserrat.

Already here, the idea for an umbrella organisation of Passion Plays from different European countries has been suggested.

In 1984, 10 delegations participated in a first official meeting in Loudéac in Brittany in France.

For the first time, a charter of an umbrella organisation of the European Passion Plays was considered. This planned umbrella organisation was to be called “Passions d’Europe” (Passion Plays of Europe).

In 1989, 16 delegations, particularly French speaking and Spanish groups, came together for a workshop in Loudéac on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Passion Play of Loudéac.

The Passion Plays confirmed their intention to preserve the character and originality of each group and not to belittle the mutual respect by judging each other.

The goal of “Passions d’Europe” would not be a uniform model Passion Play one day; it’s wealth would rather be their diversity.

They also decided to have a general assembly every year; every year at an other place in Europe.

In 1990 for the first time German groups were invited to Masevaux (in the Alsace in France).

In the same year there was an international meeting in Ötigheim in Germany in which for the first time Passion Plays from Austria participated.

In 1992, 26 Passion Plays followed an invitation to Paris-Menilmontant in France.

This was the first time that Passion Play groups from eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Czech Republic) participated.

These groups wanted to revive their old Passion Play tradition after the downfall of communism.

They were promised moral and financial support by the western Passion Plays.

At a meeting of 27 delegations from 12 European countries in 1995 in Ligny (Belgium) the foundation as an incorporated association of European Passion Plays was decided.

The name of “Passions d’Europe” has changed in “Europassion”.

Statutes were developed and discussed extensively. Josef Lang of the Passion Play of Auersmacher (near Saarbrücken in Germany) was voted Secretary General unanimously.

Maurice Clos received the title of President of Honour and Ligny was registered as Office of Europassion.

In 1996, 34 delegations from 12 countries adopted the statutes of Europassion at the yearly general assembly in St. Margarethen (Burgenland in Austria, near the Hungarian border).

During that assembly I was voted to become treasurer of Europassion.

According to his statutes, the goals of Europassion are:

- The proclamation of the message of Christ by means of a performance of the Passion,
- The promotion of cultural and human relations between the Passion Play communities,
- The exchange of experience between the single groups and the discussion of points of principles about the interpretation of the Passion, without belittling the diversity of interpretations by the different groups,
- The promotion of any kind of religious theatre or sacral performances, whose most important interpretation is the Passion of Christ,
- The organisation of friendly and solidary relations between the single groups.

## EUROPASSION TODAY

As mentioned before, every year there will be a general assembly, each year organised by an other Passion Play.

Every Passion Play within Europassion has the opportunity to organise this general assembly, mostly from Friday afternoon till Sunday afternoon.

There are three conditions, set by the board of Europassion:

- to create a possibility of an official meeting, if possible with simultane translation (for instance on Saturday morning);
- the performing of their Passion Play;
- and a Holy Mess on Sunday morning.

The organisation of the rest of the program is free.

They also decide how many persons are allowed to come and under what conditions.

The people that visit the assembly have to pay for this weekend, but the maximum price for this weekend is set by the board of Europassion at EUR 150.

At the general assembly, every member of Europassion has ONE vote, independant of the size of their representation, the number of performances or spectators.

Every Passion Play has the opportunity to become member of Europassion. This is possible by presenting a petition to the Secretary General of Europassion, mr. Josef Lang.

Probably the only condition is the members of Europassion have to pay a contribution, currently EUR. 100 every year.

At this moment 93 Passion Plays from 15 different European countries are member of Europassion.

It might be that, after this information about Europassion, Passion Plays from the UK are interested to become member of Europassion.

They then will be representants of the 16th country within Europassion.

The general assemblee this year will be organised by the Passion Play of Erl (in Tirol in Austria).

The organisation of this assemblee in the following years will be:

2014 by Loudéac in France,  
2015 by Sordevolo in Italy,  
2016 by Cieszyn in Poland,  
2017 by Rieden in Germany,  
2018 by Budaors in Hungary,  
2019 by Paris in France,  
2020 by Tirschenreuth in Germany and  
2021 by Skofja Loka in Slovenia.

Coming to an end I would like to mention two things:

In 2007, on occasion of the 25th anniversary of Europassion, there was a meeting in Esparreguera, where Europassion was born in 1982.

There we had a performance of a Passion Play, performed by 13 different Passion Play groups from Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands.

Each Passion Play played a scene in their own language and in their own clothes. It was a wonderful experience, directed by the director of the Passion Play of Esparreguera.

Because of the success, we are within the board talking about the possibilities to do this again.

Finally, at the general assembly in Cantiano in Italy in 2010, Europassion and the Cultural Counsel of the Pope in Rome signed an agreement protocol.

This protocol was signed by Mgr. Pasquale Iacobone, representing the president of the Cultural Counsel, Kardinal Gianfranco Ravasi; the Secretary General of Europassion, Josef Lang and the Mayor of Cantiano, Dr. Martino Panico.

This would be my story about Europassion.

As told at the beginning, I will now ask Hermann-Josef to tell you more about hosting a general assembly of Europassion.

If there are any questions, Hermann-Josef and I will try to answer them after his talking.

I thank you very much for your attention.