

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AATF ANNUAL CONVENTION IN ATLANTA

The 77<sup>th</sup> AATF Annual Convention officially opened at the Hilton Hotel in Atlanta on July 19, 2004. However, in addition to months of planning, the organizers' work began earlier in the preceding week. AATF Executive Director Jayne Abrate and her Assistant April Walsh drove from National Headquarters in Illinois to Atlanta, notwithstanding a hailstorm and nonstop international communication thanks to cell phone



The AATF Executive Council

technology. The AATF Executive Council arrived on Thursday and, under the leadership of President Margot Steinhart, met for two days of planning and deliberations at the Airport Hilton. Past-President and President of the Atlanta Organizing Committee Jean-Pierre Piriou left the meeting on Friday morning to attend a press conference



(from left) Chantal Manès, Executive Director Jayne Abrate, *Ministre de la Francophonie* Xavier Darcos, President Margot Steinhart, Past-President Jean-Pierre Piriou, French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte

at City Hall with Mayor Shirley Franklin providing an official send-off to the convention.

On Saturday, the Executive Council transferred to the downtown Hilton, and attendees and dignitaries began arriving. Slightly more than half the participants stayed at the Hilton, while most of the rest were housed in residence halls at nearby Emory University.

An all-day *va-et-vient* on Sunday between the Hilton and the airport ensured the safe and timely arrival of the dignitaries. Carefully coordinated by Cécile Peyronnet and Aurélien Lépine-Kouas of the French Consulate in Atlanta, the feat was managed with aplomb despite several flight delays and a

missing passenger. The Organizing Committee wishes to thank the French Consul in Atlanta, René-Serge Marty and his staff for organizing a reception for the boards of the AATF and the FIPF as well as invited guests and members of the community on Sunday evening. He also hosted a dinner at his residence for a number of dignitaries and community members. AATF President Margot Steinhart and Executive Director Jayne Abrate were pleased to attend this event.

Also Sunday evening, convention attendees were treated to a reception and concert by singers Nathalie Renault from New Brunswick and Laurence Jalbert from Quebec, sponsored by the government of Canada.

Monday's Opening Ceremonies were presided over by Abdou Diouf, former President of Senegal and *Secrétaire général de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*. At the opening ceremony, he was joined on the podium by AATF President Margot Steinhart, the President of the FIPF, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, Éliane

De Pues-Levaque, Permanent Representative of the *Communauté française de Belgique en Louisiane*, Nathalie Normandeau, *Ministre au Développement régional et au Tourisme du Québec*, Michael F. Kergin, Canadian Ambassador to the U.S., and Xavier Darcos, *Ministre délégué à la*

*coopération, au développement et à la Francophonie* (France), who also read a message from French President Jacques Chirac. Following the opening remarks, M. Diouf presented awards to the winners of the *Concours TV5* and the *Tour du monde de la Francophonie*. After a pause for lunch, participants returned to the Grand Ballroom to hear Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, *Secrétaire perpétuelle à l'Académie française*, followed by a round table featuring *les*

*opérateurs de la Francophonie*. Later, attendees were able to get a first look at the 70 exhibits during a Wine and Cheese Reception. Monday evening, *chanteur, compositeur et auteur cadrien* Zachary Richard entertained participants with a concert of *musique américaine francophone*. He had everyone on their feet dancing and received a standing ovation.



M. Abdou Diouf

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were devoted to break-out sessions given by *congressistes* themselves as well as invited experts. Each day focused on a different theme, *la Diversité des politiques linguistiques, la Diversité pédagogique et didactique, and la Diversité des usages*, respectively. The keynote speakers for each day were Guy Dumas, *Sous Ministre associé responsable de l'application de la politique linguistique* (Quebec), AATF member Sally Magnan, University of Wisconsin, and Henriette Walter (France). Each day's professional program featured semi-plenary sessions, round tables, workshops, and papers. The *congressistes* were also able to continue visiting the exhibit hall, participate in the exhibitors' raffle, have their picture taken for a press release, check their e-mail in the *Cybercafé* (sponsored by Renault Eurodrive and CAVILAM), be entertained by music and poetry in the *Café-concert*, and make new friends during and between sessions.

The cultural program of the convention continued with each evening highlighting a different Francophone area. Tuesday evening, attendees were entertained by the Royal Drummers of Africa, directed by Mor Thiam. Many of the troupe's members perform regularly at Disney World. We extend a special thanks to *Attachée culturelle* Cécile Peyronnet for all she did to organize and secure sponsors for this remarkable



The Royal Drummers of Africa



L'Équipe de France: (from left) Pascale De Schuyter (MAE, Paris), Pascal Hanse (MAE, Paris), Dominique Geslin (MAE, Paris), Fabrice Jaumont (French Embassy, NY), Chantal Manès (French Embassy, Washington), Xavier North, Director du français au MAE, Adam Steg (French Consulate, New Orleans), Samia Benaouret (stagiaire)

spectacle. On Wednesday, TV5 sponsored an evening moderated by Bernard Pivot and entitled "Double Jeu à Atlanta" where many teachers were able to share their experiences. Thursday evening, the government of Quebec offered attendees an evening of traditional music and dance by *La Grand' Débâcle*.

Friday morning began with a keynote speech by Dyane Adam (Canada)



Bernard Pivot

followed by two round table discussions, one on French in the Americas, moderated by AATF Past-President Jean-Pierre Piriou, and the other a round table of Francophone authors, moderated by Christopher Pinet, Editor of the *French Review*. The closing ceremonies, including a statement summarizing the deliberations of the convention adopted by attendees, concluded the day's professional program. All that remained was the *Soirée festive*, an evening of music, dance, and food with a DJ where participants could share their experiences and give the convention a proper send-off. By the enthusiasm of the dancers who remained until the very last song (Ray

the support of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* and the *Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie* enabled many teachers from all over the world to participate. All the representatives with whom the AATF had contact were supportive and cooperative. In particular, we would like to thank Anissa Barrak and Michèle Marcadier. We would also like to thank the many sponsors whose contributions helped make the event a huge success--the government of Canada, the government

Charles' rendition of "Georgia On My Mind" which reflected the mood of the participants), the event was a rousing success.

On Saturday morning, about 120 congressistes participated in bus tours of Atlanta, taking them on a visit of historic neighborhoods, to the Martin Luther King and Jimmy Carter Centers, and to Coca Cola and CNN World Headquarters.

Organizing a convention of this magnitude would be impossible without the help of many individuals. First and foremost, the AATF would like to thank the government of France and its representatives in Washington and Atlanta for their unwavering support of the AATF and the convention. From *Ministre* Darcos to the *stagiaires* who helped at the booth, each representative lent his or her wholehearted support and expertise to this enormous endeavor. M. Diouf's presence at the convention as well as



Zachary Richard

Their monetary and in-kind support was greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank our exhibitors and advertisers (whose links can be found on the convention Exhibitor Page) for their willingness to support the convention.

Luck often plays a bigger role than we would like to admit in the success of an event. The Organizing Committee was fortunate to be able to count on the services of Jeff Whitney and his staff from Event Transportation, particularly Jessie and Analena, who handled the shuttles, on-site registration staffing, stuffing bags, as well as the Saturday excursions. Our go-to guys for audiovisual services remain Technology Express, based in St. Louis, who have handled AV for our last four U.S. conventions, but we also were able to rely on James Wagner of Productions and Concerts for the sound and



AATF Officers meet with Nathalie Normandeau (from left, Executive Director Jayne Abrate, Past-President Jean-Pierre Piriou, Mme Normandeau, President Margot Steinhart)

lighting for each evening's performance. Thanks also to Sam Miller and his security staff, the conference personnel at Emory University, and the wonderful staff of the Hilton Hotel, especially our convention manager Carla Pollicard and Onur, Rakesh, and Radomir. The headquarters staff of the AATF, April Walsh, Rosalba Correa, and Amy Hanson went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that everything was done when it needed to be. And finally, a very special thanks to Joscyln Riech and Printec Press for moving heaven and earth to get the convention program to us on time.



La Grand' Débâcle