some impressions of the 2009 wfae conference in mexico city.
by vivienne spiteri

.... Where the streets are paved in ...muve...that tune from the wizard of oz came to mind as the plane pursued its descent into mexico city. on the approach, the intensity of those captivating purple clusters began to bleed and spread over surfaces large and wide. little did i know that before long, violet streets in coyoácan would carpet my footsteps with their trees’ fallen petals.

along the mauve lanes then to the gingerbread house of sound, where the good white witch, elves in tow, all smiling like mexico’s sunlight, welcomed me.

who are these elves whose black chests boast a white pledge to sound? whose are the disembodied voices that enter our ears for our understanding of the spoken texts? who are the angels in white, standing guard over our bellies’ fill? who are the wizards who secretly set spells ‘gainst persistent electrical hums? in other words: who were the translators, the drivers, the technicians, the photographer/s, the guides through the fonoteca, the catering company? what are their names? the conference package carried names of about a half dozen organizers, managers of the event, yet the members of the support staff, those who kept the boat afloat, were not mentioned. anywhere. they remain/ed nameless. this is unfortunate. it would make for a more comprehensive document if all players and the functions they perform were identified in the printed material. i would still like to know.

concerning transportation to and from the conferences: since proposed hotels were rather far away from the fonoteca, a scheduled, regular pick-up and drop-off coach/bus/car service to and from all these hotels (not just the plaza hotel), might have been envisaged.

the fonoteca directors ran a tight ship. too tight at times for to cut short conferences and cancel q & a periods defeats the purpose for which participants attended.

the complimentary meal tickets, the participants’ package, the tour of the fonoteca, the banquet, the forthcomingsness of the staff, the fine papers,
the translation services, the generous sunshine, the wondrous locale - all this and more made the well-organized event a memorable experience.

there was one particularly memorable sight/sound experience: on the median of a congested two-way road (three-lanes per direction), car-horns blaring incessently, a lone organ-grinder ground the handle of his instrument. sight but no sound. at a red light: horns diminuendo, and the organ music soared into space. timbral harmony!