The 18th World Orchid Conference was held at the Congress Centre, Congrexpo, in Dijon France in conjunction with the tri annual Florissimo from 11th. to 14th. March. Delegates, Exhibitors and Lecturers had travelled from all around the globe; not withstanding snow and a railway strike to make travelling conditions complicated the WOC was a success. Even the weather improved with bright but cold sunshine most of the time.

The show was divided into two halls one for the orchids the other for the main Florissimo show and was open for two weeks. A fantastic landscaping had been made by the Florissimo organisers for the orchid displays, it included twenty-foot cascading waterfalls, large mountains, and fountains to make a wonderful backdrop for the exhibits. The estimated numbers of visitors to Florissimo over the first weekend was thought to be 400,000. A massive shopping mall and food emporium were located above one of the halls and was packed throughout the duration of the show.

Two hundred and ten judges spent a morning judging the plants and displays this was then followed by the formal opening of the four-day conference held in the splendid hall of the Palais des Ducs in central Dijon. Lecturers from around the world presented papers in three parallel sessions to the eight hundred and thirty Registrants.

On the social front there were wine tasting sessions each evening and the final dinner was held in the twelfth century cellar of the Chateau du Clos de Vougeot which is owned by Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tasteven whose aim is to promote the wines of France, especially those of Burgundy.

The orchid show had four Gold Medals awarded for the displays and a total of sixteen for plants, including the fragrance plants. The Grand Champion exhibit was Vacherot & Lecoufle who had a large site, containing an island hide-away complete with boat and shipwrecked trunks with their valuable orchids spilling out onto the shore. There were many good quality plants including the mauve Dendrobium Berry and the bronze and yellow Wilsonaria Ravissement that caught the eye.

The Eric Young Orchid Foundation gained a gold medal for their display and was also the Reserve Champion Exhibit. It was predominately a cut flower exhibit and used Staghorn ferns and moss to ensure a superb finish, a small central pool had an island of Paph. Lady Isabel and Prince Edward of York to provide a central focal point. The high quality of the flowers was reflected in an additional three trophies, nine silver medals and four bronze medals being awarded to them.

The Singapore Botanic Garden exhibit gained a gold medal and a trophy for the best-illuminated display. A large island site had a theme of dance to reflect the diverse culture of the country, it included figures draped in typical Malay, Indian, Chinese and western fabrics with their corresponding music. High quality Dendrobium, Vanda and Ascocenda hybrids were replenished and refreshed daily. Interesting amongst them was Renanthera Kalsom with deep red flowers on a branching stem and the larger flowered Pararenthera Dhanabal. The exhibit from Glanz Wössner Orchideen also gained a Gold Medal and had many fine specimen plants such as Zygopetalum Artur Elle and the eye catching pendant green flowers with contrasting ruby red lipped Cymbidium Mem. Amelia Edrhard.
There were a further four exhibits from the United Kingdom, the Orchid Society of Great Britain had an exhibit next to Vacherot & Lecoufle and the plants were colour co-ordinated in small groups so that the natural slope of the floor level exhibit could be used most effectively. *Maxillaria sanderiana* and *M. hirtizii* were unusual species in the exhibit. The high quality of the display meant that it was nominated for the Grand Champion exhibit. Bournemouth Orchid Society took inspiration from the sea with an old fisherman’s cart and the use of fishing nets as drapes, starfish in the foreground completed the nautical theme. Many interesting plants included *Eulophia guineensis* and *Gastrochilus pulcher*. Unusual hybrids included *Eulophia speciosa x E. guineensis* and *Pelexia weberbaurii x Stenosarcus Vanguard*. The only British Commercial exhibitor was McBean’s Orchids and they had sold out of their stock after the first four days. The McBean’s exhibit had a corner site with a Pagoda filled with Cymbidiums, the yellow *Cym. Kintyre Gold* and the red and gold *Cym. Loch Leven* caught the eye. The appropriately named *Zygopetalum Big Country* had large mauve lipped flowers. The Royal Horticultural Society had a small exhibit that included specimen plants of *Dendrobium x delicatum* Wisley and *Dendrochilum glumaceum*. Amongst the other exhibits that caught the eye was the one from the South Africa Orchid Society, with the theme back to nature in the future, height was provided by locally made sculptures made from wattle twigs. Good quality plants included some interesting *Polystachya* hybrids such as the aptly named *Polystachya White Hot* and *Disa* hybrids displayed in ostrich eggs. The Jardin du Luxembourg had a large stand with height provided by rocks and Travellers Palms which gave scale to an enormous specimen plant of *Ansellia africana*, seven feet across grown in a dustbin sized pot and needing a fork-lift truck to lift it onto its pedestal. The plant was awarded a highly deserved Gold Medal. The cut flower display from Motes Orchids had many awarded flowers but the most striking was the Gold Medal *Vanda* Blue Grig x *Arijuna*, a *Vanda tessalata* hybrid with mauve-grey flowers with an intense colour. The Hirota International Flower Inc. also had a cut flower exhibit of *Epidendrum* spikes that showed an extraordinary range of colour forms from the typical red through pink to mauve and pale cream. They were cultivars of *Epidendrum Twinkle Valley* and *Epi. Wedding Valley*. Taiwan Orchid Growers Association had a large exhibit that displayed their new *Cattleya* and *Phalaenopsis* hybrids to maximum effect. Together with the Taiwan Pavilion, Brother Orchid Nursery, Sun Moon Orchids Inc. and Joseph Wu Orchids the Taiwanese had the largest island site in the show. *Phalaenopsis Sogo Cock* gained a Gold Medal; its deep cerise colour with strong substance had obviously caught the Judges eye. *Brassolaeliocattleya Sonyang Beauty* gained a Gold Medal in the fragrance judging. *Catasetum wenlingerii x tenebrosum* also gained a Gold Medal in the Fragrance Judging for Christiansen Orchideen, whose display was packed with many fine specimen plants such as *Mediocalcar decoratum* and *Epidendrum coriifolium*. Another exhibit for the species aficionado was the exhibit by La Canope, which had delights such as a large plant of *Maxillaria tenuifolia* that gained a Gold Medal. The Grand Champion plant was *Calanthe sieboldii* ‘Wössen’ with six spikes of buttercup yellow flowers, it was owned by Glanz Wössner Orchideen. The Reserve Champion plant was *Paphiopedilum hirsutissimum var. esqurolei* owned by K-J
Orchids of Denmark, it had very deeply coloured wide petals for the species. Both gained Gold Medals. *Mokara* Singa Gold from Singapore gained the highest Award for Commercial Excellence or ACE award.

It will be a very hard act to follow for the Nineteenth World Orchid Conference to be held in Miami from 28 February to 2nd March 2008.