

News from the Nordic Pavilion at EXPO 2005, Aichi Japan
 July 15, 2005

The Icelandic National Day at EXPO - Iceland shows its musical talent

It was with great relief – and some melancholy – that the Nordic Pavilion completed the last of five National Days at EXPO 2005. Iceland made a “grand finale” of the Nordic national days, featuring an ambitious whole-day music program in the spacious EXPO Dome. The guests of honor, Prime Minister Halldor Asgrimsson and Minister of Education, Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir spent a busy day in Nagoya – the whole morning and afternoon at EXPO, and the evening at an official reception hosted by Aichi Prefecture.



The highlight of today’s program was the opening ceremony in EXPO Dome where near all of the vast 3000 seats were taken. In their inauguration speeches, the representatives of the Japanese government and the Japanese EXPO Association praised Icelandic nature and Iceland’s effective use of renewable energy sources. Further they stressed that Japanese tourists were becoming increasingly interested in this “nature-blessed island in the North”, famous for e.g. its midnight sun, Northern lights and world-class literature.

The Prime Minister put emphasis on the friendly and expanding relations between the two island nations. Japan is an important trading partner for Iceland, but as the Prime Minister pointed out it is not only products, which travel between the two countries, but also a growing number of tourists, students and artists.



After the speeches, over 70 Icelandic musicians took center stage, featuring an interesting combination of Icelandic folk songs, jazz, and modern compositions. Two Icelandic choirs, Karsness School Choir and Skalholt Cathedral Choir, made a great impression with their lively performance and original sound. In the afternoon, the musicians performed separately as the well-known Sigurdur Flosason Jazz Quartet, Bang Gang, Caput Ensemble with Visual artist Halldor Asgeirsson, and Echo featuring the two choirs, poet Sjon, percussionist Sigtryggur Baldursson, vocalist Ragga Gisla, and Japanese musician Stomu Yamash'ta.



All songs performed during the opening ceremony were sung in Icelandic and most of the lyrics had spring and summer as a central theme. The jazzy, summer-like repertoire was well received by the Japanese audience – and was also very appropriate on a sunny day like today with over 30 degrees at the EXPO site. Many of Japan's major media attended the opening ceremony.

On the 20 meter wide super-screen at EXPO Plaza, Iceland arranged a two-hour children's program featuring the Icelandic TV series *Lazy Town* and a recent Icelandic animation, "Little Ugly Caterpillar". The Icelandic music program continues throughout the weekend as a part of an Icelandic cultural week in Chiryu City - a friendship town nominated by the EXPO Association.



The five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, have a joint pavilion at EXPO 2005. After the first three months – i.e. halfway through the EXPO period - over one million guests have visited the Nordic Pavilion.

You can find more information about the Icelandic National Day (see events) and the Nordic Pavilion on our website, www.nordicatexpo2005.org

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