

Report on World Haiku Festival Pécs 2010

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In Hungary, Mongolian blue spots appear on one out of three babies. In Hungary which is connected with Japan in some indescribable way, the World Haiku Festival Pécs 2010 was held successfully. It gave me a calm, warm feeling that Haiku is setting solid roots in Europe and coming into bloom.

This year, it was held in southern Hungary, in Pécs, one of European Capitals of Culture 2010 where many cultural events are held. This beautifully refined city has long been a crossroad of cultures, with ancient Roman ruins in its center, and Christian churches now using former Islamic mosques. The World Haiku Festival Pécs 2010 was held from 6 to 8 August, organized by the Japan-Hungary Friendship Association, with support by the World Haiku Association.

Natsuishi's Haiku collection "Madarak / Birds: 50 Haiku" (Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2007) presents Natsuishi's 50 haiku composed about 50 different types of birds, written in Japanese (author's own calligraphy), English and Hungarian languages. Each haiku has a water color painting by the Hungarian female artist Eva Papai. The book's publication inspired this haiku festival.

The Organizing Committee Chairperson was Judit Vihar, Professor of Japan Studies at Károli Gáspár University. She served in this post like the warm mother of a large family, greatly contributing to the success of this festival.

The festival was held in the main hall, University of Pécs Guest House, and the Hotel Hunyor conference room. It began in the evening of 6 August with a greeting by Professor Vihar. Participants then viewed the Italian Toni Piccini's haiga "No sky / limits the flight / of a seagull", other haiku, and haiku presented by photos on the walls of that hall. There was also a haiku presentation in the adjoining room arranged by Professor Vihar's students. These were greatly appreciated by all participants. After dinner, much like treasure hunters, they sought out each participant's haiku panels displayed in shop show windows in the old Pécs district. They were open to their many first encounters with each other, and discovered freshness in the young participants' haiku.

Under every Heaven / the gods have become / the snail of incertitude

Amelia Stănescu (Romania)

Under oaks' deep sigh / the squirrel trembles with fright / and fear of the wind.

Roland Hollós (Hungary)

The slice of lemon / is in the sky, my teacup / sips the dark.

Hajnalka Sánta (Hungary)

The fashionable poster of this World Haiku Festival, Natsuishi's latest work "Fog breaks out / from coiled unconsciousness / it rains stones" (Ban'ya Natsuishi, "Hybrid Paradise", Cyberwit.net, Allahabad, India, written 2010) was printed in the Japanese, English and Hungarian languages, and hung along paths and in windows.

The next day (7 August), there was a morning and afternoon haiku reading by 30 participants from 10 countries. These fully utilized the multilingual anthology "World Haiku Festival Pécs 2010", created by the hard work of Professor Vihar.

Birds enter, / the evening sun enters— / the invincible cloud

Sayumi Kamakura (Japan)

As I gaze / on a faraway planet / —fern am I

Toshio Kimura (Japan)

a spring morning— / in a woman's nunnery yard / twin penguins

Stjepan Rožić (Croatia)

Just before leaving / take a deep breath / of his skin scent

Danièle Duteil (France)

a lemon / in the nun's fist / solar eclipse

Petar Tchouhov (Bulgaria)

sunset on the lake / glowing exclamation mark— / your day is finished

Judit Vihar (Hungary)

the dalai lama / of coming generations / lives on the beach

Rob Flipse (Netherland)

Each author's unpretentious haiku reading gave an extra rich flavor. The performance type haiku reading by Hungary's Péter Németh Mikola in a white robe with candles also left a deep impression.

That afternoon, Natsuishi gave a talk "Haiku as Creative Link" in English, in which he pointed out new links such as nature with people, and words with words, as common characteristics seen in excellent works of each country's haiku written in the six volumes from "World Haiku 2005: No. 1" to "World Haiku 2010: No. 6", published by the World Haiku Association. His talk covered haiku from Japan, Asia, USA, Europe, Oceania, and even Africa.

Following this talk, haiku written in "Madarak / Birds: 50 Haiku" were read by Natsuishi, and by Professor Vihar who was in charge of its Hungarian translation.

That night, a ceremony was held in Restaurant Bellagio in the old city district. Japanese Ambassador to Hungary Tetsuo Ito gave a brief greeting in Hungarian. Natsuishi presented to the organizers a colored paper calligraphy in Japanese and Hungarian for the "A stork / bringing straw / to the pope's crown" haiku written in "Madarak / Birds: 50 Haiku". There was also a performance of Japanese and Croatian music.

There was a Ginko haiku writing contest on the last day, 8 August. Doc Drumheller from far-off New Zealand took first place with "a frog statue / doesn't jump into the pond / sound of silence". He was in a big earthquake in Christchurch after returning home, but he and his home were miraculously unhurt.

There were articles about this World Haiku Festival in Bulgarian, Japanese and Hungarian newspapers. You can also read about it on the World Haiku Association website.