

WORLD HAIKU FESTIVAL PÉCS 2010

6th - 8th August 2010

Report by Doc Drumheller

Haiku poets gathered on the platform in Budapest on the morning of the festival. The train to Pécs was delayed due to electrical storms and torrential rain. I waited on the platform with Petar Tchouhov, Ban'ya Natsuishi, Sayumi Kamakura, Prof. Tsuchiya Naoto, and Toshio Kimura and we watched the station flood with water. While the postponement may have hindered our travel progress, the electric weather provided me with inspiration to write haiku:

thunderstorms crackle
above the train station
angels making love

After we arrived at the Hunyor Hotel the participants registered and we began to greet each other and share stories of our journeys. 41 poets gathered from 11 different countries to celebrate the festival. Pécs is a crossroads between the East and West and was a suitable meeting place for so many languages and cultures to interact. Since the purpose of our assembly was to share haiku from our various countries, this shows that haiku is becoming a universal poetic form that is able to be translated and cross borders with ease. The efforts and enthusiasm demonstrated by Ban'ya Natsuishi and the members of the World Haiku Association have contributed to the evolution of the short form of poetry into a worldwide literary movement that involves the writer, translator and reader.

The opening ceremony of the festival began in the conference room with a speech from Judit Vihar who welcomed all of the guests to Pécs, which she explained was the town of five towers because of the different religious buildings. We were then invited to visit Toni Piccini's Haiga exhibition. Toni later offered to send each participant a postcard of their favourite haiga. The one that captured my imagination was an image of a person wearing a carnival mask with the haiku:

you look in vain
for the back of death
it smiles

We then explored a Haiku exhibition of student's of Károli University Budapest. There were many interesting presentations of haiku, including concertina style books, haiku printed on T-shirts, badges and a nest of haiku eggs. It was very refreshing to see haiku presented in so many original ways. This again displays the versatility of haiku and the possibilities the form possesses are only limited by the depth of our own imagination. We took a break for dinner before departing to the centre of Pécs to view the HAIKU INSTALLATION in the shop windows of the city.

Pécs was named one of the European Capitals of Culture for 2010 and the city of 'Mediterranean moods' had the spirit of summer wrapped up in festivities. I felt like a child hunting for Easter eggs as we searched for the haiku tapestries in the shop windows. It soon becomes apparent why the town gets its name, within one block you can find a mosque, a cathedral, a synagogue, and an early Christian necropolis that dates back to Roman times, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. Remnants of the Ottoman Empire can be seen in the ruins of Turkish baths and statues that create an atmosphere where the ancient and modern unite in this charming city. We continued window-

shopping for haiku images until it became too dark to see. A haiku by the Hungarian haikin, Ferenc Bakos caught me by surprise not only because of his sense of humour, but also the link between ancient and modern human nature:

nudist beach:

Adam and Eve exchange

e-mail addresses

The next morning we enjoyed lectures and readings from the festival guests that included contemporary Bulgarian, Croatian, Dutch, Danish, French, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, New Zealand, and Romanian haiku. One absence was noted that we missed the poet Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah, from Ghana. Although all the readings and the festival anthology included English and Hungarian translation, I enjoy hearing the poets read in their own languages and how they express the writing in their native tongues. It can be a struggle to hear many poets wrestle with the English language when it isn't commonly used otherwise. It was a pleasure for me to hear the haiku by the Hungarian, Croatian and Romanian poets. This for me is the joy of participating in any poetry festival, becoming more aware of the literary traditions of countries that aren't easily accessible when you live in a country at the bottom of the world. One of my favourite haiku in the anthology is by the Bulgarian poet Petar Tchouhov. Even before I met I Petar, I showed this haiku to my students:

the longest night

a raven steals the eyes

of a snowman

A highlight of the festival was Ban'ya Natsuishi's workshop entitled: Haiku as Creative Link. In his speech Ban'ya remarked on the first fruits of "World Haiku" gathered from different countries that contained newly found links between nature and human nature. One of his examples came from a former student of mine from the School for Young Writers: *"An innocent child can be an excellent haiku poet in any language. A haiku from Oceania demonstrates it. A young New Zealander finds a marvellous link between words "diamond" and "sky" to express nature as miraculous."*

Oceanic

blue canvas

diamond sky

Kiirōi Yumetobu, New Zealand, "World Haiku 2007 No.3", p. 64.

Ban'ya concluded his workshop with a reading from his beautifully produced book: Madarak/Birds, a publication in three languages. 50 haiku are each presented with aquarelles (water colour illustrations) by Éva Pápai, Japanese calligraphy and English translations by Ban'ya Natsuishi and Jack Galmitz and Hungarian translation by Judit Vihar. The collection of haiku shows the international scope of Natsuishi's poetry and a deep connection with the natural inhabitants of the lands he has travelled to:

a crane among clouds

my heart is

the meridian of the earth

He has even included a haiku about a New Zealand icon:

the land of winds
any kiwi bird doesn't get out of
the darkness

Later that evening we were treated to a joint ceremony with performances by the Croatian Tamburitza band "Insulla Ivanic", the Origami Association, Magnificat Choir Japan and the Béla Bartók Ladies Choir Pécs. The night was a mixture of musical exuberance and formal speeches by Zsolt Páva, the Mayor of Pécs, His Excellency Ito Tetsuo, Japan Ambassador in Budapest, Hungary, and Ban'ya Natsuishi, president of World Haiku Association. Each dignitary remarked how significant this festival was, not only for the development of haiku in the 21st century, but because of the international relationships that develop as a result of such a meeting. Judit Vihar, president of Hungary-Japan Friendship Society, handed out remembrances and each participant of the festival received a copy of the haiku tapestry that was exhibited in the shop windows. Each scroll was rolled up and tied up in a piece of string with the same colours as the Hungarian flag, to remember our connection at the festival. The celebrations continued into the night as we shared the delights of a banquet style feast in the Restaurant Bellagio in the centre of the city.

The final day of the festival began with breakfast, followed by a ginko walk and haiku writing competition. We were escorted to a garden to provide inspiration and the results were announced at the closing ceremony in the hotel conference room:

World Haiku Festival Pécs 2010 Ginko
08/August/2010 Pécs, Hungary

1st prize

Doc Drumheller (New Zealand)

a frog statue
doesn't jump into the pond
the sound of silence

2nd prize

Bakos Ferenc (Hungary)

ginko walk
unworn shoes of my father
died a year ago

3th prize

Sayumi Kamakura (Japan)

Please e-mail me
the dandelions
will fly soon

Haiku prize offered by Pécs city

Marius Chelaru (Romania)

Summer evening in Pecs
each and every window
a haiku

The prize of cultural capital of Europe

Michel Duteil (France)

bells ringing
on the Sunday closed
just a call for heaven

I wasn't expecting to win an award for haiku on this fantastic journey and even though it was a great honour to receive an accolade like this, the greatest gift I received in Pécs was the many friendships that blossomed amongst a group of poets that I truly admire, in the brief, but intensive environment of a literary festival. These are the things that make traveling 30 hours by plane through many transit lounges across continents so worthwhile. The connections that continue to develop after you say goodbye and the opportunities for future collaborations. In his closing remarks, Ban'ya announced that the next World Haiku Association Conference will be held in conjunction with the 2011 Tokyo International Poetry Festival in Japan. If invited, I hope to be able to make the journey, so we can continue where the conversations ended at the crossroads in Pécs, Hungary 2010.

--Doc Drumheller, New Zealand, September 2010.