



FÁLKINN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO

March/April 2007

ICCT FÁLKINN 47th Year Number 5

THORRABLÓT !

Come and celebrate in the oldest Icelandic way known: Eat, drink and be merry! Be treated with Icelandic dishes galore, and some Canadian dishes too, entertainment, children's activities and a silent auction. What better way to come together with great friends and friends you have yet to meet in the Icelandic community. We will also be awarding our ICCT and the Marion & Jon Ragnar Johnson Memorial Scholarships (presented in their memory by Consul General Jon Johnson and his wife) and our Snorri Grants, so check out our website and apply now!

Bar opens at 6:00pm / Appetizers begin at 6:15pm / Dinner served at 6:45pm Please remember that this is a self-catered style dinner, so please include on your ticket order form what you would like to bring, whether it be an appetizer, main, side dish or dessert every little bit helps.

More details are being added daily, so don't miss your opportunity to celebrate with us and order your tickets today! You must be registered to attend, no tickets will be sold at the door.

Adults \$35, Youth 7 to 18 \$20 (Children 6/under free)

When: Saturday, March 31st, 6:00pm

Where: North York Memorial Community Hall
(Concourse Level, Under the Library)
5110 Yonge Street, Toronto

!!!Help!!! We still need donations for the silent auction. If you have a service or item you would like to donate, please call Kara Schuster 905-828-1984 or email kara-schuster@rogers.com to make arrangements. Or simply drop off your items at Brian Eyolfson's house (drop off details on the back page). If you have any suggestions or are willing to help out in any way, please contact Kara.



Miss World 2005, Unnur Birna Vilhjálmsson

While she won't be in attendance at this year's Thorrablot, we thought we'd share a picture of Miss World 2005 with you anyway.

The daughter of former Miss Iceland 1983, Unnur Steinsson, Urmur Birna Vilhjálmsson is the third Miss World to hail from Iceland. Only a handful of other countries have had more Miss World representatives than tiny Iceland - a clear testament to the quality over quantity approach that Icelanders know too well.

Miss Icelanders who have gone on to win the Miss World title:

Miss World 1985 - Hofi Karlsdóttir
Miss World 1988 - Linda Pétursdóttir
Miss World 2005 - Unnur Birna Vilhjálmsson

Top Miss World titles by country:

India, Venezuela - 5
United Kingdom - 4
Iceland, Sweden, Jamaica - 3

FÁLKINN - THE FALCON

Fálkinn is the newsletter of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto and is published 6—8 times a year.

Editors: John Gudmundson (jgudmundson@faculty.ocad.ca)
Gail Einarson-McCleery (icegem20@cs.com)

Icelandic Editor: G. Tómas Gunnarsson
(tommigunnars@hotmail.com)

ICCT Executive

President: Kara Schuster
(karaschuster@rogers.com)
Tel: 905 828-1984

Vice President: Brian Eyolfson
(eyolfsob@lao.on.ca)
Tel: 416 416 762-9452

Treasurer: Mel Johnson
2000 Roy Ivor Crescent
Mississauga L5L 3N8
(mljohnson@rogers.com)

Membership Outreach:
Don Gislason 416-489-7737
(ericgislason@rogers.com)

Librarian: Jon Thordarson
(thorco@aol.com)

Librarian: Margret Björgvinsdóttir
(maggab@sympatico.ca)

Secretary: Tracy Morrison
(tmorr@sympatico.ca)

MYTHICAL MUSINGS

By John Gudmundson

An outspoken voice of his time, writer Stephan G. Stephansson arrived in North America in 1873, first settling in Wisconsin where he worked as lumberjack in the winter and traveled between farms as a fieldworker in the summer. He later moved to North Dakota, working on the railroad, and as he stated, “blundered along trying to farm.” In 1889 he moved to Alberta surveying for the Canadian railroad and, eventually, farming his own land. The so-called farmer poet illustrated the Western Icelander’s experience in a series of letters, essays and poems published between the late 1800s and early 1900s. Stephansson’s writings ranged from mythological to political, but with the Western Icelander always in mind. In the following passage from his apostrophe to Canada, Stephansson recalls both myth and history, reminding the Icelandic immigrant of his heroic past:

*To the Hellenes of old
It was a myth for an ode
To the Icelandic Sea King
It pledged an abode.*

(trans. Thorvaldur Johnson)

In the following selection from “Evening” Stephansson appears to proudly address Western Icelandic pride in the context of the 19th Century immigrant experience. But his deliberation on the frustration of a ‘woefully long’ quest and the lingering uncertainty that comes with experiencing the world from conflicting perspectives - equal parts myth and reality - can’t be ignored:

*The night of our wand’rings
seems woefully long,
The wayfarers lost of yore,
Our dawn of advancement
a boastful romance,
The shadows as dense as before.
The minds of the ancients
soared equally high,
Where, then,
is our wonderful score?*

(trans. Jakob Johnson)

S.G. Stephansson, a poignant and insightful voice from our Icelandic heritage.

For more information on S.G. Stephansson visit our library (maggab@sympatico.ca)



Membership information:

Single \$20, Family \$25, Senior Couple \$20, Senior Single \$15. Send cheque to ICCT c/o Treasurer @ 2000 Roy Ivor Crescent, Mississauga, L5L3N8

NEW MEMBERS

David and Phyllis Smith Georgetown, Ont.; Arlene Laxdal and Pat Wellwood Winnipeg, Man.; Sigurdury & Suzanne Petursson, Mississauga, Ont.

DONATIONS.

Marlene Mintz, Toronto; Jean Davis, Streetsville, Ont.; Blair Laxdal, Stoney Creek, Ont.; Dr. Thomas & Adrienne Einarson, Toronto, Ont.; Jean & Bryan Hollebhone, Ottawa, Ont.; Joseph & Sally Martin, Toronto, Ont.; Heather & Derek Prinsloo, Toronto, Ont.; Philip & Carol Hryhorchuk, Scarborough, Ont



Letters & Announcements

SEATTLE'S ICELAND ROOM



Dear Readers,

On my trip to the west coast this winter, I had the good fortune to meet with representatives of the Icelandic club and to tour their Iceland Room.

It is located within the Nordic Heritage Museum in Ballard and is such a treasure! It has been meticulously put together by members of the club and contains many artifacts and displays which document the history of settlement in the area. It also refers back to Iceland in its many displays, with numerous Icelandic costumes, a reproduction of a baðstofa, a book collection and many other displays and pictures, all carefully documented.

Each Tuesday, a group of members gets together for coffee and then works on improving the displays and adding new artifacts as they are donated. They have done an excellent job and it is something you must not miss on a visit to Seattle (Located at 3104 NW 67th St., Seattle, WA).

Bless,
Gail Einarson-McCleery

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

Do you have artwork that you would be interested in showing at one of the ICCT events? Please contact Kara Schuster karaschuster@rogers.com We would like to feature some of our club's talent at Thorrablot as well as at the next Icelandic film at the National Film Board of Canada. If you are interested in this opportunity please act ASAP as space is limited.

ICELAND AT WAR

The video "Iceland During World War II" is now available at the library at the Scandinavian House. It is a very interesting and educational tape documenting the British and American occupation of Iceland.

If you would like to borrow or own this tape please contact Stella Hansen at 416-267-4766.

SNORRI GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Snorri Grant and Scholarship applications are being accepted now. The deadline is approaching quickly. Please visit our website for more details: <http://icct.info/> Applications must be received by March 5th.

ICELANDIC ELECTIONS

Elections are taking place in Iceland on May 12, 2007. Eligible persons wishing to cast absentee ballots may do so at the Consulate of Iceland at Suite 2400, 250 Yonge Street in Toronto between Monday, March 19, 2007 and Friday, May 4, 2007. Consulate hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Persons wishing to vote must first make an appointment by calling the Consulate number (416) 979-6740 and must bring their current passport with any immigration or visa documentation attached as well as their Iceland ID card. Persons voting will be responsible for mailing their completed ballots.

LANDSBANKI COMING TO CANADA

Landsbanki, one of Iceland's biggest banks, has established an office in Halifax and has announced its intention of opening a branch in Winnipeg.

They would like to serve the Icelandic Canadian community and their banking needs, and feel Canada is an excellent site for expansion. A small group of executives has been visiting Icelandic communities across the country and were in Toronto in November to meet with representatives of the business community as well as of the Icelandic community.

BJÓRK STRIKES INSPIRATION

By Nadia Carretta

As a student at the Ontario College of Art and Design, Christopher Hendreich Fisher, 24, through an exercise for one of his classes paid tribute to one of Iceland's most predominant and exotic artists; Björk. He did so by creating a chair in honour of the singer/actress/artist.

"The inspiration for the chair came from Björk's personality, her creativity in her music really played a huge part in the creation of the chair", explained Fisher. The chair was created to adorn a particular artist or person in society that influenced them greatly, and Fisher chose to describe Björk and her style with his chair.



"I wanted to show the two sides of Björk that I see in her. There's the crazy genius part, that spontaneous artistic side, but also her calculated genius side. Björk has both a fun yet practical sense about her, and I wanted to exemplify it in my chair."

Fisher chose the colours for the chair based on the music of Chris Cunningham; in particular one of Cunningham's black and white videos which depicts

simplistic imagery and messages shown through the medium of black and white. Fisher says that they provided metaphorical meaning to the chair.

The chair took approximately 25-30 hours, from conception to final touches, to create. In Fischer's words it was painful work to construct the chair. He used hand sewn cotton to make a model 2 feet in length by 8 inches wide and 7.5 inches high. On top of sewing the cotton to these dimensions, he also had to shape the cotton to sit atop 400 feet of intertwined, spray painted black wiring that forms the base for the chair. Fisher remarks that "the black and white parts of the chair represent Björk's many, entangled sides." What cannot be seen in the black and white photograph above right is that the tips of the cotton that overhang on the wire are painted red, symbolizing blood



The artist, Chris Fisher (at left); Fisher's "Bjork Chair" (above); Fisher's muse (below)

"The white part is the crazy genius side; the black under belly is the many twists and intricate working angles of Björk. The blood is like the adhesive, keeping them together. Without one part, as a whole, the chair or in representation of the singer Björk, would not function. They can't work without each other" Fisher explains.

Fisher concludes by saying that though he would love to see his creation blown up to life scale so that people not only can see, but feel and understand how this chair captures all those meanings into one object, his time and resources as a student are limited. Still, he remarks that "It came out just as I envisioned it, it is perfect." And he wasn't the only one to agree with its perfection and beauty. The faculty were very pleased with the design, and it is now on display outside OCAD's Faculty of Design headquarters.

Overall this art work exemplifies not only the immense skills found at OCAD, but the knowledge and 'going beyond the everyday' in this homage to one of Iceland's amazing artists. Fisher executed his vision very well and, for our sake, we hope there is more to come!



Check out the ICCT website at: <http://icct.info>

THE VIKINGS ARE COMING, AGAIN ?

(and this one is even named Víkingur!)

By Gail Einarson-McCleery

Of course, Vikings have a reputation for roaming the world, gathering the best from every country, and Víkingur Ólafsson maintains the tradition. This talented 23-year-old Icelandic concert pianist has teamed up with 22-year-old Toronto-born Armenian-Canadian cellist, Karen Ouzounian, for a two-week tour of North America organized by the International Visits Program of the Icelandic National League. Both Víkingur and Karen are in Masters programs at Juilliard School in NYC.

The tour brings the award-winning young musicians to smaller centres as well as to cities across Canada and the northern United States. The duo will perform at 10 venues beginning April 10. In May, Víkingur will do a solo concert in Ottawa.

The INL of North America, established in 1918 with a head office in Gimli MB, plays a leading role in supporting an appreciation of literature and culture among people of Icelandic descent in North America. The International Visits Program facilitates exchange visits between Iceland and North America. The upcoming concert tour is intended to showcase Icelandic and Canadian talent to music lovers of all backgrounds.



The artists Karen Ouzounian and Víkingur Ólafsson

CONCERT DETAILS

* **Sat. April 21 7:30 p.m.** First-St. Andrew's United Church, 350 Queens Ave. London, Ontario

Tickets: \$15 adult \$10 student/senior

Contact: Nancy at E. nancycjohnson@hotmail.com P. 519 657-3994

* **Sun. April 22 7:00 p.m.** Toronto Korean Presbyterian Church, 67 Scarsdale Toronto (East of Leslie Street & Off York Mills Ave.)

Tickets: \$15 adult \$10 student/senior

Contact: Gail at E. icegem20@cs.com P. 416 762-8627

Víkingur made his debut with the Icelandic Symphony orchestra when he was 16 and is one of Iceland's most gifted young artists. He has given solo recitals in Iceland, Spain, France and the USA. After graduating from the Reykjavík College of Music he moved to Juilliard in 2002. A dedicated collaborator, he has worked closely with Karen for many years. Karen, whose Bachelor of Music is from Juilliard, has also studied in Britain, Holland, Italy, and in Banff and Orford in Canada. She has performed across North America and Europe and will join the East Coast Chamber Orchestra for its 2007 season.

Talent and hard work brings its own reward, but both Víkingur and Karen have been internationally recognized. A scholarship student at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Karen received Juilliard's Grunin Prize and Presidential Distinction Award. In 2004, Víkingur won both the Icelandic Music Awards as "Iceland's Brightest Prospect in Classical Music" and the American-Scandinavian Society Cultural Grant. In 2006, he won the Carl Roeder prize in piano from Juilliard. His most recent accolade came when he was chosen "**Performer of the year**" at the **2007 Icelandic music awards**.

The duo will perform a repertoire of classical music, including works by composers Debussy, Chopin, Ligeti, and Beethoven.

This tour is being sponsored by Landsbanki, the Foreign Ministry of Iceland and the donors to the Cultural Exchange Fund of the Canada-Iceland Foundation. In this area, they will be playing in London Sat. April 21 and in Toronto Sun. April 22. See back page for a list of additional concert dates and locations.

Here are some excerpts from critical reviews of their performance:

Ólafsson played with stunning clarity and imagination. His tone is unusually beautiful and full of character...

He played with clarity and immense power, but also with divine softness.

Ouzounian's stage presence, technical abilities, mature interpretation and virtuosity brought the audience to its feet. She produced an array of effects which were the foundation for ravishing music-making.



News from Iceland

Icelandic – Canadian Biodiesel

The Harbor Association Eyjafjörður Fjord is looking into the possibility of manufacturing biodiesel in Krossanes in Akureyri, northeast Iceland. The diesel would be produced from corn imported from Canada. In December, a delegation from Canada visited Akureyri to see whether extensive sea transport and the construction of a diesel factory would be feasible in Eyjafjörður. After the fish meal factory in Krossanes was closed down few weeks ago, The Harbour Association suggested it could be used for experimental production of biodiesel in cooperation with Canadian companies. It is believed that the fish meal factory could easily be transformed into a biodiesel factory.

“Icelander” in the Superbowl

A descendant of Icelandic immigrants to Utah, Robert Samuel Morris, played for the Indianapolis Colts, which beat the Chicago Bears 29-17 in the latest American Super Bowl. Morris, who is a descendant of Icelandic Mormons in Utah is the first “West Icelander” to become a NFL league champion. Morris’ great-great grandparents, Eyjólfur Eiríksson and Jarþrúður Runólfsdóttir, from the farm Nýibær in south Iceland, migrated to Utah in the 1880s. Morris was born in 1975 and studied at the Brigham Young University in Utah. He played American football for the university team and was chosen the best defender in the history of the university. Morris has played for the Indianapolis Colts since the year 2000.

Canadian Construction Workers in Iceland

Völundur Þorbjörnsson, an Icelander and project development manager of Scandia Housing in Perth, Canada, has constructed 26 buildings in Iceland since December 2005 with the help of Canadian construction workers. According to *Embassy*, Canada’s Foreign Policy Newsweekly, Þorbjörnsson’s construction projects in Iceland are possible because of the country’s booming economy. “The unemployment rate is next to none and it’s hard to recruit local labor,” he explained.

To persuade Canadian workers to travel to Iceland Þorbjörnsson pays all travel expenses and accommodation, in addition to an above-average salary. Over 100 people from all over Canada have applied for jobs at his company, he said. Scandia Housing also organizes recreational trips and sightseeing tours around Iceland for its employees and hosts several social events. But, while in Iceland, construction workers have to work hard. They are required to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week to complete a building in two to three weeks. Þorbjörnsson’s employees have to adapt to Icelandic building codes, which are different from Canadian codes. Most houses in Iceland are built out of concrete, whereas in Canada, wood is the preferred building material.

Icelandic Movies in the Top 10

The Icelandic movies *Börn* (“Children”), released in 2006, and its sequel *Foreldrar* (“Parents”), released in 2007, came among the ten best movies screened at the International Film Festival in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, by festival audiences. *Börn* was in the fifth place on the list and *Foreldrar* ninth. “It is very pleasing that spectators in another part of the world connect so strongly to both movies,” said Ragnar Bragason, who directed both films. “I did not have particularly high expectations. Tickets for all screenings for both films were sold out and the response was terrific.

American Airlines Going Icelandic?

FL Group, the Icelandic investment company is by now the biggest single shareholder in AMR the mother company of American Airlines, the biggest airline in the world. FL Group holdings in AMR are today totaling 8.63% of the company. FL Group is an Icelandic investment company, which grew out of Icelandair (different ownership by now) and has various investments all over the world, among them are 22% stake in Finnair, investment in Bang & Olafsen, Glitnir Bank and several other companies. See www.flgroup.is

Compiled by Tomas Gunnarsson (based on and edited from mbl.is, visir.is, ruv.is and icelandreview.com)



Author, historian and teacher **Nelson Gerrard** presents..

SILENT FLASHES

A journey into our Icelandic photographic heritage: 1870-1910

Sunday, March 18, 2006, 2:30 PM at the **Scandinavian Canadian Club, 91 Stormont Ave. (Lawrence & Bathurst)**

By Don Gislason

Do you have old photos passed down through your Icelandic family line? The sepia brown type, mounted on cardboard, with the studio name at the bottom? You may ask “who are these people, where did they come from, what was their life like in the olden days, and what happened to them?” Questions asked about old, and sometimes faded images often spark a search into your family history ~ and those fixed poses, costumes, faces and eyes have many answers - captured in photos of the past.

Nelson Gerrard is writing a new book *Silent Flashes*, which will explore the Icelandic immigrant experience in North America between 1870-1910, using studio photography as a medium. It is likely that over time, due to the scattering of families across the continent, many of those images have been relegated to junk boxes, basements, leaky sheds, the burning barrel or the trash. Yet, there are many which have been preserved in family albums.

Nelson's current project is to find, analyze and preserve those precious threads of the past in his forthcoming publication. Even though identities of the people in the photos may be unknown, investigative techniques can often be used to identify and date these pictures. Even unidentified images are historically valuable as part of the Icelandic community's experience, as they can reveal information which history books cannot.

As the saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words...”

Come and join us for his intriguing **slide show** illustrated with examples of early photographs that reveal the past. There will also be opportunity for **questions and answers**. Nelson hopes to discover and include a suitable Ontario selection for his book. Having collected images in Iceland, British Columbia, Washington, Alberta, Manitoba, North Dakota and Minnesota, he's now continuing his research across Canada - to Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. He will have computer equipment to scan photos for possible use, and his latest book, *The Icelandic Heritage*, will be available for purchase.

Nelson graduated from Fine Arts (BFA Hon) at the U. of Manitoba in 1973, then took a degree in Icelandic Language & Literature at the University of Iceland. After returning to Canada he taught history, art and English at Arborg, MB, until his recent retirement.

Author of the monumental *Icelandic River Saga* as well as many articles, he has the 'Eyrarbakki Icelandic Heritage Centre' at Hnaua, MB, on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, and his exhibit *Silent Flashes* is currently on display at the *Icelandic Emigration Centre* at Hofsos, Iceland. Nelson has been awarded the *Canada 125 Medal (1992)*, the *Queen's Jubilee Medal (2002)*, and the *Order of the Falcon* - the highest honour granted by the Icelandic government.

You can contact Nelson Gerrard at: Phone: 204-378-2758
Email: eyrarbakki@hotmail.com or info@sagapublications.com

Members \$5 Non-Members \$6 ~ Refreshments to follow.

Individual meetings with Nelson can be arranged at **private homes** between 1:00 - 5:00 & 7:00 - 9:00 PM, with coffee and tea on **Monday, March 19th** & Tuesday the 20th in Toronto (Rosedale), a short walking distance from the Castle Frank subway stop.

On **Wednesday, March 21st** Nelson will be in Mississauga.

For appointments and meetings location information contact Don Gislason

Phone: 416-489-7737
E-mail: ericgislason@rogers.com.

Upcoming Events

March 5th - Snorri Grants and Scholarships deadline (see page 3 for details)

March 13th - Official cd release date for Bill Bourne - 'boon tang' on Cordova Bay Records Distribution by Fontana North/Universal <http://www.cordovabay.com>

March 16th - Boys do Girls and Bill Bourne - Hugh's Room, 2261 Dundas St. W. Toronto Tickets & info (416) 531-6604

March 17th - Bill Bourne CD Release Concert - En-wave Theatre, Harbourfront Centre, 231 Queens Quay West, Toronto, ON Box office call (416) 973-4000 with Madagascar Slim

March 18th - Nelson Gerrard - 2:30 PM at the Scandinavian Canadian Club, 91 Stormont Avenue (Lawrence & Bathurst)

March 28th - Beowulf and Grendel at the NFB - 7:30 PM with a reception at 6:30 PM (see review this page)

March 31st - THORRABLÓT! (see front page for details)

April/May Vikingur Ólafsson concerts:

Tues. April 10 - St. Paul, Minnesota

Wed. April 11 - Winnipeg, Manitoba

Thurs. April 12 - Gimli, Manitoba

Sat. April 14 - Foam Lake, Saskatchewan

Sun. April 15 - Calgary, Alberta

Mon. April 16 - Edmonton, Alberta

Tues. April 17 - Seattle, Washington

Thurs. April 19 - Vancouver, B.C.

Sat. April 21 - London, Ontario

Sun. April 22 - Toronto, Ontario

Tues. May 3 - Ottawa, Ontario (Vikingur solo)

NORDIC MOVIES

See Beowulf and Grendel (and meet the Director)



The next movie in the Nordic series, shown on the 28th of March, is none other than *Beowulf & Grendel* directed by ICCT member Sturla Gunnarsson. The film premiered at the TIFF in 2005, and has since been shown all over the world, both at festivals and traditional screenings. The film is shot on location in Iceland, and the magnificent Icelandic nature make a perfect background for this rather grizzly tale of trolls and bloodshed. Based on the ancient poem Beowulf, it tell the tale of Beowulf's and king Hrothgar's (and his men) fight with the troll Grendel.

The film is full of action, and many fighting scenes are impressive and most of the actors put in a good performance, though some have commented on the strange blend of accents heard in the film.



There is an added bonus at this screening, as the director Sturla Gunnarsson has agreed to attend, and answer questions after the screening.

This is therefore a unique opportunity, to see a good film, enjoy the Icelandic background

and ask questions and hear explanations regarding how a film comes into being, as well as the tales of the unforgiving and harsh Icelandic weather conditions and other adventures that happened on location on the south east coast of Iceland.

The National Film Board of Canada, The Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto, The Icelandic Consulate and Icelandic Film Center present:

Beowulf & Grendel (a film by Sturla Gunnarsson)

Starring: Gerard Butler, Stellan Skarsgard, Ingvar Sigurðsson and Sarah Polley,

*Wednesday, March 28 7:30 PM (preceded by a reception at 6:30)
The National Film Board of Canada, 150 John Street, Toronto*

Admission: \$6 for NFB members, seniors, students, \$8 others.

Thorrablót Auction - Drop-off Details

What: Interesting items and services of interest to our members, their friends and families.

Drop-off location: 31 Heintzman St., Toronto (contact Brian Eyolfson directly by email or phone to make drop off arrangements)

Email: eyolfsob@lao.on.ca

Phone: 416-762-9452

Please note that Icelandic movies are now showing at the National Film Board on Wednesday nights, every second month.