



FÁLKINN

THE OFFICAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO

January 2009

ICCT FÁLKINN 49th Year Number 3

“You Fancy Yourself!”

Theatre Passe Muraille, 16 Ryerson Ave.

Jan. 27 to Feb. 14 (Tues-Sat. 8 p.m.)

Written and performed by **Maja Ardal**, presented by Contrary Company, directed by
Mary Francis Moore

“NNNN Don't miss [Maja] Ardal's brilliant work.” NOW Magazine

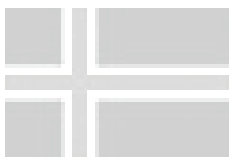
“A wonderful production!” CBC Radio

“See it if you admire great acting. See it if you appreciate great language that touches the heart and
buoys the soul.” Hamilton Spectator

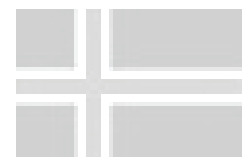
“Maja Ardal is a master of her craft...her performance is powerful, fluid, physical...This is a feat to be
witnessed and relished.” View Magazine

**JOIN US AS A GROUP WED. FEB. 4 ... Maja will do a “talk back” after the performance.
Reduced cost is 10% less than regular prices (see below) Call Box Office 416 504-7529
and identify yourself as “The Icelandic Group”**

Or go on your own between Jan. 27 to Feb. 14 \$20 st/sen (Tues to Thurs), 25 for st/sen (Fri & Sat),
\$25 adults (Tues. to Thurs), \$28 adults (Fri & and Sat), Previews are \$15 call 416-504-7529



TRAVEL TO ICELAND



**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15 @ 2:30 P.M.
Swansea Town Hall Community Centre
95 Lavinia Avenue (west of High Park)**

Join us for our Annual Travel Show, featuring :

... Well known photographers Lori Labatt and Mary Ellen McQuay “Falling in Love with Iceland”

... Snorri Plus program with Sara Benediktson

... Young travelers Charlotte Day and Courtney Mitchell

Plus video, brochures, tours, latest prices (Iceland is a bargain now!!!)

Please contact Gail Einarson-McCleery for more information icegem20@cs.com 416 762-8627



FÁLKINN-THE FALCON

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

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*Membership information: Single
\$20, Family \$25, Senior Couple \$20,
Senior Single \$15.*

Webpage: <http://icct.info>

The ICCT would like to thank the following for their generous donations to the club.

Blair Laxdal
Dr. Cathy Broughton
Dorothy Kristjanson Purchase
Evelyn Trites, Valerie Rogers
Rita Hiorth
Edward & Margaret Eggertson
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Jean Davis
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Anthony Dymott
Garry Oddleifson
Joan Albert
Kay Sigurjonsson
Joan Waterous
Ingiborg Lane
Joe Martin
Lynne Thorkelsson
Gunnar & Lynda Helgason
Brian Eyolfson

THORRABLOT IS COMING SATURDAY MARCH 28

Our biggest event of the year, Thorrablot celebrates the end of winter and the month of Thorri (actually, it should be in February, but we prefer to wait until the snow is mostly gone!)

This year, we have a new location, which is bigger and allows us lots of room. It is with our friends, the Estonians, at their Estonian House. The location is great, just off the Don Valley Parkway, near the corner of Pottery Rd. and Broadview. We did listen to the comments you made on your survey form at Thorrablot last year!

And there is lots of FREE PARKING.

Also, their caterer can supply all the non-Icelandic food, lessening the burden of cooking for many of us!

And WE ARE OFFERING AN EARLYBIRD SPECIAL ... \$35 FOR ADULTS, \$20 FOR YOUTH/STUDENTS, CHILDREN 6 AND UNDER FREE ... BOOK BY MARCH 1ST ... after that, the price goes up to \$39 for ADULTS, \$22 FOR YOUTH

We have invited our new Ambassador, Sigríður Anna Þórdardóttir, and there will be great entertainment, silent auction, presentation of scholarships, crafts for the kids and lots of fun and companionship for all the family. And of course all the traditional Icelandic food you love (and Canadian food as well!)

BOOK NOW with our Treasurer, Lynne Thorkelsson 1680 Scugog St. Port Perry, ON L9L 2E2 (Order form enclosed)

If you can help out with the Silent Auction or in any other way, please get in touch with Brian Eyolfson at brian.eyolfson@sympatico.ca 416 762-9452

INL Calendars 2009

The INL Calendars for 2009 are here, featuring visual artists from across the country.

\$10 each plus shipping

To order, contact Lynne Thorkelsson, 1680 Scugog St. Port Perry, ON L9L 1E2,
mlynnet@gmail.com

Shipping: \$2 for one; \$3 for two to four, \$6 for five or six

CALENDAR ARTISTS

The INL 2008 & 2009 calendars present a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the wide variety of expressions of the artistic soul in artists with Icelandic heritage & connections to the ICCT. Four of the artists are members of ICCT and the fifth, Ione Thorkelsson, is a sister of Lynne Thorkelsson our treasurer. Just as the tellers of the sagas drew their listeners into their world, these artists continue the tradition of reaching out to art lovers inviting them to be drawn into the artists' worlds.

Katrina Anderson (aka Fontana Swing) whose work is in the 2009 calendar uses (in her own words) "magical realism, light, rhythm" and more to draw us into her world of realistic & mythical creatures. Her art, including music, has been enjoyed in many exhibitions. Explore more of her world at her website fontanaswing.ca ICCT members will also know Katrina through her role in the family book *Blessed :Portrait of Asdis Sigrun Anderson*.

Ione Thorkelsson, is one of the featured artists in the 2010 calendar. Ione is a glass artist whose works are internationally renowned. Galleries, homes & collections throughout the world contain beautiful pieces of her blown glass & enigmatic, thought-provoking pieces of her cast work. One of her recent cast glass installations to appear in Ontario, both in Toronto & Ottawa, was "Ossuary: bones as signifiers of human absence". The show stirred deep emotions & a variety of reactions ranging from fright through awe & puzzlement to deep joy in those fortunate enough to experience it. More about Ione & her work can be found at thorkelsson.com.

Erla Macaulay does not think of herself as an artist in the traditional sense. She learned sewing & quilting from her mother who always had her sewing machine open & work underway. The family was clothed in their mother's handmade clothes & quilts were made from bits & pieces of the fabric left from the sewing. Erla has never stopped sewing quilts as her mother taught her. Her quilts are works of beauty & comfort. Erla sews with the Etobicoke Quilters Guild & on her own to provide comfort quilts (6 or 8 at a time by Erla alone) to those in Nursing Homes & especially those in wheelchairs who have lost limbs. The quilts bring thoughts of home, warmth and Amma's love to those who use them.

Gudrun Girgis was born and raised in Reykjavik, Iceland, Canada became her home. A successful businesswoman and entrepreneur, she answered a spiritual calling when she began her sculpting studies with masters of the art in various countries. Working in marble and other exotic stones, her works have been shown on three continents in corporate, private and public collections in Australia, Mexico, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Iceland, and the United States. Some of her notable exhibits include: The Embassy of Iceland, United Nations, New York, USA, Icelandic Embassy, Ottawa, Canada, and the CBC Glenn Gould Studio, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. For more information and sculpture gallery, gudrungirgis.com. More about Gudrun Girgis will follow in a future newsletter.

Merrill Albert was born with an artist's instinct and has always been involved in design and crafts. Since she has switched to digital photography and Photoshopping of some of her photography for spectacular effects she has had a very positive response. Those who see her work can now see the natural world with new eyes. One of her fascinating works is a sculpture of a Viking ship altered so you will see the sculpture with new eyes after seeing it through Merrill's eyes.

Christmas Comes to Riverdale Farm

On a crisp day at the end of November, we paid a visit to Riverdale Farm, and Gryla was there to tell us the tale of the 13 Jolisveinar amidst the lambs, cows, rabbits, chicken, horses and other farm animals. Santa also dropped in and then we all had hot chocolate and cookies! What fun! Plans are afoot to do it again next year in an expanded version. (pictures courtesy of Terri Calder)



Yrsa finds the history of Icelandic immigrants fascinating.

By: Margrét Björgvinsdóttir.

Last fall, writer Yrsa Sigurðardóttir from Iceland toured Canada and The United States, introducing her novels published in English by HarperCollins and reading from them. Her first mystery novel, *Last Rituals*, has sold well on this continent, and *My Soul to Take* will follow in the spring of 2009.

Yrsa gave her talk at the Scandinavian Canadian Club here in Toronto on the first Sunday of Advent, a well attended, interesting and entertaining afternoon. After an informative discussion as to how and why she writes and her own reading from her novel, she answered questions.

Yrsa mentioned among other things how important it had been for her to meet people of Icelandic descent on this trip to Canada, west to east. Some stories of the Icelandic settlers from late nineteenth century just might find their way into her next novel. Yrsa, who is also an engineer, studied in Montreal, where her daughter was born. At that time the family did not have the opportunity to travel much in Canada. However, Yrsa looks forward to bringing her family for a second visit.

Unfortunately, Yrsa did not have much time to spend here in Toronto, but still managed to do some sightseeing, visit the Art Gallery of Ontario, and best of all meet many people and hear their stories.



Left: Margret Bjorgvinsdottir, organizer of Toronto portion of tour, with Yrsa

Right: Honorary members Stella Hansen and Gigi Fridriksdottir with Yrsa



**THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO, AND
THE RAGNAR AND MARION JOHNSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
Application Deadline: March 6, 2009**

Two awards of \$1,000.00 are to be awarded to a student of Icelandic descent. They are the annual ICCT Scholarship, and the Ragnar and Marion Johnson Memorial Scholarship. These two scholarships are each offered to a student who is in or about to enter post secondary education or training, and we are interested in attracting candidates who, in addition to high academic standing, leadership qualities and community involvement, have an interest in their heritage.

Please visit <http://icct.info> to download the application

“You Fancy Yourself!”

The smash hit of Summerworks 2006 returns to Toronto for a limited engagement after sold-out and critically-acclaimed runs in Peterborough, Barrie Hamilton and London, Ontario and Salt Spring Island and Burnaby B.C. This little play that could is marching across Canada, thrilling audiences with its glorious story and beautifully drawn characters all in the person of solo performer and playwright Maja Ardal.

This hilarious and poignant tale of playground politics and childhood loyalties set against the background of 1950s Scotland, tells the story of a child, Elsa, whose family has travelled from Iceland, the northern land of mountains, lullabies and fairies to chilly grey Edinburgh. Post-war industrial Scotland is suspicious of foreigners and Elsa quickly and cruelly learns that navigating her way through her new world of tenement buildings, scrubbing ladies and sad-eyed children, will require more than learning the words to “Scotland the Brave.” It means taking on the school-yard bullies and that being fascinated with the massacre of Glencoe doesn't make you Scottish and that dreams come with a high price.

About Maja Ardal

She is a playwright, performer and core member of Contrary Company. She was the recipient of the 2002 George Luscombe Award for Mentorship in the Theatre. She is a director, theatre instructor and former Artistic Director of Young People's Theatre (now Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People). Her production of *Whale* at YPT received the Dora Award for Outstanding Production and toured to Washington D.C. She began her career performing at Toronto Workshop Productions, under the guidance of the late George Luscombe, whom she regards as her theatre mentor. An Iceland-born Canadian, Ms. Ardal was schooled in Scotland. She returned to Iceland in 2001 to direct her play *Midnight Sun*, which was also co-produced by Tarragon Theatre and the National Arts Centre, as well as Gloucester Playhouse, Massachusetts. She also wrote the book for the musical *Joy* (music by Joey Miller), produced by the Workman Theatre, Toronto, 2002.

Ardal has directed at The Shaw Festival, The Grand Theatre, Alberta Theatre Projects and Great Canadian Theatre Company, among others. Her recent appearances as an actor include *Raising Luke* by Claire Calnan at Summerworks, 2008, *Kilt* by Jonathan Wilson at Tarragon Theatre, (nominated for a Dora Award for Outstanding Performance) and *Joan* at the Caravan Farm Theatre. In the 2004 season, she directed *Stones in His Pockets* at Alberta Theatre Projects (Betty Mitchell Award nomination for Outstanding Direction) and *The Foursome* at The Grand Theatre. In March, 2006, she directed *Stones in His Pockets* at The Grand Theatre and *The Threepenny Opera* at Humber College. Ardal teaches playwriting – Laban approach to Shakespeare -- and ‘acting for the empty space.’ Most recently at Humber she directed the 2007 graduating class in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. She has taught at the University of Toronto, The National Theatre School, Humber College, Fanshawe College, Tarragon Theatre and she continues to offer workshops ranging from youth programmes to professional development. She continues to tour her smash hit one-woman play

EFTA Event: February 23

Canada and the European Free Trade Association countries (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) signed the Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) in 2008. Once CEFTA becomes effective (anticipated in mid 2009) Canada and Iceland will have a special trading relationship, with tariffs being eliminated on almost all goods traded between the two countries.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) is organizing a series of programs across Canada to promote CEFTA. The program for Toronto will be held on **Monday, February 23, 2009** at the Toronto Board of Trade at 1 First Canadian Place, 100 King Street West. Participants in the program may register for the full program at a cost of \$145.00, or for the lunch alone for a cost of \$80.00.

The full program commences at 8:00 am with registration and breakfast. The moderator will be Joe Chidley, Editor-in-Chief of Canadian Business Magazine and welcoming remarks will be given by our own Ambassador, Sigríður Anna Þorðadóttir. Jim Fox, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Europe Division of DFAIT will give an opening address that will explain the new agreement. The introductory part of the program will be followed by two panel discussions, the first covering opportunities in Switzerland and Liechtenstein and the second, entitled "Fish, Oil and Beyond", covering opportunities in Iceland and Norway. Iceland will be represented by Hlynur Guðjónsson, Iceland's Trade Commissioner for North America, whose presentation is entitled "Iceland – A Small Powerhouse in the North". Hlynur will be followed by Anna Blauveldt, Canada's Ambassador to Iceland, whose presentation is entitled "Opportunities for Canadian businesses in Iceland."

The program will be followed by a luncheon from 12:15 pm to 1:45 pm. The luncheon address will be given by Ronnie Miller, the President and CEO of Hoffman-LaRoche Ltd. The luncheon will be followed by business networking meetings.

This program will provide the Icelandic speakers and representatives of Icelandic businesses an excellent opportunity to present the many positives of doing business with Iceland.

If you would like further information respecting this event, please contact Jón R. Johnson, Honorary Consul General of Iceland, Toronto by telephone at (416) 597-4121 or by e-mail at jonrjohnson@rogers.com

ICCT LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

Do you have some spare time? Would you like to become more involved with the club? We are looking for a few people to fill some vacancies in our executive.

Merchandise Coordinator

Phone Committee Coordinator

Falkinn Newsletter Editor

Please contact Brian Eyolfson 416 762-9452 brian.eyolfson@sympatico.ca or Gail Einarson-McCleery. icegem20@cs.com for more details or to volunteer.

Greenland voters give thumbs

up to autonomy (Nov.27, 2008)
Alan Cowell International Herald Tribune

In a referendum on greater autonomy leading to eventual independence, the people of Greenland, the world's biggest island, voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday in favor of loosening their 300-year-old ties to Denmark, final results showed on Wednesday.

Hans Jakob Helms, a political adviser to the dominant political party in Greenland, said the ballot offered a "very clear answer" to the question of what Greenland's people wanted their future to be. The turnout was more than 70 percent, and almost 76 percent of the voters were in favor. "The support was overwhelming," Helms said in a telephone interview. The island has a population of 56,000, 90 percent of whom are native-born Inuits. Eligible voters numbered 39,000.

"Our forefathers are in my thoughts on this historic day," Greenland's prime minister, Hans Enoksen, said in a statement, according to Reuters. "Tears of joy are running down my cheeks." Denmark, which colonized Greenland three centuries ago and granted home rule almost 30 years ago, will maintain influence over matters including foreign policy and defense, Helms said.

But a new law will allow Greenlanders the option of taking more responsibility in several areas. It will also permit them to be recognized as a separate people under international law and make the Eskimo-Inuit tongue known as Greenlandic the island's official language.

The measures are to come into force next June following approval by both the Greenland and Danish parliaments. The new arrangement will allow Greenland to take control of revenues from potential oil, gas and mineral finds, but the full extent of those natural resources is not yet clear.

Iceland in Uncertain Times

(Tomas Gunnarsson)

If one were to use only one word to describe the situation in Iceland these days, and the economic and political outlook, that word would without a doubt be uncertainty.

Nobody knows where the nation is heading, how high unemployment will go, how far the GNP will sink, how much the nation will owe, how many people will emigrate.

So far the situation is not so bad. Icelanders celebrated Christmas and the New Year in traditional manner, feasting and shooting up an abundance of fireworks. The fireworks show was though not as extravagant as usual, and more families than usual had to seek assistance to provide their members with food for Christmas.

Unemployment is between 3 and 4 percent, but will almost for sure go up in the coming months, as it is common for Icelanders to be given 3 months notice. It is also expected that the retail sector will contract, now that the Christmas season is over. The pessimist expects 10 to 12 % unemployment in the spring. Those who are more optimistic hope that the manufacturing sector will pick up part of the slack, as the weakening of the krona, has given it increased competitiveness. They hope for unemployment to stop at 8 to 9 percent. The GNP is another matter that is worrying for Icelanders.

The most pessimist forecast predicts it to contract about 10%, cutting a huge chunk out of the nation's prosperity. Many point out, that even though that will come true, keeping in mind the fast growth the last few years, it will still not be so bad. It will "move the country back" about 4 to 5 years, and they rightly point out, that the standard of living was quite decent back then.

The debt that the government has gathered in the last few months is extremely high, and has people rightly worrying. As tax collection is expected to fall sharply, it is estimated that the interest payment alone could amount to approximately 22% of the government budget. At the same time the government hesitates to cut costs and has a hefty deficit on this year's budget. The quarrel with Britain over the IceSave accounts is still unsolved and it is unclear how much the assets of Landsbanki will fetch, adding further to uncertainty regarding how much the total debts will be.

Very few Icelanders have emigrated so far. Partly probably due to the fact work is not so easily found in the world, now that recession is spreading. Norway has been the place that has received the biggest number which have emigrated. Emigration is likely to pick up in the coming months, if work will be available in neighbouring countries.

(continued on Page 8)

ICELAND IN UNCERTAIN TIMES cont'd

In this situation nobody is surprised that political uncertainty and unrest is high. Every Saturday (except around Christmas) thousands of people have gathered at Austurvöllur in protest, mostly peaceful but with rare outbursts of violence. Demands for a general election in the spring get higher and higher and the government seems to get weaker and weaker. Joining the European Union has also been pushed to the front of the discussion but the nation still seem to be split into two factions, similar in size, regarding that matter.

Most Icelanders seems to take all this with rather stoic calm. Everyday life seems mostly unchanged, and in the countryside the changes are less felt than in Reykjavik. There the expansion and growth was less felt, and the burst of the bubble therefore had little effect. Others say that it is time to start rebuilding the society, look forward and not back on what happened.

But the uncertainty is also there, and fresh dangers ahead. With global recession the price of aluminum is getting lower and lower and even the price of fish is heading downwards.

2009 is generally believed to be very tough year for Iceland and Icelanders, but in most forecasts better times are expected late in the year and in 2010, and Icelanders have always been tough and optimistic people. Most of them look ahead and have no doubt that the country will pull through this, just like other difficulties that the nation has faced.

Looking at the track record there is no reason to doubt them.

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 28: 7 pm Ice. movie
"Heima" NFB, 150 John St.

February 25: 7 pm Finnish Movie

Wednesday Feb 4th: "You Fancy Yourself" 8 pm, see page 1

Sunday Feb 15th: Travel Show,
2:30pm, Swansea Town Hall Com.
Centre, 95 Lavinia St. see page 1

Feb 23rd: EFTA Event, see page 6

Saturday, March 28

THORRABLOT

Early bird booking by **March 1**

ICELANDIC MOVIE "Heima"

Wed. Jan. 28 7 p.m.

National Film Board

150 John St. @ Richmond

Come and see Sigur Rós at Home

In the summer of 2006, in the endless magic hour of the Icelandic summer, Sigur Rós played a series of concerts around their homeland, Iceland. Combining both the biggest and smallest shows of their career, the entire tour was filmed, and now provides a unique and fascinating insight into one of the world's shyest and least understood bands captured live in their natural habitat.

The Icelandic tour was free to all-comers and went largely unannounced. The concerts were in deserted fish factories, outside art follies, far-flung community halls, fields, caves and Ásbyrgi, the hoofprint of Odin's horse, Sleipnir. The band reached an entirely new spectrum of the Icelandic population; young and old, ardent and merely quizzical, entirely by word-of-mouth.

Shot using a largely Icelandic crew 'Heima' - which means both "at home" and "homeland" - is an attempt to make a film every bit as big, beautiful and unfettered as a Sigur Rós album.

Material from all four of the band's albums is featured, including many rare and notable moments. Among these are a heart-stopping rendition of the previously unreleased 'Gitardjamm', filmed inside a derelict herring oil tank in the far West Fjords; a windblown, one-mic recording of 'Vaka', shot at a dam protest camp subsequently drowned by rising water; and first time acoustic versions of such rare live beauties as 'Starálfur', 'Ágætis Byrjun' and 'Von'.

For all those who enjoy the music of Sigur Rós, the film is a must see, as it enhances and shows their music in the surroundings that has influenced it.

(Edited and adapted from the film homepage, www.heimafilm.com)

MAJOR MAKER NEW EP

Lindy, our popular singer, and his band, have released a new EP with Icelandic overtones!

<http://www.thestar.com/article/556040>