



The Raven's Report



EXPO 2005 in Japan



Ceilidh Friends at EXPO2005 in Japan!



Ceilidh Friends on the Global Commons 2 stage at EXPO, performing one of their many one hour sets (photo by Caitlin Lacey)

Yes, indeed, it was probably the biggest thrill of our lives. When we heard that we had been picked to perform at EXPO2005 in Japan, I think we were in a state of collective shock.

The lead up to the trip was at times stressful. We practiced regularly; argued over how many instruments to bring; debated over what we would sing, and fretted over the details like getting work Visas, customs documents for our instruments, and whatnot.

We knew it would all be worth it, but I don't think any of us clearly imagined how wonderful the experience would be. We arrived in Nagoya the day before Solstice. It was hot and the air was filled with smog. We barely got settled in before our contact with OYE!Canada, the outfit that hired us, put us to work. On our first day at EXPO, June 21, René LeBlanc had us perform two gigs—an hour long set on the Global Commons stage near the Canadian Pavilion, and a smaller



Ceilidh Friends (right) with René LeBlanc (middle) & Farouk al Mar, Qatar Pavilion. (Caitlin Lacey)

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Bon Voyage Concert

Before traveling to Japan, Ceilidh Friends put on a special concert in Yellowknife. We performed a set of material we were planning on playing at EXPO.



Ceilidh Friends at Northern United Place on the eve of EXPO2005 trip (Caitlin Lacey)

The gig was also meant to celebrate the fact that Yellowknife would be represented at EXPO.

We would be the only group from the NWT going to EXPO2005. It was a honour and a tremendous opportunity for us to promote the North. Both the Municipal and Territorial Governments provided us with promotional materials—pins and pamphlets—to hand out before each of our performances.

Lots of people came out to our Bon Voyage event. There was tonnes of grub and everyone in the room was caught up in the excitement of our trip.

performance at a special party hosted by the joint French and German Pavilion later that evening. We were tired but exhilarated by the time the day was done.

Ceilidh Friends performed almost every day for two weeks. We appeared on Japanese Television (for a few minutes) and made many contacts with other musicians and VIPs from around the world.



Canadian Pavilion (SPG)

When we had time off, we visited as many of the pavilions at EXPO as possible. The EXPO world was exciting; full of stimulating colours, sounds and smells. We saw many performances by other guest entertainers from countless countries and cultures. Visiting other country's pavilions gave each of us a desire to travel more of the world.

While we were there, Steve Goff emailed 3 short articles back to the local paper in Yellowknife detailing what we saw and experienced...

First Day At EXPO 2005! Still jet lagged from the ten hour flight from Vancouver, Yellowknife's Ceilidh Friends played their first gig at EXPO 2005 in Nagoya, Japan, where countries from all over the globe present their culture, technology, arts and crafts to at least 100,000 visitors per day.



Ceilidh Friends, GC2 stage (photo by Caitlin Lacey)

After a quick sleep, then a tour of the Canadian Pavilion the next day, we did an afternoon performance on the open air stage at 'Global Commons 2', a street lined with colourful pavilions of the Americas, musicians and dancers from each country having a regular performance spot.

Ceilidh Friends did their well known mixture of traditional and modern songs using a variety of instruments; Celtic to Renaissance, Country to Pop. We played mainly up-tempo music and found that the crowd responded warmly to our unaccompanied harmony numbers.

Polite and curious at first, the largely Japanese tended to loosen up and clap along after a few numbers. As passersby milled passed the stage, Rene Leblanc, the representative from OYE Canada who helps run Canada's cultural program, passes out pins and promotional material from Canada, the GNWT, and the City of Yellowknife.

After the first of our daily open-air performances, we strolled through EXPO site built with tasteful, predominantly wooden buildings set along the huge EXPO site built with tasteful, predominantly wooden buildings set along separate streets, each grouping the pavilions of different countries of the world. Two huge Ferris wheels loom above the dome-like cocoon of the Japanese Pavilion - a structure built from bamboo. An elevated wooden walkway connects the various sites, while high-tech, three-wheeled pedal driven taxis trundle past silently.



Three-wheeled taxi (SPG)

Later that night, we were asked to perform at a special party hosted by France and Germany who are sharing the same large pavilion. Musicians from several countries performed: a Japanese duo who performed at lightning speed on drum and traditional three-stringed guitar; singers and bagpipe players from Bulgaria; singers and dancers from Ukraine and Morocco; and a French ballad singer. Ceilidh Friends



Bulgarian band at French / German Pavilion (MKC)

concentrated on Québécois songs and instrumental pieces. The crowd kept growing and the audience was wonderful. We were proud and flattered to be the only act called back on stage to perform a second act, and were congratulated afterwards by René Leblanc and the staff at the Canadian Pavilion. All in all, a good first day. (SG)



EXPO site from Ferris Wheel (SPG)

EXPO2005 Site: In a forested site just east of Nagoya, Japan, sits the splash of sound and colour that is EXPO 2005: an international fair in which countries throughout the world present their art, science and technology. EXPO runs from spring until September, and this year's theme is "Nature's Wisdom."

The site itself is a mixture of ecology and high-technology. Most pavilions are built of wood and are clustered along streets or "Global Commons", each for a specific part of the world. A wooden aerial walk way connects these streets and three-wheeled taxis and high-tech, futuristic buses swish by silently. Most of this site will be returned to nature after EXPO.

The pavilion of each country expresses "Nature's Wisdom" in its own way. The Canadian Pavilion - choosing "Wisdom of Diversity" as its sub-theme - uses sound, video and multiple-projections on giant fabric screens in film presentations of the variety in both Canada's land

and people. Several interactive computer screens show the working lives and home cities of seven different Canadians, including Iqaluit's film maker, Kirt Ejesiak.

Some pavilions express "Nature's Wisdom" by showing the biological diversity of their lands: Central America (hosted by seven countries), where one walks through tropical trees to see Mayan artifacts; Mexico, using video, sound and photography to display forest, desert and artwork based on nature's themes; India, emphasizing the importance of trees in its culture and economy, using a video re-enactment of stories from folklore; Malaysia, with a replica of a limestone cave and displays of pharmaceuticals based on natural products.

Some pavilions are more than just a box: in Italy, one walks across an artificial lake; in China, the spectacular inner walls form one moulded surface - a giant piece of artwork depicting scenes of its history, art and culture.

The only overtly political message I saw was in the Disneyesque U.S. Pavilion, whose show piece was

a screen Benjamin Franklin telling his audience that a better world would come now that his ideas of 'liberty' were spreading throughout the world. In my view, the U.K. Pavilion best captured the EXPO theme with interactive displays of technology inspired by nature: fabrics which breathe based on the pine cone

structure; low resistance surfaces based on shark skin; and adhesive surfaces based on the structure of a gecko's foot. Alternative energy is also a big theme with the Nordic, Russian, and U.K. displays of tidal power generators, and fuel cell shuttle buses cruising the EXPO site.

The centrepiece of EXPO, however, is the awesome Japanese area, where several companies have their own grant pavilions. Robot orchestras, mag-lev and futuristic concept vehicles, alternative universe displays, and other delights are possible to experience if you brave the hour-plus line-ups.

Being a working musician here on site, I have not yet found time for that - but here's hoping.

(SG)



Indian Pavilion (CJL)

Music of EXPO: the wisdom of sharing

Music is an international language, and the fraternity that exists amongst musicians was emphasized again for me at Expo 2005. Just as each country's language and economy varies, so does its music and dance – in astonishing variety – and yet a common thread links all.

While playing at the French/German Pavilion our first day at EXPO, Ceilidh Friends talked backstage with many musicians. I noted the intricate rhythms of a Japanese drummer, and how Bulgarian male singers stuck to a very old form of harmony rarely used now in the west. We formed close ties with a group of Ukrainian performers at that event, and later attended one of their performances at their pavilion, where we were invited



Japanese snake-skin banjo player (MKC)

on stage for a joint photo session.

Invited over to the Qatar Pavilion by its gracious host, Farouk al Mar, I sipped cardamom tea and listened to a virtuoso on the



Ceilidh Friends with Ukrainian folk group

Arabic 'Ud', the beautifully expressive instrument from which both the European lute and guitar were derived. On another day, during an appearance on a Nagoya TV program, Ceilidh Friends met a dance troupe from Djibouti, East Africa, and through our common language of French, discussed our respective countries with their lead singer and drummer.



Ceilidh Friends on TV (CJL)

Back at EXPO, music is everywhere: the intricate harmonies and stylized theatrics of the energetic Maori singers and dancers contrasted with the precise choreography and costumed elegance of the Malaysians.

On Canada Day, a special celebration was planned on the giant EXPO centre stage, with its huge video screen and massive twin towers walled with hanging plants and wide enough at the top of each for a garden of trees. Ceilidh Friends were scheduled



Ceilidh Friends Canada Day sound check (CJL)

to appear with Shannon Thunderbird of Northern BC, hip-hop artist Keshia Chanté of Toronto, and jazz-rock-fusion singers Coral Egan and Jorane, both from Montreal.

It is the rainy season in Nagoya and the drizzle increased during our early morning sound check. By 11 a.m. the noon concert for Canada had been cancelled. Managers and musicians alike were disappointed, but met later that afternoon during a reception at the Canada Pavilion. The rain had ceased by that time, so it looked as if Coral Egan's one-hour scheduled show at the smaller Global Commons stage would go ahead.



Canadian performers with Coral Egan (2nd from right) (CJL)

Graciously, Coral invited the other musicians to share the stage with her. We drew a bigger than normal crowd, and Coral's kindness gave all of us our Canada Day concert after all, with a wide range of music in one hour. This was a fitting tribute to the Canada Pavilion's theme of the "Wisdom of Diversity" and underlined that the thread of music connects not just musicians but people as a whole.

(SG)

Japan: Nagoya



Nagoya Castle, Donjon building (MKC)

Steve and I used our first day off of performing to visit the castle in Nagoya. The castle stood for centuries only to be destroyed by fire in an air raid in 1945. Sadly, very little of the castle survived. Most of what we visited had been reconstructed. The castle grounds were bordered on three sides by a moat filled with koi, turtles and water fowl. Circling the castle buildings were beautiful gardens of flowers, shaded trees, and decorative pools.



Nagoya Castle, SE Tower (SPG)

It rained during our visit, and regardless of being prepared with rain ponchos, Steve and I were both drenched within an hour of exploring the old part of the city. Nevertheless, it was warm and the rain couldn't stop us from appreciating the beauty of the lush mountains. We explored several temples scattered throughout the rolling mountainsides. Steve returned to Kyoto on a sunnier day to visit some of the historic sights we couldn't see the first time, like the old castle and the stunning 'Golden Temple.'



Rokuon-Ji 'Golden' Temple, Kyoto (SPG)

Japan: Kyoto



Ryozen-Kannon (1955 War memorial), Kyoto (SG)

When our two weeks at EXPO ended, we all took time to visit other parts of the country, traveling by bullet train (the Shinkansen). Our first destination was the old capital city of Kyoto. Unlike most other cities in Japan, Kyoto wasn't bombed during the war, so the historic buildings are all still intact.

Japan: Hiroshima

It is hard to put into words how powerful an experience visiting this historic city was for me. I have long had strong feelings regarding the use of atomic weaponry. Often times, especially when the US rallies for war, my nights have been plagued with nightmares of living through a nuclear holocaust. I never dreamed I would be walking on the ground blasted and burnt by man's first Atom bomb.

Tears streaming down my face, I stood at 'ground zero'; the

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tattered remnant of a building now known as the A-bomb Dome building. This building, which miraculously survived the bombing, is the only sign of the devastation left by the bomb. It has been preserved in what has become a memorial park devoted to peace. We visited the Peace Memorial Museum, as well as a memorial to the victims. The visit was both depressing and inspiring. The people of Hiroshima have done a remarkable job at rebuilding. Now, the city promotes a powerful message of peace to the leaders of other countries involved in the testing of nuclear weapons.

The power of the experience was still gripping me a month later at the Anniversary of the bombing. I submitted an article to the paper to commemorate the event (see below).

Hiroshima

At 8:15 a.m., on August 6, 1945, the world's first Atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Almost exactly 60 years later, I had an opportunity to visit the historic city and see in person something I've heard about most of my life.

Upon arriving at Hiroshima train station, I took a moment to look around me. At first glance, it seemed like any other large city: vibrant, but neither special nor unique. But past the tangle of skyscraper-lined busy streets is the Peace Memorial Park; an island of green in what was the 'hypocenter' of the Atomic Bomb.

A streetcar deposited me at the Park's northern tip, where stands the crumpled, twisted remains of a once impressive piece of architecture, now known as the "Genbaku Dome-mae" or Atomic Bomb Dome. The building has been preserved as evidence of the terrible destructive

power of the Abomb. When the bomb was dropped, it detonated 600 metres directly above this building, killing everyone working in it instantly. I was standing at ground zero.



A-Bomb Dome building, Hiroshima (MKC)

I felt a tremendous quietness wash over me as I walked around the A-bomb Dome building and through the Park. At every turn, my eyes welled up with tears. The Park was filled with statues and memorials. Because of the impending anniversary, many statues were covered with thousands of multi-coloured origami cranes made by people across the country as a tribute to the hundreds of thousands who died.

I entered the Memorial Hall, a database of names and heart-wrenching testimonials built for the A-bomb victims. I have always believed in the power of telling stories, but I have never heard stories more potent than those told by these survivors. Many were reluctant to relive such tales of horror, but in the end their determination that there be "no more Hiroshimas" convinced them to record their experiences.

Nowhere is the plea for Peace made clearer than at the Peace Memorial Museum. Making its debut less than ten years after the bomb was dropped, the museum reveals the decision-making process behind the dropping of the bomb, and the terrible and long



Peace Cranes (SPG)

lasting after effects felt by the survivors.

I took my time, letting each exhibit imprint itself on my memory: a child's tricycle - twisted from the heat; a workman's lunchbox - its contents turned to ashes; a student's uniform - burned and tattered. Some artefacts, like the correspondence between US officials leading up to the bombing,

made me feel angry at the senselessness of it all. Other exhibits, like the hundreds of telegrams sent by each Mayor of Hiroshima protesting the testing of nuclear weapons, gave me hope.

I left Hiroshima with a mixture of reactions: anger at the political posturing that created this evil; sadness for the people who had to live through it; and awe at what the citizens of Hiroshima have since accomplished. I am grateful the survivors were longsighted enough to recognize that from their pain a lesson could be learned.



Peace Bell (SPG)

You can visit the 'virtual' museum on line: <http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/> (MC)

During our last week in this wonderful country, Steve returned to Kyoto and visited Hiroshima, while I spent my remaining days exploring the Nagoya Port.



Spanish Galleon here for EXPO moored next to Japanese Marine ships. (MKC)

Only a small portion of the Port has been made into a tourist spot, but even in two days, I didn't see all there was to see. The aquarium was impressive and something I really enjoyed seeing. I took two tours of the harbour, one which included a visit to a beautifully designed traditional Japanese garden. The gardens were the perfect peaceful end to a wonderful trip.



View of Port from giant Ferris wheel (MKC)

What we all saw and experienced in Japan and at EXPO2005 will always bring us fond memories. We are all very grateful to have had the opportunity to share our music and visit an ancient and beautiful country.

Steve and I both would like to return to Japan and see more of the country. But until then, we have an amazing record of photos and journaling to help us keep the memories of our experiences fresh. We hope you enjoy this special report.

All the best,

Moira and Steve

PS See the Heritage Canada Website on EXPO—we're still listed there: www.expo2005canada.gc.ca/en/cultural_program/performing_arts.html

