

Closing Ceremony of the 2007 Sata-Häme Soi International Accordion Festival
Kevin Friedrich – President
Confédération Internationale des Accordéonistes (CIA)

Mr. Mayor, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

On behalf of the Confédération Internationale des Accordéonistes (CIA) Member Nations from around the world, I would like to thank you all sincerely for inviting me to be here at this 35th Annual Sata-Häme Soi Accordion Festival.

Our organization, the CIA, is made up of national member associations from around the world representing many thousands of accordionists. We work together to help secure the accordions rightful place in the world musical society, and for its equal integration alongside other instruments.

To assist in this work, in 1975 the CIA became a member of the International Music Council (IMC), which is the largest non-governmental division of UNESCO. Today, the CIA proudly functions alongside the biggest and most prestigious international music organizations in the world, where we continually work as ambassadors for the accordion.

The Finnish accordion community has established itself as a leader, and great role model for cooperation between various groups, working towards a common goal. Here in Ikaalinen alone, there are several important groups all functioning together. These groups include the Sata-Häme Soi Accordion Festival, the Finnish Accordion Association, the Finnish Accordion Institute, the Accordion Museum and the Accordion Making School. To add another dimension to these activities, the CIA recently established their International Archive Collection here in Ikaalinen, meaning much of the world accordion history is now housed in Finland. More recently, it was unanimously decided to re-locate our main headquarters of the CIA to Ikaalinen, after the retirement of our former Secretary in Austria.

This excellent example of cooperation between both national and International groups, serves as a valuable example of how it is possible to work together for a common goal. Each group has strong leadership, however, the underlying goal remains the same. The important work being done here in Ikaalinen, combined with the other excellent activities found in Helsinki at the Sibelius Academy both in Classical and Folk departments, the work by your outstanding artists of today such as Matti Rantanen, Maria Kalaniemi, Mika Väyrynen and Kimmo Pohjonen to name just a few, the commissioning of new works by renowned contemporary Finnish Composers, the inclusion of the accordion at major Chamber and Music Festivals throughout Finland, and much more, have really secured Finland's place on the world map.

The reason we were all here this week, was to support and enjoy the Sata-Häme Soi Accordion Festival. From the very beginning, the founder, Mr. Eränen, wanted his festival to become an International affair. Now 35 years later, he must be very satisfied to see that his dream has come true.

Just as a giant tree begins from a small seed, a musical gathering of this magnitude does not develop overnight. The Sata-Häme Soi Accordion Festival is very lucky to have the vision and work of one man, to help make this dream a reality. Artistic Director Kimmo Mattila has worked very hard to find the world's finest International talent as both guest artists and more recently contestants for the Primus Ikaalinen. Kimmo assembled his excellent team, then went about developing the Sata-Häme Soi Accordion Festival into what has become one of the finest and diverse International music festivals in the world.

On a technical level, modern communication has united the world, but on a human level, it is a festival such as this, that will bring the human spirit together. At this festival we have an extraordinary 77 year old concertina artist from Saint Petersburg captivating the youth of today, we have a talented 5 year old Finnish accordionist who won the hearts of the listeners in the Folk Music Competition. We have the older generation supporting the young artists of today, and the younger generation marveling at the experience and wisdom of the established artists. Young, old, classical, jazz, folk, solo, ensemble, multiple nationalities.... Heikki Eränen probably didn't realize the profound impact that his international dream would have.

The Primus Ikaalinen competition has added a dynamic element to an already outstanding festival. By putting the some of the world's finest young accordionists together, it has created a spectacular event that helps prepare young musicians for their musical careers ahead. Viewed by thousands around the world on live TV, Broadcasts, and on the Internet, the Primus Ikaalinen has quickly established itself as one of the most exciting and interesting International competitions for accordion students today.

From UNESCO's International Music Council in Paris, to the Sata-Häme Soi Accordion Festival in Ikaalinen, each is just as important as the next. From the leadership of the various organizations both national and international, to the behind the scenes organizing staff, from the young accordion students, to the seasoned international artists, from the music teacher, to the parent who provides the moral and financial support.... everyone has a place and a purpose, and what better example of this wonderful co-existence, than right here at the Sata-Häme Soi Accordion Festival. I have had the great pleasure of meeting the Mayor Mr. Tero Nissinen, and I am sure he must be very proud to know how much the world admires the work of his town.

We at the CIA express our sincerest gratitude and congratulations to you - Finland, one of our valued CIA members, for all the work you do on behalf of the accordion, and the fine example you make towards not only the promotion of the accordion, but also the uniting of the world through the international language of music.

Thank you!

Ikaalinen, Finland
July 1, 2007