

Japanese New Year Cultural Festival 2016

Article by: Soo-Im Jansson, 2016-01-24

About two hundred people were gathered at the Japanese New Year Cultural Festival, which was filled with inspiring entertainment for all ages such as performances on stage, calligraphy, origami paperfolding, try-out kimono garments for children, and board games.

Members of Taiko Shin Kai went to the annual New Year celebration organized by the *Japanska Föreningen i Stockholm* (JFS). The program was filled with inspiring entertainment for all ages and everything started off with an energetic and upbeat taiko drumming performance by the taiko group *Maiko*.



The Japanese ambassador, Mr. Jun Yamazaki, delivered a New Year greetings:



"I just want to say, first of all, Happy New Year to all of you! I feel that all of you here present today, are really people who are representing... I think some of you are representing Japan in a sense that you embody the culture in the way of thinking of Japan. Also many others of you are probably very close friends of Japan. I think that, at the end of the day, it is really people to people and person to person relationships that build a relationship between two countries. So I am very glad that I am seeing so many happy faces at the beginning of this year. I want to express my real sincere desire to continue to support this very close and warm relationship that exists between Japan and Sweden, and hopefully we will deepen that relationship during this year 2016. So I really wish you a very successful and a happy 2016. Thank you very much."

There were lots of great performances on stage such as the Yosakoi dancing, which is a dance style that combines traditional Japanese dance movements with contemporary music, by the *Zyka Yosakoi* dancing group. Koto music, played on a traditional musical string instrument, was performed by Ingrid Yoda and Yuchi Shimizu. We could also hear the gentle voices from the *Sakura choir*.



There were also plenty of various activities to try out and get a taste of the Japanese culture. One was *chado* – *the Japanese tea ceremony* also known as *the way of tea*, in which everything from preparation of the powdered green tea to the serving and drinking the tea is performed in a ceremonial fashion. Here I was able to taste the delicious bitter green tea, which blended very nicely with the sweetness of the flavorful traditional confections that were served with the tea.



Another activity was *calligraphy* – the visual art of writing Japanese characters. It looks so easy when calligraphy master, Hiroko Kimura, moves her brush across the white paper. It was a whole different matter trying it out myself; the characters came out more or less unrecognizable. Then there were also *origami*, the art of folding paper into various forms, and *ikebana*, the traditional art of arranging flowers in beautiful arrangements. People were also playing a board game called *shogi*, which is a Japanese form of chess.

There was also a demonstration on how *omochi* is traditionally prepared, in which rice is beaten with a wooden mallet. A queue formed as children and adults, who wanted to try it out, lined up to pound a few times on the rice with the wooden mallet. Very appetizing *omochi* dishes were then served, which is a tradition when celebrating the Japanese New Year.

Länkar till *Japanska Föreningen i Stockholm (JFS)*:

<http://japanskaforeningenisthlm.se/sv/>

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Taiko Shin Kai

www.taikoshinkai.com

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