



A Greeting from the President of Iceland Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson

When Hallgrímskirkja Motet Choir visits our cousins and friends in Canada, it brings with it fond greetings to everyone whose roots lie in the island in the north.

In its unique way, the choir has managed to combine outstanding performances of classical works and enchanting interpretations of the music that Icelandic composers have been creating in recent times. The Motet Choir's performances are always a major event on the Reykjavík cultural scene and with its tours to many countries it has also been a standard-bearer of the innovation which is increasingly leaving its imprint on Icelandic culture.

The choir's home – the magnificent church rising high in the heart of Iceland's capital, a landmark seen from the distance, from the sea and the mountains – has an interesting connection with the Icelandic settlement in the New World.

On the square in front of the door to the church stands Leifur Eiríksson, cast in copper, staring firmly out into the unknown, ready to set off in search of new lands unhindered by the elements.

The church and the explorer are both symbols of strong strands in the Icelandic heritage: the settlement and the religion which shaped the new community in Iceland in its early days, and centuries later also inspired optimism in the hearts of those who followed in Leif the Lucky's footsteps to make their homes in the New World.

The Motet Choir has enchantingly fused the traditions of religious music from times past and the pioneering spirit that appears in the premiering of new works. At one and the same time it has managed to interpret the most complex works of the old masters and new departures in Icelandic music.

The choir's visit to Canada is a confirmation of how strongly we in Iceland desire to strengthen still further in the new century the family ties that join our countries, while also giving concertgoers an insight into just how much the arts are flourishing in our country.

I know that you will enjoy the choir's outstanding performance and hope that these recitals will also be an encouragement to you to visit the old country and discover even further the culture that your kinsmen are continually creating anew.