



Unconventional forms of popularization of science - festivals "Science on Stage" in Poland.

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Are natural sciences popular these days? There is no obvious and straight answer to this question. On the one hand, students discouraged with the effort which they must put into learning science, avoid choosing such subjects for matriculation exams and also are reluctant to choose courses related to these areas. On the other hand, a well-chosen activating method can infect plenty of students with enthusiasm for studying natural science.

One of such method is the festival "Science on Stage", which has been periodically held at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Department of Physics. By 2008 six such festivals were held. The first three of them were run under the name "Physics on Stage", and the other three as "Science on Stage". Every year the festivals were attended by over 200 teachers and students of all school types (from kindergartens to universities), until 2008, when the event attracted over 400 participants from all over the country. This shows an increasing popularity of such projects.

Participants in the festival could present their ideas "on stage" in three basic categories which included:

- Experiments such as "Water - a cycle of experiments", "Two elements - Smoke on the Water", Diffraction and fractals", "Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation", "Wind-propelled vehicles moving against the wind".
- Performances such as "The musical physics or the sounds around us", "The laws of physics and the human body", "The Piglet and the shadow or on the violation of the laws of physics in children stories" and "In the stream of light".
- Multimedia presentations such as "Thermonuclear fusion - the energy of the future", "The phenomena on the Sky and Earth which the philosophers have not dreamed of", "Galvanic batteries - small electric power plants", "System PSR B1257 12", "Physics and Chemistry in the kitchen".

The festivals were accompanied by photo and painting exhibitions covering the topic of natural sciences. The visitors could enter the show rooms and had an opportunity to try their hand at carrying out experiments prepared for them beforehand.

All presentations were evaluated by a jury consisting of research workers of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Warsaw University, University of Silesia and members of the Polish Physical Society. Within each category three best presentations were selected, and their authors then represented Poland at the international festival. From many years the chairman of the National Organizing Committee of the festival has been professor Wojciech Nawrocik, the winner of the prestigious competition "Propagator of Science", organized by Polish Press Agency and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Each festival was inaugurated with a performance prepared by the youngest participants of the festival – kindergarten children, who are outside of the competition. The theme of the last one was: "Preschoolers also are waiting for the Higgs particle!".

Next edition of "Science on Stage 4" festival will be held on 24-25 September 2010, also at the Department of Physics at the University of Poznań. Its aim is to show the contribution of physics, other natural and technical sciences in solving energy problems of the world and Poland, and also finding new solutions in power engineering, which will meet a rapidly rising demand for clean and cheap energy.