

Straight from the sky

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The popularization of astronomy in the planetarium The Heavens of Copernicus

1 Introduction

The sky is beautiful and calm, but also mysterious and slightly dangerous. In the past, space travels were the musings of daydreamers. Today, we're observing distant planets, send space probes towards them and we're observing distant galaxies by space telescopes. That's what we're telling about and we're showing in the planetarium. Each visit to the planetarium is like a break from day-to-day matters: isolated cinema auditorium, huge semi-spherical screen and a cosmic "perspective" encourage the viewers to stay focused and relaxed at the same time.

2 Shows and events

The Heavens of Copernicus¹ Planetarium's (planetarium hereafter) repertoire includes two types of live shows. One type are short shows presented before films as supporting material. Usually they are seasonal in nature and discuss phenomena that can be observed in the sky in the particular period. Visitors can watch them with the ticket for any of the film screenings.

The other type are ticketed longer shows, which last approx. 45 minutes. Live shows are prepared and hosted by (usually) two presenters, who perform with their heads in the stars. While one of them tells all about the sky, the other controls the console and pilots the audience as if they were in a giant spacecraft. He sets the sunrises and sunsets, turns the Jupiter and turns on auroras. Our presenters ensure that our shows are interactive which is what we aim for. When leading each show, they adjust it according to the audience's reactions, they answer questions from visitors, and tell about the latest novelties from the world of astronomy.

We have the Megastar projector, showing 16 million stars and 6 digital projectors. We also have laser shows and concerts in the repertoire.

Under the dome of the planetarium, we already hosted outstanding scientists and space engineers, conducted scientific workshops and organized broadcasts of events such as the landing of the Curiosity rover on Mars and the lander Philae on the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko. Outside the dome, we organized observations of such astronomical phenomena as the transit of Mercury or solar and lunar eclipses. Every year, we invite visitors to one of the world's largest joint observations of Perseids, which takes place in the Discovery Park in front of the Copernicus Science Centre².

In 2016, we were the hosts of the world's largest planetarium conference, under the auspices of the International Planetarium Society, which the Heavens of Copernicus planetarium is a member of.

¹<http://niebokopernika.pl/en/>

²<http://www.kopernik.org.pl/en/>

We also have a production studio, and our films – *Dream to Fly* and *Hello Earth* have won many international awards.

3 Straight from the Sky

Straight from the Sky is a series of extraordinary multimedia shows hosted by eminent Polish and foreign astronomers, astrophysicists, and other space researchers.

They describe the latest achievements of science, future plans, and intriguing stellar curiosities, and are also open to discussion and questions. NOTICE! Most of the lectures are usually conducted only in Polish, without translation.