

A Slovakian Christmas Celebration in Vienna

Peter Haider
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UPF - Austria

Vienna, Austria - On Sunday afternoon, December 16, UPF-Austria held the last of five concerts which were sponsored by the cultural department of the City of Vienna. It was also a Christmas celebration closing the year's activities of UPF in Vienna under the theme "Slovakian Christmas."

Through the support of a Slovakian woman who runs a Slovakian Children's folklore dance group in Vienna, UPF invited the choir of the Roman Catholic St. Martin's Cathedral of Bratislava.

The vice president of the Austrian-Slovakian Association in Austria, Dr. Maximilian Pammer, who was the first Austrian Ambassador of the then newly formed Republic of Slovakia in 1991, welcomed everybody, especially the musicians. He introduced the choir, which was formed just over a year ago, and at the same time he explained many details of the friendship and historical ties between Austria and Slovakia.



The musical program started with performances of the Children's folklore group "Rozmarin." First the audience could hear a performance on the fujara, the typical Slovak flute. Then children played Christmas melodies on their flutes.





They were followed by the choir of the cathedral of Bratislava. All the 100 guests were listening attentively to every song of their beautiful performance.

Mrs. Heidi Pippan from the project "Pioneers of Change" did a Christmas tree installation "Connecting hearts in a connected world" of heart beats which she had measured from the guests of the evening. Artificial hearts were beating on the tree while she read a beautiful collection of German sayings which include the word heart.

Next UPF-Austria president Peter Haider gave a PowerPoint report about the Austrian activities of UPF in 2012: All together 25 events took place, among them two conferences at the United Nations in Vienna: The first one, "Culture as a basic element for sustainable development and human rights," was organized together with "ABRASA," a Afro-Brazilian cultural organization in Austria, as well as two other organizations. The second one, "Europe and Russia – Partners in a Globalized World," was an International Leadership Conference.



There were five concerts supported by the city of Vienna, each of them well attended. The other events were lectures give by Ambassadors for Peace on various topics as well as interreligious meetings and events held on commemorative days of the UN, like the International Day of Families and the International Day of Peace. Three events were organized by Youth UPF: The main organizers were Marlies Haider, Bogdan Pammer, and Ewald Schenkermayr. Several events were held in cooperation with other organizations. One highlight of the year was that UPF Austria received a certificate of the City of Vienna and the Vienna Convention Bureau for being an outstanding congress organizer in bringing the conference "Communicating Change - Youth Perspectives on Peace" in July 2011 to Vienna. On this evening Mr. Haider handed this certificate over to Bogdan Pammer as representative of Youth UPF.

Then the choir performed the second part of its program: traditional and international Christmas songs. Many of them were well known traditional Catholic hymns sung during the Christmas season.



Finally Mr. Haider appointed two persons as Ambassador of Peace: Mrs. Helena Steiner, the founder and leader of the group “Rozmarin,” and Mrs. Andrea Seidl, who founded “Golden Earth Vision” for the children on this planet earth.



With Mozart's "Ave Verum" the choir concluded this festive celebration. Everybody was then invited to enjoy a Slovak "sour cabbage soup," a traditional Christmas, and other specialties from the Slovak cuisine.