

Zurich Family and Peace Festival 2015

Zurich, Switzerland, 12. September 2015



By William Nguyen

On the 12th of September 2015, the Family and Peace Festival was held in the Volkshaus, Zurich. It was followed by an outdoor concert and a peace march around the central part of Zurich. Goya Cheytanov-Ordenez, president of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), organized the event with some representatives of the Community. Winfried Schwager and Andrea Nakamura were the MCs.



The festival started with exceptional performances from Arnold y sus Azabaches a Hispanic band, Ejder Sabanci playing his Turkish ney (type of flute), Nathalie Komagata's rhythmic dance, Esteban Garzon's guitar picking and Sascha Kramer's opera singing with Gertrud Wullschleger's piano accompaniment.



After the performances, Lisette Müller-Jaag, former cantonal politician in Zurich, gave an opening address. Afterwards, Heiner W. Handschin, standing representative of UPF at the UN in Geneva, spoke *about "Die Familie als Ort des Erlernens von Menschlichkeit, Friedfertigkeit, Respekt für Menschenrechte und Menschenwürde."* "The Family as a Place of Teaching Humanity, Freedom, Respect for Human Rights and Human Virtues." He explained how important it is to create peace within the family in order to expand it into the world. A film was then shown about UPF and its many peace-building activities.



After the film, a few musical performances were offered by Adrian Trachsel and Ruilong Wäckerlin, two young virtuosos of violin and piano, before Julia Handschin performed "The Greatest Love of All" by Whitney Houston.



Then, a panel discussion was held about *“Erziehung zum Frieden in der Familie und in einem multikulturellen Umfeld”* (“Education to Peace in the Family and in a Multicultural Environment”). The panelists were composed of Christof Meier (chief of integration in the city of Zurich), Monika Eishuku Leibundgut (Zen Dojo Zurich), Noémie Komagata (Youth leader of FFWPU), Lisette Müller-Jaag and Carolyn Handschin-Moser (Director for the UN office WFP). The moderator, Chantal Chételat Komagata (General Secretary of UPF), gave each panelist the opportunity to share their thoughts on the topic before giving the word to the public for a Q&A session.

Afterwards, a Water Ceremony for Freedom and Peace was conducted. A representative from religion, politics, state and civil society came up to the front and was given a jar containing water from the Zurich lake. In turns, they poured the water into a chalice representing the unity of all into one common stream. Then, a toast with holy juice allowed all to symbolically share a vision for peace and love.



The ceremony was followed by a special composition by Kotaro Nishishita on guitar and voice by Hitomi Kutsuzawa in commemoration to the earthquake and tsunami victims in Japan. Mélanie Komagata performed Debussy’s *“Claire de Lune”* on her flute.



After the performances, several Ambassadors for Peace certificates were handed out to Monika Eishuku, Lisette Müller-Jaag and Arnold, the composer and interpret of the band.



The first half of the festival concluded with all the participants singing together *“One Family Under God”*.



For the second part of the festival, everyone gathered outside of the Volkshaus, on the Helvetiaplatz. Each person received a balloon for the march. Again, people representing the world religions held a tamed dove in their hands and in unison, released the birds while proclaiming peace. The festival kicked off again with the band Arnold y sus Azabaches playing a few songs from their album, Olivia Handschin with a song and Esteban with a thrilling guitar-picking performance.



Then participants marched onto the street, holding the festival banner, sunflowers, balloons and posters printed with quotes of wisdom of great peace promoters like Ghandi, the Dalai Lama and Sun Myung Moon. They marched through the city, following the Zurich police who opened the way with 1 car and 2 motorbikes, and chanted different songs on peace, love and unity.

The group concluded their march in Werdmühleplatz and gathered around as the Buddhist monk Bhante Anurudha recited a sutra in both German and his holy language. To commemorate the completion of the Family and Peace Festival, the balloons were released into the air, a group photo was taken and sandwiches with goodies were distributed.

Click the link for Michel Reymond’s video of the festival:

<https://vimeo.com/139125781>