



The American-Austrian Society

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From the Editor:

Dear Members and Friends:

How did most of us begin the New Year? Of course with resolutions including the usual I-will-lose-weight, I-will-exercise-to-improve-my-fitness, plus, many of us joined millions of viewers to watch the New Year's Concert by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. You will find a brief article about "The Wiener Philharmoniker" in this issue.

We hope to offer you a variety of "waltzing" programs throughout the year. We are looking forward to your participation, and always welcome your contribution of ideas and suggestions. If you have questions, we will try to help you as much as we can. Please write to us!

Warmly,

*Gerda Merwald
Executive Committee Member*

Introducing the Members of Our Executive Board: Ulrike Wiesner



Ulli, as she is known to her friends and colleagues, is a native of Vienna, Austria, and has been living and working in the United States for

the past thirty years.

After a long and successful career at the World Bank as a Senior Human Resources Officer, she fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a German-English interpreter and translator by going back to school upon retirement and receiving her degree from Georgetown University. She is an accredited member of the American

Translators Association. For the past seven years, she has been busily engaged in her second career, interpreting a. o. for members of the Austrian Government, the court system and the private sector, in addition to traveling for the State Department and teaching German for the Foreign Service Institute.

Ulli was elected to the Executive Board of the American-Austrian Society last year and places special importance on establishing and maintaining effective public relations and on reaching out to partner organizations, in addition to building bridges between Austrian and American culture.



Corporate Sponsor: Austria's Finest, Naturally®

Christa and John-Paul Cook of Helco, Ltd. offer an array of all natural Austrian grown imports including pure pumpkinseed oil, and a breathtaking variety of fruit and balsamic wine vinegars, juices, jellies and honey.

Visit their Web site at www.austrianpumpkinoil.com

John-Paul offers discounts for members of the American-Austrian Society.

Message from the American-Austrian Society Board

Incorporation and Bylaws

Section 501 (c) (3)

Various attempts during the past 12 to 15 years were made to achieve an IRS Section status to enable individuals and corporations to make tax-deductible donations to the Society.

A significant increase in revenues will enable the Society to offer its members more frequent, more diversified and high quality cultural events and attractions. These, in turn, will hopefully stimulate more active participation by currently passive members and also bring in additional donations. With improving finances, the Society's charitable objectives, such as the SOS Children's Villages, can be better supported.

Over the past 2-3 years, members of the Society have not only been kept informed about the recommen-

dations of the Bylaws Committee, supported by the Executive Committee, but has also voted unanimously in favor of specific preparatory bylaw changes necessary for the establishment of the new AMERICAN-AUSTRIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY.

On January 22nd, 2007, Peter Evans and Fred Obernberger met with Mr. Schott who continues in his function as legal advisor to the Society, and will report separately on the steps taken for inclusion in our next Newsletter.

In light of the many delays incurred in the past, it was agreed to set a deadline of April 1st, 2007 for the filing with the Dept. of Consumer Affairs for the District of Columbia. If no action has ensued, the Executive Board shall retain the services of an attorney to move matters forward.

Information For Austrians Living Abroad

The newly elected Federal Government of Austria plans to introduce a "genuine" absentee vote by letter in addition to implementing the reexamination of electronic voting procedures

The new government program takes into account the needs and wishes of Austrians living abroad (AuslandsösterreicherInnen).

Austria's new Federal Government that took its oath of office on January 11th, 2007, has agreed to change the following aspects of the voting rights for Austrians living abroad:

- A "genuine" letter vote – i.e. the need for witnesses is to be eliminated
- A simplification of the procedures for voter registration (Wählerevidenzeintragung)
- The abolition of automatic removal from the voter registry Wählerevidenz
- The reexaminations of electronic voting procedures

The implementation of the steps outlined above would mean that an important request from Austria's Foreign Minister, Ursula Plassnik, reflecting the long-standing wishes from Austrians living abroad, will be successfully integrated into the new government's platform.

Since the governing parties do have the required two-third majority of votes in the Nationalrat that is

needed for any changes in the voting rights act for Austrians living abroad, the implementation of these important steps appears for the first time to be within reach.

Below are the relevant *verbatim* excerpts (in translation) of the government program regarding the changes in voting rights for Austrians living abroad:

The voting procedures applicable to Austrian citizens abroad will be simplified as follows:

- There will no longer be a requirement for the signature of a witness. Instead, the voters themselves will provide an affidavit ("eidesstattliche Erklärung").
- Voter registries of Austrians living abroad shall be established at the relevant local representative authorities.
- The removal of a voter's name from the voter registry may only take place with the express approval of the person affected
- There will be a reexamination of the procedures for electronic voting ("e-voting").

[The above is a translation by Ulrike Wiesner of information received from T.M. Buchsbaum, the head of the Division for AuslandsösterreicherInnen at the Federal Exterior Ministry in Vienna].

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

From mid-February to early March, the Orchestra will be on a multi-country concert tour with conductor Daniel Barenboim, to Hungary, Norway, Russia, Spain and the United States [New York, Carnegie Hall, from March 2-4, 2007].

The Wiener Philharmoniker's home base is the world-famous Musikverein.

The members of the orchestra are chosen from the Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera: In accordance with Philharmonic statutes, only a member of the Vienna State Opera Orchestra can become a member of the Vienna Philharmonic.



Before joining the Philharmonic therefore, one must first successfully

audition for a position with the State Opera Orchestra and prove oneself

capable over a period of three years before becoming eligible to submit an application for membership in the association of the Vienna Philharmonic.

There is perhaps no other musical ensemble more consistently and closely associated with the history and tradition of European classical music than the Vienna Philharmonic. In the course of its over 160 year history, the musicians of this most prominent orchestra of the capital city of music have been an integral part of a musical epoch which, due to an abundance of uniquely gifted composers and interpreters, must certainly be regarded as unique.

The orchestra's close association with this rich musical history is best illustrated by the statements of countless pre-eminent musical personalities of the past. Richard Wagner described the orchestra as being one of the most outstanding in the world. Anton Bruckner called it



“the most superior musical association.” Johannes Brahms counted himself as a “friend and admirer.” Gustav Mahler claimed to be joined together through “the bonds of musical art.” And Richard Strauss summarized these sentiments by saying, “All praise of the Vienna Philharmonic reveals itself as understatement.”

The Vienna Philharmonic has made it its mission to communicate the humanitarian message of music into the daily lives and consciousness of its listeners.

Book Corner

Recently, the Society received an interesting letter from Mr. Rudolf Ennikl, Austria. He originally collected his mother's stories of her first 52 years as a poor peasant girl, hand-crafted four editions of a book he called “Nani” and presented it as a gift to her. Suddenly there were more and more inquiries about “Nani, Memoirs of a Peasant Girl” and the book has reached its 3rd edition. We are looking into the possibility of having it translated from German into English. If you are interested in purchasing a copy, please contact us via email: American_Austrian_Society@yahoo.com or write to American-Austrian Society, 5618 Dover Court, Alexandria, VA 22312.



Spending your summer vacation in Austria?

Among numerous festivals held all over Austria*, is the “Festspiele Reichenau” a top-ranking theatre festival among the



Pictured: Südbahnhotel Semmering

Austrian summer cultural events. Its program is based on an outstanding cultural tradition. Reichenau is 70 miles south of Vienna, and situated in a scenic mountainous setting. Every year thousands of theatre-loving

visitors come to Reichenau and Semmering to see excellent presentations of the plays by famous poets in this area [performances are in German language only].

For more information visit their Web site at www.festspiele-reichenau.com/information-eng.php

**Please don't hesitate to contact us if you need further information.*

The German edition is of quality print and priced at approximately \$18 (depending on the exchange rate).

In Memoriam Dr. Friedrich Hoess, Former Ambassador of Austria to the United States

Former Ambassador Dr. Friedrich Hoess passed away on January 5th, 2007. Austria has lost not only an outstanding diplomat, but also a great patriot and a European visionary who built important bridges of transatlantic understanding.

Friedrich Hoess was born in Vienna on October 7, 1932. After obtaining his law doctorate from the University of Vienna, he embarked on a long and distinguished career in the service of his country that took him inter alia from an initial posting as Economics Attaché at the Austrian Embassy in Washington, D.C. (1958-60), over assignments in Israel, Australia and Germany to his crowning achievement, the post of Austrian Ambassador to the United States in Washington, D.C., from 1987 to 1992. Thereafter, Dr. Hoess served as Austria's Ambassador in Bonn, Germany, and completed his



career in public service as a representative of Styria to the Bundesrat in Vienna.

Dr. Hoess was an indefatigable proponent of world peace by fostering intensive cooperation and understanding between nations. He assumed his post as Austria's Ambassador to the United States in Washington D.C. at a particularly difficult and sensitive moment in the history of bilateral relations between the two countries. While being fully aware what the "watch list" decision would mean for his activities, he nevertheless accepted the challenge and did his utmost to mitigate its impact and to achieve a reversal of the decision.

Ambassador Dr. Hoess was remembered in a special Memorial Mass at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, February 4th, 2007. As many of you may remember, he was instrumental in bringing the Mariazeller Madonna to the Austrian Chapel at the Shrine while serving in Washington, D.C.

2007 events:

March 5: 7:30 pm **Concert:** Tibor Kovac, member of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (violin,) and Lambert Orkis, Grammy Award-winning artist (piano), followed by reception, at the Embassy of Austria

April 14: 3 – 5:00 pm **Kaffeehaus Jause**, at the Embassy of Austria

late April/early May **Chesapeake String Quartett**

May 23: 7 – 8:30 pm **Annual Meeting** at the Embassy of Austria

May/June [to be confirmed] **Heurigen**

Schubert, Schubert and Schubert '07 Festival

The American-Austrian Society is proud to be among the sponsors of the ever popular Schubert, Schubert and Schubert '07 Festival to be held on March 16, 17 and 18, 2007.

By popular demand the festival remains at Gaston Hall because of its exceptional acoustics and warm ambiance.

Schubert, Schubert and Schubert was named festival in residence by the Office of Performing Arts - Georgetown University in 1991.

For more information visit:

www.stompingground.com/schubert/

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Coming in the next Newsletter: SOS Children's Villages

On January 25th, 2007, Ms. Ulrike Wiesner met with Heather Paul, the CEO of the above NGO and Kristin Backstrom, the Director of Donor Relations, in order to explore possibilities of strengthening our collaboration.