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| International Human Rights Day Concert with special guest conductor, Ambassador Robert Beecroft. (Photo: Dz.Buzadzic) International Human Rights Day Concert with special guest conductor, Ambassador Robert Beecroft. (Photo: Dz.Buzadzic) | Mozart as Reconciler on International Human Rights Day Concert |
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| By Alexandra George  Sarajevo, 20 December 2006. As the Youth Symphony Orchestra of South-Eastern Europe, made up of young musicians from Balkan countries, performed a Mozart programme on 11 December in Dom Armije Concert Hall, Sarajevo, to mark International Human Rights Day, one was reminded of the transformative and reconciliatory powers of music. Organized by the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has worked in promoting human rights here for over a decade, the music had particular resonance in a country recently wracked by internecine conflict.  A certain gleam surrounded the event. A crowd of local politicians, the diplomatic corps and international community filled the frescoed hall of Dom Armije, an Austro-Hungarian architectural landmark (former Offizierskassino). In the middle of the hall TV cameras from Bosnia's main TV, BHT, prepared to broadcast the event live throughout Bosnia. Flanked by the Bosnian and OSCE flags, Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, introduced the evening. It was a threefold celebratory affair, he said, as the Mission was observing the tenth anniversary of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina's establishment, International Human Rights Day, and Mozart's 250th birth-anniversary.  The event served as a reminder that ten years since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord (DPA) (1995), a measure of progress in the human rights field had been made. The Mission and the international community as a whole had played a significant role in this achievement. The DPA accorded the OSCE a strong human rights mandate which initially focused on the pre-war property restitution. Today its human rights work includes war crimes trial monitoring, improving the judicial system, combating human trafficking - all with a view to ending a culture of impunity and establishing the rule of law.  The evening itself was to some extent symbolic of the international community's involvement in post-war peacebuilding and reconstruction: former OSCE Mission to BiH Head, Ambassador Robert Beecroft was guest conductor, the current UK Ambassador to BiH, Matthew Rycroft, performed on string bass.  Ambassador Beecroft, opened the evening guest-conducting The Abduction of the Seraglio. Resident conductor, Sinisa Markovic led his orchestra in other Mozart works. The audience accorded soprano Aida Corbadzic-Valka an appreciative round of applause for the range of colour in her performance of a Marriage of Figaro aria.  Since the message of the evening was peace-building and reconciliation, reflecting a decade of work by the OSCE Mission here, the Mission fittingly invited the Youth Symphony Orchestra of South-Eastern Europe, whose young musicians come variously from Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro. The musicians play regularly in their national orchestras, which include the Zagreb Philharmonic, Belgrade Philharmonic and Slovene Philharmonic Orchestras, the Opera of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad and the Croatian Chamber Orchestra.  As the orchestra's conductor, 31-year old Sinisha Markovic, stood backstage, preparing to step out into the glare of the camera, he contemplated: "The Youth Symphony Orchestra exists to promote culture and peace through classical music, which transcends languages and nationalities. It also has a significant political dimension as we rely on the cooperation of young musicians from the former Yugoslavia, a region recently devastated and divided by war."  International Human Rights Day marked every year around the globe reminds us that the inalienable rights of every human being, as well as tolerance and understanding, are universal values. Once such a cultural legacy is impressed into the social fabric, coexistence becomes possible. On this occasion such a spirit seemed in ascendance. Ambassador Robert Beecroft, Honourary President of the Orchestra, who travelled from Washington D.C. to take part in the concert, encapsulated the mood: "Words can kill. So much of the world's problems are fought with words. Music reconciles us by reaching for our universal souls. This orchestra plays in perfect harmony, which taken metaphorically, is a lesson for politicians and citizens throughout the former Yugoslavia". | |