

THE VIENNESE BALL



Last night's \$350-per-person event raised \$60,000, with \$30,000 going to The Champions for Children Foundation's bursary program and the balance to the Thirteen Strings Junior Orchestra.

Splendour greets Austria's new ambassador

Debutantes, cavaliers and Ottawa's glitterati made it a night to remember for the new envoy, writes JENNIFER CAMPBELL.

Against the elegant backdrop of the National Art Gallery's main hall and rotunda and surrounded by more than 400 members of Ottawa's glitterati, Austria's new ambassador was introduced to what many in the city consider the social event of the season.

The eighth annual Viennese Winter Ball, a sold-out, fairy tale of an evening, went off without a hitch.

Ambassador Otto Ditz and his wife, Maureen, arrived in late December, just in time to assume the responsibilities for this year's splashy ball. At an exclusive pre-party reception in his residence, where guests arrived by limousine, Mr. Ditz said he was pleased to be host-

ing the auspicious affair.

"Canada is a hundred times bigger than Austria, but one of the things we can offer is culture and lifestyle," Mr. Ditz said. "The Viennese Ball has been Austria's most successful export. In Canada, it is special because it is community-based."

Back at the gallery, after sipping champagne and taking in the music of the Junior Thirteen Strings Orchestra in the front foyer of the gallery, party-goers — ladies decked out in their finest taffetas, satins and silks; lads sporting black tie and spats — made their way to the rotunda. Here, a gorgeous group of debutantes, 12 in all, each with her own "Prince Charming" cavalier, kicked off

the evening by dancing the polonaise, a traditional European court dance. They then fanned out and invited guests to join them on the dance floor.

This year's event lacked some of the frenzied excitement of last year's, where, for the first time in the ball's history, then-prime minister Jean Chrétien and his wife, Aline, were able to attend.

While Paul and Sheila Martin were not among the guests, the ball boasted dignitaries and VIPs from all walks of Ottawa life. Socialites, politicians, ambassadors, high commissioners and lawyers and hospital administrators were among the distinguished guests. Environment Minister David Anderson was the federal government's only cabinet minister in attendance. Israeli ambassador Haim Divon and his wife Linda brought their daughter Michelle. David Reddaway, British

high commissioner, made an appearance, as did Maria Theresa de Madero, ambassador of Mexico, who came with her husband, Manuel. Also spotted were NCC chairman Marcel Beaudry and his wife Mona.

Ottawa heart surgeon Fraser Rubens, also an accomplished oratorio and concert soloist, teamed up with Shawne Elizabeth, a coloratura soprano, in a number of musical selections.

A jubilant David Wallace, the event's co-chair since its inception and the vice-president and managing director of major sponsor BMO Harris Private Banking, was delighted with the eighth edition.

"This evening has become an event for charity as opposed to a charity event," he said. "But in the end, it's about young people. The debutantes set the magic up at the beginning of the evening and the youth benefit at the end through the two charities."

For women, black was the colour of the night although there were some exceptions, including Catherine Clark, daughter of former prime minister Joe Clark, who was resplendent in a red satin skirt with a black bodice and long black satin gloves. Men didn't stray far from the black tie dress code with most wearing traditional tuxedos. Mark Macy, who drove in from Toronto, wore a kilt to show off his "distant Scottish heritage."

Westin Hotel chef Philippe Wetzel whipped up a culinary extravaganza featuring pre-set horns d'oeuvres including corn blinis with smoked salmon and Canadian caviar, barbecue Peking duck terrine, Vietnamese lobster roll, coconut-spiced giant shrimp, foie gras terrine, red deer tenderloin, cured caribou, and West Coast crab salad. The main course? A maple-smoked medallion of

beef tenderloin with a Calvados McIntosh relish and apple cider reduction served alongside a turnip, chanterelle and potato gratin and a "bouquet" of baby vegetables. A selection of desserts included lemon and blueberry St-Honoré and raspberry-filled dark chocolate fondant.

For the price of admission, \$350 per person, guests received a portrait by photographer Jacqueline Turpin and left with gift bags. Between courses, and waltzes, party-goers were free to roam the gallery and take in music by the Ottawa Schrammel Quartet and sips of chocolate martini at the Kaffee Haus set up outside the bookstore.

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