

PAS - Shining Brightly in the Sunshine State

by Michael J. Kopanic, Jr., Ph.D.

Editorial assistance from Milenka Melanie Freighner & Angie Lipchick

The year 2010 will be remembered for its record snowfalls and chilly temperatures. Even Florida experienced several frosts during the frigid winter which threatened orange groves and cooled the usually warm southern state.

The Pittsburgh Area Slovak Folk Ensemble (PAS), brought a ray of sunshine to Florida and warmed its audiences with two lively musical performances - one at Disney World in Orlando on Friday, March 5 and another at The Slovak Garden in Winter Park on Sunday, March 7. Perhaps it was no coincidence that temperatures rose steadily, day by day, after the troupe touched ground in Orlando!

Magic at Disney World

At "Downtown Disney," PAS put on a dazzling display in front of a large audience at the Waterside Stage, Walt Disney World's premiere venue for entertainers. Invited to perform as part of the 25th anniversary of Disney's *Magic Music Days*, PAS presented a rousing program including elements of the one the troupe presented at the 44th Annual Folk Festival in Detva, Slovakia during their July 2009 visit. Opening with *Vyhadzovana*, or the tossing dance from Myjava, the repertoire included a *mazurka* from the western region of Slovakia near the town of Kubra, a waltz, a medley of songs, a couples' dance from the central Liptov region, and the *Zbojnický taniec* or the Dance of Janosik, the Slovak Robin Hood, with axes.

- PAS's performance proved a real crowd pleaser. In consideration of

the audience's probable unfamiliarity with the Slovak traditions, the group presented a short address about PAS and its mission to continue the traditions of Slovak folk song and dance in America. This was quite useful for the audience; one person in attendance initially thought the group was Spanish!

The Slovak Garden

Founded in 1952 by Slovak fraternalists, The Slovak Garden, bills itself as "A home for American Slovaks." The retirement facility is located in Winter Park, a northeast suburb of Orlando. The Slovak Garden features a banquet hall for dining and entertainment in addition to an extensive library and museum, which opened to the public after the meal and performance.

At the Slovak Garden, there was no confusion about who we were as Slovaks. The audience consisted mainly of ethnic Slovaks from across Florida, other parts of the United States and even Canada. As all gathered for the celebration of their 58th Annual Slovak Day, most were quite familiar with PAS from their celebrated performances of recent years.

The activities of the Slovak Day began with a Slovak Mass celebrated by the Rev. Louis P. Luljak, a retired priest from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. The Liturgy was celebrated and sung in Slovak, with only the sermon given in English. As part of the Mass, following the reception of the Eucharist, the PAS women performed a solemn liturgical dance to

the hymn "I am the Living Bread."

Following the liturgy, guests enjoyed a wonderful banquet which included traditional Slovak foods such as *schnitzel* (bravcovy rezen in Slovak), *pirohy*, and *halubky* (stuffed cabbage) followed by homemade *kolace* for dessert.

Following the meal, United States Representative John L. Mica who represents Florida's 7th Congressional District, offered a brief address in which he noted how proud he is that Slovak Americans continue the traditions and religious faith of their immigrant ancestors. Congressman Mica, a native of Binghamton, N.Y., is himself of Slovak ancestry.

During the cultural program, PAS awed the audience with a startling array of folk dances and songs from both eastern and western Slovakia. In addition to the dances performed in the shorter program at Disney, PAS incorporated a suite of dances, including the women's *karicka* (circle dance) to *Dajce nam Pelenky* (give us some brandy), the men's military recruitment slapping dance, *Verbunk*, Sariska Polka, the Eastern *Csardas* and *Karcmar* (the Innkeeper's Song). The show concluded with *valasky* (long handled axes) brandished for the ever-popular *Zbojnický taniec*. The audience applauded with resounding approval.

Returning to Florida in 2011

Both events proved to be a great success and both Disney World and The Slovak Garden have asked the ensemble to return for performances in 2011.

Credit for PAS's success belongs to director and choreographer Angie Lipchick, who also meticulously scrutinizes the singing and music with musical director John Lipchick, who provides the group with accompaniment as well as coaching all aspects of their musical interpretation.

PAS's next public performance will be at this year's 7th annual banquet of the Kent-Dudince Sister Cities Association on Sunday, May 16 at the Kent Elks Lodge Hall in Kent, Ohio. The social hour which begins at 1 p.m. as well as the dinner music will be provided by the Johnny Pastirik Band and the *Slovenske Mamicky* vocal ensemble of greater Cleveland. The cost of the event is \$15.00. Those interested in attending should contact Rudy Bachna, 1544 Vine Street, Kent, OH 44240 or call (330)673-3255.

For more information about the Pittsburgh Area Slovak Folk Ensemble, visit the group's website at www.pasfolkensemble.com or contact them via regular mail at PAS Folk Ensemble, 1254 Old Concord Road, Monroeville, PA 15146. You may also call at (412) 373-3873.

The entirely-volunteer members of PAS are both both proud and grateful to continue

this historic traditions of our Slovak forebears both in the United States and throughout the world, and would like to express their thanks to all, especially our Slovak fraternalists, whose support makes their efforts possible. Thank you and Zdar Boh!

