

Maharimba Music in Uzhhorod

In spite of the last-minute instrument shipping crisis the nine member Maharimba band and marimbas arrived in Uzhhorod safely and happily on September 26! Within hours the instruments were assembled and the first performance took place at the city's official wedding registry site where several newly married couples were entertained by the magical music played on wooden keys.

And so began the cultural exchange which was a year in the planning and fundraising for both the Maharimbas and for C-USCA. Ira Roshkovych, Program Director for the Path to Life Rehabilitation Center in Uzhhorod, was the Maharimbas official host and organizer in Uzhhorod. A ball of fire and all-around outstanding human being, Ira's greeting to band members most days was "Are we flexible?" which meant she had found yet another opportunity for the band to perform, sometimes up three flights of stairs (no elevators) or at a venue that expected us to be there within 45 minutes!

From the first moments, the marimba music was received with such joy and happy curiosity that band members were thrilled to play at 16 venues in the 11 days there (a record number of performances). The band didn't turn down a single opportunity to play and often moved on a moment's notice to a new site. Performance venues for the band included the orphanage, the library (covered by local TV), two schools (including Public School #14 where the Roma children also performed for the band), Path to Life Anniversary Party, several outdoor venues during the City Days Festival, the grand Philharmonic Hall (audience of 500 dignitaries), live TV and radio interviews and more. The venues also included five master classes with 10 music students chosen from many different local schools and three local music teachers. The students learned an African song and performed with great skill on opening day of the City Days Festival to the applause of the TOUCH delegation, friends, parents, teachers and proud Maharimba band members.

The beautiful new set of marimbas was left in the care of the music teachers at the youth center in Uzhhorod, "PADIUN," where the lessons will continue. The Maharimbas will be sending written marimba music to the music teachers during the course of the year to encourage the continuation of classes for children. Hopefully, children from PADIUN will be performing on their own next year at the City Days Festival!

This was a wonderful cultural exchange between two sister cities, and the music and laughter was a form of communication that was immediately enjoyed and understood by all. The Maharimbas worked very hard to be good diplomats, and enjoyed each and every minute in the company of the great people of Uzhhorod. A million thanks to Corvallis Uzhhorod Sister Cities Association and its many donors for this outstanding opportunity offered to The Maharimbas!

Sara Swanberg
Maharimbas

