

Report on

THE FIFTH SARAJEVO UN WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Sarajevo, February 8th TO 10th, 2017

International Forum Bosnia's Centre for Interfaith Dialogue is pleased to report the completion of its programme to mark the Fifth Sarajevo UN World Interfaith Harmony Week in February 2017.

Continuing its tradition of holding the Sarajevo UN World Interfaith Harmony Week since its inception in 2013, the organisers and participants decided to prepare a programme for 2017, again under the patronage of Sarajevo Old Town Municipality and the United Nations Development Programme.

The programme began with *A painter's quest for Behaudin Selmanović in Stolac,* an exhibition of pictures by Adela Nurković Kulenović, opened on February 8th. This was followed the same evening by a public discussion by leading Bosnian intellectuals of *Challenges facing social pluralism in Bosnia*. The next day, February 9th, there was a presentation and public discussion of five new books on sacred culture by leading writers from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The programme was rounded out, on February 10th, by the already traditional musical evening and public concert, *Musica Sacra Bosnae,* showcasing the sacred music of Bosnia’s four main religious traditions, as performed by the interfaith Pontanima Choir.

The exhibition, and so the programme as a whole, was opened by Mr. Ibrahim Hadžibajrić, the mayor of the Sarajevo Old Town Municipality and main sponsor of the Fifth Sarajevo UN Interfaith Harmony week. Mrs. Sezin Sinanoglu, UN Resident Coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina, gave the inaugural talk at the public discussion that followed.

The first event was *A painter's quest for Behaudin Selmanović in Stolac,* an exhibition of paintings by Adela Nurković Kulenović. It was opened at 18:30, February 8th (Wednesday), 2017, in the Hotel Europe. The exhibition was open to view for the three days of the programme. Adela Nurković Kulenović is an academic artist and member of the Association of Fine Artists of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has shown at ten sole and more than 50 collective exhibitions. International Forum Bosnia proposed to Adela Nurković Kulenović in 2016 that she try to unravel through her own painting the inspiration Behaudin Selmanović's testified to as a painter in Stolac before the towns destruction in the war of 1992-5, applying her own painterly language to what remains of the town after its destruction. This process has given rise to six canvasses in acrylic by Adela Nurković Kulenović: *Stolac Story: I breathe in your power, On the backs of bridges, Landscape, Still life, In quest* and *Rhapsody ST16*. These picture were shown publicly for the first time during the current exhibition and were presented by the painter herself. The exhibition opened by the mayor of Sarajevo Old Town, Mr. Ibrahim Hadžibajrić.

The exhibition was followed by a public discussion on *Challenges facing social pluralism in Bosnia*, which started at 19:00, also at the Hotel Europe*.* Mrs. Sezin Sinanoglu, UN Resident Coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina, opened the proceedings with an inaugural address. The topic of the dissucsion was that Bosnia, like every other plural society, comprises practically countless aspects – generational, religious, economic, political, ideological, etc. When such social pluralism is oriented towards a better future and served in this orientation by the political, cultural and economic orders, these different aspects can contribute to a general awareness of our responsibility towards other individuals, communities, and the world in general. They can also be cruelly abused, however, and wielded against both human beings and the world. Despite its richness, Bosnia's social pluralism has tended for a long time to be presented as an agony due to a lack of any clear vision of a future to which it can make a meaningful contribution. Instead of protecting and cherishing it as a jewel of great worth, it is been the target of ideological constructions of conflict and exclusion.

The public discussion was moderated by Mehmedalija Hadžić. The speakers were:

* Mehmedalija Hadžić is a Muslim theologian, diplomat, and translator from the Arabic. He is widely held to be one of most authoritative Bosnian interpreters of the Muslim sacred tradition.
* David Kamhi is a violinist, a professor of The Sarajevo music academy and researcher into Bosnian Sephardi heritage.
* Rusmir Mahmutćehajić is a philosopher, politician and writer. His wide-ranging oeuvre in many languages includes the following books: *Andrićevstvo: Protiv etike sjećanja*; The Praised and the Virgin, 3 volumes; *Iz Jerusalema: O jednosti, vjesništvu i povratku* and *Learning from Bosnia: Approaching Tradition*.
* Ivo Marković is a Franciscan priest and writer. He is known to the Bosnian public for his promotion of inter-religious dialogue and harmonious relations between the various elements that comprise Bosnian plurality. He is the founder and leader of the Pontanima Choir, which has found fame both at home and abroad as a convincing symbol of social pluralism.
* Žarko Papić is a politician, diplomat and wide-ranging researcher of the social aspects of political, cultural, and economic life in Bosnia and abroad. His writings cover the multiple political, cultural and economic aspects of the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav drama. His analyses and reflections on social realities in Bosnia are a necessary starting point for any serious approach to politics, culture or the economy in this country.
* Yuri Stoyanov is a researcher and author. His academic expertise is first and foremost in the field of of the history of religious, broadly understood, with a particular interest in the theology of the end-time in Eastern Christianity, the heresiology of Bogumilism, the question of the mediaeval Bosnian church, and the relationship between religious dualism and the Abrahamic traditions.

The programme continued the next day with a presentation of new books on sacred culture by Bosnian authors, starting at 19:00, again in the Hotel Europe. The presentation, with discussion, lasted approximately one and a half hours.

The books presented were:

* Azra Akšamija, Mosque Manifesto: Propositions for Spaces of Coexistence, Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2015;
* Ines Ašćerić Todd, *Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia: Sufi Dimensions to the Formation of Bosnian Muslim Society*, Leiden: Brill, 2015;
* Amila Buturović, *Carved in Stone, Etched in Memory: Death, Tombstones and Commemoration in Bosnian Islam since c.1500,* London: Routlegde, 2015;
* *fra Matije Divković, Nauk krstjanski za narod slovinski i Sto čudesa aliti zlamenja blažene i slavne Bogorodice, Divice Marije, Sarajevo:* Kulturno-povijesni institut Bosne Srebrene, 2015;
* Helen Walasek with contributions by Richard Carlton, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Valery Perry and Tina Wik, Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage, London: Routlegde, 2015.

They were presented respectively by:

* Professor Amra Hadžimuhamedović, a well-known researcher of Bosnian cultural heritage. Her work has contributed greatly to the understanding and affirmation of Bosnian culture as a whole to which parts can neither be added nor subtracted without damaging both those parts and the whole they comprise.
* Professor Asim Zubčević, a researcher of Bosnia's written heritage. His recent research into the culture of the book in Sarajevo during the 18th and 19th centuries has shed much light on the loss involved in the separation and parceling up of Bosnia's rich cultural heritage in spite of the social pluralism that has always been and remains such a feature of Bosnian social reality.
* Gorčin Dizdar, a researcher of religious relations in mediaeval Bosnia and their interpretation under various ideological constructions of history. His research is the first comprehensive attempt to place the religious drama of Bosnia within the wider context of the religious and cultural history.
* Professor Mile Babić, a Franciscan priest and philosopher. He is well-known both at home and abroad through his translations and his own works. His engagement in public life has been in itself a major contribution to the promotion of social pluralism in Bosnia as a resource for developing our humanity in freedom and our right to difference.
* Elma Hašimbegović, a researcher of Mediaeval Bosnia's written heritage. As such, her research has broad implications for the framework for assessing and presenting Bosnian cultural heritage within its holistic historical context, as well as for contemporary paths towards creating harmony within the social realm.

The final event was the now traditional *Evening with the Pontanima Choir:* *Musica sacra Bosnae*, held on Friday, February 10th, 2017, at 19:00, in St. Francis' Hall (Zagrebačka 18). As in previous years, the concert showcased the Pontanima Choir's wealth of experience. The host for the evening's programme was Slobodan Šoja, the President of the Pontanima association. The choice of songs reflected both the common ground of Bosnia's sacred Jewish, Christian - both Orthodox and Catholic and Muslim, traditions and what makes each of them special.

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