

15th POLISH FESTIVAL AT FEDERATION SQUARE

After the very hot temperatures in Sydney I arrived in Melbourne to a much colder atmosphere and it even rained on Friday 15 November.

On Saturday, I walked to Federation Square, which was approximately 200 meters from my hotel. I must say I was a little disappointed that nowhere in sight were there any advertisements about the Festival. There were only a few pavilions set up and nothing else. I took a wander down onto the lower level across the street from the Yarra River and found the same as on the upper level. No banners put up, no billboards, nothing to even let one know that there was to be Festival.

On Sunday, I walked over to the Square and found that banners had been put up. This can be seen in my photos. There was a large throng of people now and very active pavilions selling goods and pavilions with information regarding the Scouts, Jesuit Order, Kresy Siberia, how to obtain a Polish Passport, etc.

On either side of the stage two tents had been erected to act as change rooms for the Dancing Groups. The lower level was abuzz with activity and this was the section where all types of food could be purchased as well as a Beer Garden. Security was abundant so that there would be no problems with revelers. At one food Pavilion the dancing group Lowicz were selling cookies which were absolutely delightful.

To start off on the main stage the Polish Schools were performing with songs and portraying different short stories. At the end of their performance they received loud applause. At 12 o'clock the hour was signalled by the Hejnal played with great gusto by a very talented Dominic Rawdanowicz.

This year a number of Interstate dancing groups attended and participated in the Festival. These groups were Kujawy Sydney, Kukuleczka from Perth, and Obertas from Brisbane and Syrenka from Sydney. The two dancing groups Lowicz and Polonez were also present. Polish Schools were represented by Polish Saturday School Albion, Polish Saturday School Sth Melbourne, Polish Saturday School Rowville, Polish Saturday School Essendon, Polish Saturday School St Albans and The Edmund Strzelecki Melbourne Polish School. Other appearances were by Senivoda, Lukas Zawirski, and Victor Janisiow.

At the same time there was a concert at Deakin Edge. Participants were Frederic Chopin Society of Victoria, different Polish Music Schools, and winners of the Ewa Malewicz Music Competition: Ola Milena, Kujawy Sydney, and piano recital by Konrad Olszewski, Kotaro Nagano, music and poetry by Marta Kaczmarek, Roman Syrek and Alicja Shaw.

The close of the Festival was at 5:30 pm. Overall the Festival was a great success, but it was just a shame that two sections of the Festival were on at the same time, being Deakin Edge and Market Square Stage. It was difficult to be in two places at the same time.

The other thing that I thought was misplaced was that the official opening was after 1:30pm and not when the 12 o'clock Hejnal was played. The VIP's were on stage after 1:30 pm. A speech was given by the new Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Sydney, Mrs Monika Konczyk, which opened the Festival. In attendance on stage were also representatives from Kujawy Sydney, Syrenka and Children from Kukuleczka.

Jolanta Zurawski