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The Year of the Czechs continues in Orinda with St. Wenceslas Festival

By Sora O'Doherty

It has been a year filled with Czech activities as Orinda joined with the Orinda-Tabor Sister City Foundation to celebrate the year of the Czechs in Orinda. On Sept. 29 the three-day St Wenceslas 2017 Czech Festival begins with the Czech Festival Gala Dinner at 6:30 p.m. at the Quarry House in Wilder, hosted by OTSCF in collaboration with Sokol SF.

Honoring over 25 years of citizen diplomacy between Tabor, the Czech Republic and Orinda, the dinner features a host of special guests, including a presentation by William Lobkowicz, American-born prince of Lobkowicz, current heir to most of the Lobkowicz lands and preservationist of four castles in the Czech Republic, including Lobkowicz Palace at the Prague Castle.

Born just outside Boston, Lobkowicz grew up an American and attended Harvard University before entering the world of finance. His life was turned around, however, after the wall came down and his amazing family history, which began in the 14th century, emerged. As the current proprietor of seven castles, and with the responsibility of centuries of artifacts, he and his wife, Sharon, and their three children moved part-time to Prague, determine to sort out and share their fortunes with the public.

Ambassador Marie Chatardova, Czech Permanent Representative to the United Nations, will offer an introduction. Other dignitaries will attend the event, including Czech Consul General from Los Angeles Pavol Sepelak, Czech Honorary Consul General from San Francisco Richard Pivnicka, Slovak Honorary Consul General from San Francisco Barbara Pivnicka, and Czech-American Olympian Rink Babka. Entertainment will be by Muzicka, a Prague-based folk music group, and dinner choices of goulash, roast pork or a vegetarian dish will be offered, in addition to a no-host bar with Czech beer and wine. Tickets are \$100 per person. For tickets, visit <https://czechfestivalgala.eventbrite.com> or send a check to: O/TSCF, P.O. Box 265, Orinda, CA 94563, indicating your dinner preference.

Prior to the gala, there will be an opening ceremony with music and vendors at 4 p.m. Sept. 29 in Orinda Community Park. The Czech Museum will also be open. The festival will continue starting at 9 a.m.

Saturday, Sept. 30 and ending with the free showing of "Amadeus" beginning at 7 p.m. in Orinda Community Park, including a question and answer session with the producer.

During the day on Saturday there will be music, dancing, vendors, egg decorating and wheat weaving classes, children's storytelling, marionette shows and Czech Christmas ornaments. Other activities include a Czech lunch offered from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., a presentation about Lobkowicz, an American in Prague, at 2 p.m. in the Community Center, and food trucks at 5 p.m. near the park.

The Festival will conclude at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 1 with a concert of Czech composers Dvorak and Smetana in the Orinda Library Auditorium.

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[back](#)

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