

The Leonhard Euler Tercentenary in Europe

A festive ceremony in the church of St. Martin in Basel—the church in which Leonhard Euler, born on April 15, 1707, was baptized on April 17—will inaugurate the Euler 300th anniversary year. Invited guests at the ceremony, which will be held on April 20, 2007, will include representatives of the Swiss federal and local governments, of the University of Basel, and of the Academies of St. Petersburg and Berlin, which Euler helped bring to prominence with his numerous scientific memoirs published in their annals. The program, along with a commemorative speech by a prominent Swiss scholar and addresses by various delegations, is to include the world première of a work by the Polish–Swiss composer Bettina Skrzypczak commissioned for the occasion—a piece for two voices and chamber orchestra based on texts from Euler’s *Theory of Lunar Movements* (1772) and *Essay on a New Theory of Music* (1739). Following the ceremony in the church, which will be open to the public, the government of the canton Basel–Stadt will offer an apéro in the historic Blue House overlooking the Rhine.

The organizing committee, under the direction of Hanspeter Kraft, president of the Euler Commission, and under the patronage of the Swiss Academy of Sciences, is planning a year-long series of events intended to bring mathematics, the exact sciences, and their history closer to the general public. Scheduled events include a cycle of interdisciplinary lectures at the University of Basel during the summer semester (April–June,

2007), organized by Hans-Christoph Im Hof, on the life and work of Leonhard Euler and its impact on modern science; an International Euler Symposium, Basel, May 31 and June 1, featuring lectures by a group of first-rate scientists; an exhibition at the Basel University Library, March 16 to June 9; a series of documentary films on science; and a concert in the church of St. Peter, Basel, on September 13 that will include a repeat performance of Skrzypczak’s composition, together with other 20th-century works inspired by mathematics, as well as works by contemporaries of Euler.

A series of events for high school students and teachers will commemorate Euler’s extraordinary and pioneering efforts in expository writing. Also planned is an “on the road” problem-solving competition: For several weeks, all streetcars and buses of the Basel Transportation System will carry posters bearing the Euler tercentenary logo and proposing problems whose solution requires common sense and creative thinking more than technical knowledge. Prizes will be awarded for the best solution of each week’s problem and for the best overall performance in the competition.

On the publishing front, Birkhäuser Basel plans to bring out *Ein Mann, mit dem Man Rechnen Kann* (A Man One Can Count On), an entertaining portrayal of Leonhard Euler’s life in Basel, St. Petersburg, and Berlin, illustrated by Elena Pini, researched by Alice Heyne, and written by Andreas K. Heyne. On a more serious level, the same publisher will issue an English translation by Erika and Walter Gautschi of the well-known, but out-of-print, biography *Leonhard Euler*

(from the original German by Emil A. Fellmann, a Basel historian of science and long-time editor-in-chief of the fourth series of Euler’s *Opera Omnia*).

Other organizations are planning their own Euler celebrations: The Union of Swiss Societies for Experimental Biology, in conjunction with [BC]² (Basel Computational Biology Conference 2007), will hold a conference in Basel, March 13–14, 2007, on the interfaces between biology, mathematics, and computational science. The Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, under the patronage of the Institut de France of the French Académie des Sciences, is organizing an international interdisciplinary conference marking not only Euler’s tercentenary, but also the 250th anniversary of Euler’s *Principes Généraux du Mouvement des Fluides*, the classic treatise on hydrodynamics in which the celebrated Euler equations were first introduced. The conference will take place in the alpine resort town of Aussois, France, June 18–23, 2007. Finally, on July 18 Walter Gautschi will present the Euler Lecture at the sixth International Congress on Industrial and Applied Mathematics (Zürich, July 16–20).

Interested readers can find further details about all these activities at <http://www.euler-2007.ch>.

Activities being planned in Berlin include a historical lecture on Euler by Eberhard Knobloch, to be given in the “New Palace,” Potsdam, May 25, 2007. Also in May, an honors course on Eulerian topics will be offered to especially talented students at the Berlin–Brandenburg Academy of Sciences (the former Prussian Academy of Sciences); Eberhard Knobloch and Jochen Brüning are the course organizers.

Naturally, the 300th anniversary of Euler’s birth will be celebrated also in St. Petersburg. The main event there will be an Euler Festival, June 10–12, along with a series of satellite conferences throughout the month of June and part of July. All events will take place at the St. Petersburg branch of the V.A. Steklov Mathematical Institute and at the Euler International Mathematical Institute. Further details can be found at <http://www.pdmi.ras.ru/EIMI/2007/Euler300>.—Walter Gautschi, Department of Computer Sciences, Purdue University.

