

Paris Journal 2010

Reception of AMOPA at the Grand Salon of the Sorbonne, February 15, 2010.

Ernie, as a member (“Chevalier”) of the Order of the Palmes Académiques was invited to a champagne reception by the Association of Members of Palmes Académiques (AMOPA). He has been a dues paying member of the US branch (called ASFAP = American Society of French Academic Palms) since 1994 when he was nominated by Francis Guastavino, then Scientific Attaché at the French Consulate in Chicago.

Ernie contacted the Paris section of AMOPA and that is how we were invited to this event.

Below is the entry from the street.



The entry to the old Sorbonne building is guarded and we had to show our invitation to get in.

On the main floor is the entry to the Grande Amphitheater. It was closed but the doors were worth a photo.



Next is the stairway up to the Grand Salon. I love the murals and all the gilding on the wrought iron work. It is interesting that there are two grand marble stairways, one on the left called the “Escalier des sciences” and the other on the right called the “Escalier des Lettres.”



The next mural is adjacent to the entry to the Grand Salon.



The place is very grand. As you can see the members of the Palmes Académiques are mostly older people. They look like retired professors and educators. It is a society of educators.

The Grand Salon is a large high-ceilinged reception hall with parquet floor and more murals and chandeliers. For this event there was a platform set up with a screen and projector and microphones.



The program began at 1800 (6 pm) with introductions and then the main speaker who spoke on his research and ideas on how children learn. That was followed by a teacher with a couple of kids who recited. Our French was not up to understanding a great deal of it.

After the formal part of the meeting, the string quartet from the Republican Guard (dressed in their uniforms) gave an awesome performance of Mozart's Hunt Quartet.

We then adjourned to the péristyle (I guess one would call it the foyer of the salon) where there were fancy hors d'oeuvres and champagne.

What an incredible place and what a privilege to be part of this.

The Republican Guard is part of the French Gendarmerie and is responsible for providing security in the Paris area and for providing guards of honor. It is remarkable that it has its own world class string quartet. The group was quite young.

After that wonderful concert, the Salon emptied out and we saw how these people were standing in line at a "feeding frenzy." People pushed their way to the champagne server and stayed at the table munching on the little fancy hors d'oeuvres and didn't make room for the next wave of people. It was elbows and pushing to get to the table. You can see the mass of people at the far end of the floor. There were no lines. I wasn't the only one taking pictures.

Incidentally it wasn't free; cost 22 € per person. (and the event in the Fall was 25 € each).



Some Garde Républicaine pictures from their web page:



