WALTZ INTO SPACE

VIENNA AND THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY REWRITE HISTORY

Vienna's reputation as the world capital of music is undisputed. The challenge was to use this strength not only to celebrate the past, but to support Vienna's ambition to compete for meetings in future-facing sectors such as aerospace, science and technology.

The opportunity was already there. Vienna hosts the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs, and ESA Phi-Lab Austria opened at Vienna Airport in 2024. Yet the city had attracted relatively few space-related conferences and the Vienna Convention Bureau had no established strategic partnership with ESA.

The relevance of the sector was clear. ESA's Living Planet Symposium 2025 brought around 6,900 delegates to Vienna and generated an estimated €16 million in economic value.

At the same time, 2025 created a unique cultural moment: the 200th anniversary of Johann Strauss II.

His Blue Danube Waltz is one of the pieces of music most closely associated with Vienna – but also with space, thanks to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Yet when NASA launched the Voyager Golden Records in 1977 as a representation of humanity's cultural heritage, The Blue Danube was famously missing.

That omission became the starting point for WALTZ INTO SPACE.

The idea was simple: correct history and finally send The Blue Danube Waltz into space.

Vienna Tourism brought together the European Space Agency and the Wiener Symphoniker, combining scientific credibility, artistic excellence and destination storytelling around one shared mission.

On 31 May 2025, ESA transmitted a live performance of The Blue Danube into deep space from its Deep Space Antenna in Cebreros, Spain.

But audiences were not asked simply to watch.

The original Strauss score was digitally mapped into 13,743 individual SpaceNotes using ScanScore and custom-coded logic. People could claim one of these notes, connect their name to it and receive a personal certificate confirming that their name would travel into space together with the music.

Every SpaceNote was claimed before the mission.

As a result, 13,743 people from 92 countries became active participants in the story. Their names travelled with The Blue Danube as electromagnetic waves at the speed of light. Within 23 hours and 3 minutes, the signal overtook Voyager 1 – symbolically correcting the cultural omission from 1977.

The campaign was activated across nine countries, five languages and five time zones through localised microsites, dynamic advertising and adapted content. It connected audiences interested in music, culture, science, technology and travel while retaining one central idea that could be understood anywhere in the world.

The mission culminated in a live performance by the Wiener Symphoniker. It was broadcast on national television, livestreamed internationally and screened publicly in Vienna, New York, Madrid and directly at ESA's antenna in Cebreros.

Around 10,000 people followed the initial digital broadcast, which reached approximately 100,000 views within the following weeks. Around 2,500 people watched in Bryant Park in New York, around 1,000 at Strandbar Herrmann in Vienna, 245 at Madrid Planetarium and 135 experienced the transmission directly in front of ESA's Deep Space Antenna.

The campaign became the most-watched content in the history of Vienna Tourism, generating more than 20.4 million video views.

Between January and June 2025, WALTZ INTO SPACE generated around 6,500 media reports worldwide and approximately 13.5 billion international media impressions.

Importantly, the campaign's organic momentum significantly exceeded expectations. Planned media spend could therefore be reduced by 50%, demonstrating that international reach was not simply bought through media investment – the idea itself generated attention, participation and earned coverage.

But the story did not end when the signal left Earth.

When WALTZ INTO SPACE was first submitted for the ICCA Best Marketing Award in 2025, the mission had taken place only three months earlier. At that point, its creative and communications impact was already clear. Its longer-term value was not.

One year later, that picture is different.

The project established a highly visible working relationship with ESA and gave the Vienna Convention Bureau a distinctive platform for approaching international aerospace, astronomy, science and technology communities.

We do not claim that subsequent space-related meetings were won because of WALTZ INTO SPACE. They do, however, demonstrate the strategic relevance of the sector the campaign was designed to address.

In April 2026, Vienna hosted the ESA-supported Hubble & Webb Conference *Enriching the Universe*, organised with STScI and the University of Vienna. The European Astronomical Society Annual Meeting is confirmed for Vienna in June 2027.

The broader space and ESA narrative also reached beyond international delegates.

Just weeks after the WALTZ INTO SPACE mission, ESA's Living Planet Symposium brought space science into the city through Space in the City, a public festival for the people of Vienna.

The Living Planet Symposium School Lab gave 2,000 Austrian schoolchildren an interactive and immersive experience of science, technology, Earth observation and space research, extending the wider space initiative into education and local legacy.

WALTZ INTO SPACE therefore became more than a communications campaign. It connected destination marketing, business events, classical music, science, technology, education and public engagement around one idea.

The creative idea was to send The Blue Danube into space.

The strategic idea was to use something the world already associates with Vienna to open a conversation about something it does not yet associate strongly enough with Vienna: the future.

See WALTZ INTO SPACE in action:

WALTZ INTO SPACE

Space Anthem: How a Waltz by Johann Strauss II Became the Soundtrack of the Universe