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Foreword

The 18th International Symposium on Separation and Analysis of Proteins, Peptides and Polynucleotides (ISPPP'98) was held at the Vienna Hilton hotel in Vienna, Austria. This hotel is located close to the center of the city near Stadtpark. Delegates from all five continents attended an outstanding conference on separation and analysis and enjoyed the lovely surrounding and historical places of the heart of Austria, the city of Vienna.

ISPPP'98 was focusing as the two previous meetings on separation and analysis of biopolymers. Separation of biopolymers cannot be carried out in a meaningful way without a high standard of analysis. Increasing interest in small modifications imposed upon the biopolymers, generated either by the production system or generated during separation should be observed. These diminutive structural differences may have an overbearing impact on the biological activity. Currently mass spectrometry is very closely linked to purification. Breakthroughs in the rapid and reliable determination of a mass spectrum of a biopolymer sample enable us to judge separation efficiency on the molecular level. This does not mean that we do not have to cultivate other tools for the analysis of biopolymers. Electrophoretic, immunological and high-throughput biological assays have become essential tools for the separation scientist.

With the advent of genomics and proteomics new challenges for the separation scientist have arisen. Protein purification must now be accomplished either in miniaturized arrays in parallel or an extremely complex sample must be characterized fast and efficiently to understand the proteom. Currently, two-dimensional electrophoresis is considered to be the tool best suited for this purpose. A growing number of scientists have started to combine two-dimensional electrophoresis with mass spectrometry. Despite the increasing sophistication, separation science still needs investigations on fundamentals of electrophoretic and chromatographic methods. The latest developments in separation science, such as high-capacity or high-speed chromatography media, based on monoliths, are not completely understood. How does the mass transport work. How can we obtain information needed to design separation processes in silic?

The number of submitted abstracts demonstrate that separation science for biopolymers is a very dynamic discipline. We had more than 100 posters, 36 lectures and 6 workshops.

The social program provided delegates with an opportunity to relax and to explore the beautiful city of Vienna and its fascinating history. Without the generous sponsorship of various companies, we would not have been able to invite the participants to a reception at the Museum of Natural History in Vienna. The historical building itself is a very impressive monument.

Thanks should also go to Zdeněk Deyl, Robert Hodges, Milton Hearn, Joe DeStephano, Klaus Unger and Richard Willson for their assistance in organizing the scientific program. I wish to express my thanks to my colleagues of the organising committee, Djuro Josic and Ales Strancar for their input, their help and for supporting the symposium. I also wish to thank my wife, Monika, who took care of the correspondence and was most understanding for my workload. Gabriele Prohazka and her team

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from the conference organization, ''COME-IN'' was responsible for a very smoothly running conference.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to all the participants and the speakers who came to Vienna, contributed to the scientific program and shared their own unique insights with the rest of us.

Vienna (Austria) Alois Jungbauer