Preface

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In the preface of the first Alexander von Humboldt Colloquium, in 1984, we can read: “The dedication of the meeting to Alexander von Humboldt presented participants with the challenge that the discussions during this week should reflect the spirit of that great scientist of the last century, that the very many interesting ideas presented and developed during the sessions should be interpreted in the light of a broad view of Astronomy and Astrophysics.”

Today, 25 years later, almost one decennium in the twenty-first century, we need to say that this international colloquium, as well as all the past six Alexander von Humboldt Colloquia, happened to be in that spirit of being open minded to new ideas and facing the challenges of our research field.

This time, the meeting took place from March 30 to April 5, 2008, in Bad Hofgastein, Salzburg, Austria. As already three times before, the charming “Hotel Winkler” was a generous host for the 45 scientists from all over the world, from Argentina to China. Already from the title of the meeting: “The Chaotic Dynamics of Small Bodies and Planets”, it was evident that the topics were spread over a wide range of problems, namely from mathematical models (“Anisotropic Nekhoroshev stability”) to the real motion of celestial bodies (“Dynamics and orbital determination of resonant planetary systems”). The Heinrich von Eichhorn lecture, in which the well-known Austrian professor for Astronomy is honoured, was given by Prof. George Contopoulos, of the Academy of Athens, with the title ‘Order and Chaos in Spiral Galaxies’.

All authors were encouraged to write papers of a length that they considered suitable for the presentation of their results. The editorial board of *Celestial Mechanics and Dynamical Astronomy* arranged for competent and fast refereeing so that all papers could be reviewed and, when necessary, revised before publication.

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Salzburg. But we also have to thank the Astrophysikalisches Institut Potsdam, the *Sternenbote*, and Global Communication & Services (GCS) GmbH, Salzburg. With their financial support, we could organise the seventh of this series of meetings in Austria.

Finally, we thank the minister of Science, Dr. Johannes Hahn, and the Landeshauptfrau from Salzburg, Mag. Gabi Burgstaller, who took over the *Ehrenschatz* of our seventh Alexander von Humboldt Colloquium, 2008.