Final day of the 2nd Christmas Festival of Church Music

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The final concert of the 2nd Christmas Festival took place on January 22, 2012, at the International House of Music in Moscow. The choir of the Popov Academy of Choral Art and the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by V. Spivakov performed compositions by Luigi Cherubini (*Requiem in C-minor*) and Johannes Brahms (*Song of Destiny).*

The audience in the Svetlanov Hall could hear the first performance of *Stabat Mater* composed in 2008 for chorus and orchestra by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

Metropolitan Hilarion greeted the audience on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and his own behalf as artistic director of the festival. He said, 'Our festival has been conducted for the second time now and the experience has shown that the music performed at its concerts is very much in demand. It is not accidental that every concert has attracted public attention and has been overcrowded. It shows that people strive after beauty and things spiritual, that is, after the traditional source of the art of music'.

He explained that it was not accidental that the festival was timed to Christmas days, saying, 'Concerts in the House of Music as if continue the Christmas services, and the text performed here speak of the same as the liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church, namely, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14), that God became man. He did not come to us sometime long ago but He came to stay with us, and today and always He is among us. His divine presence gives meaning to our human.

'During the concerts of the 2nd Christmas Festival we heard music of various nations and various times, beginning from the Byzantine singing and plain chant to the compositions by the 19 century Russian composers and contemporary composers and American gospels. For two weeks we could hear a very wide range of church music, the art belonging to various nations and at the same time to all nations because the language of music is a universal one understood by every person with the open heart and ability to hear what the composer put in their works. I wish God's help to all the participants in the Festival's final concert and hope that there will be a third festival, and we will see you all at its concerts', he said in conclusion.

Answering questions from journalists before the concert, Metropolitan Hilarion said that the idea to

compose ‘Stabat Mater’ visited him as back as 2007 when he was working at ‘Passions According to St. Matthews’. ‘The Gospel of St. Matthews does not mention the Mother of God standing at the Cross’, he reminded, ‘but I wanted to compose a work dedicated precisely to this theme. It is an eternal theme: a mother crying over the suffering of her child and the Mother of God who cries over the suffering of the whole world and intercedes with her Son as God incarnate’.

Numerous listeners acclaimed the performers of the final concert. After ‘Stabat Mater’ was performed, the chorus and orchestra executed as an encore another Metropolitan Hilarion’s composition, ‘On the Rivers of Babylon’, a part of the symphony ‘The Song of Ascents’.

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