



Second Christmas Festival of Religious Music opens at the Moscow International House of Music

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On 8 January 2012, the Second Christmas Festival of Religious Music opened at the Moscow International House of Music with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Vladimir Spivakov, president of the Moscow International House of Music, a member of the Patriarchal Council for Culture, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, act as artistic directors of the Festival.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk read out greetings from the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church to the organizers, participants and guests: "On these radiant days we have gathered together to share the joy over the incarnation of God the Saviour of the world and to sing songs of praise to Him." His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted that the Moscow Christmas Festival has already made a name for itself in the world music community and expressed his hope for the Festival, held annually, to foster moral health of our society.

"Singing, especially choral singing, is the most natural expression of unity and accord. It is not fortuitous that the Holy Bible regards singing as the best form of praising God by human beings and angels", His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia underscored in his greeting.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk told the audience about the versatile programme of the Festival, which includes performing of different kinds of religious music: Byzantine and Old Russian hymns, and modern compositions, such as American spirituals.

The Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by Alexei Puzakov, an honoured artist of Russia, sang hymns by Pavel Chesnokov, Alexander Kastalsky, archpriest Nikolai Vedernikov, Nikolai Golovanov, and Georgy Sviridov. In the second part of the concert the Moscow Synodal Choir and "Musica Viva" Moscow Chamber Orchestra (headed by Alexander Rudin) performed the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, composed by Alexander Grechaninov in 1917 on the basis of ancient plain chant "Demestvo" for choir, string orchestra and organ (opus 79).

Performing at the next concert of the Christmas Festival to be held on 14 January will be "La Cappella Silvanensis" vocal ensemble of the Sylvanès Abbey (France).