First Christmas Festival of Religious Music opens in Moscow

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The First Christmas Festival of Religious Music opened at the Moscow International House of Music on January 9th, 2011, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. The best performers from Russia, Armenia, Great Britain and Serbia will take part in the Festival.

A renowned violinist and conductor, president of the International House of Music, Vladimir T. Spivakov, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations act as artistic directors of the Festival.

Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the audience and read out greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the participants and guests, in which he expressed his hope for the musical forum to offer an opportunity to many people to feel the joy of the great feast of the Nativity of Christ, will present new performers, and will strength fraternal and creative relations.

The Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by Alexei Puzakov, an honoured artist of Russia, sang troparion and kontakion of the Nativity of Christ by Alexander Kastalsky, selected hymns from Sergei Rachmaninov's Liturgy, Lenten and Paschal hymns by Nikolai Golovanov, 'The Cherubic Hymn' (arrangement of the first contrapunctus from Bach's "The Art of Fugue" by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, and religious pieces by contemporary composers A. Viskov and A. Rybnikiov.

Performing at the Festival that will last till January 23 will be choirs from different countries of the world, including the Choir of Westminster Abbey (London, Great Britain), the St. Stephan of Decani Choir of the Cathedral of the Three Holy Hierarchs (Novi Sad, Serbia), and the Cathedral Choir of Holy Etchmiadzin, the Male Choir of the Moscow Sretensky Stavropegic Monastery, and the Choir of the Popov Academy of Choral Art (Russia).

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