



Concert in commemoration of victims of World War II



On October 8, 2015, a charity concert 'Benjamin Britten. War Requiem' to commemorate the victims of World War II' took place at the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire Grand Hall in Moscow.

Among the numerous listeners were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, Mr. Vygaudas Usackas, head of the EU Delegation in Moscow, and representatives of the diplomatic corps.

The event was organized by the St. Gregory the Theologian Charity and EU Delegation in the Russian Federation with the support of the Moscow government and the embassies of Germany, USA and Great Britain as well as the British Council.

Before the performance, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the public, saying in particular,

'This concert is devoted to the 70th anniversary of the Victory in the war which we are accustomed to calling 'The Great Patriotic War' and which is also known as World War II. Millions of people of various nationalities fell victims to it. Fighting side by side in it were Russians and people of other ethnic origins

who lived in the Soviet Union at that time, as well as Americans, the British and people of other nations. They all rallied to defeat the evil of fascism.

'We paid dear price for the Victory. And in memory of this Victory, outstanding composer Benjamin Britten wrote his 'War Requiem' to the traditional text of Latin requiem services, adding to it verses by English poet Wilfred Owen who wrote profoundly Christian poetry and who as a still very young man was killed at the front in the end of World War I.

'War is evil, and the Church always calls people to settle their problems and conflicts by peaceful means. Wilfred Owen wrote, 'One of Christ's essential commands was: Passivity at any price! Suffer dishonour and disgrace, but never resort to arms.' We know that the Lord Jesus Christ said, *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends* (Jn. 15:13). And many people, men and women, most of them young, gave their lives for their friends, thus performing the greatest feat: they died so that others may live, and in this they became like Christ Who went to death in order to save others...

'Let the music we will hear today remind us of those who left this life so that we could live under a peaceful sky. May the Lord make their memory to be eternal'.

Mr. Vygaudas Usackas, who also made a speech, said in particular, 'Over 60 million people – the population of what is France or Great Britain today – were killed in the Second World War. We must remember this terrible figure so that it may never happen again. *War Requiem* is a reminder of that bloody war and a message of the importance of reconciliation. May the music we are to hear become an occasion for us to say a quiet prayer for the repose of the souls of the fallen. May it make us think over the lessons of that war'.

The charity concert was given by the Russian National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Martyn Brabbins, Great Britain, the Moscow Synodal Choir, the Yurlov State Academic Capella, Russia, and German baritone Stephan Genz, Russian soprano Svetlana Kasian, and American tenor Dominic Armstrong.

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