

Musical Dialogue-of-Culture Concert Breakthrough in Copenhagen

by Michelle Rasmussen

COPENHAGEN, Feb. 17—They came from around the world this evening. They came bearing gifts. Not gifts you could touch with your hands. But gifts that touched your soul. Gifts of beautiful music, and beautiful dance.

And the people came to hear them. And they kept coming, and they kept coming till all of the 120 seats were taken. And after there was no more room for extra chairs, they stood in the aisles, and they stood in the lobby, and they sat behind the curtains. They were Danes, and they were diplomats and other people from many nations, maybe 180-200 people in total. The hostess said that there had never been so many there before.



Soloist Valery Likhachev

Bai Claire Jie



Indonesian traditional dancer, Sarah Noor Komarudin, performing a Jaipong dance.

Bai Claire Jie



Soloist Leena Malkki

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The Svetit Mesyats [The Moon is Shining] ensemble from the Russian House, conducted by Igor Panich.



Gitta-Maria Sjöberg, recently retired from the royal Danish Opera.



Bai Claire Jie
Kai Guo, from Mongolia with Feride Istogu Gillesberg.

The dialogue of cultures between the sponsors of the concert, itself, led to the great success: the Schiller Institute, the Russian-Danish Dialogue organization, the Russian House in Copenhagen, and the China Culture Center of the Chinese Embassy (about to open, which also provided food during the intermission). And the concert was held in the Russian Center for Science and Culture, tied to the Russian Embassy, representing the Russian Federation's authority for connection to the CIS countries (of the former Soviet Union), Russians living abroad, and international humanistic cooperation (*Rossotrud-nichestvo*).

First, the people were told by Schiller Institute chairman Tom Gillesberg that we have a unique moment in world history, where the potential is there for the United States to join the new paradigm of economic development sweeping the world. Then they were told by the spokeswoman for the Russian-Danish Dialogue, Jelena Nielsen, that a dialogue of culture can lead to peace in the world. These two were also the alternating hosts for the evening. Finally, the director of the Russian Center for Science and Culture, Artem Alexandrovich Markaryan, welcomed the people. Then the procession of gift-givers began.

From Russia came the *Svetit Mesyats* [The Moon is Shining] ensemble from the Russian House, conducted by Igor Panich. These were children playing Russian folk songs on balalaikas, including "Katyusha," with soloist Valery Likhachev, baritone, who has sung on 200 stages. He also later performed Leporello's "List"



Kristian von Späth
Fred (left) and Isaac Kwaku, from Ghana.

aria, from the opera *Don Giovanni* by Mozart, and Mephistopheles' couplets, from Gounod's opera *Faust*, together with his pianist Semyon Bolshem.

From China's Mongolia came a very musical young science student, Kai Guo, who played many flutes, and he and Feride Istogu Gillesberg from the Schiller Institute, charmingly sang the "Kangding" Chinese love song, as a duet.

From Indonesia came a traditional dancer, Sarah Noor Komarudin, who filled the room with her graceful Jaipong dance.

From Ghana came two young men, Isaac Kwaku and Fred Kwaku, who sang and played a religious song, and a song depicting the point that when we work together, we are stronger than when we stand alone.

And from Denmark and Sweden came three out-



Pianist Benjamin Telmányi and his mother, Anika, played Beethoven's Romance for Violin and Piano, Op. 50.



Bai Claire Jie

Soloist Idil Alpsoy, a member of the Middle East Peace Orchestra.

standing female opera singers, whose tones and dramatic intensity, moved the audience profoundly. Their offerings were songs and arias from Schubert, Verdi, Dvořák, and Sibelius. Gitta-Maria Sjöberg, an international bright star of a soprano who recently retired from the Royal Danish Opera, sang “Rusalka’s Song to the Moon” by Dvořák. Idil Alpsoy, a fantastic mezzo soprano with roots in Hungary and Turkey, who is also a member of the Middle East Peace Orchestra, sang songs from Sibelius’ Op. 37 and 88. And a soprano, Leena Malkki, whom we have heard for many years blossoming into a truly magnificent artist, sang Schubert’s “Gretchen am Spinnrade” (spinning wheel), and Desdemona’s prayer *Ave Maria*, from Verdi’s opera *Othello*. The first two (Sjöberg and Alpsoy) were accompanied by Christine Raft, an extremely talented young Danish pianist, and the latter (Malkki) by the Schiller Institute’s own Benjamin Telmányi Lylloff.

He and his mother Anika, poignantly played Beethoven’s “Romance for Violin and Piano,” Op. 50, continuing the legacy bequeathed by their ancestor from Hungary, the violin soloist Emil Telmányi Lylloff.

For the finale, all the singers (but one), sang Verdi’s chorus of the Hebrew slaves longing for freedom, “Và, pensiero,” with the addition of four members of the Schiller Institute’s future chorus. See the program at: <http://schillerinstitut.dk/si/?p=17965> Video and audio will also be posted to this link.

And the audience was uplifted, with each presentation by itself, and with the succession of one piece of music, or dance, after the

other, one country after another—traditional music in dialogue with classical music, weaving a tapestry of sound, sight, and delight, not reaching their senses, but their soul.

As they left, they all expressed the most sublime joy and thankfulness for having had the privilege to have received all of these precious gifts, which they took home in the memory of their minds, to be opened again, and again.

A musical testament to the paradox of the unity and diversity of mankind, expressed by human creativity, and a powerful statement of the dialogue of cultures was declaimed.

We will go forth with this statement, in the form of professional video and audio recordings, to spread its ripples throughout the world.



For the Finale, all the singers and members of the Schiller Institute Chorus sang “Va Pensiero,” Verdi’s chorus of the Hebrew slaves longing for freedom.