

Translation from Bulgarian

Missionaries of Art

by Rose-Mary Statelova

(Democratia newspaper - June 5, 1992)

Singers, singers... All styles and trends of them are represented in the program of the XXIIIrd Sofia Musical Weeks Festival. Take for example the enthusiastic Singers Glorifying God from the United States - I am not sure whether people with such a task should be judged at all. Forty-four excellent choisters, a skillful and sensitive conductor (Elizabeth Paterson') and an irreproachable organist (David Chalmers). They visit Sofia and other Bulgarian cities after an extensive tour in Albania and Russia - up to the remote Siberia. We appraise the generosity of the gesture - after humanitarian aid, political consultations and business contacts it is time now for the missionary activity of the art ("to establish peace, harmony and mutual understanding between nations"). It is discreet but still unusual - I see for the first time a choir which welcomes its public with radiant smiles. Gloriam Dei Cantores presents to us various performances from its large repertoire with different power of convincingness. The Christmas Motets of Poulenc causes an extremely pleasant musical sensation, an astonishing power of suggestion is reached by the Russian church music (Tchaikovsky, Tchesnokov, Rachmaninov). We are very grateful to the American singers and we invite the public to attend their second concert in Bulgaria Hall on July 7. Gregorian psalms will be performed then and they are, according to the critique, brought to perfection by Gloriam Dei Cantores.

Here is also one of the outstanding persons of the festival - the mezzo-soprano Kristina Ascher from Germany. She literally opens to us the great world of modern masterly performance. Thanks to the efforts of the Bulgarian Association for Modern Music (the two concerts of Kristina Ascher took place under the aegis of this association) we participate in the tempting "search for little known works of art" of the XXth century. I had the opportunity to hear the second concert of Kristina Ascher given together with Bulgarian soloists and the conductor and pianist Brekston Blake (USA). Songs for vocal and piano by Charles Ives, a fragment from "Hammer without a Master" by Pierre Boulez, "The Beautiful Widow of the Eighteen Spring" and Aria for solo vocal by John Cage - the program objective of

the association "to rediscover masterpieces of modern music" is being fulfilled at the highest level. The top performance is the leading expressionist piece of art by Schonberg: "The Lunar Pierrot". What can I say about it? All of us who attended the performance will remember it as a perfect model due to Ascher and her worthy partners. All those who did not attend may at least remember the name of the singer and try not to miss her next tour in Bulgaria, whenever it takes place.

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Gloriae Dei Cantores

by Iana Slavova

(Kultura newspaper - June 12, 1992)

The fall of the iron curtain opened numerous ways of communication to us, as well as to people from "the other side". But while in the economic field we say "Help!" in the cultural sphere the acquaintance is made in a natural and non-humiliating way. Musicians from Western Europe and America come to Bulgaria and Bulgarian musicians go to Western Europe and America. The forty-four singers of the mixed choir Gloriae Dei Cantores (USA) joined this "blood circulation" without the ambition to be healers and without pretentious words on behalf of God. They came with their songs as a message about peace and love, as a means for mutual understanding. I am well aware that the words I am using could appear without real meaning to somebody because all of us have been hearing them for so long that they have been already waisted away. But the singers of Elizabeth Paterson's choir - an excellent musician and interpreter of Poulenc, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Hinastera - pronounce them sincerely and convincingly. At least that was my impression during the meeting that took place after the concert. They left from the remote Orleans, Massachusetts for the purpose of "singing in order to overcome linguistic barriers, ideological and cultural differences and to be an instrument of hope". This text is taken from the advertising booklet. In fact, they are not at all occasionally assembled amateurs: the choir is fully professional with high artistic ambitions and capacities. While the Bach Motet caused my embarrassment by its musical performance and some small failures, the Christmas Motets by Poulenc and "Angel" by Tchaikovsky sounded very impressive and touching. The music from "Bless me" by Tchesnokov was a real balm for the soul and the three parts of the "Ieremaya's weeping" by Hinastera were a genuine revelation. An eulogy of God, it was written in a modern way, and performed with inspiration and great power of suggestion. We are very grateful to them! As well as for the spectacular performance of "Dilmano, Dilbero" - it is a pity that so far they did not have the opportunity to get information about Bulgarian church music and include it in their repertoire. Anyway they promised to do so. Let us hope that the interest of the singers in that kind of music will be suited.

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Americans Glorifying God Ennobled our Souls

by Lilliana Markova

(Review from Plovdiv newspaper)

The start of the XXVth International Chamber Music Festival in Plovdiv is impressive! After the brilliant secular opening by Barbican Trio from London the second night was meant for spiritual purging: Gloriam Dei Cantores. A professional choir of 44 American singers glorifying God launched from the stage the very earthy appeal for peace, harmony and mutual understanding between nations from different states and cultures. "Doors between nations", this is the title of the program included in their long tour not only in Bulgaria but also in Albania and Russia, up to the remote Siberia. It is clear that they accept enthusiastically and put into practice the idea of missionary activity through the art.

Gloriam Dei Cantores is a choir which has brought to perfection the difficult performance of the Gregorian psalms, as well as the orthodox service (Tchesnokov, Glinka). It is actually a rare opportunity to contemplate an exceptional combination of spiritual and musical virtues. The performance of Brookner and Bach showed the magnetism of highly emotionally charged music. Elizabeth Paterson conducts the choir not only with an unexpectedly expressional gesture, but in an emotional way which is hard to resist. The choir coped with different styles of church choir music without any problem and enriched our knowledge of the spiritually-aimed art. There is nothing more alien to the performance of the Americans than pomposity or aggressiveness. It is a simple and emotional message to God and to people. That is why it will be remembered by the public at the Plovdiv concert hall which was full to capacity. It is clear that even in the time of recession the desire for the magic, called spiritual feeling, remains.

"Don't Change Anything in the Festival,
Especially the Public", Says Conductor Paterson

by Rossitza Strezova

(Review from Plovdiv newspaper)

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The story begins in middle of the 70s in Massachusetts where the Christian community numbering some six hundred people decided that the singers in the church were not good enough. Only those who felt fitting to glorify God remained in the choir, began to study the notes and since then have become one of the few choirs in the world bringing to perfection the performance of Gregorian psalms!

It sounds like a fictitious "American story" but it is the truth. In accordance to the unanimous opinion of the critique, Gloriam Dei Cantores performs with equal easiness church choir music of all styles and times and by its overall artistic activity opens the doors between nations.

"We came to Bulgaria to participate at the International Chamber Music Festival but our visit is a part of a larger tour", says the conductor Elizabeth Paterson. She is an exceptionally gifted musician and interpreter, co-author of the theoretical study "The Eternal Sound". And she continues: "Two months ago we left for Switzerland, Albania, Russia, and before coming here we visited Crete Island where we had attended lectures on Byzantine liturgy music for ten days. Your festival is wonderful! Don't change anything, especially the public!"