

The Sylvia Olden Lee Concert Tribute Reverberates

by Dennis Speed

July 11—The Schiller Institute New York City Chorus, as well as other participants in the June 29 concert, spoke and corresponded with audience members afterwards. Here is a sample taken from the several hundred responses. They reflect, not merely “reactions to music,” but deeper considerations that go to the heart of the intent behind the Schiller Institute, the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture, and the Harlem Opera Theater’s joint collaboration and mission to form a 1500-person chorus in New York City.

From an elder Chinese musician (translated):

I was very impressed with the duet and multi-part singing, and particularly the chorus. They coordinated so well. A high level performance. The whole concert was a composition.

From two members of the Flushing, Queens chapter of the Schiller Institute chorus:

We invited sixteen friends to come to the concert. They were excited as we, their friends and very common people, appeared and participated in the great performance on the stage of Carnegie, one of the greatest music holy lands of the world. They are all music-lovers, and many of them love Classical music. They (were) amazed at the great performance of the high-level Italian opera and Classical music soloists. But they loved the African-style spiritual more, as it opened their eyes, and they think it is so beautiful and touching.... However, they loved our singing best, as so many people, including us, sang together to create (such) harmonious great music. To them, the effect was shocking! (We) feel good as our friends loved our choir as well

as our performance. We were treated as heroes with ‘Hail!’ and flowers, although we are just small potatoes, and contribute only a little to the group.

Thank you very much for your help and the chance to have this great experience.

From a concert organizer, who helped bring members of a Buddhist temple to the concert:

14 people: five monks, three parents, and six children came from the Buddhist temple. None, except the lead monk, even knew what Carnegie Hall was, so this was huge. They were very excited. They told me that there was a lot they did not understand, but they loved the duet from *Don Carlos*, and especially the chorus. Their commitment to the singing process vastly increased.

From a chorus member:

I received a “Thank You” card from former concert pianist, who does not speak English, with a \$100 check inside!

From a professional singer:

What a magnificent evening, and I can tell Sylvia Olden Lee was a very special person as well as a genius teacher, singer, and musician, from all I heard and saw at the concert!

(I was) so impressed with what was organized and yes, I am very fascinated even more now about the Schiller Institute as the special choir was *outstanding*!

Thanks for our chat, your contact informa-

tion. So sorry I can not attend the Symposium tomorrow. I hope it is very well-attended and perhaps it can be recorded or such.

You are terrific and I have included my contact information.

You will see, humbly, if you Google me—especially if you put “soprano” after it—that I am quite well known. . . .

From a trombonist friend of conductor Diane Sare, who sang in the bass section:

Congratulations on a brilliant concert! Your conducting was exceptional, and the spirit of the evening was powerful. My heartfelt thanks for including me in this special event. After singing this evening I am thoroughly convinced of the validity of natural tuning (as if Corelli weren't enough). Please let Frank (Mathis) know I was deeply moved by his Roland Hayes interpretation, and he held his own in the Donizetti with some heavy hitters, too!

From a retired singer, now re-activated:

I want to thank you for the great opportunity to sing again like last night at Carnegie Hall.

Since 2006, (when) I sang *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff (I did) not sing any more until I met the Schiller institute choir at Christmas of 2016. . . .

I had thought not to return to the choir due to personal reasons. But, after last night, I just want to sing again like the “Tenor” I was 19 years ago (or maybe better). . . . I have no words to thank you for this new opportunity, I hope I don't disappoint you.

Thank you very much.

Ambassadors to the United Nations, heads and former heads of engineering and science organizations, and other officials, including the office of the Mayor of New York City and New York State Assembly and Senate offices also attended the concert.

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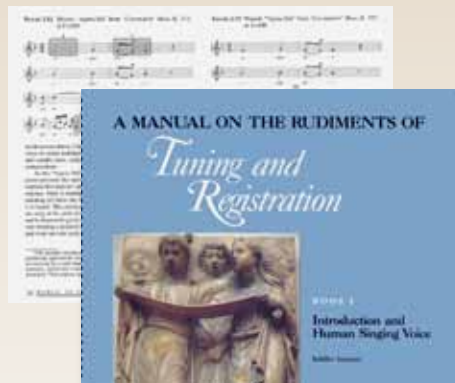
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—Norbert Brainin, founder and first violinist, Amadeus Quartet

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