

Inspired by Homer's poem

Belarusian premiere of *Organ Odyssey*, by Polish composer and organist Dariusz Przybylski, held at Vitebsk's Philharmonic, showing contemporary trends in musical culture

By Ruslan Kochetkovsky

The project brought together eight young composers from Poland, Belarus, the UK, Germany, Ukraine and South Korea. Inspired by Homer's epic poem, the young musicians presented their own interpretation, using the organ to express their feelings. Listeners had a unique opportunity to assess their various techniques at the concert, as well as those of various national musical schools. Nelli Matsaberidze stresses that the project enables amateur organists to gain insight and learn of contemporary trends in musical culture, alongside modern musical language.

According to Dariusz Przybylski, the author of the

project, the idea of combining the most ancient text with the most ancient musical instrument, using contemporary material, was born this year. Mr. Przybylski invited his friend-musicians and young composers to take part, having met many talented people at festivals. Homer's text was chosen, since it exists in every language. Eight segments of the epic poem were selected, with each young composer taking responsibility for a segment — to create the *Organ Odyssey*.

Belarusian Konstantin Yaskov played one segment and read texts for the others during the concert in Vitebsk. The other musicians were Dariusz Przybylski, Eunho Chang, Ralph Bernardi, Alexander Campkin,

Jagoda Szmytka, Bohdan Sehin and Tomasz Opalka.

The concert was organised with the assistance of the Polish Institute in Minsk and the premiere took place during the International *Warsaw Autumn* Musical Festival of Contemporary Music, in September. On the eve of the event, the recital was first given in Ukraine. The musicians are now touring the UK, Germany and Poland — enjoying their own 'odyssey'.

Dariusz Przybylski is a pupil of the famous Polish musician Marcin Błazewicz, and currently teaches at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. He has written several operas, as well as symphony, chamber and vocal works.



Four years have already passed since organ has played at Vitebsk's Philharmonic

Alexander Patlis continues to believe

His songs are listened to from Belarus to America

By Viktor Korbut

Alexander was previously known as part of *New Jerusalem* but launched his solo career a few years ago and has now become known as a talented singer, with fans in Belarus and abroad. His recent album, *Read My Thoughts*, sees him singing not only in Russian, but in English, German and Ukrainian. He arrives eager to discuss the past and the future.

Why is it that you rarely appear on TV these days?

I've been touring and recording my new album but recently performed some songs from the album for the 1st Belarusian TV Channel's 'Meeting Place' light-entertainment programme. I sang 'Megapolis', 'Linked by Thoughts' and 'Hello'. I'm now recording videos for my songs, for play on the MTV and A1 channels.

Do you remember when you 'stormed' the Palace of the Republic as *New Jerusalem's* front man?

Of course. Its main hall can seat 3,000 and, as far as I know, only 'New Jerusalem' and 'J:Mors' have performed there as Belarusian rock bands. We attract as many fans as popular foreign groups.

Why did you leave *New Jerusalem* in 2006? There

are so many rumours...

I didn't leave. I was put aside. Do you believe me?

No. How could they exist without you?

Many don't believe me but it happened in the USA, after we'd played in Seattle, Washington.

Who is your audience there?

They're mostly former Soviet émigrés and Americans. We'd been playing in the USA since 1993, with producer Karl Richardson organising our first tour. There were times when we gave almost a hundred concerts in just six months. My last solo concert was organised in 2008 but, in the spring of 2012, a tour is planned, to coincide with a new English language album. I'm currently preparing to tour Germany.

Let's return to the five year old American story...

I lost my voice after our tough tour of Russia. We'd endured different time zones, and enjoyed sell-out events. We'd rented musical equipment and were unable to cancel any of our concerts, so the pressure was huge. I strained my voice and needed an operation. After recovering, I returned to America, where my band had been performing for a couple of weeks without me. A new leader had appeared



Alexander Patlis continues to believe in people

and I felt that something was wrong. We chatted for a while and I realised that I had to take my own path.

Do you feel as popular as you were as the leader of

***New Jerusalem*?**

Five thousand Internet downloads of my 'Read My Thoughts' album is the best assessment of me. I've toured Vladivostok and Brest, often

visiting Latvia, Germany, Ukraine and Moldova. Meanwhile, I've spent a total of four years touring the USA.

Did you work on a construction site in America?

After splitting from 'New Jerusalem', I went to Indiana to help friends build a house. It was a conscious decision towards physical labour, nailing with a pneumatic stapler and taking off old sidings. I then returned to Minsk to record some songs and start my solo career. The same year, my 'For You' song was acknowledged among the best in Belarus.

Why did you decide to allow free download of your album from alexpatlis.com?

I understand that the Internet is a huge tool. I have a social network of almost 10,000 fans, with 15-20 joining every day. If I'd failed to place these songs online myself, someone else would have done so. Within two hours of my 'Second Breath' album being launched in St. Petersburg, it was online. I receive many messages of gratitude, as people love being able to download songs free of charge. They promise to buy a CD on coming to my concert.

Are you involved in charity activities? Music is a profitable business.

Charity projects are close to my heart. I find sponsors and determined people, sending all profits from certain concerts to children's charities — especially those which buy vitamins and medicines. My last concert of the kind was organised at Minsk's St. Simon and St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church, in 2009; over 1,000 fans attended, raising over \$3,000 for a Minsk Region orphanage.

Do you see yourself as a rock musician?

What is rock music these days? Many of songs by 'Metallica' are actually lyrical ballads. I do use guitar solos and strong rock vocals but, in contrast, when I needed to create a Ukrainian language ballad, I invited cellist Yulia Glushitskaya to accompany me. Let listeners decide what they love and stop trying to categorise music. You can describe yourself as you like, but you may just find that your music is pop — like that of Robbie Williams, with huge energy. If you believe in what you're singing, your songs will touch people.

What do you believe in?

I believe in God, love and my family. I've been married for twenty years. I truly believe in people who appear to have a real mission in life, being born for a purpose.