

Sim shalom, this is 'Moscow speaking

In Moscow within the framework of the Jewish art week dedicated to the 3000th anniversary of Jerusalem and represented by numerous collectives all over the CIS the distinguished foreign guest - chief cantor of the New York synagogue Joseph Malovani had a performance. Together with him the skill of our domestic musical forces was shining - they were the Male choir of Academia cantorial art (artistic director Vladimir Pliss, conductor Alexander Tsalyuk, soloist Andrei Andrianov), chief cantor of the St.-Petersburg Boris Finkelshtein as well as the State symphonic (Svetlanov's) orchestra conducted by Arnold Kats.

The spectacle of the Grand hall represented that day indeed an unprecedented view - stoically pensive heads of families with offsprings of all ages, majestic wives, radiant youth (many peised and skull-cap headed) and maidens, innocent and beautiful, as herd of she-goats descending from the mountain of Halaad. A few music-lovers and a full staff of the American embassy at best made this picture more prominent. Meanwhile, according to participants of the performance the hall looked a little bit damped. Do the Jews remember their traditions, did they know what they expect to see?

The Jewish culture is nearly a synonym of the world culture, the Jewish music - is the same. Mendelson and Maler, Horovitz and Menukhin, Dunaevsky and Bernstein are the names of the world pantheon. What is then the Jewish music proper? Ancient psalms have gone together with the old times, folk traditions of the Diaspora have become the property of history and professional variety. The most fruitful and honoured branch is hasanut - the art of cantorial singing counting more than a century.

Strictly speaking, for the devout Jews the event which took place in the Grand hall of the conservatory was not quite cosher. Nevertheless, liturgical music was performed in a civil hall, and the second part altogether was accompanied by the orchestra, which was unthinkable in the synagogue. But for all that, an expert at his job made a performance. Joseph Malovani is a musician of the East European roots (his original name should be probably pronounced as "Malevanny"), - chief cantor of New York, professor of Yeshiva, an opera singer in the past, but also not a newcomer: In Russia he used to sing with Russian choirs and orchestras not for the first time and may be some of you even remember how splendid he sang Lensky's aria at the beginning of perestroika in the Chaikovsky hall.

The first part consisted of traditional fragments of liturgy, some kind of choral performances where the priority was given to cantor's voice pouring out in prayers. Their style is an odd combination of letter of XIX century with a monody which preserved features of the old and south origin as well as with distinctively expressed elements of folk dances. They became more noticeable in the second part of the concert which the participants themselves named them

“poptsa” which sounded the same way as a famous Jewish dish. Of course, this is not “Hava nagila” or “Seven-forty”, but a certain hybrid of opera scenes, Neapolitan arrangements and Broadway harmonies. They based on texts of prayers and the world famous musical themes - such as “Sim shalom”. “Who knows this melody - sing with me! Who does not know this melody - sing with me!”, - Joseph Malovani exclaimed from the stage. But the hall made a shy attempt only when Arnold Kats turning back from the orchestra for a second, addressed the hall with his typical and irresistible imperative glance.

It was difficult to cope with the full concert program for the 63 years old singer: if in the first part he could easily reach the upper “C” several times, then in the second part to penetrate through the wall of the orchestra sound he had to use all his actor’s efforts. And still a great support to the famous hasan was not only the excellent choir and splendid voices of Boris Finkelshtein and Andrei Andrianov (together with whom the New York star of the liturgical singing made from the orthodox Saturday Kadish something like a concert for “three tenors”), but, mainly, his own art. They say that it is not easy to be a young cantor: a rich life experience is needed to sing with a “Jewish tear”, with strain. This Joseph Malovani demonstrated in full. Passion that was put into every curl of masterly coloratura must be heard at least in the heaven: since cantor is not only an actor, but he who prays for the whole flock, for the whole people.