



## Metropolitan Hilarion attends opening of Valery Khalilov Music Festival



The Valery Khalilov International Music Festival, named after the peoples' artist of Russia, conductor and composer lieutenant general Valery Khalilov (1952-2016), opened at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

The festival first took place in 2020. This year the event is dedicated to the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of emperor Peter the Great and the seventieth anniversary of the birth of Valery Khalilov.

Before the festival began, a minute's silence was observed for the musician and for those who died with him in the plane crash on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2016. When the TU-154 went down on its way to Syria there died performers and the artistic director from the Alexandrov Red Army Choir, a number of journalists and the director of the Just Aid Foundation Yelizaveta Glinka.

In his address to those present at the opening ceremony, the chairman of the Department of External

Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Hilarion stated: “Valery Khalilov was in many respects a remarkable man. He was a thorough professional as a hereditary military musician. I have direct experience of military music as I spent two years of my life on it during my army service. I know what it means to take part in parades as I was part of the mixed orchestra of the Moscow military garrison in four parades on Red Square and I recall what all this means. Each parade took two months to prepare for. Every day from early morning to mid-day, often under a downpour, sometimes in a strong wind, the preparation for the parade takes place and the main military conductor has to be in his place without fail. Valery Khalilov was the chief military conductor of Russia for many years and we were witnesses as to how he was able to conduct a huge thousand-strong orchestra. The precise hand movements which he used to so that this gigantic mass of people could perform the music has been fixed in our memories for all time.”

As metropolitan Hilarion noted, Valery Khalilov had a deep sense of music, and not only military music: he was both a composer and arranger of classical musical pieces. For example, he rearranged Bach’s organ Passacaglia for orchestra.

The metropolitan shared his personal reminiscences of conversing with Valery Khalilov. “I was fortunate to travel to the United States of America with him. He was the first person to perform my Christmas Oratorio,” said metropolitan Hilarion. “Together with the defense ministry orchestra headed by Valery Khalilov and with the then culture minister Alexander Sokolov, we travelled to a number of cities in America. You should have seen how people greeting our army musicians, how our Russian choir, together with the Washington Boys’ Choir, performed music under the baton of Valery Khalilov.”

The late composer was a believer, noted the metropolitan, who quoted him as saying: “I cannot understand how it is possible not to love the Church.”

“He loved the Church greatly. He spent much energy on propagating Russian music abroad. Valery Khalilov was a very pleasant and outgoing individual. All of us who knew him will recall this. We recall his energy, his smile, his remarkable eyes. We remember him as someone who never seemed to tire. He was always cheerful and full of energy. He radiated good spirits and those around him found this infectious,” stated the metropolitan.

He noted that the music at the international festival would be played in memory of Valery Khalilov and the musicians of the Red Army Choir who died in the plane crash in 2016. “May the Lord rest his soul and the souls of all those who perished with him, and we will always preserve within our hearts their eternal memory,” said metropolitan Hilarion.

The first part of the concert was taken up by Rachmaninov’s third symphony performed by the State

Academic Symphonic Orchestra of Tatarstan under the direction of Alexander Sladkovsky.

In the second half of the concert the Red Army Choir under Gennady Sachenyuk performed famous military and folk songs, as well as the songs The Army and the Navy to verses by Ilya Reznik and Forever a Great Country to verses by Alexander Savitsky, the music to which was composed by Valery Khalilov.

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