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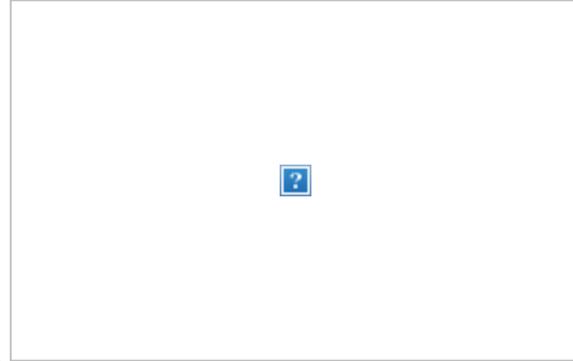
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Tenth anniversary of the 1992 World Congress



Tenth anniversary of the 1992 World Congress in New York

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Tom Price put out a call inviting Bahá'í musicians to take part in a Voices of Bahá concert in Carnegie Hall, New York; when I made the decision to go, Jeremy my husband, requested an audition in order to join the choir, which involved calling Tom Price late at night in Nashville and singing "In Dublin's Fair City" down the phone – his acceptance meant that several months later we found ourselves bound for New York.



*The "Voices of Baha" performance in the Carnegie Hall
Photo: © www.cafeannick.com*

The Carnegie Hall concert was to be just one part of a week long Festival of the Arts celebrating the 10th anniversary of the 1992 World Congress in New York. Presented by Global Music, it offered concerts and theatre presentations in parallel with an arts conference involving talks, discussions and devotionals, all of which took place in the Penntop ballroom on the eighteenth floor of the Pennsylvania hotel, once made famous by Glenn Miller.

Since Jeremy and I were involved in rehearsals for the Carnegie concert we were unable to attend all the conference sessions; what we did manage showed just how rich our Bahá'í community is in artists, actors and musicians who are at the top of their professions: Nick Tate, Star Trek; The Next Generation, The X Files, and Hollywood voice-over actor for Jurassic Park, Independence Day, The World is Not Enough; Jayce Bartok, the current blockbuster, Spiderman; Tiffany Paul, El Padrino, Clockstoppers; Shidan Majidi, Annie Get Your Gun, Les Miserables and other Broadway successes; and Nancy Ewing, The Cosby Show; Ilona Rogers, Emergency Ward 10, – and also Red Grammer, Peter Terry, Van Gilmer and others. We made time to see two Bahá'í plays, performed in the 47th Street Theatre, the first written and performed by Philip Hinton called Portals to Freedom, and the second by Cris Hampton, graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York, entitled The Noble Thief; both productions drew full houses, and were very inspiring.

Three concerts were scheduled, primarily as a means of proclamation, two of which took place in the Manhattan Theatre; A Night of Fine Persian Music featured some of the best known professional Persian musicians in the world, including Rahmat'u'llah Badiyi, Shokouh Rezai and Hushmand Aghili, and this concert was videoed by National Iranian TV for broadcast. Our rehearsal programme enabled us to be present at the 10th anniversary concert given by The Bahá'í Gospel singers; the atmosphere was electric, with an

auditorium full of Bahá'ís and non Bahá'ís alike who screamed and yelled their approval and enthusiasm all the way through the performance. Van Gilmer directed the swaying choir of 200, and guest director Dr Joyce Garrett from the US Naval Academy Gospel Choir, inspired impeccable precision and breathtaking beauty. A support band jived away on drums, piano and guitars, obviously thoroughly enjoying their experience of Bahá'í enthusiasm

The Carnegie Hall concert involved five hundred and sixty singers and a 90-piece orchestra, consisting of 30 professional Bahá'í musicians from various corners of the globe including China and 60 local freelancers. The singers, who were thoroughly rehearsed for several days by Tom Price and eighteen assistant choir directors, were required to sing from memory, apart from two new pieces composed especially for the occasion, including a setting of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Prayer for America by Tom Price. The Carnegie Hall stage wasn't large enough to take all the singers, which meant that at least half the choir occupied the second circle of the auditorium; the concert attracted a large audience, many of whom weren't Bahá'ís, and the whole experience was very moving and inspiring. The Voices of Bahá choir travels to Europe next summer, and I heard talk of London the year after – maybe this is just wishful thinking!

The few days we spent at this festival gave us an opportunity to experience at first hand the diverse talents of Bahá'ís from around the world, whilst making contact with people of similar interests and genres who normally we wouldn't even be aware of. For myself, meeting professional Bahá'í musicians from China, Australia, Canada and America really gave me a feeling of belonging to a wider family, and who knows, maybe opportunities will present themselves for joint projects and travel-teaching.

Carolyn Fox

