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February 2013

Jessica Wong, Editor

Join us for

Passion and Protest

Friday, March 1
8 p.m.

Sunday, March 3
4 p.m.

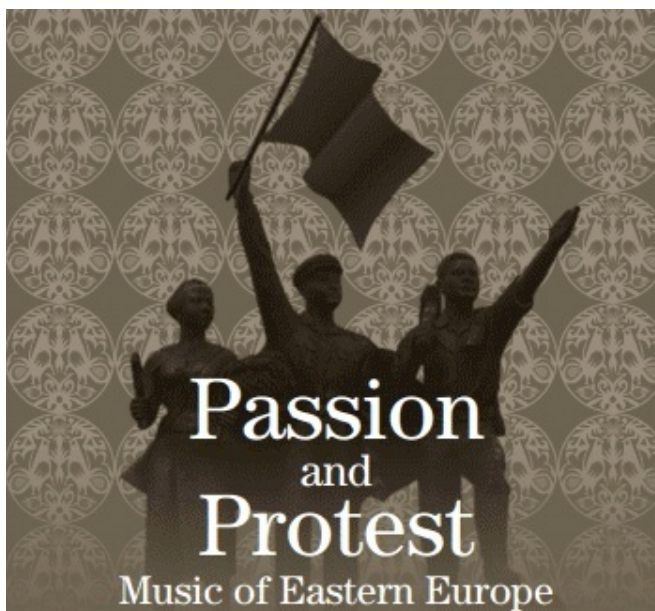
The Church of the Holy Trinity
316 East 88th Street
(between 1st and 2nd Avenues)

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www.nasingers.org

Rarely heard works of Taneyev, songs of social protest by Liszt and Kodály, and love songs by Eben and Rautavaara.



Stay in Touch with NAS!



A Note from the Music Director

Music of Eastern Europe is a broad field that could include music from many countries. The program New Amsterdam Singers will present in March focuses on Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Russia. This is the third time NAS has sung an Eastern European program, and now we repeat some favorite works we sang ten or twenty years ago, adding new discoveries. What the music has in common: good melodies, rhythmic vitality, and interesting harmonic twists.

Here are some highlights:

We will sing the U.S. premiere of a work by Einojuhani Rautavaara, whose choral music is always interesting. His harmony is based on thirds in many works, but not in conventional patterns. The adventurous modulations are fun. *Unsere Liebe* was reworked in 2011 from an earlier work for women's voices.

Petr Eben uses folk poetry in a rather dark incantation to attract

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You can also check out the NAS [blog](#).

For more information about NAS, please contact the chorus at info@nasingers.org.



NAS Visits the White House

by Hannah Kerwin

Under Clara Longstreth's direction, a group of 25 singers appeared at the White House on December 15, 2012. We sang traditional holiday songs and selections from our concert repertoire in the Grand Foyer of the State Floor, in view of portraits of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

After performing, we toured the exquisitely decorated rooms and saw more paintings of presidents, including the Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington, which was saved from destruction during the War of 1812 by First Lady Dolly Madison. Our awesome afternoon at the White House was a return engagement for NAS—we first performed at the White House in December 2010. A third invitation would be splendid!

See more photos [here](#).

the beloved. Some of the words are harsh—*Set his heart aflame so that he can no longer eat, sleep, or be happy*—but the music is always beguiling. A women's trio is given music reminiscent of fifteenth century motets.

Sergei Taneyev was a student, friend, and later a colleague of Tchaikovsky. His music is not well known in America, but his scores for chorus are a delight. To the rich sonority one expects of nineteenth century Russian music, he adds more counterpoint than is usual, and more syncopation. His choice of texts gives him the opportunity for atmospheric effects, which are clear whether one sings them in Russian or English. (We do some of each.)

The men and women are given chances to shine on their own in this program. Bartok miniatures for children's or women's voice are much more sophisticated than would be expected. Liszt's *Le Forgeron* has drama, pathos, and stirring protest in a ten-minute symphonic cantata for men and piano.

All in all, this program is focused on rarely heard music, presenting rare delights.

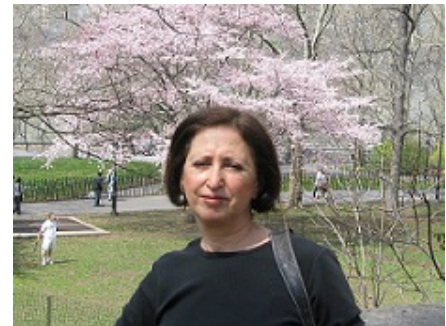
Hungarian Folk Songs Stir Fond Memories

by Jessica Wong

Vera Sziklai, originally from Budapest, Hungary, joined the New

Amsterdam Singers as an alto nine years ago. As a child, she attended a special school where she received music instruction every day under the [Kodály Method](#) and was introduced to [Béla Bartók's](#) folk songs for women and children in the fifth and sixth grade. "I'm very excited to sing some of these songs in our upcoming concert. I never in my life thought that I would have the chance to revisit these songs," says Vera. "I remember carrying the music in my backpack. When I visited my mother in Hungary last fall, my music was still on the shelf."

Bartók and Kodály collected folk songs throughout Hungary and in neighboring countries between World War I and II, and the songs were considered key pieces for anyone who had a decent music education in the country. As a small nation with a population of about 10 million, Hungary was occupied by other countries for a number of years. Therefore, preserving the unique Hungarian language and culture was very important to its people.





_NAS Cabaret

On January 26th, in a lovely space on West 57th Street provided by NAS singer and board member Bob Pietrzak, NAS hosted a cabaret/fundraiser featuring four NAS singers: Robin Beckhard, Rick Bonsall, Kate Leahy, and Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff. The audience had a great time enjoying the music and the NAS-prepared finger foods!

See more photos [here](#).

"While Hungary has a rich culture with amazing poets and authors, it can be hard to share because of the language barrier. At least the music can be shared more easily!" says Vera. "The text for the pieces we will perform is wonderful. *The Peacocks*, which will be sung by the men of NAS, is based on a very famous Hungarian poem. It will be great to hear the whole chorus singing with me on these songs!"



Tim DeWerff with Dmitri Hvorostovsky in Moscow, 2003.

An Ear for Russian

by Jessica Wong

Tim DeWerff, a baritone in his twenty-first season with NAS in both the full and chamber choruses, has been acting as a Russian language coach for the upcoming concert. While Tim is not Russian or of

Russian heritage, he studied the language during college for three years. "My interest in the Russian language and culture really started as a lark—I decided to take introductory Russian my sophomore year at Yale and stayed with it. I've traveled to Russian-speaking areas of the former Soviet Union on four concert tours, and having some facility with the language is extremely helpful!"

As part of the Yale Alumni Chorus, Tim has performed with several prominent Russian musicians, including the conductors Constantine Orbelian and Valery Gergiev and renowned opera singers Dmitri Hvorostovsky and Marina Domashenko. The group has performed at the Kremlin, the Moscow Conservatory, Spaso House (the U.S. ambassador's residence in Moscow), and the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.

While Tim's ancestry is mainly German and Swedish, he did find a family tie to Russia: "I do a lot of family history research, and some years ago I had an unexpected discovery that one of my forebears, a certain Captain Jakob Meijer, was a fortifications engineer and cartographer in the Swedish army. He was stationed for a time at Nyen, the original site of St. Petersburg before it fell into Russian hands and became the new capital founded by Peter the Great. I have a digital copy of a map that he drew of the fortress and surrounding areas in around 1698, and when I visited the museum at the site in St. Petersburg, I saw they had blown up the map for a major wall display!"

While Tim admires the entire canon of Russian music, from Glinka on to Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and

so on, his favorite Russian composer is Shostakovich, particularly his fifteen symphonies. He is also a fan of the pieces NAS will be performing for the concert: "The Taneyev pieces we are performing in March are wonderful examples of nineteenth-century romantic style using contemporaneous poetry. It's not often that New York audiences have the chance to hear this significant, if not world-famous, composer."

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