

Classical Music DJ In Israel

July 13, 2019

This is the final blog for my incredible venture / tour / lectures / holiday (yes, I was able to relax a bit) in Israel. Firstly, I would like to thank you for the many comments you have sent me during the course of this blog as they have helped to keep me going through these 10 weeks.

It is difficult to try to wrap all this up. The Skilled Volunteers For Israel group that organized this for me was very pleased with the way things went with my visits to various places in the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem areas. At the start they had no idea how my programs would work out. My approach differed from their usual approach in that I did short programs at a variety of places whereas they usually place a person at only one place for the duration of their stay. Nevertheless, it worked out extremely well, and each place wanted me back for more. That is something I will have to consider and to work on when I return. SVFI also wants me to write up something about my experience which is their standard procedure. I told them that I can't because I don't have the words to describe it, in English or Hebrew. I will give it a shot when I get back. In the meantime, I suggest that you take a look at the [SVFI](#) website where you can see more detail on what this program is all about. You never know, maybe SVFI could work for you, too.

In trying to put together a final statement on these 10 weeks in Israel there were two signature moments that really defined the experience for me. One occurred the day after I arrived, the other occurred at the last program I delivered in Jerusalem just this past week. I will describe them for you in some detail because both were very important.

The first program I delivered on my second day in Israel was at Shavei Zion where my cousin is involved with the social club there. The social club serves not only people from Shavei Zion, but others from the surrounding area near Nahariya. Everything was set up and I was prepared to start but the social club coordinator said a few general introductory remarks to the over 30 people who were gathered there. Included in the audience were an Arab gentleman and his wife who were from the neighbouring village of Mazra'a. That day was the second day of the Muslim month of Ramadan when Muslims refrain from eating and drinking during the daylight hours. The coordinator welcomed the Arab neighbours and wished them an "easy Ramadan". That struck me as one of the kindest, most humane things one would hear anywhere, certainly given the situation in the Middle East. It is the same as wishing a fellow Jew an "easy fast" on Yom Kippur. As a result, it made me very aware that the real day to day life in Israel in general, is very different from what we see and hear from the news media outside the country. In particular, it also presents a different image of the relationships between many Jews and Arabs from what we are used to. Therefore, I became very attuned to seeing Jews and Arabs mingling together in various places where they live or work near each other, enjoying the beach in Akko or Netanya, at Shuk Faisal Hagadol as I described previously. Even at the one-day conference presentation I did last week in Bat Yam there were two Arabs in attendance. Is the situation ideal or perfect? Not by any stretch of the imagination. But it is real and offers some bit of direction and hope for everyone.

My last program in Jerusalem was at Bayit Balev, an independent living apartment building for seniors. The program I gave was "Jewish Themes In Classical Music By Non-Jewish Composers". That has been a big hit here whenever I give it. The second composer I present is Bedrich Smetana, a Czech composer who incorporated a lot of Czech folk music in his works. His large symphonic work "Ma Vlast", or "My Country", describes, musically, various aspects of Czech history and geography. The second movement is titled "The Moldau" and it describes the Moldau river (in Czech, it is actually the Vltava river) as it flows from the mountains of Bohemia through the countryside towards the city of Prague. The basic river theme melody is the melody we know as "Hatikvah", the Israeli national anthem. The YouTube example I show is outstanding, performed by an orchestra from Slovenia. Everyone recognizes the Hatikvah melody and at the end I explain how it came from "The Moldau" during the time of first "Yishuv" or major migration of Jews back to Israel during the 1890's. They needed a motivational song so this Jewish composer, Samuel Cohen, took that basic melody and combined it with the words from a poem by Naftali Imber called "Tikvatenu". In 1948 with the establishment of the State Of Israel, that became the national anthem as we know it today. At the end of my explanation a gentleman in the front row raised his hand and I asked if he had a question. He said no, but he had a story to tell. He was a young boy at the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia during the

Second World War. That camp was used by the Nazis as a propaganda tool for the world to see how well they were treating the Jews. The reality as we all know was much different. The gentleman said that there was an orchestra in the camp although it was not very good as the instruments were of poor quality and all the people in the camp were living in horrific conditions. One of the musical pieces that the orchestra played frequently was "The Moldau" by Smetana since most of the performers and people in the camp were Czech and they were all very familiar with it. When he finished, I was speechless. I thanked him and carried on with my program. At the end I told him that I would like to tell his story whenever I do this program again and he said that was fine. His story has actually added another dimension to my program where I try to draw connections between the Christian composers of classical music and their works, to matters that are of importance to Jews. From that perspective this was a most powerful message.

Instead of having photos in my blog I am offering you the following two YouTube links for you to watch and listen to. These represent the message of the Classical Music DJ In Israel.

- [Bederich Smetana: Ma Vlast - The Moldau](#)
- [Israel Philharmonic Orchestra - Hatikvah](#)

Thus, my first Classical Music DJ In Israel blog has concluded. Hopefully, there will be several more occasions to produce this kind of blog. If you have any further questions, comments or criticisms, please feel free to email or call me, and I would be most happy to continue the conversation. I thank you again for being part of this with me. But for now:

Shalom, L'hitraot, Bye