TOWN TOPICS
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Capital Philharmonic, LOTUS Host Concert to Benefit Ukraine

On Saturday, June 11 at 6 p.m., the LOTUS Project and the Capital Philharmonic of New Jersey will present a benefit concert for Ukraine at St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Trenton, with a goal of raising $10,000 toward relief efforts.

The concert title, "O Vos Omnes," is a reference to the Tenebrae vigil service during Passion Week in Christian circles — traditionally held as the darkest time of the year in Christian spirituality. Selections include Ukrainian art and folksongs and a variety of smaller pieces for string instruments and voices.

"Our board member, Omelan Kostoepksy, approached me about performing a Ukrainian benefit concert with Capital Philharmonic," said Kate Mulligan, the newly-appointed executive director of the orchestra. "When I learned that The LOTUS Project already had a concert in the works, it only made sense for our ensembles to join forces for good in the city and for Ukraine."

The concert features Ukrainian songs and compositions for chamber orchestra and vocal ensemble and will run approximately an hour long with no intermission. Included on the program is the East Coast premiere of a work by New Jersey native Frank La Rocca, who now lives in California.

"*The Requiem Mass for the Homeless* offers a sound world of healing, and is as appropriate for the massively displaced homelessness of the Ukrainian refugees as it is for the homeless on the streets of San Francisco or Trenton," said Alicia Brozovich, artistic director of The LOTUS Project. "Once I connected with Frank La Rocca to request our using it as the centerpiece of the benefit concert, I learned that his mother was born to Ukrainian parents who resided in Trenton. That sealed the deal."

La Rocca is the grandson of early 20th century Ukrainian immigrants who made a home in Trenton, and this piece was

selected as it relates to the plight of all those displaced by the war in Ukraine, and the deep spiritual traditions of Ukrainian people.

“My grandparents came to Trenton in 1918 from Ukraine to escape the Bolsheviks,” said La Rocca. “They lived and worked among other Ukrainian and Polish immigrants, learning a little English from my mother, who picked it up when she went to school at age 5. Stepan and Anna Siminowicz were good, simple people who loved their adopted country, but remained immersed in their native tongue and customs within their Ukrainian-Polish enclave in Trenton. After Stepan’s death, my ‘Baba’ came to live with us in Clifton.”

All funds raised will be directly given to Ukrainian relief efforts. The suggested donation is $35. Visit thelotusprojectnj.org.

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