The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Massive Choir Breaks Record

By Irina Titova

May 29, 2013



A choir consisting of 4,335 St. Petersburg residents performed at St. Isaac's Cathedral during the city's 310th anniversary celebration, setting a Guinness World Record and thrilling the crowd despite the intermittent rain.

Standing on the steps of Europe's third-largest cathedral, singers of all ages from nearly all of the city's professional and amateur choirs sang 14 well-known Russian and Soviet songs.

Thousands of spectators gathered to see the show despite the weather, singing along during the hour-long performance. Many of the songs performed were patriotic ones, including "Victory Day," a song honoring the Soviet Union's victory in World War II.

Yulia Alshenina, 44, a lawyer whose daughter sang in the choir, was moved to tears by the awe-inspiring spectacle.

"I didn't expect that I would have such a reaction. That was really something overwhelming!" Alshenina said, adding that her daughter's choir had been preparing for the event for three

months.

Nastya Dzhioyeva, a 12-year-old choir member wearing one of the plastic ponchos that most of the participants were forced to wear, described the experience as "extraordinary."

"It was exultation. At the moment when we were standing there shoulder to shoulder and singing, I suddenly felt how those songs were written, how people felt during the war," she said.

St. Petersburg governor Georgy Poltavchenko, who sang along with the spectators during the performance, said that "such events unite people and make them strong."

In addition to Guinness's verification of the event as setting a new world record, Vladislav Chernushenko, conductor of the St. Petersburg State Capella Choir, hopes that the event will be entered into the Russian Book of Records as well.

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Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/05/29/massive-choir-breaks-record-a24473