



# Press from Songs of Life

*“The important thing is that the oratorio delivers a message of hope. Ordinary citizens can do something kind. It doesn’t have to be big, dramatic. A small gesture can turn someone’s life around sometimes.”*

*“ . . . music (is) a perfect vehicle for expressing profound ideas and emotions, and for paying tribute to this lesser-known aspect of 20th century history.”*

**Kalin Tchonev, live interview  
*The Post and Courier, Oct. 20, 2013***

*“The concert is a labor of love and the brainchild of Kalin Tchonev, a Bulgarian native, and his wife, Sharon Tchonev, whose Bulgarian grandparents were saved during the rescue. ‘This is a personal story and we felt that it is a message for people today to learn what happened 70 years ago in Europe.’ ”*

***The State (South Carolina), October 31, 2013***

*“A Major Musical Undertaking”*

...

*“The complex efforts to bring the oratorio *A Melancholy Beauty* to Charleston and Columbia were worthy in many ways.*

...

*“The performance of the oratorio was excellent. Andreev’s orchestrations played by the University of South Carolina Orchestra were superb. “*

...

*“The requirements for a production such as this rivals the complexity and expense of such works as Gustav Mahler’s *Symphony No. 8* or Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass*. “*

***Columbia Free Times, November 6, 2013***

*“The English and Bulgarian voices rose together, with a few Hebrew phrases thrown in, to create a sound at once exotic and deeply familiar.”*

***The Washington Post, June 21, 2011***

*“Georgi Andreev’s oratorio *A Melancholy Beauty* is a smart, confidently written, seductively attractive piece that weaves Bulgarian folk instruments and folk-singing styles into colorful scoring.”*

***The Washington Post, June 23, 2011***

*“The Songs of Life festival offers the premiere of an oratorio by the Bulgarian composer Georgi Andreev, who combines elements of classical choral style and folk music to tell the story of the rescue of almost 50,000 Bulgarian Jews during World War II.”*

***New York Times, June 23, 2011***

*“...a massive undertaking ...a noteworthy and stirring endeavor that deserves to be heard.” “... all delivered spectacular performances...and a few goose-bumps moments.” “This is a smart, confidently written, seductively attractive piece that weaves Bulgarian folk instruments and folk-singing styles into colorful scoring.”*

***The Boston Musical Intelligencer, June 24, 2011***

*“‘I feel this is a message of the utmost importance,’ Tchonev said. ‘And I want it to be heard in all the cultural capitals in America. For me, this is a heavenly commission.’”*

***The Boston Herald, June 22, 2011***

*“More than 300 performers will commemorate the rescue of 49,000 Jews by the citizens of Bulgaria.”*

***The Boston Globe, June 22, 2011***

*“‘The concerts,’ Tchonev says, ‘are a way to tell the story of the Bulgarians’ action, which remains largely a secret two decades after Bulgaria became a free country.’”*

***The Jewish Week (New York), June 24, 2011***

*“... It is right for us to start a festival that would share the message of the rescue and how it happened. This is a great way to bring to the multitudes a story that is largely unknown.”*

***Sharon Tchonev to The Examiner (Washington, DC), June 16, 2011***

*“‘All the [49,000] Jews were to perish, but the people of Bulgaria spoke up,’ explains Sharon Tchonev, who with her husband, Kalin, founded Songs of Life, a recurring music festival dedicated to telling stories in music, that encourage people to make the right decisions to save lives.”*

***Washington Jewish Week, June 16, 2011***

*“Musically the composer has masterfully combined folk song with full symphonic music into a dramatic oratorio. Elements of gypsy music and Hebrew dance blend seamlessly with popular song and large full symphonic forces of almost 300 in the finale. It is hair-raising at times, poignant at others, dance-like in a folk manner in places.”*

***The Jewish Daily Forward, June 29, 2011***

*“Three hundred performers came to the Kennedy Center for the world premiere of A Melancholy Beauty, an oratorio by Georgi Andreev commemorating the Bulgarians who saved the lives of 49,000 Jews during the Holocaust.”*

**Washingtonian, June 4, 2011**

*“The performance commemorated the historic but little-known rescue of Bulgaria’s 49,000 Jews from the Holocaust by ordinary citizens who rose up in civil disobedience and demanded of the King and Parliament that Bulgaria’s Jews be spared from Nazi extermination. No Bulgarian Jews went to the Concentration Camps.”*

**Atlanta Jewish Times, June 3, 2011**

*“A stirring union of classical music, Bulgarian folklore and Hebrew motifs to create a deep sense of respect for human courage, perseverance and dignity.”*

**Sofia News Agency (Bulgaria), 2008**

*“The production blends classical symphonic styles with traditional Bulgarian instruments to achieve a sound that is utterly new.”*

**San Diego Jewish Journal, 2008**