

Tributes to Cavafy in Latin America

TNH Staff

MEXICO CITY, Mexico and SANTIAGO, Chile – The 150th anniversary of the birth of Constantine Cavafy has been marked by enthusiastic events all over the world, many of them presented by Hellenic organizations, but attended by non-Greek devotees of the great poet from Alexandria.

Combining music with Cavafy's poetry has proven a popular format. "C.P. Cavafy en Música: Un Recital de Cantos y reflexiones – C.P. Cavafy and Music: An Evening of Songs and Reflections" was presented on October 28 in Mexico City and on October 31 in Santiago, Chile.

The events were organized as part of the University Seminars Program of the Onassis Foundation (USA) in collabora-

tion with the Greek Embassies in Mexico and Chile and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the University of Chile.

Both recitals were attended by large audiences that were most predominantly, if not almost exclusively, of non-Greek descent and received enthusiastic reviews by the local press. The recitals included extensive analytical comments on the Cavafy poetry by Professor Vasilis Lambropoulos, the C.P. Cavafy Chair in Modern Greek studies at the University of Michigan, and 16 musical performances of selected poems by mezzo soprano Alexandra Gravas and pianist Despina Apostolou-Holscher.

The songs were written by Greek, Spanish, French and American composers, some well-known and some never

performed before. The performances illustrated the many musical idioms used to set the Cavafy poetry to music, sometimes using more than musical interpretation of the same poem. The distributed programs included all the

original versions of the poems in Greek as well as their translations in Spanish," according to an Onassis Foundation (USA) press release.

The event in Mexico was attended by about 280 people and was also taped by TV UNAM to be shown in classes. The event was followed by a reception and the Ambassadors of Greece and Egypt were in attendance.

In Chile, Teatro Municipal de las Condes, the most important theater and Opera House of Santiago, was filled to its 700-person capacity with diplomats, scholars, authors, journalists,

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Professor Vassilis Lambropoulos, with mezzo soprano Alexandra Giavas and pianist Despina Apostolou-Holscher.

and leaders in the arts, sciences, and government. A reception followed at the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

Aglaia Balta, formerly Consul General of Greece in New York and currently the Ambassador of Greece in Chile, opened the event with a recital of Cavafy's "Ithaca." The translation was by Chilean Professor Miguel Castillo Didier, the main translator of Cavafy in Latin America and the Director of the Fotios Malleros Center of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Chile.

The University Seminars Program of the Onassis Foundation (USA) had also arranged a successful tour of this event that visited Columbia University, Yale University, Brown University, the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, the University of Iowa, and the University of Indiana.