



Magnificent soloist soprano Milda Vaskeviciute



Choral Arts Society Director and Conductor Diana Saez is a Bank spouse and professional musician



The Choral Arts Society members

## Raising the Roof with Christmas Carols

Bank/Fund Choral Arts Society thrills MC lunchtime crowd

**December 6, 2000**—On Monday, the cavernous atrium of the Bank's main complex echoed to the sounds of seasonal cheer as the World Bank-International Monetary Fund Choral Arts Society choir performed its annual Christmas concert. Another concert will be given today at 1 pm in the IMF Atrium Mezzanine.

Staff who had never witnessed a performance by this group watched goggle-eyed as colleagues and managers were suddenly transformed into the likes of Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Luciano Pavarotti.

The 40-member choir, whose diversity reflects that of the two institutions, performed a suite of hymns from Marc-Antoine Charpentier's enthralling *Messe de Minuit pour Noel* (Midnight Mass for Christmas) conducted by music director and conductor Diana Saez. This began with a rapturous Kyrie, through Gloria, the Credo, Sanctus, and a rousing rendition of Agnus Dei.

This professional performance, worthy of any to be heard in the Sistine Chapel at this time of year, was followed by traditional carols in which the audience participated, initially timidly but with growing enthusiasm as inhibitions dropped. By the time "God Bless ye Merry Gentlemen" ended and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" began, the MC atrium could have been mistaken for a church.

The Choral Arts Society is almost as old as the two Bretton Woods institutions and has included some distinguished personalities over the years. It began in 1958 as a Christmas carol group at the Fund and the following year was expanded to include staff from the World Bank. Its first director was Dr. Wunsch, an organist and choirmaster of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. He was succeeded by Dr. P.M. Jayarajan, Alternate ED at the Fund and violinist with the National Symphony Orchestra, and then by Jack Upper, Fund staff member and active Washington area musician, who still sings with the choir today.



Soloist sopranos Patricia Rogers (l) and Helen Ton



An appreciative audience cheered and sang along traditional Christmas carols

It presented two concerts a year, usually with piano accompaniment, but occasionally with volunteer instrumentalists drawn from the staffs of the Bank and the Fund. The repertoire was largely madrigals and motets, plus a variety of other choral works—some from Ghana, Japan, and Korea. At one memorable concert, the instrumentalists performed Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 4.

Sáez, its current director, is a professional musician and Bank spouse who has been running the show since 1997. Under her, the chorus is continuing its tradition of rehearsing once a week and presenting two concerts annually. She hopes to increase the membership of the group and expand its repertoire supported by Fabián Faccio, assistant director and accompanist.

"This was really nice and very moving," said Julia Bucknall, a senior environmental specialist at ESSD, when the music stopped. "It is good to see people from all over the world get together and make such beautiful music. And Diana, the conductor, did a terrific job," she added.

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