

PRESS RELEASE

***14th Lessinia Film Festival
Mountain life, history, and traditions***

Bosco Chiesanuova (Verona), August 23-30, 2008

Is the concert played by the Caucasian Chamber Orchestra at the Lessinia Film Festival to be their last?

Bosco Chiesanuova (Verona), August 23, 2008 – From the opening strains of the Caucasian Chamber Orchestra, on Friday, August 22, the spotlight was on the **14th edition of the Lessinia Film Festival**, the international film competition devoted to mountain life, history, and traditions.

Not even the violent conflicts that are tearing apart their homelands stopped the thirteen young musicians who form the **Caucasian Chamber Orchestra** from performing before a sold-out audience in the Teatro Vittoria. Thus, in the heart of the Veronese mountains, the resounding notes of violas, violins, cellos and double-basses took the place of the sounds of bombs and Kalashnikovs to prove that music, symbol of peace and peaceful coexistence, is a unifying force able to overcome every boundary.

In a nearly two-hour-long concert, with a repertoire drawn from Caucasian traditions, the German pianist, composer, and orchestra director **Uwe Berkemer** accompanied the artists and the public present on an evocative musical journey with works from Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Since 2003, Berkemer, one of the major figures in German music, has directed this remarkable group comprised, in its complete formation, of seventeen musicians of various ethnic backgrounds from the mountainous region that extends from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. Yet only thirteen, from Georgia, Armenia, and Daghestan, were on stage last evening after the closing of the Tblisi airport forced them to make a ten-hour car trip to Armenia before boarding a plane to Switzerland, and then to Italy.

In his welcoming remarks, the mayor of Bosco Chiesanuova, **Claudio Melotti**, praised the musicians for their “extraordinary professionalism and for the message of peace that they wish to bring to the world”. “The director always firmly believed they would succeed in leaving for the tour,” added **Claudio Rossetti**, president of the Fondazione Monte Verità of Ascona, who accompanied the Caucasian Chamber Orchestra on their tour with stops in several European cities.

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“The Caucasian Chamber Orchestra will disband,” announced Uwe Berkemer at the end of the Veronese concert. “We have no more money. The sponsors and economic support we received from Germany are no longer there. In the Caucasus it’s impossible to find money for this kind of musical initiative. The musicians in the orchestra need to earn a living, and will be forced to find other work. The concert in Bosco Chiesanuova may have been our last”.

“The news that this orchestra might close down fills us with acrimony,” commented **Alessandro Anderloni**, director of the Lessinia Film Festival. “These musicians and their maestro have reached such a supreme level of quality that many other European orchestras pale by comparison. Their message of peace is a lesson to us all. We hope that an appeal will be launched from the Lessinia Film Festival so that this orchestra may continue to play”.

Today, **Saturday, August 23, at 6:00 p.m.** in the Festival piazza, the musicians of the **Caucasian Chamber Orchestra will meet the public of the 14th edition of the Lessinia Film Festival.**

Scheduled for **9 p.m.**, this evening in the Sala Olimpica of the Teatro Vittoria, is the **world premier** of ***Grozny dreaming***, the documentary film by the Swiss directors Mario Casella and Furio Mariani, who followed the orchestra members from rehearsals in Tbilisi through their difficult tours in the Caucasus region. Entering in their homes, the filmmakers recorded the musicians’ feelings about the world and about their greatest dream: to play in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya.