

Bahá'í Houses of Worship Mashriqu'í-Adhkár

Santiago, Chile, 2016

Class prepared by Arthur Lyon Dahl

Shoghi Effendi

It should be borne in mind that the central Edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, round which in the fulness of time shall cluster such institutions of social service as shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant, should be regarded apart from these Dependencies, as a House solely designed and entirely dedicated to the worship of God.... (Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932*, letter dated 25 October 1929, pp. 184-186) [Institution §38]

Santiago
Chile



The last Continental House of Worship, for South America, is high on a hill overlooking Santiago, Chile, with the Andes behind. As with all Bahá'í Houses of Worship, the Santiago temple has a dome and nine entrances, but this one is composed of nine translucent “wings” spiralling to the centre, enclosing a volume about 30 metres in each dimension, making what is truly a “temple of light”. Glass, stone, bronze and wood are combined in exquisite beauty and attention to detail. The gardens and pools also spiral around the temple, recently planted with native shrubs that will take some years to reach maturity.

Santiago
Chile
2016



The House of Worship is a unique architectural gem. The nine wings have an internal metal structure covered on the outside with translucent panels of highly resistant glass recycled from the manufacture of laboratory apparatus, and on the inside with translucent white alabaster. Glass between the wings and below around the auditorium and balcony provides views of the gardens, the Andes and the city below. Light enters during the day, and radiates out at night. The temple can accommodate about 600. The doors and fittings are bronze and the balcony is covered in dark wood.

THE DEDICATION

The House of Worship was dedicated on 13-16 October 2016 in a ceremony and associated conference of high spiritual significance and artistic beauty. Five thousand Baha'is, 3,000 from Latin America and 2,000 from the rest of the world, gathered for the occasion.

I was privileged to be one of those present. This was the fourth dedication that I have attended, after those of Wilmette (1953), Panama (1972) and Samoa (1984). The dedication ceremonies were at the Temple, a dramatic structure in Peñalolén, with the Andes rising behind on one side and the city of Santiago spread out below on the other. On Saturday afternoon and Sunday, groups of 500 went to the temple for a short ceremony with prayers, beautiful choir music, and a rare opportunity to view portraits of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, while the remainder followed artistic activities and videos from across South America and around the world at the conference.

Dedication
in the
House of
Worship

Santiago
Chile
2016



When it was our turn to attend a dedication ceremony at the temple, we were 500 taken by bus to the temple site. We waited in a reception tent for our group to gather and for the previous group to leave the temple, admiring the site with its extensive view over Santiago below, and the green backdrop of the Andes behind. Then we climbed the stairs to the temple and entered quietly into such a beautiful building for the first time. We were welcomed briefly by the Representative of the Universal House of Justice. The choir on the balcony sang some quotations from the Baha'i writings, and other were read and chanted. Then we slowly filed out, passing and paying our respects to the portraits of Bahá'u'lláh and The Báb that had exceptionally been brought from the Bahá'í World Centre for this unique occasion.



Preparing to attend the dedication, Santiago, Chile, 2016

House of
Worship

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International
Teaching
Conference

Santiago
Chile
2016



The conference was held in the Movistar Arena in downtown Santiago, while groups of 500 attended a dedication ceremony at the Temple. The first afternoon featured indigenous peoples, with a representative of the government appreciating the work of the Bahá'ís, quotations on the importance of the indigenous peoples, experiences of some of the indigenous believers, and music and dance, including a unity dance with many tribes together. There were musical presentations, videos of socio-economic development projects, messages from other Bahá'í communities around the world, and a true feeling of unity and celebration among all present. I represented Switzerland and made a short presentation.

Music

Santiago
Chile
2016



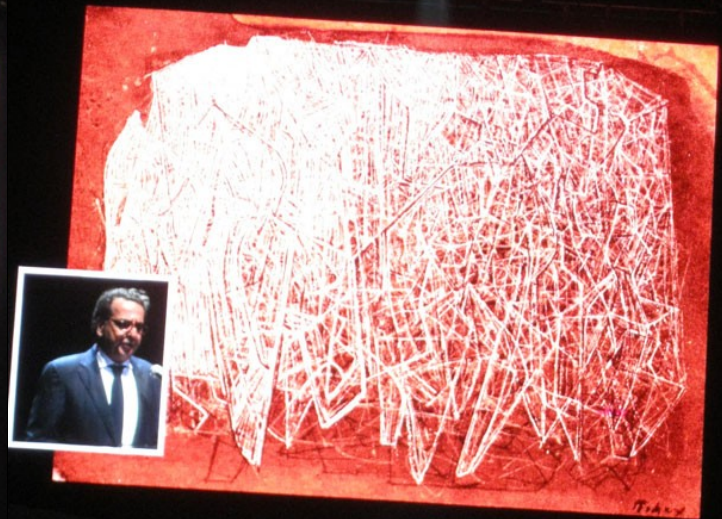


Music and dancing

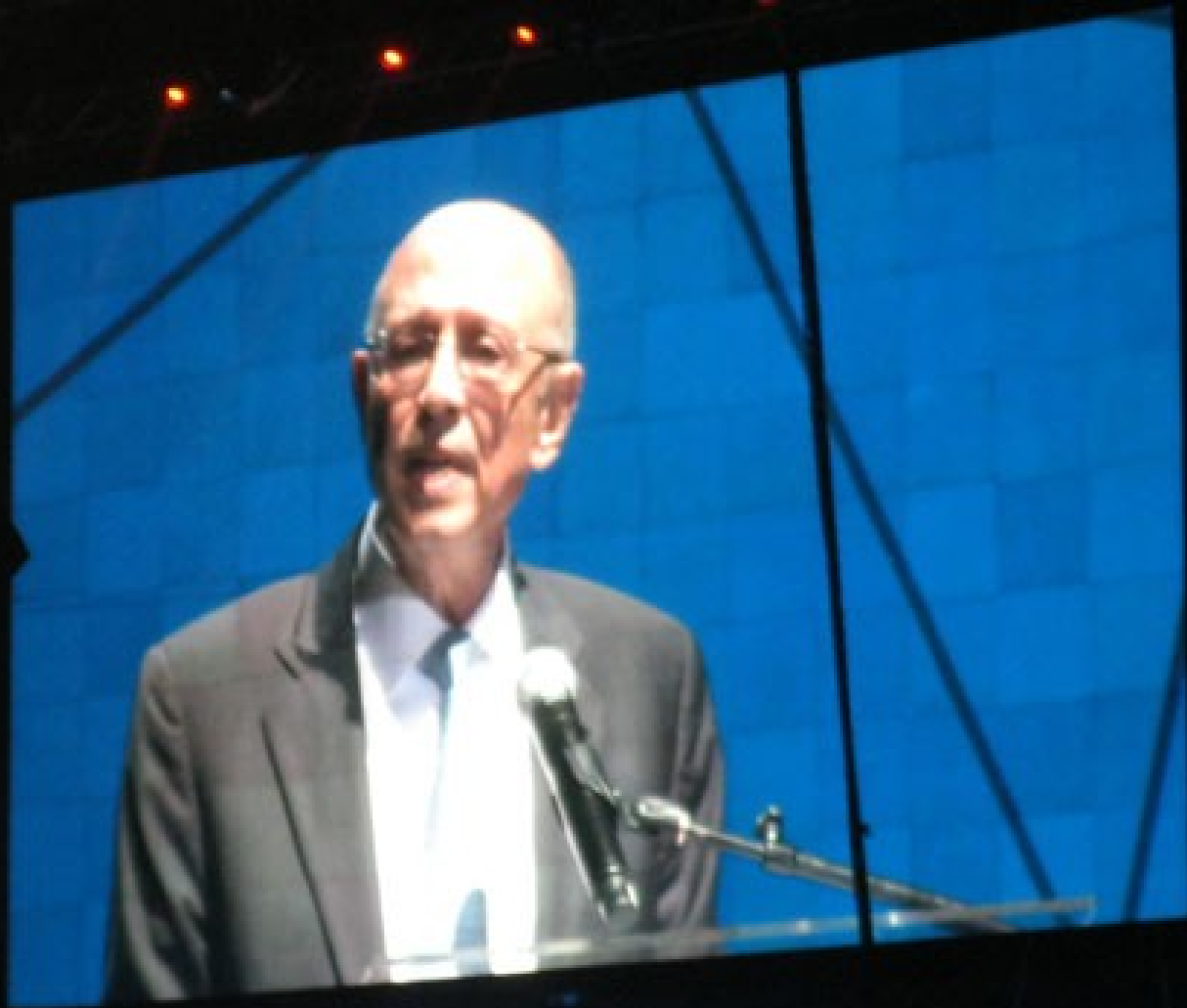


Unity dance

Saturday morning featured a presentation by the architect of the temple, Siamak Hariri, who told how the concept of the temple evolved, the technical challenges in its construction and the long and difficult effort to find an appropriate site near Santiago. I had met Siamak in 2008, when he visited friends in Geneva where he studied. It was then that I discovered that a painting by Mark Tobey, "*Lovers of Light*", had inspired him to create a temple of light. Mark painted it in Basel in 1960, and it is in my own collection, making a special tie between Switzerland and the Santiago temple.



The closing plenary featured a talk by Dr. Farzam Arbab, who spent many years in South America starting in Colombia in 1969 before serving at the International Teaching Centre and for 20 years on the Universal House of Justice at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel. There were also Bahá'í songs by leading artists of South America that had everyone on their feet and some dancing in the aisles.



Farzam Arbab speaking



Closing celebration



Me with some old friends from New Caledonia

House of
Worship

Santiago
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Shoghi Effendi

...of all the institutions that stand associated with His Holy Name, surely none save the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can most adequately provide the essentials of Bahá'í worship and service, both so vital to the regeneration of the world. ...the unique position of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahá'u'lláh. (Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932*, letter dated 25 October 1929, pp. 184-186) [Institution §38]