

Compact Disc 1**65'47**

DMITRY BORTNIANSKY 1751–1825

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | Cherubic Hymn | 5'32 |
| 2 | Sacred Concerto No.104 for two choirs (Psalm 137) | 9'01 |
| 3 | Sacred Concerto No.105 for two choirs (Psalm 112) | 6'18 |
| 4 | Sacred Concerto No.106 for two choirs (Psalm 45) | 9'25 |

ANON. MONODY 17th century

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|------|
| 5 | Easter Sticheron | 6'19 |
|---|-------------------------|------|

VASILY TITOV *c.1650–c.1715*

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 6 | Cherubic Hymn | 5'46 |
|---|----------------------|------|

STEPAN DEGTYAREV 1766–1813

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|------|
| 7 | Let all the peoples | 2'13 |
| 8 | Cherubic Hymn | 5'17 |

ARTEMY VEDEL *c.1767–1808*

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 9 | Peaceful Light | 4'17 |
| 10 | By the waters of Babylon (Psalm 136) | 10'58 |

Yurlov Academic Choir / Stanislav Gusev

Recording: October 1991, Mosfilm Studios, Moscow, Russia

© 1992 Le Chant du Monde · Music licensed courtesy of National Music Publishers

Compact Disc 2**55'32**

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY 1840–1893

Liturgy of St John Chrysostom Op.41

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | Lord, have mercy | 3'11 |
| 2 | Glory be to the Father | 4'10 |
| 3 | O come, let us worship | 4'15 |
| 4 | Alleluia | 1'10 |
| 5 | Glory be to Thee | 3'52 |
| 6 | Hymn of the Cherubim | 7'50 |
| 7 | Lord, have mercy | 2'03 |
| 8 | The Creed | 4'27 |
| 9 | The mercy of peace | 3'16 |
| 10 | We sing Thee | 3'18 |
| 11 | It is meet | 4'07 |
| 12 | Amen, and with Thy spirit | 1'42 |
| 13 | Our Father | 3'52 |
| 14 | Praise ye the Lord from the heavens | 3'13 |
| 15 | Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord | 4'58 |

National Academic Choir of Ukraine 'Dumka' / Yevhen Savchuk

Recording: October 2001, Kiev Cathedral, Ukraine

© 2001 Brilliant Classics · © 2009 Brilliant Classics

Compact Disc 3**58'14**

ALEXANDER GRETCHANINOV 1864–1956

- 1 **Come, let us bow before the Lord** 1'01
2 **Praise the Lord** 2'12

MIKHAIL IPPOLITOV-IVANOV 1859–1935

- 3 **This day all peoples bless the name of the Lord** 4'09
4 **My soul, bless the Lord** 1'37

ALEXANDER KASTALSKY 1856–1926

- 5 **The Only-Begotten Son** 1'46
6 **Appeal of the Patriarch Hermogenes to the Insurgents in 1609** 2'42
Soloist: Vladimir Surjenko
7 **Tropary to the Holy Martyr Hermogenes** 1'30

ALEXANDER GRETCHANINOV

- 8 **Trisagion (Thrice Holy)** 2'42

PAVEL CHESNOKOV 1877–1944

- 9 **The Good Thief** 1'38
10 **Since my youth** 3'45
Soloist: Vladimir Silayev
11 **Mother of God** 3'15
12 **Arise, O God** 4'00
Soloists: Alexey Fokin, Vladimir Makarov, Yuri Zykov

ALEXANDER NIKOLSKY 1874–1943

- 13 **Praise the name of the Lord** 2'05

NIKOLAI GOLOVANOV 1891–1953

- 14 **Cherubic Hymn** 5'42

KONSTANTIN SHVEDOV 1886–1954

- 15 **The Great Litany** 5'10
Soloist: Sergei Kaznacheyev
16 **The Beatitudes** 4'23
Soloists: Vassily Larin, Vladimir Silayev
17 **The Creed** 3'01
18 **It is meet** 2'05

NIKOLAI KEDROV SR 1871–1940

- 19 **Our Father** 2'52

ALEXANDER GRETCHANINOV

- 20 **Multos annos** 1'19

Rybin Male Choir / Valery Rybin

Recording: May 1992, Moscow Conservatory, Russia

© 1992 Le Chant du Monde · Music licensed courtesy of National Music Publishers

Compact Disc 4

60'22

- DOBRI HRISTOV 1875–1941
- 1 Praise the name of the Lord 4'32
- ALEXEY KOSOLAPOV ?-?
- 2 Confirm, O Lord 2'34
- PAVEL CHESNOKOV
- 3 Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight Op.24/6 6'14
- 4 Eternal Counsel Op.40/2 3'05
- 5 Let us pray to the Holy Virgin Op.43/5 3'22
- 6 On the bed of suffering Op.45/1 2'41
- 7 Make haste to intercede Op.45/4 2'06
- NIKOLAI GOLOVANOV
- Six Chants Op.1
- 8 Cherubic Hymn 5'14
- 9 The Peace of the World 6'20
- 10 We hymn Thee 2'50
- 11 It is meet (Hymn to the Holy Virgin) 2'31
- 12 Holy Virgin ever vigilant in prayer 2'47
- 13 Kontakion to St Nicolas 2'46

GEORGY IZVEKOV 1874–1937

arr. GEORGY SMIRNOV

- 14 Relieve my suffering, Mother of God 3'51

APOSTOL NIKOLAEV-STRUMSKI 1886–1971

arr. GEORGY SMIRNOV

- 15 Great Doxology 8'44

Irina Arkhipova *mezzo-soprano* (1–7, 14, 15)

'The Orthodox Singers' Male Choir / Georgy Smirnov

Recording: May–October 1996, Moscow Conservatory, Russia

© 1998 Le Chant du Monde · Music licensed courtesy of National Music Publishers

Compact Disc 5

61'56

ALEXANDER KASTALSKY

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | Thou who wert announced in the psalms | 2'04 |
| 2 | Nunc dimittis | 2'34 |
| 3 | Since my youth many passions assail me | 2'08 |
| 4 | Tropary for the Feast of the Christianization of Russia | 1'26 |
| 5 | Multos annos
Soloist: Andrey Yuravlev <i>baritone</i> | 3'23 |
| 6 | Christ is risen | 1'10 |

VIKTOR KALINNIKOV 1870–1927

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|------|
| 7 | We sing unto thee | 2'31 |
|---|-------------------|------|

PAVEL CHESNOKOV

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 8 | Praise the Lord, O my soul (Psalm 103) | 2'39 |
| 9 | Lord, save thy people
Soloist: Vladimir Matorin <i>bass</i> | 3'18 |
| 10 | The Good Thief | 1'42 |

ALEXANDER GRETCHANINOV

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|------|
| 11 | Let all the earth praise the Lord | 2'30 |
| 12 | Praise the name of the Lord | 3'44 |

YAN BURAKOVSKY 1965–1982

- | | | |
|----|-----------|------|
| 13 | Ave Maria | 2'19 |
|----|-----------|------|

VALERY KALISTRATOV b.1942

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 14 | Lord, cleanse me of my sins
Soloist: Valery Rybin <i>tenor</i> | 3'39 |
|----|---|------|

NIKOLAI KARETNIKOV 1930–1994

Eight Sacred Choruses in Memory of Boris Pasternak

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 15 | For the taking of the veil | 3'01 |
| 16 | Excerpt from the Prophet Zephaniah | 2'40 |
| 17 | Prayer for Salvation
Soloist: Yuli Khomenko <i>baritone</i> | 3'54 |
| 18 | Extreme Unction | 3'38 |
| 19 | God is with us | 3'12 |
| 20 | Excerpt from the Gospel according to Matthew | 2'53 |
| 21 | Praise the name of the Lord | 2'20 |
| 22 | The Lord's Prayer | 4'14 |

Rybin Male Choir

Valery Rybin (1–13) · **Valery Kalistratov** (14) · **Nikolai Karetnikov** (15–22)

Recording: October 1990 & February 1991, Moscow Conservatory, Russia

© 1991 Le Chant du Monde · Music licensed courtesy of National Music Publishers

Compact Disc 6

62'02

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF 1873–1943

Vespers Op.37

1	Come, let us worship	1'46
2	Bless the Lord, O my soul	4'52
3	Blessed be the man	5'40
4	O serene light	3'29
5	Now let Thy servant depart	3'59
6	Rejoice, O Virgin	2'26
7	Glory to God in the highest	2'50
8	Praise the name of the Lord	2'33
9	Blessed art Thou, O Lord	6'02
10	Having seen the Resurrection of the Lord	3'16
11	My soul magnifies the Lord	9'45
12	Glory to God in the highest	7'50
13	Troparia of the day of salvation	2'01
14	Christ is risen from the grave	3'34
15	Thanksgiving to the Mother of God	1'51

Olga Borusene *soprano* · Yuri Korinnyk *tenor* · Mykhaylo Tyshchenko *tenor*

National Academic Choir of Ukraine 'Dumka' / Yevhen Savchuk

Recording: December 2000, Kiev Cathedral, Ukraine

© 2001 Brilliant Classics · © 2009 Brilliant Classics

In old Russia all preserved and recorded art was religious. The German writer and naturalist John Herbinus, on his travels around Russia in the 1660s, attended a service and later recalled the experience: 'I felt as if I stood in Jerusalem in the early days of Christianity: Russia glorifies the Lord in a much more heavenly and grand manner than the Romans.'

The intense character of that worship derives from the texts and long-breathed lines of ancient *znamenny* chant. It was the performance of this chant that developed a singing tradition in Russia with particular characteristics: seamless lines and a remarkable capacity to sustain pitch. On his first visit to St Petersburg in 1847, Berlioz remarked upon how Russian choirs 'perform with an angelic calmness of expression, which requires an excellent vocal technique and art of sustaining power, resulting in a sound that surpasses anything in Europe. By their intensity, they suspend one's breathing.'

The idea is that declamation of text should not break the musical line: a beautiful legato remains the highest law. Articulation marks of accent and emphasis were likewise not intended to break or even form an architectural scaffolding to the line; the aim was for full-bodied, homogeneity of sound, achieved in choirs through the use of staggered breathing. Such a technique had been practised in Russia as far back as the 16th century. Fast tempi are foreign to the dignified nature of the *znamenny* chant. The cultivated style was pliant, smooth, unified and connected. Breathing between the last note of one bar and the first note of the next bar was not permitted. In smooth singing all voices merge to complement the ecclesiastical architecture, iconography and clergy vestments in a synthesis of aesthetic beauty offered in service of God. 'It is this quality of reverence and worship which has entered into the music of the Russian Church,' observed the Scottish musician Archibald Henderson in 1919, 'giving it [...] a wonderful quality of elevation, nobility and beauty, which at once lifts the hearer above all material things.'

There are no downbeats in Russian sacred music, for the simple reason that rhythm is dictated by the inflections of the text. The chant historian and dedicatee of Rachmaninoff's *Vespers*, Stepan Smolensky, wrote: 'Rhythmic flexibility in our singing is absolutely free due to the Church Slavonic prose, which replaced the Greek. A remarkable rhythmic flexibility, making it possible for our melodies to be applied to any kind of asymmetrical or symmetrical rhythms of the text, and the complete elasticity of stresses of the Church Slavonic language, have resulted in the fact that we are extremely far from the conventional-Germanic rhythmic musical structures in our old melodies.'

Practically absent is the idea of fitting our text into square musical unities of two, three or four beats, as is possible in verse text. Our prose text, together with its wealth of rhythmic fluidity of speech, gave us grounds for the creation of ancient liturgical chants, most remarkable in their rhythmic suppleness and melodic elegance.’

Znamenny chant derived from 11th-century Byzantine models and reached its culmination at the hands of the ‘Novgorod Masters’ – monk-musicians attached to religious institutions scattered across western Russia – in the 16th and 17th centuries. The notation of neumes and the compass of eight tones had been transmitted to the Byzantine Orthodox Church through the common thread of Hellenistic culture. St John of Damascus, a Syrian church father, is commonly credited with organising a hymnography of the Eastern Church in a manner parallel to the preservation, arrangement and composition of chant undertaken by monks during the papacy of Pope Gregory II in the 11th century.

This system of eight tones was – and continues to be – common to Orthodox churches not only in Russia but across the Near East, into Arabic countries and Africa. Each national culture developed its own unique signature or language from that system. The Russians imported their system of worship and chant from Byzantium, but by the 14th and 15th centuries, the Russian system had taken on its own character. There is only one basic scale or tone-row, while the various tones are differentiated by patterns of melodic formulae. Then newer chants flourished in distinct regions of the Russian Church such as the Kiev chant. In their turn, these gave way during the 19th century to the *obychny* (usualis) style of chant, close to recitative. By then, the richness and suppleness of *znamenny* melodies had been almost completely lost or at least forgotten.

The *znamenny* thread had begun to fray under pressure from secularism during the reign of Tsar Alexis (1645–76). The tsar’s two weddings furnish salient evidence. The first, taking place near the beginning of his reign, in 1648, was celebrated with all the solemn ceremony of the Middle Ages. For the second, in 1671 (his first wife, Maria Miloslavskaya, having died a few weeks after giving birth to their 13th child), sundry entertainments, musical and theatrical, were imported from the West. The influence of the reforming boyar Boris Morozov over the tsar had achieved a quiet revolution in the upper echelons of Russian culture and politics, which had become more and more open to ideas from Europe, culminating in 1735 with the first visit to Russia by an Italian opera company. For upholders of old ways, such events took on baleful significance, as they observed

their ancient chants being superseded by newer, more pliable melodies, which in turn were subjected to arrangements in the fashionable Polish and Italian styles.

The next century marked a low ebb in the fortunes of Russian music, sacred and secular. When Glinka began to write operas with distinctively Russian themes such as *A Life for the Tsar* (1836) and *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842), the court chapel of Tsar Nicholas I was in the hands of excellent musicians, but Glinka himself, the Russian counterpart of Weber, had a liberal outlook with no strong personal allegiance to his country’s religious culture. He leaned towards the West, travelled widely, and when his reputation flourished abroad, threw his energies into operatic and symphonic music. Nicholas attempted to husband Glinka’s talent within the realms of church music, appointing him master of the music at the court chapel, but Glinka soon relinquished the post and continued his life of work and travel. He died abroad in 1857, having made but a handful of contributions to the Orthodox heritage of his land. In 1861, his successor at the head of the court chapel, Bakhmetev, brought out a now widely deplored volume of modernised *obychny* chant.

Tchaikovsky understood the problem. ‘In your question about Russian church music,’ he wrote to a friend in 1888, ‘you have touched upon a sore point, and I should have to use up a whole ream of paper in order to answer you adequately. Bortniansky’s technique is childish, academic, and yet he is the only religious composer who had any technique at all. All those Vedels, Degtyarevs, etc. loved music in their own way, but they were grossly illiterate and have done harm to Russia by their works that a hundred years will not undo. From capital to village, the saccharine style of Bortniansky is to be heard, and alas! it pleases the public. A Messiah is needed who with one stroke should destroy all the old and go along a new path which lies in the return to antiquity and the resurrection of the ancient chant in the proper harmonisation. What the latter is to be, no-one has as yet any idea, but there are people like Rasumovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Asayev, who know and understand what Russian church music needs. However, theirs is a voice crying in the wilderness. Don’t imagine that I have in mind my own works. I wished only to be a transitional stage from the trite Italianism of Bortniansky to the one that will be found by the future Messiah.’

It takes a composer to really pull another composer apart, and disparaged here are several significant names in Russian music who feature on CD1 of the present collection. The most significant of them was Dmitri Bortniansky (1752–1825), who studied with Baldassare Galuppi in Venice and later became director of music at the court chapel in St Petersburg. He was composing

in an era when to suppress one's Russian cultural heritage was a mark of sophistication, when Paris was the centre of all that was dazzling and attractive to the Russian aristocracy, and when a lack of fluency in French, Italian or German marked one of them out to their contemporaries as backward; the mark of a peasant.

The much derided 'Italianism' of Bortniansky's style accordingly belongs to its time. Galuppi had served as court composer to Catherine the Great in St Petersburg between 1758 and 1768, and he found the conditions there trying and the obligations oppressive – he left in a hurry for Europe hardly having fulfilled his side of a very generous contract. Even so, he was feted there at the time (and deplored later) for introducing the strains of the Italian Baroque to what has always been Russia's most westward-facing city. Having completed his studies abroad, Bortniansky became choirmaster, eventually head and then director of the choir of the court chapel, in which capacity he composed more than 50 'sacred concertos' for unaccompanied choir. Though they are settings of ancient Russian texts, their language is rooted in the counterpoint, concerto-grosso alternation and exultant character of Italian instrumental models.

In similar manner, Catherine lured the composer Giuseppe Sarti to St Petersburg in 1784. He stayed for longer, though Russian life still broke his health eventually, and, having been granted leave to return to Italy and a generous pension, he died in Berlin in 1802, en route home. While in post, he taught both Stepan Degtyarev and Artemy Vedel, who thus followed Bortniansky in marrying Italian Baroque harmony to ancient Russian hymnody. However, Vasily Titov's *Cherubic Hymn* (CD1, track 6) is the sole representative here of a 'Moscow Baroque' school of composition which briefly flourished in the second half of the 17th century.

Born in the 1650s in Moscow, Titov became a member of an imperial choir attached to the court of Tsar Fyodor, where his salary is recorded in 1678, and where he quickly rose in rank as both a singer and a composer. After that he took up posts at a church in the Kremlin and as head of a music school in Moscow. Titov's music is generally subservient to the text, not in the sense of that fusion of text and melody associated with *znamenny* chant and its intrinsic function as an act of worship, but in a personally inflected style owing nothing to the fashionable Venetian style of antiphonal layout, framed in a Western design yet abounding with intricate detail inherited from Russian tradition. Form is dictated by the phrases of the text, which in turn determine the shape of the melodies.

While styling himself as a John the Baptist in the letter quoted above, Tchaikovsky makes oblique reference to the setting of the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* (CD2), which he had composed a decade earlier at the invitation of the Moscow publisher Jürgenson. Corresponding to the liturgy of the Eucharist celebrated in the Western Church, the sung texts of the *Liturgy* mark out biblical readings, a profession of faith (Credo), the consecration of bread and prayer over the gifts, the Lord's Prayer and the distribution of communion.

Though hardly a doctrinal believer, Tchaikovsky attached significance to his work as honouring his reverence for the liturgy itself: 'I consider the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom one of the greatest productions of art,' he wrote to his patron Nadezhda von Meck in 1877. 'If we follow the service very carefully and enter into the meaning of each ceremony, it is impossible not to be profoundly moved...' He was therefore all the more wounded by the anathema pronounced on his work by Ambrose, Archbishop of Moscow.

Just a couple of years earlier, Tchaikovsky had given instruction at the Moscow Conservatoire to the musician who more than anyone would fulfil his yearning for a Messiah figure to revitalise church music in Russia. This was Alexander Kastalsky, who according to his own account was late to realise his calling: 'I will not say that when I entered the Conservatoire I was overmuch in love with music.' As a dilatory pianist and timpanist in the student orchestra he attracted little attention; a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy* made no great impression on him. Only when he began to attend rehearsals for the chorus of the Bolshoi Opera, working on their concerts of sacred music, did he 'begin to see the choral business handled as it should be'. Thus inspired, he became a teacher and composer and in 1887 took up a post as professor of piano at the Synodal School in Moscow. While its size had diminished and its status had suffered from the dominance of the St Petersburg court chapel during the previous two centuries, the choir of the Synodal School had maintained a vestigial tradition of *znamenny* chant singing that offered the promise of renewal to a generation of native composers in search of a distinctively Russian language of musical expression, whether in secular or sacred idioms. Its director in 1887 was Vasily Orlov, who had known Kastalsky at the Conservatoire and who secured his appointment.

Foremost among the new nationalists was, of course, Rimsky-Korsakov, and just as Tchaikovsky recognised his colleague's vision for a musical language that relinquished dependence on European models, so Rimsky himself – while much less of a believer than Tchaikovsky – grasped the

importance of chant in recovering an authentic musical identity. ‘Russian Orthodox singing,’ he wrote, ‘like a folk song, flows in an expansive, free stream from the national bosom, and the freer it is, the more abundantly it speaks to the heart. Our melodies are analogous to those of the Greeks, but the Russian people sing them differently, because they have put their Russian soul into them. Whoever wants to hear how this soul is manifested needs to do so in a good monastery.’

In his comparison of chant with folksong, Rimsky hit upon a profound and forgotten truth. The prevalent wisdom – propounded by Sergei Taneyev, master contrapuntalist in the German style and another of Kastalsky’s professors at the Conservatoire – was that chants should be treated like *cantus firmus* melodies in the Western tradition as the basis for a contrapuntal motet: Palestrina with a late-Romantic Russian accent. With Orlov’s encouragement, Kastalsky instead attempted to harmonise them more in the fashion (though not the language) of a Lutheran chorale. As he told the story: ‘Quite unexpectedly to myself and others I had become a church composer and even the founder of a movement just as casually as I had dropped into the Conservatoire when I was preparing for [a career in] land economy.’

He considered his first work of importance to be the *Cherubic Hymn* of 1897, but all the pieces in this collection made a lasting impact on Russian sacred composition and the revival of *znamenny* chant at its heart. ‘From the point of view of preserving the style of the old chant I consider particularly successful my *Benedictus* of the Uspensky Cathedral chant, the *Lord’s Prayer*, *O Lord I cried unto Thee* and the *Theotokia*. On the latter I had to work hard. The *znamenny* chant dislikes being handled and struggles like children about to be washed. I remember a dispute with the vestrymen of Uspensky Cathedral, who did not recognise their *Cherubim Hymn* in my arrangement and insisted that I had distorted the melody. I had to convince them with score in hand and point out with my finger the zigzag line of the chant, since in my setting it winds its way from one part to another.’

Orlov’s successor in charge of the Synodal School Choir was Smolensky, and the generation of sacred composers after Kastalsky was led by one of its former members, Pavel Chesnokov. Having joined the choir in 1884 at the age of seven, Chesnokov grew up under Orlov’s instruction and soaked up the heritage of *znamenny* chant. He then passed it on to further generations of students, both on a programme he founded at the Moscow Conservatoire in 1920 and through what he considered his ‘life’s work’, the book he completed in December 1930: *The Choir and How to Direct It*.

As composers in the vanguard of a Russian Spring for choral music in the two decades before the 1917 Revolution, Kastalsky and Chesnokov were joined by Alexander Gretchaninov, against considerable opposition from those identified by Gretchaninov as ‘the self-appointed arbiters of Russian Orthodox church singing... Anything that did not sound like German or Italian church music seemed to them – and alas, still seems to their disciples – as contrary to the spirit of Russian church music.’

‘I decided to launch an open attack on this fossilised attitude and published an article,’ Gretchaninov continued. ‘If the music corresponds faithfully to the meaning of the text, this proves its fidelity to the “spirit” as well... Secondly, I pointed out in my article that the only way to write Orthodox church music in a truly Russian style is to return to old Slavonic church singing, to study it, learn to love it, and enjoy it as part of our own native folk music. Let Italian songs flourish in Italy; it behoves us, Russians, to cling to our own Slavonic modes.’

Gretchaninov’s later use of instruments in para-liturgical works, his composition of a Roman Catholic Mass and motets (with organ), and his writing of a *Missa oecumenica* – a Latin mass for solo voices, chorus, organ and orchestra on Orthodox, Gregorian and Hebrew liturgical melodies – all testify to his liberal religious outlook. However, these works were all written after his emigration, first to Paris and then to New York, in 1925. The unequivocal highpoint of the *znamenny* renaissance arrived with the pair of choral masterpieces by the most famous composer-émigré of them all, Sergei Rachmaninoff, with his own setting of the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* (1910) and the *Vespers*, or *All-Night Vigil* (1915).

The *All-Night Vigil* (CD6) in particular is a veritable choral symphony, a string of 15 pieces of a stirring beauty. Though Rachmaninoff drew mainly on later examples of chant from Greek and Kiev sources, he strips them of 18th-century sweetness and infuses them with the nobility of the *znamenny*. His layout is immense, rising to ten or eleven parts as if in emulation of the Venetian polychoral composers such as Gabrieli, yet without any imitational devices. With this mighty work, Rachmaninoff seemed (at least in retrospect) to have brought Russian liturgical music into the wider world of art music. Alas, just as the battle for an authentic expression of church music in Russia was being won, exemplified here by works from lesser-known names such as Kedrov Sr, Shvedov and Nikolsky, it was swept aside once more by the Communists like so much aesthetic collateral damage in the bloody struggle against all existing hegemonies, the Church very much included. The newly elected patriarch was imprisoned, churches were closed down in hundreds, and a violent campaign was waged for years to eradicate religious belief.

In the late 1960s, the early years of Leonid Brezhnev's presidency, a few recordings were made and released of Orthodox church music, the likes of which had not been produced in the previous half-century. The recordings were made, it would appear, to prove that there was religious freedom in the Soviet Union and that the Orthodox Church had not been persecuted, as in point of fact it had. Even devoutly religious composers in the Soviet republics such as Arvo Pärt in Estonia and Giya Kancheli in Georgia channelled their creative energies into writing symphonies and film music rather than risk censorship and worse by writing music that, in the tradition of the *znamenny* chant, could be construed as any kind of act of worship.

Among the most individual of dissident composers of the late Soviet era was Nikolai Karetnikov, whose eight choruses for male choir date from 1969 (Nos. 1–5) and 1989 (Nos. 6–8). The last three were written at the suggestion of his spiritual mentor, the priest Alexander Men – who was assassinated outside his home in Moscow the following year, aged 55. The score of Karetnikov's choruses is headed by a quotation from *Doctor Zhivago*, Pasternak's testimony to the enduring power of love over the forces of darkness, including Stalinism: 'All through the night I read your testament, and it seemed as if I had woken from a dream.' Karetnikov himself remarked that: 'At the end of the 1950s, I observed Pasternak's conduct. As a result he became my model. Like him, I have always rejected the idea of immigrating. Like him, I discovered faith when I had already reached adulthood. The first chorus, "For the taking of the veil", takes up the parable of the prodigal son returning to his father's house; the excerpt from the Prophet Zephaniah, "Day of Wrath", expresses our present situation. In these choruses I wanted to recall the life we have led and the God to whom we must pray.'

With the downfall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the expression of such faith became possible once more, and composers such as Valery Kalistratov returned from making uncontroversial settings of folksongs to religious poetry such as this setting of Psalm 51, *Lord, cleanse me from my sins*. Such music could not only be written but also performed in the era of *glasnost*, which was initiated by the eighth and last President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev. No previous regime would have sanctioned the establishment of the Valery Rybin Male Choir, which was founded in 1988 to celebrate the millennial anniversary of the Christianisation of Russia. Their recordings from the years immediately following the downfall of Communism, made in Moscow and initially issued on the 'Saison Russe' imprint of the Chant du Monde record label, reissued here for the first time, have with the benefit of hindsight become historical objects in their own right, witnesses to what may in time be seen as a third revival of Orthodox chant in Russia.

© Peter Quanttrill