

ST ALBANS, HOLBORN

LONDON

(by kind permission of the Vicar)

LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

Musical Director: Malcolm Cottle

**SERGEI
RACHMANINOV**
(1873 - 1943)

VESPERS

THURSDAY 27 MARCH, 1980

7.30pm

The music of the Eastern Orthodox Church has its roots in the ancient Byzantine plainsong. According to the Council of Laodicea in AD 367, in order to avoid corruption of the plainsong the congregation were deprived of all vocal participation in the service, only trained choirs acquainted with the tradition being allowed to sing. Also the use of instruments was forbidden.

Christianity was introduced into Russia in the year 987 when Saint Vladimir accepted the faith, and he entrusted the conversion of his people to Byzantine monks. However, as well as the plainsong which they brought with them, there was also an element of folksong in the music used in the Russian Church, indeed at one time alternating choirs sang hymns in Greek with responses in Old Slavonic.

From the 15th century attempts were made to create a purely Russian style of church music, departing from the ancient plainsong and moving towards harmonised song, culminating in the fully choral, highly formalised style we know today.

One of the features of Russian Orthodox Church music is the constant repetition of the melody, whether based on a traditional chant or an original composition. Many of the great Russian composers, including Glinka, Gretchaninov, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky have written music for the church, and have all adhered to this principle, usually repeating the harmonies as well, thus producing a somewhat monotonous effect. Rachmaninov, in his setting of the Vespers, is much more adventurous, moving the melody from voice to voice and illuminating the words by changing harmonies and sonorities and by sometimes surprising modulations.

Rachmaninov composed the Vespers or "all night vigil" in January and February of 1915, (two years before he left his native country to live in America) and the first performance was given in March of that year for the benefit of war relief. It consists of 15 pieces of varying lengths to be sung during the Saturday night service, although Nos. 13 and 14 would not both be performed in the same service but would be used on alternate weeks. Some of the pieces are simple and hymn-like in style, while others are extended compositions of considerable breadth and grandeur.

1. **PRIIDITYE POKLONIMSYA TSARYEVI NASHEMU BOGU**

Come, let us worship God our King. Come let us worship and kneel before Christ, our King and our God.

2. **Greek Chant [Alto Solo: Penny Dixie]**

BLAGOSLOVI, DUSHE MOYE, GOSPODA

Praise the Lord, O my soul. Blessed are thou, O Lord. My Lord, how great thou art. Thou art clothed with glory and majesty. The waters stood above the mountains. Glorious are thy works, O Lord. Thy waters flowed through the mountains. Glorious are thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast thou made them all. Glory to thee, O Lord, who hast created all.

3. **BLAZHEN MUZH, IZHE NYE IDYE NA SOVYET**

NYECHYESTIVYKH

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked. Alleluia. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked will perish. Alleluia. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in him with trembling. Alleluia. Blessed are all who rely upon him. Alleluia. Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God. Alleluia. It is the Lord's salvation and thy blessing be upon the people. Alleluia. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen. Alleluia. Glory to thee, O Lord. Alleluia.

4. **Kiev Chant**

SVETE TIKYI SVYATYYA SLAVY

O serene light of the holy glory, of the immortal heavenly Father, holy, blessed Jesus Christ, having come to the setting of the sun, and beheld the light of the evening. We praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God! Thou art worthy of praise in songs at all times. Son of God, Giver of Life, hence the world glorifies thee.

5. **Prayer of St Simeon — Kiev Chant [Tenor Solo: Alan Armstrong]**

NYNE OTPUSHCHAYESHI RABA TVOYEGO, VLADYKO

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart, according to thy word, in peace. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to illuminate the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.

6. **BOGORODITSE DEVO, RADUISYA**

Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of God, Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.

7. **Znamen Chant**

SLAVA V VYSHNIKH BOGU

Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

8. **Znamen Chant**

KHVALITE IMYA GOSPODNE, KVALITE, RABI, GOSPODA

Praise the name of the Lord, praise him, ye servants of the Lord. Alleluia. Blessed be the Lord from Zion who dwells in Jerusalem. Alleluia. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good and his mercy is everlasting. Alleluia. Give thanks to the heavenly God for his mercy is everlasting. Alleluia. Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

9. **Znamen Chant**

BLAGOSLOVEN YESI, GOSPODI

Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes. The assembly of angels was amazed beholding thee among the dead. Thou destroyed the citadel of death, O Saviour, and didst raise Adam with thyself and freed all from Hell. Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes. 'Why do you, women, dilute the myrrh with your tears?' The radiant angel in the tomb cried to the myrrh carriers. 'Look at the tomb and understand, the Saviour has risen from the tomb!' Blessed art thou . . .

Very early in the morning the myrrh carriers ran to thy tomb, lamenting. But the angel appeared to them and said: 'The time for sorrow has ceased. Do not weep, but announce the Resurrection to the Apostles'. Blessed art thou . . .

As the sorrowful myrrh carriers neared thy tomb, O Saviour, the angel said unto them: 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? As God he has risen from the tomb'.

Glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, one in essence, with the Seraphim we cry: Holy, holy, holy art thou, O Lord! Now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen. By giving birth to the giver of life, O Virgin, thou hast delivered Adam from his sin, thou hast given Eve joy instead of sadness: the God-man born of thee has restored to life those who had fallen from it. Alleluia. Glory to thee, O Lord. Alleluia.

INTERVAL

20 minutes

10. VOSKRESENIYE KHRISTOVO VIDEVSHE

Having seen the Resurrection of the Lord, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless one. We venerate thy cross, O Christ, and thy holy Resurrection we praise and glorify. For thou art our God, and we know no other than thee. We call on thy name. Come all ye faithful, let us venerate Christ's holy Resurrection, for through the Cross joy has come to all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, we praise his Resurrection by enduring the Crucifixion, he trampled death by death.

11. VELICHIT DUSHA MOYA GOSPODA

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. More honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement thou hast given birth to God the Word. True Mother of God, we magnify thee.

For he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. More honourable than the Cherubim

For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. More honourable than the Cherubim

He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away. More honourable than the Cherubim

He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants for ever. More honourable than the Cherubim

12. Znamen Chant — The great doxology

SLAVA V VYSHNIKH BOGU, I NA ZEMLI MIR

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we thank thee for thy great glory. O Lord, heavenly King, God the Father almighty, O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us: take away the sin of the world, accept our prayer. Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For thou alone art holy, thou alone art the Lord, Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day I will bless thee and praise thy name forever and unto ages of ages. Vouchsafe, O Lord, this day to keep us without sin. Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of our Fathers, and praised and glorified is thy name forever. Amen.

Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we rely on thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes. Lord, thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation.

I said: Lord, have mercy on me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee. Lord, I fled to thee, teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God, for thou art the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see light. Continue thy mercy on those who know thee.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal have mercy on us. Holy God . . .

13. Znamen Chant

DNES SPASENIYE MIRU BYST

This day has salvation come to the world! Let us sing to the One who rose from the dead, who is the Author of our life. Having destroyed death by death, he has given us victory and great mercy.

14. Znamen Chant — Hymn of the Resurrection

VOSKRES IZ GROBA I UZY RASTERZAL YESI ADA

Thou didst rise from the tomb and didst destroy the bonds of death. O Lord, thou didst destroy the condemnation of death and didst deliver all men from the snares of the enemy. By revealing thyself to thy apostles thou didst send them to proclaim thee. Through them thou hast given peace to the universe, O only Merciful One!

15. Greek Chant

VZBRANNOY BOYEVODE POBEDITELNAYA

O victorious leader of triumphant hosts, delivered from evil, we, thy servants, sing praise to thee, O Mother of God! Thou dost possess invincible might and hence set us free from every calamity so that we may sing: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

THE LONDON CONCORD SINGERS

The choir was started in its present form in 1966. It seeks to maintain a small, well-knit group of some thirty voices, practising and performing a wide range of choral music. Its members come from a great variety of backgrounds, none of them being full-time musicians. The choir's range of activities is equally varied; it has accepted cabaret engagements in and around London and has sung in all three South Bank concert halls, at the Royal Albert Hall and at St John's, Smith Square. The group has travelled widely and has won competitive prizes at home and abroad. Festival appearances include Montreux and Dubrovnik. The choir has enjoyed an enthusiastic reception from audiences and the Press and has recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra. Recently, in recognition of their continuing support of Contemporary Music, particularly British compositions of the last 25 years, London Concord Singers received a Jubilee Award from the Performing Rights Society.

MALCOLM COTTLE

The conductor sang for many years as a boy with the choir of St Paul's Cathedral, London, during which time he sang at the Coronation of the Queen and toured the United States of America. More recently, as well as conducting the London Concord Singers he has worked as repetiteur with the New Opera Company at Sadlers Wells Theatre and conducted for Orpheus Opera. He has appeared as Musical Director at the Sheffield Playhouse; the Swan Theatre, Worcester; Nottingham Playhouse and the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon.

The next London Concord Singers concert will be at St Martins, Trafalgar Sq. on Thursday 3 July, 1980 where they will be performing a programme of American Choral Music.

The National Federation of Music Societies, to whom this society is affiliated, supports these concerts with funds made available by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

London Concord Singers would welcome friends wishing to subscribe to increase the activities of the group. Anyone requiring further details or wishing to be placed on the mailing list please contact:

Mrs M C Woodward, The Old Forge, Smith's Lane, Crockham Hill, nr Edenbridge, Kent. Telephone Crockham Hill 308.

We would like to remind members of the public that unauthorised recording of the Concert is not allowed.