

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Cover: Church ruins in Narva, Estonia,  
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English translations from the  
*Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic  
Apostolic Church* by Isabel Florence Hapgood.  
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1117 Chestnut Street, Burbank, California 91506  
Recorded, edited and mastered in DSD  
Recording: May 24–27, 2004  
at the Dome Church, Haapsalu, Estonia.  
Producer: Robina G. Young  
Recording Engineer & Editor: Brad Michel  
DSD Engineer: Chris Barrett (Air Lyndhurst)



# SERGEI RACHMANINOV ALL-NIGHT VIGIL OP. 37



Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir • Paul Hillier

PRODUCTION **USA**

# SERGEI RACHMANINOV

## ALL-NIGHT VIGIL OP. 37

### VESPERS

- |   |                            |                              |      |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Come, let us worship       |                              | 2:51 |
| 2 | Praise the Lord, O my soul | Iris Oja, <i>alto solo</i>   | 4:48 |
| 3 | Blessed is the man         |                              | 4:17 |
| 4 | O gentle light             | Mati Turi, <i>tenor solo</i> | 3:20 |
| 5 | Lord, now lettest Thou     | Mati Turi, <i>tenor solo</i> | 3:32 |
| 6 | Rejoice, O Virgin          |                              | 2:44 |

### MATINS

- |    |   |                              |      |
|----|---|------------------------------|------|
| 7  | The Six Psalms                                  |                              | 2:07 |
| 8  | Praise the name of the Lord                     |                              | 2:19 |
| 9  | Blessed art Thou, O Lord                        | Mati Turi, <i>tenor solo</i> | 5:36 |
| 10 | Having beheld the Resurrection                  |                              | 2:35 |
| 11 | My soul magnifies the Lord                      |                              | 6:59 |
| 12 | The Great Doxology                              |                              | 6:41 |
| 13 | <i>Troparion:</i> Today salvation is come       |                              | 1:38 |
| 14 | <i>Troparion:</i> Thou didst rise from the tomb |                              | 2:43 |
| 15 | O queen victorious                              |                              | 1:39 |

Intonations: Vladimir Miller *basso profundo* 1, 4, 11, 12 & Tiit Kogerman *tenor* 1

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir • Paul Hillier



# SERGEI RACHMANINOV ALL-NIGHT VIGIL

HAVING CRAFTED A CAREER marked by public showmanship at the highest level – by pianism whose virtuosity was second to none, by compositions whose rhetoric was extroverted and extravagant, by a conducting style whose impassioned conviction won wide acclaim from concertgoers and critics alike – Sergei Rachmaninov would seem an unlikely composer to have set one of the Russian Orthodox Church's most sacred rites whose spiritual essence dates back to Byzantium.

Building on the techniques of the earlier Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Op. 31, and richly scored for unaccompanied chorus, the *All-Night Vigil* is a brilliant achievement. In contrast to the gregarious nature of his best-known works – the Second Symphony, the Second and Third Piano Concertos, the *Paganini Rhapsody* – the Vigil looks inward. Instead of flirting with advanced harmonic languages, it is inspired by and infused with centuries of Russian chant. Rachmaninov was mostly tone-deaf to modernity and his compositions were more strongly drawn back to 20th-century patterns than pulled forward by 19th-century practices. Although the musical universe was changing around him, he had no ear for the 'Luft von anderen Planeten' so famously augured in Arnold Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, premiered in 1908. In the *All-Night Vigil* he declared ancient allegiances.

And more than the musical world was changing in the years before the *Vigil*, which was composed and premiered in 1915. On the international front, the First World War was all-consuming. Since its outbreak in 1914, Russia, on the Allies' behalf, was committed to securing the Eastern Front, an initiative whose successes were decidedly mixed. (The disastrous opening gambit of this campaign is the subject of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's epic novel "August 1914.") And on the domestic front, internal politics created further turmoil. Despite earnest efforts begun in the wake of the 'first' Russian Revolution of 1905, Czar Nicholas

II's introduction of democratic reforms was imperfect, so imperfect that in 1917 the Russian Revolution would sweep away the remains of Imperial Russia.

Upheaval, in fact, is what diverted Rachmaninov's career from composition to performance. He recently had created some of his finest works – his Third Piano Concerto in 1909; *The Bells* and the Second Piano Sonata in 1913 – but in 1914 his primary activity was performing, not composing; to support Russia's efforts in the so-called 'Great War,' he toured towns along the Volga with Serge Koussevitzky and his orchestra. In fact, Rachmaninov was possibly led by chaos to the contemplation and creation of the *Vigil*. Although during these years he was at his prime as virtuoso composer and performer, "the spiritual beauty of the (Vigil) ... invites interpretation as an oblique response to the sacrifices of the war years" (so speculates music historian Glenn Watkins in "Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War," University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002, p. 302).

Regardless of its inspiration, the *Vigil* echoes traditions we can trace back centuries. An excellent overview of its cultural context is offered by historian Orlando Figes:

"Anyone who goes to a Russian church service is bound to be impressed by the beauty of its chants and choral song. The entire liturgy is sung – the sonorous bass voice of the deacon's prayers interspersed with canticles from the choir. Orthodoxy's ban on instrumental music encouraged a remarkable development of colour and variety in vocal writing for the Church. The polyphonic harmonies of folk song were assimilated to the *znamenny* plainchants – so called because they were written down by special signs (*znameni*) instead of Western notes – which gave them

their distinctive Russian sound and feel. As in Russian folk song, too, there was a constant repetition of the melody, which over several hours (the Orthodox service can be interminably long) could have the effect of inducing a trance-like state of religious ecstasy.

"Churches famous for their deacons and their choirs drew huge congregations – Russians being drawn to the spiritual impact of liturgical music, above all.

Part of this, however, may have been explained by the fact that the Church had a monopoly on the composition of sacred music – Tchaikovsky was the first to challenge it when he wrote the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom in 1878 – so that it was not until the final decades of the 19th-century that the public could hear sacred music in a concert hall. Rachmaninov's Vespers, or All-Night Vigil, was intended to be used as part of the liturgy. The summation of Rachmaninov's religious faith, it was based on a detailed study of the ancient chants and in this sense it can stand not simply as a work of sacred art but also as the synthesis of an entire culture of religious life." (Orlando Figes, "Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia," Picador Press, New York, 2002, p. 298f.)

The *All-Night Vigil* combines texts from two of the Office's Canonical Hours: the evening's Vespers (Nos. 1–6) and the following morning's Matins (Nos. 7–15). As required by the Russian Orthodox Church, the composer based ten of the fifteen sections on chant. In the other five sections (Nos. 1, 3, 6, 10 and 11) he was free to write a music of his own, but the movements he wrote were so

strongly colored by chant that he called them “conscious counterfeits” (Sergei Bertensson & Jay Leyda, “Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music,” Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2001, p. 191).

Rachmaninov was by no means conventionally religious; never a conscientious churchgoer, he stopped going altogether after marrying his first cousin, Natalia Satina, a marriage proscribed by the Russian Orthodox Church (Figes, op. cit., p. 593). Yet prior to composing the Vigil, he schooled in ancient chant with Stepan Smolensky, the leading expert on the subject of his day and Director of Moscow’s Synodal School of Church Music (and the dedicatee of the Vigil). In the work, Rachmaninov drew on three different traditions: *znamenny* chant, the oldest school, which traced its roots to Byzantium but by the late 19th-century had fallen out of favor (for example, in Nos. 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 14); a more recitational ‘Greek’ chant, which was developed in Moscow in the 17th century (Nos. 2 and 15); and ‘Kiev’ chant, also a 17th-century development, which adapted *znamenny* chants to reflect Ukrainian tastes for an alternation of recitation and choral refrains (Nos. 4 and 5).

When listening to the Vigil, one always is conscious of its liturgical elements, but one also is aware, as Figes has suggested, of a strong feeling of folk music and of how one genre accommodates the other. Both share melodies that are simply constructed and that generally move in step-wise motion; both are rich in sonorous intervals of the third and the sixth; and both express feelings, be they sacred or secular, of a plain and pious people. They are the art-song’s antithesis.

Yet the *Vigil* is abundant in artful touches. Working with the sumptuous palette of an unaccompanied four-voice chorus, Rachmaninov is endlessly inventive in creating a wide spectrum of textures and sonorities. The work reflects a Russian predilection for lower voices. Among the women, altos are featured more prominently than sopranos. (Listen to their warm solos in Nos. 2, 9 and 12.) The sopranos’ compass never rises higher than the note A above the staff, but they find prominence most notably in No. 6, one of the movements wholly the composer’s own; paired with tenors in unison, they sing an

arching melody tinged with longing and nostalgia (m. 15ff) – it is the most idiomatic touch in the entire work of what we think of as vintage Rachmaninov, as typified by the Second Piano Concerto’s and the Second Symphony’s lyric tenderness. The Vigil’s high-voice solos are mostly entrusted to the tenors, as is heard in Nos. 5 and 9. And the basses, as we might expect, are richly exploited, nowhere more so than at the conclusion of the Nunc dimittis (No. 5), where they notably descend to the lowest of possible low B-flats.

Choral forces are marshaled in various ways. While unison singing is sometimes heard – in the Hexapsalmos, No. 7, where sopranos and altos are wedded; in No. 8, where altos and basses sing as one; and in No. 10, where tenors and basses do likewise – the chorus is most often divided into five or six or seven parts. Once – thrillingly – Rachmaninov creates a true eight-part texture by doubling voices throughout; the moment comes towards the end of the Great Doxology (No. 12, mm. 121–124) and the full and vibrant sonority lends special majesty to the words of praise that constitute the Doxology itself: ‘Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, amen.’

Rhythmically, the Vigil reflects the prosody of its texts. The words’ flow and accentuations are mirrored in the music and this creates a wonderful plasticity. Listen, for instance, to the supple and fluid rhythmic pulse in No. 2, m. 14ff, or to No. 9, m. 54ff, where the dynamic propulsion of the words carries the narrative irresistibly forward, rendering bar-lines irrelevant.

Dramatically, the fifteen movements span the gamut from contemplative to theatrical. The meditative manner of the Hexapsalmos (No. 7), for example, stands in stark contrast to No. 9, which vividly recounts an episode from the Gospels: an Angel consoles women bringing myrrh to the tomb of Jesus and urges them to tell the Apostles the news of the Resurrection. Rachmaninov alternates choral episodes framing the action with a single part relating the narrative. (It is first sung by altos, then by tenors.) Tellingly, choral refrains increase in intensity as the drama unfolds, growing from four-voice to six-voice, and they are made richer still

by sustained notes that are hummed (mm. 39–42), a coloristic device used as well in three other of the Vigil’s movements (Nos. 2, 5 and 9).

We also hear touches of tone painting. ‘Bells’ peal in the Hexapsalmos (No. 7), first as if faintly ringing out the word ‘Slava’ (‘Glory,’ marked *piano* and *pianissimo* in mm. 5 and 7) and then again at the climax of the movement (mm. 10–12), where the joyful tintinnabulations grow in volume from *pianississimo* to *forte* in fitting response to the declaration of ‘Glory to God on high’; and clarion ‘trumpets’ add their silver voice to accompany the Angel’s appearance in No. 9, mm. 7–10.

Rachmaninov composed the *All-Night Vigil* in less than a fortnight early in 1915. He quickly sought approbation from Sergei Taneyev, his former professor at the Moscow Conservatory, and Taneyev applauded the work – his praise was “warmer than ever” – which surely was a great satisfaction. (Bertensson, op. cit., p. 192)

The Vigil also was shown to Alexander Kastalsky and Nicolai Danilin, director and conductor, respectively, of the Moscow Synodal School and Choir, and they, too, were praiseful. Kastalsky, in fact, agreed to sponsor its first performance with Danilin conducting. This took place in March, 1915, to benefit the war-relief effort, and according to Sergei Bertensson, Rachmaninov’s biographer, the première gave the composer “‘an hour of the most complete satisfaction’, so magnificent were the choir singers. Audience, musicians, and critics were enthusiastic; even Grigori Prokofiev, often Rachmaninov’s harshest critic, wrote that it was a great step forward ... and remarked that ‘its miracle is in its fusion of the simple and the sincere’ ” (Bertensson, p. 191). The work was so successful that it received an additional five performances within a month.

Rachmaninov considered the Vigil one of his two favorite works, *The Bells* being the other, and he requested that the Nunc dimittis (No. 5) be sung at his funeral (Bertensson, p. 191 & 284). He asked in his will to be buried in the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow, alongside Taneyev and his former colleague Alexander

Scriabin; having lived as an émigré since 1917, he finally would return to his land and his people (Andreas Wehrmeyer, “Rakhmaninov,” Haus Publishing, London, 2004, p. 113). Instead, when he died in the spring of 1943, he was interred in Westchester County, New York, across the continent from Beverly Hills, California, where he died just days before turning 70.

His epitaph might be borrowed from an interview he gave *The Musical Courier* magazine in 1939: “I felt like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien. I cannot cast out the old way of writing and I cannot acquire the new” (Figes, op. cit., p. 542). In this purported weakness lay his greatest source of strength.

– GEORGE GELLES



## Paul Hillier

His musical interests range from medieval to contemporary music and include singing, conducting, and writing. In 1990, after many years as Music Director of the Hilliard Ensemble, he founded the Theatre of Voices and began

his series of acclaimed recordings for **harmonia mundi usa**. From 1996 to 2003, Hillier was Director of the Early Music Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington. In September, 2001 he was named Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, with which he launched a cycle of recordings exploring the choral tradition of the Baltic Sea countries. *Baltic Voices 1* and *Baltic Voices 2* met with unanimous praise and each won Hillier a GRAMMY® nomination. Another recording with the Choir, *The Powers of Heaven*, was a much-admired program of Russian Orthodox sacred music. In 2004 Paul Hillier was awarded the Estonian Cultural Prize.

In 2002 he was made Honorary Professor in Music at the University of Copenhagen, and in 2003 accepted the post of Chief Conductor of Vocal Group Ars Nova (Copenhagen). Hillier is the author of a monograph “Arvo Pärt” (1997) and editor of “The Collected Writings of Steve Reich” (2002), both published by Oxford University Press. His latest project is a book about consort singing.

## Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir

(*Eesti Filharmonia Kammerkoor*) is recognized as Estonia’s best-known classical music ensemble and one of the finest choral groups in the world. Founded in 1981 by Tõnu Kaljuste, its principal conductor and artistic director until 2001, when he invited conductor Paul Hillier to take over the post, the Choir has an extensive repertoire ranging from Gregorian chant to 20th-century music, with special emphasis on Estonian composers, including Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis. The Choir tours regularly in Europe, the

United States, Canada, Japan, and Australia. In addition to concertising, the Choir has made numerous recordings, many of which have received the highest critical acclaim, including six GRAMMY® nominations. The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir works with many world-class conductors and orchestras, and has a long-standing partnership with the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra. For more information, please visit [www.epcc.ee](http://www.epcc.ee)

### SOPRANO

Kaia Urb  
Vilve Hepner  
Eha Pärj  
Kristiina Under  
Annika Ilus  
Veronika Portsmuth  
Kädy Plaas  
Maris Liloson  
Else Torp

### ALTO

Iris Oja  
(solo, track 2)  
Karin Salumäe  
Tiiu Otsing  
Juta Roopalu-Malk  
Kairi Kiviselg  
Agnes Toomla

### TENOR

Mati Turi  
(solo, track 4, 5, 9)  
Martin Lume  
Toomas Tohter  
Arvo Aun  
Kaido Janke  
Tiit Kogerman  
(chants)  
Toivo Kivi

### BASS

Aarne Talvik  
Tõnu Tormis  
Kalev Keeroja  
Esper Linnamägi  
Allan Vurma  
Rainer Vilu  
Ranno-Eduard Linde  
Vladimir Miller  
(basso profundo, chants)

Choirmaster: Mati Turi

Principal Conductor and Artistic Director: PAUL HILLIER



# ALL-NIGHT VIGIL

## 1 Come, let us worship

*Deacon (bass solo):* Arise! Bless us, O Lord.

*Priest (tenor solo):* Glory to the holy, con-substantial, life-creating, and undivided Trinity always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Amen. O come, let us worship God our King. O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God. O come, let us worship and fall down before the very Christ, our King and our God. O come, let us worship Him and fall down before Him.

## 2 Praise the Lord, O my soul

– Iris Oja, *alto solo*

Amen. Praise the Lord, O my soul. Blessed art Thou, O Lord. O Lord my God, Thou art become exceeding glorious; Thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Blessed art Thou, O Lord. The waters stand in the hills. Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord. The springs run among the hills. In wisdom hast Thou made all things. Glory to Thee, O Lord, who hast made them all.

*Psalms 103*

## 3 Blessed is the man

Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly. Alleluia. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly shall perish. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence. Blessed are all they whose hope is in Him. Arise, O Lord: save me, O my God. Salvation comes from the Lord, and Thy blessing is upon Thy people. Glory be 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.

*Psalms 1–2*

## 4 O gentle light

– Mati Turi, *tenor solo*

*Deacon:* Wisdom, upright!

O gentle radiance of the holy glory of the Immortal one, the heavenly Father, holy and blessed, O Jesus Christ! In that we now are come unto the setting of the sun, and behold the light of even, we hymn thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our God. For meet it is that at all times Thou shouldest be magnified by voices propitious, O Son of God who givest life. For which cause all the world doth glorify Thee.

## 5 Lord, now lettest Thou

– Mati Turi, *tenor solo*

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.

## 6 Rejoice, O Virgin

O Virgin Mother of God, rejoice! O Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou didst give birth to the Saviour of our souls.

## 7 The Six Psalms

Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace, good will among men. O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim Thy praise.

## 8 Praise the name of the Lord

Praise ye the name of the Lord, alleluia. Praise the Lord, all ye his servants. Alleluia. Blessed is the Lord from Zion, He who dwells in Jerusalem. Alleluia. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for His mercy endures forever. Alleluia.

## 9 Blessed art Thou, O Lord

– Mati Turi, *tenor solo*

*Refrain:* Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy statutes.

The company of the angels was amazed, when they beheld Thee numbered among the dead, yet Thyself, O Saviour, destroying the power of death, and with Thee raising up Adam and releasing all men from Hell. *Refrain.*

“Wherefore, O women disciples, do ye mingle sweet-smelling spices with your tears of pity?” the radiant angel within the sepulchre cried unto the bearers of myrrh: “Behold the grave, and understand; for the Saviour is risen from the tomb.” *Refrain.*

Very early in the morning did the women bearing myrrh run lamenting unto Thy tomb; but an angel came toward them, saying: “The time for lamentation is passed; weep not; but announce unto the apostles the resurrection.” *Refrain.*

The women bearing myrrh mourned as, bearing unguents, they drew near Thy tomb, O Saviour. But the angel spoke unto them, saying: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? In that He is God, He is risen from the grave.” Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

We worship the Father, as also His Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity in one essence, crying with the seraphim, Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O Lord. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

In that thou didst bear the Giver of Life, O Virgin, thou didst redeem Adam from sin and didst give to Eve joy in place of sadness; and He who was incarnate of thee, both God and man, has restored to life those who had fallen therefrom. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Glory to Thee, O Lord.

## 10 Having beheld the Resurrection

In that we have beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us bow down before the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless One. Thy cross do we venerate, O Christ, and Thy holy Resurrection we laud and glorify: for Thou art our God, and we know none other beside Thee; we call upon Thy name. O come, all ye faithful, let us worship Christ's holy Resurrection, for lo, through the cross is joy come into all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, let us sing His Resurrection: for in that He endured the cross, He has destroyed death by death.

## 11 My soul magnifies the Lord

*Deacon:* Let us honour and extol in song the Birth-giver of God and Mother of the Light.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.

*Refrain:* More honourable than the cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim, thou who without defilement gavest birth to God the Word, true Mother of God, we magnify thee. For He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. *Refrain.*

For He that is mighty has magnified me, and holy is His name; and His mercy is on them that fear Him, throughout all generations. *Refrain.*

He has put down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted the humble and meek. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away. *Refrain.*

He remembering His mercy has helped His servant Israel, as He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever. *Refrain.*

## 12 The Great Doxology

*Deacon:* Glory to Thee who didst show us the light.

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will among men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory. O Lord God, 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 sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou who sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord, Thou only, O Jesus Christ, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen. Every day will I give thanks unto Thee and praise Thy name forever and ever. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified be Thy holy name forever. Amen.

Let Thy merciful kindness, O Lord, be upon us, as we do put our trust in Thee. Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy statutes. Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another.

I said, "Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee. Lord, I flee unto Thee. Teach me to accomplish Thy will; for Thou art my God. For with Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light. Continue Thy mercy unto those who know Thee. O Holy

God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## 13 Troparion: Today salvation is come

Today is salvation come into the world. Let us sing praises unto Him who rose again from the grave, the Author of our life: for in that by death He has destroyed Death, He has given unto us the victory and great mercy.

## 14 Troparion: Thou didst rise from the tomb

Thou didst rise again from the tomb and burst the bonds of Hell, O Lord; Thou didst destroy the condemnation of death, releasing all men from the snares of the enemy. Revealing Thyself to Thine Apostles, Thou didst send them forth to proclaim Thee. And through them Thou hast granted Thy peace unto the universe, O only All-merciful One.

## 15 O queen victorious

O queen victorious who warrest for us, we, thy servants, delivered from calamities, do offer unto thee songs of triumph and thanksgiving, O Mother of God. Do thou also, in that thou hast might invincible, free us from all assaults, that we may cry unto thee: Hail, O Bride unwedded!

*Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church*