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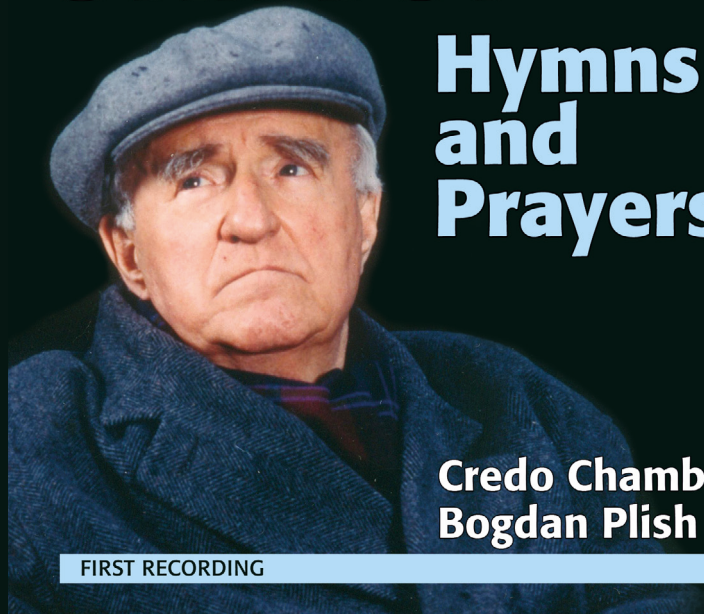
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Georgy SVIRIDOV

Hymns and Prayers



Credo Chamber Choir
Bogdan Plish

FIRST RECORDING

GEORGY SVIRIDOV'S HYMNS AND PRAYERS

by Stuart Campbell

The music recorded here is the final work of Georgy Sviridov. It draws together in a single fabric some of the threads from which his earlier compositions were woven.

Sviridov was born in the Kursk province in 1915. He received his education there, including the first part of his musical upbringing. His outstanding gifts took him to Leningrad, where he studied music from 1932 until 1941, latterly at the Conservatoire. The years of his childhood and youth were politically turbulent, both in his native village of Fatezh and in the former imperial capital. Sviridov's father was executed during the strife of the Civil War; the brutal process of collectivising agriculture caught up the Kursk province no less than anywhere else; the 1930s witnessed mass purges of all classes of society, including important experts and politicians. Sviridov was called up for service against the Nazi invaders but soon invalidated out. In this climate, it must have been unimaginably difficult for him and his compatriots to lead normal lives. Nevertheless, he left a considerable number of works which in the majority found comparatively rapid performance and publication. He settled in Moscow in 1956 and there lived the life of a successful Soviet composer until his death in 1998.

Songs for solo voice and film music are two musical strands running throughout Sviridov's creative life. The songs began with the Pushkin settings which announced his presence to the musical world in 1935, and the first film contract dates from 1940. Otherwise Sviridov seems to have devoted himself to different musical genres in waves. He was a formidable pianist and wrote music for solo piano and chamber music, most of it before the end of the 1940s. Works for the musical theatre and incidental music for plays are concentrated between 1940 and 1953, though some later incidental music is important, too. Works in the cantata/oratorio genres – that is, with instrumental involvement up to and including full-scale symphony orchestra – occur from 1955–56, with the *Poem in Memory of Sergey Esenin*; the other large-scale example, the *Oratorio Pathétique*, setting a text by Vladimir Mayakovsky, dates from 1959. Although the term oratorio might suggest a work long enough to fill an evening, neither of these works lasts much longer than half an hour. The series of smaller-scale cantatas began in 1962 with the Blok settings in *Sad Songs* and continued with the *Songs of Kursk*

[18] Помилуй нас, Господи

Помилуй нас, Господи, помилуй нас; [...] сию Ти молитву яко Владыце грешнии приносим: помилуй нас. [...] Господи, помилуй нас, на Тя бо уповахом; не прогневайся на ны зело, ниже помяни беззаконий наших [...]; Ты бо еси Бог наш, и мы людие Твои, [...] руку Твоею, и имя Твое призываем. Аминь. [...]

[19] Молитва слепаго

Аминь. Душевыми очима ослеплен, к Тебе Христе прихожду, якоже слепый от рождения, покаянием зову Ти: Ты сущих во тьме свет пресветлый.

[20] Слава (монастырская)

Слава Отцу и Сыну и Святому Духу, и ныне и присно и во веки веков. Аминь.

[21] Покаяние блудного сына

Объятия Отча отверсти ми потщися, блудно мое иждих житие, на богатство нежданное мое взирая щедрот Твоих, Спасе, ныне обнищавшее мое да не презриши сердце. Тебе бо, Господи, умилением зову: согреших на Небо и пред Тобою.

[22] Слава (тихая)

Слава Отцу и Сыну и Святому Духу, и ныне и присно и во веки веков. Аминь.

[23] Величание Богородицы

О всецетая Мати, рождающая всех святых Святейшее Слово, радуйся, невеста невестная.

[18] Have mercy on us, O Lord

Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us; [...] this prayer we sinners bring Thee, Lord: Have mercy on us! Lord, have mercy on us, for we trust in thee. Do not be angry at us much, nor remember our iniquities. [...] For Thou art our God, and we are Thy people, the work of Thy hands, and we call on thy name.

[19] Prayer of the Blind Man

Amen. Having the eyes of my soul blinded, I come to Thee, O Christ, like the man blind from birth, and with repentance I cry to Thee: Thou art the bright Light of those in darkness. (Kontakion)

[20] Glory (monastic)

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

[21] Repentance of the Prodigal Son

Hasten to open your Fatherly embrace to me; I have wasted my life on whoring, staring blankly at the inexhaustible wealth of Thy mercies, Saviour! Now, do not despise my impoverished heart, for unto thee, O Lord, do I cry in despair: 'I have sinned, Father, against heaven, and before Thee!' (Sedalen at Matins in the week of the Prodigal Son)

[22] Glory (quiet)

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

[23] Glorification of the Mother of God

O Mother hymned by all, who gave birth to the most sacred Word of all the saints: rejoice, holy, most pure Mother, unwedded bride. (Akathist for the Most Holy Virgin)

[14] Предательство Иуды

Егда славнии ученицы на умовении Вечери просвещася, тогда Иуда злочестивый сребролюбием недуговав омрачашеся, и беззаконным судиям Тебе праведнаго Судию предает. Виждь имений рачителю, сих ради удушение употребивша! Бежи несытая души, Учителю таковая дерзнувшия: Иже о всех благий, Господи слава Тебе.

[15] Слава и Аллилуйя

Слава Отцу и Сыну и Святому Духу, и ныне и присно и во веки веков. Аминь. Аллилуйя. Слава Тебе, Боже.

[16] Неизреченное чудо

Неизреченное чудо,
в печи избавивый преподобныя отроки из пламене,
во гробе мертв бездыханен полагается,
во спасение нас поющих:
Избавителю Боже, благословен еси.

[17] Се жених грядет...

Се Жених грядет в полунощи, и блажен раб,
егоже обрящет бдяща: недостоин же паки, егоже
обрящет унывающа. Гряди убо Душе моя, да не
сном отяготится,
да не смерти предана будеши и Царствия вне
затворишися.
Но воспрянь, но воспрями, зовуще:
Свят, свят еси Боже Богородицей помилуй нас.

[14] Judas' Betrayal

When the glorious disciples were illumined by the Washing at the Supper, then was the impious Judas, ailing with covetousness, darkened. And to the unjust judges doth he betray Thee, the just Judge. Behold his money beloved, for the sake of which he hanged himself. Flee the insatiate soul which dared such things against the Master. O Lord who art good above all men, glory to Thee. (Troparion at Matins on Great Thursday).

[15] Glory and Alleluia

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Alleluia. Glory be to Thee, O God. (Troparion for the Feast of the Lord's Nativity)

[16] Inexpressible Wonder

O marvel unutterable! He who delivered the Holy Children in the fiery furnace from the flames, is laid dead, bereft of breath, in the grave, for the salvation of us who sing: O God our Redeemer! Blessed art thou. (from the Canon for Great Saturday)

[17] Behold, the Bridegroom comes

Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find vigilant; and, again, unworthy is the servant whom He shall find heedless. [Keep watch], therefore, O my soul, do not be weighed down with sleep, lest you be given over unto death, and lest you be shut out of the Kingdom; but rouse yourself, crying: 'Holy, holy, holy, art Thou, O God! Through the Theotokos have mercy on us!' (Troparion for Holy Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday).

(traditional words, 1964), *Wooden Russia* (Esenin, 1964), *It's Snowing* (Pasternak, 1965), and the *Spring Cantata* (Nekrasov, 1972).

The songs with piano were produced more or less regularly, some as single items, some in collections, some in both categories, and with some later scored for orchestra. Favourite poets for setting were Russian classics such as Pushkin and Lermontov as well as poets of the first decades of the twentieth century, especially Blok and Esenin. Other authors, such as Alexander Prokofiev (1900–71; no relation to the composer) and Nikolay Klyuyov (1884–1937) also appear. Explorations beyond Russian literature took Sviridov to Robert Burns,¹ Avetik Isaakyan (1875–1957), Shakespeare and Chinese poets, all set in Russian translation. Songs are by far the most numerous part of Sviridov's output.

The emphasis on Blok (1880–1921) and especially Esenin (1895–1925) in combination, and the titles of many of the resultant compositions, reveal that the fate of Russia was a central concern of Sviridov, both as artist and citizen. Blok, the urban intellectual and Symbolist poet, and Esenin, the peasant-poet of the countryside, at first approached the October Revolution with hopes of a transformation in Russia, though their hopes were abstract, even metaphysical, rather than concrete and practical. Both rapidly became disillusioned, as the reality of the following years – civil war, the violent imposition of new values – took shape. Older values were discarded and their physical manifestations destroyed. The cultures of both the peasants and the old elite as well as the Orthodox faith were repressed, together with their most eminent representatives, and many of the former elite left their homeland permanently. Sviridov was acutely conscious of the Bolsheviks' severing of the ties which had made the earlier Russia an organic society. Though born in the countryside, far from the centres of Russian high art, he nevertheless made himself at home in that other world, and his attraction to both Blok and Esenin symbolises this synthesis. The work recorded here dates from a time when, in his view, a new form of degradation by the name of *perestroika* overtook his beloved motherland and her culture.

Sviridov's deepening concern for Russia and her traditions is reflected in his growing interest in sacred music. Christianity had been an integral part of Russian culture since 988 when Prince Vladimir, the ruler of Kievan Rus', adopted that faith as the religion of his state. It became integrated both with the state for official purposes and with the majority of the tsar's subjects on a personal and individual basis. Even for those who did not accept the doctrines and practices of the Church, or who had an alternative allegiance, the ritual of her services offered a wonderful aesthetic experience, engaging every one of the senses and reaching out to the hearts of all, if not touching all minds. Unaccompanied choral singing was

¹ Sviridov's *Songs to Verses by Robert Burns* (1955) can be found on *Russian Settings of Robert Burns* (Toccata Classics TOCC 0039), performed by Vassily Savenko, bass-baritone, and Alexander Blok, piano.

the sole musical attribute within these services; there were also of course magnificent bells, though they were not within the actual space used for worship. Sviridov had been exposed to all this sublimity as a child in Fatezh, and wrote of it as a breathtaking experience.²

It seems that a commission to write incidental music for *Tsar' Feodor Ioannovich*, the historical tragedy by A. K. Tolstoy, triggered Sviridov's active interest in this part of Russia's heritage. For the production staged by the Maly Theatre in Moscow in 1973, he provided three *a cappella* choruses, one drawing on the melody and text of a sixteenth-century liturgical composition, an incorporation arising from a consultation with Maxim Brazhnikov, the eminent scholar of ancient Russian church music. Sviridov wrote incidental music for two further plays by Tolstoy staged at the same theatre, the tragedy *Tsar' Boris* in 1993 and the drama *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* in 1995. Since the October revolution, church music, like the church itself, had been subjected to oppression in varying degrees of severity. Ancient Russian church music was studied, if it was at all, as evidence of ancient monuments rather than as something relevant to the modern age. Some found performance in secular concerts. But as the Soviet era drew to a close, it became easier to satisfy listeners' hunger for the previously forbidden fruit of church music.

From at least 1985 Sviridov experimented with setting Orthodox texts, embarking on many more than he completed. In the end they were all for *a cappella* chorus, though at earlier stages he had considered writing with orchestral support as well. The use of instruments alone would have precluded use in Orthodox church services, but there was another factor which ruled that out. It was Sviridov's custom to alter the texts he set according to his own lights: he regarded verbal texts as one component in the larger poetic creation in which he was engaged, and therefore subject to adjustment to a different artistic end. Texts with canonical status were not exempt from this reworking, even if the fact of their reworking meant they could not be sung during worship. The liturgical language of Russian (and Bulgarian and Serbian) Orthodoxy is Church Slavonic, the ancestor of those modern languages. The composer's adjustments include cutting some texts (these excisions are indicated in the texts given below) and substituting a word in modern Russian here and there, presumably aiming to improve comprehensibility for Russian-speakers.

Sviridov tried out several titles for this work. *Hymns and Prayers* resonates with some earlier Russia collections by other hands of strictly liturgical music entitled *Prayers and Hymns*. In the end 'From Liturgical Poetry' in the subtitle superseded the idea of *Words from the Orthodox Book of Services (Slova*

² In his Notebook No. 2 (1974–79) ff. 88–88v., an autograph manuscript held in the personal archive of G. V. Sviridov, quoted in A. S. Belonenko (ed.), *Georgiy Vasil'yevich Sviridov (1915–1998). Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy* ('Collected Edition of his Works'), Vol. 21: *Pesnopeniya i molitvi* ('Hymns and Prayers'), Natsional'niy Sviridovskiy Fond, Moscow and St Petersburg, 2001, p. i.

[9] Приидите, поклонимся

Приидите, поклонимся Цареву нашему Богу.
Приидите, поклонимся и припадем Христу,
Цареву нашему Богу.
Приидите, поклонимся и припадем Самому
Христу, Цареву и Богу нашему.

[10] Слава Пресвятой Троице (быстрая)

Слава Отцу и Сыну и Святому Духу, и ныне и
присно и во веки веков. Аминь.

[11] Господи, воздвигни силу Твою

Господи, воздвигни силу Твою и прииди спасти
нас.
Да воскреснет Бог, и расточатся врази Его, и
да бежат от лица Его ненавидящие Его. Яко
исчезает дым, да исчезнут.

[12] Моление Св. Апостола Иоанну Богослову

Апостоле, Христу Богу возлюбленне, ускори
избавити люди безответны: приемлет тя
припадающая, иже падша на перси приемый
Егоже моли, Богослове, и належащую мглу
языков разгнати, прося нам мира и велия милости.

[13] Тайная вечера

Странствия Владычня, и безсмертныя Трапезы
на Горнем месте, высокими умы, вернии
приидите наладимся, возшедша Слова, от
Слова научившися, Егоже величаем.
Просвети одеяние души моея, Светодавче, и
спаси мя.

[9] Come, let us worship

Come, let us worship God, our King.
Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ,
our King and our God.
Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ
Himself, our King and our God.
Come, let us worship and fall down before Him.

[10] Glory to the most Holy Trinity (fast)

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

[11] Lord, stir up your strength

Lord, stir up your strength, and come and save
us [Psalm 80]. Let God arise, let his enemies be
scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.
As smoke is driven away, so [let them disappear]
[Psalm 68].

[12] Entreaty to the Apostle St John the Theologian

Apostle beloved of Christ our God, hasten to deliver a
defenceless people. He Who allowed thee to recline on
His breast receives thee bowing in prayer, O John the
Theologian. Implore Him to dispel heathen persistence
and to grant us peace and mercy. (Troparion)

[13] The Last Supper

Come, O ye faithful, let us enjoy the hospitality and
the banquet immortal of the Lord, in the upper
chamber, with minds uplifted, in that we have
learned the Word from the Word who hath gone
up on high: Whom we do magnify. (Zadostoynik;
replacement for the Cherubic Hymn on Great
Thursday)

[5] Царь славы

Поднимите, врата, верхи ваши, и поднимитесь,
двери вечные, и войдет Царь славы!
Кто сей Царь славы? - Господь крепкий и
сильный, Господь, сильный в брани.
Поднимите, врата, верхи ваши, и поднимитесь,
двери вечные, и войдет Царь славы!
Кто сей Царь славы? - Господь сил, Он - царь
славы.

[6] Рождественская песнь

Рождество Твое Христе Боже наш, возсия
мирови свет разума: в нем бо звездам служащий,
звездо учасяся, Тебе кланяется Солнцу
правды, и Тебе ведети с высоты Востока:
Господи слава Тебе.

[7] Странное Рождество видевше...

Странное Рождество видевшие устранимся мира,
ум на небеса приложим, ум на небеса приложим.
Того ради Высокий Бог на земли явился
смиренный человек.
Аллилуйя.
Да нас на небеса возведет вопиющих Ему.
Аллилуйя!

[8] Достойно есть

Достойно есть яко воистину блажити
Тя, Богородицу, Присноблаженную и
Пренепорочную и Матерь Бога нашего.
Честнейшую херувим и славнейшую без
сравнения серафим, без истления Бога Слова
рождшую, сущую Богородицу, Тя величаем.

[5] The King of Glory

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye
everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come
in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong
and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your
heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting
doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is
this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King
of glory [Psalm 24:7–10].

[6] Nativity Song (Troparion)

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world
the light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshipped
the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun
of Righteousness and to know Thee, the Orient [Day
Spring] from on high [Luke 1:78]. O Lord, glory to Thee!

[7] Having beheld a strange Nativity

Having beheld a strange Nativity, let us estrange
ourselves from the world and transport our minds to
Heaven; for the Most High God appeared on earth
as a lowly man, because He wished to draw to the
heights them that cry to Him:
Alleluia!

[8] It is meet

It is meet and right to call thee blessed who didst
bring forth God, ever-blessed and most pure and
the Mother of our God; more honourable than the
Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than
the Seraphim; thou who without defilement didst
bring forth God the Word and art indeed Mother of
God, thee do we magnify.

iz pravoslavnogo obikhoda), implying that the works were conceived for the concert hall rather than the church service. The definitive title emerged in 1993. A possible alternative translation of the Russian title – *Песнопения и молитвы* / *Pesnopeniya i molitvi* – is ‘Canticles and Prayers’, but I judged that the first word might give rise to over-specific and inappropriate expectations about the texts set, and that ‘Hymns and Prayers’ on its own gave a sufficient indication of the ecclesiastical source of the texts, even before the addition of ‘From Liturgical Poetry’.

Similarly, the subjects of the texts did not emerge from the start. Sviridov wished to incorporate a sequence of Easter texts but in the end did not. Nonetheless, the events of Holy Week, and especially the services for Thursday and Saturday, loom large in the finished work.

The sequence in which the pieces are arranged in Volume 21 of the collected edition of Sviridov's works did not take shape at once. An important role in this process was played by Vladislav Chernushenko, conductor of the Glinka Kapella (successor to the Court Chapel Choir) in St Petersburg, whose repeated performances of these compositions allowed the composer to try out various orderings, and also to benefit from Chernushenko's long experience of working with choirs. That published order developed from the choir's performance practice in the years 1992–97 and arises not from liturgical function, shared subject-matter or theme, but, as in the majority of Sviridov's compositions with texts, relies on links by free association. With the Credo Choir of Kyiv, Bohdan Plish followed the same associative logic to arrive at a different sequence, the one in which the movements are recorded here. As a result of considering the subject-matter of the movements, he has arranged them in four groups, concerned respectively with the Old Testament up to Christ's Nativity (‘The King of Glory’) [1]–[5], texts devoted to the Nativity [6]–[10], texts linked to Christ's life on earth (‘Judas' Betrayal’) [11]–[15] and prayers and hymns after Christ's Resurrection [16]–[23], thus providing a conspectus of sacred history as recorded in the Bible. After this basic division was accomplished, the sequence within each group was arrived at in the light of tonal connections (to minimise awkward changeovers) and with the idea of linking pieces together by dynamics, so that one movement might set off another or emphasise something in the following one, and so that the compositions should not absorb one another.³

Listeners wishing to hear the first two sets in the sequence eventually settled on by the composer should listen to the tracks here as follows:

[1], [2], [8], [6], [15] and [16], as the set entitled ‘Inexpressible Wonder’;
[10], [9], [20], [21], [22], [18] and [7] as ‘Having beheld a strange Nativity’.

³ Three further movements, for male-voice choir, are not included in this recording, as being for an ensemble differently constituted.

In the collected edition of Sviridov's works the final two sets are arranged as follows, in the light of discussions between the composer and his musical executor (and energetic champion) Alexander Belonenko and taking account of material left by the composer:

[5], [4] and [3] entitled 'From the Old Testament'; and [23], [12], [11], [14], [17], [19] and [13], grouped as 'Other Songs'.

Stylistically speaking, this composition is distinctly within the tradition of Russian Orthodox liturgical music. It uses an *a cappella* choir with much writing in block chords to facilitate comprehension of the text; perhaps for the same reason, counterpoint is eschewed. The music has secure foundations in tonality or modality, with triads (often with added notes) prevailing. Melodic lines frequently proceed in the stepwise motion reminiscent of ancient chant. Rhythms are often asymmetrical. Refrains occur. The pattern of statement and response familiar from church usage is found (for instance, in 'The King of Glory' [5] or 'Glory and Alleluia' [15]). The same portion of text is repeated with increasing intensity, like a petition presented ever more insistently (for example, in 'Holy God' [2]) or with vociferous encouragement (as in 'Come, let us worship' [9]). Reciting on notes of equal value which become longer up to the end of the phrase occurs in 'Nativity Song' [6]. Low bass-registers not always available in western European choirs are demanded (the F an octave below the bass stave is notated in 'Judas' Betrayal' [14]). Features of style such as these make the roots of Sviridov's idiom in this work obvious. In its general effect, too, this music could only be in the tradition of Russian church music. A meditative quality holds sway. There is a sense that time stands still while ineluctable processes work themselves out majestically. The movements vary in length from the eight bars and some 45 seconds of 'Glory (monastic)'⁴ [20] to the 113 bars and approaching seven-and-a-half minutes of 'Having beheld a strange Nativity' [7].

If these established marks of style are evident, so, too, are moments when the extensions of the choral idiom pioneered in what was called the 'New Direction' make themselves felt. This current was promoted by the Moscow Synodal School of Church Music at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is most familiar from the *All-Night Vigil* ('Vespers') of Rachmaninov. It shows through in *Hymns and Prayers* in devices of 'choral orchestration', typically when the composer turns his back on the standard distribution of voices in four parts. Examples of this way of thinking include:

- temporary concentrations in particular registers (for instance, the exclusion of the sopranos from all but the opening and the ending of 'Judas' Betrayal' [14], or the suppression of the soprano part throughout 'The Last Supper' [13]);
- silence of entire sections of the choir (for example, when the tenors and basses bring 'Song of Purification' [4] to an end without the soprano and alto sections);

⁴ There are three settings of the *Gloria Patri* text, which occurs no less often in Orthodox services than in western ones. They are conveniently distinguished from one another by the adjectives 'monastic', 'fast' and 'quiet'.

Text and Translations

[1] Господи, спаси благочестивые

Господи, спаси благочестивыя и услыши ны и во веки веков. Аминь.

[2] Святый Боже

Святый Божий, святый Крепкий, святый Бессмертный, помилуй нас.

[3] Господня земля

Господня земля, и исполнение ея, вселенная и вси живущии на ней.

Той на морях основал ю есть, и на реках уготовал ю есть.

Кто взыдет на гору Господню? или кто станет на месте святем Его?

Неповинен руками и чист сердцем, иже не прият всуе душу свою, и не клялся лестию искреннему своему.

Сей примет благословение от Господа, и милостию от Бога, Спаса своего.

Сей родиющих Господа, ищущих лице Бога Иаковля.

[4] Песнь очищения

Окропиши мя иссопом, и очищуся; омыеши мя, и паче снега убелюся. [...] Сердце чисто созижди во мне, Боже, [...] [inserted: Пресвятая Богородица спаси нас. Аллилуйя.] Жертва Богу дух сокрушен; сердце сокрушенно и смиренно Бог не уничижит. Ублажи, Господи, благоволением Твоим Сиона, и да созиждутся стены Иерусалимския. Тогда благоволиши жертву правды, возношение и всесожегаемая; тогда возложат на алтарь Твой тельцы.

[1] O Lord, save the pious

O Lord, save the pious, and hear us.

[2] Holy God

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

[3] The Earth is the Lord's

The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek your face, O Jacob [Psalm 24:1–6].

[4] Song of Purification

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow [Psalm 51:7]. Create in me a clean heart, O God [Psalm 51:10]. Most Holy Mother of God, save me. Alleluia. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar [Psalm 51: 17–19].

The Credo Chamber Choir has worked with some of Ukraine's most eminent composers, among them Lesia Dychko, Hanna Havrylets, Viktoria Polevaya, Aleksandr Rodin, Mikhail Schuch, Valentyn Silvestrov, Myroslav Skoryk, Yevhen Stankovych, Viktor Stepurko and others, singing their music in the most prestigious halls and cathedrals in Kyiv, among them the Column Hall of the National Philharmonic of Ukraine, the Large and Small Halls of the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine, the Organ and Chamber Music Hall, the House of Scientists, Refectory Church and Assumption Cathedral in Kyiv-Pecherska Lavra and St Andrew's Church.

Other works in the repertoire of the Choir include the Brahms *German Requiem*, Grechaninov's *Domestic Liturgy*, Pavel Chesnokov's cycle *In the Days of Battle*, the Requiems of Alexander Shchetynsky and Aleksandr Rodin, Valentin Silvestrov's spiritual music and Archbishop Ionafan Yeletskii's *Chernobyl Liturgy*. The Choir's concert programmes are built around such themes as 'Kyiv Chant', 'Easter New and Holy', 'The Frescoes of St Sophia', 'Musical Parallels' and 'Silent Prayer'.

In recent years the Credo Chamber Choir has toured Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, and Hungary. It took part in the fourth, fifth and seventh of Valery Gergiev's Moscow Easter Festivals and in the Fourth International Festival of Sacred Music in Rottenburg (Baden-Württemberg), where the Credo performance was recognised as 'the crowning event of the festival'. The Choir has given concerts in some of the most prestigious of concert halls abroad, among them the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow (2009), the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam (2010) and the Berliner Dom (2008) and Philharmonie (2011). It won the XXIV Hainuwka International Competition of Sacred Music in Poland in 2005, took Grand Prix of the 44th International Choir Competition in Tolosa in Spain in 2012 and was a finalist of the 25th European Grand Prix for Choral Singing in Arezzo in 2013. Between 2005 and 2013 the Credo Chamber Choir sang in Austria Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Slovakia and Switzerland. It also participated in fourth, fifth and seventh Moscow Easter Festival directed

The recordings of the Credo Chamber Choir include the CDs *Archangel's Voice*, a collection of Kyiv chant (Credo Choir Production, 2007), Archbishop Ionafan's *Chernobyl Liturgy* (Deonika, 2009), *New and Holy Easter* (Credo Choir Production, 2009) and Abbot Roman Pidlubnyak's *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* (Credo Choir Production, 2012). It also participated in *Song of the Sages*, a collection of choral and orchestral music by Hampson Sisler (MSR Classics, 2008).

The website of the Credo Chamber Choir can be found at www.kyiv-credo-choir.com.

- moments when a smaller group within the choir sing words while the larger body hums the same harmonies in the same rhythmic framework (for instance, all the choral writing in 'O Lord, save the pious' [1], though there are several other examples); a variant is found in 'Glory and Alleluia' [15], where the accompanying choir sings a vowel; another variant occurs in 'The King of Glory' [5], where chords are produced by one section of the choir 'with mouths half-closed' before the main forces enter with the text;
- solo lines, sometimes representing a character in the action described (such as the solo tenor singing the words of the blind man in 'Prayer of the Blind Man' [19], or in 'Inexpressible Wonder' [16] the altos – the highest voice there – representing the youths);
- single notes or short phrases, generally in high registers, assigned to a solo voice to obtain a specific colour (or, more prosaically, to avoid attaching undue prominence to a crucial but potentially dominating pitch);
- uses of multiple *divisi* for generally brief periods (the final three bars of 'Judas' Betrayal' [14] demand a fifteen-note chord);
- *portamento* simultaneously in all parts (voices sliding from one note to the next) at one point in 'It is meet' [8].

Given the number of movements on Holy Week themes, or dealing with repentance, it is not surprising that slow tempi and dark timbres predominate.

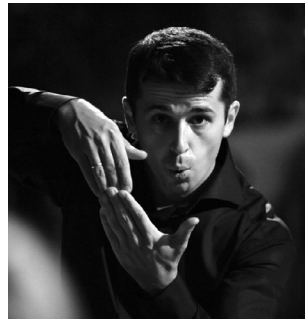
The texts Sviridov had set previously, particularly those of Blok and Esenin, are often rich in religious imagery. He wrote eloquently from the 1970s on about what he considered the poor state of choral performance in Russia, considering that because it had once enjoyed a close connection with the church it had been deliberately neglected, and what in imperial times had been a medium in which Russia excelled had declined catastrophically.⁵ Sviridov also paid tribute to leading exponents of choral music within the Russian tradition in Soviet times. In the case of Alexander Yurlov (1927–73), artistic director and principal conductor of the leading Russian large choir which since 1973 has borne his name, the tribute included a *Concerto in Memory of Yurlov*, a three-movement work for unaccompanied chorus, written in 1973.

Hymns and Prayers thus represents a synthesis of: the cultural tradition of a central institution in Russian history – the Orthodox Church; Sviridov's lifelong inspiration by the words and imagery of poetic texts and desire to set them to music; the Russian cultivation of vocal and choral music over instrumental; comment through the medium of his art on the fate of Russia.

⁵ *Muzyka kak sud'ba* ('Music as Fate'), Molodaya gvardiya, Moscow, 2002, p. 217.

Stuart Campbell graduated from the University of Edinburgh in Russian and Music. He has compiled and translated two volumes of Russian music criticism covering the period from 1830 until 1917 (Russians on Russian Music, Cambridge University Press, 1994 and 2003). He is a contributor on Russian subjects to both The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (second edition) and Die neue Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Besides Sviridov, current interests include aspects of Rachmaninov and Stravinsky.

Bogdan Plish was born in Mukachevo, in western Ukraine, in 1977 and studied first at the Transcarpathian Choral School for Boys and Young Men directed by Volodymyr Volonty before graduating from the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine, taking the choral-conducting class led by Lev Venedyktov in 2001 and the opera and symphonic conducting class directed by Roman Kofman in 2006). He had a post-graduate internship as assistant to Lev Venedyktov.



Upon the founding of the Credo Chamber Choir in 2002 Bogdan Plish became its art director and conductor. In the same year he became 'Regent' of the choir of Archangel Gabriel's Church on the TV and radio channel 'Glas'. In 2005 he won the Grand Prix of the III Ukrainian Competition for Choral Conductors and was awarded the Levko Levytskiy Prize; in 2007 he was appointed choirmaster of the Shevchenko National Opera House of Ukraine; and in 2009 he became co-founder and artistic director of the International Easter Assembly. During his work in the theatre, he prepared the chorus in such operas as Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, Vitaliy Kireyko's *Boyarynya*, Rossini's *Cenerentola* and Verdi's *Don Carlos* as well as for the choral scenes in Theodorakis' ballet *Zorba the Greek*. From 2010 Bogdan Plish has been active as a conductor at the National Opera House of Ukraine. His performances there have included Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Rachmaninov's *Aleko*, Myroslav Skoryk's edition of Lysenko's *Natalka Poltavka* and Ravel's *Bolero* set as a ballet.

In 2013 Bogdan Plish was awarded the title 'Merited Art Worker of Ukraine' and appointed chief choirmaster of the National Opera House of Ukraine. He combines his work in the theatre with his activities as a conductor of the Lyatoshynsky National Chamber Music Ensemble.



The **Credo Chamber Choir**, based in Kyiv, was founded in April 2002. From the beginning of its activities it managed to attract the attention of a wide range of listeners and drew enthusiastic reviews from some of the most influential musicians in the country. The members of the choir regard their performance of sacred music as a form of prayer, which explains in part the intensity of their singing.

The Choir is a regular participant in some of Kyiv's international festivals, among them the Kyiv Music Fest, Kyiv of Golden Domes and the International Easter Assembly. It has participated in the festival Shevchenko's March, with concerts dedicated to the music of Ivan Karabyts, Lyatoshynsky, Yuri Shamo and Sviridov, and has also appeared at the festival Vladimir Krainev Invites. At the second MotsArtFest the Choir performed Mozart's Requiem with the Ukrainian National Philharmonic Symphonic Orchestra conducted by Mykola Diadiura. It also participated in a performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, with the Kyiv Chamber Orchestra under Roman Kofman. In the same company the Credo Chamber Choir has performed cantatas by Bach, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Pärt's *Adam's Lament* and Te Deum, Britten's cantata *St Nicholas*, Schnittke's Requiem and a concert performance of the opera *Flight* by Valentin Bibik.