

## UNIT 3C: MINISTRIES AND MISSION

### 84: Church Music

#### **The Roots of early Christian Chant (Byzantine and west Roman)**

*(by Elias Fotopoulos)*

Many times or almost every time when I play J S Bach or Mozart on my piano I have these wonderful feelings of amazement, and immediate departure to other worlds. Questions tend to interrupt all the time. “How did they do it?” I ask. I wish I was there to see them composing or performing.

Well, I have the same questions every Sunday when I am singing Matins and Divine Liturgy, the Great Doxology, the Only Begotten Son, the Trisagion and others. Here the amazement is out of this world and I have the desire to travel back in time to the early years of Christianity, the early years of the Church. What were their services? Were they similar to ours? How did they sing? Who taught them?

For about the first ten years of Christianity, the Church comprised mainly Jewish converts. The early Christians were in the habit of attending the Temple daily. Until the Council of Jerusalem (c. 50 A.D.), generally speaking, new Gentile converts to Christianity had to convert to Judaism before becoming Christians.

From the Acts of the Apostles we understand that the Apostles used to meet daily, praying and chanting glorifying God at the third, sixth and ninth hour. With hymns and prayers they used to bury their dead on departure. They sang hymns at the Dormition of Theotokos and St Stephen’s burial.

Liturgical Jewish music used both voices and musical instruments. The first Christians and the early Fathers of the Church rejected musical instruments and kept only voices which are the perfect musical instruments. They sang instead of talked, and that tradition exists to the present day. The chant that will be

developed throughout the coming centuries will eventually become Byzantine chant in the east, Gregorian chant in the west. The Church in the west later began to use instruments and in some traditions will even perform liturgical dance.

*(Audio 1)*

<https://youtu.be/MzHRBQbzhXw><sup>1</sup>

Many historians and musicologists agree that Byzantine music was developed in Byzantium and has its roots in ancient Greece. Some have suggested the origins go back to Israel even Babylonia / Mesopotamia. Philosophers, mathematicians and musicians in ancient Greece from early centuries developed a theory of music. Aristoxenus 330 BC a pupil of Aristotle, wrote about “harmonics”. Musical terminology from that time is still in use today. Their music was based on four notes, the tetrachord and later developments gave rise to the octave (Pythagoras). Then came the development of modes, (Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Locrian) and divided into three genders: Diatonic, Chromatic and Enharmonic. They were able to write and read music by using letters from the alphabet and called these phthogoi or "notes." Concerning the ancient scales or systems, the first and the oldest is the Tetrachord, consisting of four notes: - Hypate, Parhypate, Lihanos and Nete. In European notation these are equivalent to Tonic, Supertonic, Median and Subdominant respectively.

*(Slide: Byzantine Notation)*

After the legalisation of Christianity by Constantine the Great, all forms of art flourished in the whole empire. The first period began from the era of Saint Constantine the Great. He with the Edict of "Mediolan" (today's Milan) declared religious freedom throughout the Byzantine Empire.

The first period of Byzantine Music started from the 4th century A.D and reached up to the 8th century AD. This is the period of St. John of Damascus. It is worth

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 145 – Yemenite Jewish Hebrew Chant, with English subtitles.

mentioning a few names from the first period; names of men who can be characterised as the moulders of Byzantine Music.

Ephrem the Syrian is one of the initiators who introduced and established Byzantine Music in Syria. St Athanasios the Great showed great interest in music and promoted the Byzantine chant in Alexandria. St Ambrose in Mediolan (Milan), St Basil the Great in Asia Minor and St John Chrysostom in Constantinople were also involved. Another important figure was St Romanos the Melodist, an excellent poet, a giant of ecclesiastical hymn writing and known as the founder of Christian poetry. These men, therefore, as the pioneering composers, established the chanting of hymns in an antiphonic manner; that is, the responsorial chanting of a right and left hand choir alternatively. They also introduced the practice of the choir chanting the main part of the text with the people chanting the end parts.

The eight ancient modes became the new “echoi”. Dorian is the first, Lydian the second, Phrygian the third, Mixolydian the fourth. Hyperdorian is the plagal or more extensive variation of the first, hypolydian the plagal of the second, Hypophrygian the plagal of the third or grave tone and Hypomixolydian the plagal of the fourth.

### **Psaltai, Cantors**

From the early centuries of Christianity, Christians used to sing freely, men, women and the elderly. In Laodicea the local Synod 367 AD established that only psaltes were allowed to sing. These used to sing from the amvon in the centre of the church. The style of singing was monophonic and still is to the present day, at least in the Byzantine tradition and mostly in the Slav tradition until the 17th / 18th century when, controversially, polyphony was introduced. So, there are no harmonies as in western music other than the ison which was introduced in 16 century. The ison is an underlying monotone chanting of the text. Traditionally the ison was not notated. The first example of notation appeared as late as 1847

and practice of notating the ison becoming widespread only in the second half of 20th century.

At the beginning Of the 19th century, due to difficulty of reading Byzantine notation, three great teachers changed the notation and this is now used in the Church today.

## Examples of Byzantine notation

### Ambrosian Chant

The question as to what constitutes Ambrosian chant in the sense of a chant composed by St. Ambrose has been for a long time a subject of research and discussion amongst historians and archæologists. When the saint became Bishop of Milan, in 374, he found a Liturgy in use which tradition associates with St. Barnabas. It is presumed that this Liturgy, which was brought from Greece and Syria, included singing by the celebrant as well as the spoken word and liturgical action. On the other hand, it is certain that the greater part of the chants now used in connection with the Ambrosian, or Milanese, rite and which are frequently designated in the wider sense as Ambrosian chant, originated in subsequent centuries as the Liturgy was developed and completed. So far no documents have been brought to light which would prove that the saint composed anything except the melodies to most of his hymns. Of a large number of hymns attributed to him, only fourteen are pronounced with certainty to be his, while four more may be assigned to him with more or less probability. Like any other great man who dominated his time, St. Ambrose had many imitators, and it so happened that hymns written by his contemporaries or those who came after him, in the form which he used, that is, the iambic dimeter, were called "Hymni Ambrosiani". The confusion brought about in the course of time by the indiscriminate use of this designation has necessitated endless study and research before it was decided with any degree of certainty which hymns were by St. Ambrose and which by his imitators. As regards the melodies, it has been equally difficult for archæologists to distinguish them and restore them to what was probably their original form.

Although the opinion that the early Western Church received into her liturgy, together with the psalms of the Old Testament, the melodies to which they had been sung in the Temple and the synagogues, and that melismatic chants (those in which many notes may be sung to one syllable of the text, in contradistinction to syllabic chants, in which there is only one note for each syllable) were in use from the beginning, has been defended with plausibility by men like Hermesdorf, Delitzsch, and, lately, by Houdard (*Cantilène Romaine*, 1905), no direct contemporary testimony that such was the case has yet been discovered. It is likely that the florid, or melismatic, style in which most of our Gregorian *propria* are written, and which many authorities hold to be of Hebrew origin, found its way into the Church at a much later period.

The literature at the time of St. Ambrose shows that the Greek music was the only kind known to the saint and his contemporaries. St. Augustine, who wrote his unfinished work "De Musicâ" at about the time that St. Ambrose wrote his hymns, gives us an idea as to the form which the melodies must have had originally. He defined music as "the science of moving well" (*scientia bene movendi*) and the iambic foot as consisting "of a short and a long, of three beats". As in the case of St. Ambrose we have a poet and composer in one person, it is but natural to suppose that his melodies took the form and rhythm of his verses. The fact that these hymns were intended to be sung by the whole congregation, over which, according to the Arians, the saint cast a magic spell by means of his music, also speaks in favour of their having been syllabic in character and simple in rhythm. For several centuries it has been held that St. Ambrose composed what are now termed antiphons and responsories. There is no satisfactory proof that such is the case. The fact that he introduced the antiphonal (alternate) mode of singing the psalms and his own hymns (each of the latter had eight stanzas), by dividing the congregation into two choirs, probably gave rise to this opinion. The responsory as practised by direction of St. Ambrose consisted in intoning the verse of a psalm by one or more chanters and the repetition of the same by the congregation.

## Gregorian chant

Living in the west for so long the western liturgical tunes are more familiar to me and rather close to my eastern ears, so I call them the Byzantine chants of the west!

The history of Gregorian Chant begins before the birth of Christ. Chant is based upon the songs sung in the synagogues and Middle Eastern countries. It is fascinating to know that some of today's chants are based upon the actual songs which Jesus must have sung when he was living in Jerusalem.

Gregorian Chant was adopted by the Christian Church in the west in about the 6th Century and it quickly became an essential part of Christian worship. It was named after Pope Gregory the Great who united all the chants into one collection. This soon became an essential part of monastic worship and monks would write new chants and take them from monastery to monastery. Eventually there was a sufficient repertoire of Gregorian Chant for all the services - approximately nine a day, seven days a week and even more on great feast days. In the early days the chant was not copied into books. It had to be memorised and it would take monks many years to learn all the different songs. Eventually they worked out a way to write music down, and words and notes were copied into one large book from which all the choir monks would gather round and sing.

After many centuries plainchant became very complex, and people would even sing bawdy lyrics to the chants. By the way, the name "plainchant" doesn't mean the music is boring! Quite the reverse - it's from the old French "plein chant" meaning "full singing". Many different styles of performance came into being and it wasn't until the 19th century that the monks, like Gregory the Great, began to

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<sup>2</sup> Medieval Ambrosian chant of the church of Mediolanum (Milan). Title: "*Offertorium: Ecce apertum est Templum tabernaculi*". Performers: Ensemble Organum, Director: Marcel Peres. Album: "Chants de l'Église Milanaise"

seek a single method of performance which reflected what was known about early methods of chant singing.

There is a famous monastery in France at Solesmes, and its monks became responsible for the restoration of Gregorian Chant as you hear it today - on CDs and on the radio. They worked out a very artistic method of singing it and a new method of writing it down. They then produced books which contained the fruits of their scholarship. Their theories have been adopted by monasteries throughout the world. Unfortunately Gregorian Chant has now largely fallen into disuse in the Catholic church because of widespread change in the services. How sad!!

Listening to Gregorian music it is clear to the ear that the influence of the early Jewish chant is playing a major rôle. The expression is different from Byzantine style but the structure and the elements are the same. I find all the above styles up lifting and essential for prayer. Music has progressed throughout the centuries and from monophonic chant four part harmony produces perfect results in the Orthodox Church.

(Audio 3)

<http://youtu.be/8wNcZf64PvU><sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Byzantine Choir with Lycurgos Angelopoulos Romanian orthodox chant: *Laudati pe Dumnul* (*Praise the Lord*, by Ioan Cucuzel), a communion hymn for Sunday. Piesn Naszych Korzeni Festival, Jaroslaw, Poland, 25 August 2005.

# An Outline History of Russian Sacred Music

(by Ivan Moody<sup>4</sup>)

## Introduction

According to the oft-repeated story in the Russian Primary Chronicle, it was the beauty of the liturgy which attracted the attention of the emissaries of Prince Vladimir of Kiev to Constantinople in the 10th century. "We did not know whether we were in Heaven or on earth", they said after attending a celebration at Aghia Sophia.

Liturgical art in Orthodoxy is an expression of prayer, which in turn is a means of living eschatologically, ever conscious of the Revelation (Apocalypse): the transfiguration of our everyday lives in order to prepare the coming of the heavenly Kingdom. Without bearing this in mind, it is impossible to understand the essence of Eastern Orthodox art and why it is different from western liturgical art, and why their visit to Constantinople made such an impact on the two Russians that in 988 the Grand Duke of Kiev, Vladimir, chose to be baptized into the Orthodox Church.

## The Beginnings of Sacred Music

The acceptance by Russia of the Orthodox faith from Greek-speaking Byzantium meant that initially liturgical practice must inevitably have been strongly influenced by Greek procedures [see Gardner 2000: 9], though Bulgarian links meant that church singing probably also had a Slavic influence from the beginning; in any case it rapidly took on a Russian style. There arose from this mixture a peculiarly Russian kind of neumatic chant, called znamenny, from the word znamia, meaning sign or neume.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://ivanmoody.co.uk/articles.russiansacredmusic.htm>



The earliest manuscripts with musical notation appeared in the late 11th or early 12th century, though they have proved difficult to decipher. Very few survive, principally on account of the Tartar invasions. Continued development of the liturgy meant that, whereas initially the musical notation was simply written above the text, gradually special musical books began to appear - the *Sticherarion*, the *Octoechos* (book of eight tones), the *Heirmologion*, and special collections for great feasts and Sunday offices, the *Obikhod*.

Parallel with *znamenny* there grew up a second kind of musical notation, now called *kondakarny*, or *kondakarian*, differing from *znamenny* both graphically and in the kind of text which it was employed to accompany. The evidence from the few manuscripts that survive is that *kondakarian* singing, highly melismatic in style, was employed for the performance of *kontakia*, lengthy homilies constructed from a *prooemion* or *koukoulion* (opening stanza) followed by a series of up to twenty-four *oikoi*, stanzas ending with the same refrain as the first. Recent research indicates that this notation was modelled on that used in Byzantium during the 10th and 11th centuries. [See Morosan 1986: 6 and Velimirovic 1990: 65] This style disappeared during the 14th century.

The 15th Century was a period of great expansion and tremendous creativity in the field of liturgical singing in Russia. Moscow began to grow while Kiev declined, never fully recovering from Mongol occupation. Russian desire for independence from the Oecumenical Patriarchate at Constantinople increased, the Russians seeing themselves as the natural successors to Byzantium. Because of their refusal to accept the Council of Florence, the Russian bishops had since 1448 appointed their own Metropolitan; from 1543, with the Fall of Constantinople, Moscow and

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<sup>5</sup> *God is with Us: Russian Znamenny Chant: Vaalam Monastery in Russia. (English)*

Constantinople were again in communion, but the Russian Church was now autocephalous (in addition to which Russia was the only nation capable of taking on the role of leader in eastern Christendom, most of Bulgaria, Serbia and Rumania already having been conquered by the Turks). [See Gardner 2000: 179 ff., and 205-208]

The liturgical and artistic expansion which accompanied this emancipation, beginning with the great flourishing of musicians in Novgorod between about 1480 and 1564, and then continuing at the Imperial Court when Ivan IV (The Terrible) brought these singers to Moscow, tended to emphasize national characteristics. For liturgical chant, this meant that the repertoire of signs for znamenny increased, and manuals (azbuki) began to be written explaining the neumatic system. [Velimirovic 1990: 65]

## The 16th Century

Two new types of musical notation appeared at this stage, znamenny chant being at its height. It developed to the point that each of the eight tones had its own distinct musical expression. Each tone is constructed from the juxtaposition of different musical motifs proper to it, the popevki, of varying length and elaboration. Znamenny melodies are divided into three groups according to their place in the liturgy. Bolshoi rospev, or "great chant", is used on great feasts as well as the most important moments of the office. Maly rospev, "lesser chant", is used during the weekday offices. The remaining chants form a third category simply called Znamenny rospev, "neumatic chant".

During the course of the later 16th century developed a new kind of chant derived from znamenny, called putevoy, literally "chant of the road", or "chant of the way". It differed in having a new notation and in employing a more complex rhythmic structure. Parallel with putevoy there appeared another kind of chant, this time standing outside the system of the eight tones of the octoechos. This chant is known as demestvenny, the name deriving from demestik, which word

may refer to the chief chanter of the chapel; its golden age was during the 17th century. [For a summary of the controversy concerning the meaning of the word demestik, as expressed in the work of Metallov and Gardner, see Morosan 1986: 10]. The first appearance of the word demestvenny is in a chronicle dated 1441, but it was only in the 16th century that this kind of chant came to be written down. The system of melodic construction is similar to that of znamenny, based on the popevki, but there is a fundamental difference in the fact that demestvenny does not come within the octoechos system, which means that its melodic and modal scope is expanded. In addition, even more than in the putevoy repertory, there is a tendency towards rhythmic complication and the use of much shorter note values. The correspondence between the spirit, if not the letter, of this repertory and the earlier kondakarian chant is striking, and it was likewise probably performed by soloists.

## 17th-19th Centuries

### The Chant Tradition

During the course of the 17th century appeared three new types of liturgical chant. Firstly, the Kievan chant, in essence a drastically simplified form of znamenny; then the so-called "Bulgarian" chant, highly melodic and rhythmically supple; and thirdly what are known as "Greek" chants, originating in southern Russia, and bearing evidence of folk influence. The straightforward melodic character of these latter made them ideal for harmonized performance, and indeed all three of these repertories are in use today in harmonized versions in the Russian Church. The precise origin of the latter two repertories is still the subject of controversy.

(Audio 5)

<http://youtu.be/slzBaXiEMLc><sup>6</sup>

The most surprising development within the znamenny tradition was the appearance of polyphony - strochnoie penie (line singing). The earlier pieces in this tradition were written in a "descant" style (whereby a chant was harmonized by two voices, one above and one below) called troiestrochnoie penie (three-line singing), but the harmonic sense in these works is, by western standards, very wayward. There is no use of imitation or canon in the manner of western renaissance composers, and no hierarchy of consonance and dissonance - polyphony here is quite simply a division of the unison. It was this attitude to harmony which led those who originally began to work on this repertory to lose confidence in the fruit of their researches. Comparison with indigenous folk repertoires, however, helped to encourage the work anew in the early years of this century (the level of dissonance in Georgian folk singing is often considerably greater than here, for example). Unprepared dissonances, parallel fifths, sevenths, octaves, and ninths, are all part of this style of composition. [The standard work on this remains Uspensky, 1965 and 1968]

(Audio 6)

<http://youtu.be/RJTmOpzXGy8><sup>7</sup>

The precise origins of this early polyphony continue to be disputed by pro- and anti-western factions, but the abundant links between Novgorod, source of the earliest surviving evidence, and Western Europe (the city was a member of the Hanseatic League, and had a Roman Catholic Church) make it impossible to rule out western influence. [Morosan 1986: 17] Of this early polyphony (referring specifically to a three-voiced setting of "Eis polla eti Despota" taken from Uspensky's anthology), Gardner says "*it is clear that the texture, the voice leading*

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<sup>6</sup> from *Sacred Treasures III: Choral Masterworks from Russia and Beyond*. Images - NASA Hubble Space Telescope <http://hubblesite.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Early Russian Polyphonic Chant ... unreferenced.

*and the sonority of this piece of music are fundamentally different from those of Western polyphonic compositions of the seventeenth century. Particularly noteworthy is the abundance of dissonant combinations and the distinctiveness of the asymmetric rhythm.*" [Gardner 2000: 298] Such observations may, indeed, be made about the generality of the repertoire. Antonowycz is more forthright, and describes it as "eine Kakophonie" [Antonowycz 1990], but the large number of successful performances recordings made in recent years by Russian choirs (and especially the work of the Russian Patriarchal Choir under Anatoly Grindenko), belies this.

### The Polish-Ukrainian Period

The 17th century, though a time of flourishing creativity, was for liturgical art in Russia also a time of decadence and crisis, both related to historical events; firstly, the Time of Troubles, following the death of Boris Godunov, during which there was a rapid succession of tsars and Russia was invaded by Poland; and secondly, the accession to the throne of the first Romanov. For the arts, as for life in general, the immediate consequence was a strong influx of foreign influence, accompanied by political centralization and a significant strengthening of the monarchy and attendant social divisions between the people and the ruling classes. The need for a strong state to defend the country against her aggressors, in conjunction with western political, social and philosophical ideas, led the Tsar to attempt to submit the Church to the State in order to attain his political goals. The Church, for its part, tried to check the Roman Catholic influence brought by the Polish invasion: the people had been impressed by the organs and orchestras of Polish churches and there was a sharp drop in attendance at Orthodox churches. One means employed in order to try to remedy this was to copy Polish-style polyphonic music, though the traditional Orthodox ban on instruments continued to be enforced. [Morosan 1986: 37, 39-42]

With the accession of Mikhail Romanov to the throne in 1613, westernization was the order of the day in Russian culture, theology itself not escaping from this

tendency. Much came from Poland across her borders with the Ukraine. By the end of the 17th century, both the court and the patriarchal singers were performing a repertory that was largely polyphonic, sometimes in many parts (there survive from this period works in twelve, twenty-four and even thirty-two parts). While the negative elements of these developments are easy to see and to emphasize from an Orthodox point of view, it must also be admitted that what resulted was something highly original in that the Russians' and the Ukrainians' attitude to their native languages was not compromised by their usage of western counterpoint: this, added to the creative employment of elements from folk polyphony, led to a repertoire that does not quite sound like anything else, however much the shadows of Schütz or Gabrieli and, often, earlier composers, hover over some of these works. [See Morosan 1986: 56-59]

The name for this style (written, with few exceptions, in western notation) is simply *partesnoe penie*, part singing, and its chief representative was Nikolai Diletsky (c.1630-c.1680), Polish and Lithuanian trained. He wrote an influential book entitled simply *A Musical Grammar*, first published in Polish at Vilnius in 1675, which expounds the basis of western music theory (including, interestingly, the earliest known mention of the circle of fifths) and discusses the composition of sacred music according to western models of voice-leading. Fellow composers of the *partesny konsert* include Titov, Pekalitsky, Kalashnikov, Bavykin and Trediakovsky.

Parallel with this complex style of writing is the *kant*, a paraliturgical pious song, melodically simple and usually in three (rarely four) parts. The *kant* became so widespread owing to its easily memorable character that it began to penetrate into churches and monasteries and influenced liturgical chant: *maly znamenny* or Kievan melodies were harmonized in parallel thirds with a bass, thereby becoming the basis of what one hears today in many Russian parish churches.

## The Italian Period

From the 1750s onwards, the Imperial Court began to look more towards Italy for inspiration in cultural matters. During the reign of the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, a large number of artists, architects, sculptors and musicians left Italy for St Petersburg. The list of chapelmasters of the Court Choir during the 18th century is a continuous stream of foreigners, including Galuppi, Paisiello, Sarti, Cimarosa, and Martin y Soler. They wrote for the Court chapel and had a lasting influence on many young Russian composers, including Degtiarev, Vedel, Bortnyansky, Berezovsky, Davydov, and Turchaninov. Bortnyansky (1751-1825) studied with Galuppi and studied in Italy from 1769 to 1779. On his return he became Chapelmaster at the Imperial Court, and then Director. He is the undisputable master of the Italian style, as is shown by his large number of virtuosic choral concerti as well as his considerable quantity of secular music. His lyrical style, in combination with western counterpoint, made him the outstanding composer of this period. Morosan observes of him and his contemporaries "their creative orientation and musical vocabulary were almost entirely European, as were the performance techniques mastered by the singers of the Court Chapel". [Morosan 1986: 61] Dunlop, in addition, defends Bortnyansky against later criticism, observing that, in view of his education at the hands of Italians, "it would have been highly remarkable had his music not strongly reflected their influence. In addition, the characteristics later condemned as 'Italian' were common in much Western European music of this time." [Dunlop 2000: 113]

## The German (St Petersburg) Period

With the death of Bortnyansky in 1825, for political as well as cultural reasons, Germany succeeded Italy as the dominant influence. The Imperial Chapel was taken over by Lvov (1798- 1870), who had travelled in Germany and knew Mendelssohn, Schumann and Meyerbeer. His music for the Church is characterized by four-part harmony, in German style, predominating over the melody (though he did employ chant) which is always placed in the top voice. His influence was

considerable, and among his followers are Lomakin (whose still frequently-sung setting of the Cherubic Hymn actually departs rather from this style in favour of something rather more original, albeit undeniably western), Vorotnikov, Bakhmetev, Golitsyn, and Strokin. This time, known as the St Petersburg period, was important precisely for its simplification and the beginnings - though the results were not entirely positive - of a return to chant traditions. [See Morosan 1986: 78-83 and Dunlop 2000: 72-75]

In 1879 occurred a famous incident which would have significant consequences for Russian church music. Pyotr Jurgenson, the Moscow music publisher who frequently worked with the Imperial Chapel, published Tchaikovsky's Liturgy of St John Chrysostom without the authorization of the Chapel - indispensable since Bortnyansky's time. Bakhmetev attempted to forbid publication, but Tchaikovsky sought and received authorization from the Senate. Though many have considered the work too "western", it may be considered truly Russian in spirit, and marks the end of the period of German domination and the initiation of the study and recovery of the Russian Church's musical past. Tchaikovsky himself later worked more seriously with the chant repertoire, and his settings for the Vigil show a genuine preoccupation with finding a valid style of genuinely liturgical composition. [See Brown 1992: 283-287]

### The Moscow School

This return to Russia's liturgical and musical heritage was begun by Prince Vladimir Feodorovich Odoievsky (1804-1869), a philosopher, writer, critic and musicologist. He was a founder member of the Russian Musical Society, which would play an extremely important rôle in Russian musical life at the end of the 19th century. He was a lover of old music books, and of znamenny chant manuscripts and prints in particular. Around him he gathered a number of musicians interested in studying chant, including archpriest Razumosvky and Stepan Smolensky. The latter numbered among his pupils Kastalsky, Chesnokov and Nikolsky. It is to Smolensky that Rachmaninov's Vigil ("Vespers") is dedicated.



As a composer, Kastalsky (1856-1926) best exemplifies the influence of Smolensky's work. His music, almost all of it liturgical, is profoundly rooted in znammeny, putevoy and demestvenny chant, combined with a harmonic language deriving from the modal implications of the chant and from Russian folk tradition and which he soon went on to develop independently of the citation of actual chant, as the pseudo-chant style *Miloserdiya dveri otverzi nam*, for example demonstrates triumphantly. [Morosan 1986: 232-233] This return to sources was deeply influential on many composers, including Kompaneisky, Tolstiakov, Nikolsky, Grechaninov, and Chesnokov. The height of this movement was undoubtedly reached, however, with Rakhmaninov's monumental Vigil ("Vespers"), based on chant and one of the peaks of choral writing in any century: "he (...) scales new heights of expressive intensity, such as have been achieved in only a few choral masterpieces in the entire history of music." [Morosan 1986: 248]

(Audio 7)

<http://youtu.be/iCglswP7jPY><sup>8</sup>

## The 20th Century

Many composers (such as Arkhangelsky, Allemanov and Vinogradov) continued in their allegiance to the Germanic principles of the St Petersburg School, and it was this tradition, in spite of the unparalleled achievement of Rachmaninov, that was influential upon most of the musicians of the Russian diaspora following the October Revolution. Arkhangelsky (1846-1924) was one of many composers during this period to set the principal parts of the Vigil - Tchaikovsky, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Grechaninov also did so, as well as Rachmaninov. Similar settings of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom also abound from the mid-19th century onwards; certainly there was a feeling that composers who did not write only sacred music could

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<sup>8</sup> *Blagoslovi Dushe Moya Gospoda (Bless the Lord, O my soul)* - Rachmaninov Opus 37 All Night Vigil (Vespers). The transcendently beautiful recording by Klara Korkan (contralto) and the State Russian Choir directed by Alexander Sveshnikov. The text is taken from Psalm 103.

approach the sacred repertoire in this fashion, creating large cycles rather than isolated settings specifically destined for particular liturgical occasions.

Since the recent political changes in the former Soviet Union, works by a number of Russian composers have appeared relating to church music traditions, though not specifically liturgical in intent (such as *Apocalypse*, *Easter Music* and *Christmas Music* by Vladimir Martynov [b.1946], the *Concerto for Mixed Choir* by Alfred Schnittke [1934-1998], *Svete tikhi* by Edison Denisov [1929-1998] and *Zapechatlenniy Angel* by Rodion Shchedrin [b.1932]); it remains to be seen, however, whether there will be any widespread return to the composition of genuinely liturgical music.

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A comprehensive Bibliography for Byzantine Chant may be found here:-

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