

STEREO

MCD 71485

The
Russian
Orthodox
Requiem
&
Hymns
to
the
virgin

The Russian Orthodox
Cathedral
Choir of Paris
conducted by
P.V. Spassky

monitor
MUSIC OF THE WORLD



A Monitor International Compact Disc

to Hell," which attained enormous popularity in medieval Russia and was mentioned by Dostoevsky in his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the tale, Mary wishes to see for herself how human souls are tortured, and asks the Archangel Michael to open the gates of Hell to her. On seeing the inexpressible torments of the multitudes (which are described in very vivid detail) the Mother breaks down and weeps, and beseeches Michael to let her be tortured together with the Christians. But Michael refuses and commends her to Paradise. Then she asks the angel host to pray God's mercy upon the sinners. But God will not pardon them. But the Mother persists, calling on the prophet Moses to help her and upon the apostle Paul and upon "Sunday, the pride of Christianity" and "the power of the Holy Cross". Yet this appeal also proves fruitless. But once again, the Mother addresses herself to all the heavenly powers and beseeches them to intercede for the sinners. And this time Christ descends from His throne and grants rest to the damned during the interval from Holy Thursday to Pentecost.

What is remarkable here is the very human picture painted of Mary as a woman of unquenchable sympathy, who upbraids the saints and angels for their indifference to human suffering. It is as the mother of mankind that numberless Russian hymns were written to Mary, addressing her as Intercessor, Mediator, Supplicator, Beseecher, Helper and Comforter. Some of these hymns, as well as those in which the events of her life were reflected, are presented on this recording in superb settings by the best-known composers of Russian liturgical music.

Notes by **NICHOLAS SPASSKY** and **BEATRICE STILLMAN**

THE ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL CHOIR OF PARIS, under Mr. Spassky's direction, has recorded for Monitor the Christmas Eve Service (MCD 71448), the Easter Liturgy (MCD 71441), and Russian Sacred Choral Masterpieces (MCD 61468).

Recorded in the Cathedral on Rue Daru, Paris, under the personal supervision of Michael Stillman.

The cover icon is "Our Lady of Smolensk", early 15th Century attributed to Andrei Rublev.

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX REQUIEM

The awesomely beautiful Orthodox Requiem, or burial service, presented on this recording in condensed form, was written by a Byzantine genius of extraordinarily varied gifts. St. John of Damascus, who was born early in the 8th century (he died before 754) was theologian, poet, musician, orator and statesman. His great gift of eloquence earned for him the title of *Chrysorrhoeas* ("pouring of gold"). Despite the fact that he was an Orthodox Christian, he held high political office under the Muslim Caliph of Damascus, as had his father before him.

John's theological convictions, however, brought him into bitter conflict with the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Isaurian who, as leader of the iconoclastic faction in the Byzantine Church, was vigorously engaged in suppressing the worship of images. For John, on the other hand, the "mysteries," the ritual itself, were integral to the Orthodox faith and found their culmination in icon worship. In defense of his belief John wrote a famous series of epistles in the years 726-730. The Emperor in retaliation denounced him to the Caliph as a traitor. The miracle by which John's hands, which the Caliph had severed, were rejoined to his body, is recounted in the *Life of St. John of Damascus*, written in the 10th century by the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Later in his career, John surrendered his worldly goods and entered the Monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem. Here he was forbidden by the monastery Elder to write. He held to the interdiction until the death of the brother of a certain monk. In profound despair, the monk begged that a mass be written and sung for his brother. Taking pity on his grief, John composed and sang hymns for the burial service. The Elder was incensed, but during the night, the account is given, he received a vision in which the Mother of God directed him to lift the ban on John's writing and composing. In his last years, John travelled through Syria contending against the iconoclasts and even visited Constantinople at imminent risk of his life.

The poetic creativity of John had great impact on the Orthodox liturgy. He wrote not only the Requiem, but also the radiantly joyous Hours at Easter (see *The Divine Easter Liturgy*, Monitor recording MCD 71441). Of him, G.P. Fedotov, author of *The Russian Religious Mind*, wrote that "the Byzantine Church has produced two or three real poets whose works touch, stir and extort tears...such was St. John of Damascus."

The dominant theme of the Requiem is John's vision of the mystery of human destiny. Death is man's inescapable fate. Yet even in his state of corruption, he retains the image of the Divine. And the mystery of human death is transcended by the mystery of Christ's death, which destroyed death. "He trampled down death by death." Human death assumes a new meaning in the hope of Resurrection and the grace of new life. Thus are John's hymns infused with the voices of hope and love which overcome the voice of mourning.

Hymn No. 7, "With the Saints Give Rest," was written by St. Ephraim of Syria, a monk of the 3rd century who was the most celebrated writer among the Syrian fathers and a prolific author of hymns. The music of the Requiem is based on ancient Byzantine and Russian melodies which have been performed in Russian cathedrals and churches from remotest times. The language of the service is neither Russian nor Greek, but Church Slavonic, the oldest recorded Slavic language. It was created originally about the middle of the 9th century for the purpose of bringing Christianity to the Slavic peoples in a language understandable to them, and developed in the course of subsequent centuries in the different parts of the Slavic world (for fuller explanation, see *The Divine Easter Liturgy*, MCD 71441). It should be noted that the Requiem is sung as an entity, and therefore the recording does not divide the titles into separate bands.

HYMNS TO THE VIRGIN

Since the earliest centuries of Christianity the mother of Jesus has been venerated. In Russia, the most common name for Mary is *Bogoroditsa*—Mother of God, or God-Bearer, a literal translation from the Greek *Theotokos*. In the development of Russian religious thinking this was no mere abstraction. Mary was the very embodiment of motherhood, the birthgiver, the mother of all mankind. Numberless churches were consecrated to her name and to the events connected with her life; her feasts were celebrated; her ikons were venerated. Many of these, such as the ikons of Kazan, Vladimir, Smolensk, the Iversky Monastery and others, were considered to have miraculous powers.

In Russian belief Mary is regarded as the very fountainhead of motherly warmth, sympathy, compassion, protectiveness and unquestioning love. These qualities are illustrated in the remarkable apocryphal tale called "The Visit of the Mother of God

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX REQUIEM & HYMNS TO THE VIRGIN

The Russian Orthodox Cathedral Choir of Paris

Conducted by **Piotr V. Spassky**. Soloist: **Protodeacon Mikhail Storogenko**

1 REQUIEM (25:30)

1. Intonation: O Holy God (*Trisagion*)
2. Litany
3. Hallelujah
4. Blessed Art Thou, O Lord (*Troparia*)
5. Give Rest, O Lord, to the Souls (Refrain)
6. Forasmuch as I Behold the Sea of Life (*Hirmos*)
7. With the Saints Give Rest (*Kondakion*)
8. Our Father (music by Sheremetev)
9. With the Souls of the Righteous Dead (*Troparia*)
10. Litany
11. Eternal Memory

1 ПАНИХИДА

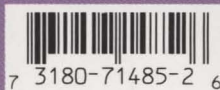
1. Возглас: Святы Боже...
2. Ектения
3. Аллилуйя
4. Тропари: Благословен еси Господи...
5. Припев: Покой Господи...
6. Ирмос: Житейское море...
7. Кондак: Со Святыми упокой...
8. Отче наш (Шереметев)
9. Тропари: Со духи праведных скончавшихся...
10. Ектения
11. Вечная память

HYMNS TO THE VIRGIN (21:00)

- 2 It Is Fitting (Bortniansky) (1:45)
- 3 The Archangel's Voice (Bortniansky) (1:25)
- 4 Rejoice O Bride (Praise to the Mother of God) (2:05)
- 5 Assumption Matinsong (Kievan melody, Jerusalem harmonization) (1:35)
- 6 Diligently Unto the Mother of God (Arkhangelsky) (3:50)
- 7 The Doors of Mercy (Arkhangelsky) (1:55)
- 8 We Have No Other Help (Arkhangelsky) (3:30)
- 9 Assuage Our Sickness (Arkhangelsky) (3:10)
- 10 Prophets From On High (Lvov) (1:45)

БОГОРОДИЧНЫЕ ПЕСНОПЕНИЯ

- 2 Достойно есть (Бортнянский)
- 3 Архангельский глас (Бортнянский)
- 4 Радуйся Невеста (похвала Богородицы)
- 5 Светилен на усение (Киевский распев, иерусалимская гармонизация)
- 6 К Богородице прилежно (Архангельский)
- 7 Милосердия двери (Архангельский)
- 8 Не имамы иныя помощи (Архангельский)
- 9 Утоли болезни (Архангельский)
- 10 Свыше пророцы (Львов)



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REQUIEM & HYMNS TO THE VIRGIN

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