Russian & Ukrainian Liturgical Chants: 16th & 17th Century

STEREO

A Monitor/Balkanton Production
MFS 738

The Svetoslav Obretenov Bulgarian A Cappella Choir Conducted by Georgi Robev
Russian & Ukrainian Liturgical Chants

from the 16th-17th Century

The Svetoslav Obretenov Bulgarian A Cappella Choir — Conducted by Georgi Robev

**Side One**

1. Three Chants (Ukrainian)
   a) Shedshe Trye Tsary
   b) O Darovannye Pobedy
   c) Styhy Pohvalnye Rossyi

2. Examples of Ancient Russian Choral Art
   a) Mnogoletstvovanye
   b) Dostoyno Est
   c) Ije Herouvymy
      (Compiled by N. Ouspensky)

3. Kto Tvoyou, Spasse, Rizou Razdra
   (A 12-voiced Concerto by an unknown composer)

**Side Two**

1. Zlatokovannouyou Troubou
   (An 8-voiced Concerto, music by V. Tytov)

2. Rojdestvenskyi Styh
   (A 12-voiced Chorus, music by V. Tytov)

3. Herouvymyska
   (An 8-voiced Chorus, music by M. Dyletskyi)

The chant “Shedshe trye Tsary” (three-voiced) is one of the most popular and representative Christmas songs. These songs, which originally had a religious theme, subsequently acquired laic, lyrical, satiric and humorous content, too. They have verse structures with a distinct rhythm and harmony. The panegyric chants became especially popular during the reign of Peter I. Examples of these are: “O darovannye pobedy” and “Styhy pohvalnye Rossyi.”

The first evidence of Russian liturgical polyphony, closely connected with the principles of polyphony in folk songs, dates back to the 16th Century. There are three basic genres: first, the “strochno”—two or three-voiced—which uses as a basic melody the most ancient one-voiced Russian church vocal repertory—“znamenya rospevy”—as in the hymn “Ije Herouvymy.” The second and third genres—“poutevo” and “demestvenno” polyphony (two and three-voiced, rarely four-voiced) is built up on the basis of melodies corresponding to the “poutevoya” and “demestvennya rospevy,” which appeared in the course of the 15th to the 17th centuries. Examples are the hymns “Dostoyno est” and “Mnogoletstvovanye” which are performed during the divine services.

The chant “Kto tvoou, Spasse, rizou razdra” is a characteristic twelve-voiced (polyphonic) concerto. Polyphonic vocal music emerged in the Ukraine during the 16th and 17th centuries and in Great Russia during the 17th century. The most developed form of the polyphonic style is the a cappella chorus, eight or twelve-voiced (a double choir) concerto.

Vassily Polykarpovich Tytov (1650-1715) was one of the Tsar’s “dyatsy” (singers of the Imperial Court) belonging to the Moscow school. He composed approximately 30 religious musical works. His polyphonic concertos (in eight and twelve voices) are remarkable for their choral sonority and for their harmonic and polyphonic techniques. The eight-voiced “Zlatokovannouyou troubou” and the twelve-voiced “Rojdestvenskyy styh” are representative samples of his work.

M. Dyletskyi (1630-1690) was an Ukrainian music pedagogue, theorist and composer, author of the “Musical Grammar” wherein he summarized and systematized the principles of polyphonic vocal music. “Herouvymyska” (Cherubic Hymn) is an eight-voiced polyphonic elaboration of the text of the great entrance hymn of the “Divine Liturgy.”

The Svetoslav Obretenov A Cappella Choir has a repertory which includes the most important Bulgarian choral works as well as examples of the choral music from other countries. Its greatest successes have been in the field of liturgical music from Bulgarian, Russian and Ukrainian sources. This recording has been made under the baton of Georgi Robev, honored artist of the Bulgarian People’s Republic.

Notes by ELENA TONCHEVA

Cover: Icon from the Bachkovo Monastery near Plovdiv, Bulgaria