

Vespers (All-Night Vigil) Op. 37

For Symphonic Winds

No. 6 Bogoroditse Devo (Rejoice, O Virgin)

No. 2 Blagoslovi, Dushe Moya (Bless The Lord, O My Soul)

No. 3 Blazhen Muzh (Blessed Be The Man)

No. 4 Svete Tikhyi (O Serene Light)

No. 15 Vzbrannoy Voyevode (Thanksgiving to the Mother of God)



Sergei Rachmaninoff
1873-1943

Arranged by William V. Johnson

PROGRAM NOTES

VESPERS, (ALL-NIGHT VIGIL) OP. 37..... Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

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The inspiration to transcribe five of the fifteen choral works contained in Sergei Rachmaninoff Vespers, Op. 37 came from many years of performing Bruce Houseknecht's transcription of Pavel Tschesnokoff's "Salvation is Created." I can't imagine a serious wind band that has not used this beautiful work over and over in both programs and as a warm-up chorale for rehearsals. My Rachmaninoff transcriptions are designed to be a sequel to the Tschesnokoff/Houseknecht transcription. Tchesnokoff (1877-1944) was a Russian choral conductor/composer and lived at the same time as Rachmaninoff (1873-1943).

Rachmaninoff was a composer, pianist, and conductor. He was widely considered one of the finest pianists of his day and, as a composer, one of the last great representatives of Romanticism in Russian classical music. Choral music makes up a relatively small part of Rachmaninoff's creative output, yet the medium inspired what many music lovers treasure as his most profoundly affecting composition. *Vespers, Op. 37* consists of 15 liturgical choral works for a cappella choir and was composed in less than two weeks in January and February 1915. The first performance was given in Moscow on March 10 of that year. It was received warmly by critics and audiences alike, and was so successful that it was performed five more times within a month. "Even in my dreams I could not have imagined that I would write such a work." Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance.

Vespers draws from the ancient musical tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church, with its self-effacing focus on communal worship. The work shows Rachmaninoff anticipating an alternative to modernism's abrupt break with tradition by reclaiming early-music elements outside the mainstream classical tradition—a strategy that continues to be followed by a wide spectrum of contemporary composers.

For years, I have been fascinated and moved by the beauty of these choral pieces. Working with woodwinds and brasses and even percussion, I have come to realize that the wind band is much like a choir with its many colors and vocal-like emphasis on blend and balance. Indeed, Percy Grainger's *Horkstow Grange* for wind band sounds much like a Russian choir and some of the wind band works of Morton Lauridsen, Eric Whitacre and Frank Ticheli are transcriptions of beautifully lush choral works. For the first time, three of the movements from Rachmaninoff's *Vespers* have been rewritten for the modern wind band. On December 10, 2011, the San Luis Obispo Wind Orchestra, under my direction performed the premier of these beautiful works.

No. 6, 2 and 15 make a beautiful setting. No. 3 and No. 4 can easily stand alone.

William Johnson

Vzbrannoy Voyevode (Thanksgiving To The Mother of God)
From Vespers (All-Night Vigil) Op. 37

Sergei Rachmaninoff
Arr. by William V. Johnson

Allegro con brio; molto ritmico ♩ = 116

A

Piccolo

Flute 1

Flute 2

Oboe 1

Oboe 2

English Horn

Bassoon 1

Bassoon 2

Contrabassoon

Clarinet in E♭

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ 2

Clarinet in B♭ 3

Alto Clarinet in E♭

Bass Clarinet in B♭

Contrabass Clarinet in B♭

Allegro con brio; molto ritmico ♩ = 116

Soprano Saxophone

Alto Saxophone 1

Alto Saxophone 2

Tenor Saxophone 1

Baritone Saxophone

Piano

Allegro con brio; molto ritmico ♩ = 116

A

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Trumpet in B♭ 2

Trumpet in B♭ 3

Horn in F

Horn in F

Horn in F

Horn in F

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Bass Trombone

Euphonium

Tuba

Double Bass

Timpani

Snare Drum

Cymbals

Percussion

Orchestral Bells

Xylophone

Marimba

13

Picc.

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Eng. Hn.

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Cbsn.

Ev. Cl.

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Cl. 3

Alto Cl.

B. Cl.

Cb. Cl.

Sop. Sax.

A. Sax. 1

A. Sax. 2

T. Sax. 1

Bari. Sax.

Pno.

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tpt. 3

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

B. Tbn.

Euph.

Tba.

Db.

Timp.

S. D.

Cym.

Perc.

Orch. Bells

Xyl.

Mar.

B

p

This page of a musical score, numbered 3, contains parts for a wide variety of instruments. The woodwind section includes Piccolo, Flutes 1 and 2, Oboes 1 and 2, English Horn, Bassoons 1 and 2, Contrabassoon, E♭ Clarinet, Clarinets 1, 2, and 3, Alto Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, and Contrabass Clarinet. The saxophone section includes Soprano, Alto 1 and 2, Tenor 1, and Baritone. The brass section includes Trumpets 1, 2, and 3, Horns (four parts), Trombones 1 and 2, Baritone, Euphonium, Tuba, and Double Bass. The percussion section includes Snare Drum, Cymbals, and Percussion. The keyboard section includes Piano and Maracas. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It features dynamic markings such as *f* (forte), *cresc.* (crescendo), and *ff* (fortissimo). A section marker 'C' is placed above the staff for the Piccolo and Saxophone parts at the beginning of the page. The page concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

