

Winter 2015

The MUSICA RUSSICA BUYING GUIDE

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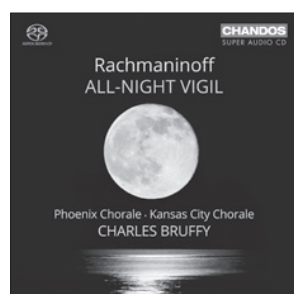
Vol. 21, No. 1

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In case you missed them earlier, **NEXT YEAR'S GRAMMY™ CONTENDERS!**

A136



Sergei Rachmaninoff

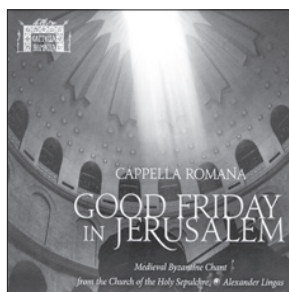
All-Night Vigil

Kansas City & Phoenix Chorales

Charles Bruffy, cond.

(See page 5)

J039



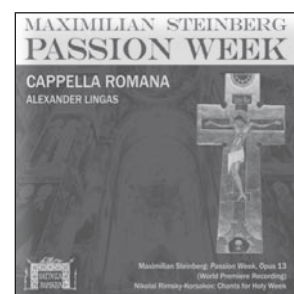
Good Friday in Jerusalem

Cappella Romana

Alexander Lingas, cond.

(See page 11)

A137



Maximilian Steinberg

Passion Week

Cappella Romana

Alexander Lingas, cond.

(See page 5)

Best-Sellers Return as DOWNLOADS

D203



Classical and Folk Music

Russian Patriarchate Choir

Anatoly Grindenko, cond.

(See page 8)

G031



The Time of Joy Has Come

Svetilen Ensemble

Dmitry Garkavi, cond.

(See page 9)

H097



New Sky, New Earth

Sirin Ensemble

Andrei Kotov, cond.

(See page 9)

Vladimir Morosan, editor

Special Holiday Section

B138



Liturgy for the Nativity of Christ
Amvrosiy's Choir
\$18.98

Polished, well-blended, and tastefully sung in a liturgically appropriate style.

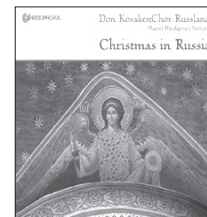
C122



Sacred Spirit of Russia
Conspirare
(Craig Hella Johnson, cond.)
\$19.98

2014 Grammy Winner for
"Best Choral CD!"
An Orthodox Christmas Liturgy.

D155



Christmas in Russia
Don Cossacks Choir of Russia
\$21.98

Beautiful vocal display and drama for which Serge Jaroff's Don Cossacks were famous.

E023



The Bright Star Arose
St. John Damascus Youth Choir
\$19.98

Fresh, young voices from St. Petersburg sing traditional Ukrainian, Slovak, Belorussian, and Russian carols.

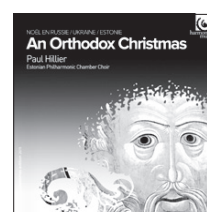
H053



Ukrainian Christmas Carols
The "Boyan" Ensemble
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This is, quite simply, THE BEST CD of Ukrainian Christmas carols released in recent years.

H060b



An Orthodox Christmas
Estonian Philharmonic Chorus
\$15.98

Best-selling CD of Christmas Hymns and Carols. Now out of print! Limited stock remaining.

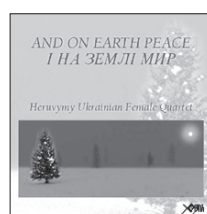
H062



Carol of the Bells; Shchedrik
"Pavana" Women's Choir
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One of the leading chamber choirs in Ukraine offers some of the most exquisite singing by a women's choir found in our entire catalog.

H067



And On Earth Peace
Heruwymy Ukrainian Female Quartet
\$17.98

Four wonderfully blended women's voices sing a perfect mix between "East" and "West"—popular Ukrainian carols and some of the best selections from the Western carol repertoire.

H091

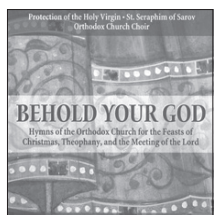


Carols and Songs
Russian Chamber Chorus of New York
Nikolai Kachanov, cond
\$15.98

A variety of delightful choral music, including Ukrainian carols, Rachmaninoff songs, and more.

Special Holiday Section

I-079



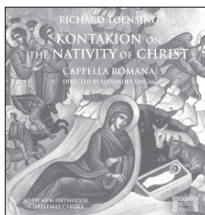
Behold Your God

Protection of the Holy Virgin Choir

\$17.98

A veritable panoply of "Orthodox sounds"—bell-ringing, Scripture readings, and a variety of chants sung by choirs of men's, women's, and mixed voices.

I-085



Richard Toensing (+2014):

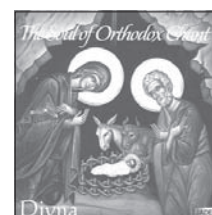
Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ and Carols

Cappella Romana

\$16.98

The transcendent character of this music will appeal to all those interested in newly created sacred music inspired by the Orthodox tradition.

K075



Soul of Orthodox chant (Christ is Born!)

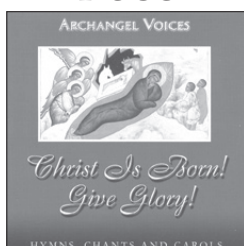
Divna Ljubojevic & Melodi

\$15.98

A variety of Byzantine, Serbian, and Russian chants and a carols for the Nativity of Christ.

Best seller!

I-068



Christ is Born! Give Glory!

Hymns, Chants, and Carols

Archangel Voices

\$17.98

Sung in English, this CD offers a variety of compositions and chant arrangements by some of North America's leading composers as well as traditional hymns and carols.

A few remaining copies!

I-088



Byzantine Christmas

Romeiko Ensemble

\$26.98

Beautifully produced CD and accompanying book—a major addition to the recorded repertoire of Byzantine chant in English released in recent years.

K086



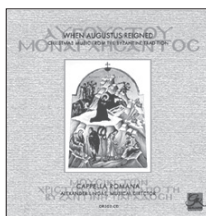
Alilo: A Georgian Christmas

Ensemble Alioni

\$14.98

A delightful selection of traditional Georgian caroling songs (Alilo) and Georgian liturgical hymns.

J016



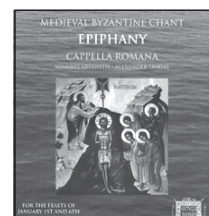
When Augustus Reigned

Cappella Romana

\$16.98

Byzantine hymns for the Christmas and Theophany season, from early chants to choral arrangements by modern-day Greek-American composers.

J021b



Hymns of Theophany
Medieval Byzantine Chant

Cappella Romana

\$16.98

Medieval Byzantine treasures from Constantinople and Palestine.

Special Holiday Section

❄ ❄ ❄ New Holiday Arrivals ❄ ❄ ❄

H094



★★★★★

Christ Is Born, Glorify Him! Ancient Russian Chants for Nativity / Sirin Ensemble / Andrey Kotov, cond. / 51:43
Download Price: \$9.99

The inimitable Sirin Ensemble, the premier ensemble for early Russian folk and sacred music, makes its welcome return to Musica Russica's catalog with this fabulous collection of early chants and spiritual folk songs for the Nativity of Christ (along with cat. no. H097, which has an equally rich collection of non-Christmas songs and hymns). Named after a mythological Russian bird, the Sirin Ensemble uncovers a layer of Russian vocal music that until recently had been thoroughly forgotten. They sing in a stylized folk manner, eschewing bel canto vocal technique and the restrained "academic" manner of most other groups that perform the early sacred repertoire. The results are truly eye-opening! Never previously available in our catalog, this CD, originally released in 1994, is now out of print and available only for downloading under license from the artists. (The download includes the full booklet, which contains an informative article about the celebration of the Nativity feast in ancient Rus', in Russian, English, and German, as well as titles in Russian and English). This CD is a must-have for all lovers of genuine Russian sacred and folk culture!—V. M.

The Sirin Ensemble sings Nativity hymns like you've never heard them before!

From Christmas Through Easter / Svetilen Ensemble / 50:49

Download Price: \$9.99

The Russian folk music ensemble Svetilen also returns to the Musica Russica catalog with four discs, available for downloading only, under license from the artists. Like their counterparts, the famed Sirin Ensemble (see above), Svetilen (named after the "Hymn of Light" sung at the end of the Russian Orthodox Matins service) explores the folk roots of sacred singing in Russia, particularly as represented by "spiritual verses" and carols. A number of these spiritual verses, as collected and re-worked by the ensemble's director Dmitry Garkavi, form the bulk of the material on their CDs. Some of these songs are somber and penitential while others bring joyful delight to the ears. Some tracks are accompanied by traditional Russian folk instruments, such as the hurdy-gurdy and the gusli. (The downloads include the accompanying tray cards and booklets, which contain titles in English and Russian). This CD focuses on spiritual songs from the Nativity season, as well as other church celebrations throughout the liturgical year. These rare CDs are a must-have for lovers of traditional Russian music and culture in some of its most distinctive and original manifestations.—V. M.

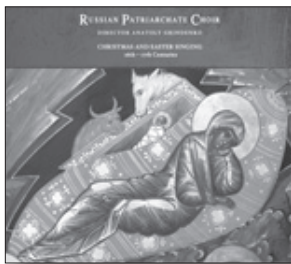
H096



★★★★1/2

Russian Folk hymns and Carols from the Svetilen Ensemble!

D202



★★★★★

Christmas and Easter Chants of the 16th-17th centuries / Russian Patriarchate Choir / Anatoly Grindenko, cond. / 2015
Download Price: \$9.99

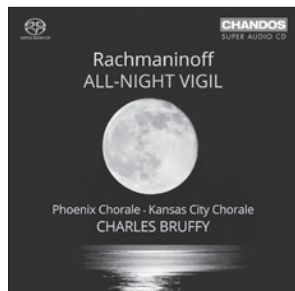
Established in 1983, the Russian Patriarchate Choir, under the direction of Anatoly Grindenko, has established an international reputation as one of the foremost interpreters of early Russian liturgical chant. Over the span of two decades, they released 13 outstanding CDs on the now-defunct French label Opus 111, but in recent years, their recordings have been largely unavailable. We are delighted therefore to be able to offer the present recording for downloading under license from the artists. This retrospective CD contains some of their finest tracks from the two greatest feasts of Orthodox Christianity—the Nativity of Christ and Pascha, the Resurrection of Christ, including unison chants, hauntingly beautiful znamenny and demestvenny chants with ison, and some early harmonized polyphony. Whether you are already a fan of the Russian Patriarchal Choir or missed getting to know them when they were actively recording, this is a CD you will not want to miss. (The download contains the full booklet and digipak, together with titles in Russian and English.)—V. M.

Back in the Catalog! The best-selling Russian Patriarchate Choir!

NEW LISTINGS

A. MAJOR WORKS AND COMPOSERS

A136



★★★★1/2

Rachmaninoff: All-Night Vigil / Phoenix Chorale and Kansas City Chorale / Charles Bruffy, cond. / 2015 / 74:13 / Chandos CHSA 5148 (Super Audio CD) **Price: \$19.98**

The timing of the release of this CD on March 10, 2015, coincided exactly with the 100th anniversary of the world premiere of Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil* in Moscow by the Moscow Synodal Choir under the direction of Nikolai Danilin. After suffering a period of relative obscurity between the 1920s and the late 1980s (with the notable exception of Sveshnikov's classic recording—our cat. no. A128), this work has now assumed its rightful place among the great masterpieces of the world-wide choral repertoire. What, then, distinguishes this recording from its numerous predecessors?

Conductor Charles Bruffy has had a long-standing fascination with Russian choral music. In 1996, with the Kansas City Chorale, he recorded Rachmaninoff's *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*, op. 31 (our cat. no. A045). With the partnered Kansas City Chorale and the Phoenix Chorale he has performed both Gretchaninoff's *All-Night Vigil*, op. 59, and *Passion Week*, op. 58; his recording of the latter work (our cat. no. A115) won a Grammy™ Award in 2008 for the "Best Engineered Album, Classical".

To this recording of Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil*, Bruffy and the combined 56-voice Kansas City and Phoenix Choral ensembles bring a crystal-like clarity of sound that allows Rachmaninoff's rich choral textures to emerge as the composer undoubtedly intended; it should be remembered that Rachmaninoff's choral sound ideal—the Moscow Synodal Choir—was a choir of men and boys (sopranos and altos). Bruffy views this music primarily in its vertical dimension, lingering and delighting in the choral sonorities in what sometimes seems an endless fashion. Consequently, in his interpretation, the work takes on an other-worldly timelessness, leaving behind all sense of the tumult and passions of this world. In the booklet, listeners will find an informative essay about the *All-Night Vigil* (by the author of this review) in English, French and German, and the text of the Vigil in Church Slavonic (in modern Russian orthography) and English translation. Whether this is your first acquaintance with Rachmaninoff's masterpiece, or whether you are a seasoned collector of Russian choral music recordings, this CD will surely enhance your library!—V. M.

Maximilian Steinberg: Passion Week / Cappella Romana / Alexander Lingas, cond. / 2015 / 223020 / Cappella Romana CR413-CD **Price: \$16.98**

The release of this CD represents an historic event: music history being made! Maximilian Steinberg's *Passion Week*, a choral masterpiece of major proportions composed in 1923, was essentially lost for 90 years, until it was rediscovered, republished in a new edition by Musica Russica, and given its world premiere in April of 2014 by Cappella Romana. Three months after the premiere, Cappella Romana reassembled to record the present CD. The music on this CD, based almost entirely on znamenny and other early Russian chants, cannot fail to captivate. It builds upon the legacy of Gretchaninoff's *Passion Week* and Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil*, in some respects surpassing both works. The other thing that is absolutely irresistible and beguiling on this CD is the sound of Cappella Romana in the fabulous acoustics of St. Stephen's Catholic Church in Portland. This is indeed Cappella Romana and choral singing at its finest! Filling out the CD are four lovely arrangements of Holy Week chants (some of the same ones set by Steinberg) by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, whose student, protege, and eventually son-in-law Maximilian Steinberg was. Like all Cappella Romana productions, the booklet is a scholarly work in and of itself, containing an essay about Steinberg's life, times, and music, as well as texts in Church Slavonic, phonetics, and English translation. If there is just one CD of choral music you will ever add to your collection, this is the one!—V.M.

A137



★★★★★

A138



★★★★★

Trubachev: Divine Liturgy / Men's Choirs Assembled at the Russian Cathedral in London / Evgeny Tugarinov, cond. / 2007 / 56:27 **Price: \$18.98**

Deacon Sergius Trubachev (1919–1995) (pronounced "Trubachón") trained and worked as a choral and symphony conductor. After retiring from a career in the secular Soviet-era music world, he took up permanent residence at the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery in 1980 and devoted the remainder of his life to composing and arranging hymns for the Russian Orthodox Church. Most of his works are grounded in the traditional church chants, which he supplied with harmonies that are alternately austere and luminous. In this respect, he followed the best traditions of the composers connected with the Moscow Synodal School—Kastalsky, Chesnokov, Nikolsky, and Rachmaninoff. The present CD, one of the few entirely devoted to his works, shows him to be one of the most prominent contributors to the Russian liturgical repertoire in the latter 20th century. Technically, the recording could have benefitted from somewhat closer placement of the microphones, which would have made sound less "distant." Nevertheless, it will be enjoyed by those who may not be familiar with Trubachev's compositional legacy. The notes on the digipak are in both Russian and English.—V.M.

NEW LISTINGS

B. LITURGICAL CYCLES and SERVICES

B144



★★★★1/2

Russian Orthodox sacred singing that is occurring in certain places in Russia, where scholarship, artistry, and spirituality are interacting to produce fruitful and pleasing results.—*V.M.*

All Night Vigil for Dormition / Optina Pustyn' Men's Choir / Alexander Semyonov, cond. / 2005 / 70:00

Price: \$18.98

The fine professional men's choir of the Optina Hermitage Representation Church in St. Petersburg presents a festal All-Night Vigil similar to one that would be heard at the actual church where they sing—the Dormition Cathedral in St. Petersburg; they freely mix compositions and chant arrangements by prominent composers with traditionally rendered monastic-style chants and early Russian polyphony. Some of the former might have benefitted from having a larger choral ensemble (for example, the excerpts from Rachmaninoff's All-Night Vigil). But the monastic chants are sung in an authentic monastic style, using special model melodies (*podobny*) and with canonarching (lining-out) of the verses by a solo voice, which are then repeated by the choir. There are some remarkable soloists, including the inimitable Vladimir Miller, whose low contra-Gs repeatedly adorn the singing. The CDs of the Optina Hermitage Representation Choir will be a revelation to lovers of Russian men's choir singing, and a welcome addition to the lineup of available offerings. They represent another chapter in the high-quality resurrection of

A beautifully sung Vigil from the Optina Pustyn' Choir!

C. SACRED CHORAL ANTHOLOGIES (Mixed Voices)

With the Voice of the Archangel / "Credo" Chamber Choir / Boghdan Plish, cond. / 2007 / 65:32

Download Price: \$9.99

The excellent Ukrainian Chamber Choir "Credo" is known to our customers through their fine recording of Georgy Sviridov's *Motets and Prayers* (our cat. No. A105). On this disc, they offer a number of beautiful choral selections by a host of composers—both well-known figures such as Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff and lesser-known contemporary Ukrainian composers. The unifying concept behind this excellent program is Kievan Chant, which is presented here in its many guises through the centuries, from unison chant to elaborate polyphonic arrangements. Both the repertoire and the quality of the singing on this disc will be a revelation to lovers of Orthodox liturgical music as well as all lovers of fine choral singing. The titles and the booklet are in Ukrainian only.—*V.M.*

C128



★★★★1/2

Kievan Chant, from unison to modern Ukrainian composers.

C130



Praise the Lord All Ye Nations / Patriarch Tikhon Choir / Vladimir Gorbik, cond. / 2015 / PaTRAM / 38:47

Price: \$14.98

In our time, when Russian and Western politicians snipe at one another and stoke the fires of mutual suspicion, 30 of the finest Orthodox choral singers from Russia, the U.S., and Canada, assembled under the leadership of Vladimir Gorbik, one of the finest choral conductors active in Russia today, to spend a week recording beautiful sacred music—no small logistical feat in and of itself! This CD—the result of their unprecedented collaboration—raises Orthodox liturgical singing in both English and Church Slavonic to new levels of excellence!

The program, which includes Orthodox liturgical works of composers from both continents, is distinctive and varied, yet deeply traditional and churchly. The sonority of the Patriarch Tikhon Choir lies squarely within the best traditions of the liturgical choral art, a remarkable achievement, considering that singers from entirely different cultural roots had to overcome multiple linguistic barriers, and achieve

a blended, homogeneous sound. The final challenge was not simply to give a beautiful rendition of good music, but also to sing in a prayerful manner—a most elusive task, which the singers fulfilled admirably.—*V.M.*

The world premiere CD from the Patriarch Tikhon Choir!

The main objective of the Patriarch Tikhon Choir is to transmit the choral singing traditions of Russian Orthodoxy and establish them in North America. This CD is a testament to the fact that this process has indeed begun and will bear fruit, thanks to the efforts and vision of the Patriarch Tikhon Russian-American Musical Institute (PaTRAM), the sponsoring organization behind this effort (patraminstitute.org).

NEW LISTINGS

D. CHORAL MUSIC FOR MALE CHORUS (Sacred & Secular)

D197



Cycles and Seasons; Worship at Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY / Holy Trinity Monastery and Seminary Choir / Nicholas Kotar, cond. / 2015 / 56:43

Price: \$16.98

The CD "Cycles and Seasons" contains a kaleidoscopic variety of hymns—festal as well as unchanging—as sung at the venerable Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York. It gives the listener a good snapshot of the current liturgical music practices at the Monastery, and the picture is an encouraging one. The small 10-voice choir sings with tight ensemble, resonantly, smoothly, and in tune. There is evidence of beneficial influence from recent choral Master Classes, taught by Vladimir Gorbik from the Moscow Representation Church of the Holy Trinity-St-Sergius Monastery. Some of the repertoire has been developed over the years at the monastery (Jordanville Obikhod), while other selections have been adapted from sources such as the Kievan Caves Lavra, Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, and some of the monastic composers of the 20th century. While all but one of the selections is sung in Church Slavonic, English text translations are offered in the booklet. This CD will be enjoyed by all lovers of monastic-style singing for men's chorus.—*V. M.*

A fine offering from Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville!

O Marvelous Wonder; The Tree of Life Rises Above Rus' / Sretensky Monastery Choir / Nikon Zhila, cond. / 2008 / 48:01 /

Price: \$16.98

This CD was issued in 2008, commemorating the 1020th Anniversary of the Baptism of Rus', but only now has become available to our catalog. The Sretensky Monastery Choir, which is comprised of professional singers rather than monks, sings with their characteristic fullness and richness of sound, which they sustain from beginning to end without much variation in a choral tour de force. This manner of singing fits the festive repertoire on the CD well. Fans of the Moscow Sretensky Choir will want to add this rare disc to their collections before it disappears from availability.—*V.M.*

D198



★★★1/2

A rare disc from Sretensky Monastery!

D199



★★★★

Let My Prayer Arise / Konevets Quartet / 2010 / 51:54

Download Price: \$9.99

Since its founding in 1992, the Konevets Quartet has been a perennial favorite with lovers of Russian men's chorus singing. With these two recent releases (D199 and D200, released in 2010 and 2012, respectively) they return to the Musica Russica catalog. Perhaps more than in previous albums, the suave-voiced ensemble demonstrate a broad range of repertoire—from ancient Serbian, Bulgarian, and Znamenny Chants to compositions by latter-day composers—and their ability to interpret a variety of styles, from unison chant to Georgian polyphony. Whether you have been a long-term fan of the Konevets 4, or are hearing of them for the first time, you will want to add these tracks to your collection! Technically and musically, D199 edges out D200 because the singing is more in tune, the ensemble is tighter, and because the acoustics in which D199 was recorded are more favorable to the overall sound of the group.—*V. M.*

God Is With Us / Konevets Quartet / 2012 / 55:12

Download Price: \$9.99

There is a 7-track overlap in the contents of the two discs, so if one were to buy only one of the two, D199 would be the recommended choice. There is sufficient variety, however, that fans of the Konevets Quartet will want to own both sets of tracks.

(Both downloads include the accompanying booklets, which contain titles and some information about the group in both Russian and English).

D200



★★★1/2

The Konevets Quartet is back!

NEW LISTINGS

D. CHORAL MUSIC FOR MALE CHORUS (Sacred & Secular) (cont'd)

D201mp3



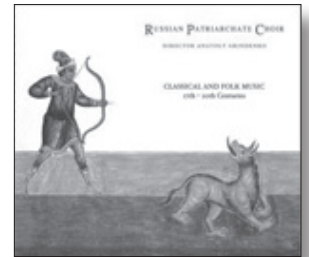
★★★★1/2

Valaam Anthology: Behold the Bridegroom, Northern Athos, The Secret Path, Valaam Liturgy, Day of Resurrection, Attend, O Heaven, Prayers before Communion, and Psalter (2-disc mp3 format of 6 CDs) / Valaam Monastery Choir / 2015 / 14 hrs, 54 minutes

Price: \$29.98

This remarkable two-mp3-disc compilation contains 6 of the best-selling CDs by the Choir of the Valaam Brethren, directed by Hieromonk Gherman (Ryabtsev). In addition, it contains the entire office of Preparation for Holy Communion AND the entire Psalter (chanted in Church Slavonic) with contextual prayers—191 tracks of hymns and prayers and 20 tracks of Psalter Kathismata. Considering the fact that most of the Valaam Brethren CDs have been out of print lately and unavailable in any form, this is a veritable treasure-trove! The musical tracks will provide hours of listening enjoyment to the calm and serene monastic chants (Valaam, znamenny, Kievan, and others), while the Prayers of Preparation and the Psalter can serve a number of devotional and instructional purposes.—*V.M.*

D203



★★★★

Classical and Folk Music / Moscow Patriarchate Choir / Anatoly Grindenko, cond. / 2015

Download Price: \$9.99

The present CD is a true retrospective anthology, containing all the various styles the Russian Patriarchate Choir has mastered over their illustrious career, from early chant and znamenny polyphony, to Baroque partesny polyphony, to works by 18th- and 19th-century masters; the final eight tracks are devoted to secular folk songs, including urban folk songs and Cossack songs. Whether you are already a fan of the Russian Patriarchal Choir or missed getting to know them when they were actively recording, this is a CD you will not want to miss. (The download contains the full booklet and digipak, together with titles in Russian and English and English text translations.—*V.M.*

E. RUSSIAN CHORAL MUSIC FOR TREBLE VOICES

E033



★★★★

Chants of the Russia Emigres, vol. 10 / Ozarenie Chamber Choir of the Moscow Musical Society / Olga Burova, cond. / 2015 / 54:50

Price: \$17.98

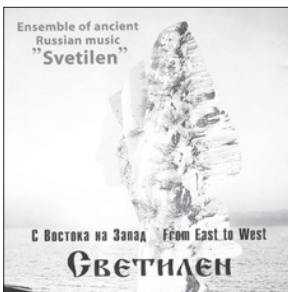
This, the tenth issue in the remarkable series “Chants of the Russian Émigrés,” sustains the high level of excellence of the previous discs, but adds the previously unheard element of an all-female choir. The “Ozarenie” (Enlightenment) Women’s Choir is composed of attractive, well-trained voices. They sing a variety of hymns from Vigil, Divine Liturgy, and various feasts, as well as several selections from the Wedding Service—another welcome addition, not heard previously. Some of the arrangements are of very familiar melodies that will be instantly recognizable to the typical Russian Orthodox listener; others range a bit father afield, drawing upon the repertory of Bulgarian, Serbian, and Carpatho-Russian chants.

Thanks to the efforts of Fr. Peter Perekestov and all the fine choirs that participated in this project, the spirits of the composers represented here—Ivan Gardner, the Kedrovs, father and son, Maxime Kovalevsky, Boris Ledkovsky, and the many others—are rejoicing in the heavenly mansions, now that their musical creations, many of them neglected and unrecognized for years, have received a proper hearing in the homeland these men were forced to leave behind. As in previous issues, the bi-lingual booklet (Russian and English) is well-researched and highly informative.

This CD will be enjoyed by all lovers of Orthodox church singing and especially, by those who appreciate the sweet sound of women’s voices.—*V. M.*

G. RUSSIAN CHORAL AND FOLK MUSIC (Secular)

G029



★★★★

From East to West / Svetilen Ensemble / Dmitriy Garkavi, cond. / 55:23

Download Price: \$9.99

The Russian folk music ensemble **Svetilen** makes its return to the Musica Russica catalog with four discs, which are only available for downloading, under license from the artists.

This is the most “atmospheric” of Svetilen’s CDs, perhaps because it is recorded in a much more resonant acoustic than the other albums. The resulting sound is fuller and not as razor-clear as on the other recordings, but it allows the ensemble’s magical sound to be heard in a new and different light.

These rare CDs are a must-have for lovers of traditional Russian music and culture in some of its most distinctive and original manifestations. (The downloads include the accompanying tray cards and booklets, which contain titles in English and Russian).

NEW LISTINGS

G. RUSSIAN CHORAL AND FOLK MUSIC (Secular) (cont'd)

G030

The Soul Calls Out / Svetilen Ensemble / Dmitriy Garkavi, cond. / 45:01 /

Download Price: \$9.99



★★★★1/2

This is the fourth album by the Svetilen Ensemble, which demonstrates the group's maturity and polish, as well as their creative growth. As the notes relate, "While recording this album, we were in a constant state of creative inspiration. We are happy that you have this disc in your hands, for this allows us to share our happiness and rejoicing with you. And so, onward! To the sources of light and goodness, where the Russian Orthodox soul unceasingly strives."

These rare CDs are a must-have for lovers of traditional Russian music and culture in some of its most distinctive and original manifestations. (The downloads include the accompanying tray cards and booklets, which contain titles in English and Russian).

SVETILEN shines once again!

The Time of Joy Has Come / Svetilen Ensemble / Dmitriy Garkavi, cond. / 37:33

Download Price: \$9.99

Seven of the ten tracks on this CD are original works by Dmitry Garkavi and one other is by ensemble member Liubov Shagalova; the rest are arrangements by Garkavi of folk material. Thus, this is the most original of Svetilen's albums, demonstrating how the spiritual music of ancient Russia is being creatively perpetuated in the present day in delightful and original ways.

These rare CDs are a must-have for lovers of traditional Russian music and culture in some of its most distinctive and original manifestations. (The downloads include the accompanying tray cards and booklets, which contain titles in English and Russian).

G031



★★★★

H. MIXED CATEGORIES (Sacred and Secular)

H095-DVD

Flowers of Joy and Sorrow / Festal Choir of St. Elizabeth Monastery, Minsk / Nun Iuliania (Denisova), cond. / 2013

Price: \$18.98



★★★★1/2

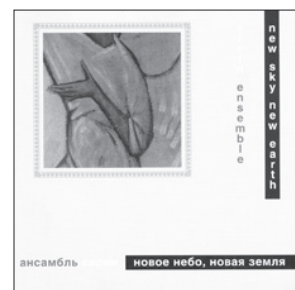
This is a universal-format DVD of a remarkable concert of sacred music of a type that is becoming widespread in contemporary Russia and the CIS. Part sermon, part concert, it features several introductory talks by Archpriest Artemy Vladimirov, addressed to the audience, about the challenges of contemporary life and the beneficial influence of the Christian faith and sacred music. These are interspersed into a concert program that is original and innovative, particularly for that part of the Orthodox world: it features a number of Byzantine chant arrangements (sung in Church Slavonic), znamenny chant arrangements, and compositions mostly by the conductor, Nun Iuliania (Denisova). The second half of the concert presents a number of Belorussian folk songs and spiritual verses by contemporary Russian and Belorussian composers. The choir of young professional voices negotiates the unusual technical requirements of the music with precision, musicality, and spirited energy. It is also quite interesting to see visuals of the conductor, the singers, and the audience. Titles on the digipak are given in Russian and English; the video, however, has no subtitles, which would have made this a truly five-star production. A highly satisfying viewing and listening experience!—V.M.

New Sky, New Earth / Sirin Ensemble / Andrey Kotov, cond. / 66:08

Download Price: \$9.99

The inimitable Sirin Ensemble, the premier ensemble for early Russian folk and sacred music, makes its welcome return to Musica Russica's catalog with this fabulous collection of early chants and spiritual folk songs (along with cat. no. H094, which has an equally rich collection of songs and hymns for the feast of the Nativity of Christ). The Sirin Ensemble uncovers a layer of Russian vocal music that until recently had been thoroughly forgotten—ancient chants, sung both in unison and a dissonant indigenously Russian polyphony (not unlike Georgian polyphony, with which it may have a distant kinship), "spiritual verses," which were non-liturgical counterparts of the ancient chants, as well as hurdy-gurdy songs sung by wandering minstrels (*kaliki perekhozhie*), and hymns and carols dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when harmonic part singing in the Western European manner had already come to Muscovy through Ukraine. Listening to Sirin one realizes that until the coming of Italian opera in the eighteenth century, Russian singers probably did not sing in the bel canto manner, nor was their music conceived with that manner in mind. This CD is a must-have for all lovers of genuine Russian sacred and folk culture!—V. M.

H097



★★★★★

NEW LISTINGS

I. ORTHODOX MUSIC IN ENGLISH

Those who attended the first Divine Liturgy at the recent All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in July of 2015, were immensely impressed by the fine quality of the singing at that service—a well-blended, disciplined parish choir, endowed with fine, young voices, under the direction of a gifted and musically educated conductor, Alexander Fecanin. The choir was from St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Church in Birmingham, Alabama, a parish blessed by an abundance of musical talent.

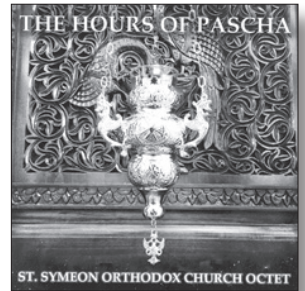
I-119



Come, Bless the Lord / St. Symeon Orthodox Church Choir, Birmingham, Ala. / Alex Fecanin, cond. / 2012 / 51:08
Price: \$14.98

This CD features a cross-section of repertoire representative of the multi-national patchwork that characterizes Orthodoxy in America. The rich and full sound of the choir is enhanced by the fine acoustics of the recording space—the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Vestavia Hills, Alabama: no electronic enhancement of any kind was used. The rich, full sound of this CD will be greatly enjoyed by all lovers of Orthodox liturgical choral singing, particularly in English.

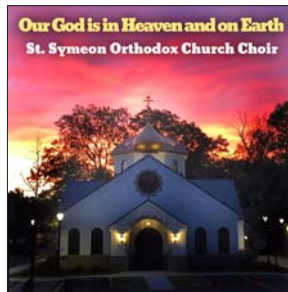
I-122



The Hours of Pascha / St. Symeon Orthodox Church Octet, Birmingham, Ala. / Alex Fecanin, cond. / 2015 / 34:16
Price: \$14.98

On this CD the listener will hear an abundance of melodies and arrangements that are familiar as well as some heard in English for the very first time. The music is well served by the crystal clear and transparent sound of the eight-voice ensemble, although some selections would have been more convincing with a larger group.

I-121



Our God is in Heaven and on Earth / St. Symeon Orthodox Church Choir, Birmingham, Ala. / Alex Fecanin, cond. / 2015
Price: \$14.98

In this, their brand new CD, the Choir of St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Church in Birmingham, Alabama, continues to demonstrate growth and maturity since their earlier CD, "Come, Bless the Lord" (cat. No. I-119), recorded in 2012. The selections on this disc continue to exhibit a bold and innovative approach to programming on the part of the conductor, featuring seven more works never before adapted into English. The choir is able to handle challenging music, with many divided parts, without any apparent difficulty. There are no or hired professional "guests" or "ringers" in this choir! Their CDs demonstrates what a dedicated parish choir, in a city that is by no means a "center" of Orthodox culture, but which has been nurtured and developed in a sustained manner over a number of years, is capable of achieving—truly an inspiration to all Orthodox choir directors in North America! One can only wish the young singers of St. Symeon Orthodox Church continued growth and success, and look forward to their future creative musical explorations.—*V.M.*

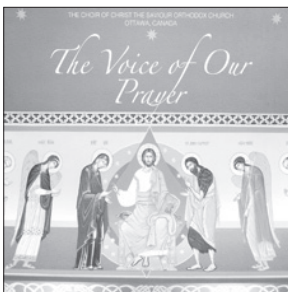
I-120



Abundant Mercy: The Polyeleos / Eikona / 2014 / 53:37
Price: \$15.98

On their newest disc the Eikona Trio sings hymns of the from the festal Orthros (Matins) service and the Artoclasia (Blessing of the Loaves), which in many North American Orthodox parishes are little known because they are either not sung or because the services at which they are sung are sparsely attended. Yet these are some of the most elaborate and beautiful chants in the entire Byzantine repertoire. The singers of Eikona (who are sisters) negotiate the complexities of the chant melodies with ease and grace, tunefully, with fine blend, and subtle ornamentation that doesn't overshadow the melody. On this disc they have achieved a new level of musical and spiritual depth. The recording is nicely engineered, allowing the natural quality of the voices to emerge in their purity and beauty, while using subtle electronic enhancement to create antiphonal effects where appropriate. This CD will be enjoyed greatly by lovers of Byzantine Chant, as well as by those who simply love beautiful, mellow, and serene sacred chant.—*V.M.*

I-123



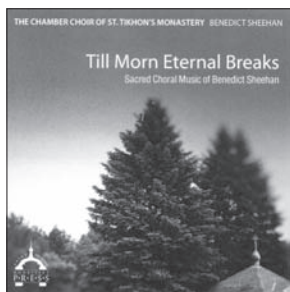
The Voice of Our Prayer / Choir of Christ the Savior Orthodox Church, Ottawa, Canada / 2013 / 48:05
Price: \$16.98

The most attractive thing about this musical offering from Christ the Savior Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church in Ottawa, Canada, is the wide variety of repertoire, representing a cultural and linguistic cross-section of Orthodoxy in North America. The singing is in tune, with a good sense of ensemble, and clean, although some voice tracks seem excessively engineered, exhibiting almost a synthesized character. One would like to hear this same group of singers in a more natural, acoustically resonant environment, and wish them continued growth and success in exploring the ever expanding musical landscape of Orthodoxy in the New World.

NEW LISTINGS

I. ORTHODOX MUSIC IN ENGLISH (cont'd)

I-124



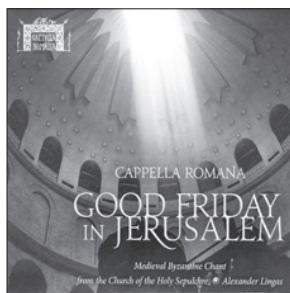
Till Morn Eternal Breaks; Sacred Choral Music of Benedict Sheehan / St. Tikhon's Monastery Chamber Choir / Benedict Sheehan, cond. / 2015 / 51:08
Price: \$18.98

This CD marks a number of laudable firsts: First, it is the debut CD comprised entirely of the choral works of American Orthodox composer Benedict Sheehan (b.1980), a gifted composer who has something to say, in ways that are both traditional and innovative. Second, it is the debut CD of the Chamber Choir of St. Tikhon's Monastery, the first professional vocal ensemble formed under the auspices of America's oldest Orthodox monastery. Such a high level of both creativity in the realm of composition and choral performance is indeed a rare occurrence in Orthodox America. The fact that Benedict Sheehan is not only the composer, but the driving force behind the formation of the St. Tikhon Chamber Choir and its conductor on this disc, shows him to be a formidable creative force. The singing on this CD is of a caliber that one expects from top-level professional singers—many of them highly accomplished Orthodox Christian vocal artists. Where appropriate, the singing is delicate and subtle, and at other times it is powerful and opulent. One can only

hope that this is the first of many rewarding recordings, both of Benedict Sheehan's (and other American Orthodox composers' works), and of the fine Chamber Choir of St. Tikhon's Monastery.—*V.M.*

J. BYZANTINE CHANT (in Greek, Slavonic, and English)

J039



Good Friday in Jerusalem / Cappella Romana / Alexander Lingas, cond. / 2015 / 74:38 /
Cappella Romana CR413-CD **Price: \$16.98**

The singing on the disc is at once rich, incisive, alive, and achingly beautiful. The repertoire is a compilation of various medieval Byzantine manuscripts of hymns from the Matins of Great and Holy Friday, organized according to a 10th-century order for the celebration of the service from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. The service is the direct liturgical ancestor of the service Orthodox now know as the Twelve Passion Gospels; anyone familiar with the current form of the service will recognize many common elements on the disc. However, rather than giving off the nostalgic aroma of a historical reenactment, as such projects often do, this recording leaves one with a clear sense that these old chants are truly liturgical, containing all the immediacy and authenticity of heartfelt prayer.—*Benedict Sheehan*

Read Benedict Sheehan's full review at:

<http://www.orthodoxartsjournal.org/cappella-romanas-good-friday-jerusalem-review-essay/>

Paraklesis / St. John of Damascus Youth Choir, St. Petersburg, Russia / Irina Boldysheva, cond. / 2014 / 49:08 / **Price: \$18.98**

The unique ministry of Irina Boldysheva and the St. John of Damascus Youth Choir in St. Petersburg is well known to our customers. For twenty-five years this choir of young people has been studying and cultivating traditional Byzantine singing —psaltiki—in the context of their service at the Vladimir Icon Cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia—a fascinating cross-cultural phenomenon. They move with facility between Church Slavonic and Greek, traditional diatonic modes, which are indigenous to Russian music, and Byzantine modes which sound quite exotic to the Russian ear. The choir's sound has developed and matured over the years; there is now a substantive contingent of male *isokrates* (ison singers) who formerly were boy sopranos; vocal lines and ornaments are negotiated with aplomb and confidence. This CD contains the traditional Byzantine Paraklesis service, sung mostly in Church Slavonic with some Greek interpolated, demonstrating how, in skillful hands, Orthodox musical traditions are able to transcend national and linguistic barriers.—*V.M.*

J042



★★★★

J043



The Rays of Byzantium; Selected Hymns from the Byzantine Tradition / St. John of Damascus Youth Choir / Irina Boldysheva, cond. / 2015 / 55:44 /
Price: \$18.98

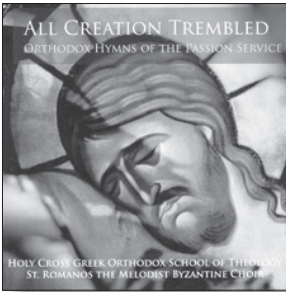
This CD serves as an inspiration to all those who work and aspire to work with young singers—an example of what can be done with vision and dedication. The CD contains 33 hymns from Vigil, Liturgy, for various feasts and saints, including the recently canonized St. Paisius of the Holy Mountain. The lavishly illustrated booklet contains texts in Church Slavonic and Greek, as well as 13 reproductions of ancient 12th- and 13th-century icons from the Sinai Monastery of St. Katherine.—*V.M.*

★★★★

NEW LISTINGS

J. BYZANTINE CHANT (in Greek, Slavonic, and English) (cont'd)

J040

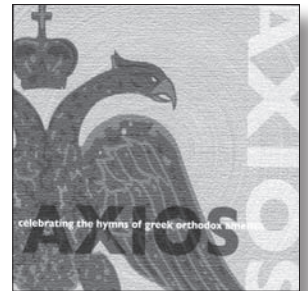


All Creation Trembled; Orthodox Hymns of the Passion Service / St. Romanos the Melodist
Byzantine Choir; Holy Cross School of Theology, Boston / 2014 / 73:42 **Price: \$19.98**

The 24-voice choir of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and Hellenic College in Brookline, Massachusetts, offers this CD in celebration of the 75th Anniversary of both schools, and dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Boston Marathon bombings that occurred on April 15, 2013, just a few days before the recording was made. Alternating Greek and English, the choir generates a convincing and authentic sound of a traditional Byzantine choir, which offers welcome evidence that Byzantine chant instruction and practice have achieved an unprecedented level of stability at Holy Cross, and are yielding good fruit. This CD will certainly appeal to lovers of Byzantine Chant, and also will serve as a good introduction for those who may not be familiar with this tradition on North American shores. The Greek and English liturgical texts are available online at www.hchc.edu/allcreationtrembled.

Axios; Celebrating the Hymns of Greek Orthodox America/ / 2011 / 23:22 **Price: \$11.98**

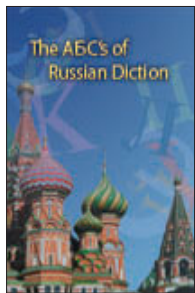
This CD is best described in the words of a phrase from the liner notes: “a tribute to the musicians who have shaped the liturgical sound for generations of Greek Orthodox Americans...” and “a celebration of the new tradition of Greek hymnody” that developed on American shores over the past century. Represented on this brief disc are many of the “giants” of Greek-American Orthodox music—Frank Desby, Anna Gallos, Tikey Zes, Theodore Bogdanos, George Raptis, Alexander Georges, and Paul Maritsas (information about them can be found on the Axios website: <http://axios-music.com/composers/>). The singing by the fourteen-voice ensemble of professional-level voices, assembled specifically for this recording project, is of high quality and does full justice to the music: it can certainly stand as a worthy model to inspire Orthodox parish choirs! This CD will be enjoyed by anyone familiar with Greek Orthodox choral music in America, but it will be an even greater revelation to those who may not be familiar with it. Short as it is, it will introduce you to some lovely and imaginative choral arrangements of traditional chant melodies and will leave you wanting to hear more. The English texts of the hymns can be found on <http://axios-music.com/hymns/>.—V.M.



J044

An Essential DVD for Singers, Conductors, Clergy, Actors, and Public Speakers who wish to learn to pronounce Russian and Church Slavonic like a native

MRDVD-1



The ABC's of Russian Diction / Vladimir Morosan / 2015 / 65:01

Price: \$29.98

Internationally renowned diction coach Vladimir Morosan teaches essential diction techniques that will enable you to pronounce Russian, Ukrainian, and Church Slavonic with confidence, accuracy, and authenticity. You will learn:

- How to shape your mouth to pronounce Russian vowels
- Where to place your tongue and lips to form Russian hard and soft consonants
- How to achieve the correct results with such difficult sounds as the rolled R and the thick Russian L
- What important pitfalls to avoid in order to sound authentically Russian

Referencing over 300 on-screen examples in Cyrillic, the Russica™ Transliteration System, and the International Phonetic Alphabet, Morosan systematically goes through all the Russian vowel and consonant sounds, visually and audibly demonstrating each one. This video will benefit everyone who desires to improve their pronunciation of Russian and other Eastern Slavic languages.

• THE RATING SYSTEM •

- ★★★★★ — Superb in every respect (reserved for those very rare “milestone” recordings)
- ★★★★ — Excellent recording
- ★★★ — Noteworthy and recommended
- ★★ — Recommended with reservations
- ★ — Of limited interest

FAQ: Why are some recordings not rated (NR)?

Customers like you have told us they appreciate and value our “star-rating” system. It is an easy way for us to share our observations and opinions in our field of expertise, which is Russian and Slavic choral music. There are many areas of music, however, in which we are not experts, such as Byzantine Chant or Georgian singing. For this reason we do not rate CDs of that music. We also do not rate CDs recently recorded in the North America by currently practicing Orthodox church musicians, many of whom are our friends and colleagues.

—Vladimir Morosan, editor