TEXT TRANSLATION

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God,
accept me today as a partaker:
for I will not speak of Thy mystery to Thine enemies,
either like Judas will I give Thee,
but like the thief will I confess Thee:
“Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.”
—from the Liturgy of Great and Holy Thursday

NOTES

GRETCHANINOFF, Alexandre Tikhonovich (b. 13[25] October, 1864, Moscow—d. 4 January, 1956, New York City)—studied at the Moscow Conservatory 1881–90 and St. Petersburg Conservatory 1890–1893, from which he graduated in N. Rimsky-Korsakov’s composition class. In 1894–96 composed a number of secular choral works for Melnikov’s and Bekker’s Choir in St. Petersburg; in 1896 moved back to Moscow, where he began writing sacred music under the influence of S. Smolensky’s ideas being propagated at the Moscow Synodal School of Church Singing; continued to compose secular choral music, theater music, and music for children’s choirs. Worked as a pedagogue, and performed as a pianist, accompanist, and conductor. In 1925 left Russia to live in Paris; from 1939 until his death lived in the United States, where he also composed a number of large- and small-scale choral works.

Gretchaninoff’s choral style is characterized by an intense Russian “flavor” on the one hand, and exceptionally rich choral textures and opulent harmonic sonorities on the other. While he occasionally quoted actual liturgical chants and, in his secular choral works—folk songs, more often he composed new melodies and themes that exhibited chant-like characteristics: stepwise melodic movement, the stringing together of melodic nuclei (known as popravi in the Znamenny Chant of the Russian Orthodox Church), and rhythmic syncopations. Out of these melodies he wove splendid choral textures that expanded and contracted freely, from unison to as many as twelve or sixteen parts, and utilized the extremes of the vocal range, creating, in effect, a choral “symphonism,” similar to that found in the works of Kastalsky, Chesnokov, Nikolsky, and Rachmaninoff. In 1917 Gretchaninoff took the notion of “symphonism” in Russian sacred music a step further, composing his third Divine Liturgy (opus 79) for chorus with instrumental accompaniment, which placed it at odds with the Orthodox Church’s tradition of exclusively a cappella performance.

“Vecherì Tvoeì tajnyì” (“Of Thy Mystical Supper”) is No. 7 from the cycle Strastnàya sedmìtsa (Passion Week or Holy Week), opus 58, which was premiered on 12 May, 1911, in Moscow by Basil’yev’s Choir. The hymn is proper to the service of Great and Holy Thursday, when Jesus’s institution of the Eucharist is celebrated in the Orthodox Church. At that service this hymn replaces the Chorubic Hymn, the Commination Hymn, and the Hymns of Thanksgiving following communion.

The present edition is based upon the original first edition published by P. Jurgenson of Moscow. All performance indications and the piano reduction have been retained from the source. Where necessary, translations of Russian performance indications have been added in brackets. In the source the text appears only under a single voice part in homophonic passages; the editor has systematized the placement of the text. One discrepancy between the voice parts and the piano reduction has been corrected: in m. 38 the second alto has a D# in the original, while the piano contains no D#. Based on the analogous measure 40, the editor believes this is a misprint. The marking poco sostenuto, in m. 42 should be interpreted as “poco ritennuto,” rather than as indicating the manner of articulation.

—Vladimir Morosan

Alkindר Гречанинов
№ 7. Вечери Твоя тайны
Alexandre Gretchaninoff
(1864 – 1956)

Vecherì Tvoeì tajnyì
Of Thy Mystical Supper

Lento assai.

Obras, No. 7

Soprano

 Alto

 Tenor

 Bass

 Piano

(For rehearsal only)

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Деление на два хора.
[Dvizi a due chori.]
Деление на два хора.

[Divisi a due chori.]