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# Maia Aprahamian (1935-2011)



I am pleased and honored to have known Maia Aprahamian and to count her among my friends. Maia entered the Orthodox Church in 2001 and became a member of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, San Anselmo, California.

Maia is one of those persons whose musical talents simply astonish. She was truly a musician. Music filled her life and was, simply put, what she "did." It was the primary medium through which she shared herself with the world.

A graduate of the prestigious Manhattan School of Music in composition, Maia is the composer of several operas, ballets, instrumental works and a considerable body of choral compositions, many of them written for use in the Orthodox Christian liturgy.

Maia was a close and dear friend of the monks of the St. John of Shanghai Monastery in Manton, California. In fact her final resting place is there in the monastery cemetery. She worked closely with the little choir of monks and helped them develop a rather unique style of singing, one rooted in traditional Orthodox chants, but refreshingly new.

It is this "refreshingly new" quality of Maia's music that I believe is its greatest asset. Very often American composers of liturgical music set out to create something "new," something "American." In so doing, their compositions often become disconnected from the liturgical "tradition" to the point they become, in a way, very artificial. I recall an early composition of an Orthodox priest whose work I generally admire. In the case I am thinking about, he took the Trisagion (Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us) and turned it into a round. The result was something "catchy" but not particularly "liturgical."

Maia seems to have avoided that temptation. Her compositions are always tasteful, modern and American, yet always respecting the moment in the Liturgy for which they were written. This is a very different concept for non-Orthodox musicians to grasp. Liturgical music is more than "entertainment." Its texts are set and its function in the service clearly defined. In this way it resembles the work of iconographers who paint a particular icon according to a set pattern or form that has been handed down for generations. The colors, positions of the figures in the icon, and other details are carefully prescribed in the canons that govern iconography. The miracle lies in the fact that, while observing all the "rules," each icon is unique and expresses the personality of its author. Working within and with the constraints of the Liturgy, Maia was able to express herself and employ all the craft of her art.

The result is a body of work that is American and contemporary, but that remains humble and useful. Maia never intrudes, never imposes herself into the fabric of the Liturgy. Rather her work lifts up the words of the common prayer of the believers and gives them voice. Maia leads us in prayer through her music.

+Benjamin Archbishop of San Francisco and the West Orthodox Church in America June, 2015

## O Joyous Light



10 LITURGY: Trisagion

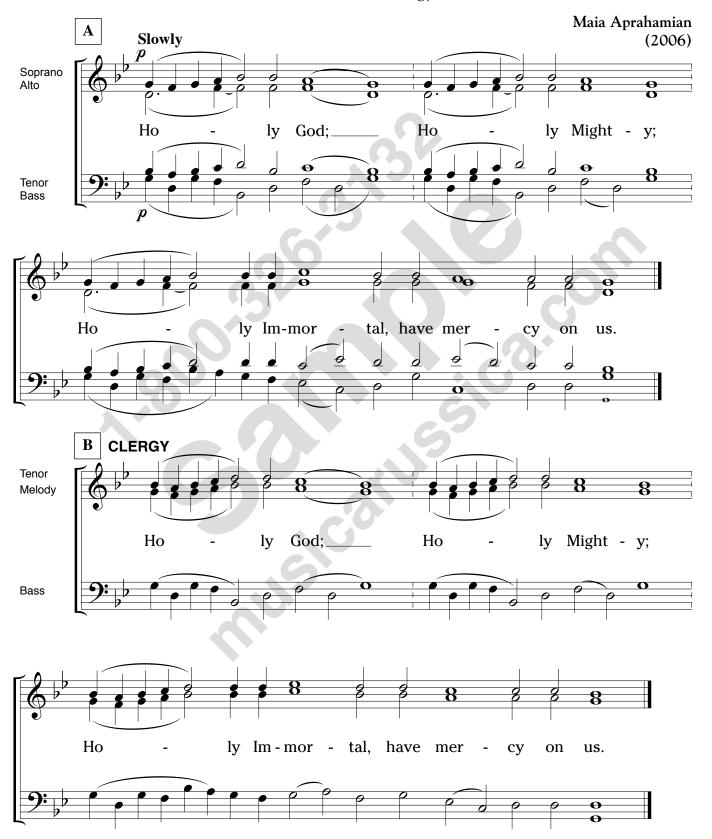
### Trisagion



12 HIERARCHAL LITURGY

## Trisagion

(at a Hierarchal Liturgy)



LITURGY: Cherubikon 17

## Cherubic Hymn



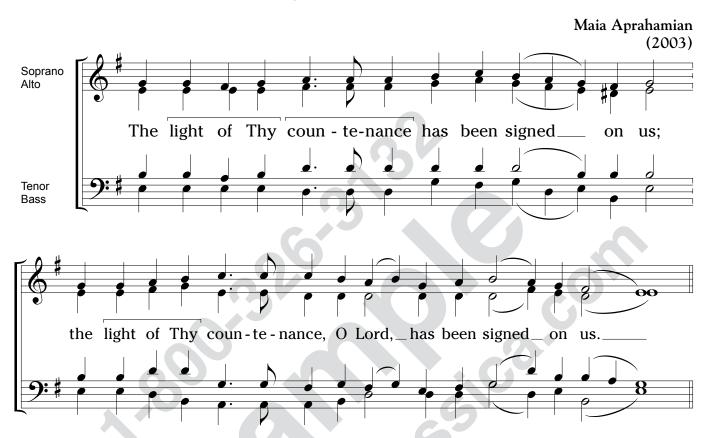
## Receive the Body of Christ



23

### The Light of Thy Countenance

(Communion Hymn for the Elevation of the Cross)



HOLY FRIDAY: Exaposteilarion 27

### The Wise Thief

#### I - Melody with ison







### The Wise Thief

#### II - Choral Version A



### The Wise Thief

#### III - Choral Version B



### An Offering Carol



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