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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
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O Joyous Light

Maia Aprahamian
(2009)

$\text{♩} = 76 - 84$

Soprano
Alto

O Joy - ous Light of the ho - ly glo - ry

Tenor
Bass

of the im - mor - tal, heav - en - ly, ho - ly, bless - ed Fa - ther:

O Je - sus Christ. Now that we have come to the

set - ting of the sun, and be - hold the light of eve - ning,

Trisagion

Maia Aprahamian
(2006)

A *Slowly*

Soprano
Alto

p

Ho - ly God; Ho - ly Might - y;

Tenor
Bass

p

Ho - ly Im-mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.

B *pp*

Ho - ly God; Ho - ly Might - y;

mf

Ho - ly Im-mor - tal, have mer - cy on us. **Repeat** **A**

Trisagion

(at a Hierarchal Liturgy)

Maia Aprahamian
(2006)

A **Slowly**

p

Soprano
Alto

Ho - ly God; Ho - ly Might - y;

Tenor
Bass

p

Ho - ly Im - mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.

B **CLERGY**

Tenor
Melody

Ho - ly God; Ho - ly Might - y;

Bass

Ho - ly Im - mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.

Cherubic Hymn

Maia Aprahamian
(2006)

Very slowly.

p

Soprano
Alto

Let us who mys - tic'ly, mys - tic'ly

Tenor
Bass

p

4

rep - re - sent the Cher - u - bim, and who *

7

sing the thrice - ho - ly hymn to the

10

life - cre - at - ing Trin - i - ty, life - cre -

The musical score is written for Soprano/Alto and Tenor/Bass voices. It begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and a tempo instruction of "Very slowly." The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "Let us who mys - tic'ly, mys - tic'ly rep - re - sent the Cher - u - bim, and who sing the thrice - ho - ly hymn to the life - cre - at - ing Trin - i - ty, life - cre -". The score is divided into four systems, with measure numbers 4, 7, and 10 indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. A repeat sign with an asterisk is placed above the final measure of the second system.

* If needed, repetition may begin here.

Receive the Body of Christ

Maia Arahamian
(2006)

1

Slowly.

Soprano
Alto

Re - ceive the Bod - y of Christ,

Tenor
Bass

Detailed description: This system contains the first two staves of the musical score. The top staff is for Soprano and Alto, and the bottom staff is for Tenor and Bass. The music is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a common time signature. The lyrics 'Re - ceive the Bod - y of Christ,' are written below the notes. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some rests and ties.

taste the foun - tain of im - mor - tal - i - ty.

Detailed description: This system contains the next two staves of the musical score. The top staff is for Soprano and Alto, and the bottom staff is for Tenor and Bass. The lyrics 'taste the foun - tain of im - mor - tal - i - ty.' are written below the notes. The music continues with similar rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

2

Re - ceive the Bod - y of Christ,

Detailed description: This system contains the final two staves of the musical score. The top staff is for Soprano and Alto, and the bottom staff is for Tenor and Bass. The lyrics 'Re - ceive the Bod - y of Christ,' are written below the notes. The music concludes with a final cadence.

The Light of Thy Countenance

(Communion Hymn for the Elevation of the Cross)

Maia Aprahamian
(2003)

Soprano Alto

Tenor Bass

The light of Thy coun - te - nance has been signed on us;

the light of Thy coun - te - nance, O Lord, has been signed on us.

The musical score is written for Soprano Alto and Tenor Bass. It features two systems of music. The first system contains the lyrics: "The light of Thy coun - te - nance has been signed on us;". The second system contains the lyrics: "the light of Thy coun - te - nance, O Lord, has been signed on us.". The music is in the key of D major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The Soprano Alto part is on a treble clef staff, and the Tenor Bass part is on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are placed between the two staves. The music consists of chords and single notes, with some phrasing slurs and a fermata at the end of the second system.

The Wise Thief

I - Melody with ison

Very slowly.

Maia Aprahamian
(2009)

F



The wise ___ thief ___ didst Thou ___ make wor - thy of

E \flat

F

E \flat

F



par - a - dise in a sin - gle mo - ment, O Lord;

(F)



by the wood ___ of the Cross ___ il - lu - mine me as well, and

The Wise Thief

II - Choral Version A

Maia Aprahamian

(2009)

Very slowly.

Soprano
Alto

The wise thief didst Thou make wor - thy of

par - a - dise in a sin - gle mo - ment, O Lord;

by the wood of the Cross il - lu - mine me as well, and

The Wise Thief

III - Choral Version B

Maia Aprahamian
(2009)

Very slowly.

The wise thief didst Thou make wor - thy of

par - a - dise in a sin - gle mo - ment, O Lord; —

by the wood of the Cross il - lu - mine me as well, — and

An Offering Carol

Maia Aprahamian
(2009)

Lively.

Soprano
Alto

mf Glo - - - ri - a! Glo -

Tenor
Bass

Glo - ri - a! Glo - - - ri - a!

4

- ri - a! Glo - ry to God in the High -

Glo - ri - a! Glo - ry to God in the

8

1. 2. *mp*

- est! - est! What shall we of - fer Thee, O Christ,

mp

High - est! High - est! What shall we of - fer

12

who for our sake hast ap - peared on earth as man? Ev - 'ry

Thee, O Christ, as man? Ev - 'ry