Glory... Only-Begotten Son

(No. 2 from Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom No. 2, opus 29)

GRETCHANINOFF, Alexandre Tikhonovich (b. 13 [25] October, 1864, Moscow; d. 4 January, 1956, New York) — studied at the Moscow Conservatory (1881-1890) and the St. Petersburg Conservatory (1890- 1893), which he completed in composition as a student of Rimsky-Korsakov. Collaborated with various choral ensembles, including Melnikov's Choir in St. Petersburg, the Moscow Synodal Choir and Vasilyev's Choir in Moscow, which premiered his numerous choral compositions. Also worked in the fields of theater music, children's music, and musical ethnography. Toured in Russia and abroad as a pianist, accompanist, and conductor. In 1925 emigrated to Paris, where he lived until 1939, when he moved to New York.

Early in his musical career, Gretchaninoff came under the influence of Stepan Smolensky, Director of the Moscow Synodal School of Church Music and leader of the movement to return Russian church music to its roots in ancient ecclesiastical chant and the choral folk song. Although Gretchaninoff tended not to use actual chants in his sacred works, he frequently devised new chant-like melodies. Like other composers working at the Moscow Synodal School (e. g., Kastalsky, Chesnokov, Nikolsky), he used a rich palette of choral textures, ranging from stark unison (sometimes doubled in two or three octaves, reminiscent of Old Believers' singing) to "choral symphonism" in eight to twelve diverse parts.

Gretchaninoff's second setting of the Divine Liturgy, opus 29, from which the present hymn is taken, was published in 1902. By comparison with previous settings of this service, such as Tchaikovsky's and his own opus 13 (1898), this work represented a major evolution in terms of musical scope and complexity.

NOTE: According to a note in Gretchaninoff's autobiography, My Life (New York: 1952), the correct pronunciation of the composer's name puts the stress on the third syllable: Gret-cha-ní-noff.











