



Colchester Chamber Choir

Director Roderick Earle

RACHMANINOFF VESPERS



This performance of the Rachmaninoff Vespers celebrates the beginning of our tenth anniversary year. We have presented over sixty concerts and recitals in just nine years, performances that have included more than two hundred and fifty individual pieces of music. Our repertoire covers the complete spectrum of the classical tradition from the Renaissance to the contemporary. We specialise in singing less well-known music for the smaller choir in the original language and pride ourselves on our imaginative programming and presentation. The choir is auditioned and through detailed rehearsal endeavours to aspire to the highest professional standards of music-making. We perform throughout East Anglia in cathedrals, castles, gardens and country churches.

Several of our choral apprentices have gone on to receive choral scholarships at universities and cathedrals, benefiting from the unique experience of singing in the choir.

Roderick Earle

was a boy chorister at Winchester Cathedral and following a choral scholarship at St. John's College, Cambridge and the Royal College of Music entered the singing profession as a soloist. He was a principal baritone with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden for 21 years, singing more than 60 roles with many of the greatest singers, conductors and directors of the era and has sung in opera and concerts all over the world. He has made several recordings and videos from early to contemporary music. Roderick is also a singing professor at The Royal College of Music, London and teaches the choral scholars at Trinity College, Cambridge.

COLCHESTER CHAMBER CHOIR

sopranos

Rosalind Aczel, Emily Burden*, Diana Childs,
Liz Curry, Anita Filer, Caroline Finlay,
Lesley Gunfield, Harriet Orbell, Linda Pearsall,
Libby Ridley, Hilary Sellers, Sarah Watson

altos

Lehla Abbott, Anne-Dore Beaton,
Gemeilah Cann, Patsy Cosgrove,
Tessa Freebairn†, Gemma Hydes, Julia King,
Meg Prolingheuer, Mary Stamp, Clare Westley

tenors

Jonathan Abbott, Chris Huggon†,
Andrew Marsden, Amrit Nasta,
Daniel Ruiz, Lenny Rush‡

basses

Mike Frost, Adam Masters,
Sean Moriarty, Steven Moseley,
Sam Newton*, Stephen Smith,
Chris Tanner, Paul Torrington

†soloist, *choral apprentice, ‡choral scholar

Please do not applaud until the end of the performance
There will be no interval during the concert, but two short pauses.

After the concert we hope you will join us for some Russian refreshments.

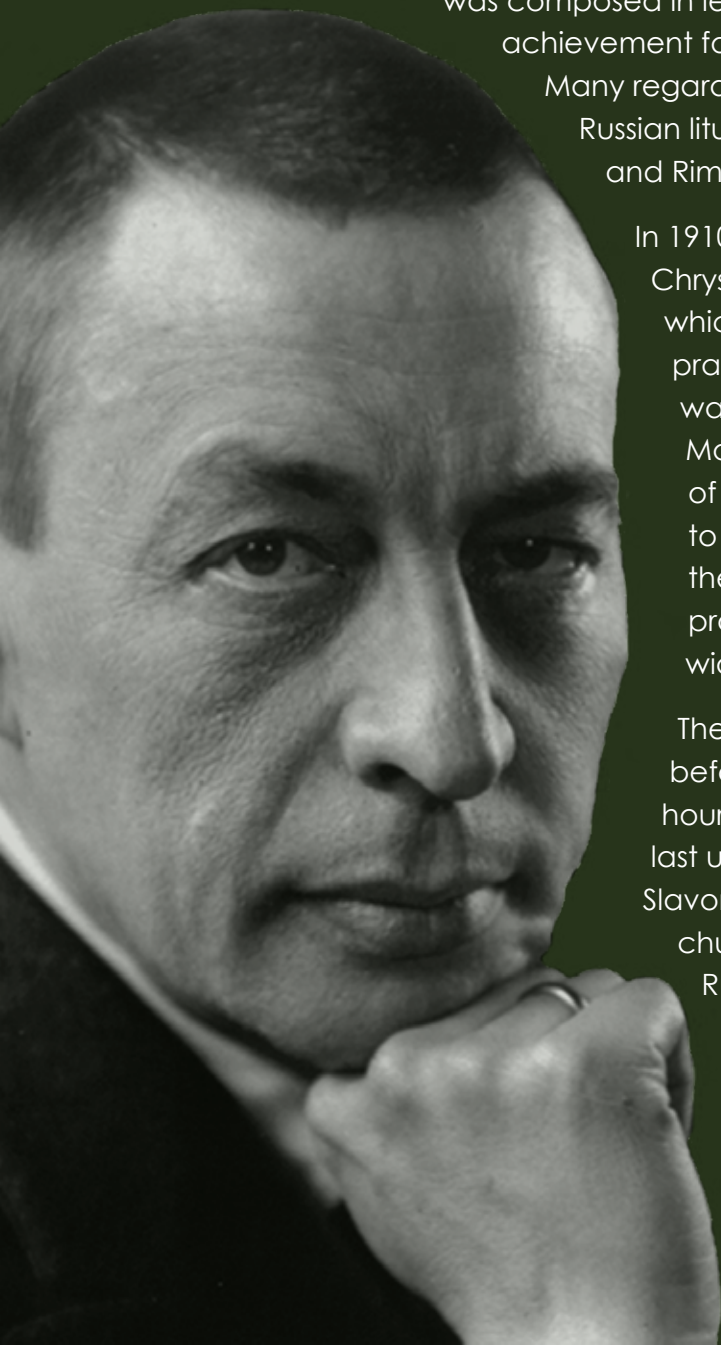
RACHMANINOFF VESPERS

Rachmaninoff's setting of the Vespers or, more properly, the All-Night Vigil, was composed in less than two weeks in early 1915 - a remarkable achievement for a deeply felt, densely scored and complex work. Many regard it as the crowning achievement of the golden era of Russian liturgical music - a tradition to which both Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov had made significant contributions.

In 1910, Rachmaninoff had written his Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (the Orthodox equivalent of the Mass) with which he was never wholly satisfied and although not a practising member of the Russian Orthodox church he was persuaded by Stepan Smolensky, the director of the Moscow Synodal Choir, to embark on the composition of the All-Night Vigil. Rachmaninoff dedicated the work to Smolensky and the first performance was given by the all-male choir in March 1915. The performance, promoted to raise funds for the Russian war effort, was widely acclaimed by audience and critics alike.

The All-Night Vigil, celebrated on Saturday evenings or before major feast days, combines the three canonical hours of Vespers, Matins and Prime. The whole service can last up to three hours or even longer. The text is in Church Slavonic, the ancient liturgical language of the Slavic churches. It is related to, but not the same as modern Russian.

Rachmaninoff's work shows a masterly use of polyphonic and monodic techniques. He allows the melody of the chant to meander between vocal lines and conjures vast imagined spaces, filling



them with chanting human and angelic voices as well as the tintinnabulation of bells, sometimes slow and low, sometimes fast and jubilant. The work also presents a wide range of emotions, contrasting hushed moments of reflection, awe and adoration with wildly ecstatic and euphoric passages that seem to catch us up into heaven itself.

Nine of the movements are based on traditional chants (ancient Znamenny, Greek and Kievan), but for six of the movements Rachmaninoff wrote his own pastiche chants and for this 'un-orthodox' reason the work was never embraced by the Russian church. Happily, the composer clearly conceived the work for concert performance as much as for liturgical use and although it was not much performed until the 1960s it is now a staple of the choral repertoire, albeit one of the most challenging.

In 1939 Rachmaninoff confessed that he, "felt like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien. I cannot cast out the old way of writing and I cannot acquire the new". This is hardly surprising as the world was lurching towards yet another major conflict and the Russia of his childhood seemed but a dim memory. The music of Stravinsky, Bartok and Schoenberg had similarly swept away the music of his earlier years. As a postscript, Rachmaninoff paid tribute to the Vespers by quoting the syncopated passage at the end of the ninth movement in his compositional swansong, the third orchestral Symphonic Dance.

Sergei Rachmaninoff was born in 1873 near Novgorod, into an aristocratic and musical family. He took piano lessons at the age of four and graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in 1892, having already composed several major works. Following the disastrous première of his First Symphony in 1897, he experienced four years of deep depression which were only relieved by the rapturous reception of his Second Piano Concerto in 1901. For the next 16 years he was conductor at the Bolshoi Theatre; he also moved to Dresden and made his first visit to the USA. After the Revolution he and his family left Russia, eventually settling in New York. His main source of income then came from his performances as a concert pianist and from conducting. Between 1918 and his death in 1943 he wrote only six works, including his Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini, his Third Symphony and the Symphonic Dances. Initially influenced by Tchaikovsky and his contemporaries, he developed a personal style which features an abundant melodic ability as well as a deeply rich expressiveness. His abilities as a pianist meant that he wrote many masterworks for that instrument as well as songs with piano accompaniment.

ALL NIGHT VIGIL

VESPERS

1 Priiditye, poklonyimsya

Come, let us worship

2 Blagoslovyi dushe moya, Ghospoda

Bless the Lord, O my soul

3 Blazhen muzh

Blessed is the man

4 Svyetye tyihy

Gladsome Light

5 Ninye otpushchayeshi

Lord, now letttest thy servant

6 Bogorodyitse Dyevo

Rejoice, O Virgin





MATINS

7 Shestopsalmyiye

The six psalms

8 Hvalyitye imyia rospyeva

Praise the Name of the Lord

9 Blagoslovyen yesyi rospyeva

Blessed are thou, O Lord

10 Vosryesyenyiye Hristovo vidyevshe

Having beheld the Resurrection

11 Vyelichit dushamoya Ghospoda

My soul magnifies the Lord

12 Slavoslovyiye vyelikoye

The Great Doxology

13 Dnyesy spasyenyiye

Today Salvation

14 Voskryes iz groba

Thou didst rise

PRIME

15 Vzbrannoy voyevodye

To thee, the victorious leader

No.1

Come, let us worship God, our King.

Come let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before the very Christ, our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before him.

No. 2

Bless the Lord, O my soul, blessed art thou, O Lord.

O Lord my God, thou art very great.

Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

Blessed art thou, O Lord.

The waters stand upon the mountains.

Marvellous are thy works, O Lord.

The waters flow between the hills.

Marvellous are thy works, O Lord.

In wisdom hast thou made all things.

Glory to thee, O Lord, who hast created all.

(Psalm 103)

No. 3

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked. Alleluia.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish. Alleluia.

Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in him with trembling. Alleluia.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! Alleluia.

Salvation is of the Lord; and thy blessing is upon thy people. Alleluia.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia. Glory to thee, O God.

(Psalm 1)

No. 4

Gladsome light of the holy glory of the Immortal One,

the Heavenly Father, holy and blessed, O Jesus Christ.

Now that we have come to the setting of the sun and behold the light of evening,

we praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - God.

Thou art worthy at every moment to be praised in hymns by reverent voices.

O Son of God, thou art the giver of life; therefore all the world glorifies thee.

(Psalm 140)

No. 5

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation

which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.

A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people, Israel.

(Luke 2: 29–32)

No. 6

Rejoice O Virgin Theotokos, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb,
for thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.



No. 7

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.
O Lord, open thou my lips and my mouth shall proclaim thy praise.

No. 8

Praise the name of the Lord. Alleluia.
Praise the Lord, O you his servants. Alleluia.
Blessed be the Lord from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem. Alleluia.
O give thanks to the Lord for he is good. Alleluia.
For his mercy endures for ever. Alleluia.
O give thanks unto the God of heaven. Alleluia.
For his mercy endures for ever. Alleluia.

(Psalm 135)

No. 9

Blessed are thou O Lord, teach me thy statutes.

The angelic host was filled with awe when it saw thee among the dead.
By destroying the power of death, O Saviour, thou didst raise Adam and save all men from hell.

Blessed are thou O Lord, teach me thy statutes.

'Why do you mingle myrrh with your tears of compassion, O ye women disciples?'
cried the radiant angel in the tomb to the myrrh-bearers.

'Behold the tomb and understand: the Saviour is risen from the dead.'

Blessed are thou O Lord, teach me thy statutes.

Very early in the morning the myrrh-bearers ran with sorrow to thy tomb,
but an angel came to them and said:

'The time for sorrow has come to an end. Do not weep,
but announce the resurrection to the apostles'.

Blessed are thou O Lord, teach me thy statutes.

The myrrh-bearers were sorrowful as they neared thy tomb but the angel said to them:

'Why do you number the living amongst the dead?
Since he is God, He is risen from the tomb.'

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

We worship the Father, and his Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Trinity, one in essence.

We cry with the seraphim: 'Holy, holy, holy art thou, O Lord.'

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Since thou didst give birth to the Giver of Life, O Virgin,
thou didst deliver Adam from his sin.

Thou gavest joy to Eve instead of sadness.

The God-man who was born of thee has restored to life those who had fallen from it.

Alleluia. Glory to thee, O God.

No. 10

Having beheld the resurrection of Christ,
let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless one.

We venerate thy cross, O Christ,
and we hymn and glorify thy holy resurrection,
for thou art our God and we know no other than Thee.

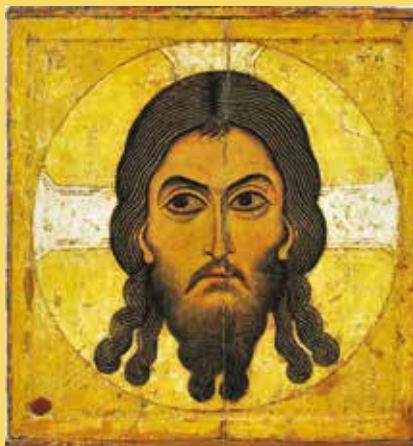
We call on thy name.

Come, all you faithful, let us venerate Christ's holy resurrection.

For behold, through the cross joy has come into all the world.

Ever blessing the Lord, let us praise his resurrection,

for by enduring the cross for us
he has destroyed death by death.



No. 11

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

More honourable than the cherubim
and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim,
without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word,
true Theotokos, we magnify thee.

For he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

More honourable ...

For he that is mighty hath done great things for me and holy is his name,
and his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

More honourable ...

He has put down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away.

More honourable ...

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
as he promised to our forefathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever.

More honourable than the cherubim
and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim,
without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word,
true Theotokos, we magnify thee.

(Luke 1 46–55)

No. 12

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.

We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee,
we give thanks to thee for thy great glory.

O Lord, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty,

O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who
takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Thou who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.

Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For thou alone art holy, thou alone art the Lord, Jesus Christ,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day I will bless thee and praise thy name for ever and ever.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. Blessed art thou, O Lord,
God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is thy name forever. Amen.

Let thy mercy O Lord, be upon us, as we have set our hope on thee.

Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes.

Lord, thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation.

I said: 'Lord have mercy on me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.

Lord I flee to thee, teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God;
for with thee is the fountain of life and in thy light we shall see light.

Continue thy mercy on those who know thee'.

Holy God, Holy Might, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. Holy God,

Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

No. 13

Today salvation has come to the world.

Let us sing to him who rose from the dead, the author of our life.

Having destroyed death by death he has given us the victory and great mercy.

No. 14

Thou didst rise from the tomb and burst the bonds of Hades.

Thou didst destroy the condemnation of death, O Lord,
releasing all mankind from the snares of the enemy.

Thou didst show thyself to thine apostles,
and didst send them forth to proclaim thee;
and through them thou hast granted thy peace to the world,
O thou who art plenteous in mercy.

No. 15

To thee, the victorious leader of triumphant hosts,
we thy servants, delivered from evil,

offer hymns of thanksgiving, O Theotokos.

Since thou dost possess invincible might,
set us free from all calamities, so that we may
cry to thee: 'Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!'.

A painting of a woman in a white dress looking out over a river with boats. The woman is in the foreground, looking towards the right. The background shows a river with two boats, surrounded by lush greenery and trees. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

**Colchester
Chamber Choir**

Director Roderick Earle

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We would like to thank our patrons for their generosity in supporting our choir.

Joanna Bisdee

David Jewell

Richard Murphy

Jill and Peter Newton

Linda Salmon

Val Sanderson

Madeleine Wilson

The choir is largely self-funding with the help of some generous donations. We are always looking for further financial support to enable us to continue to flourish and to develop future projects.

If you have enjoyed tonight's performance and are interested in becoming a supporter, please contact our chairman Patsy Cosgrove by emailing chair@colchesterchamberchoir.org

THE
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ELGAR

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Information about the choir's activities and future concerts can be found on our website

www.colchesterchamberchoir.org



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