Rachmaninoff
Vespers

All-Night Vigil
Tenebrae
Nigel Short
RECORDED LIVE
**TENEBRAE**

**1. PRIIDITE, POKLONIMSYA**
COME, LET US WORSHIP

**2. BLAGOSLOVI, DUSHE MOYA, GOSPODA**
BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL

**3. BLAZHEN MUZH**
BLESSED IS THE MAN

**4. SVETE TIKHYI**
GLADSOME LIGHT

**5. NYNE OTPUSHCHAYESHI**
LORD, NOW LETTEST THOU

**6. BOGORODITSE DEVO**
REJOICE O VIRGIN

**7. SHESTOPSALMIYE**
The SIX PSALMS

**8. KHVALITE IMYA GOSPODNE**
PRAISE THE NAME OF THE LORD

**9. BLAGOSLOVEN ESI, GOSPODI**
BLESSED ART THOU O LORD

**10. VOSKRESENIYE KHRISTOVO VIDEVSHE**
HAVING BEHELD THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

**11. VELICHIUT DUSHA MOYA GOSPODA**
MY SOUL MAGNIFIES THE LORD

**12. SLAVOSLOVE VELIKOYE**
THE GREAT DOXOLOGY

**13. DINES SPASENYE**
TODAY SALVATION HAS COME

**14. VOSKRES IZ GROBA**
THOU DIDST RISE FROM THE TOMB

**15. VZBRANNOY VOYEVODE**
TO THEE, THE VICTORIOUS LEADER

**16. Tebe poyem**
WE PRAISE THEE

Total Time [60.18]

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**TENEBRAE**

**DIRECTOR:** Nigel Short  
**ALTO:** Frances Jellard  
**TENOR:** Paul Badley

**SOPRANO**
Emily Benson, Emma Brain-Gabbott, Elizabeth Crabtree, Grace Davidson, Anna Dennis, Julia Doyle, Alice Gibbin, Amy Haworth

**ALTO**
Frances Bourne, Helen Brookes, Mark Chambers, Frances Jellard, Kathryn Oswald, Suzanna Spicer, Anna Stephany

**BASS**
Jeremy Birchall, Julian Clarkson, Gabriel Crouch, Joseph Cullen, Dan Jordan, Andrew Kidd, Adrian Peacock, David Porter-Thomas

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Tenebrae is a professional chamber choir founded and directed by Nigel Short. Often performing in ecclesiastical buildings by candlelight, the choir creates an atmosphere of spiritual and musical reflection, where medieval chant and renaissance choral works are interspersed with contemporary compositions, to create an ethereal mood of contemplation. The beautiful acoustics and lighting effects of a Tenebrae concert are further enhanced by the choir’s dramatic use of movement. As singers move around their surroundings exploring all possible sound perspectives, each member of the audience is able to experience the power and intimacy of the human voice. A Tenebrae performance provides an opportunity for pure meditation, or simple enjoyment.

Passion and Precision is the motto of Tenebrae, and the singers of the choir are drawn from musical backgrounds that reflect these qualities. Former members of choirs such as King’s College, Cambridge, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral & St Paul’s Cathedral, together with the leading specialist vocal groups from the UK, make up its ranks. Contributing to the dramatic qualities of Tenebrae’s performing style are singers from two of Britain’s opera houses, Covent Garden and English National Opera. This combination weaves together an extraordinary variety of vocal experience and flexibility, giving the choir a unique range of vocal power and colour.

Tenebrae has made a number of recordings, most recently a recording including the traditional carol *Gaudete* arranged by Karl Jenkins, Britten’s *Hymn to St Cecilia* on SignumClassics, and Mozart’s *Requiem* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Their recording of Sir John Tavener’s *Mother and Child* (commissioned by Tenebrae) was nominated for a Gramophone Award in 2004.

In the 2003/4 season, Tenebrae made their debut at the City of London Festival, performing Rachmaninoff’s *Vespers* in St Paul’s Cathedral. They have also performed throughout the UK and Europe, and in the USA, and are involved in a future Disney film project. In 2005, they will give the world premiere of a major new commission from British composer Joby Talbot, inspired by the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage.

Nigel Short, Tenebrae’s founder and music director, started singing at the age of 7 and studied at the Royal College of Music. He has sung in many of the country’s foremost choirs, including Westminster Abbey, where he was appointed a lay vicar aged 19, and the English National Opera. After seven years as a member of one of the world’s most celebrated vocal ensembles – the King’s Singers – Nigel Short left to follow his dream of conducting and composing for his own chamber choir.
RACHMANINOFF: VESPERS

We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely we cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty.

So wrote the envoys of Vladimir I, experiencing for the first time the divine liturgy at the church of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople in 987. It was this visit that led directly to the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church the following year. Yet the origins of this branch of Christianity go back far further than this: indeed, it can lay claim to being the oldest manifestation of the church of Peter. At the same time, Byzantine liturgy was taking shape. To an extent, it was the formulation of the liturgy that precipitated the schism with Rome. When the Roman pope refused to recognise Photius as Patriarch of Constantinople in the 9th century, Photius responded by challenging the pope’s authority over the inclusion of the ‘filioque’ clause in the creed. Missionaries from Constantinople converted the Slavs and many parts of Eastern Europe to Christianity – amongst them Bulgaria in 864, Russia in 988 – and part of this process involved the translation of the Greek rite into the vernacular. Thus the old church Slavonic texts set by Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff and others are directly linked to this early expansion.

Further schism with Rome in 1054 and the sacking of Constantinople in the first Crusade (1204) led to an irreparable separation between the two major branches of Christianity. Whilst Western forms of Christianity continued to evolve – and splinter into different factions – the Orthodox tradition has been preserved largely intact. It remains the established religion in Greece; the largest populations of Orthodox Christians are in Russia and Romania, and this despite the church’s persecution under an intolerant Communist regime – which only lifted in the Gorbachev era.

The story begins in Greece. Greek was the medium of international communication in the early centuries; the Hebrew scriptures were transmitted to the rest of the world via Hellenistic Alexandria; Paul wrote in Greek to the early churches and until the third century the liturgy of the church was in Greek. However, the early formation of what we now recognise as the Orthodox Church dates from 320 when Emperor Constantine shifted the seat of imperialism from Rome to Constantinople. In the following eight centuries the region witnessed major advances in social, intellectual and cultural life. Eight ecumenical councils met in Constantinople between 325 and 787 to determine the structure and doctrine of modern Christianity, including the concepts of the trinity and divine incarnation. Of particular significance for the Orthodox Church were the veneration of Mary as mother of God and the adoption of icons as visible symbols of God’s taking human form in Christ.

The music of the Orthodox Church is exclusively vocal; no instruments of any kind are permitted. The oldest chant of the Russian tradition is known as znamenny – the word derives from the Slavonic znamia (sign) which is cognate with the Western neume. The chant’s earliest forms in the pre-Mongol period are well documented in approximately twenty-five manuscript sources, yet these are all but indecipherable now, dependent as they are on a subtle and sophisticated understanding of complex rules of melodic invention. Later interpretations (from the mid-15th to the late-17th centuries) are however well preserved, thanks in part to the annotations found in manuscripts – the so-called ‘cinnamabar’ annotations, which are written in red above the melodic signs, and indicate the starting pitches of the melodic units.

The melody of znamenny chant is extremely simple. It started as a purely monodic style, usually unornamented, moving almost exclusively by step following and speech intonation. Although this allows maximum clarity of the sung text, the chant could be decorated with a variety of celebratory patterns for festive occasions. By the 17th century the melodic line, in the tenor, might be harmonised by other voices. In the 19th century there developed a kind of complex vocal ‘orchestration’, of which the most significant exponents were from the Moscow Synodal School – Katalys and Chesnokov. This involved highly developed vocal technique, exploiting a wide tessitura for all voices, but especially parts for strong low basses and altos, combined with high tenor and (to a lesser extent) soprano lines. This kind of textural variety was the only way in which composers could add expressive colour to the music. Glinka and Tchaikovsky to some extent step outside the rigid confines of traditional chant, adding characteristic harmonic effects and greater metrical regularity, but Rachmaninoff consciously preserves the modal purity of the originals he uses. Rachmaninoff creates variety in his rather more ‘orthodox’ Orthodox settings by relying instead on divisi voice parts and dynamic contrasts.

THE ALL-NIGHT VIGIL

Our fathers did not wish to receive the grace of evening light in silence; rather, they offered thanks as soon as it appeared.

— St Basil the Great, 4th century

The all-night vigil is celebrated on the eve of the main feasts of the Orthodox Church. Originally it lasted all night from 6 pm on Saturday night through to 9 am on Sunday morning, and it consists of three separate services: Great Vespers, Matins (at midnight) and the First Hour or Prime (in the morning). By the end of the 19th century this had been reduced to a service lasting a mere three hours.

The purpose of the vigil is to show a sense of beauty in the setting sun and give the congregation a chance to consider the spiritual light of Christ, the new light of the coming day and the eternal light of the heavenly kingdom. Great Vespers begins in silence, with a cruciform censing of the altar – one of the most profound moments of Orthodox liturgy, representing eternal rest and the silence before Creation. There follows a sequence of hymns, readings, chants and prayers, providing an analogy of the way in which paradise was returned to mankind by the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. Music of course plays a part in this liturgy, as a vehicle for the sacred texts – the words are always paramount and the austerity of the music reflects this.
Rachmaninoff's setting of the All-Night Vigil (Vesennischnoye bdeniye op. 37) was written in January and February 1915, in the middle of the first world war, when Rachmaninoff was 41. During this period Rachmaninoff was travelling throughout Russia with Serge Kousovetsky, giving concerts in aid of the war against Germany. He had already completed one choral work in this vein (the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom of 1910 following Tchaikovsky's example of 1879) but the Vigil is more elaborately worked out and more intense in its expression. He used authentic znamenny chant in seven movements; two movements employ Greek chants; and in the remaining movements he constructed what he described as a 'conscious counterfeit of the original'. The piece is dedicated to the scholar Stephan Vasilevitch Smolensky (1849–1909) who had introduced the composer to the repertoire of the church when he was at the Moscow conservatoire. Yet Rachmaninoff's inspiration was as much politically motivated as anything else – the composition was a powerful affirmation of nationalism during the war.

The first performance on 10 March 1915 was given not liturgically but in a fund-raising concert by the Moscow Synodal Choir, directed by Nicolai Danilin. It was extremely well received and had to be repeated four times during the concert season.

‘Even in my dreams I could not have imagined that I would write such a work,’ Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. Hearing this extraordinary piece of music, not a word, Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. Hearing this extraordinary piece of music, not a word, Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. Hearing this extraordinary piece of music, not a word, Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. Hearing this extraordinary piece of music, not a word, Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. Hearing this extraordinary piece of music, not a word, Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. Hearing this extraordinary piece of music, not a word, Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. Hearing this extraordinary piece of music, not a word, Rachmaninoff told the singers at the first performance. 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An encore ...

Tebe poyem (We praise thee, we bless thee)

Tebe poyem is the twelfth movement from the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom op. 31, whose first version was completed in July 1910. Whereas in the Vespers Rachmaninoff used authentic chant as the foundation for many of the movements, here the material is entirely his own. The piece was written for Alexander Katalsky at the Moscow Synodal School but when the composer showed it to him, Katalsky sent back a long list of 'corrections' — some were in fact incorporated in the final score, including changes to the number of voices (for example, changing single to double choir and vice versa). In the end the revised piece was premiered by Nicolai Danilin on 25 November 1910 and published in that form later that year.

This movement has a great simplicity that belies its emotional impact. In E flat major, it is written in a homophonic style, the five-part chorus joined at the end by a floating soprano solo.

Notes © David Bray 2004

1 Amin.
PRIDITE, POKLONIMSYA Tsarevi nashemu Bogu.
Priidite, poklonimsya i pripadem Khristu Tsarevi nashemu Bogu.
Priidite, poklonimsya i pripadem Samomu Khristu Tsarevi i Bogu nashemu.
Priidite, poklonimsya i pripadem Emu.

2 BLAGOSLOVI, DUSHE MOYA, GOSPODA, blagosloven esi, Gospodi.
Gospodi Bozhe moy, vozvelichilsya esi zelo.
Blessed art thou, O Lord.
The waters stand upon the mountains.
Marvellous are thy works, O Lord.
The waters stand upon the mountains.
Marvellous are thy works, O Lord.
In wisdom hast thou made all things.

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

1 Amen.
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.

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.

3 BLAZHEN MUZH, izhe ne ide na sovet nechestivykh. Alliluya.
Vako vest Gospod put pravednykh, i put nechestivykh pogibnet.
Alliluya.
Rabotaite Gospodevi so strakhom i radutesya Emu s treptom.
Alliluya.
Voskresni, Gospodi, spasi mya, Bozhe moy. Alliluya.
Gospodene est spasenie, i na lyudekh Tvokh blagosloveniye Tvye. Alliluya.
Slava Otsu, i Synu, i Svatymu Dukhu, i nyne i prismo i vo veki vekov. Amen.
Alliluya. Slava Tebe, Bozhe.

4 (Vechernaya Pesn)
SVETE TIKHYI svyatyya slavy, Bezsmertnago, Otsa Nebesnago,
Svyatago Blazhennago, liskee Khriste!
Prishedshe na zapad solntsa, videvshe svet vechernii, poyem Otsa,
Syna i Svatago Dukha, Boga!
Dostoin esi vo vsya vremena pet byti glasi prepodobnymi,
Syne Bozhii, zhivot dayai, temzhe mir Tya slavit.

5 NYNE OTPUSHCHAYESHI raba Tvoego, Vladyko,
po glagolu Tvoyemu s mirom:
yako videsta ochi moi spaseniye Tvoe,
eze esu ugotoval pred litsem vseki lyudei,
svet vo otkrovenie yazykov, i slavu lyudei Tvokh Izrailya.

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.

(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.

Notes © David Bray 2004
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 art thou …

The myrh-bearers were sorrowful as they neared the 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.

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 shall 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 his seed for ever.

12 THE GREAT DOXOLOGY Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill 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 God, 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.

13 (Tropar voskresen 1) DNES SPASENYE miru byst, pojem voskressshemu iz groba i nachalniku zhizni nasheya: razrushed bo smertyu smert, poberu dade nam i veliyu milost.

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.
(Tropar voskresen 2)

VOSKRES IZ GROBA i uzy rasterzal esi ada, razrushil esi osuzhdeniye smerti, Gospodi, vsya ot setei vraga izbavivyi, yavivyi zhe Sebe apostolom Tvoim, poslal esi ya na propoved, i temi mir Tvoi podal esi veselennye, edine mnogomilostive.

(Kontakion)

VZBRANNOY VOYEVODE pobeditelnaya, yako izbavishesya ot zlykh, blagodarstvennaya nosissemu Ti rabi Tvoi, Bogoroditsye. No yako imushchaya derzhavu nepobedimuyu, ot vsyakikh nas bed svobodit, da zovem Ti: ‘Raduisya, nevesto Nenevestnaya.’

TEBE POYEM, tebe blagoslovim, tebe blagodarim, Gospodi, yi molim ti sa, bozhe nash.

14

(Resurrection Troparion 2)

THOU DIDST RISE FROM THE TOMB and burst the bonds of Hades. Thou didst destroy the condemnation of death, 0 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, 0 thou who art plenteous in mercy.

15

(Kontakion)

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!’

WE PRAISE THEE, we bless and praise thy name. Humbly, we thank thee. Lord our God, hear us, hear our prayer. We praise thee. Hear our prayer, 0 Lord our God.
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Gramophone

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