Sergei Rachmaninoff

Vespers
(All-Night Vigil) Op.37

Saint Thomas Choir of Men & Boys,
Fifth Avenue, New York

John Scott conductor
Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op. 37

Ory Brown mezzo-soprano
David Vanderwal tenor
Saint Thomas Choir of Men & Boys, Fifth Avenue, New York
John Scott conductor

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1. Priidite poklonimsya
Come, let us worship
[2:44]

2. Blagoslovi, dushe moya
Praise the Lord, O my soul
[5:32]

3. Blazhen muzh
Blessed is the man
[5:03]

4. Svete tikhii
Hail, gladening light
[3:35]

5. Nyne otpushchaeshi
Lord, now lettest thy servant depart
[3:28]

6. Bogoroditse Devo, raduiysa
Rejoice, O virgin mother of God
[2:48]

7. Slava v vyshnih Bogu
Glory be to God on high
[2:45]

8. Khvalite imya Gospodne
O praise the name of the Lord
[2:04]

9. Blagosloven esi, gospodi
Blessed art Thou, O Lord
[5:34]

[3:24]
[7:50]
[7:25]
[1:31]
[2:48]
[1:39]
[58:16]

Dedicated to the memory of Kyra Schutt Hawkins Hickox (1903-2008)

About Saint Thomas Choir of Men & Boys:

‘The choir is absolutely secure from trebles to basses’
Gramophone

‘The choir sings wonderfully’
New York Times
Romania, and this despite the church’s
role in the persecution under an intolerant Communist
regime – which only lifted in the Gorbachev era.

The music of the Russian 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 znamiya (sign)
which is comparable to the Western neume.

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
seventeenth century the melodic line, in
the tenor, was harmonized by other voices,
but by the mid-nineteenth century there was
a resurgence of interest in the ancient
prototypes, including chant. Composers
began to create polyphonic settings of the
chant melodies as well as freely composed
harmonised chant in his All-Night Vigil (1881)
and a more effusive originality in his Liturgy
of St John Chrysostom (1878). The latter
work, in fact, shocked some of the more
conservative churchmen and served to open
the door to a series of later settings by
leading composers at the turn of the century.
These included, among others,
Arkangelsky, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Gretchaninoff,
and Chesnokov. Characteristic of this school
of composition is the 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.
Rachmaninoff followed in the tradition of
these great composers. He was not raised in
the church, nor did he attend regularly. As
a result, when he began to compose this
work, he did not fall back on common
formulas or established forms for the
various hymns. Rather, he gave careful
consideration to the texts, setting them in
such a way as to point out meanings and
nuances that other settings generally lack.
The Vespers is written for a four-part choir;
however, in many parts there are divisi into
five, six, or eight-part harmony. At one
point in the seventh movement, the choir
is divided into eleven parts. The result is a
work that is unique in its musical content,
formal breadth, sheer beauty and
opulence of choral writing.

Sergei Rachmaninoff:
Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op. 37

We knew not whether we were in heaven or
on earth, for surely there is no such splendid
or beauty anywhere upon earth. 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.

Of particular significance for the Orthodox
Church are the veneration of Mary as Mother
of God and the adoption of icons as visible
symbols of God’s taking human form in Christ.

Schism with Rome in 1054 and the sacking
of Constantinople in the first Crusade (1204)
led to an irrevocable 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 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

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, fourth century

The All-Night Vigil is celebrated on the eve of
the main feasts of the Orthodox Church.
Originally it lasted all night from 6pm on
Saturday night through to 9am 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 nineteenth 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

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consisting of fifty boys and thirty men, directed by Nikolai 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, a vibrant and powerfully emotional manifestation of religious experience, it is surely possible to understand precisely how he felt.

Vechernya – Vespers

1. The work begins with the word ‘Amin’ (amen), responding to the Opening Acclamation, chanted by the priest. Then there is a fourfold call to prayer, in six and then eight parts.

2. This movement consists of a truncated version of Psalm 103 (104), in which an alto solo sings a melody based on Greek chant against a background of tenor and bass, alternating with soft passages for soprano and alto. During this psalm the whole church would have been censed.

3. The text of this movement comes from Psalm 1, the verses alternating with ‘Alliluya’ (alleluia). The verses are mainly sung by middle voices (alto and tenor) and the refrain by the full choir.

4. This is the Evening Hymn of Light (phos hilaron), which is one of the most ancient hymns of the Orthodox Church. The text is attributed to Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem. During the singing of this psalm all the lights of the church would be gradually illuminated and the priest and deacon entered the Holy of Holies. Here, the melody is a Kiev chant using only four notes, sung by the tenors.

5. Perhaps the most famous and certainly the most extraordinary of the Vigil movements, this setting of the Song of Simeon (Luke 2: 29–32) is the high point of Vespers. The text is said by the priest whenever a child is received into the church. Rachmaninoff was particularly fond of this movement and wanted it at his funeral, but this wish was not granted because no place could be found for it in the funeral service. Against a gently rocking background, the tenor solo sings a Kiev chant. At the end of the movement the basses descend step by step to a low B flat in what is one of the most famous passages in the whole work. When Rachmaninoff initially played this passage through to Kastalsky and Danilin in preparation for the first performance, Rachmaninoff recalled that:

Danilin shook his head, saying, ‘Now where on earth are we to find such basses? They are as rare as asparagus at Christmas!’

6. The last movement of Vespers is a Hymn to the Mother of God: it occurs in many places in Orthodox worship and here the threefold setting is very solemn but full of rejoicing and gladness. After this all the lights were dimmed and the doors to the Holy of Holies closed.

Utrenya – Matins

7. The start of Matins is a chorus in praise of God, which precedes the reading of the Six Psalms expressing man’s sense of loss and separation from God. This setting is full of the sound of bells as the word ‘Slava’ (glory) is reiterated.

8. This section, ‘Praise ye the name of the Lord’, with words from Psalm 135 (136), is called Polyeleos. This term means both ‘much mercy’ and ‘much oil’ – the latter because the lamps would be lit once again. This is a moment of reconciliation with God and the priest again would cense the whole church. Rachmaninoff uses a *znamenny* chant in octaves for altos and basses, marking the music spiritoso.

9. The Evlogitaria is a series of stanzas in praise of the Resurrection and one of the longest sections of the Vigil (around seven minutes). The refrain (‘Blagosloveni, Gospodi’ – ‘Blessed art thou O Lord’) was used by Rachmaninoff at the end of his life.
10. This movement was sung immediately after the Gospel reading as the book was brought out for the people to kiss. This is Rachmaninoff’s own chant, using wide contrasts of register and dynamics.

11. This is the Magnificat, the text from Luke 1: 46–55. Mary’s words (strangely enough given to the bass at first) alternate with an antiphon ‘More honourable than the cherubim’, which begins in various different keys but always cadences in B flat.

12. The climax of Matins, and in a true all-night Vigil this would coincide with the sunrise – the priest begins with the exclamation, ‘Glory to Thee who has shown us the light’. Rachmaninoff’s setting of the words of the Gloria begins with znamenny chant. There is then a sequence of contrasted sections containing some of the most rhythmically and harmonically complex music of the Vigil.

13. & 14. The two Resurrection hymns were not both sung in one service: they would alternate according to the prevailing tone of the chant for that week. Both are based on znamenny chants, the second slightly longer and richer harmonically.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

A native of Semyonovo, near Novgorod in north-western Russia, Rachmaninoff was born into a noble family of Tartar descent who had been in the service of Tsars since the sixteenth century. His parents, both amateur pianists, having unfortunately squandered the family fortune, were reduced to a single estate at Oneg, where Rachmaninoff had his first piano lessons with his mother. Neither parent noticed any particularly outstanding talent in the young Rachmaninoff until his teenage years. Indeed, as a youth he appears to have been ‘quite lazy, failing most of his classes and spending much of his time ice skating’. He was eventually sent to the Moscow Conservatory, where he lived in the home of one of his teachers, Nicholai Zverev. For Sergei and two other students living in the house, the day began at 6 am with piano practice and continued throughout the day as they learned the basics of music from studying four-hand arrangements of symphonies. Evenings were spent attending concerts in the city. On Sunday afternoons, Zverev held musical gatherings where the young Rachmaninoff first met the prominent musicians of his day: Anton Rubinstein, Taneyev, Arensky, and the most influential of all, Tchaikovsky.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 Rachmaninoff believed his life and those of his wife and two daughters to be in considerable danger. They left Saint Petersburg for Stockholm on 22 December 1917, settling firstly in Denmark (spending a year giving concerts throughout Scandinavia), finally departing for New York from Oslo in November 1918, where he mainly lived thereafter, marking the beginning of the American period of the composer’s life. The family never returned to Russia, a cause of great personal sadness for the composer. Rachmaninoff’s music was banned in the Soviet Union for several years and his compositional output diminished, partly because he spent most of his time performing to support the family. Nevertheless, he still managed to produce some of the best-known orchestral works of the twentieth century in the latter part of his career, including the magnificent piano concertos for which he is best known. Rachmaninoff died on 28 March 1943, in Beverly Hills, California, just days before his seventieth birthday. He is buried at Kensico Cemetery, Valhalla, New York.

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Texts & Translations

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op. 37

1. Amin.
Priidite 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.
Amen.

O come, let us worship God our King.
O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and God.
O come, let us worship and fall down before the very Christ, our King and God.
O come, let us worship and fall down before him.
Psalm 95:6

2. Amin.
Blagoslovi, dushe moya, Gospoda,
blagosloven esi, Gospodi.
Gospodi Bozhe moy, vozvelichilsya esi zelo.
Blagosloven esi, Gospodi.
Na gorakh stanut vody. Divna dela Tvoya, Gospodi.
Posrede gor proydut vody.
Vsya premudrostiyu sotvoril esi.
Slava Ti, Gospodi, sotvorivshemu vsya.
Amen.

Psalm 95:6

1. Amin.
Priidite 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.
Amen.

O come, let us worship God our King.
O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and God.
O come, let us worship and fall down before the very Christ, our King and God.
O come, let us worship and fall down before him.
Psalm 95:6
2. (cont.)

in wisdom thou madest them all.
Glory to thee, O Lord, creator of all.

Verses from Psalm 104

Yako vest Gospod put pravednykh, i put nechestivykh pogladen. Alliavya.
Rabotaiye Gospodovi so strakhom i raduitesya Evu s trepetom. Alliavya.
Blazheni vesi nadeysushchiasya Nan. Alliavya.
Voskresni, Gospodi, spasi mya, Bozhe moy. Alliavya.
Gospodene est spasieniye, i na lyudekh Tvoikh
blagosloveniye Tvoeye. Alliavya.
Slava Otsu, i Synu, i Svyatomu Dukhu, i nyne i prisno
i vsoi vekov. Amin.
Alliavya. Slava Tebe, Bozhe.

Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly. Alliavia.
For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly shall perish. Alliavia.
Serve the Lord in fear and rejoice unto him with reverence. Alliavia.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Alliavia.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost, and to the Holy Spirit Divine.

We hymn the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Divine.

Verse from Psalm 1-3

Hail, gladdening light, of his pure glory poured down,
Who is the immortal Father, heavenly, blest,
Holyest of Holies, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Now we are come to the sun’s hour of rest,
The lights of evening round us shine,
With undefiled tongue,
Son of our God, giver of life, alone!
Therefore in all the world thy glory, Lord, they own.

Christian Hymn, third century

5. Nyne Otppushchayeshi raba Tvego, Vladkya,
po glagolu Tvoemu s mirom:
yako vidersi ochi moi spasieniye Tvoeye,
exe ugeo tov per first vsem khudei,
svet vo otkrovenie yazykov, i slavu lyudei Tvoikh Izrailya.

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;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles,
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Luke 2:29–32

6. Bogoroditse Devo, radunyi, Blagodatnaya Mariye,
Gospod s Tobouy.
Blagosloveniya Ty v zhenshenkh, i blagosloven plod chreva Tvoyego,
yako Spasa rodila esi dush nashikh.

Blessed be the Lord our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,
now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.
Alliavia. Glory to thee, O God.

Verses from Psalms 1-3

4. Sveti tki syatstva slawy, bezmertrago,
Otsu nebezhago.
Syatstyo blazhenago, lusse Xiriste! Plishdeshe na zapad solntsa, vidshew svet zhenkh,
poyem Otsu, Syna i Syatstya Dukha, Boga! Dostoin esi vo vya vremenata pet byt glii prepodobnymi,
Syne Bozhi, zhitet dayati, temzhe mir Tyu slavit.

Blagosloveniye Gospodi, s Syatstva,
yako Spasa rodila esi dush nashikh.

Blagosloveniye, Gospodi...
Zelo rano mirsosti techa mnu k grobu Tvoemu
rydavshchia.
No predsta k nim angel, i reche:
‘Rydayushchina vremya prest na plachte, voskresnuye
iya apostolom rtsyte.’

Blagosloveniye Gospodi, Gospod...
Narysosiy zheny, s miry prishedshia k grobu Tvoemu,
Fonat nebesnyi. Angel zhe k nim reche, glagolya:
Chto s merysni zhivago pomishlaiyety?
Yako Bog vo vremya presta.

Slava Otsu, i Synu, i Svyatomu Dukhu.

Poklonimy Otsu, i Ego Synovyi, i Svyatomu Dukhu,
Svatyi Troitse vo edinom sushchestve, s
seryafymy zovushche:
‘Svaty, svaty, svaty eisi Gospodi.’

Blagosloveniye, Gospodi...

Blagodatnaya Mariye,
Gospod s Tobouy.
Blagosloveniya Ty v zhenshenkh, i blagosloven plod chreva Tvoyego,
yako Spasa rodila esi dush nashikh.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
for thou hast borne the saviour of our souls.

Orthodox Prayer

7. Slava v vysniki Bogu, i na zemli mir,
v chelovekotvekh blagosloveniye.
Gospodi, ustine moyi otverzeshi,
i usta moya vmesnyat k Helvo Tvaouy.

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace
to men of goodwill.
O Lord, open thou my lips and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

Luke 2:14; Psalm 51:15

Alliavia.
Khvalite, rabi, Gospoda.
Alliavia.
Blagosloveniye Gospod s Tvaou.
Blagodatiyaya Devo, synzh i ho-ye spyshuyme.

Verse from Psalm 136-135

7. Slava v vysniki Bogu, i na zemli mir,
v chelovekotvekh blagosloveniye.
Gospodi, ustine moyi otverzeshi,
i usta moya vmesnyat k Helvo Tvaouy.

Blagosloveniye, Gospodi....

Blagodatnaya Mariye,
Gospod s Tobouy.
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Khvalite, rabi, Gospoda.
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Blagosloveniye Gospod s Tvaou.
Blagodatiyaya Devo, synzh i ho-ye spyshuyme.

Verse from Psalm 136-135

9. Blagosloveniye esi, Gospodi, nauchi mya
opravdaniem Tvoiym.
angielsky sobor udvisiya, yra Tebe v meryshych
menysviacha,
smetruyma yze, Spase, krepost razoriva.

Verse from Psalm 136-135

Blagosloveniye esi, Gospodi....

Blagodatnaya Mariye,
Gospod s Tobouy.
Blagosloveniya Ty v zhenshenkh, i blagosloven
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yako Spasa rodila esi dush nashikh.

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Blagosloveniya Ty v zhenshenkh, i blagosloven
plod chreva Tvoyego,
yako Spasa rodila esi dush nashikh.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
for thou hast borne the saviour of our souls.
cried the radiant angel in the tomb to the myrrh-bearers. ‘Behold the tomb and understand: the Saviour is risen from the dead!’

Blessed art thou, 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 myrrh-bearers were sorrowful as they neared thy tomb but the Angel said to them: ‘Why do you number the living among the dead? Since he is God, He is risen from the tomb.’

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. 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 that sittest at the right hand of the Father, the Holy One, the Uncreated One, the Only Begotten Son of God, who art in the glories of the Father. Glory be to God in the Highest, for He is Merciful and He forgives us our sins. Amen. 

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Greater in honour than the cherubim and glorious incomparably more than the seraphim, thou who involvest didst bring forth God the Word and art indeed the Mother of God: thee we do magnify.

For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaid. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Greater in honour...

For he that is mighty hath magnified me and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away. He remembers his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, forever. Luke 1:46–55

11. Velichitodusha moya Gospoda, izovrazdovaysa dukh moyo Baze Spase moyem.


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 ye 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. Orthodox Hymn

11. Velichitodusha moya Gospoda, izovrazdovaysa dukh moyo Baze Spase moyem.


Nyak v sap blagoslovlyu Tyu i vosklyvalyu imya Tvoe vo veki i v vek velka.


Glory to be God on high, and on earth peace to men of goodwill. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship 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 thou Holy Spirit. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of this world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us, for thou art holy, O Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name forever, ye a forever and ever. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is thy name forever. Amen.

Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us according as we have hoped in thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes.
and through them hast granted thy peace to the world, O all-merciful Lord.

Orthodox Hymn


To thee, our leader in battle, O mother of God, we thy servants, delivered from evil, offer hymns of victory and thanksgiving; since thou hast power invincible, from all calamity deliver us, that we may cry unto thee: rejoice, O bride without bridegroom.

Orthodox Hymn

The Saint Thomas Choir & Choir School

The Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys is considered by many to be the leading ensemble in the Anglican choral tradition in the United States. Directed from 2004-2015 by John Scott, formerly Organist and Director of Music at St Paul’s Cathedral in London, the choir performs regularly with the period instrument ensemble, Concert Royal, or with the Orchestra of St Luke’s as part of its own concert series. Its primary raison d’être, however, is to provide music for five choral services each week. Live webcasts of all choral services and further information including recordings of the choir may be found at www.saintthomaschurch.org

Supplementing its choral services and concert series over the past three decades, the choir has toured throughout the U.S. and Europe with performances at Westminster Abbey and St Paul’s Cathedral in London, Kings College, Cambridge, Windsor, Edinburgh, St Albans and the Aldeburgh Festival. In 2004, the choir toured Italy, and performed for a Papal Mass at the Vatican. During 2007, the choir performed Bach’s St Matthew Passion for Westminster Abbey. In 2012, the choir traveled to Dresden to give the premiere of Lera Auerbach’s Dresden Requiem with the Dresden Staatskapelle in the Frauenkirche. In February 2012, the Boys of the Choir School traveled to Dresden to give the premiere of Lera Auerbach’s Dresden Requiem

In addition to the annual performances of Handel’s Messiah, concerts at Saint Thomas have included Requiems by Faure, Brahms, Mozart, Durufle and Howells; Bach’s Passions and Mass in B Minor; the Monteverdi Vespers of 1610; a Henry Purcell anniversary concert; Rachmaninoff Vespers; the U.S. premiere of John Tavener’s Mass; a concert of American composers featuring works by Bernstein and Copland and a composition by Saint Thomas chorister, Daniel Castellanios; the world premiere of Scott Eyerly’s Spire and Handel’s Israel in Egypt. In the spring of 2015, the choir signed an agreement with the UK recording label Resonus Classics for future recording projects. The first recording in this series to be released was the choir’s recording of the Bach Motets, followed by Dancing Day: Music for Christmas.

The Men of the Saint Thomas Choir are professional singers; the Boy choristers attend Saint Thomas Choir School. Founded in 1919, it is the only church related boarding choir school in the United States, and one of only a few choir schools remaining in the world. The Choir School offers a challenging pre-preparatory curriculum, interscholastic sports, and musical training for boys in grades three through eight. The Choir School is committed to training and educating talented musicians without regard to religious, economic, or social background. Choristers are sought from all regions of the country. Details of admissions procedures and audition requirements are available at www.choirschool.org.
John Scott (1956-2015)

John Scott was born in 1956 in Wakefield, Yorkshire, where he became a Cathedral chorister. While still at school he gained the diplomas of the Royal College of Organists and won the major prizes. In 1974 he became Organ Scholar of St John’s College, Cambridge, where he acted as assistant to Dr George Guest. His organ studies were with Jonathan Bielby, Ralph Downes, and Dame Gillian Weir. He made his debut in the 1977 Promenade Concerts in the Royal Albert Hall; he was the youngest organist to appear in the Proms.

On leaving Cambridge, he was appointed Assistant Organist at London’s two Anglican Cathedrals: St Paul’s and Southwark. In 1985 he became Sub-Organist of St Paul’s Cathedral, and in 1990 he succeeded Dr Christopher Dearnley as Organist and Director of Music.

As an organist, John has performed in five continents, premiered many new works written for him, and worked with various specialist ensembles. He is a first-prize winner from the Manchester International Organ Competition (1978) and the Leipzig J.S. Bach Competition (1984). In 1998 he was nominated International Performer of the Year by the New York Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. He is a past President of the Incorporated Association of Organists. He has been a member of a number of international competition juries, including those in Manchester, Dublin, Chartres, Dallas, St Albans and Erfurt. Recent highlights of his career have included recitals at the Thomaskirche, Leipzig, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Notre Dame in Paris, the Aarhus Organ Festival in Denmark, Cologne Cathedral, Disney Hall in Los Angeles and London’s Royal Albert Hall.

At St Paul’s he played a complete cycle of the organ works of J.S. Bach in 2000 and followed this in subsequent years with the organ symphonies of Vierne and Widor, as well as the complete organ works of Franck and Buxtehude. At Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York, he performed complete cycles of the organ works of Buxtehude in 2007, Messiaen in 2008 and the six organ symphonies of Louis Vierne in 2009. In 2014, he was one of the featured organists in the re-opening Gala and subsequently gave the first solo recital on the restored organ in London’s Royal Festival Hall and gave the opening recital of the organ in the new Musikkens Hus in Aalborg, Denmark. In June, he gave the premiere of Nico Muhly’s Patterns for the American Guild of Organists National Convention in Boston.

In addition to his work as a conductor and organist, John has published a number of choral compositions and arrangements and he has jointly edited two compilations of liturgical music for the Church’s year, published by Oxford University Press. John’s many recordings include the organ sonatas of Elgar, organ music by William Mathias, Maurice Duruflé and Mendelssohn, as well as two discs of music by Marcel Dupré. He has also recorded the solo organ part in Janacek’s Glagolitic Mass with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas. He recently made a recording at the organ of Washington’s National Cathedral for the JAV label.

In the summer of 2004, after a 26 year association with St Paul’s Cathedral, he took up the post of Organist and Director of Music at Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York, where he directs the renowned choir of men and boys. He was awarded the LVO in the New Years Honours List of 2004, a personal gift from HM Queen Elizabeth II, in recognition of his work at St Paul’s Cathedral. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from Nashotah House Seminary in Wisconsin in 2007.
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