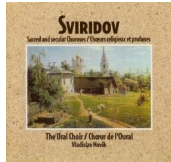


Sviridov – Sacred and Secular Choruses (1998)

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Hymns To The Fatherland (F. Sologub), For Chorus 1 1. *Our North* 0:05:12 2 2.
Russian Heart 0:02:33 3 3. *Sadness Of Immense Spaces* 0:03:20
Songs Without Prospect (A. Blok), For Chorus
4 1. *Autumn* 0:02:01 5 2. *Bright Fields* 0:01:28 6 3. *Spring And The*
Sorcerer 0:05:05 7 4. *The Icon* 0:04:57
Concerto To The Memory Of A.A. Yurlov, For Chorus
8 1. *Lament* 0:02:35 9 2. *Sepration* 0:03:09 10 3. *Chorale*
0:03:50
Choral Pieces (3) On Tolstoy's "Tsar Fyodor Ioanovich"
11 1. *Prayer* 0:03:25 12 2. *Sacred Love* 0:03:21 13 3. *Song Of*
Repentance 0:03:26
Unuttered Miracle, For Chorus
14 1. *Lord, Save The Just* 0:01:30 15 2. *Trisagion* 0:03:53 16 3. *Come,*
Let Us Bow Down 0:02:12 17 4. *Christmas Carol* 0:01:43 18 5. *Glory And*
Alleluia 0:03:46 19 6. *Unuttered Miracle* 0:02:21
Ural Cossack Choir Vladislav Novik – conductor

On January 5th, 1998 the death was announced of Georgy Sviridov, one of the veterans of Soviet Russian music, and this recording is a timely tribute to his memory. Born on December 3rd, 1915 at Fatezh in the province of Kursk, Sviridov began his musical education in his native town. He then went on to the Music School and the Leningrad Conservatory, studying the piano and composition. Between 1937 and 1941 he was a pupil of Shostakovich. His earliest compositions (song cycles to words by Pushkin) determined his innate predisposition for vocal music. Although his purely instrumental production comprises a number of large-scale works (Piano Concerto, Symphony for strings, Trio, String Quartet), he was known, and will continue to be known, for his vocal compositions. A musician with a strongly marked patriotic vein, Sviridov was always considered by the Soviet authorities to be an ideologically orthodox artist. However, his attachment to the Russian soil, its rural traditions and its national heritage stemmed from his personal disposition and not from any imposed dogmas. His musical style, which was devoid of any avant-garde features, possesses a recognisable personal stamp in its

constant recourse to modalism, the superimposition of the major and the relative minor, clusters of diatonic discords, and a sense of treating the voices in such a way that the melodic discourse maintains its predominance within the polyphonic texture. There is a frequent use or imitation of traditional themes, as well as of archaic religious motives borrowed from or inspired by the "znamenny" (neumatic) chants of the Orthodox Church. Frequently used vocal techniques are glissandi, humming, and singing on single vowels.

The triptych Hymns to the Fatherland (a title that could easily inspire dread of wooden official ranting!) was composed in 1983 to words by the early 20th century poet Feodor Sologub, and expresses an interiorised form of patriotism, that of the soul and the love of the soil. In Our North solo voices (soprano, alto, bass, baritone) alternate with brief interventions of the massed choir, while the sadness of A Russian Heart is expressed in short phrases with the intonations of an appeal. The dimension of the obsessive monotony of The Sadness of the Immense Spaces is depicted in the unvarying use of the same key of D sharp minor. The four Songs without Prospect were written in 1980 to words by Alexander Blok, the leading representative of the Russian Symbolist movement in the early part of the century. The style is relatively simple: phrases in unison or in parallel motion, with a few choral cadences in Autumn; transparency, ingenuousness and optimism in Bright Fields, with the hope of the return of the soul towards the light; the most original and interesting, Spring and the Sorcerer, is a kind of parable steeped in popular paganism. The handling of the voices is highly representative of the balance between melody, counterpoint and harmony which is one of Sviridov's hallmarks, highlighted by his use of choral humming in one of the sections. This technique is even more striking in The Icon, which also brings in an electronic organ and gives the text to a solo mezzo-soprano in the form of an arioso that does not stray from the keys of F major and its relative D minor, except for sudden modulations in the concluding bars. The Concert in Memory of Alexander Yurlov composed in 1973 is a funerary tribute to the great choral conductor and founder of one of the most renowned of all choirs in the USSR, which frequently performed Sviridov's music. It is a wordless triptych in which grief is expressed by means of harsh dissonances in the Lament, is transformed into controlled sadness in Separation, alternating between the simplicity of a vocalised formula and a chromaticism bordering on serialism; in the Chorale there is a recognizable quotation in four ascending degrees of the German hymn, Es istgenug. Between 1969 and 1972 Sviridov wrote three choruses for Alexey Tolstoy's historic play Tsar Feodor Ivanovitch. Dating from a period when it was not considered very commendable in the USSR to refer to religion, these three choruses belong to the tradition of sacred music in the manner of Rachmaninov's Vespers, with borrowings or imitations of znamenny chants. Prayer is a setting of the liturgical text of the Ave Maria, treated throughout with an almost hieratic austerity. Sacred Love has a soprano spinning out a line of majestic vocalises against the background of the chorus, while the Song of Repentance is partly taken from a melody composed in the 16th century by Feodor Krestianin, one of earliest known Russian precentors who was attached to the court of Ivan the Terrible. These links Sviridov maintained with the Orthodox spiritual and musical heritage were confirmed in the set of religious choruses he wrote at the beginning of the 1980s and which were performed on February 2nd, 1982 at the Moscow Conservatory by the Glinka Cappella conducted by Vladimir Tchernushenko. Six of them are recorded here. Without being specifically destined for the divine office, they are religious music in its purest form,

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achieving a happy synthesis between tradition and the composer's personal style, as, for instance, in the Christmas Carol, which borrows a motive usually sung in church in a highly original harmonization. There are episodic passages for solo voices (a bass in Lord, save the just, bass and soprano in Glory and Alleluia), which add a touch of concertante writing. And the last piece, Unuttered Miracle, ends the programme in the tenderness and refinement of unusual harmonies. ---Andre Lischke, mymusicbase.ru

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