

Program Notes

Dmitri Bortniansky

Dmitri Stepanovich Bortniansky (Russian name) was born in 1751 in Ukraine. His name is Dmytro Stepanovych Bortnians'ky in the Ukrainian language and his birthplace is called Hlukhiv in Ukrainian and Glukhov in Russian. He is claimed as both a Ukrainian and a Russian composer. His earliest musical training was at the Preparatory Musical School in Hlukhiv. At the age of seven he became a pupil at the Imperial Court Chapel in St. Petersburg, Russia, where he became a favorite choirboy of Empress Elizabeth. He soon was cast as a principal in opera productions and played leading roles in court productions. During this period, he studied composition with Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785). When Galuppi returned to Venice in 1769, Catherine the Great sent Bortniansky to Italy to continue his studies with Galuppi. His first compositions were written in Italy and include operas and settings of Roman Catholic texts. His setting of a German liturgy also dates from this period.

Bortniansky returned to Russia in 1779. At first, he was an assistant director at the imperial court chapel but when Paisiello left Russia in 1783, Catherine the Great promoted Bortniansky to the post of Kapellmeister to her son, Prince Paul. In addition to composing operas in French, it was also during this time that he composed most of his Russian Orthodox sacred music. These include 41 works for 3–4 voices, 26 pieces for double chorus, 35 choral concertos for four voices, 10 choral concertos for double chorus and a setting of the *Divine Liturgy*.

After the death of Catherine the Great in 1796, Tsar Paul I promoted Bortniansky to Director of Vocal Music and in 1801 to Director of the Imperial Court Chapel. This was the first time a Slavic composer had held the post. The position brought with it not only prestige as a composer but powerful influence over the future of sacred choral music throughout the Russian Empire. Under Bortniansky's leadership, the size of the Court Chapel Choir was increased to 108 singers and its repertoire expanded to include performances of Western masterworks such as Haydn's *Creation* (performed 1802), Mozart's *Requiem* (performed 1805), Handel's *Messiah* (performed 1806), Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (performed 1813), and the world premiere of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* in 1824.

In 1815 Bortniansky published a liturgical cycle that was distributed throughout Russia with the aim of standardizing musical performance in Orthodox Churches. In 1816 the Russian government issued a decree stating that the imperial court chapel had the exclusive right to print sacred music in the Russian Empire. This monopoly continued until the latter part of the 19th century when it was challenged by Tchaikovsky's publisher, Pyotr Ivanovich Jurgenson in 1881. Although Bortniansky could have used his power to promote his own compositions he did not do so and only late in his career began to revise his works for publication. Most of Bortniansky's liturgical works and choral concertos

appear to have been written prior to his appointment as Director of the Imperial Court Chapel.

Bortniansky's original manuscripts are lost. Until recently, Bortniansky scholarship was based upon the 1882 edition of his works by Peter Tchaikovsky and his publisher, Peter Jurgenson. Tchaikovsky "corrected" music that had already been edited by Bortniansky's successors. Tchaikovsky stated that he changed voice leading, removed or added ornamentation and added innumerable dynamic markings.

This Is the Day That the Lord Has Made is the first movement of Bortniansky's three-movement choral concerto No. 9. The choral concerto is a setting of a sacred text, usually from the Book of Psalms, and sung during the Divine Liturgy. It is usually divided into three or four contrasting movements. The form mirrors the instrumental concerto in that *tutti* and *solo* sections provide contrasting textures. The inclusion of *colla parte* instruments is, however, never intended. The work is conceived for unaccompanied performance, a rubric of Orthodox choral music.

Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky

Piotr (Peter) Ilyitch Tchaikovsky was born in 1840 in Votkinsk, Viatka district, and died in St. Petersburg in 1893. The son of a wealthy mining inspector, he began studying piano at the age of four and started composing at ten. He was sent to the School of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg, graduated in 1859 and took a position as a clerk in the Ministry of Justice. In the meantime his family had moved to St. Petersburg in 1852. Two years after the move, Tchaikovsky's mother died of cholera. During this time Tchaikovsky studied music with several teachers, none of whom noticed that he had any talent for composition even though he had become quite adept at improvisation at the piano. In 1861 he began studying with Zarembo who encouraged him to become serious with his music. Zarembo and Anton Rubinstein had recently opened the new St. Petersburg Conservatory and Tchaikovsky enrolled as a student. He continued as a law clerk until 1863 when he quit the legal profession and began giving piano lessons to support himself. In 1865 he composed his first large-scale work, an overture to Ostrovsky's *The Storm*. The following year Nicholas Rubinstein hired Tchaikovsky as a professor of harmony at the new Moscow Conservatory which had just opened. Following his move to Moscow his career progressed quickly.

Much has been written about Tchaikovsky's enigmatic relationship with Nadezhda von Meck, an elderly and wealthy widow who had a great fondness for Tchaikovsky's music. By 1875 he found that his teaching duties at the conservatory conflicted with his needs as a composer, leaving him exhausted. In 1876 Mme. von Meck began commissioning works from him with generous fees, permitting him to compose more and teach less. His relationship with Mme. von Meck was confined to writing. By mutual agreement, they never met even though Tchaikovsky spent considerable time at her various country estates. Mme. von Meck even rescued Tchaikovsky from an ill-conceived marriage, offering him an annuity of 6000 rubles so he could live independently. In 1888 he also received a pension of 3000 rubles from the Tsar. By this time he had resigned from

his teaching duties and declined the offer of directorship of the conservatory when Nicholas Rubinstein died.

Shy and retiring by nature, Tchaikovsky did not make his first appearance as a conductor until 1887 when he was 40. The following year he made his first foreign tour as a conductor, performing in Germany, Prague, Paris and London. By this time he had a world-class reputation. In 1891 he visited the United States and was a guest conductor in the dedication of Carnegie Hall in New York City. His American tour also included appearances in Baltimore and Philadelphia. In 1894 he composed his Sixth Symphony (the *Pathétique*) and conducted the premiere performance of it in St. Petersburg. A few days later he became a victim of the cholera pandemic that was sweeping the country.

Tchaikovsky was best known for his secular works such as his symphonies, ballets and operas. But his role in the field of Russian sacred music is also noteworthy. He wrote complete settings of the two most important services of the Orthodox Church: *The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (1878) and *The All-Night Vigil* (1882). These two compositions set stylistic standards that were followed by numerous composers after him – particularly his student, Sergei Rachmaninoff.

It is interesting to ponder why Tchaikovsky would become involved in writing sacred music when his success was so great with his secular compositions. It is all the more puzzling when one considers the fact that Russian church music was at a low ebb during Tchaikovsky's earlier years. The Imperial Chapel held a monopoly on the publication of all church music in Russia and its director, Nikolai Bakhmetev, held a monopoly on the publication of all newly written church music. The result was that many talented composers avoided writing sacred pieces rather than submit to Bakhmetev's censorship. Tchaikovsky appears to have taken a different view of the situation and decided to write sacred music in spite of Bakhmetev's official position, taking upon himself the role of liberator of Russian sacred music.

When Tchaikovsky completed his setting of the *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, he submitted it to the Moscow Office of Sacred Censorship. This office certified the correctness of the text and authorized publication in 1878. When Bakhmetev became aware that Tchaikovsky had obtained permission for publication, he ordered the police to seize all published scores of the work. By this time, Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy* had attracted the attention of other talented musicians, including the director of a church choir in Moscow. The first performance of the *Liturgy* was in the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory. Tchaikovsky stated, "The choir sang in an exemplary fashion, and I experienced one of the sweetest moments of my career as a composer." In a letter to his brother Modest, Tchaikovsky wrote, "On 18 December 1880 there was a special sacred concert with my *Liturgy*. A full hall and despite a prohibition against applause, a terrific and unexpected ovation together with the presentation of a kind of lyre-shaped garland from an anonymous admirer."

Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy* was not yet out of danger. Modest Tchaikovsky summarized the controversy surrounding it saying, "Some objected to the music's 'lack of churchliness'

in the sense that it did not resemble what was commonly heard at services, i.e., the works of Bortniansky, Sarti, Lvov, and Berezovsky, while others saw insufficient similarity to the ancient ecclesiastical chants...A third group were dissatisfied by the lack of piquant and interesting musical passages, while a fourth, by contrast...wished for the strictness of the Palestrina style. Finally, a fifth contingent, primarily composed of clergy, ranted for no reason, simply voicing their indignation at an insolent venture by a 'secular' composer: 'What business does he have with church music? Let him stick to polkas, waltzes and operas!'"

Tchaikovsky wrote to Mme. von Meck in 1881: "My attempts to advance the cause of Russian church music have elicited persecution. My *Liturgy* remains under ban. When two months ago in Moscow there was a memorial liturgy in memory of Nikolai Rubinstein, the administrators wanted my *Liturgy* to be performed. Alas, I was deprived of the pleasure of hearing my *Liturgy* in church because the Moscow diocesan authorities came out categorically against it. Bishop Amvrosy called it 'Roman Catholic.'"

Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy* was never accepted by church authorities during his lifetime. The Moscow Synodal Choir performed it for the first time in a church service in 1893, on the customary fortieth day after the death of the composer. After this, the Tchaikovsky *Liturgy* was sung every year on the anniversary of the composer's death.

The text of the *Cherubic Hymn* is one of the most famous and frequently set texts in the Orthodox tradition. It is divided into two parts, the first in a quiet mood with reference to the songs of angels and the laying aside of earthly cares. The "Amen" marks the conclusion of this first section. In Orthodox liturgical practice, the priest would customarily chant prayers for the church hierarchy, civil authorities and the congregation, to which the choral "Amen" would be the response. Following the "Amen" the mood switches to one of exuberance as in the joyous welcome of a victorious king.

The text of *To Thee we sing* is the tenth movement of the *Liturgy* and the last section of a group of hymns called the *Anaphora*, which form the main part of the Holy Communion in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy during which the bread and wine are consecrated. In pre-Revolutionary Russia, Church authorities attempted to prohibit concert performances of this hymn and other hymns of the *Anaphora* on the grounds that they were too sacred to be performed as concert music. This attempted prohibition only added to the arguments over whether Tchaikovsky should be allowed to publish and perform his controversial *Liturgy*.

Pavel Chesnokóv

Pavel Grigoryevich Chesnokov was born near Voskresensk in the Moscow region of Russia in 1877 and died in Moscow in 1944. He attended the Moscow Synodal School from 1885 to 1895 and graduated with highest honors. His teachers included Arensky, Smolensky and Kastalsky. Following graduation, he continued his studies of composition with Ippolitov-

Ivanov and Taneyev and served as choirmaster at the Church of the Holy Trinity “at the mud baths” in Moscow. He established a fine reputation as a choral conductor of the Russian Choral Society from 1915 to 1917. During this time he composed prolifically and became associated with the “Moscow Style” of choral composition which featured a distinctive and skilled use of polyphony on the ancient *znamenny* chant tradition.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Chesnokov became professor of choral conducting at Moscow Conservatory, chief conductor of the Moscow State Choir and director of the Moscow Academic Choir. He went on to become chorus director of the Bolshoi Theater in the 1930's.

Chesnokov's output of sacred choral music was extremely prolific, numbering over 400 works. Many of these compositions, including *Let the Spirit Bless*, were written for his own choir, which numbered 42 singers (10 women sopranos, 7 women altos, 12 tenors and 13 basses). His book, *The Choir and How to Conduct It*, was published in 1940 and remains an encyclopedic handbook for Russian choral directors. It is now available in an English translation by John C. Stuhr-Rommereim.

The text of *Dukh Tvoj blagi* is taken from Psalm 143: 10 (Orthodox Psalm 142: 10) and is appropriate for ordinations, consecrations, special ceremonies, and general worship. Tradition is observed in the thrice-repeated alleluias at the end of the composition. Stylistically, these alleluias should be sung as a large phrase using staggered breathing; not separated into three small phrases. Measures 9, 31 and 37 – 41 include writing for low basses that may be out of reach for some basses. Chesnokov's own choir featured *bassi profundi* (*oktavisty*) who could negotiate such pitches and for which much Russian choral music is famous.

Nye ímamī inīya pómoshchi comes from a set of ten communion hymns, Opus 25. It is technically a kontakion, (a hymn sung in commemoration of a feast day, whether referring to Christ, the Virgin Mary or to a saint). *Nye ímamī inīya pómoshchi* is intended to be sung for the feast day commemorating an icon of the Virgin entitled “The joy of all who sorrow,” (Всех скорбящих Радость | Vsekh skorbyashchikh Radost') observed on October 24 in the Orthodox Church calendar. The author of the text is unknown. In contemporary church practice, this work is sometimes sung during the communion of the clergy. Although other pieces in Opus 25 are based on traditional church chants, *Nye ímamī inīya pómoshchi* contains original music that is not based on any pre-existing chant.

Nikolai Semyonovich Golovanov (1891-1953) was a distinguished Russian conductor, pianist and composer, whose entire life and creative activity centered around Moscow.

From 1900 through 1909 Golovanov studied at the Moscow Synodal School, where he graduated with the rank of choir director first class. After this he worked as a conductor of the Synodal Choir and taught at the same school.

In 1914 Golovanov graduated from Moscow Conservatory with a gold medal in composition under Ippolitov-Ivanov and Vasilenko. In 1915 he made his debut as

conductor of the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra and was hired as assistant chorus master of the theater. From 1919 to 1928 and again from 1930 to 1936 Golovanov was conductor of the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra and from 1948 through 1953 the Principal Conductor. Simultaneously he was involved in the opera studio founded by K.S. Stanislavsky at the Bolshoi Theater and later reorganized as the Stanislavsky Theater.

From the end of the 1920's Golovanov's creative activities, apart from his work at the Bolshoi Theater, were connected with the Moscow Philharmonic and the Moscow Radio Center, where he headed the Opera Radio Theater. From 1937 to 1953 Golovanov was artistic director and principal conductor of the Orchestra of the All-Union Radio Network.

He was one of the most brilliant representatives of the Russian conducting school. Inherent in his performance style were conducting freedom, emotional incandescence, and a combination of full sonority with brilliant dynamic and timbral contrasts.

Golovanov was a famous interpreter of Russian classical music and the works of Soviet composers such as Myaskovsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, et al. Under Golovanov's direction the following opera productions were staged at the Bolshoi Theater:

Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (1948), Rimsky-Korskov's *Sadko* (1949),
Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* (1950).

At the Stanislavsky Theater he produced: Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and Kriudov's *Dmitri Donskoi* and many others.

Golovanov was involved in teaching from his early years at the Synodal School and Moscow Conservatory where he was professor of orchestral and opera classes from 1925 to 1929 and 1943 to 1944. Especially noteworthy was the production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Tsar's Bride* by the students of the opera class and symphonic orchestra of Moscow Conservatory under Golovanov's direction.

Golovanov was a fine piano accompanist who performed for many years with his wife, the great Russian singer Antonina Vasilievna Nezhdanova. The couple had no children and there are no direct descendants.

Golovanov's published compositional output was not especially large compared to his performing activities. His works include *Princess Iurata* (based on a Baltic legend), *The Hero's Grave* (after Ibsen), several symphonies and a symphonic poem, *Salome*.

The recordings of Golovanov's performances of both Russian and Western European masterpieces is extensive. Many of them are available on YouTube.

Golovanov was fired from his position at the Bolshoi Theater as a result of Stalin's displeasure at his hiring of a Jewish singer, Mark Reizen, as the lead character, Boris, in

Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. The public humiliation he suffered led to a stroke that ended his life in August, 1953, only five months after Stalin's and Prokofiev's deaths.

The sacred compositions of Golovanov, Opus 38 and 39, were not published during the composer's lifetime and have not been published since. The original manuscripts are preserved in the archives of the Museum-Apartment of Golovanov in Moscow and are the property of the Glinka State Museum of Musical Culture. The curator of the Golovanov Museum-Apartment states that Golovanov wrote his sacred works "for the drawer," meaning that he had no expectation that they would be performed or published during his lifetime.

Golovanov's *Svyetye tikhiy* (Gracious Radiance) is Number 10 in his Opus 39 sacred pieces. It is a setting in Church Slavonic of an anonymous Greek text (*Phos hilaron*) that is sung in the All-Night Vigil (Vespers) of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the end of the manuscript the composer wrote, "In the sorrowful days of the war." The work is dated 9 March 1943. It is dedicated to Sergei Rachmaninoff. It was inspired by Rachmaninoff's setting of the same text in his *All-Night Vigil* (known also as *The Vespers*) written in 1915. Like Rachmaninoff, Golovanov quotes the ancient chant that forms the basis for the melodic theme of the movement. Golovanov creates imitative counterpoint with the melody, surrounding it with lavish, western harmonies that would have shocked the clergy if they had heard them at the time. It seems likely that Golovanov might have been acquainted with the style of the French composer, Maurice Duruflé, whose works use Gregorian chants in a similar way.

Golovanov's *Mnogaya lyeta* (Many years) is Number 11 from the same unpublished Opus 39. It is a traditional Church Slavonic text that is sung at the conclusion of the morning liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church. Best known in its setting by the Ukrainian-Russian composer, Dmitri Bortniansky, this setting by Golovanov would probably have been rejected by church officials for its 20th-century chord progressions and exuberant style. It is written in eight parts.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Six Choruses for Women's Voices*, Op. 15 were written between 1894 and 1896. At the time, Rachmaninoff was teaching at the Maryinsky Academy and it may have been his students who inspired him to set the six poems to music. The first five choruses appeared periodically in the magazine *Dyetskoye chtenie* (Children's Reader) over a period of a year before the complete opus was published in 1896 by Jurgenson.

There is no record of a premiere public performance of the songs until the 1973 Rachmaninoff centenary celebrations, with the Yurlov State Chorus conducted by Yevgeny Svetlanov.

It is a rare folk song that enjoys as great a popularity all over the world as **Kalinka**. The design of Kalinka – two contrasting parts: masculine and feminine – came to this 19th-century urban dance song from an old dance form in which the movements gradually accelerated until everything whirled in a fiery dance. Even in Russia many people do not know what “kalinka” and “malinka” have to do with love, which is the theme of the song. Kalina (diminutive: kalinka) is a snowball tree. It has white flowers and bright red berries. Its very name is derived from kalit’ or raskalit’ - “to make red hot.” In Russian folk tradition the red color of fire and kalina’s berries fused together as a symbol of beauty. In the old Russian language the words “beautiful” and “red” were the same – krasnaya, and together with the red sweet berries of malina (raspberry) they began to serve as the symbol of love since in Russian folklore berries were an erotic symbol. Later, kalina and malina began to stand for a beautiful maiden, an object of passionate love.

Valery Kalistratov studied choral conducting with Boris Tevlin at the Moscow Conservatory, graduating in 1970. In 1974 he completed a second degree in composition at the same institution. Because his early training was in choral conducting, choral music naturally became Kalistratov’s primary medium. He has written numerous cantatas and oratorios, shorter choral works and folk song arrangements, songs, music for children’s voices, and several orchestral and chamber works. **Tania Taniusha** was composed at the outset of Kalistratov’s career. It soon became one of his most popular works and helped to establish his early reputation as a choral composer. The great Russian composer Georgi Sviridov has described Tania Taniusha as a “small masterpiece.” In it Kalistratov develops a melodic fragment taken from an original folk melody and transforming it and expanding it using his own distinctive harmonic idiom. In a radio interview Kalistratov said that he was unimpressed by this simple folk song when he first encountered it, but later its poetic imagery overtook him and he completed the composition almost at a single sitting.

Vissarion Shebalin was born in Omsk in 1902. He studied in the musical college in Omsk, and was also enrolled in the Institute of Agriculture. He was 20 years old when, following the advice of his professor, he went to Moscow to show his first compositions to Glière and Myaskovsky. Both composers thought very highly of his compositions. Shebalin graduated from Moscow Conservatory in 1928. His diploma work was the 1st Symphony, which the author dedicated to his professor Nikolai Myaskovsky. Many years later his fifth and last symphony was dedicated to Myaskovsky's memory. After graduating from Moscow Conservatory, he worked there as a professor, and in 1935 became also a head of the composition class at the Gnessin State Musical College. In the very difficult years of 1942-48 he was a director of the Moscow Conservatory and the art director of Central Music School in Moscow. He fell victim to Zhdanov's purge of artists in 1948 and fell into obscurity afterwards. Shebalin was one of the founders of and the chairman of the board (1941–1942) of the Union of Soviet Composers. Shebalin was one of the most cultured and erudite composers of his generation; his serious intellectual style and a certain academic approach to composition make him close to Myaskovsky. In 1951,

he was awarded the Stalin Prize. Shebalin was a close friend of Dmitri Shostakovich, who dedicated a string quartet (No. 2) to him. In a 1948 campaign launched by Stalin's cultural henchman Andrei Zhdanov, the top Soviet composers – Shebalin, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturian and Myaskovsky – were all accused of writing “anti-people music” and of “kowtowing to the decadent West.” Shebalin was dismissed from the Conservatory and his music temporarily banned. He was allowed to return as a professor in 1951. During the 1950s Shebalin suffered two strokes that impaired his movement and speech but not his ability to compose, and he continued to write and teach until his death at 59. Outside of Russia he is probably best known for his nine string quartets (1923 to 1963), which span his entire professional career and are benchmarks of his artistic evolution. His other works include the dramatic symphony "Lenin" (1931, to a poem by Mayakovsky), a Violin Concerto (1940), the ballet "The Skylark" (1943), the Symphonietta (1951), orchestral suites, overtures and songs. One of the outstanding figures of the Soviet period of Russian music. A master craftsman, his style was rigorous and intelligent but always accessible to audiences. He enjoyed his greatest success with the comic opera "The Taming of the Shrew" (1957). Critics consider his Symphony No. 5 in C Major (1962) the finest of his five symphonies. Shebalin died on 29 May 1963 in Moscow. He was buried in Novodevichy Monastery near his professors and colleagues. *Zimnyaya doroga* and *Strekotunya beloboka* are settings of poetry by Alexander Pushkin for unaccompanied four-part chorus. They are numbers 2 and 5 in his Opus 42 Songs, published in 1949. Shebalin altered Pushkin's text in the first song to remove the name "Nina" from the poem.

Shchédrik

Shchedrik belongs to the category of songs sung by Christmas carolers in Ukrainian towns and villages as they approached each house, offering wishes for health and prosperity, and hoping to be invited inside for a treat. The word *shchedrivka* comes from the same root as “bounty,” “generosity,” or “benevolence.”

The text plays with the deliberate movement of the accented syllable from one place to another: *shchEDrik, shchedRIK, shchedRlvochka*.

The genius of Leontovich's setting lies in his treatment of the simple four-note motive – the ringing of bells or a children's street cry – which he skillfully moves from voice to voice, while weaving a polyphonic texture around it.

Shchedrik is well known in the United States as “Carol of the Bells” in a version by Wilhousky that employs the identical notes as the original but substitutes a totally different set of lyrics.

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Tania-Taniusha was composed at the outset of Kalistratov's career. It soon became one of the most popular works in the Russian repertoire and helped to establish his reputation as a choral composer. Kalistratov develops a melodic fragment taken from the

original folk tune, preserving its essential spirit, while transforming and expanding it using his own distinctive harmonic idiom. In a radio interview, Kalistratov said that he was unimpressed by this simple folk song when he first encountered it, but later its poetic imagery overtook him, and he completed the composition almost at a single sitting.

Vissarion Shebalin was born in Omsk in 1902. He studied in the musical college in Omsk, and was also enrolled in the Institute of Agriculture. He was 20 years old when, following the advice of his professor, he went to Moscow to show his first compositions to Glière and Myaskovsky. Both composers thought very highly of his compositions. Shebalin graduated from Moscow Conservatory in 1928. His diploma work was the 1st Symphony, which the author dedicated to his professor Nikolai Myaskovsky. Many years later his fifth and last symphony was dedicated to Myaskovsky's memory. After graduating from Moscow Conservatory, he worked there as a professor, and in 1935 became also a head of the composition class at the Gnessin State Musical College. In the very difficult years of 1942-48 he was a director of the Moscow Conservatory and the art director of Central Music School in Moscow. He fell victim to Zhdanov's purge of artists in 1948 and fell into obscurity afterwards. Shebalin was one of the founders of and the chairman of the board (1941–1942) of the Union of Soviet Composers. Shebalin was one of the most cultured and erudite composers of his generation; his serious intellectual style and a certain academic approach to composition make him close to Myaskovsky. In 1951, he was awarded the Stalin Prize. Shebalin was a close friend of Dmitri Shostakovich, who dedicated a string quartet (No. 2) to him. In a 1948 campaign launched by Stalin's cultural henchman Andrei Zhdanov, the top Soviet composers – Shebalin, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturian and Myaskovsky – were all accused of writing “anti-people music” and of “kowtowing to the decadent West.” Shebalin was dismissed from the Conservatory and his music temporarily banned. He was allowed to return as a professor in 1951. During the 1950s Shebalin suffered two strokes that impaired his movement and speech but not his ability to compose, and he continued to write and teach until his death at 59. Outside of Russia he is probably best known for his nine string quartets (1923 to 1963), which span his entire professional career and are benchmarks of his artistic evolution. His other works include the dramatic symphony "Lenin" (1931, to a poem by Mayakovsky), a Violin Concerto (1940), the ballet "The Skylark" (1943), the Symphonietta (1951), orchestral suites, overtures and songs. One of the outstanding figures of the Soviet period of Russian music. A master craftsman, his style was rigorous and intelligent but always accessible to audiences. He enjoyed his greatest success with the comic opera "The Taming of the Shrew" (1957). Critics consider his Symphony No. 5 in C Major (1962) the finest of his five symphonies. Shebalin died on 29 May 1963 in Moscow. He was buried in Novodevichy Monastery near his professors and colleagues. *Zimnyaya doroga* and *Strekotunya beloboka* are settings of poetry by Alexander Pushkin for unaccompanied four-part chorus. They are numbers 2 and 5 in his Opus 42 Songs, published in 1949. Shebalin altered Pushkin's text in the first song to remove the name "Nina" from the poem.

Mykola Leontovich's *Shchedrik* belongs to the category of songs sung by Christmas carolers in Ukrainian towns and villages as they approach each house, offering wishes of health and prosperity, and hoping to be invited inside for a treat. The word *shchedrivka* derives from the same root as "bounty," "generosity," or "benevolence." The genius of Leontovich's setting lies in his treatment of the simple four-note motive – really nothing more than a children's street cry – which he skillfully moves from voice to voice, while weaving a polyphonic texture around it. The popular English version, "Hark! How the bells, sweet silver bells!" is note-for-note the same as the original and forms the title of our concerts for this season.