

Rachmaninov – The All-night Vigil (Vespers)

Vestchernya – Vespers

1. The work begins with a fourfold call to prayer, in six and then eight parts.

Priidite, poklonimsya Tsarevi nashemu Bogu.

Come, let us worship God, our King.

Priidite, poklonimsya i pripadem Khristu Tsarevi nashemu Bogu.

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

Priidite, poklonimsya i pripadem Samomu Khristu Tsarevi i Bogu nashemu.

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

Priidite, poklonimsya i pripadem Emu.

Come, let us worship and fall down before him.

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 is censed.

Blagoslovi, dushe moya, Gospoda, blagosloven esi, Gospodi.

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

Gospodi Bozhe moy, vozvelichilsya esi zelo.

O Lord my God, thou art very great.

Blagosloven esi, Gospodi.

Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

Vo ispovedaniye i v velepotu obleklsya esi.

Blessed art thou, O Lord.

Blagosloven esi, Gospodi.

The waters stand upon the mountains.

Na gorakh stanut vody. Divna dela Tvoya, Gospodi.

Marvellous are thy works, O Lord.

Posrede gor proydut vody. Divna dela Tvoya, Gospodi

In wisdom hast thou made all things.

Vsya premudristiyu sotvoril esi.

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

Slava Ti, Gospodi, sotvorivshemu vsya.

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.

Blazhen muzh, izhe ne ide na sovet nechestivyykh. Alliluya.

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

Yako vest Gospod put pravednykh, i put nechestivyykh pogibnet. Alliluya.

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

Rabotaite Gospodevi so strakhom i raduitesya Emu s trepetom. Alliluya.

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

Blazheni vsi nadeysushchisya Nan. Alliluya.

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

Voskresni, Gospodi, spasi mya, Bozhe moy.

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

Alliluya.

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

Gospodene est spaseniye, i na lyudekh Tvoikh blagosloveniye Tvoye. Alliluya.

both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Alleluia. Glory to thee, O God.

Slava Otsu, i Synu, i Svyatomu Dukhu, i nyne i prisno i vo veki vekov. Amin.

Alliluya. Slava Tebe, Bozhe.

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 from Psalm 140 (141). During the singing of this psalm all the lights of the church are gradually illuminated and the priest and deacon enter the Holy of Holies. Here, the melody is a Kiev chant using only four notes, sung by the tenors.

(Vechernyaya Pesn)

(Evening Hymn)

Svete tikhyi svyatyya slavy, Bezsmertnago, Otsa Nebesnago,

Gladsome light of the holy glory of the Immortal One, the Heavenly Father, holy and blessed, O Jesus Christ.

Svyatago Blazhennago, Iisuse Khriste! Prishedshe na zapad solntsa, videvshe svet vechernii, poyem Otsa, Syna i Svyatago Dukha, Boga!

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.

Dostoin esi vo vsya vremena pet byti glasi prepodobnymi,

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

Syne Bozhii, zhivot dayai, temzhe mir Tya slavit.

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

5. Perhaps the most famous and certainly the most extraordinary of the Vigil movements is this setting of the Song of Simeon (Luke 2: 29–32). 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 impressive passages in the whole work.

Nyne otpushchayeshi raba Tvoego, Vladyko,
po glagolu Tvoyemu s mirom:
yako videsta ochi moi spaseniye Tvoye,
ezhe esi ugotoval pred litsem vsekh lyudei,
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. A
light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy
people, Israel.*

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 are dimmed and the doors to the Holy of Holies are closed.

(Tropar)
Bogoroditse devo, raduisya, Blagodatnaya
Mariye, Gospod s Toboyu.
Blagoslovenna Ty v zhenakh, i blagosloven plod
chreva Tvoyego,
yako Spasa rodila esi dush nashikh.

(Troparion)
*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.*

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 ('praise') is reiterated.

SHESTOPSALMIYE
Slava v vyshnikh Bogu, i na zemli mir, v
chelovetsekh blagovoleniye.
Gospodi, ustne moyi otverzeshi, i usta moya
vozvestyat khvalu Tvoyu.

THE SIX PSALMS
*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
goodwill among men.*
*O Lord, open thou my lips and my mouth shall
proclaim thy praise.*

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 are lit once again. This is a moment of reconciliation with God and the priest again censures the whole church. Rachmaninoff uses a Znamenny chant in octaves for altos and basses, marking the music spiritoso.

(Polyeleyinye Stikhi)
KHALITE IMYA GOSPODNE. Alliluya.
Khvalite, rabi, Gospoda. Alliluya.
Blagosloven Gospod ot Siona, zhivyi vo
Iyerusaleme. Alliluya.
Ispovedaitesya Gospodevi, yako blag. Alliluya.
Yako v vek milost Ego. Alliluya.
Ispovedaitesya Bogu nebesnomu. Alliluya.
Yako v vek milost Ego. Alliluya.

(Polyeleos Verses)
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 endureth for ever. Alleluia.
O give thanks unto the God of heaven. Alleluia.
For his mercy endureth for ever. Alleluia.

9. The Evlogitaria is a series of stanzas in praise of the Resurrection and one of the longest sections of the Vigil. The refrain (Slava otsu i sinu – 'Blessed art thou O Lord') was used by Rachmaninoff at the end of his life in his Symphonic Dances.

(Evlogitaria)

Blagosloven esi, Gospodi, nauchi mya opravdaniem Tvoim.

Angelskiy sobor udivisya, zrya Tebe v mertvykh vmenivshasya, smertnyuyu zhe, Spase, krepost razorivsha, i s Soboyu Adama vozdvigsha i ot ada vsya svobozhdsha.

Blagosloven esi, Gospodi ...

Pochta mira s milostivnymi slezami, o uchenitsy, rastvoryayete;

blistayaisya vo grobe angel, mironositsam veshchashe:

'Vidite vy grob, i urazumeite: Spas bo vozkrese ot groba.'

Blagosloven esi, Gospodi ...

Zelo rano mironositsy techakhu ko grobu

Tvoyemu rydayushchiya.

No predsta k nim angel, i reche:

'Rydaniya vremya presta ne plachite, voskresnye zhe apostolom rtsyte.'

Blagosloven esi, Gospodi ...

Mironositsy zheny, s miry prishedshyya ko grobu Tvoyemu, Spase, rydakhu.

Angel zhe k nim reche, glagolya:

'Chto s mertvymi zhivago pomyshlyayete?

Yako Bog vo vozkrese ot groba.'

Slava Otsu, i Synu, i Svyatomu Dukhu.

Poklonimsya Otsu, i Ego Synovi, i Svyatomu Dukhu,

Svyatei Troitse vo edinom sushchestve, s Serafimy zovushche:

'Svyat, svyat, svyat esi Gospodi.'

I nyne, i prisno, i vo veky vekov. Amin.

Zhiznodavtsa rozhdshi, grekha, Devo, Adama izbavila esi.

Radost zhe Eve v pechali mesto podala esi: padshiya zhe ot zhizni, k sei napravi,

iz Tebe voplotivisya Bog i chelovek.

Alliluya. Slava Tebe, Bozhe.

(Evlogitaria)

BLESSED ART 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 art thou ...

'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 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 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.

10. There follows a Gospel reading and this movement is sung immediately afterwards as the book is brought out for the people to kiss. This is Rachmaninoff's own chant, using wide contrasts of register and dynamics.

Voskreseniye Khristovo videvshe, poklonimsya Svyatomu

Gospodu Iisusu, edinomu bezgeshnomu.

Krestu Tvoyemu poklanyayemsa, Khriste, i svyatoye voskreseniye

Tvoye poyem i slavim:

Ty bo esi Bog nash, razve Tebe inogo ne znayem, imya Tvoye imenuem.

Priidite vsi vernii, poklonimsya svyatomu

Khristovu voskreseniyu:

se bo priide krestom radost vsemu miru,

vsegda blagosloyashche Gospoda, poyem voskreseniye Ego;

raspyatiye bo preterpev, smertiuyu smert razrushi.

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 none 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.

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

Velichit dusha moya Gospoda, i vozvradovasya dukh moy o Bozhe Spase moyem.

Chestneyshuyu Kheruvim i slavneyshuyu bez sravneniya Serafim, bez istleniya Bogo Slova rozhdshuyu, sushchuyu Bogoroditsu Tya velichayem.

Yako prizre na smireniye raby Svoeyaya. Se bo otnyne ublazhat mya vsi rodi.

Chestneyshuyu Kheruvim ...

Yako sotvori mne velichie silny, i svyato imya Ego, i milost Ego v rody rodov boyashchymysya Ego.

Chestneyshuyu Kheruvim ...

Nizlozhi silniya so prestol, i voznese smirennyya.

Alchushchiya ispolni blag, i bogatyashchiyasya otpusti tshchi.

Chestneyshuyu Kheruvim ...

Vospriyat Izrailiya otroka svoeyego, pomyanuti milosti, yakozhe

glagola ko otsem nashym,

Avraamu i semeni ego, dazhe do veka.

Chestneyshuyu Kheruvim ...

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

SLAVOSLOVIE VELIKOYE

Slava v vyshnikh Bogu, i na zemli mir, v chelovetsekh blagovoleniye.

Khvalim Tya, blagoslovim Tya, klanyayem Ti sya, slavoslovim Tya,

blagodarim Tya velikiya radi slavi Tvoyeya.

Gospodi, Tsaryu Nebesny, Bozhe Otche, vsederzhitel'yu.

Gospodi, Syne edinorodny, Iisuse Khriste i Svyatye Dushe.

Gospodi Bozhe, Agnche Bozhiy, syne Otech, vzemlyai grekh mira, pomiluy nas:

vzemlyai grekhi mira, priimi molitvu nashu.

Sedyai odesnuyu Otsa, pomiluy nas.

Yako Ty esi edin svyat, Ty esi edin Gospod, Iisus Khristos, v slavu

Boga Otsa. Amin.

Na vsyak den blagoslovlyu Tya i voskhalyu imya Tvoe vo vek i v vek veka.

Spodobi, Gospodi, v den sei bez grekha sokhranitisya nam.

Blagosloven esi, Gospodi, Bozhe Otets nashikh, i khvalno i

proslavleno imya Tvoe vo vek. Amin.

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 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.

Budi, Gospodi, milost Tvoya na nas, yakozhe upovakhom na Tya.
 Blagosloven esi, Gospodi, nauchi mya opravdaniem Tvoyim.
 Gospodi pribezhishche byl esi nam v rod i rod.
 Az rekh: Gospodi, pomiluy mya, istseli dushu moyu, yako sogreshikh Tebe.
 Gospodi, k Tebe pribegokh, nauchi mya tvoriti volyu Tvoyu, yako Ty esi Bog moy, yako u Tebe istochnik zhivota.
 Vo svete Tvoem uzrim svet.
 Probavi milost Tvoyu vedushchym Tya.
 Svyaty Bozhe, Svyaty Krepkyi, Svyaty Bezsmertnyi, pomiluy nas.
 Slava Otsu, i Synu, i Svyatomu Dukhu, i nyne i prisno, i vo veky vekov. Amin.
 Svyaty Bozhe, Svyaty Krepkyi, Svyaty Bezsmertnyi, pomiluy nas.

*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.*

13 & 14. These two Resurrection hymns are not both sung in one service: they 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.

(Tropar voskresen 1)
 Dnes spaseniye miru byst, poyem voskresshemu iz groba i nachalniku zhizni nasheya: razrushiv bo smertiyu smert, pobedu dade nam i veliyu milost.

*(Resurrection Troparion 1)
 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.*

(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 vselennei, edine mnogomilostive.

*(Resurrection Troparion 2)
 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.*

Pervy tchas – First Hour

15. The Vigil ends with another hymn to the Virgin, called the Akathist Hymn because the people stand throughout (akathistos means 'without sitting'). This is part of Prime (the 'first hour'). The priest chants the liturgy on one note and the choir joins with the kontakion – in Rachmaninoff's setting a brilliantly scored and lively movement which ends the All-Night Vigil in a suitably splendid fashion.

(Kontakion)
 VZBRANNOY VOYEVODE pobeditelnaya, yako izbavlyshesya ot zlykh, blagodarstvennaya vospisuem Ti rabi Tvoi, Bogoroditse.
 No yako imushchaya derzhavu nepobedimuyu, ot vsyakikh nas bed svobodni, da zovym Ti:
 'Raduisya, nevesto Nenevestnaya.'

*(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!'*

Sacred Concerto: The Mother of God in never-slumbering prayer

V molitvakh, nyeusypayuschuyu Bogoroditsu, *The tomb and death have not been able to*
i v pryedstatyelstvakh mirs nyeprelozhnoye *hold the Birth-Giver of God, who is in*
upovaniye, *constant supplication, in intercession and*
grob I uershchvlyeniye nye uderzhasta: *unfailing hope:*
yakozhe bo Zhyvota Matyer, k zhyvotu *for the Mother of Life is come into the*
prestavi, *presence of the Life, who took up his abode*
vo utrobu Fsyelivysia prisbodyevstvyennuyu. *in her ever-virgin womb.*

Kontakion for the Dormition

The Transliteration and Translation of the All-night Vigil kindly sourced by Graham Sharp of Cardiff Polyphonic Choir.