

The Seven Saints

Dimitar Grigorov, conductor

Snezhana Grigorova, choirmaster

1.15pm

St Mary's Church, Fotheringhay

St. Y. KOUKOUZEL (c.1280-1360)
Vladiku i svjastenonachalnika nashego, m. VII
(Our Bishop and Shepherd)

ANONIM XIV (Russian orthodox)
Svete tihij (Joyful light)

ANONIM XVI (Russian orthodox)
Telo Hristovo
(The body of Christ)

BALTASARE GALUPPI (1706-1785)
Blagoobraznij Jossif (Handsome Joseph)

ALEZANDER FATEEV
Blazhen muzh (Blessed is the man)

DMITRIY BORTNJANSKY (1751-1825)
Da voskresnet Bog (Let God resurrect)

MIKOLAY LEONTOVITCH (1877-1921)
Tebe Boga hvalim (We admire our God)

PAVEL CHESNOKOV (1877-1944)
Angel Vopiiashe (The Angel cried)
Soloist: Radostina Nikolova

SERGEY RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)
Bogoroditze Devo, Radujsja (Rejoice, Virgin Mother of God)

ALEXANDER ARKHANGELSKY (1846-1924)
Nine otpushtaeshi (Now lettest Thou depart)
Soloist: Hristo Hristov

PETR TCHAJKOVSKY (1840-1893)
Blagosloven esi, Gospodi (O, God, you are blessed)

DOBRI HRISTOV (1875-1941)
Vo tzarstvii Tvoem (In your Kingdom)
Soloist: Bistra Petrova

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)
Veruju - The Creed

JOHN TAVENER (1944)
Funeral Ikos (part)

JOHN TAVENER
Eonia - Greek orthodox chant

JOHN TAVENER
Carol: The Lamb

Orthodox Church Music

In the Orthodox Church, music has a unique objective: to sing the glory of God and to express the will to sanctify both mankind and the world. Liturgical chants have remained unchanged for many centuries; the composers are little known or simply anonymous.

Such music has never looked for an audience other than the followers of the divine service. Without any instrumental accompaniment the pure art of the liturgical chant, based solidly on the basso profundo voice, creates a marvellous harmonic structure of a kind that is difficult to find elsewhere in vocal music. There is also a close relation with Gregorian chant in the logic and syllabic pronunciation of the melody and also in the unique emotional atmosphere expressed in both choral traditions.

In the year 865 Bulgaria adopted the Orthodox faith from Byzantium, and at the same time Byzantine chants were introduced into the Bulgarian liturgy. At the end of the ninth century two monks translated much of the Christian scriptures, including the New Testament, into the Slavic language. These two churchmen also created the Slavonic alphabet. Later they were canonized by Pope John Paul II, with the names St Cyril and St Methodius. St Cyril is buried in the Vatican in Rome. These two, with their five disciples Climent, Naum, Sava, Gorazd and Angelarij, are the saints after whom the Seven Saints ensemble is named.

Recent research has shown that translations at this time were increasingly being adopted by the Bulgarian tradition. This was the start of a long development process, which culminated in the 14th and early 15th centuries when the Bulgarian Church adopted the Old Bulgarian Orthodox chants.

This process was severely interrupted when Bulgaria became part of the Ottoman Empire. During this period many Bulgarian intellectuals had to flee the country, going to Russia or finding shelter in the monasteries of Mt Athos in the north west of Greece. They took books of liturgies and other holy works with them, thus bringing about the evolution of the Bulgarian Church and the introduction of its choral tradition to Russia. At exactly this time the Bulgarian Gregory Tsamblack was appointed Bishop of Kiev, and it was he who introduced Old Bulgarian Orthodox chants into the liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Seven Saints

The Seven Saints Choir (*Sveti Sedmochislenitchi*) was founded at the Seven Saints Cathedral, one of the most famous churches in the city centre of Sofia, capital of Bulgaria. This well known ensemble has this year celebrated its one hundredth anniversary, and can look

back on a rich history. The years between 1911 and 1928 were of great significance, when the choir's conductor was the composer and patriarch of Bulgarian music culture, Dobri Hristov.

The current ensemble was formed in Sofia in 1992, and consists of a core of sixteen young professional singers (average age 27) specializing in the performance of Christian sacred music. Every year, in the course of its regular church duties, the ensemble takes part in more than 120 public services. In addition it has regular concert activities abroad, and in the last three years has toured Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Germany.

Initially the ensemble specialized in Renaissance and Baroque music, later extending its repertoire to include oratorios and cantatas of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Its repertoire contains Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Anglican Church music from the 9th century to the present day.

Since 1992 the conductor of the choir has been **Dimitar Grigorov**. He completed his education at the Sofia Music Academy, specializing in choral conducting. Dimitar Grigorov is also a professor of choral conducting at the State Academy of Music and Dance Arts in Plovdiv.

The choirmaster of the ensemble is **Snezhana Grigorova**, who also specialized in choral conducting at the Sofia Music Academy.



Sponsor

