



THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR® PROGRAM NOTES

Founded in 1957, this Choir is Russia's most prestigious all-boy choirs. In Moscow, members of the Choir attend a special school called The Moscow Boys Capella that provides both general education and musical training. Being selected as a member of the touring company of THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR is no easy feat. Hand-picked from over 400 students, these highly talented youngsters have the voices of angels. However, they must also have the discipline to match their talents. There is a level of honor for these boys to be members of the choir, but there are no lifestyle advantages. They must work and study like everyone else. The boys traditionally begin their life in music as early as age 5, but are not allowed to perform for audiences until age 9.

Produced by IAI Presentations, Inc. since their highly acclaimed US debut in 1993, THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR has toured Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Scandinavia, and South Korea. They have played such prestigious venues as the Bolshoi Theatre, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall and the Kremlin - where they were honored to perform with the Presidential Orchestra on several occasions. They have appeared in a Command Performance at The Royal Albert Hall in London for members of the British Royal Family. During their 1996 US Tour, in addition to their highly successful and critically acclaimed return, they were invited to perform at the Crystal Cathedral in Southern California for Rev. Robert Schuller's Hour of Power. Their performance was broadcast both nationally and internationally and was seen by a world-wide television audience. They were also featured in a recent CBS TV Christmas Eve Special, which aired across the US. Their angelic voices have carried them all the way to the White House where, in December of 1999, they were invited to perform at a private Holiday Gala for President Clinton, the First Family and their guests. In 2004, THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR recorded a special performance on National Public Radio for airing on that network's program, "Performance Today." In 2005, they were invited by the City of Moscow to participate in a grand concert at Red Square for International Children's Day where they performed their renditions of "Ave Maria" and "Evening Bells" with the famous tenor Andrea Bocelli. They also perform frequently in operatic productions and musical festivals for which they have won numerous awards. THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR have even organized a Choral Festival all their own, called the All-Russian Children's Choral Festival. This Festival is held at a Summer Camp for artistically gifted children. The camp, which has been named after the Famous Russian bassist and opera star, Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin (1873-1938), is situated in the idyllic Russian countryside along the banks of the Volga River. THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR have toured extensively across Europe, including such countries as Germany, Italy and Holland. In February of 2003, they made their debut in South Korea, where they played to enthusiastic standing ovations. 2009 marks their eleventh North American Tour.

While at home in Russia, the Choir has performed in ceremonies for Russia's prestigious National Cinema Awards - only the most popular performers in Russia were invited to participate in this highly publicized event. They also performed in the Moscow Festival of Choirs, dedicated to the 850th anniversary of the founding of Moscow plus many performances at the Olympic Hall in Moscow and at the Moscow Conservatory with the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. Upon returning to Russia at the conclusion of their 2003 US Tour, the Choir performed many concerts at the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses. In these concerts, they performed their beautiful rendition of *Ave Maria* with the Presidential Orchestra and acclaimed Bolshoi Opera soloist, Nikolai Baskov. The Choir has also given recitals at the Central House of Literature Workers, where Russia's cultural elite discuss politics and share ideas. The Choir has also performed at the brand new Moscow House of Music, which is a beautiful and modern facility that has hosted such stars as Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras. In 2004, THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR performed in the Jubilee concerts at the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory dedicated to Alfred Schnittke. In 2005, they sang at the annual Gala at the House of Teachers in a performance dedicated to the memory of Ninel Kambourg, their Choir's founder. They also performed in Yuri Grigorovich's ballet *Spartacus* at the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses, and made a recording of Alexander Grechaninov's *Sister Beatrix* as well as Dmitri Shostakovich's *Songs About Forests* which The Choir first performed on Russia's "Culture TV," dedicated to the memory of that famous composer.



The year 2007 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Moscow Boys Capella, the school at which the boys study their craft, and there were many concerts and celebrations surrounding this momentous event. Some of these included performances in a Jubilee Concert in the city of Volgograd, where they performed *Generation Without War*. They participated in a Gala concert and party dedicated to the composer Aleksandr Klevitsy at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow. They also performed a concert at the Slobodkin Concert Center located on the famed Arbat Square in Moscow. Here, they performed *Requiem* by Gabriel Faure, and in another Gala performance, they performed the same program at the beautiful Roman Catholic Cathedral in Moscow. The Choir also performed this program at the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music in honor of their 50th Anniversary. They also performed *The Symphony of Psalms* by famed composer Igor Stravinsky at Rachmaninoff Concert Hall. These, along with many other special events, hailed a half-century of artistic excellence, awards, accomplishments, and touring for **THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR**. Sharing their beautiful and transcendent music with the world has been the hallmark of the Choir's success, and they look forward to many more years of carrying on their tradition of excellence well into the future.

LEONID BAKLUSHIN ~ *Tenor, Conductor, and Choir Master for THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR®*. Born in Moscow, Mr. Baklushin entered THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR in 1972. He rose in the ranks to become a truly gifted tenor, arranger, and conductor. He has appeared in many operas including *La Boheme* and *Carmen* at the Stanislavski Music Theatre and in B.A. Pokrovsky's production of *Vain Gold* at the Moscow Chamber Theatre. In 1988, Mr. Baklushin graduated from the Music College at the Moscow Conservatory and received his degree in bassoon and conducting. In 1993, he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, where he studied under S. Kalinin, with a Master's Degree in conducting. In 1991, Mr. Baklushin became the Choir Master of THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR, an honor of which he is deeply proud. In 1999, he was awarded a Medal of Honor for his work in the arts by the Russian government. At the culmination of their 1999 North American Tour, Mr. Baklushin was honored to meet President Bill Clinton in a private audience when the Group performed at the White House. Mr. Baklushin says of the experience, "This was an unforgettable tour with the White House [performance] being the best finale anyone could dream of!" In 2004, Mr. Baklushin was appointed the conductor of the Novospassky Monastery Chorus, who are famous in Moscow for performing Russian Orthodox music for audiences around the world. That same year, he was honored to be awarded the Order of Sergei Radonezhsky in the 3rd Degree for his work benefiting the Russian Orthodox Church. In 2008, Mr. Baklushin was awarded a special medal called "Our Heritage," named for the Russian Composer Georgy Sviridov. This award is given by an organization called Orthodox Russia and is bestowed upon artists with a high level of dedication to Russian Orthodox musical tradition and heritage. In addition to all of this, Mr. Baklushin has traveled the world sharing his music with the people of such countries as Spain, France, Germany, Sweden, Finland, England, Greece, and South Korea. With his youthful exuberance and elegant conducting style, Mr. Baklushin is guiding THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR to new heights in the musical world and into the future!

ALEXEI NESTERENKO ~ *Accompanist for THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR®* - Mr. Nesterenko is an accomplished pianist with a long background in music. He completed his post-graduate work at the Moscow Conservatory and performs as an accompanist and soloist with many ensembles throughout Europe. Mr. Nesterenko has won many prizes and awards including the International Competition of Pianists in Italy in 1995 and the Taneev Chamber Orchestra Competition in 1996. In 2004, he toured Russia as accompanist to famed Russian Opera Singer Liubov Kazarnovskaya, performed in a tour dedicated to the works of Rachmaninoff with the Tomsk Philharmonic Orchestra and he appeared with the Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra in a George and Ira Gershwin retrospective. In 2005, Mr. Nesterenko gave two recitals at the Rachmaninoff Festival in Moscow. He performed in a series of concerts called "Russian Seasons" in Austria as soloist and accompanist to his wife Elena Kononenko, and the couple toured Spain together as well, performing in Bilbao and Barcelona. He has performed as a soloist in many countries including Italy, Germany, Austria, Poland, Spain, South Korea, and



Russia. This is Mr. Nesterenko's seventh trip to America and he is very excited and honored to once again be touring with THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR.

NINEL KAMBOURG (1940 ~ 2002) ~ The driving force which has propelled the Choir to the success they enjoy today can be attributed, at least in part, to the work of Mrs. Ninel Kambourg, Choir Mistress and Artistic Director for THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR for over thirty years. It was in 1966 that Mrs. Kambourg became Artistic Director for the Choir and under her direction the Choir grew and developed until their reputation became highly regarded both in Russia and abroad. A native to Russia, Mrs. Kambourg was an extremely accomplished individual. She was a graduate of the Russian Music Academy and for her body of work the Russian government bestowed the coveted "Merited Worker of Arts for Russia" award upon her. This is an honor given only to a very few, outstanding artists who make great contributions in the development of arts and culture. Under her direction, the Choir mastered the most complicated works of Russian, European and American composers. Besides conducting the Choir, she was a lecturer, teacher, and author of many articles published in musical encyclopedias and other publications including *Musical Life*. Mrs. Kambourg also wrote several of the musical arrangements that the Choir still performs today. Mrs. Kambourg passed away just prior to the 2002 US Tour, however, her work remains the cornerstone of THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR's incredible sound and her musical signature is still legible in the high standards of performance this outstanding Group of young men sets with each passing year. In 2001, Mrs. Kambourg was awarded the prestigious title of People's Artist of Russia. This is the highest honor obtainable in the arts in Russia and is considered the equivalent of winning a Tony Award in America.



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End of Required Program Information.



OPTIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION BEGINS HERE

THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR® ~ Classical Composers Information

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 ~ 1750): ~ Born into a musical family at Eisenach in eastern Germany, Bach was that rare composer whose genius cannot be summed up, even approximated, by any known means. He was the supreme master of counterpoint, fugue, vocal writing, melody, chamber composition; solo instrument repertoire...the list is endless. His *Passions* are arguably the greatest compositions ever created for choral ensemble and orchestra. His solo works (for violin and cello) are of such beauty and perfection of form that their secrets have never been divulged fully, not even by the greatest virtuosi on those instruments. His writing for keyboard - the *Goldberg Variations* and *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, among others, reveals an unsurpassed ability to combine intricate musical structure with pure spiritual force; in fact, most leading musicians point to the mastery of these pieces as their ultimate goal. Bach was the greatest master of the Baroque, and probably of all classical music. Any student of music must start - and end - an inquiry into the glories of classical music with him. Written with the French composer Charles Gounod (1818-1893) "Ave Maria" as performed by our Choir, was originally written as a piece for violin and/or various other instruments and was entitled *Méditation sur le Prélude de piano de S. Bach*. It was later transcribed for voices, and later still, in 1859, the words of *Ave Maria* were added. The melody was composed by Gounod; the accompaniment, however, consists of the first prelude of J.S. Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier (The Well-Tempered Clavier)*, written in 1722, with just one bar added by Gounod.

Dmitri Stepanovich Bortniansky (1751 ~ 1825): ~ Dmitri Bortniansky was born on October 28, 1751 in the city of Hlukhiv in present-day Ukraine (officially referred to as "Glukhov" at the time, as part of the Russian Empire). At the age of seven, his prodigious talent at the local church choir afforded him the opportunity to go the capital of the empire, then St. Petersburg, and sing with the Imperial Chapel Choir in St. Petersburg. There he studied music and composition under the Director of the Imperial Chapel Choir, the Italian master Baldassare Galuppi, with whom he developed a bond. When Galuppi left for Italy in 1769, Bortniansky went with him. In Italy, Bortniansky gained considerable success composing operas. He composed *Creonte* (1776) and *Alcide* (1778) in Venice, and *Quinto Fabio* (1779) at Modena. He also composed sacred works in Latin and German, for both a capella performance and with orchestral accompaniment (including an *Ave Maria* for two voices and orchestra). Bortniansky returned to the court at St. Petersburg in 1779 and flourished creatively. He composed at least four more operas (all in French, with libretti by Franz-Hermann Laferrière): *Le Faucon* (1786), *Le Fete du Seigneur* (1786), *Don Carlos* (1786), and *Le Fils-Rival ou La Moderne Stratonice* (1787). Bortniansky wrote a number of instrumental works at this time, including piano sonatas and a piano quintet with harp, and a cycle of French songs. He also composed liturgical music for the Russian Orthodox Church, combining Eastern and Western European styles of sacred music, incorporating the polyphony he learned in Italy; some works were polychoral, using a style descended from the Venetian polychoral technique of the Gabriellis. After a while, Bortniansky's genius proved too great to ignore, and in 1796, he was appointed Director of the Imperial Chapel Choir, the first director not to have been imported from outside of the Russian Empire. With such great talent at his disposal, he produced scores upon scores of compositions, including over 100 religious works, sacred concertos (35 for four-part mixed choir, 10 for double choruses), cantatas, and hymns. Dmitri Bortniansky died in St. Petersburg on October 10, 1825, and is interred at Alexander Nevsky Monastery in St. Petersburg. The choir performs *Christmas Hymn*, in a tribute to this great composer.



Stepan Anikeivich Degtiarev (1766~1813) ~ A serf under the famous Russian Count Sheremetiev, Degtiarev worked at the Count's theatre as an actor, singer and composer. He is most famous for his Oratorio *Minin and Pojarskyi or, The Liberation of Moscow* composed in 1811. Most pre-classical choral compositions were based upon religious texts and the selection by Degtiarev the Choir performs on this tour, "*All Angels in the Sky Rejoiceth*" is an example of this. Happily, Mr. Degtiarev was given his freedom at the end of his life by his master, the good Count Sheremetiev.

Gabriel Fauré (1845 ~ 1924): ~ Born in the small southern French town of Pamiers, Gabriel Faure's musical predilections were apparent from an early age when it was found that he could improvise on the local church harmonium and piano. One of his teachers noticed his talent and recommended that he be sent to the new Niedermeyer School of Religious Music in Paris. When Fauré arrived there at the age of nine, he probably didn't know that he was to be a part of the renaissance of religious music in France. Since the French Revolution, church music had been reduced to little more than popular opera and theater tunes. The goal of the Niedermeyer School was to reverse this trend by training new organists and choirmasters to bring more depth to music. It was in this atmosphere that young Fauré would be trained. During the eleven years he stayed at the school, he learned traditional subjects like harmony, solfège, and counterpoint; but his primary focus was on the organ and the piano. Even though his grades in organ performance were poor, Fauré proved to be an exceptional talent at the piano. He won first prize two years in a row in competitions, including a first prize with distinction. By 1864, he could play so well that he was actually refused permission to compete with the other students! Finally, in 1865 at the age of 20, Gabriel Fauré left the school with a first prize in fugue and counterpoint. In August of 1870, the Franco-Prussian War broke out and Fauré was enlisted into the First Regiment of the Imperial Light Infantry as a messenger. Throughout his life he had made friends and in the army, it was no different. Between battles, he liked to give impromptu recitals to his comrades while they took refuge in the abandoned buildings outside Paris. Fauré took part in the battles at Champigny, Le Bourget, and Créteil and for being under fire in Champigny, he received the *croix de guerre* medal. When the war ended, Fauré returned to Paris and found work as second organist at the church of St. Suplice. In 1877, the choirmaster position became available at the Madeleine Church to which Fauré was appointed and where he worked for almost twenty years (1877-1896). The majority of Fauré's religious music was written for services held at the Madeleine. Besides numerous motets and a mass written for liturgical use, there's no question that Gabriel Fauré's best known choral work is the *Messe de Requiem (Requiem Mass)*, a movement from which the Choir performs in this program. Written between 1887 and 1890, the Requiem was written not for the death of his father as was thought by some, but as another experiment in Fauré's endless quest to write music that was new and different. Even so, the *Requiem* does convey his own personal feelings and attitudes about death. He said in 1902, "That's how I see death: as a joyful deliverance, an aspiration towards a happiness beyond the grave, rather than as a painful experience." When one hears the Requiem, one can almost visualize Fauré's belief in "a happiness beyond the grave." The Choir performs the seventh movement from the *Requiem Mass; In Paradisum*. The use of this last text in particular shows how much Fauré wanted to break from tradition in his work. When Fauré passed away on November 4th, 1924, from pneumonia at the age of 79, he was given a state funeral at the Madeleine and his *Requiem Mass* was performed. Then, he was laid to rest in Passy cemetery. In death, perhaps, he found the profound serenity which he conveyed so well in his ethereal and timeless music.



Mikhail Glinka (1804 ~ 1857): ~ A well-educated child of privilege, Glinka became a fervent Russian nationalist. He is considered the father of Russian music, and exerted a significant influence on such great later composers as Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Stravinsky. Glinka took piano, violin, and voice lessons, but he did not study music or composition seriously as a youth. His first job was as a government official, but, realizing how strongly he was drawn to music, he left to pursue both a general and a musical education. He studied for a time in Italy and spent the year 1833 studying composition in Berlin. He had composed some works during and prior to this time, but these were still derivative of prevailing Western European styles, and the year in Berlin only reinforced the non-Russian influences he felt. Returning to Russia, he discovered the works of writers such as Pushkin and Gogol, who uncovered for him the wealth and depth of his Russian cultural heritage. Moved, he wrote his seminal, truly Russian work, *A Life for the Tsar*. It recounts how villainous Poles, in 1613, attempted to capture the Tsar and how a young hero, Ivan Sussanin, led the pursuing Poles on a wild goose chase at the ultimate cost of his life. The work premiered in 1836 and was an immediate success. It intermingled Russian and Polish folk tunes with Italian-style operatic passages and even anticipated Wagner's use of the *leitmotif* by employing recurring themes identified with specific characters. It also marked a new approach to orchestration in which the orchestra was essentially a member of the cast, not merely background accompaniment for the singers. The year 1842 saw the premiere of Glinka's second great Russian opera, *Ruslan and Ludmilla*. It was not as immediately successful as *A Life for the Tsar*, but ultimately was more influential. It contained Persian influences and made use of a seven-step whole-tone scale for the first time in European music. His influence upon the Russian composers who followed him was immense; specifically he inspired Mily Balakirev, who gathered four other young Russian composers around him to form the so-called "Mighty Handful," and extended Glinka's effort to foster Russian nationalism in music and the arts in general. *Poputnaya pesnya (or, The Traveling Song)*, is performed by the choir, and is from Glinka's, *A Farewell to St. Petersburg*, circa 1840.

George Frederic Handel (1685 ~ 1759): ~ George Friederich Händel, was born the son of a barber-surgeon who intended him for a legal career. At first he practiced music clandestinely, but his father was encouraged to allow him to study music and he became a pupil of Zachow, the principal organist in Halle, Germany. When he was 17 he was appointed organist of the Calvinist Cathedral, but a year later he left for Hamburg, Germany. There he played the violin and harpsichord in the opera house, where his *Almira* was produced at the beginning of 1705, soon followed by his *Nero*. The next year he accepted an invitation to Italy, where he spent more than three years in Florence, Rome, Naples and Venice. He had operas or other dramatic works produced in all these cities (oratorios in Rome, including *La Resurrezione*). By writing many Italian cantatas, Handel perfected his technique in setting Italian words for the human voice. While in Rome he also composed some Latin Church music. He left Italy early in 1710 and went to Hanover, Germany, where he was appointed Kapellmeister to the elector. But he at once took leave to accept an invitation to London, where his opera *Rinaldo* was produced early in 1711. During his time in London, Handel saw many of his operas produced to mixed success. Finally, in 1718 a group of noblemen, in an effort to put Italian opera in London on a firmer footing, launched a company with royal patronage, the Royal Academy of Music, and appointed Handel as its musical director. However, public support was variable and the financial basis insecure, and in 1728 the venture collapsed. The previous year Handel, who had been appointed a composer to the Chapel Royal in 1723, had composed four anthems for the coronation of George II and had taken British citizenship. During the rest of the 1730s Handel moved between Italian opera and the English forms, oratorio, ode and the like, unsure of his future commercially and artistically. After a journey to Dublin in 1741, where *Messiah* had its premiere (in aid of charities), he put opera behind him and for most of the remainder of his life gave oratorio performances, mostly at the New Covent Garden



Theatre, usually at or close to the Lent season. The Choir performs the *Hallelujah Chorus* from the *Messiah* oratorio in this concert. During his last decade, he gave regular performances of *Messiah*, usually with about 16 singers and an orchestra of about 40 members. In 1749 he wrote a suite for wind instruments (with optional strings) for performance in Green Park to accompany the Royal Fireworks celebrating the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. Handel died in 1759 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, recognized in England and by many in Germany as the greatest composer of his day. The wide range of expression at his command is shown not only in the operas, with their rich and varied arias, but also in the form he created, the English oratorio, where it is applied to the fates of nations as well as individuals. He had a vivid sense of drama. But above all, he had a resource and originality of invention, to be seen in the extraordinary variety of music in the *Op. 6 Concertos*, for example, in which melodic beauty, boldness, and humor all play a part, that place him and Johan Sebastian Bach as the supreme masters of the Baroque era in music.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 ~ 1791) ~ Among the Titans of classical music, and generally placed in the top rank of composers along with Beethoven and Bach. Many consider Mozart to be the greatest composer of all time. He was a child prodigy who wrote his first symphony at age 8, then grew into a prolific composer who wrote over 600 pieces of music. Among his most famous works are *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (A Little Night Music, 1787) and the operas *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute, 1791). Mozart died of a mysterious fever at age 35. Over the years, various people have speculated that Mozart was murdered, perhaps by rival composer Antonio Salieri, but no proof exists to support that theory. In the year 2000 a scholarly panel suggested that Mozart died of rheumatic fever. Mozart married the former Constanze Weber in 1782. She was the younger sister of Aloysia Weber, who had refused Mozart's marriage proposal a few years earlier. Movie-goers will recall that Mozart was brilliantly portrayed by the actor Tom Hulce in the hit 1984 movie *Amadeus*. However, in the ultimate irony, it was F. Murray Abraham's portrayal of Antonio Salieri in that same film that won the Academy Award! The Choir performs two famous movements from the *Requiem: the Lacrimosa* and *the Sanctus*, which was only partially composed by Mozart, who died before he completed it. In fact, the Mozart *Requiem* was later completed by [Franz Xaver Süssmayr](#), who had assisted the ailing Mozart in writing much of the score, as in Mozart's final days, the composer's limbs had become extremely swollen.

Giovanni Battista Pergolese (1710 ~ 1736) ~ Pergolese was born in Jesi, Italy, where he studied music under Francesco Santini there before going to Naples in 1725 where he studied under Gaetano Greco among others. He spent most of his life working in Neapolitan courts. Pergolese was one of the most important early composers of *opera buffa* (comic opera). His *opera seria Il prigionier superbo* contained the two act *buffa* intermezzo, *La Serva Padrona* (*The Landlady Servant*, 1733), which became a very popular work in its own right. When it was given in Paris in 1752, it prompted the so-called *querelle des bouffons* (quarrel of the comedians) between supporters of serious French opera by the likes of Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean-Philippe Rameau and supporters of new Italian comic opera. Pergolese was held up as a model of the Italian style during this quarrel, which divided Paris's musical community for two years. Among Pergolese's other operatic works are his first opera *La conversione e morte di San Guglielmo* (1731), *Lo frate 'nnamorato* (*The friar in love*, 1732), *L'Olimpiade* (1735) and *Il Flaminio* (1735). All his operas were premiered in Naples apart from *L'Olimpiade* which was first given in Rome. Pergolese also wrote sacred music, including *Mass in F*. It is his *Stabat Mater* (1736), however, for male soprano, male alto, and orchestra, which is his best known sacred work. It was commissioned as a replacement for the one by Alessandro Scarlatti which had been performed each Good Friday in Naples, and is performed in this concert by the Moscow Boys



Choir. The work remained popular, becoming the most frequently printed work of the 18th century, and being arranged by a number of other composers, including Johann Sebastian Bach, who used it as the basis for his psalm *Tilge, Höchster, meine Sünden*, BWV 1083. Pergolese wrote a number of secular instrumental works, including a violin sonata and a violin concerto. A considerable number of instrumental and sacred works once attributed to Pergolese have since been shown to be falsely attributed. Much of Igor Stravinsky's ballet, *Pulcinella*, which ostensibly reworks pieces by Pergolese, is actually based on spurious works. The *Concerti Armonici* are now known to be composed by Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer. Pergolese died at the age of 26 in Pozzuoli, Italy, of tuberculosis.

Sergey Vassilievich Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) ~ Rachmaninoff was a student at the Moscow Conservatory from 1885 to 1892 where he studied composition with Russian composers Taneev and Arensky in addition to becoming a protégé of Tchaikovsky's and a close friend of another Russian composer, Scriabin. After studying at both the St. Petersburg and Moscow Conservatories, Rachmaninoff embarked on a career in Russia as a composer, pianist and conductor. The bulk of his opuses were written prior the Russian revolution in 1917. Cleverly, he used the opportunity of an already scheduled Scandinavian concert tour to escape from the civil unrest in Russia in December 1917. Rachmaninoff never returned to Russia, instead he began a new life and career in the West. In 1942, Rachmaninoff moved to Beverly Hills, California and became an American citizen in February 1943. Tragically, he died of cancer the following month. In his honor, our Choir performs his dense and moving composition, *A Quiet Melody*, and the popular choral piece, *Vocalise*.

Russian Folk Song Notes ~ In the Russian folk tradition the Choir performs the evocative and moving *Evening Bells*; also, *Steppes*, *Only Steppes All Around*, *Cherry Blossom*, and *In the Dark Forest*, all evocative of the beauty of nature. Another folk selection performed by the Choir hails from the neighboring Republic of Georgia and is called *The Mountains*. The tune is by contemporary composer Merab Partshaladze with text in Georgian by M. Dzhgamadze which has been translated into Russian by Gurin. *The Mountains* is about the grandeur of the majestic mountain landscapes found in that country.



THE MOSCOW BOYS CHOIR® ~ Christmas Around the World Tour Holiday Traditions from Around the World

Russia - Due to the “dual calendars” honored in Russia (that of the Gregorian Calendar and the Julian Calendar), Russians celebrate Christmas on January 6, which is called Koylada, and the New Year’s Eve holiday, or Epiphany Eve, is celebrated twice - on December 31 and January 14. At Koylada, Father Christmas brings gifts to the children and people go caroling house-to-house singing songs, called kolyadki in the North and schedricks in the South. The Russian Orthodox Hymn, “All the Angels in the Sky Rejoiceth” by Degtiarev, typifies the deep spiritual significance the Christmas season holds for the Russian people.

Ukraine – Holding similar traditions to Russia, and also celebrating Christmas on January 6, the people of the Ukraine have held the tradition of caroling since before 988 A.D. Between the days of Christmas Eve and Yordan, or the last day of their Christmas Season which is January 6 or January 19 depending on the calendar, groups of carolers visit homes in their villages spreading good wishes. If caroling later in the season, around New Year’s Eve, the schedrivky would be sung. The Choir performs “Schedrick,” which is an example of these carols and will be recognizable to Western audiences as “The Carol of the Bells.”

France - The French Christmas centers around le crèche or the manger scene. Every home will have its own nativity setting featuring tiny clay figures called santons, or “little saints.” The traditional songs performed by the Choir, La Bonne Nouvelle and “O! Holy Night,” both refer quite specifically to the heralding by the Angels of the birth of Christ. The lyrics to “O! Holy Night” were written by Placide Clappeau in 1847. It was translated from French to English by John Sullivan Dwight (1812-1893). Clappeau, a wine merchant and mayor of Roquemaure, France, wrote poems for his own enjoyment. The music was written by Adolphe-Charles Adam (1803-1856). Adam was born in Paris, France and is best known for his ballet Giselle (1841) and his operatic work. After Midnight Mass on the French Christmas Eve comes le reveillon, the late supper that is the culinary high point of the season. When it’s time for bed, French children leave their shoes by the fireside for presents to be placed in them by Pere Noel (Father Christmas) or le Petit Noel (Little Christmas, or the Christ Child) who work as a team to make sure each child receives a gift!

Germany - In Germany, Christmas technically begins December 6 and is celebrated throughout the entire month. The center of a traditional German Christmas is, of course, the Christmas Tree. It is said that the idea of raising and decorating a tree for Christmas comes out of Germany and decorations were originally homemade trinkets or even fruit and cookies. The Choir performs the perennial favorite “Silent Night” which, ironically, was written hastily by Father Josef Mohr and his organist, Franz Gruber, to save Christmas Eve 1818 from being without music as the church organ had rusted. Instead, “Silent Night” was first performed by a Choir to the accompaniment of a guitar. It is interesting to note that such an enduring Christmas Classic had such humble beginnings!

England - England enjoys many rich traditions at Christmas, typified by the presence of delicious roast beef (dubbed “Sir Loin of Beef” during the Middle Ages) and the “kissing bough,” a combination of greenery and mistletoe still popular today. During Medieval times, there was the tradition of the Lord of Misrule, who “reigned” over the numerous masques and great feasting during “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” Oddly, this carol, performed by the Choir, is entirely about getting gifts and it is thought that its origins go back to “counting songs” that taught children to count. Another



strong English Christmas tradition is Boxing Day, December 26th, where the church alms boxes are opened to the poor to ensure they, too, enjoy a Merry Christmas. Boxing Day is still celebrated in modern England and is a legal holiday. In the days of Olde England, groups of traveling singers would entertain for food or pay. These groups were called "waits" and were extremely popular at Christmas time. "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" is one of these carols and the caroler's tenacity in waiting for their treats is exemplified as the choristers sing about their figgy pudding, exclaiming "...and we won't go until we get some!"

Israel - Chanukah, or the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by the lighting of candles and opening of gifts, each candle and gift bearing a special significance or representing an important aspect of Jewish life. As a result of the divergent faiths in Israel, Christmas comes three times each year to the village of Bethlehem. A site to behold it is as people of many creeds come together in peace and reverence to worship and reflect in their own manner. The traditional Chanukah song of celebration the Choir performs typifies that joy of the people of the world coming together in peace.

Spain - In Spain, Christmas actually begins on December 8 during the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Similar to France, the manger scene or nacimiento is the center of much activity. Children dance around the nacimiento and play their tambourines. "Fum! Fum! Fum!" is an example of the songs they sing. After Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, called Noche Buena, there is feasting, fireworks, and dancing in the streets. On the afternoon of Christmas Day, 17th century costumes are donned and a special dance called the Seixesare are performed before the church altar. In the Spanish tradition, the Wise Men are the bearer of gifts to the children.

United States - Christmas in America embraces almost all of the customs of the world. Every ethnic group has brought their own traditions and a great diversity of climate also makes a difference to how Christmas is celebrated regionally. For most people, though, Turkey is the feast of choice and the presents are placed beneath a Christmas Tree, brought for children young and old by Santa Claus. The selections the Choir performs points out that harmonized diversity. The perennial favorites "Jingle Bells" and "Silver Bells," also capture the joys of winter time as shared by friends and family during the holiday season. These song's images are truly a part of the American Christmas tradition!

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SOURCES FOR THIS PROGRAM

The program notes are intended to enhance the audience's enjoyment of this performance. Information sources are listed below, but there is so much more to know about the Classical Composers in our program and the fascinating Holiday traditions that exist worldwide. Find out more! For further reading, pay a visit your local public library.

"Celebrating Christmas Around the World" ed. By Herbert H. Wemecke
The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA 1962

"The Christmas Almanac" by Gerard and Patricia Del Re
Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City, NY 1979

"Christmas Around the World" ed. by Elizabeth Gutierrez
FJH Music Co., Inc., Miami, FL 1995

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Wikipedia Foundation, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida (2001-2009) www.wikipedia.org

Answers Corporation, New York, NY (2005) www.answers.com