

32. Kol' slaven nash Gospod (Glory to our Lord)

Dmitri Bortniansky
(1751-1825)
arr. William Melton

Bortniansky, Dmitri Stepanovich

(born 1751 in Hlukhiv; died 10 October 1825 in St. Petersburg)

A chorister at the Court Chapel in St. Petersburg at the age of eight, the Ukrainian-born Bortniansky studied with Baldassare Galuppi. In 1769, Bortniansky followed Galuppi to Italy with the help of a stipend from Czarina Catherine the Great. He studied in Venice, Bologna, Rome and Naples, and saw his first operas produced in Italian theatres (*Creonte*, 1776; *Alcide* and *Quinto Fabio*, both 1778). After returning to St. Petersburg in 1779, he was named Kapellmeister to Catherine's son Paul. When the latter became Czar Paul I in 1796, Bortniansky was made director of the Court Chapel Choir (the first native Slav to be appointed to the post). He expanded the ensemble to over one hundred singers and introduced the great choral works of Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven to audiences in St. Petersburg. Czar Alexander I would honour the composer by appointing him privy-councilor.

Bortniansky composed comic operas to French texts, including *La fete du seigneur*, *Le faucon* (both 1786), and *Le fils rival* (1787), and also wrote keyboard pieces. Dubbed the 'Russian Palestrina', he also left a large body of liturgical music that included a Catholic and a Greek Orthodox Mass, psalms, cantatas, hymns and sacred concerti (the sacred vocal works later appeared in ten volumes edited by Tchaikovsky). The hymn 'Kol slaven nash Gospod v Sione' ('How Glorious is Our Lord in Zion', text by Mikhail Kheraskov) was widely published both in and outside of Russia. Sung in churches across Germany in both Latin and German ('Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe', text by Gerhard Terstegen), it remains popular to this day in both a cappella and military band arrangements.

Text by William Melton