

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner. It consists of the word "NAXOS" in white, bold, uppercase letters, centered within a blue square. Above the text, there are several horizontal lines and a stylized architectural element resembling a classical building facade.

NAXOS

Georgy  
**SVIRIDOV**  
(1915–1998)

**Russia Adrift – Song Cycle**

Snow is Falling – Cantata  
Music for Chamber Orchestra

Mila Shkirtil, Mezzo-soprano

Nikolay Mazhara, Piano • Sergey Voloshchuk, French horn  
Choirs • St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra

Yuri Serov

Georgy  
**SVIRIDOV**  
(1915–1998)

**Sneg idyot (Snow is Falling) (1965)**

**A small cantata to words by Boris Pasternak (1890–1960)**

- 1 Snow is Falling
- 2 Soul
- 3 Night

**Music for Chamber Orchestra (1964)**

- 4 –
- 5 –
- 6 –

**Otchalivshaya Rus' (Russia Adrift) (1977/2016)**

**A song cycle to words by Sergey Yesenin (1895–1925)**

**Version for mezzo-soprano and orchestra by Leonid Rezetdinov (b. 1961)\***

- 7 Autumn
- 8 I Have Left Behind My Beloved Home
- 9 Open the Gates, O Guardian Angel
- 10 Silver Path
- 11 Russia Adrift
- 12 Simon, Peter... Where Are You?
- 13 Where Are You, O My Father's House?
- 14 Beyond the Hills of the Milky Way
- 15 The Sound of the Deadly Horn
- 16 An Owl Cries in Autumn
- 17 I Do Believe in Happiness!
- 18 O Motherland, O Happy and Eternal Hour!

**9:43**

**2:21**  
**5:04**  
**2:18**

**22:16**

**8:02**  
**5:43**  
**8:31**

**32:55**

**3:05**  
**2:40**  
**3:12**  
**3:10**  
**2:30**  
**2:08**  
**3:40**  
**3:10**  
**1:44**  
**2:56**  
**2:18**  
**2:33**  
**2:59**

**Georgy Sviridov (1915–1998)**

**Snow is Falling • Music for Chamber Orchestra • Russia Adrift**

Georgy Vasil'yevich Sviridov was born in Kursk Oblast, about one hundred miles from the Russian border with Ukraine, in 1915. Following early musical training at the music school in Kursk, he moved to St Petersburg (then Leningrad) to study at the city's Central Music Tekhnikum from 1932–1936. In 1935, he scored his first success with a cycle of songs to texts by Aleksandr Pushkin: his settings, lyrical and simple in their harmonies and texture, gave them a freshness that was to become characteristic of Sviridov's approach.

The following year, Sviridov entered the Leningrad Conservatory, where his teachers included Dmitry Shostakovich. He continued his studies there until 1941, and Shostakovich's compositional approach was to leave a significant imprint on his young student's works of the 1940s. In 1956, Sviridov moved to Moscow, where he remained until his death in 1998. He was to become a celebrated figure of the Soviet regime, and among the various honours bestowed upon him were the Lenin Prize, and the titles of National Artist of the Soviet Union and Hero of Socialist Labour. He was also a committee member of the Composers' Union from 1962–1974, acting as its head from 1968–1973, having taken over this leading role from Shostakovich.

A prolific composer – his output includes film scores, incidental music, symphonic suites, and other instrumental works – Sviridov is particularly important as a composer of vocal music. In addition to several thousand songs, he wrote many choral works for both small ensembles and large-scale forces – such as the *Poem in Memory of Sergey Yesenin* (1955–56, setting the lyric poet Yesenin's own words); *Oratorio Pathétique* (1959) and *Songs of Kursk* (1964), all of which call for orchestra and chorus. His choice of texts in each case is significant: evidently a well-read man, he sought out poetry that reflected, in the broadest sense, the character and image of his native country. From the folk texts (and indeed folk melodies) of *Songs of Kursk* to the words of Yesenin, Pushkin and Pasternak, Sviridov's careful settings of Russian poetry

seem calculated to conjure images of his native land, and the pivotal moments of its history.

The writings of Boris Pasternak (1890–1960) were of particular importance to Sviridov throughout his career; though in the first instance it was not as a source for musical settings that the composer looked to his texts, but rather as a source of consolation and thought-provoking ideas. Sviridov regularly referred to Pasternak in his diaries as, for example, after his observations when reading *Doctor Zhivago* (initially banned from publication in Russia upon its completion in 1957): 'Some deep (though not always comprehensive) thoughts from Pasternak on life, on Man and his calling, on the times, on what outrages the 1917 Revolution has inflicted upon Man...'. The small cantata *Sneg idyot* (Snow is Falling) was written in 1965 after decades of contemplating Pasternak's poetry – and it was the first time that the writer was to inspire a composition from his younger contemporary.

Sviridov selected three poems for this cantata, all written during the last few years of Pasternak's life: *Snow is Falling* (1957), *Soul* and *Night* (both 1956). The texts are all heavily descriptive – of the falling snow, the passing night, and the state of the soul – but they each mention, too, the artist himself. Whether contemplating the role of the creator, or urging himself to keep writing, the speaker/maker is present in these poems, and this evidently appealed to Sviridov. The work was both completed and published in 1965, issued by *Sovetskaya Muzyka* (Soviet Music) magazine; and it was premiered on 21 December 1966 in the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.

The musical idiom of *Sneg idyot* is heavily reliant on repetition and relatively simple, often modal, harmonic progressions. In the first movement, *Snow is Falling*, we are in a still and hypnotic world: sopranos and altos sing their words on a single note, while the orchestral writing largely alternates between just two chords. Within its dreamy string texture, a glockenspiel sounds the passing bars, and a flute solo dances past, again constructed from

a repeating figure. This circular construction is also used in *Soul*, a minor-inflected, almost chant-like movement which uses low strings and clarinets and flutes towards the bottom of their register. After such contemplative writing, *Night* comes as something of a surprise: a boys' chorus perform a light, lively tune to the accompaniment of bounding chords and a tapping snare drum. Despite the philosophical musings of the text, there is something childish and folk-like about Sviridov's setting. 'Work on, work on creator –! the boys sing cheerfully, 'To sleep would be a crime – / Eternity's own hostage / And prisoner of Time.'

From the following decade, Sviridov's *Music for Chamber Orchestra*, composed in 1964, draws on the thematic material of an early *Piano Concerto*. Scored for piano, strings and horn, much of the piece still bears traces of a concerto – or at least concertino – texture, with a prominent role given to the piano in contrast to the occasional splashes of colour added by the horn. There are traces of Shostakovich's influence in this work, particularly in the compound harmonies and sometimes angular lines of the first movement. The second movement, a dramatic scherzo, makes effective use of short, strong gestures and silences. The finale, a slow movement, gradually builds in intensity to an impassioned climax, which I see as the 'development and interaction... of human woe [and] vivid compassion', before fading at last to its whispering, major-key conclusion. The piece is dedicated to Rudolf Barshai, founder and leader of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra.

*Otchalivshaya Rus'* (Russia Adrift), a cycle to the poems of Sergey Yesenin, was written in 1977. This was a bold choice of title in an age of 'developed Socialism', and Sviridov took it from Yesenin's *The Dove of Jordan*, here presented as the fifth movement of his piece, under the title *Russia Adrift*. Yesenin (1895–1925), a poet of the Revolution, was a controversial figure and both Stalin and Khrushchev banned some of his works. Sviridov largely chose texts written around 1917, which evoke the Russia of the early twentieth century: the beauty of the landscape, mysticism and religious faith, and political uncertainty. Sviridov interpreted these poems in his diaries as follows:

*Autumn and I Have Left Behind My Beloved Home*  
– landscape and lyrics

*Open the Gates, O Guardian Angel...* – legendary fabulous horse, a symbol of poetical creativity  
*Silver Path* – eternal path of an artist, path of man  
*Russia Adrift* – Russia as a bird in flight, Russia in her space flight, as a flying swan

*Simon, Peter... Where Are You?*  
– fragment of an ancient legend  
*Where Are You, O My Father's House?*  
– picture of revolutionary turmoil, ruin of the fathers' home

*Beyond the Hills of the Milky Way* – outer space where ancestors' souls fly in a whirl of cosmic flames

*The Sound of the Deadly Horn*  
– advent of an iron guest, tragic monologue, feeling of ruin of the patriarchal peasant lifestyle

*An Owl Cries in Autumn* – the poet again, eternity of poetry, eternity of advent of a poet

*I Do Believe in Happiness! and O Motherland, O Happy and Eternal Hour!* – limitless belief in the Motherland, in her best spiritual powers, a solemn hymn, belief in regaining the Motherland.

Sviridov's work, along with the late vocal cycles of Shostakovich, is considered a keystone of twentieth-century Russian vocal repertoire. Written for voice and piano, *Russia Adrift* was premiered by Elena Obraztsova and Sviridov himself in 1977; and soon afterwards the composer raised the idea with my father, Eduard, of producing an orchestral version. In the end, it was Leonid Rezetdinov (b. 1961) who orchestrated the work, and Eduard was not able to conduct its first performance. I dedicate this performance to the memory of my father, who died soon after this recording was completed.

**Yuri Serov**

*Edited by Katy Hamilton*

## Mila Shkirtil



The mezzo-soprano Mila Shkirtil graduated from the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College in Choral Conducting and Solo Singing, and from the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory of St Petersburg in Solo Singing. She made her debut in Vivaldi's *Gloria* in 1994 at the St Petersburg Philharmonic Hall. Since 1997 she has appeared at the Conservatory Opera and Ballet Theatre, making her opera debut abroad in 2001 as Eboli in *Don Carlos* at the Stadttheater Klagenfurt. Her career has since taken her to venues throughout the world. Mila Shkirtil has made several recordings, particularly of Russian vocal repertoire, including works by Glinka, Glazunov, Smirnov, Sviridov and Boris Tchaikovsky, as well as vocal works by Valery Gavrilin and collected songs by Anton Rubinstein.

### Nikolai Mazhara



Leningrad-born Nikolai Mazhara is a pianist and composer with a wide repertoire. He is known in St Petersburg as an interpreter of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Schoenberg, as well as performing staples of the Russian piano repertoire from the Romantic era to the present day. His concerto repertoire includes Brahms, Grieg, Mendelssohn, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Scriabin and Schoenberg, which he has played with the leading orchestras of St Petersburg. He has been a member of the St Petersburg Composers' Union since 2005, and currently teaches composition at the St Petersburg Conservatoire.

### Sergey Voloschuk



Sergey Voloschuk was born in the city of Norilsk in 1966. He graduated from the Academy of Music in Krasnoyarsk in 1992, moving to Novosibirsk Conservatory for professional probation. In 2002 Sergey Voloschuk received the honorary title of Honoured Artist of Russia, and since 2005 has been principal horn of the St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra. As an experienced orchestral musician, chamber musician and soloist playing both in Russia and internationally, he has performed the horn concertos of Mozart, Leopold Mozart and Richard Strauss, as well as orchestral repertoire.

### St Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov Music College Female Choir



Founded in 1967, the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College Female Choir consists of students from the conductor-choral department aged 14 to 22 years old. Since 2002, the choir has been directed by composer and conductor Sergey Yekimov. This multi award-winning choir has performed at the best concert venues in St Petersburg, both in solo concerts and accompanied by the city's leading symphony orchestras, as well as touring across Russia and Eastern Europe. The choir has made several recordings of music by St Petersburg composers.

### St Petersburg Radio and Television Children's Choir



The St Petersburg Radio and Television Children's Choir was created in 1955 by the musician and teacher Yuri Slavnitsky. Since 1988 the artistic director and conductor of the choir has been Stanislav Gribkov. The choir consists of three age groups, comprising a total of 300 girls and boys. With an active concert schedule, both for broadcasts and in music festivals, the choir collaborates regularly with the symphony orchestras of St Petersburg. The choir is the recipient of more than ten international music competition and festival awards.

### St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra



The St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1967 by Nikolai Rabinovich, Karl Eliasberg and Edward Grikurov and until 1985 was known as the Orchestra of Ancient and Modern Music. Renowned soloists and conductors, including Yuri Temirkanov, Mariss Jansons, Sviatoslav Richter, and many others, have performed with the orchestra. In 1985 the orchestra was enlarged, developing as the Leningrad State Orchestra under Ravil Martynov and undertaking concert tours of China, Japan, Germany, Austria, Mexico, Spain, Finland, Norway, Sweden, France and Belgium. From 2004 until 2007 the orchestra was headed by Martynov's pupil Vasily Petrenko. The orchestra's artistic director and chief conductor from 2007 to 2013 was Alexander Titov, who has recorded significant Russian compositions from the period of the Second World War.

### Yuri Serov



The conductor Yuri Serov graduated from the St Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory in 1993, and has also studied in Salzburg and Weimar. As a conductor and pianist, Yuri Serov has toured the cities of more than thirty countries and has made over sixty recordings for a number of labels in Russia, Belgium, Japan and the United States. He is Chief Conductor of the Volgograd Philharmonic Orchestra and is the author of many articles and essays on music. At present he teaches at the St Petersburg Conservatory. Yuri Serov is Artistic Director of the Northern Flowers international music festival, and founder and editor of the CD series St Petersburg Musical Archive.

Georgy Sviridov was a celebrated figure whose vocal works, along with those of his teacher Shostakovich, are considered to be among the most important in twentieth-century Russian music. His 'small cantata' *Snow is Falling* includes passages of hypnotic stillness as well as folk-like warmth, while the major song cycle *Russia Adrift* evokes landscape, mysticism and religious faith, ending in a solemn hymn to the Motherland. Sviridov's prolific output included symphonic suites as well as theatre and film scores. The angular and impassioned *Music for Chamber Orchestra* reveals his mastery of non-vocal music.

Georgy  
**SVIRIDOV**  
(1915–1998)

- 1-3** **Sneg idyot (Snow is Falling) (1965)** – a small cantata  
to words by Boris Pasternak (1890–1960) **9:43**
- 4-6** **Music for Chamber Orchestra (1964)** **22:16**
- 7-18** **Otchalivshaya Rus' (Russia Adrift) (1977/2016)**  
– a song cycle to words by Sergey Yesenin (1895–1925)  
Version for mezzo-soprano and orchestra  
by Leonid Rezetdinov (b. 1961)\* **32:55**

**\*WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

**Mila Shkirtil, Mezzo-soprano 7-18**

**Nikolay Mazhara, Piano 4-6 • Sergey Voloshchuk, French horn 4-6**

**Rimsky-Korsakov Music College Female Choir 1-3**

**Boys of the St Petersburg Radio and Television Children's Choir 1-3**

**St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra • Yuri Serov**

A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

The available sung texts can be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/573685.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/573685.htm)

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