

**THE TWO LIVES OF ALEKSANDR ANDREEVIČ
ARHANGEL'SKIJ AND ALEKSANDR VASIL'EVICH
NIKOL'SKIJ: THE FATES OF MASTERS OF RUSSIAN
SACRED MUSIC IN A PIVOTAL ERA***

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**ДВА ЖИВОТА АЛЕКСАНДРА АНДРЕЈЕВИЧА
АРХАНГЕЛСКОГ И АЛЕКСАНДРА ВАСИЉЕВИЧА
НИКОЉСКОГ: СУДБИНЕ МАЈСТОРА РУСКЕ ДУХОВНЕ
МУЗИКЕ У ПРЕЛОМНОЈ ЕПОХИ**

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Received: 18 June 2024

Accepted: 4 November 2024

Original scientific paper

ABSTRACT

This article delineates the main developments of Russian choral music in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries by examining the lives of Aleksandr Andreevič Arhangel'skij and Aleksandr Vasil'evič Nikol'skij. It considers transformations in the choral landscape during the pivotal years of the February and October revolutions in Russia and subsequently in the Soviet period. It highlights the circumstances in which Russian sacred music found itself in the new state and reveals how, in part thanks to Arhangel'skij and Nikol'skij, traditional practices were sustained – both within the USSR and among the Russians abroad.

* The article was translated from the Russian language and edited for publication by Georgij Lapšinov.

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KEYWORDS: Russian sacred music, Aleksandr Andreevič Arhangel'skij, Aleksandr Vasil'evič Nikol'skij, Imperial Russia, USSR.

АПСТРАКТ

Овај чланак испитује главне развојне токове руске хорске музике крајем XIX и почетком XX века, кроз проучавање живота Александра Андрејевича Архангелског и Александра Васиљевича Никољског. Разматрају се промене у хорском пејзажу током године Фебруарске и Октобарске револуције у Русији, а затим и у совјетском периоду. Наглашавају се околности у којима се руска духовна музика нашла у новој држави и открива се како су се традиционалне праксе одржале, делом захваљујући Архангелском и Никољском, како у СССР-у тако и у руској дијаспори.

Кључне речи: руска духовна музика, Александар Андрејевич Архангелски, Александар Васиљевич Никољски, Руска Империја, СССР.

The early life paths of Aleksandr Andreevič Arhangel'skij and Aleksandr Vasil'evič Nikol'skij were remarkably similar. Both originated from the clerical estate and were natives of the Penza Governorate [Penzenskaâ guberniâ]. Only an age difference of nearly thirty years separated them: Arhangel'skij was born on 11 (23) October 1846 in the village of Staroe Tezikovo, Narovchatsky District [Narovčátskij rajón],¹ and Nikol'skij on 10 (22) June 1874 in the village of Vladykino, Chembarsky Uyezd [Čembarskij uezd]. Given the detailed knowledge of Nikol'skij's biography, whose archive has been excellently preserved,² it is possible to hypothetically reconstruct the early biography of Arhangel'skij, whose archive was lost.

The young men grew up in remote provinces, within traditional patriarchal environments in the families of rural priests, spending their leisure

¹ Nowadays Mihájlovo-Tézikovo village (Melsitovo), Narovchatsky district, Penza region.

² For many decades, the archive of Nikol'skij had been preserved by the composer's children. A significant portion of it was transferred by them to the State Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow [Gosudarstvennyj muzej muzykal'noj kul'tury] – now the Russian National Museum of Music [Rossijskij nacional'nyj muzej muzyki] – where a personal collection of A. V. Nikol'skij (No. 294) was established. A considerable part of the archive, including personal letters and memoirs, remained with the heirs, who kindly granted the author of these lines the opportunity to study and publish them in the first book of volume 8 of the series *Russian Sacred Music in Documents and Materials* (Zvereva, 2018).

time alongside peasant children. Subsequently, upon becoming professional musicians, they paid great attention to folk song, which had been a part of their life from early childhood. Their upbringing within the bosom of the Orthodox Church also left its mark on the characters of Arhangel'skij and Nikol'skij. Both were instilled with religiosity, modesty, a love of work, books, and knowledge. There was much in common in the characters of these musicians as well. Nikol'skij's daughter, Tat'ana Alexandrovna, recalled: "His character was so imbued with a special quietness, equanimity, and purity that never left him and, to some extent, even hindered him" (Favorskaâ 2018, 256). A contemporary described Arhangel'skij's character in similar terms: "He was a bright person, extraordinarily gifted, modest, and kind with that broad Russian kindness that only we Russians understand. There was no limit to his kindness. Aleksandr Andreevič was the universal favourite of all who knew him" (Razumovskij 1933, 7).

Both musicians learned church singing by ear in the church choir during early childhood, and learned to read music when they entered religious educational institutions – first theological school, then theological seminary. There, they began to conduct church choirs and to experiment with composing sacred music.³

During the decades that separated the birth dates of Nikol'skij and Arhangel'skij, the provincial ecclesiastical world of Russia had changed very little. However, social and cultural life was transforming rapidly. In Arhangel'skij's youth, the undisputed centre of the country was its capital, Saint Petersburg; for church musicians, the most authoritative institution was the Imperial Court Chapel [Pridvornaâ pevčeskaâ kapella] located there. It was there that Arhangel'skij passed the examination for the title of church choir director ("regent" in Russian), having moved to Saint Petersburg in 1870 to continue his education.

The capital dictated not only the laws for the whole country but also an artistic style oriented towards Western Europe. As a composer of sacred music, Arhangel'skij aligned himself with the Romantic and eclectic movement that prevailed at the time.⁴ By the 1890s, when Nikol'skij began his professional musical training, the old Russian capital, Moscow, was already playing a significant role in the cultural landscape of Russian life. It was

³ For Archangelsky's biographical details, see: Arhangel'skij, Aleksandr Andreevič. *Avtobiografiâ*. Rossijskaâ nacional'naâ biblioteka, Otdel rukopisej, Fond 816, Op. 3, Ed. hr. 2852, L. 2. For Nikol'skij, see "Perepiska A. V. Nikol'skogo s členami sem'i. Penzenskaâ duhovnaâ seminar-iâ. 1891–1894 gody."

⁴ For more on the history of liturgical music in the Russian Orthodox Church, see Gardner 1982, 450–451.

perceived by contemporaries as the antithesis of the “Western” bureaucratic Saint Petersburg and embodied the ancient Russian past.⁵ It was therefore Moscow, where a new artistic style was emerging in those years, that attracted the young Nikol’skij.

In history of art, this new national style is commonly referred to as the New Russian (or Neo-Russian) style. It manifested itself in civil and ecclesiastical architecture, icon painting, frescoes, decorative arts, sacred and liturgical music, and other art forms. As a Russian variant of Art Nouveau, it poetised images of the native Middle Ages, borrowing elements from ancient cultural memory – in musical art, for example, it borrowed heavily from old church chants. In sacred music, in particular, it was named the New Direction [*Novoe napravlenie*]. And the Moscow Synodal Choir, which rivalled the Saint Petersburg Court Chapel, became the proponent of this new style. Composers such as Sergej Vasil’evič Rahmaninov, Aleksandr Dmitrijevič Kastal’skij, Aleksandr Tihonovič Grečaninov, Pavel Grigor’evič Česnokov, and others wrote music for this choir. In 1894, Nikol’skij joined the Synodal Choir as a singer. He subsequently received higher musical education in Moscow and stood alongside many composers of the New Direction. Moreover, as a publicist, Nikol’skij essentially became the chief historiographer of this creative movement after the death of his teacher, Stepan Vasil’evič Smolenskij, in 1909.

Thus, we see that both our protagonists found themselves on different stylistic ends of the Russian sacred-musical creativity, representing two fundamentally different directions – the old of Saint Petersburg and the new of Moscow. However, in their public activities, Alexander Arhangel’skij and Alexander Nikol’skij acted as a united front. Both were representatives of a new stratum in the musical world that began to form in Russia after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the subsequent reforms. This new professional community often consisted of individuals from the lower social classes, as well as those originating from clerical families. Professionally, these were vocal teachers in educational institutions, secular and church choirmasters, and ordinary singers.

It is particularly necessary to emphasise the role of the clergy, whose members, in the post-reform period, gained the freedom to choose an education not limited to ecclesiastical institutions. Many choral conductors, singers, teachers of choral singing, and musicological researchers were children of priests and clergymen. Besides Nikol’skij and Arhangel’skij, many others can be named, but we will only mention a few: brothers Pavel

⁵ See Smolenskij 2002, 273–275.

Grigor'evič and Aleksandr Grigor'evič Česnokov, Aleksandr Dmitrievič Kastal'skij, Emel'ân Mihajlovič Vitošinskij, Aleksandr Dmitrievič Gorodcov, Aleksej Vasil'evič and Vladimir Ivanovič Kastorskij, Aleksandr Vasil'evič Preobraženskij, and Vasilij Mihajlovič Metallov. The vocal abilities possessed by members of the clergy were passed down from generation to generation. From an early age, the children of clergy served and read in church, and sang in the church choir. They grew up among the spiritual leaders of the people: managing parishes that sometimes numbered thousands of parishioners, teaching in rural schools – this was an intrinsic part of their familial inheritance. The choice of a choral or vocal speciality was largely determined by the fact that the children of clergy typically entered higher educational institutions as adults, lacking sufficient preparation to pursue a career as performing musicians-instrumentalists.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the humanities education received by graduates of ecclesiastical educational institutions was exceptionally high in quality, and the knowledge they acquired served as a solid foundation for their subsequent scholarly, journalistic, and musical-pedagogical endeavours.

Also emerging from within the choral community on the eve of the revolution were masters of secular music, including composers. They entered the realm of great secular music through the church choir and often had vocal thinking as their primary musical foundation. Nikol'skij is a vivid example of this. Likewise, Kastal'skij, Konstantin Nikolaevič Švedov, Nikolaj Seměnovič Golovanov, brothers Česnokov, Fëdor Stepanovič Akimenko, Vladislav Andreevič Zolotarëv, and many others transitioned from the choir loft to the broader musical sphere.

The same is also true the other way round. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, many composers from the secular professional music world also engaged in sacred music – Pëtr Il'ič Čajkovskij, Nikolaj Andreevič Rimskij-Korsakov, Milij Alekseevič Balakirev, Sergej Ivanovič Taneev, Rahmaninov, Grečaninov, Nikolaj Nikolaevič Čerepnin, and many others. Moreover, several of them (such as Rimskij-Korsakov, Balakirev, Čerepnin) at various times either taught at the Court Chapel or served on the Supervisory Board of the Synodal School of Church Singing (such as Čajkovskij and Taneev).

On the eve of the revolution, the rise in self-confidence and educational level of the initially inadequately educated choral musicians who represented the poorest musical stratum was already producing results on a new qualitative level. For example, in the 1910s, the Moscow Synodal School of Church Singing surpassed the Moscow Conservatory in the level of instruction in

certain musical subjects; and during the Soviet era, the diplomas of its former graduates were recognised as equivalent to those of the Conservatory and other higher educational institutions.

Naturally, the growth of professional choral education was facilitated not only by the Moscow Synodal School and the Saint Petersburg Chapel. In the early twentieth century in Russia, numerous educational courses were already being conducted for teachers of choral singing, choir directors, psalmists, and choristers.⁶ In this field, Arhangel'skij and Nikol'skij also found opportunities to exercise their talent.

The professions of church choir director and school teacher began to converge. Church choir directors often taught singing in educational institutions and became leaders of secular choirs. At the same time, future school teachers, studying in pedagogical establishments, received training as choir directors and were prepared to lead choirs at concerts and church services.

Even the role of the church parish singing clerk was re-evaluated in the pre-revolutionary years. As he became regarded (and accordingly trained) as a versatile musician with many important roles – church singer, reader, teacher, and popular choir director in parishes without trained choirs – he began to be called by the more honourable term, the psalmist (“psalomšik” in Russian).

At the beginning of the century, “musical workers,” as musicians referred to themselves at meetings, loudly declared their needs in the press.⁷ The main topics of their addresses were the improvement of their material and social conditions (as they were often destitute), as well as the deepening of musical education nationwide. Public charitable organisations established during that period were instrumental in achieving the first of these goals.

Arhangel'skij, who founded the Benevolent Church Choral Society [Blagotvoritel'noe cerkovno-pevčeskoe obščestvo] in 1902 in Saint Petersburg, was the first to create a major organisation of this kind. His society organised grand spiritual concerts with the participation of most of the city's choirs, intending to use the proceeds of these concerts to provide allowances and pensions for church musicians, establish libraries, lectures, gatherings, concerts, and more. On 3 February 1902, the first concert was given under the direction

⁶ The materials of various courses for singers and choirmasters, as well as chronological tables of these courses for the period 1881–1918, can be found in Zvereva 2022, 621–742; 993–1054.

⁷ The use of this expression can be seen in the compilation of articles from early twentieth-century periodicals in Zvereva 2022, 530–580.

of Arhangel'skij, who conducted a choir of 500 people.⁸ This unprecedented event caused a great stir. The second concert, on 10 March 1902, was attended by Tsar Nikolaj II, who, as a sign of encouragement for the new endeavour, donated a thousand roubles.⁹ In subsequent years, the society consistently gave two to three concerts annually with both sacred and secular repertoire. Over ten years, 169 sacred musical compositions were performed at these concerts; some were written specifically for them.¹⁰ Contributors included Česnokov, Nikolaj Ivanovič Kompanejskij, Grečaninov, Cezar' Antonovič Kûi, and other composers. The appeal of collaborating with this organisation was enhanced by its ability to publish music.

The creation of such societies was encouraged by the state, and following the Saint Petersburg model and charter, charitable organisations began to appear from 1903 onwards in many cities: Rostov-on-Don and Nakhichevan (1903), Perm (1905), Saratov and Kharkov (1906), Stavropol (1907), Tomsk (1908), Vyatka, Yekaterinburg and Tiflis (1909), and Yekaterinoslav, Smolensk, Tsaritsyn, and Ufa (1910).¹¹ In 1907, the Society for the Mutual Assistance of Church Choir Directors [*Obščestvo vzaimopomoši regentov cerkovnyh horov*] was also established in Moscow, spearheaded by Nikol'skij. The first major initiative of this society was the organisation of the First All-Russian Congress of Church Choir Directors and Church Singers [*Pervyj Vserossijskij s'ezd regentov cerkovnyh horov i deâtelej po cerkovnomu peniû*] in 1908. Arhangel'skij was elected honorary chairman of this congress.

Between 1908 and 1917, six such congresses took place – five times in Moscow and once in Saint Petersburg.¹² These gatherings attracted hundreds of delegates from across the Russian Empire and from overseas parishes of the Russian Church. The primary objectives were to improve social conditions and to provide material support, to develop choral repertoire policies, to refine the stylistics of sacred music, to structure and organise choral activities in the country, and to enhance vocal education for adults and children, among many other topics.

The democratic revolution of February 1917 and the abolition of autocratic power in Russia presented new tasks to the participants of the final, sixth choral congress. Held in May 1917, it was more modest in composition (many men

⁸ More can be read about this concert in Rybakov 2022, 576.

⁹ We estimate that one thousand 1902 roubles worth of gold would be worth over seven million roubles at the time of writing in 2024. Or a little under 71,000 US Dollars.

¹⁰ This information is also found in Rybakov 2022, 575.

¹¹ For a compilation of information on various choral societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including charters, programmes, and chronological tables see Zvereva 2022, 495–618, 951–979.

¹² For materials on all pre-revolutionary all-Russian choral congresses see Zvereva 2022, 33–482.

were at the front) and resonated with the events unfolding in the country. For instance, after the traditional prayer service at the beginning of the congress, attendees honoured the memory of those fallen at the front by singing “Memory Eternal [Večnaâ pamât’],” and then greeted their newfound freedom from autocracy with shouts of “hurrah.” The “spirit of renewal” manifested itself both in new themes and in the overall atmosphere. The vanguard of the choral community under the new regime sought to take matters into their own hands and aimed to create a centralised and influential system of choral practice in the country by organising as many local choral associations as possible. Some participants were urged to emulate the active socialist parties and to dispatch agitators to the provinces to establish cells of choral administration. The leader of the congress, Nikol’skij, appealed to those gathered in the following words: “It is necessary for each of our members to feel like a military commander and to mobilise the living vocal forces locally; and if this does not succeed, then they should request an agitator to be sent” (Zvereva i Lebedeva-Emelina 2022, 68).

But more noteworthy is another point: in the resolution of the congress, which was dedicated to singing in schools, it was folk song that now took precedence, rather than sacred music. A sign of the times was also the concert of the peasant choir under the direction of Mitrofan Efimovič Pâtnickij, which, like the concert of the Synodal Choir, was included in the congress programme. After the February Revolution, there came a period when church singing was not yet excluded from school curricula but was merely tolerated as a phenomenon closely related in its origins to folk song.¹³

Naturally, the participants of the aforementioned congress could not have known what awaited Russia in six months, when the October Revolution would occur in the country. They were preparing to discuss issues of church singing at the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, which began its activities in Moscow on 15 August 1917 and whose main achievement was the restoration of the Patriarchate in Russia. Drafts of decrees on church singing were also prepared, and leading sacred composers – Kastal’skij, Grečaninov, Nikol’skij, and others – were invited to discuss them.¹⁴ However, in September 1918, when the civil war was already raging in the country, the Council hurriedly concluded its work without having time to approve the project on church singing and other documents.¹⁵ In 1920, a new wave of repression began against the Church, which

¹³ Thus, in May 1917, the director of the Synodal School of Church Singing A. D. Kastal’skij, devoted an article to proving the “folkness” of church singing, in which, in particular, he wrote that “church tunes are folk art and preserved by the people.” See Kastal’skij 2006a, 122.

¹⁴ See “Ob uporiadočenii cerkovnogo peniâ. Doklad Otdela o bogoslužanii, propovedničestve i hrame Svâšennomu soboru” 2022.

¹⁵ See Zvereva’s introductory article to the section on materials on church singing from the

in the following years, until the late 1980s, constantly experienced enormous pressure from the state and at times came close to total destruction.

As is well known, after the October Revolution, relations between the state and the Church became sharply confrontational. Regardless of the laws and decrees concerning religion enacted by the Soviet authorities, they were all based on the premise that the Church was a hotbed of counter-revolution, and its clergy and believers were enemies of the new regime. The starting point of the state's struggle against religion was the decree of the Soviet government dated 20 January (2 February) 1918, "On Freedom of Conscience, Church, and Religious Societies."¹⁶ This decree not only contained provisions for the free profession of religious faith but also prohibited church organisations from owning property, deprived them of the rights of legal entities, and expropriated church property in favour of the state. The decree also included clauses on the separation of the Church from the state and of schools from the Church. Secular initiatives were gaining strength: in 1918, the property and buildings of church educational institutions were nationalised, and the institutions themselves were either closed or transformed into secular organisations. A similar fate befell the Moscow Synodal School of Church Singing. It was transformed into the People's Choral Academy and transferred to the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros). As early as 1917 the students of this school stopped singing in the Synodal Choir, and in 1918 the Choir itself, which had a 500-year history, ceased to exist.

There are many reasons for the Choir's dissolution. In Soviet times, there was a legend among the singers of the Synodal Choir that it was dissolved because it refused to sing revolutionary songs. The truth is probably simpler: the Synodal Choir, which belonged to both the church and the state, was no longer needed by either. While the former no longer had the means to maintain it or the need to use it (the government moved from Petrograd to the Kremlin), the latter considered it purely ecclesiastical and, being secular, had no use for a religious choir.

As the old-world order and its ideals collapsed, terror, hunger, cold, and disease descended upon the citizens of the new Soviet state after the revolution. Both of our protagonists endured these years of trials.

Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church 1917–1918 in: Zvereva 2022, 705.

¹⁶ For the full text of the document, see *Soviet Decrees* 1957, 373–374.



Figure 1. A. V. Nikol'skij, Moscow, 1935 (Zvereva 2018, 206).

The situation of Nikol'skij's family after the revolution was truly tragic.¹⁷ His wife, Kapitolina Ivanovna, the mother of eight children, died of typhus in 1920. At that time, their youngest son, Lev, was eleven years old, and the composer was also caring for his mentally ill daughter, Lûdmila. His apartment underwent "uplotnenie" (literally, densification) – the Soviet practice by which surplus living space was confiscated, turning personal flats into "communal" living spaces. Nikol'skij found solace in ethnography, immersing himself in research work at the State Institute of Musical Science (GIMN). However, while folk songs

¹⁷ For a first-hand appreciation of Nikol'skij's tragic life following the Revolution, see his own letters between 1919 and 1920 in Zvereva 2018, 206–211.

were initially considered one of the foundations of musical art in Soviet Russia, by the late 1920s, they were regarded by the authorities as a “kulak relic.” For example, at a meeting at the GIMN on 18 May 1930, the following was said of the Pâtnickij's Peasant Choir: “This rubbish is now completely unnecessary and even harmful, along with their ridiculous costumes and bast shoes (in our age of tractors and industrialisation!) and their wild ‘wedding rituals,’ which we should forget as soon as possible” (“Čistka v GIMNe. Iz pisem Â. A. Bogatenko k V. V. Pashalovu” 2015, 980). In 1931, the Ethnographic Section of the GIMN was liquidated, and later the institute itself was closed.

It is known that after the Revolution, Nikol'skij continued to compose sacred music; for example, between 1921 and 1927, he wrote his *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*. However, in 1928, certain Soviet authorities extracted from the composer a commitment not to disseminate his sacred works. Following this, Nikol'skij, deciding not to play with fire, ceased writing for the Church (“Iz perepiski s kollegami. A. V. Nikol'skij – D. S. Semenu, 23 avgusta 1933 g.” 2018, 228). His enthusiasm was further dampened by the fact that some critics, keeping in step with the state's anti-church policy, detected a “church spirit” in the secular music of Nikol'skij, as well as that of Kastal'skij, Čerepnin, and others, which they expressed in the press (Vinogradov 2015, 1002–1004).

Simultaneously, Nikol'skij had started composing “revolutionary” pieces, such as “Russia the Rebel” and “Hymn to October.” In 1928, he became the artistic director of the male vocal quartet of the State Institute of Musical Science (GIMN), whose repertoire, in addition to folk songs, included works by classical composers, revolutionary and atheistic songs, and arrangements of instrumental pieces. Nikol'skij often created the arrangements himself.

At present, it remains unknown how Nikol'skij felt about the events unfolding in the country. However, it should be borne in mind that not all members of the creative intelligentsia immediately understood the world they found themselves in after 1917. For example, Kastal'skij harboured an illusion that the Revolution had opened up possibilities for transforming Russian musical art on popular foundations. With the support of government officials overseeing cultural affairs Anatolij Vasil'evič Lunačarskij and Artur Sergeevič Lur'e, his ideas were given the green light.¹⁸

In one of his articles from that period, Kastal'skij depicts a utopian future Russia, flourishing with the brotherhood of people, where art embodies the images, rhythms, and sounds of the people's labour. The composer envisioned scenes of mass mysteries during which the slogan “Workers of the world,

¹⁸ A letter from Kastalsky to Hristofor Nikolaevič Grozdov dated 5 (18) April 1918 on this subject can be found in Zvereva 2006, 564–566.

unite!” could be “developed on a grand scale, developed symphonically, as, for example, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with its finale ‘Embrace, ye millions!’” (Kastal’skij 2006b, 131).

Naive, utopian, and at times tinged with dark humour, Kastal’skij’s projects for new forms of proletarian art coexisted with quite realistic proposals for organising ethnographic work in the country. In the end, it was ethnography that became the field where many former sacred music composers found an opportunity to apply their efforts. Musicians from the old choral world also found employment in secular musical pedagogy, utilising their previous methodological developments with only superficial adjustments. Former composers of sacred music, choir directors, and graduates of church singing schools could be found among the staff of the Moscow Conservatory, the Music Section of the State Publishing House, Proletkult, the Association of Proletarian Musicians, and in the journal *Musical Newness* [Музыкальный нов’]. Choral work and the mass education of ordinary people became more relevant than ever after the Revolution, and this professional field was occupied by representatives of the democratic choral milieu that had formed in Russia on the eve of the Revolution. Among them were those who took an anti-church position and participated in the atheistic campaign, composing musical parodies of the clergy and church services.

Striving to transfer choral traditions from the “old world” to the “new world,” striving even to exclude sacred music, musicians sometimes faced insurmountable obstacles. For example, after the famous Synodal School of Church Singing was transformed into the secular People’s Choral Academy in 1918, the shadow of “churchliness,” allegedly hovering over this institution, gave the new authorities grounds to dissolve it, forming from its ashes the Instructional Choral subdepartment of the Moscow Conservatory. What the new subdepartment represented is described in the following memo fragment in *Musical Newness*:

In social terms, the choral subdepartment is the very best. It has the highest percentage of the proletarian element, with an insignificant number from other strata. The new intake was exclusively from workers, peasants, and Red Army soldiers. In short, the legacy of the former Synodal Chapel is being completely eradicated. As for the programmes, they have undergone fundamental reworking, since they were based on theological babble, saturated with liturgical exclamations [“vozzvahami”] and other nonsense. The task of the new choral subdepartment is to produce exemplary, politically advanced club instructors and choir leaders, not the church choir directors that the Synodal Chapel provided under the banner of the Choral Academy. They were the same trousers, only inside out (Abakumov 1924).

SVETLANA GEORGIEVNA ZVEREVA

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Not only were the signs of ecclesiastical art being “uprooted,” but the clergy as a social class as well. At the end of 1925 and the beginning of 1926, when Nikol'skij visited Penza for the last time, he discovered that none of his close relatives remained there. Nikol'skij's brother, the priest of the village Krivozyorye [Krivozer'e], Aleksej Nikol'skij, had been arrested in 1922 and died in exile. Aleksandr Vasil'evič also visited Mertovshchina [Mertovšina], where his nephew lived with his father, the priest Nikolaj Grigor'evič Skvorcov. In 1931, Fr Nikolaj Skvorcov would also be arrested on charges that he allegedly “conducted agitation against the collective farms, spread provocative rumours about war, and threatened to deal with the communists.” He was sentenced to three years of exile in the Northern Territory, after which he disappeared without a trace.¹⁹ Of course, the persecutions did not stop at the clergy. In 1937 Nikol'skij's son Roman, a historian, was arrested and executed.

Arhangel'skij, who turned 71 in 1917, also endeavoured to adapt to life after the Revolution. Following the upheaval, his choir became state-run and ceased performing in churches. Russian sacred music was replaced by a new Soviet repertoire, including, for example, Luigi Cherubini's *Requiem* set to a text dedicated to the Third International. As was written in one of the materials from that time:

Not a single solemn day of the Bolshevik calendar, not a single civil funeral of prominent figures and victims of the Revolution occurred in Petrograd without the participation of A. A. [Arhangel'skij] and his choir [...] Bound by professional discipline, he always held the banner of art high and honourably fulfilled all tasks entrusted to him. Undeterred by distance, means of transportation (on foot, on heavy horse-drawn carts, or at best, on trucks), weather conditions (in winter frost and autumn slush), or local conditions (in unheated premises, lacking even the most basic amenities) he brought to the uneducated masses and workers the beauty and harmony of sounds (Dvoržanskij 2004, 50–51).

In 1921, Arhangel'skij was awarded the title of Merited Artist of Russia by the government. The actual circumstances in which the conductor found himself are illuminated by his letters and the memoirs of contemporaries. From these, it is evident that his country house (along with furniture, sheet music, and books) was requisitioned by the new authorities in 1918 “for the needs of the workers.” Arhangel'skij was forced to remain in Petrograd, where

¹⁹ More information about Fr Nikolaj Stepanovič Skvorcov can be found in the *Open List* project that publishes information about people who were repressed by the Soviet state for political reasons between October 1917 and 1991 (*Otkrytyj spisok* n. d.).

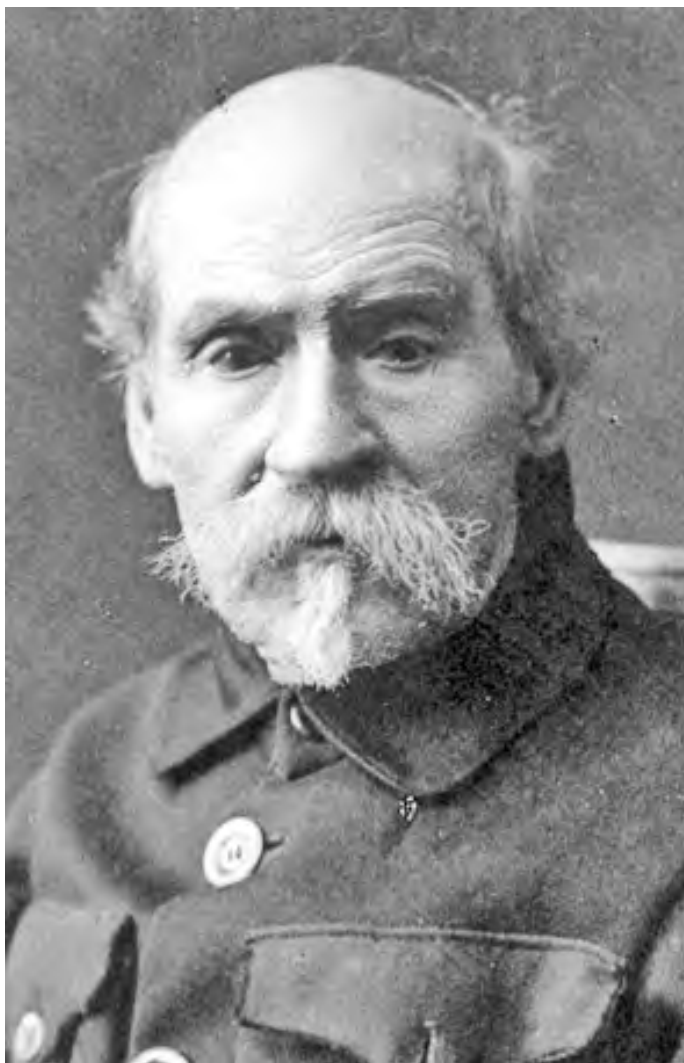


Figure 2. A. A. Arhangel'skij (Penzenskaâ ãnciklopediâ n.d.).

famine was rampant. “Complete and utter devastation!” wrote Arhangel'skij to a friend (Tevosân 2002, 162–163). His situation was further complicated by the supervision of his former choirmaster, Iosif Vasil'evič Nemcov, who, apparently, was adjusting the choir's programme in a Soviet and anti-church spirit. As the renowned publisher Nikolaj Fedorovič Findejzen noted in his diary of those years, Nemcov had become disgracefully Bolshevik (“red”) and was banning all music “about God,” including works by Handel and Schumann (Findejzen 1921, 272). In 1921, the choir was transferred from the

Philharmonic to Glavprosvet, the Main Political-Educational Committee of the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR, and underwent significant reductions. Under these circumstances, Arhangel'skij declined to continue working with the choir. Destitute and foreseeing the prospect of starvation for his family, in 1922 he turned for assistance to his friends in Penza, where a concert of his own works was organised in honour of the 50th anniversary of his compositional career.

In 1922, finding himself in a desperate situation, Arhangel'skij received an offer from Prague to work with an émigré Russian student choir. On 10 July 1923, Aleksandr Andreevič arrived in Prague, where an eighty-member male choir awaited him. After a month and a half under his direction, they gave their first concerts. The subsequent few concerts of the choir, which now included female singers, enjoyed immense success. However, the conductor's vitality was already waning, and almost every performance concluded with his hospitalisation or a stay in a sanatorium. On the morning of a concert scheduled for 16 November 1924, Arhangel'skij suddenly passed away. He was buried at the Olšany Cemetery in Prague, and on 25 November 1925, his ashes were brought to Leningrad and interred at the Necropolis of the Tikhvin Cemetery. A tradition has been preserved that Arhangel'skij's funeral service was held at the Kazan Cathedral and that a choir comprising his former choristers sang at the service, although evidence for this is lacking.

After Aleksandr Andreevič's death, his sacred musical legacy continued to live on exclusively within the church in his homeland. Meanwhile, in the Russian diaspora in Czechoslovakia, the activities of the Russian choir with which Arhangel'skij had worked before his death continued until 1950. The choir honoured the legacy and precepts of its leader: it adopted his name and performed sacred compositions and arrangements of folk songs during church services and concerts. Additionally, the choir played a unifying role for Russian choral forces abroad, published sacred music, issued the magazine *Russian Choral Bulletin* [Russkij horovoj vestnik] for a time, and established a museum and even an exhibition. In the choir's activities, those ideas found continuation which the choral community of pre-revolutionary Russia had discussed and implemented. Thus, the Russian émigrés upheld the sacred musical traditions that could no longer be pursued in their homeland.

The experience accumulated by the choral community of the Russian Empire, its powerful energetic charge, and vast human resources ensured the flourishing of secular choral art in the USSR after 1917. Even the former singers of the Synodal Choir found themselves in demand. In the early 1930s, Nikol'skij, together with his former colleagues from the Synodal School of Church Singing, Nikolaj Mihajlovič Danilin and Česnokov, established the

Department of Choral Conducting at the Moscow Conservatory. Nikol'skij developed the curricula for this department and taught courses in choral literature, folk songs, arrangement, methods of teaching musical literacy in choirs, and more.

Nicol'skij's swan song was his participation during the Second World War in organizing the State Choral School for Boys, opened on 1 April 1944 in Moscow, modelled closely after the pre-revolutionary Synodal School of Church Singing. Aleksandr Vasil'evič did not evacuate and continued to teach at the conservatory the course on the history of church singing, which he had revived. He lived in poverty, suffered from hunger, and died in Moscow in 1943 from heart failure.

Thanks to these musicians devoted to the Russian choral cause, a bridge was built from the past to the future. In this historical process of transmitting traditions, Arhangel'skij and Nikol'skij played a unique role.

Research into the transfer of musical traditions from the socio-political and cultural reality of Imperial Russia to that of Soviet Russia remains a virtually unexplored area of scholarship. Nevertheless, many traditions of the “old world” continued under the new regime, as did the lives of many musicians who were unable or unwilling to emigrate. The transfer of liturgical musical traditions in the homeland of these church musicians was particularly painful, as the church in the USSR was gradually destroyed and liturgical musical traditions, as exemplified in the biography of Nikol'skij, dwindled and were transformed into more socially acceptable secular forms. Those church musicians who went abroad found themselves in a different linguistic, cultural, and confessional situation, but, as the biography of Arhangel'skij shows, they found a foothold in the Russian diaspora, where sacred music flourished and was given a new lease of life. Divided into two distinct streams, the once unified stream of Russian sacred music existed separately for almost seventy years, and only at the end of the twentieth century did it regain its unity.

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SVETLANA GEORGIEVNA ZVEREVA

THE TWO LIVES OF ALEKSANDR ANDREEVIČ ARHANGEL' SKIJ AND ALEKSANDR VASIL' EVIČ
NIKOL' SKIJ: THE FATES OF MASTERS OF RUSSIAN SACRED MUSIC IN A PIVOTAL ERA

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СВЕТЛАНА ГЕОРГИЈЕВНА ЗВЕРЕВА

ДВА ЖИВОТА АЛЕКСАНДРА АНДРЕЈЕВИЧА АРХАНГЕЛСКОГ И
АЛЕКСАНДРА ВАСИЉЕВИЧА НИКОЉСКОГ: СУДБИНЕ МАЈСТОРА РУСКЕ
ДУХОВНЕ МУЗИКЕ У ПРЕЛОМНОЈ ЕПОХИ

(РЕЗИМЕ)

Повод да се у 2024. години сетимо имена А. А. Архангелског и А. В. Никољског су јубилеји: стогодишњица смрти Архангелског и сто педесет година од рођења Никољског. Главна област њихових талената била је духовна музика. Поред композиције, Архангелски је био успешан у хорском извођаштву и био је један од најбољих хорских диригената Руске Империје. Професионална интересовања Никољског обухватала су компоновање духовне и световне музике, педагогију, музичку етнографију и публицистику. Обојица су припадали новом заједништву хорских музичара, формираном у Руској Империји почетком XX века, а били су и лидери њиховог професионалног покрета.

Живот ових мајстора подељен је Октобарском револуцијом 1917. године на два дела: у Руској Империји њихова делатност била је веома поштована. У Совјетској Русији били су принуђени да се одрекну духовне музике којој су претходно служили деценијама. У том смислу, судбине Архангелског и Никољског биле су типичне за припаднике њихове генерације и професионалне оријентације. Није изненађујуће то што је Архангелски провео своје последње дане у иностранству: преминуо је у Прагу 1924. године. Присилни одлазак из Совјетске Русије и емиграција постали су судбина неколико милиона бивших грађана Руске Империје. У стању унутрашње емиграције нашли су се многи који су остали у домовини и тешко се прилагођавали животу у новом поретку, међу којима је био и Никољски. У раду се на широком историјском фону прати развој стваралачких судбина ових двају музичара у сложеној и контрадикторној епохи; откривају се компоненте хорске традиције Руске Империје које су, делимично захваљујући њиховом раду, даље развијене у СССР-у, као и у руској дијаспори.

Истраживање трансмисије духовно-музичких традиција у периоду смене историјских формација представља потпуно неистражено поље. Овај рад први је покушај приступа расветљавању тог значајног проблема.