



OLEH HARKAVYY'S LUX AETERNA (2018) IN "LIGHT" OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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Lux aeterna / *Свете мучуї* (2018), composed for eight-voice SSAATTBB choir with organ accompaniment, is a work of ecumenical character. It was composed soon after the death of my father – Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Harkavyy (1940-2018) – using two texts: the Latin “*Lux aeterna*” (from the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass) and the Church Slavonic “Свете тихий” (from the Byzantine-rite All-Night Vigil). Why were these texts, rather than others, chosen? There were two circumstances which influenced the choice of texts.

The first was that, since the untimely death of my wife – the musicologist Rita (Margarita) Dmitrievna Ocheretnaya (1969-2008) – I have been composing a Latin-texted Requiem in her memory. I was working precisely on the concluding movements of the work, including “*Lux aeterna*,” endeavouring to complete the work by the 10th anniversary of her death (27 March), when my father suddenly died (on 24 February 2018). This naturally had a great impact on me. Soon afterwards, I composed a work in his memory. Obviously, this circumstance – that I was working precisely on the Requiem – had an influence upon a choice of the text “*Lux aeterna*,” though it is a completely different setting from the corresponding movement from the Requiem.

The second was that I was – simultaneously – working on a paper entitled “Liturgical music as a dynamic system”. I was thinking about liturgical music (mostly Orthodox) and looking through some settings of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom and the All-Night Vigil by different authors: Alexander Archangelsky,¹ Sergey Rachmaninov,² Pavel Chesnokov,³ Metropolitan Jonathan (Yeletsikh),⁴ etc. Thus, one of the most poetic texts from All-Night Vigil, “Свете тихий” was also chosen for the work.

The text of the Latin “*Lux aeterna*” is as follows:

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
Cum sanctis tuis in aeternam:
Quia pius es.

1 Alexander Archangelsky, *All-Night Vigil*: score (Petrograd: Energy, 1896).

2 Sergey Rachmaninov, *All-Night Vigil*, op. 37: score (Moscow: Muzyka, 1989).

3 Pavel Chesnokov, *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*, op. 42: score.

4 Archbishop Jonathan (Yeletsikh), *The “Chernobyl” Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*: score (Kiev, 2009).

The text of the Church Slavonic “Свете тихий” is as follows:

Свете тихий святых славы, Бессмертнаго Отца Небеснаго, Святаго, Блаженнаго, Иисусе Христе. Пришедше на запад солнца, видевши свет вечерний, поем Отца и Сына, и Святаго Духа, Бога. Достоин еси во вся времена пет быти гласы преподобными, Сыне Божий, живот даий: темже мир Тя славит.

Obviously, the texts are not identical, not being exact translations one of the other, but they have similar content – “light” from the other world.

Being drawn to both texts, in the context of the death of my father, they became near and dear to me (for example, the line “cum sanctis tuis in aeternam”). They were, in my mind, repositioned into another context and took on additional content – important and personal for me.

As for my Requiem (2008-2018, 12 movements, ca 52'), it is scored for soprano solo, eight-voice SSAATTBB choir, organ and string orchestra. Following Christian metaphysics, which uses the method of oppositions (*dichotomia*) in order to describe basic notions, e.g., “light – darkness”, “kindness – evil”, and so on, I also used this method in my Requiem, considering the opposition “Immanent life (in the sense of life *before* death) – Transcendental life (in the sense of life *after* death)”. I realized this extra-musical idea also by means of the orchestration: eight-voice SSAATTBB choir is a musical metaphor for living people (Immanent life), while the soprano solo is a metaphor for Rita’s voice (Transcendental life); in addition, the string orchestra, with its “warm” and expressive “living” sound – is a metaphor for Immanent life, while the organ, with its contemplative and meditative sound, is a metaphor for Transcendental life:

Immanent life:

Eight-voice SSAATTBB choir (living people)
String orchestra

Transcendental life:

Soprano solo (Rita’s voice)
Organ

Thus, the collective sound (choir, orchestra) was used for Immanent life, while solo sounds (soprano, organ) were used for Transcendental life.

Comparing the orchestration of the Requiem (2008-2018) and *Lux aeterna* (2018), it may be seen that the latter uses eight-voice SSAATTBB choir and organ, i.e. half of the performers of the Requiem, so to speak. But here both choir and organ are used for Transcendental life only

In composing the work, I needed to “translate” the extra-music notion of *light* into a musical language, constructing a musical metaphor. All three aspects or senses of the complex notion of *light* were considered:

1. “light” as a notion of physics, which can be defined as the electric-magnetic waves of a diapason, visible to the human eye, of frequencies with different wave – from red light to violet light, such as the light of the Sun, the Moon, a candle, a lamp. What are the characteristics of physical light in our subjective perception? It is continuous and permanent in space and time; it has different colours; has different temperatures (on the scale cold – cool – warm – hot); has different intensity and density. We say (metaphorically) of light that it is “streaming”, “pulsating”, etc.

2. "light" as a notion of Christian metaphysics, which can be defined as a Transcendental light from the other world, invisible to the human eye. It is a symbol of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; In addition, God the Son is also called "Light from Light": "lumen de lumine" (Latin Credo), "Свет от Света" (Church Slavonic "Верую"). See also the above mentioned "Свете тихий", as well as "Видехом свет истинный" (from the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom), "et lux perpetua luceat eis, Domine" ("Requiem aeternam" from Requiem), etc.
3. "light" as a notion of Christian ethics, which, being primarily a notion of physics, is placed in another context, becoming a metaphor of the ethical notion of "kindness": light (physics) > kindness (ethics). For example, we say (metaphorically): a "light person", "in his/her light memory",⁵ etc.

In what the way – by means of what musical skills, methods and techniques – were all the three aspects or senses of the *light* translated into musical language? In other words, what are the musical metaphors for the complex notion *light*?

The initial material of the *Lux aeterna* is rather simple, based on a melodic line which consists of two brief phrases (in G sharp minor):

G sharp – F double sharp – G sharp – E – G sharp and B – A sharp – F double sharp – G sharp

Both the phrases have a concluding G sharp and are doubled a third above. As for its metric and rhythmical organization, the four rhythmic modes (an idea adopted by me from the mediaeval music, specifically the *Ars Antiqua*) were used for the phrases in 9/8 and 6/8:

1. Crotchets and quavers (for the first motif G sharp – F double sharp and the second motif G sharp - E);
2. Quaver and crotchet (only for the first motif G sharp – F double sharp as a rhythmic variant);
3. Three quavers in a row (B – A sharp – F double sharp);
4. Dotted crotchet (for the concluding G sharp of both phrases).

There follows a brief structural analysis of the work.

Cipher 1: the first episode is a "wave" of 10 beats, which is a sequential ascent through its three sections (*p* – *mp* – *mf*) to the first culmination (*mf*) and then returning to the initial tonics.

The melodic line, doubled at the upper third, is primarily distributed among the tenors (first phrase) and altos (second phrase), while the basses repeat the tonic third G sharp - B without a text (*bocca chiusa*), which gives an even pulsation. Climbing up, the melody is then distributed among the altos (first phrase) and sopranos (second phrase), while the tenors repeat without a text a new tonic third, C sharp - E.

The initial material is in permanent quasi-modulations, following the circle of fourths:

...G sharp – C sharp – F sharp ...

It is harmonized by four-note chords of symmetrical structure [3-2-3] (in semitones) of quasi-tonal character:

G sharp – B – C sharp – E (*p*), C sharp – E – F sharp – A (*mp*), F sharp – A – B – D (*mf*) and back symmetrically: F sharp – A – B – D (*mf*), C sharp – E – F sharp – A (*mp*), G sharp – B – C sharp – E (*p*).

⁵ This is an expression unique to certain Slavic countries such as Ukraine and Russia: Светлая память. (Editor's note)

These chords are long, sustained notes on the organ part, which realize the idea of the continuity of "light" (in its first aspect).

Cipher 2: the second episode (with the text "cum sanctis tuis in aeternam", 6 beats): the melody – without doubling at the upper third, in a two-voice canonical sequence (only sopranos and altos) also ascends through its 3 sections to the next culmination, following the circle of fifths: E – B, A – E, D – A.

It is harmonized first in four-note chords of fourths: F sharp – B – E – A (*p*), B – E – A – D (*mp*), and then, as their sum, by a five-note chord of fourths, F sharp – B – E – A – D (*mf*).

Cipher 3 – culmination (*f*, 5 beats): the melody, doubled at the upper third, is in two-voice canon at the octave: sopranos – tenors (second phrase), altos – basses (first phrase). Chords of symmetrical structure [3-2-3] in the organ part are also duplicated in octaves (8' – 16'). The intensity and density of the sound (= "light" in its first aspect) are increased to the maximum.

Then a new brief "wave" (of four beats) ascends (*p*–*mp*–*mf*) to a new culmination, being harmonized thus: B – D – E – G (*p*), E – G – A – C (*mp*), A – C – D – F (*mf*).

Cipher 4: culmination (*f*) with a consequent descent to the initial tonics. The melody – without doublings – is in a two-voice canonical sequence (as in Cipher 2), harmonized by the five-note chords of fourths: F sharp – B – E – A – D, C sharp – F sharp – B – E – A.

Cipher 5: reprise with a new tightly structured "wave" with the following harmonization in the organ part:

G sharp – B – C sharp – E (*p*)

G sharp – B – C sharp – E – F sharp – A (*mp*)

G sharp – B – C sharp – E – F sharp – A – B – D (*mf*) and finally:

G sharp – B – C sharp – E – F sharp – A – B – D – E – G (*f*) –

through the integrative chord of the five consequent "tonics" in the circle of fourths (G sharp – C sharp – F sharp – B – E), framed by G sharp and G natural.

Coda (last six beats) – brief conclusion with the integrative chord in another transposition:

E sharp – G sharp – A sharp – C sharp – D sharp – F sharp – G sharp – B – C sharp – E (framed by E sharp and E natural).

After this brief structural analysis of the work, it is possible to answer the question: what are the musical means used to create a metaphor for the first aspect of "light", i.e. light in its physical sense?

The melodic line is doubled at the upper third, which give a sensation of streaming light. The repetition of the tonic thirds in the lower vocal parts give an even pulsation. The long, sustained chords in the organ part give a sensation of the continuity of light. The initial material is in permanent modulation, constantly changing its "colour" (taking into consideration the colourful function of musical harmony). The intensity and density of the texture and sound (= light) are also changed. The work consists of some long "waves" (of many beats), and in addition, each long "wave" consists of three shorter "waves" – which is a metaphor for the wave-like nature of the light.

What are the metaphors for the second aspect of "light", i.e. Transcendental light from the other world?

As far as harmony is concerned, a non-octave scale of symmetrical structure [3:2] (in semitones) is used:

...G sharp – B – C sharp – E – F sharp – A – B – D – E – G ...

What is genesis of this scale? It was “born” by the modulatory movement of a melody, following the circle of fourths: ...G sharp – C sharp – F sharp – B – E ...

As the melodic line is doubled by upper thirds, the scale can be interpreted as a row made up of the consequent tonic thirds G sharp – B, C sharp – E, F sharp – A, etc.:

...Gsharp – B – C sharp – E – F sharp – A – B – D – E – G...

t_1 t_2 t_3 t_4 t_5

In addition, it is a simultaneous integration of two different segments of the circle of fourths:

G sharp – C sharp – F sharp – B – E...

1 2 3 4 5

B – E – A – D – G...

4 5 6 7 8

As any *circle* (being endless by its nature) is a symbol of any endless process, the circle of fourths – in a context of the second aspect of a “light” – is a symbol of the eternal and endless Transcendental light from the other world.

As for the four-note chord of symmetrical structure [3-2-3].

Being placed in the context of the tonal major-minor harmonic system, it can be considered as an inversion of the 7th-chord: G sharp-B-C sharp-E, like C sharp 4/3 in figured bass. But *Lux aeterna* is not composed according to the tonal system, and that is why C sharp 4/3 can be considered only as *homonym* of G sharp-B-C sharp-E.

The chord can be also considered as a sum of the original three-note chord of the structure [3-2] and its inversion [2-3], i.e., G sharp-B-C sharp (original) and B-C sharp-E (inversion). Chords of similar structure can be found in Russian Orthodox Church music, for example, the three-voice “Милость мира” (17th century), which can be compared with non-parallel organum on the basis of parallel organum in Western European music.⁶

The chord of the structure [5-2] can be considered as the basic one in this amazing work: it is used both for parallel and non-parallel movement of the voices, as well as for repetitions: for example, in the first section (with the text “Милость мира, жертву хваления”), the chord C-F-G is repeated seven times, and there is parallel movement of the voices:

D-G-A - C-F-G - B-E-F - C-F-G - B-E-F - A-D-E.

5-2

5-1

The chord B-E-F of the structure [5-1] is rather remarkable (with its “diabolus in musica”, the tritone). In my opinion, it would be better to use B flat instead of B natural: B flat-E-F, or B flat and E flat instead of B natural and E accordingly: B flat-E flat-F with its solution to A-D-E.

The chord of structure [3-2] is used not as widely as the first, and mostly in non-parallel movement of the voices. But it is also used for parallel movement of the voices, for example, in the concluding section (with the text “молим Ти ся, Боже наш”, where the syllable “наш” is a melismatic jubilation/illumination):

⁶ “Милость мира” (17th century): score, transcribed by Anatoly Konotop (photocopy of Prof. Konotop’s unpublished manuscript).

D-F-G - E-G-A - D-F-G - E-G-A - D-F-G, etc.

As for the cadences, some of them are the chords of structure [5-2], while the other of the second structure:

D-E-F - C-D-E

2-1 2-2

The movement of the voices to the cadence C-D-E is as follows:

B-D-E - C-E-F - C-D-E

3-2 4-1 2-2

The beginning of the two long sections – with its elegant and graceful movement of the voices to the basic chord C-F-G – is remarkable too (on the initial words “Милость мира” and then “Тебе поем”):

F-F-F - E-F-F - D-G-G - C-F-G

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) used for his works the symmetrical octave modes of limited transposition. But he used only their “transcendental” sound, not using their segments of tonal (quasi-tonal) sound. In his works, the modes became a metaphor of Transcendental life only, with no relationship to Immanent life (see his *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant-Jésus*, 1944).

My method of using such modes is quite different. I use both the “transcendental” sound of the modes, which is an index (in the semiotic sense of a type of sign, in a row of types of signs: icon – index – symbol) to Transcendental life, and their segments (e.g., four-note chords of symmetrical structure) of the quasi-tonal sound of the major-minor harmonic system, which is an index to Immanent life. Thanks to the homonyms (e.g., G sharp-B-C sharp-E as the four-note segment of the scale [3:2] and C sharp 4/3), these two parallel worlds – Transcendental and Immanent – cross at these “points.” Such chords can be (metaphorically) called “prophets-chords”, as they belong to both parallel worlds.

Pater noster (2010, ca 6' 30), was also composed for 8-voice SSAATTBB choir and organ. It uses the symmetrical mode [3:1] (in semitones):

B flat – C sharp – D – F – G flat – A – (B flat)

The initial scale was re-structured by me into another symmetrical scale [7:1]:

B flat – F – G flat – C sharp – D – A,

which gives three four-note chords of symmetrical structure [7-1-7] with their quasi-tonal sound:

B flat – F – G flat – D flat (B flat minor)

F sharp – C sharp – D – A (F sharp minor)

D – A – B flat – F (D minor)

These three chords were used for the accompaniment figures in the organ part in pairs of “tonalities”: B flat – F sharp; Fsharp – D; D – B flat, - with “oscillations” between B flat minor and F sharp minor, between F sharp minor and D minor, between D minor and B flat minor (the chords of only one transposition of the mode [3:1] were just enough for the work).

These tonal “oscillations” were used by me to manifest the idea of semantic oscillations between hope and despair (the motet was composed soon after the death of my wife Rita). The oscillations between Transcendental Hope and Immanent Despair lead to a cathartic culmination – a high point of Despair (on the words “sed libera nos a malo”).

The symmetrical mode [3:1] was used in similar way in the following works:

- *Toccata, Fugue and Chorale*, (1996, ca 10'), for piano;
- *Symphony in Three Movements* (1998, ca 22'), for large symphony orchestra;
- *Cantata In Memory of an Artist*, on the poems by Russian poets (1999, rev. 2018; ca 25'), for soprano solo, tenor solo, SATB choir, piano;
- *Горные вершины...* (Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841); 2016, ca 2' 30), for SSAA choir/ensemble, piano.

Such works have a dramaturgy of the *from – until* type: “from the Immanent sound (life) until the Transcendental sound (life):” during its development, the sounding of the initial quasi-tonal material becomes more and more “transcendental” by means of consequent integration of two, three, four, etc. segments of quasi-tonal sound – as is the case in *Lux aeterna*:

G sharp-B-C sharp-E (homonym: C sharp 4/3)

G sharp-B-C sharp-E-F sharp-A (homonym: 4th inversion of F sharp 11?)

G sharp-B-C sharp-E-F sharp-A-B-D (without a homonym)

G sharp-B-C sharp-E-F sharp-A-B-D-E-G (an integrative chord: not a cluster)

Thus, the first chord G sharp-B-C sharp-E, which is one segment of the symmetrical scale [3:2], has its tonal homonym C sharp 4/3. As for the second chord – which is the sum of two segments of the scale G sharp-B-C sharp-E and C sharp-E-F sharp-A, - its homonym is very problematic (an inversion of F sharp 11?). Beginning from the third chord, which is the sum of three segments, such chords do not have tonal homonyms.

On the one hand, the chords have a non-tonal sound; on the other hand, they are different from a cluster, as they are well structured, being a part of the symmetrical scale [3:2].

The mode [3:1] is re-structured by me (e.g., in the above mentioned *Pater noster*) into the symmetric scale [7:1] with the three four-note segments of symmetrical structure [7-1-7] and quasi-tonal sound:

B flat-F-G flat-D flat (tonal homonym: G flat 6/5)

F sharp-C sharp-D-A (tonal homonym: D 6/5)

D-A-B flat-F (tonal homonym: B flat 6/5)

They can be integrated into the chords of 2 segments:

[B flat-F-G flat-D flat] + [F sharp-C sharp-D-A] = [B flat-F-G flat-C sharp-D-A]

[F sharp-C sharp-D-A] + [D-A-B flat-F] = [G flat-C sharp-D-A-B flat-F]

[D-A-B flat-F] + [B flat-F-G flat-D flat] = [D-A-B flat-F-G flat-C sharp]

or all three segments, i.e. the integrative chords of the complete scale:

B flat-F-G flat-C sharp-D-A-B flat-F

G flat-C sharp-D-A-B flat-F-G flat-C sharp

D-A-B flat-F-G flat-C sharp-D-A

As for the third aspect of “light” as a metaphor of the ethical notion of “kindness,” my father was a kind man and can be called a “light person”. *Lux aeterna* is composed in his light memory and can be considered as his musical post-humanum portrait; at least, such an interpretation of the extra-musical content of the work is also possible.

I had an earlier experience of such musical “portraiture” in the organ Sonata *Holy Trinity* (2012, ca 16' 15), which is a *polyptych* of four icons of the God the Father (first movement), God the Son (second movement), God the Holy Spirit (third

movement). The fourth movement does not have its own material but integrates the material of all the preceding three movements, thus being a “group icon” of the Holy Trinity. The Sonata was successfully premiered by Dr David Bohn in 2014 in Appleton, WI, and gratefully dedicated to its first performer. The second performance was in 2017 in Milwaukee, WI.

Being really four musical icons, the Sonata does not have the visual icons of the Orthodox Church as its subtext. In other words, the Sonata is not a musical *ekphrasis* of four visual icons, which was the case in another work of mine, the Two Madrigals (2011/2016), composed for eight-voice SSAATTBB choir *a cappella*, after Sandro Botticelli’s masterpieces “The Birth of Venus” (1484) and “Spring” (1478). The Two Madrigals are a musical *ekphrasis* of the corresponding pictures.⁷ The second madrigal, *Stetit puella* (2011, ca 3’), was composed specially for Rebecca Tavener and her female vocal ensemble *Canty*, and premiered by them on 18 May 2011 in St Giles Cathedral Edinburgh at the multi-media project *AniMotion Show* of the Edinburgh-based Russian painter Maria Rud.⁸

In this context, interpreting *Lux aeterna* as a musical portrait of my father, one can compare all the musical means of the work with the corresponding means of painting:

- the melodic line of a musical work can be obviously compared with the contours of the images in a picture, as a melodic line, doubled at the upper third, can be compared with the black thick contours of the images in the pictures of some painters such as Paul Cezanne (1839-1906). Some painters use black thick contours on their pictures, while the others prefer the technique of *sfumato*, first used by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519);
- the “colouring” aspect of musical harmony corresponds with the colours of painting; I am not considering here the phenomenon of synaesthesia, which is an extreme case of such correspondence between a musical tone (or tonality) and a colour. The “coloured ear” has a very individual character and is not the same for all composers, e.g., Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), Alexander Skryabin (1872-1915) and Boris Asafyev (1884-1949);⁹
- the variable intensities and densities of the musical texture and sound correspond with the different intensities and densities of the colours;
- the modulatory movement of the musical material gives a sensation of the tonal and linear perspectives of painting;
- rhythm is also a notion common to both music and painting.

Curiously, both the time signatures of 9/8 and 6/8, used in *Lux aeterna*, are in the proportion of [3:2], and the intervallic structure of the symmetric scale [3:2], is also used in the work. Thus, the harmony (the vertical aspect of the music) and the time signatures (its horizontal aspect) have the same figures: [3:2].

Thus, I have considered all the musical means which create metaphors of light; of all three aspects of this complex idea. Further, it needs to be said that any of these musical means has a relative character, and its sense or meaning depends upon the context into which it is placed. If, for example, a melodic line is doubled at the upper third, what does it mean? It depends upon the context.

7 Oleh Harkavyy, “Two Madrigals (2011/2016): cross-road of music, poetry and painting”, in *International Congress on Musical Signification ICMS-14 Programme and Abstracts* (The “Gheorghe Dima” Academy of Music, Cluj-Napoca, 2018), 47.

8 <https://www.mariarudart.com/>

9 Irina Vanechkina, Bulat Galeev, *Поэма Огня: концепция светомызыкального синтеза А.Н. Скрябина* (Poem of Fire: a conception by A.N. Skryabin of the synthesis of light and music), Kazan State University Press, 1981).

In the first context, of “light” as a physical notion, it gives the sensation of streaming light. In the second context, of Transcendental light from the other world, it is an index to the Russian Orthodox Church musical tradition of singing in parallel thirds or sixths (“пение вторами”). In the third context, of “light” as a metaphor for the ethical notion of “kindness”, interpreting *Lux aeterna* as a musical portrait of my father – a “light person” – this duplication of the melodic line corresponds with the thick black contours of painted images.

The physical visible light is directly connected with the human eye – the organ of its perception. One says, “the light of my eyes”. This title was given, for example, to the cantata by Anton Webern (1883-1945) *Das Augenlicht*, op. 26, for SATB and orchestra, written in 1935.

But what is the “organ” for the perception of a Transcendental light from the other world? I will end my article with this rhetorical question.