

O Virtus Sapientiae

for SATB choir a cappella
or with organ

music by

Dmitri Shostakovich

arranged by Neil Buckland

words by

Hildegard of Bingen

O virtus Sapientiae,
quae circuiens circuisti
comprehendendo omnia
in una via quae habet vitam,

tres alas habens,
quarum una in altum volat
et altera de terra sudat
et tertia undique volat.
Laus tibi sit, sicut te decet,
O Sapientia.

Hildegard of Bingen

O power of Wisdom
who, circled, circling,
embracing all
in a path full of life,

three wings you have:
one soars to the heavens,
the second emerges from the earth,
and the third flies all around us.
Praise to you, as is your due,
O Wisdom!

(Transl. N. Buckland)

The Fugue in B \flat minor, no.16 from the 24 Preludes and Fugues, op.87 by Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975), has an extraordinary meditative quality, suggestive of the wisdom and maturity that may sometimes be attained after great suffering. The resemblance of this music to early Renaissance polyphony by composers such as Josquin gave me the idea of arranging it as a choral piece. Finding a suitable text initially presented a major obstacle, until I chanced on these lines from *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* by the 12th century abbess, composer and polymath Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). Hildegard's words in praise of wisdom fit both the character of Shostakovich's music and many of its details perfectly. In deference to Shostakovich's well-known atheism, this is also not an explicitly religious text.

In 2008 I applied to Shostakovich's publishers, Boosey and Hawkes, for permission to make this arrangement and was told the request would be passed on to the composer's estate. I have received no further communication from either. I am therefore offering the score here free as a concept piece. If you wish to publicly perform or record this arrangement, copyright issues should be followed up with Boosey and Hawkes. (Private performances and performances in educational settings should not, however, be affected by copyright.)

Note that Hildegard composed her own music to this text. (It can be heard on the *Sequentia* CD, *Symphoniae: Geistliche Gesänge*, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi GD77020.) Hildegard's music is unique and the present setting of her words is in no way intended to supplant it. Instead, I hope Shostakovich's music – extraordinary in a very different way – will illuminate the words from a different angle, just as the words and the arrangement for choir cast a new and different light on the music.

Performance notes

O virtus Sapientiae should be performed a cappella if possible, but can be performed with organ doubling the choir if desired. It requires an accomplished choir and includes some low passages for basses (to E \flat) and a brief high soprano solo (bars 69 – 78).

The soprano solo in bars 145 – 153 is an addition by the arranger and may be omitted if desired. The solo in bars 69 – 78 on the other hand is, apart from its first note, an essential part of the original composition.

Neil Buckland

Duration: 8'45

O Virtus Sapientiae

Hildegard of Bingen

Dmitri Shostakovich
arr. Neil Buckland

Adagio ♩ = ca. 64
mp

Soprano
O vir-tus sa - pi-en-ti-ae, quae cir - cui-ens cir -

Alto
-

Tenor
-

Bass
-

Organ
ad lib.
p

6

S.
-cu- is 5 - ti com pre-hen-den-do om - - -

Org.

10

S.
- - - - ni-a, O vir-tus sa - - -

A.
mp
O vir-tus sa - pi-en - ti-ae, quae cir -

Org.

14

S. *pi - en - ti - ae quae cir - cui - ens cir -*

A. *- cui - ens cir - cu - is ti com - pre - hen - den - do om -*

Org.

18

S. *- cu - - - is - ti, cir - cui -*

A. *- - - - - ni - a,*

Org.

22

S. *ens_ cir - cu - - i - sti*

A. *om - - - - ni - a, O vir - tus sa -*

T. *O vir - tus sa - - pi - en - ti - ae,*

Org.

26

S. com - - - - - pre -

A. pi - en - ti -

T. quae - - - - - cir - cui - ens - - - - - cir - cu - is - - - - - ti

B.

Org.

5



29

S. hen - - - - - den - do om - - - - -

A. ae quae cir - cui - ens cir - cu - - - - -

T. com - pre - hen - den - do om - - - - -

B.

Org.

33

S.

A.

T.

B.

Org.

5



38

S.

A.

T.

B.

Org.

5

42

S.

A.

T.

B.

Org.

- cu - - - is - ti com - pre-hen - den - do

cir-cu-is - ti com - pre - hen-den - do_ om - - -

mp
O vir - tus sa - - - pi-en - ti -



45

S.

A.

T.

B.

Org.

om - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

ae quae_ cir - cui-ens_ cir - cu- is - ti com - pre-hen-den-do

49

S. in u - na

A. ni - a

T. ni - a

B. om - - - - - ni - a,

Org.



53

S. vi - - a, quae ha - bet, ha - bet vi ⁵ tam,

A.

T.

B. in u - na vi - a quae ha - bet vi - tam,

Org.

57

S. in u - na, in u - - - - -

A.

T.

B. in u - na vi - a, in u - - - - -

Org.



61

S. - na vi - a quae ha - bet vi - - - - -

A.

T.

B. - na vi - a quae ha - bet vi - - - - -

Org.

66 (solo) *mp*

Sop. solo in u -

S. - - - - - tam,

A. in u - na

T. 8

B. - tam, quae ha - bet vi - - - tam,

Org. solo

Detailed description: This system contains measures 66 to 69. It features five vocal parts and an organ part. The Soprano soloist has a melodic line starting in measure 67 with the lyrics 'in u'. The Soprano part has a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Alto part has a triplet in measure 69. The Bass part has a triplet in measure 67. The Organ part provides accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand with triplets. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4.

70

Sop. solo - na vi - a, in u - na, in

S. 3/4

A. vi - - a, quae ha - bet, ha - bet vi - tam,

T. 8 3/4

B. in u - na vi - - - a,

Org. 5 3/4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 70 to 73. It features five vocal parts and an organ part. The Soprano soloist has a melodic line starting in measure 70 with the lyrics '- na vi - a, in u - na, in'. The Soprano part has a rhythmic accompaniment. The Alto part has a melodic line starting in measure 71 with the lyrics 'vi - - a, quae ha - bet, ha - bet vi - tam,'. The Bass part has a melodic line starting in measure 71 with the lyrics 'in u - na vi - - - a,'. The Organ part provides accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand with a quintuplet in measure 73. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 3/4.

74

Sop. solo

u - na vi - a quae ha -

S.

A.

in u - na, in u - - - na vi - a quae

T.

B.

in u - na vi - - - a quae ha - - -

Org.

78

Sop. solo

- bet vi - tam,

S.

tres a - - -

A.

ha - bet vi - tam, tres a - - -

T.

tres a -

B.

- bet vi - tam, tres a -

Org.

tutti

(+ 4')

81

S. *las ha - bens, qua - rum*

A. *las ha - bens, qua - rum u - na*

T. *las ha - 5 - bens,*

B. *las ha - 5 - bens,*

Org.

85

S. *u - na in al -*

A. *in al - tum vo -*

T. *qua - rum u - na in al -*

B.

Org.

(- 4')

99 **poco rit.**

S. 

A. 

T. 
dat, su

B. 
u - - na in

Org. 
16' ad lib.

poco rit.

104 **a tempo**

S. 
u - - - na in al - -

A. 
- - - dat,

T. 
u - - - na in

B. 
al - - - - - tum vo - -

Org. 
a tempo

109

S. - tum vo - - - - - 5

A.

T. al - - - - - tum vo - -

B. - - - lat, vo - - - - -

Org.



113

S. - lat et al-te - ra de ter - - ra su - dat,

A.

T. - - - - - 5 lat, et al-te - ra de

B. - - - - - lat, et al - te - ra de

Org.

117

S. 

A. 

T. 
ter - - - ra_ su - - - -

B. 
ter - - - ra su - - - dat, et

Org. 

121

S. 
et ter-ti - a un -

A. 
et ter-ti - a un - - di - que vo -

T. 
- - - dat,

B. 
- - - ter-ti - a un - - - - - di -

Org. 

125

S. - di-que vo - - - lat, vo - - -

A. - lat, vo - - -

T.

B. que vo - - -

Org.



128

S. - - - - - 5 - lat, et_

A. - - - - - 5 - lat, et_ ter - ti-a

T.

B. lat, et_ ter - ti-a un - - -

Org.

132

S. *ter - ti - a, et - ter - ti - a un - - -*

A. *un - - - - - di-que vo - - - -*

T. *- - - - -*

B. *- di-que vo - - - lat,*

Org.



135

S. *⁵ - - - di-que - vo - - - -*

A. *- - - - -*

T. *- - - - -*

B. *- - - - -*

Org.

138

poco rit. *a tempo*

S. *lat. Laus,*

A. *lat. Laus*

T. *Laus*

B. *Laus ti-bi sit,*

Org. *poco rit.* *a tempo*

142

S. *laus ti -*

A. *ti - bi sit, si - cut te de - - cet, o*

T. *ti - bi sit, si - cut te de - - cet, o*

B. *laus*

Org.

145

Sop. solo

Laus ti-bi sit, o

S. - bi sit, si - cut te de - cet, o sa - - -

A. sa - pi - en - ti - a,

T. sa - pi - en - ti - a,

B. ti - bi sit, laus ti - bi sit, si - cut te de - cet,

Org.

solo*

149

Sop. solo

sa - pi - en - ti - a.

S. pi - en - ti - a.

A. o sa - pi - en - ti - a.

T. o sa - pi - en - ti - a.

B. o sa - pi - en - ti - a.

Org.

ritenuto

ritenuto

* The solo part in bars 145-153 is an addition by the arranger and may be omitted if desired.